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DONIZETTI IN HABSBURG EUROPE

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Barbara Babić

Introduction. Donizetti's tales across borders

1841, deep within a wild forest in Italy. A carriage on its way to Florence is suddenly ambushed by a band of brigands. Shots echo through the trees, followed by screams and pleas for mercy: a woman and her daughter are captured and plead for their lives. The captain of the brigands approaches and recognizes the woman: it's Maria, an opera singer. "You sang for me [...] at the Teatro San Carlo, I often listened to your Norma, Lucrezia Borgia, Gemma [di Vergy], and Lucia, and I was among those who applauded and shouted 'brava, brava'".[1] The woman, fearful for her fate, asks what he expects as ransom for her freedom: "one of your best arias",[2] he replies. And so, the forest turns into a natural stage and the diva appears as Lucia di Lammermoor. The power of her voice touches the hearts of the brigands, granting her freedom.

This is the plot of *Sangerinden* (*The Soprano*), a one-act drama premiered on 7 November 1841 at the Royal Danish Theatre in Copenhagen. As a brigand tale with an operatic touch, the piece combines pre-existing melodies written by composer Friedrich Kuhlau for the *Singspiel Røverborgen* (*The Brigands*, text by Adam Oehlenschläger, 1814) together with famous excerpts from Gaetano Donizetti's operas. Its subtitle—*Dramatic motif for an aria*—highlights the centrality of its master scene featuring the soprano Maria singing the aria "Perché non ho del vento". Originally composed by Donizetti for *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra* (1834), it was widely used as a substitute aria for the cavatina "Regnava nel silenzio" in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835).[3]

The librettist of *Sangerinden* was none other than the Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875), a man equally at home in the worlds of fairy

1. "Capitainen. I har jo siunget for mig [...] Tidt i Sanct Carlo, naar I spilled Norma, Lucrezia Borgia, Gemma og Lucia, Jeg hørte til og jubled' brava! brava!". Hans Christian Andersen, *Sangerinden. Dramatisk motiv for en arie, Musik af Fr. Kuhlau og G. Donizetti*, in *Andersens samlede værker*, *Skuespil*, 2, *1836–1842*, edited by Klaus P. Mortensen (Copenhagen: Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab, 2005), pp. 507–513, here 511.

2. "Ja, vi fordre mange! Vi fordre een af dine bedste Sange!". Andersen, *Sangerinden*, p. 511.

3. Hilary Poriss, "A madwoman's choice: aria substitution in *Lucia di Lammermoor*", *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 13/1 (2001), pp. 1–28 and *Changing the Score. Arias, Prima Donnas, and the Authority of Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 102.

tales as he was in Europe's opera houses. The origins of this work can be traced back to his travels across Europe in the 1830s, punctuated by experiences full of rich theatrical encounters and musical discoveries. It was on his trip to Italy in the summer of 1834 that he heard of a "well-known anecdote, only a few months old" which involved the celebrated singer Maria Malibran and would go on to inspire the plot of *Sangerinden*. Reportedly, as Malibran's carriage had to stop in "one of the smaller Italian towns, she was encouraged by the crowd that assembled in a frenzy around her to sing an aria in the middle of the street; she obliged and was rewarded for it with the most enthusiastic cries of 'brava'".[4]

Sangerinden is not merely an homage to Maria Malibran, one of the operatic voices that most impressed the writer;[5] it is, more specifically, a tribute to *Lucia di Lammermoor*, a subject matter that held particular significance in his biography. Indeed, Andersen was one of the first to adapt Walter Scott's novel for the stage: *Bruden fra Lammermoor*, with music by Ivar Frederik Bredal, premiered in Copenhagen in May 1832. His fascination with this topic endured for years, resurfacing a decade later in early 1840, when Donizetti's operatic version captivated him during his travels in the Habsburg lands. Akin to a sign of destiny, upon crossing the Alps and arriving in Bolzano/Bozen, Andersen noted that "in the inn there was as much Italian spoken as German, and on the table lay a playbill on which we read in large letters: *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *tragedia lirica*: we were near Italy, although yet on German ground".[6] Interestingly enough, Donizetti's opera served to define a sort of liminal experience, crucial in bridging the Italian and German-speaking cultures unified under the Habsburg crown.

Andersen had to wait until his arrival in Vienna to experience the opera firsthand. On 11 June 1841, he rushed to the Kärntnertortheater to attend a

4. Hans Christian Andersen, "Italiensk Musik, Sang og Theatervæsen" [Italian Music, Songs, and Theatres], *Søndagsblad*, 6 (8 February 1835), pp. 91–94. English translation by Jens Hesselager, 2018. On Andersen and the operatic world see Henrik Engelbrecht, *Hjertet brast i toner – med H. C. Andersen i operaen* (Copenhagen: henrikengelbrecht.dk, 2019).

5. "In Naples I heard Malibran for the first time. Her singing and acting surpassed anything which I had hitherto either heard or seen" ("In Neapel hörte ich zum ersten Mal die Malibran; ihr Gesang und Spiel übertraf Alles, was ich bisher gehört und gesehen hatte"). Hans Christian Andersen, *Das Märchen meines Lebens ohne Dichtung. Eine Skizze*, 1 (Leipzig: Carl B. Lorck, 1847), p. 104.

6. Hans Christian Andersen, *A Poet's Bazaar. Pictures of Travel in Germany, Italy, France, and the Orient* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1871), p. 39. "[...] i Vertshuset hørtes italiensk ligesaameget som tydsk, og paa Bordet laae en Placat fra Theatret, der stod med store Bogstaver: Luzia di Lammermoor, tragedia lirica; vi vare ved Italien, omendskjøndt endnu paa tydsk Grund". Hans Christian Andersen, *En Digters Bazar* (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1842), p. 66.

performance of *Lucia di Lammermoor* featuring soprano Erminia Poggi-Frezzolini in the title role. Encountering Italian opera there proved to be a true epiphany for him:

> During my stay I did not hear German opera here, but Italian, and that the most excellent I have ever heard. The male singers were Napoleone Moriani, Badiali, Donzelli; and the ladies Tadolini, Frezzolini, and Schoberlechner. I heartily wished that the Copenhageners might once hear such an Italian opera; they would and must be enchanted![7]

Four months later, upon returning home, Andersen had brought with him a souvenir from Vienna: his drama *Sangerinden*. The piece clearly echoed the melodies of *Lucia* and served as a way to introduce a touch of Donizetti's music to his fellow countrymen. In fact, Andersen was slightly ahead of the curve. In the following year in 1842, a complete production of *Lucia di Lammermoor* resounded in Copenhagen's Hofteatret in a series of operatic nights staged by an Italian travelling company.[8]

Andersen's writings—his drama, the travel notes, and diary entries—offer a unique insight into the "Donizetti moment" that captured the Habsburg lands in c. 1840, not unlike the one that arose around Gioachino Rossini during the Congress era. Commenting on the opera season 1840–1841, the influential *Wiener Theaterzeitung* remarked on the number of productions dedicated to the composer, emphasizing that "everything written by Donizetti is considered a masterpiece".[9] Some months later, the commission of *Linda di Chamounix* (19 May 1842) and his appointment as *Hofkammercapellmeister und Hofcompositeur* (3 July 1842) officially marked Donizetti's connection to Vienna in both its essences: as a leading European operatic centre and as the *Haupt- und Residenzstadt* of the Habsburg monarchy.

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7. Andersen, *A Poet's Bazaar*, p. 333. "[...] under dette mit Ophold hørte jeg ingen tydsk Opera, men italiensk, og det den fortræffeligste jeg nogensinde har hørt; det var Sangerne Napoleone Moriani, Badiali, Donzelli og Sangerinderne Tadolini, Frezzolini of Schoberlechner–! Jeg ønskede ret, at Kjøbenhavnerne engang maatte høre en saadan italiensk Opera, de vilde eg maatte henrives!". Andersen, *En Digters Bazar*, pp. 560–561.

8. *Lucia di Lammermoor* was played for the first time in Copenhagen's Court Theatre on 6 January 1842. For performance records see the online catalogue: <danskforfatterleksikon.dk>. Andersen himself stressed the arrival of Italian opera in Copenhagen in his travel report: "it was after my return home to Copenhagen that the first Italian company came here". Andersen, *A Poet's Bazaar*, p. 333. "Først ester min Hjemkomst til Kjøbenhavn, indtraf, som bekjendt, det første italienske Opera-Selskab hertil". Andersen, *En Digters Bazar*, p. 561.

9. "[...] alles, was Donizetti schreibt, als Meisterwerk gilt". "Wien, k.k. Hoftheater nächst dem Kärntnerthore, Schluß und Uibersicht der italienischen Opernvorstellungen", *Wiener Theaterzeitung* (2 July 1841), p. 698.

Donizetti's activity within the Habsburg context has increasingly drawn scholarly attention, as evidenced by recent contributions by Claudio Vellutini[10] and Michael Jahn.[11] His music—both on- and offstage—had an impact in various centres of the vast empire, such as Vienna, Budapest, Agram/Zagreb, Prague, and Lemberg/L'viv, to name just a few. Furthermore, his imperial belonging influenced key moments of his career. These include his early steps on the *piazze operistiche* of the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia and connections with the influential *impresari* Domenico Barbaia and Bartolomeo Merelli; his entry into Vienna's cultural circles, notably with his nomination as a member of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde;[12] contacts with local aristocrats and diplomats; and not least, his official courtly appointments that lasted until the end of his life. Indeed, in June 1846, by emphasizing Donizetti's "dual role as subject of the empire and chamber composer to His Majesty", Klemens von Metternich expressed his concerns over the composer's health in a letter to the Austrian Embassy in Paris. Metternich remarked that Donizetti "is generally beloved here, and everyone is interested in his fate [...] [His] loss would, in any case, be a tremendous blow to the theaters. Italy is so poor today in composers and performers that if things continue along this path, Italian opera will soon be reduced to silence".[13]

As Austria's chancellor and *mélomane*, Metternich endeavoured to give a voice to Italian opera and its singers within the Habsburg Empire in the first half of the nineteenth century, a mission that he defined as "a good episode in [his] life".[14] Italian opera not only signified a certain prestige and

10. Claudio Vellutini, *Entangled Histories. Opera and Cultural Exchange between Vienna and the Italian States after Napoleon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2025); "Italian opera in *Vormärz* Vienna. Gaetano Donizetti, Bartolomeo Merelli and Habsburg cultural policies in the mid-1830s", in *Italian Opera in Global and Transnational Perspective. Reimagining Italianità in the Long Nineteenth Century*, edited by Axel Körner and Paulo M. Kühl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 96–112.

11. *Donizetti und seine Zeit in Wien*, edited by Michael Jahn (Vienna: Der Apfel, 2010).

12. Donizetti to Raphael Georg Kiesewetter, Vienna, 14 June 1842, in Guido Zavadini, *Donizetti. Vita - musiche - epistolario* (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1948), no. 427, p. 615.

13. "Donizetti est généralement aimé ici, et tout le monde s'intéresse à son sort [...] La perte de Donizetti en serait, dans touts cas, une fort grande pour les théâtres. L'Italie est aujourd'hui tellement pauvre en compositeurs et en exécutants, que si les choses continuent à aller dans ce train, l'opéra italien sera bientôt réduit au mutisme". Klemens von Metternich to Rudolf Apponyi, Vienna, 20 February 1846, in *Mémoires, documents et écrits divers laissés par le prince de Metternich*, 7, edited by Richard Metternich (Paris: Plon, 1883), pp. 165–166.

14. "April 8. What a good episode in my life is the establishment of the Italian opera here: it has at last succeeded, and I have gained a real and great victory". *Memoirs of Prince Metternich, 1815–1829*, 3, edited by Richard Metternich (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1881), p. 575.

cosmopolitanism. More significantly, it became instrumental in asserting the monarchy's supranational identity. As a *lingua franca* it was able to create cultural and intellectual connections between its many lands and peoples, as well as between its political centre and peripheries. This perspective is at the core of the research project *Opera and the Politics of Empire in Habsburg Europe, 1815–1914* based at Leipzig University, that animates this special issue of *Donizetti Studies*. The project addresses two distinct areas of scholarship: the transnational turn in opera studies and recent trends in Habsburg history, which have moved away from a narrow focus on ethnic and linguistic conflict to examine the role of imperial identity, national hybridity, dynastic loyalty, and factors such as religion, class and gender that cut across national ideology. In this context, examining Donizetti within the framework of Habsburg Europe opens up a wealth of new perspectives. First, it offers a deeper understanding of the interactions between Italian and Austrian territories, framing them as a dynamic of cultural exchange rather than one of oppression. Second, it allows for an exploration of the complex layers of belonging—municipal, regional, imperial, and European—that shaped the composer's career. Finally, it sheds light on a less explored chapter in music history, spanning from the *Vormärz* to the 1848 revolutions, revealing the importance of music culture during the reign of Emperor Ferdinand I (1835–1848).

This publication is the result of a conference (Study Day) held at the Bach-Archiv Leipzig and at Leipzig University on 31 May and 1 June 2024. It was organised within the framework of the research project *Opera and the Politics of Empire in Habsburg Europe, 1815–1914*, funded by an advanced investigator grant of the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, grant agreement No. 101018743. The editors—Barbara Babić, Axel Körner and Riccardo Mandelli—are grateful to the participants of the conference and the authors of this special issue, as well as to the general editors of *Donizetti Studies* for hosting our work. Special thanks go to Quirin Lübke (Leipzig University) for his editorial assistance.

"8 avril. Quel bon episode dans ma vie que l'opéra italien, que j'ai enfin réussi à implanter ici ! C'est une grande et réelle Victoire que j'ai remportée". *Mémoires, documents et écrits divers laissés par le prince de Metternich*, 3, edited by Richard Metternich (Paris: Plon, 1881), p. 540.

Roger Parker

Donizetti *dappertutto*: how to fix the unfixable

Ainsi, toujours poussés vers de nouveaux rivages,
Dans la nuit éternelle emportés sans retour,
Ne pourrons-nous jamais sur l'océan des âges
Jeter l'ancre un seul jour ?
[...]
« Ô temps, suspends ton vol ! et vous, heures propices,
Suspendez votre cours !
Laissez-nous savourer les rapides délices
Des plus beaux de nos jours ! »
Lamartine, *Le Lac* (1820)

I want to explore here the tension between the idea of a "critical" edition of an opera (which serves to fix its text, in the process giving it the stamp of a composer's authority, as well as the authority that institutional scholarship might still command) and the idea of operatic mobility: of the fact that the work in question was often subject to multiple revivals, multiple re-imaginings (both with and without that composerly authority), multiple reinterpretations, multiple meanings. The case of Donizetti, the most widely disseminated operatic composer from the mid-1830s to the mid-1840s, and amongst the most prolific, brings these issues into sharp focus. So much about this composer challenges the rhetoric that conventionally accompanies critical editions, and perhaps even challenges the very basis on which they make their small ripples in today's vast musical-industrial complex. But what is also challenged by Donizettian praxis is the manner in which we think of composers' works more generally as they migrated from one urban centre to another.

My starting point is scraps of paper. I begin there because I want to remind the reader of material things, of paper in the hand, of legibility or lack of it, of the logistical difficulties and sheer material weight of operatic transmission. My exemplum comes from material traces that have come to light in connection with recent work on a critical edition of one of Donizetti's lesser-known but most thought-provoking late works, *Caterina Cornaro*. I should stress immediately that the musicological sleuthing involved is in large part

the work of that publication's editor, Eleonora Di Cintio.[1] Just a brief historical account of that opera will demonstrate that its *mise-en-place* is inescapably bound up with the geographical eclecticism of Donizetti's life at this point in his career, the first half of the 1840s; it will also gesture towards the manner in which his personal sphere of operations was expanding ever more widely just as his career was, alas, about to come to an abrupt and tragic end. As a preface to that account, and to those circumstances, we might recall a letter the composer wrote around this time (from Vienna on 4 June 1842) to one of his domestic acquaintances:

> I don't know if you're familiar with Figaro's aria in Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*... "tutti mi chiedono, tutti mi vogliono", etc... That's the way it is.... Paris says: "come at once". No! Naples: "come running". No! Bologna: "settle down here; these are your terms". No. – Do you want to accept (here comes the *adagio*) the post in V...i...en...na... of M.º di Corte... [...] M.º di Corte, that looks all right to me... if the pay is OK. – The title looks decent... the work shouldn't be too much.[2]

As so often, the humour and ventriloquism hide a deeper truth. Tellingly, Donizetti depicts his life in terms of a notoriously hectic (and much travelled) comic opera: caught up in a multi-vocal vortex, one that saw him speeding around the most prestigious theatrical venues in Europe, and in ever-more-dizzying circles.

Placed amid this furious activity, here—briefly—is the story of *Caterina Cornaro*.[3] It started life around the time of the letter just quoted, when Doni-

1. Gaetano Donizetti, *Caterina Cornaro*, critical edition by Eleonora Di Cintio (Milan: Ricordi, 2024), which appeared as a volume in *Le opere di Gaetano Donizetti*, a series directed by Gabriele Dotto and the present writer. My sincere thanks to my friend and colleague Di Cintio: for her exceptional dedication to this, one of Donizetti's most complex scores; and also, more immediately, for her willingness to allow me to appropriate her work as a launching pad for my own in this essay.

2. "Non sò se voi conoscete l'aria di *Figaro* nel Barbiere di Rossini... *tutti mi chiedono, tutti mi vogliono* etc... Eccoti il caso.... Parigi: *venite subito*. No! Napoli: *correte*. nò! Bologna *quì stabilirvi ecco le proposizioni*. Nò. – Volete voi accettare... (quì vien l'adagio)... il posto in V...i... en...na... di M.º di Corte... [...] M.º di Corte, va bene, mi pare... se il quibus è discreto. – Il titolo è decoroso... il travaglio non dovria esser molto". Letter to Giuseppina Appiani, dated "Vienna, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 Sabbato insomma 1842", actually 4 June 1842; Guido Zavadini, *Donizetti. Vita - musiche - epistolario* (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1948), no. 424 (henceforth Z. 424), p. 611.

3. What follows is largely indebted to the historical introduction of Di Cintio's edition (see fn 1, pp. XXXIII–XLVII), which offers by far the most complete account of the opera, in the process correcting many details that escaped earlier commentators. For previous accounts of the

zetti, in the wake of the extraordinary success of *Linda di Chamounix* at the Kärntnertortheater in Vienna (May 1842), had indeed assumed the position of *Kammercapellmeister* to the Austrian Emperor, at an annual and not insignificant salary of 12,000 *lire austriache*. *Caterina Cornaro* was intended for—indeed commissioned by, as a sequel to *Linda*—the Kärntnertortheater, a venue for which Donizetti would write some of his most innovative works of musical theatre in these years. (Here a brief but significant interstice is useful: we should immediately be aware that this "progressive" music, the music of the future, the music he wrote for Vienna, was for Donizetti not a matter of artistic credo, not a way of carving out identity in the world; it was, rather, a *style*, a mode to be assumed or cast aside depending on circumstances. This clarification is important in what follows, as the prestige of the "progressive" may—sometimes—serve to distort decision-making about how to edit his operas.)

However, when Donizetti was in mid-composition with *Caterina*, it became clear that another composer, the Bavarian Franz Lachner, had already written a German-language opera on that very theme (*Catharina Cornaro*, first performed in Munich in 1841), and that—worse—Lachner's opera had now been scheduled for revival in Vienna. So Donizetti's commission was cancelled. He was obliged to halt composition in mid-stream and turned instead to *Maria di Rohan* (another of those innovative works for Vienna). Then, with *Maria di Rohan* finished, and as something of a stop-gap, he returned to *Caterina*, refashioning it for Naples. The immediate problem was that Naples prided itself on being one of the most conservative operatic centres in Italy at the time: in other words, something like the polar opposite of progressive Vienna. Small surprise, then, that the Italian city was, according to Donizetti, by no means the best place for such a premiere. As he wrote to his brother-in-law Antonio Vasselli even before the first performance:

> I am anxiously awaiting news of a *Caterina Cornaro* fiasco in Naples. [Fanny] Goldberg as a prima donna is my first disaster without knowing it. I wrote for a soprano, they give me a mezzo! God knows if [Filippo] Coletti [the baritone], if [Gaetano] Fraschini [the tenor], understand their roles as I intend them. God knows what butchery the censorship has brought about.[4]

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opera, see William Ashbrook, *Donizetti and His Operas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 180–183; and, with the supplement of reprinting many reviews of the first performances, *Le prime rappresentazioni delle opere di Donizetti nella stampa coeva*, edited by Annalisa Bini and Jeremy Commons (Rome–Milan: Accademia nazionale di Santa Cecilia–Skira, 1997), pp. 1308–1335.

4. "Attendo con ansietà le nuove del fiasco di *Caterina Cornaro* a Napoli. La Goldberg per prima donna è la mia prima rovina senza saperlo. Scrissi per un soprano, mi danno un mezzo! Dio sa se Coletti, se Fraschini intendono le parti come le intesi io; Dio sa la censura qual macello ha fatto". Letter of 6 January 1844 to Antonio Vasselli, Z. 531, p. 716.

His fears were, alas, correct on all counts. When composing (or perhaps we might immediately say when "assembling") an opera, Donizetti was used to working closely with singers—or, at the least, according to his most recent knowledge of the singers' capabilities—to fashion what might best be called a composite creative achievement, one in which the traditions and tastes of a city, its dramatic and musical preferences, and the principal performers' individual talents and weaknesses could be joined with his dramatic ideas to form something modelled for a specific event. But in this case there was no possibility of such tailoring; the opera intended for Vienna was shipped off to Naples; the composer had commitments elsewhere and could not attend and make any necessary adjustments. Small surprise that *Caterina* was performed in January 1844 with no success at all.[5] After the Naples debacle, it seems likely that Donizetti again thought he might rescue the opera for Vienna, and even revised the final scene to make it more fluidly dramatic and less concentrated on vocal display. But this possibility again fell through, and he had to content himself with a premiere of this revised version (or at least a part of it) in a distinctly secondary theatre: Parma's Teatro Ducale (this was in February 1845). As it turned out, the Parma performances were the last time Donizetti would have an Italian premiere: within six months he was all but incapacitated; a year later he was in an asylum in the suburbs of Paris. As so often, and particularly in Donizetti's frenetic later career, one has the impression that the opera was not so much "finished" as "abandoned". Had, for example, the chance of a Viennese or Parisian premiere turned up, and had the composer's health not collapsed, we can be virtually certain that he would have returned to the score: to fashion it anew, to begin afresh.

With this brief background established, we come to the material traces. These might seem like three sheets of paper but actually there are just two: an original page (f. 72*v* of the composer's autograph score, Figure 1); then a supplementary page, also in his handwriting, that was pasted over this first page at a later date (Figure 2); and then the page that follows in the autograph score (f. 73*r*, Figure 3).[6] The plot of the opera up to this point hardly matters for our purposes, but I'll offer it in telegraphic form. The drama begins in Venice, in the middle of the fifteenth century. Caterina (soprano) is engaged to a young Frenchman called Gerardo (tenor): she loves him; he loves her. They are about

5. For an anthology of the critical response in Naples, which is full of offended local sensibilities (Donizetti's absence, and the fact that the opera had been intended for elsewhere, were found gravely insulting); see *Le prime rappresentazioni*, pp. 1323–1335.

6. Donizetti's score is housed in the library of the Conservatorio San Pietro a Majella (I-Nc), the shelf-mark is Rari 14.6.15. For a detailed description, see the "Sources" section of Di Cintio's edition (pp. 577–579).

to celebrate their wedding as the curtain rises. As one would expect in a work whose generic title is *tragedia lirica*, such joys are brutally short-lived. After a congratulatory opening chorus and some warbling in parallel sixths from the betrothed, a messenger arrives with desperate news: the Venetian authorities have decided that Caterina must, for political reasons, marry Lusignano, the King of Cyprus (baritone). The next act is set in Cyprus. Various opportunities for exotic *couleur locale* are musically explored, in the midst of which Lusignano arrives and makes clear in a lively *aria di sortita* ("Da che sposa Caterina") that he is aware the Venetians have offered him Caterina only because they wish to plot against him and control him. The passage we will focus on is the recitative preceding this aria (Figures 1 and 2), and then the aria itself (the first page of which is on Figure 3).

Judging from the paper used, the recitative that precedes the aria (Figure 1) was written by Donizetti in November 1842, when he assumed *Caterina* would be performed in Vienna. The aria (Figure 3), on the other hand, was probably written in Vienna in spring 1843, some time after the Kärntnertortheater premiere had fallen through and Donizetti was about to send the score to Naples. It is clear from Figure 1 that, originally, Donizetti did not envision an aria here for Lusignano, and fashioned a recitative that closed on the dominant of D, then to be followed by the Coro "Sgherri" (the present opera's No. 7, which follows Lusignano's aria and is in D major). But then, as we can see, he crossed through the recitative and on the right hand at the bottom wrote a curtailed recitative that turned the music to the dominant of B♭. This would then lead directly to Figure 3, which contains the start of Lusignano's B♭ minor aria.

A word or two about that aria, to which I've deliberately not given a generic descriptor. In common with so much of *Caterina*, the piece seems to put in play contradictory generic markers. On the one hand, as the opening of Figure 3 makes plain, it's a cabaletta; the "alla polacca" driving rhythms, the dotted notes in the melodic line, the two strophe structure, etc., etc. But the first vocal score (published by Ricordi) gave it the title "Romanza", and there are plainly elements of that very different generic type: the expansive melodic inspiration in the middle of each strophe, the movement both to the relative major and (in the second strophe) to the parallel major.[7] The curious tempo designation, "Andante mosso ma non troppo", seems in this sense a lapidary indication of the bifurcated generic aims: "Andante" (the tempo of a romanza),

7. Luca Zoppelli's continually informative new book on Donizetti, celebrated elsewhere in this collection, aptly describes the aria as having "il carattere di una cabaletta marziale in ritmo di polacca, con momenti di appassionata ribellione lirica"; Luca Zoppelli, *Donizetti* (Milan: il Saggiatore, 2022), p. 455.

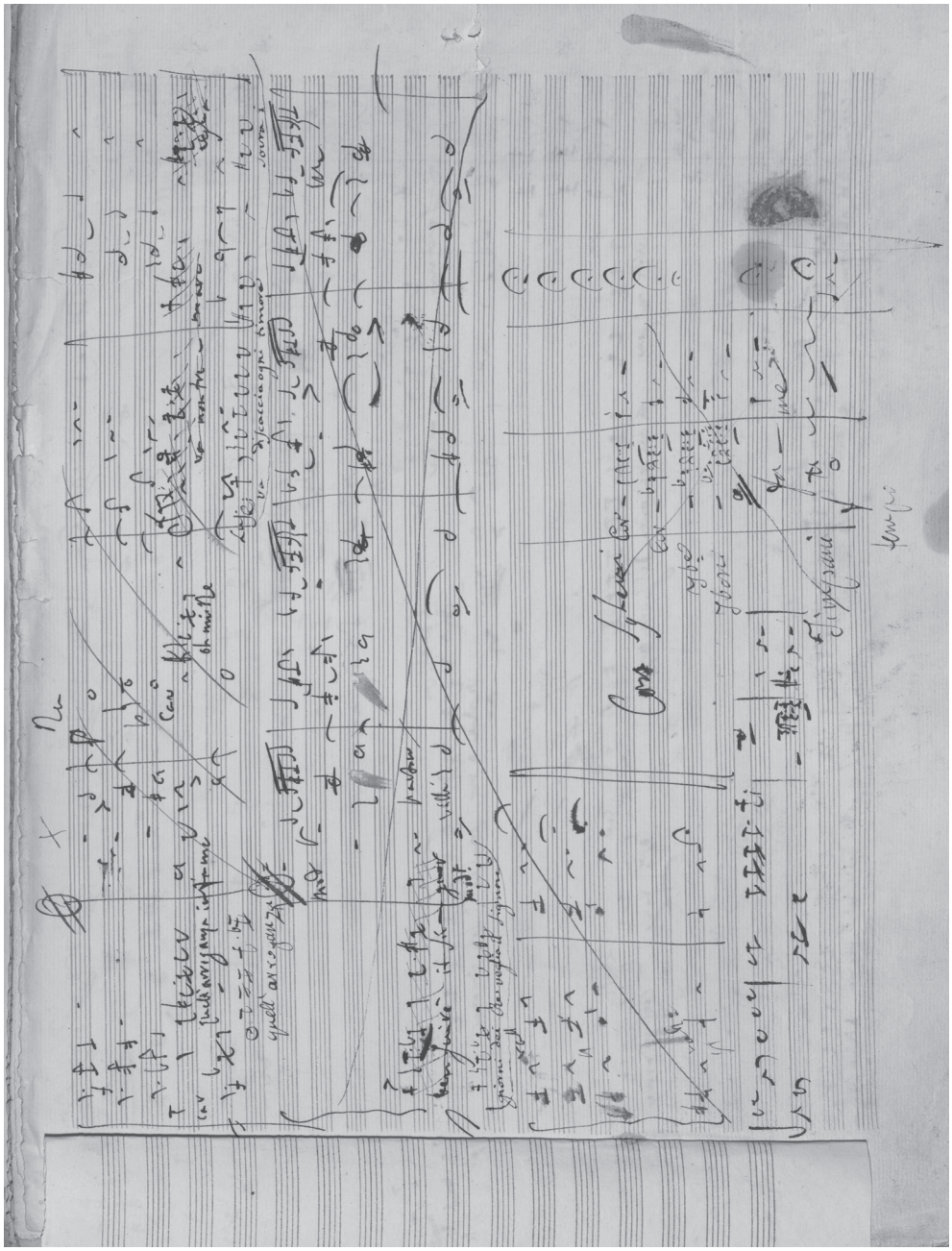

Figure 1
F. 72*v* of Donizetti's autograph score of *Caterina Cornaro*, showing the original configuration of the recitative before Lusignano's Act 1 aria "Da che sposa Caterina"; I-Nc, Rari 14.6.15.

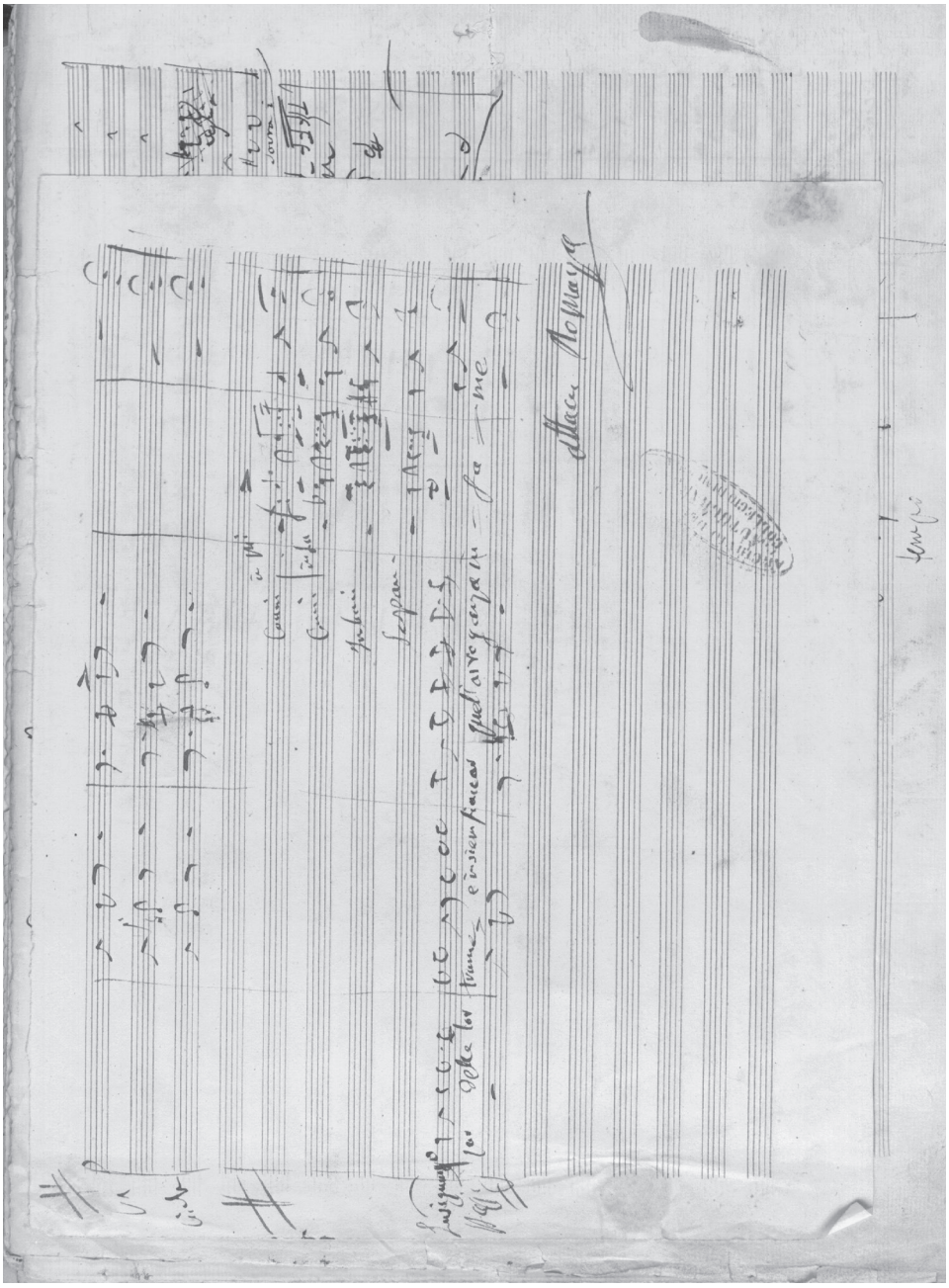

Figure 2
F. 72*v* of Donizetti's autograph score of *Caterina Cornaro*, showing a subsequent revision of the recitative before Lusignano's Act 1 aria "Da che sposa Caterina"; I-Nc, Rari 14.6.15.

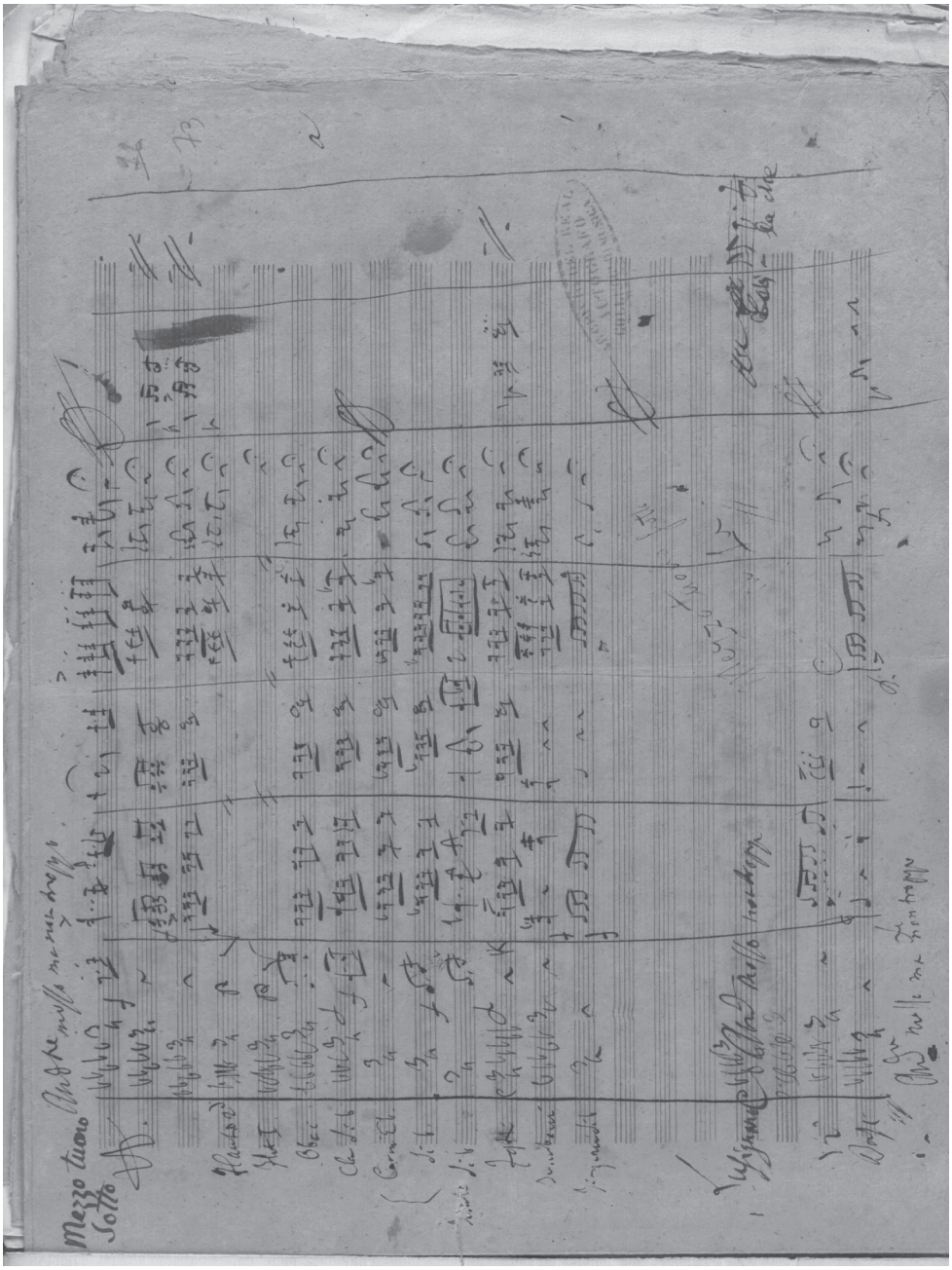

Figure 3
F. 73*r* of Donizetti's autograph score of *Caterina Cornaro*, showing the start of Lusignano's Act 1 aria "Da che sposa Caterina"; I-Nc, Rari 14.6.15.

"mosso" (the cabaletta element intrudes), "ma non troppo" (but not too much so).[8] To repeat, this type of generic confusion is a notable feature of *Caterina* as a whole, as it is of all the operas Donizetti wrote with a Viennese audience in mind (*Maria di Rohan* is the classic instance). The opera's first cabaletta, "Dell'empia Cipro il popolo" in the Prologo, is if anything even stranger, with a constant oscillation in tempo that eventually calls into question the dominant characteristic of what we might call the "cabaletta function".

Such ruminations on one of Donizetti's most challenging operas could continue, but we need to return, briefly, to the philology. In those material traces offered by our trio of figures, there is further evidence of yet further revision. Donizetti, perhaps adapting the part for baritone Filippo Coletti, who was to sing Lusignano in Naples, decided to lower by a semitone his Act 1 aria, thus necessitating further changes to the closing measures of the recitative in Figure 1. Possibly shortly before sending his revised score to Naples, he crossed out those three bars that he had composed at the end of Figure 1, with its preparation for B♭ minor and sketched a new version in the bottom left-hand corner, one that comes to a close on the dominant of A minor. Following that, and on a new page subsequently attached to Figure 1, he wrote an orchestration of the new conclusion of the recitative (the new page is shown in Figure 2). And then, in the centre of the first page of Lusignano's aria (Figure 3), he added the instruction "mezzo tuono sotto | in La", an indication that another hand repeated in the upper left-hand corner of the page.

There are various other strands of evidence, all presented with admirable clarity by Di Cintio in her edition. One further source, also present in the Naples Conservatory Library, is an additional autograph copy of the aria's melodic substance, again in B♭ minor/major and differing from the version seen in Figure 3 in important details. Quite why this further version exists, and what relationship it has to previous versions, is not entirely clear.[9] As if to demonstrate the surrounding confusion, the opera's first vocal score (published by Ricordi) presents a strange and surely mistaken confection: the re-

8. Two valuable essays concerning the romanza genre are worth noting here: Marco Beghelli, "Tre slittamenti semantici: cavatina, romanza, rondò", in *Le parole della musica*, 3, *Studi di lessicologia musicale*, edited by Fiamma Nicolodi and Paolo Trovato (Florence: Olschki, 2000), pp. 185–217; and Giorgio Pagannone, "Un genere particolare di aria. La 'romanza' operistica", *Quaderni dell'Istituto nazionale tostiano*, 2 (2022), pp. 87–104. Both demonstrate (although neither says so explicitly) the manner in which such generic markers are always open to deformation and creative manipulation as the nineteenth century unfolded, so much so that the very category they inhabit gradually becomes nugatory. On the continuing difficulties of adapting operatic music to generic categories, see Emanuele Senici, "Genre", in *The Oxford Handbook of Opera*, edited by Helen M. Greenwald (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 33–52.

9. See in particular the discussion on p. 590 of Di Cintio's edition.

citative is consistent with the very first version that Donizetti conceived, but finishes prematurely on a D major chord (the dominant of G), a tonality that is harmonically incompatible with the subsequent Lusignano aria, which duly starts in B♭ minor. This vocal score version, incidentally, is followed in the most recent recording of the opera, by Opera Rara, a recording that generally takes seriously its philological duties; but they plainly got this aspect wrong, which is surprising given the blatant tonal *non-sequitur*.[10]

So there we have it, and if readers are bewildered, they can take comfort from a similar state among the specialists. We have, at the least, what cultural theorists like to call a surplus of authorial signature. There are four discrete and—at some point—composer-authorised configurations of this moment in which our principal baritone enters the scene: 1. with no aria at all (probably written for Vienna); 2. with an aria in B♭ minor/major (probably written for Naples); 3. with the same aria transposed to A minor/major (almost certainly written for Naples); 4. with the aria again in B♭ minor/major, but altered in significant details by the composer (the alterations possibly post-dating version 3, possibly not).

Version 1 is clearly an early draft, never performed anywhere, and subsequently cancelled by the composer; the critical edition relegates it to an Appendix, where it surely belongs unless one's Lusignano of choice has severely disappointed.[11] But the decision between versions 2, 3 and 4, and thus between preferring the aria in B♭ minor/major or A minor/major, is more complex. There is, as we have seen, conclusive evidence that, at some point and quite possibly for the Naples premiere, Donizetti wanted the aria transposed; but there is also evidence that this was for a particular performance opportunity (that offered by Naples, which he could not attend or supervise), and one he had little confidence in. There is also—as we have seen—the fact that in some (probably) post-autograph partial copies of the aria, he maintained the original key of B♭ minor/major: a circumstance that *may* reflect a continuing preference for that key even in the face of the transposition requested/required for Naples, or that *may* merely have resulted from the fact that these iterations preceded the decision to make the transposition. And in case the title of a famous Shakespeare comedy set in Messina is by now occurring to some readers, I should stress here an added circumstance: we have an autograph version of the aria in B♭ minor/major in full score, but we do not have his full score of the transposed version, and can guess that it never existed. What is important here is that transposing an orchestral composition at this period is

10. Gaetano Donizetti, *Caterina Cornaro*, conducted by David Parry (London: Opera Rara, 2013), ORC48.

11. The original recitative is printed as Appendix 1 in Di Cintio's edition, see p. 531.

never a simply mechanical operation: the brass in particular will need to be re-written, as their limitations at that time mean that a simple move down a semitone is rarely possible. In other operas of around this time, Donizetti took the trouble himself to write out important transpositions. In other words, if editors decided to favour the aria in A minor/major, they would need to invent themselves such adjustments.[12]

In other words, we are left with a conundrum, a moment poised between alternatives, each with a legitimate claim for our attention. What is more, lest readers think this is merely an especially difficult moment in an unusually complex work, such cruxes are virtually the norm so far as Donizetti's operas are concerned, and often involve not just simple transpositions but the very core of the dramatic articulation. While some of his operas, by force of circumstance, exist in one incontestable, author-approved version, the norm is quite other, with choices sometimes proliferating alarmingly. In a case on which the Donizetti edition is working at the moment, that of his *Otto mesi in due ore* (first performed in Naples 1827), the composer was actively involved with at least six subsequent versions (Palermo 1828, Milan 1831, Rome 1832, Turin 1834, Paris 1840 and London 1845), all of which have some considerable claim to "authenticity".[13]

As promised, in what remains of my paper I want to focus on two issues that might fold the present Donizettian investigation into the larger historical project to which this volume is dedicated. The first issue concerns the matter of "authorial intention" (that rock and refuge, not to say fetish object, of most critical editions): specifically the extent to which such a slippery term has purchase in Donizettian circumstances. On this topic, it is instructive to quote from a further Donizetti letter concerning *Caterina Cornaro*, this time addressed to his fellow composer, Naples-based Saverio Mercadante, whom he hoped might watch over preparations for the Neapolitan premiere of the opera. The letter was published in a musical journal before the Naples premiere and was probably intended for such wide dissemination: to demonstrate

12. A case in point is Donizetti's opera *Adelia* (first performed in Rome, 1840); the library of the Naples Conservatorio contains scores of several numbers that the composer himself took the trouble to transpose (see I-Nc, Rari 4.1.11/1-3). As far as this particular transposition goes, the surrounding tonality might fit either solution: B♭ major (the end tonality of Lusignano's aria) links comfortably to the D major of the following Coro (by means of the shared D), while A major clearly functions as the dominant of the Coro. In the end, Di Cintio's edition elected to publish only the B♭ minor/major version.

13. For the best published account of these versions, see Annalisa Bini, "*Otto mesi in due ore 'ossia' gli esiliati in Siberia*: vicende di un'opera donizettiana", *Rivista italiana di musicologia*, 22 (1987), pp. 183–260. The critical edition (forthcoming) is edited by Francesca Vella.

publicly that, although Donizetti could not be present for the premiere of his opera, he was actively engaged in its final preparations. As part of this demonstration—and helpfully from our point of view—the composer proceeded to itemise what such "watching over" might entail: specifically what freedoms he was willing to allow Mercadante in managing the score onto the Neapolitan stage. Donizetti could be sure, he wrote, that his interlocutor was fully aware of the misunderstandings that manuscript transmission can engender, and so he humbly requested Mercadante to:

> Save me from the errors thus made, watch over with a benign eye my opera, do to what you think useful in the broadest sense of that term; increase, re-orchestrate, abbreviate, expand, transpose, in short do with [the opera] as you would with a work of your own, for you are in a position to appreciate *the weak side of the artists*.[14]

The tabula rasa thus offered was broad indeed: as the composer made clear, it encompassed "the broadest sense of that term" ("tutta l'estensione del termine"). As well as minor adjustments to the music text, it could involve adding supplementary movements or even entire numbers, whether by Donizetti or (shock, horror) by others. With such blanket approval—to do, in short, whatever local exigencies required—what are we to make of authorial intention? In this context, might any adaptation be deemed "authentic"?

If only matters were that simple. We have other letters from the composer—perhaps in other moods, or swayed by other motives (economic ones were often important)—in which he could pronounce himself incandescent about changes made to his scores. It is true that he rarely seemed to mind if singers incorporated their own favourite arias into his works (these additional or substitute pieces are often called *arie di baule*, suitcase arias, to be carried in a singer's luggage and pulled forth whenever applause was thought in need of solicitation).[15] But re-orchestrations from vocal score models, made to circumvent the cost of hiring orchestral materials, were a constant source of composerly anguish, and a form of meddling he actively disliked because it involved precisely the issue of transposition. While he was content for such changes of pitch to take place in vocal scores for the domestic market, he

14. "[...] toglimi di sì fatti errori, invigila con occhio benigno l'opera mia, fa in essa ciò che più credi utile in tutta l'estensione del termine; accresci, istrumenta, diminuisci, scorta [scorcia?], allunga, trasporta, in somma fanne cosa tua, che sei a portata di conoscere *le côté faible des artistes*". Letter to Mercadante, dated Paris, 5 November 1843, published in the Neapolitan journal *Il sibilo* on 28 December 1843; reprinted in *Le prime rappresentazioni*, pp. 1323–1324.

15. For a book-length study of this practice, see Hilary Poriss, *Changing the Score. Arias, Prima Donnas, and the Authority of Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

would complain bitterly about transpositions in the theatre, precisely because they might interfere with an orchestral sonority that he regarded as dramatically important.[16] Again, the issue would seem neatly balanced. What is plain, at least, is that "authorial intention" is by no means a simple concept (in this as in any other circumstance), and cannot reliably be burnished forth as a guiding principle in making the decisions we are faced with.

My second, related issue has some significant historical baggage in the musicological past. Should the composer's comparatively lax attitude to the claims of performance vs the claims of "the work" (a hierarchy admirably laid out in his letter to Mercadante, quoted above) be imported into our treatment of and attitudes to his music? Readers old enough to be familiar with the writings of Carl Dahlhaus might recall his famous (or, according to some, infamous) resurrection of an ancient binary that had once been iconic in the historiography of early nineteenth-century music. As one historian of the period put it, the early decades of that century were best seen as "The Age of Beethoven and Rossini".[17] And here's how Dahlhaus glossed the formulation. On the one hand was "Beethoven [who], virtually at one fell swoop, claimed for music the strong concept of art, without which music would be unable to stand on a par with literature and the visual arts"; this powerful concept to be juxtaposed with "Rossini, [...] preserving in the nineteenth century a residue of eighteenth-century spirit, [who] was completely oblivious to this concept [...]; a Rossini score is a mere recipe for a performance, and it is the performance which forms the crucial aesthetic arbiter as the realization of a draft rather than the exegesis of a text".[18]

Dahlhaus's formulation might be taken, in the context of its time and place (the book from which it came, a general history of nineteenth-century music, was first published in Germany in 1980), as an enlightened attempt

16. One of the most voluminous examples of Donizetti's contrasting attitudes to his operatic texts comes in the case of *Lucrezia Borgia* (first performed, Milan 1833), which travelled through multiple author-approved versions but was, because of its success, frequently pirated. For full details, see the historical introduction to the critical edition, edited by Roger Parker and Rosie Ward (Milan: Ricordi, 2019).

17. Raphael Georg Kiesewetter thus named what for him was the most recent epoch, that since 1800; see his *Geschichte der europäisch-abendländischen oder unserer heutigen Musik* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1834), especially pp. 9–8. For a book-length meditation on this formulation, see *The Invention of Beethoven and Rossini: Historiography, Analysis, Criticism*, edited by Nicholas Mathew and Benjamin Walton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

18. Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 9; the book originally appeared as *Die Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1980).

to find an alternative aesthetic space for Rossini, rather than—as had been commonplace in the immediate past—simply judging the music aesthetically inferior.[19] However, very soon after its English translation emerged a decade later there were loud complaints of hidden agendas, ones that might subtly aid marginalisation of the Rossini side of the equation. And it is surely no accident that such complaints issued from those attempting at the time to raise Rossini's prestige by making claims for the integrity of his operas as "works" in the strong sense, and doing so by creating a critical edition of his entire opus.[20] A middle ground in this *querelle* might conclude that, rather than Dahlhaus's binary (and he was, lest we forget, a remorselessly dialectic writer), there is a constantly shifting continuum along which the various genres and national schools of the early nineteenth century might tentatively be arranged. Small surprise, then, if the edifice of the "critical edition", which was constructed as a mean of shoring up (if not actually creating) one extreme end of the continuum is applied to a repertory at the other end.[21]

However, there is a much broader conclusion to be taken from this whole meditation on uncertainty and ambiguity. Like a good deal of music in the nineteenth century, Italian opera gained enormous momentum by making use of improved transportation systems to move around the continent (and, increasingly, beyond the continent) in search of new performers, new audiences, new profits. And, in part because it was so reliant on fragile human bodies to make its impact, in part because it involved dramatic representation, which could have political resonances that those in power found potentially danger-

19. Interestingly, Kiesewetter's *Geschichte* restricted itself to bland distinctions between instrumental music and opera, and declined to pass unequivocal judgment on the competing claims of his two protagonists, suggesting that only time would tell.

20. Philip Gossett, "Carl Dahlhaus and the 'ideal type'", *19th-Century Music*, 13/1 (1989), pp. 49–56, here pp. 55–56. For further critiques along the same lines, see the same author's review of Dahlhaus's *Nineteenth-Century Music*: "Up from Beethoven", *New York Review of Books*, 36/16 (28 October 1989), pp. 21–26.

21. Possible reactions to these remarks are pre-emptively ringing in my ears. What are you doing as General Editor of a critical edition (of Donizetti of all people), a type of publication that is, if anything, a celebration (not to say reification) of the composer's authority? To answer that—justified—question would take another paper entirely, and it's one I've written already and have no desire to repeat. See Roger Parker, "A Donizetti edition in the postmodern world", in *L'opera teatrale di Gaetano Donizetti. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studio, Bergamo, 17–20 settembre 1992*, edited by Francesco Bellotto (Bergamo: Comune di Bergamo, 1993), pp. 57–68. Briefly though I would continue to argue that the production of critical editions can, if one controls the surrounding rhetoric carefully, be an activity as likely to *demystify* the work of a composer as to give that work added authority: it can, in other words, encourage users (attentive users) to realise the limitations of Donizettian material traces and Donizettian intentionality.

ous, and in part because of the huge economic variations across the continent, it shape-shifted to a remarkable degree as it travelled. To take our present example, and to embroider only a little: in Vienna—had it happened there the first time—that aria of Lusignano would have been absent, and the comparatively lean, spare, "spoken drama" musical action that emerged would have been heartily approved; in Naples, on the other hand, it might have got by—just—in A minor, allowing the old-fashioned heroic bass now struggling with the higher tessitura of "modern" composers to gain some applause for his stentorian but less than stratospheric top notes;[22] but then, a little later, it might have been revived in Vienna, this time with the addition of the aria in B♭ minor, and would have helped to establish the new vocal persona of the high baritone and even served to impress a coterie of Viennese connoisseurs as an example of large-scale tonal articulation.[23] What is more, one might immediately imagine the scene at smaller venues, perhaps in the depths of the Austro-Hungarian empire: it might arrive there, somewhat bedraggled, a decade later, to be played by a company that perhaps had no bass or baritone, or before a ruling elite that disapproved of showing kings onstage, and so the aria was again omitted altogether.

I belabour this point because, if there is one inflection of our musical history that is still on occasion needed, it is surely to take such variability, whether or not willed by the composer, not as a sign of unfortunate compromise in the face of "practical considerations" but rather as a positive historical phenomenon: as further illustration—if we needed it—that mobility and malleability in musical works can be a cause for celebration rather than for confusion or lament. To put this another, more radical way: while we continue to think endlessly about the effect that musical works have on places (the arrival of Rossini in Vienna; the impact of Beethoven on London; and so on and on), we might usefully juxtapose those imaginings with examples of, as it were, the opposite direction of travel: the manner in which places—or, perhaps better, "spaces", in the distinction made by Michel de Certeau[24]—can inflect musical

22. In fact, though, there remains some doubt about whether the aria was actually performed in any key in the Naples performances. It is certainly present in the contemporary libretto (what Di Cintio's edition calls NA^{1844}, published in Naples by the Tipografia Flautina), but in the reviews collected by Bini and Commons (see *Le prime rappresentazioni*, pp. 1323–1335) there are multiple references to the fact that Coletti had too little to sing, and no specific comments on this piece for him in Act 1.

23. Although it would be dangerous to press the point too far, the key of B♭ has a prominent place in several numbers of *Caterina* and might—with a certain strain—be thought significant in a larger tonal argument.

24. In Certeau's words, place is comparatively neutral, "an instant configuration of positions"; while space is what he calls "a practised place", an "intersection of mobile elements [...] actu-

works. In that sense, I would argue that "Habsburg Europe in Donizetti" is at the least as revealing a topic as is the more usual "Donizetti in Habsburg Europe". Indeed, one of the great advances of the present project, as I see it, is to take issue with a kind of music history that regards nation states as a prime classificatory category, and for the most part uses either larger conglomerations (empires, continents) or smaller ones (cities) as an alternative taxonomy. What I'm urging is that we go one stage further, and put equal critical pressure on another classificatory category, one just as tenaciously present in certain forms of music history: the category of the composer and his (it's almost always his) musical work. The manner in which cities inflect musical works is almost always seen as potentially disruptive and invasive of "the work", the villains being lazy or incompetent or ignorant or disrespectful musicians; overbearing or illiberal political authorities; grasping or cash-strapped administrators. Let's try harder to see another story: one in which individual cities creatively inflect the music that comes within their confines, thus serving an important social function that is far away from the moral uplift so routinely pronounced to come from rapt attention in the imaginary museum of musical works.[25]

ated by the ensemble of movements deployed within in it". See Michel de Certeau, "Spatial stories", republished in *Defining Travel: Diverse Visions*, edited by Susan L. Roberson (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), pp. 88–104, here p. 90.

25. My reference here is, of course, to Lydia Goehr's classical account, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Abstract
The paper explores the tension between the idea of a "critical" edition of an opera (which serves to fix its text, giving it the stamp of a composer's authority, as well as the authority that institutional scholarship might still command) and the idea of operatic mobility: of the fact that the work in question was often subject to multiple revivals, multiple re-imaginings (both with and without that composerly authority), multiple reinterpretations, multiple meanings. The case of Donizetti, the most widely disseminated operatic composer from the mid-1830s to the mid-1840s, and amongst the most prolific, brings these issues into sharp focus; as does my choice of a "case study" in his late opera *Caterina Cornaro*, which for many reasons had an extremely complex genesis and exodus. So much about this composer, and this opera, challenges the rhetoric that conventionally accompanies critical editions, perhaps even challenges the very basis on which such editions make their small ripples in today's vast musical-industrial complex. But what is also challenged is the manner in which we think of composers' operas more generally, particularly their status as "works" as they migrated from one urban centre to another.

Riccardo Mandelli

Malicious tongues and elusive success. Donizetti's reception in Milan in the 1820s

In the late 1860s, after a long career in Milan, the equestrian performer Gaetano Ciniselli decided it was time to seek his fortune elsewhere and moved to Russia, settling in St. Petersburg. His former theatre, the Politeama Ciniselli, had for nearly two decades animated Milan's cultural scene with its popular equestrian spectacles. Over time, the venue began alternating these performances with opera productions in response to the popularity of the genre. After the theatre was left vacant, the city seized the opportunity to construct a new opera house, further enriching Milan's operatic season. Count Francesco Dal Verme, a local nobleman, took the initiative to sponsor the project and entrusted the architect Giuseppe Pestagalli with the task. In an impressively short time, the new theatre was completed in just over a year, opening its doors in September 1872.[1]

The Milanese public, still captivated by the triumph of Verdi's *Aida* (Teatro alla Scala, 1872), clamoured for grand operas, represented by the nationalized category of *opera ballo*, the undisputed protagonist of the Italian operatic life in the 1870s.[2] Reflecting this enthusiasm, the decision was made to inaugurate the theatre with Donizetti's *La favorita*, a grand opera that had enjoyed repeated success in Milan's foremost venue, Teatro alla Scala, during the preceding decade.[3] With this choice the impresarios Giuseppe Lamperti and Arturo Merini sought to ensure a successful debut.[4]

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1. See Ferdinando Fontana, "I teatri di Milano", in *Milano 1881* (Milan: G. Ottino, 1881), pp. 241–272, pp. 248–250; and Raffaella Valsecchi, "Teatri d'opera a Milano: 1861–1880", in *Milano musicale 1861–1897*, edited by Bianca Maria Antolini (Lucca: Lim, 1999), pp. 3–20, p. 6.

2. See Alessandro Roccatagliati, "Opera, opera-ballo e *grand opéra*: commistioni stilistiche e recezione critica nell'Italia teatrale di secondo Ottocento (1860–1870)", in *Opera e libretto II*, edited by Gianfranco Folena, Giovanni Morelli and Maria Teresa Muraro (Florence: Olschki, 1993), pp. 283–349.

3. The original French version, *La Favorite*, premiered in 1840 at the Académie Royale de Musique in Paris. The Italian version, edited by Lucca, was presented at the Teatro alla Scala in the years 1860, 1861, 1865, 1866, 1867. See Giampiero Tintori, *Duecento anni di Teatro alla Scala. Cronologia. Opere-balletti-concerti, 1778–1977* (Bergamo: Grafica Gutenberg, 1979).

4. Giuseppe Lamperti (1834–1898), son of the singing teacher Francesco Lamperti (1813–1892), later impresario at Teatro alla Scala, Teatro Apollo (Rome), and Teatro San Carlo (Na-

However, *La favorita* was more than just a strategic commercial choice. The decision to open the new theatre with this specific opera was accompanied by plans to name the venue after its composer, who had passed away on the eve of the revolutionary upheavals of 1848.[5] This choice was emblematic of a broader post-unification effort to establish a national cultural tradition celebrating prominent Italian figures of the past.[6] A similar decision would be made a year later when, following the death of the poet Alessandro Manzoni, the recently opened Teatro della Commedia in piazza San Fedele—situated directly in front of the spot where the poet suffered his fatal fall—was renamed Teatro Manzoni.[7]

Those familiar with the current Teatro Dal Verme know that the story ultimately took a different turn. For unknown reasons, possibly connected to the preferences of the artists involved in the inaugural season, Donizetti's *La favorita* was set aside in favour of Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*.[8] The confusion surrounding the naming of the new theatre, as well as the changes to the opening production, was vividly captured by Salvatore Farina in an article published in the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* on the day of the theatre's inauguration:

> Today—thank heavens!—the new theatre opens, and the matter of its name is settled. The impresarios were in great embarrassment over choosing a fitting name. *Teatro Bonaparte* meant nothing, *Teatro Nuovo* didn't mean enough, [...]

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ples). He authored an essay on copyright (*Sulla legge dei diritti di autore*, 1898). See Elisabeth Forbes, *Lamperti, Francesco*, in *Grove Music Online*, from <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.15924>, last accessed 20 January 2025. No precise information could be found about Arturo Merini, but his activities can be traced in Ferrara. The two took initially the direction of the theatre for a period of nine years. See *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, 27/19 (12 May 1872).

5. See *La perseveranza*, 14/4580 (30 July 1872).

6. The phenomenon, in relation to the toponymy of the streets, is discussed in Sergio Raffaelli, "I nomi delle vie", in *I luoghi della memoria. Simboli e miti dell'Italia unita*, edited by Mario Isnenghi (Rome: Laterza, 1996), pp. 215–242, pp. 219–223.

7. The renowned actor Ernesto Rossi (1827–1896) played a leading role in the event: "The Teatro della Commedia assumed its new title of Alessandro Manzoni yesterday. [...] After the drama, when the curtain was lifted, a bust of Manzoni veiled in black appeared. Rossi stepped forward carrying a laurel wreath, which he placed on the Poet's head after removing the veil. [...] Then, amidst a solemn silence, the distinguished actor recited the magnificent chorus from *Il Conte di Carmagnola*". "Il Teatro della Commedia ha assunto jeri il nuovo titolo di Alessandro Manzoni. [...] Dopo il dramma, levatosi il sipario, apparve il busto di Manzoni velato a bruno. Il Rossi si presentò, portando una corona d'alloro, che depose sul capo del Poeta, a cui aveva tolto il velo. [...] Poscia, in mezzo ad un religioso silenzio, l'egregio attore declamò lo stupendo coro del *Conte di Carmagnola*". *La perseveranza*, 15/4871 (31 May 1873).

8. Also, in the Italian version *Gli ugonotti*. See *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, 27/28 (14 July 1872).

> *Teatro Nuovo al Foro Bonaparte* clearly meant too much; the proposed name of *Donizetti* remained, but that would have been doing too much right. And so? So, the theatre will be named *Dal Verme*, after the owner. I bow to the wisdom of the theatre's godparents and hang my head in shame on behalf of my fellow brothers, for we did not think of it.[9]

Two years later, in 1874, Milan tried to make amends for the missed opportunity to pay homage to Donizetti by unveiling a statue of him in the foyer of Teatro alla Scala. Unfortunately, this effort by the city to celebrate the composer turned out to be similarly uninspiring:

> Until the other day, I naïvely believed that inaugurating something required some kind of ceremony; the venture of La Scala has convinced me that, to inaugurate a statue, the statue itself suffices. The real ceremony [...] should have been a dignified performance of *Lucia*; but the masterpiece of the Bergamasque composer was staged as it is in the provinces [...]. The result was hesitations, uncertainties, and off-key notes. Donizetti is made of marble and cannot move; otherwise, he would have walked out the door.[10]

The composer's true sanctification would take place not in Milan but in his nearby birthplace of Bergamo. In 1875, Bergamo solemnly celebrated Donizetti with a cantata composed by the new Milanese star Amilcare Ponchielli, set to a libretto by Antonio Ghislanzoni.[11] This recognition was further ce-

9. "Oggi – siano lodati i cieli! – il nuovo teatro si apre, e la questione del battesimo è risoluta. Gli impresarii erano in grave imbarazzo per la scelta di un nome grazioso. *Teatro Bonaparte* non diceva nulla, *Teatro Nuovo* non diceva abbastanza, [...] *Teatro nuovo al Foro Bonaparte* diceva evidentemente troppo; rimaneva il battesimo proposto di *Donizetti*, ma sarebbe stato far troppe cose bene; dunque? Dunque il teatro s'intitolerà *Dal Verme*, dal nome del proprietario. M'inchino alla sapienza dei padrini, ed arrossisco per me e per i miei confratelli che non ci avevamo pensato". *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, 27/37 (15 September 1872). The confusion had already become apparent by August, see *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, 27/31 (4 August 1872), and the debate persisted until December, see *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, 27/49 (8 December 1872).

10. "Fino all'altro giorno io credeva ingenuamente che per inaugurare qualche cosa occorresse una specie di cerimonia; l'impresa della Scala mi ha persuaso che, per inaugurare una statua, basta la statua. La vera cerimonia [...] doveva essere una rappresentazione decorosa della *Lucia*; ma il capolavoro del maestro bergamasco fu messo in iscena come si fa in provincia [...]. Ne risultarono tentennamenti, incertezze e stonature. Donizetti è di marmo e non si può muovere, se no avrebbe infilato l'uscio". *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, 29/11 (15 March 1874). *Lucia di Lammermoor* was performed for a single evening on 10 March 1874, during which the statue, created by Giovanni Strazza and gifted to the theatre by the widow Giovannina Lucca, was presented. See *La perseveranza*, 16/5161 (11 March 1874).

11. The cantata *A Gaetano Donizetti* was performed at Teatro Riccardi in Bergamo on 13 September 1875.

mented in 1897, on the centenary of his birth, with the inauguration of a monument in his honour and the successful renaming of the local Teatro Riccardi into Teatro Donizetti.

Although the events of 1872 may seem tangential to the main subject of this article, which focuses on Donizetti's early reception in Milan during the 1820s, they are more closely connected than they might initially appear. The failure to celebrate the memory of Donizetti in post-unification Milan reflects the complex and ambivalent relationship between the composer and the city, a dynamic that persisted beyond his lifetime and well into the late nineteenth century. This strained relationship can be traced back to the 1820s when Donizetti was attempting to establish himself in Milan's challenging theatrical scene, then dominated by Rossini's works.

While the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia provided him with opportunities to stage his early operas in cities like Venice and Mantua, it was in Milan in 1822 that he encountered failure with *Chiara e Serafina*.[12] After this discouraging fiasco, he left for Naples, writing to his teacher Mayr: "by removing myself from Lombardy, I remove myself from the pasture of a thousand malicious tongues... I hope to recover the honour lost on the Olona in the bosom of Partenope, Heaven willing".[13] These "thousand malicious tongues" played a pivotal role in shaping Donizetti's early Milanese reception. It was not until his return in 1830, with the triumph of *Anna Bolena* at the Teatro Carcano, that he finally silenced his detractors, uniting them in agreement about his talent.

The reception of Donizetti in Milan during this decade is often dismissed as negligible, attributed to the alleged general aversion critics and audiences had to his music. However, this perspective overlooks his continuous presence in the city's operatic scene. Between 1822 and 1830, Milanese theatregoers had several opportunities to familiarize themselves with his works. For instance, his "melodramma giocoso" *L'aio nell'imbarazzo* was the highlight of La Scala's autumn season in 1826, with over thirty performances between August and November, and was reprised in the autumn of 1828 due to its en-

12. Donizetti's first theatrical appearances occurred between 1818 and 1819 with *Enrico di Borgogna* (Teatro di San Luca, Venice), *Le nozze in villa* (Imperial Regio Teatro, Mantua) and *Pietro il Grande kzar delle Russie* (Teatro di San Samuele, Venice). See Luca Zoppelli, *Donizetti* (Milan: il Saggiatore, 2022), pp. 515–516. For a study on *Chiara e Serafina*, see Livio Aragona, "Un processo d'appello per *Chiara e Serafina*", in *Chiara e Serafina. Qui comincia l'avventura*, edited by Livio Aragona (Bergamo: Fondazione Teatro Donizetti, 2022), *Quaderni della Fondazione Teatro Donizetti*, 65, pp. 9–21.

13. "[...] togliendomi alla Lombardia, mi tolgo il pascolo a mille lingue maledicenti... Spero risarcire in Seno a Partenope, L'onore perduto Sull'Olona, Lo voglia il cielo". *Gaetano Donizetti. Carteggi e documenti 1797–1830*, edited by Paolo Fabbri (Bergamo: Fondazione Donizetti, 2018), no. 1822.29, p. 499 (11 December 1822). Parthenope and Olona are metonymies for Naples and Milan, respectively.

during popularity. Additionally, Milan hosted the first revival of the successful *L'esule di Roma*, which had premiered in Naples a few months earlier. But it was not all a bed of roses, *Il borgomastro di Saardam* ended in miserable failure, with only a single performance.

At this point, it is necessary to make an important distinction. While critics' voices can be easily traced through the detailed reviews published in newspapers, the general response of audiences cannot be documented with the same precision. A particularly harsh review of an opera did not necessarily correspond to the feelings of the wider theatre-going public. Especially in the 1820s, revivals of operas, in cities that had not been the site of their premiere, were often met with indifference by critics, particularly if the composer was not personally involved in the production. In Milan, despite clear signs of audience appreciation—evidenced by the extended runs of Donizetti's operas—critics frequently downplayed his abilities, emphasising his supposed lack of originality and rarely acknowledging his growing prestige elsewhere.[14]

In this regard, Federico Fornoni has highlighted the persistence of a strong emphasis on the principle of novelty since the critical reception of Donizetti's first stage work, *Enrico di Borgogna* (1818). However, he argues that many of the composer's musical and dramaturgical choices, initially met with harsh criticism, ultimately contributed to the development of a precise concept of musical theatre, one that engaged with European aesthetic trends and theatrical techniques, thereby helping to shape the landscape that emerged after the Rossinian era.[15]

Within this framework, I argue that the composer's difficulties in penetrating Milan's cultural life were not due to his lack of originality or expertise, as the local press suggested. Instead, they stemmed from a deeply rooted bias against composers of his generation, who, during the Restoration, were frequently accused of plagiarism and a general lack of innovation.

This article revisits this critical decade, shedding new light on the challenges Donizetti faced in navigating Milan's competitive opera market. Drawing on archival research conducted in Milan, articles published in the periodical press, and extensive documentation published in the recent edition of *Carteggi e documenti* by Paolo Fabbri,[16] as well as Luca Zoppelli's new monograph,[17] it examines the obstacles Donizetti encountered in the early stages

14. With the sole exception of the successful debut of *L'esule di Roma* in Naples. See *Gazzetta di Milano*, 16 (16 January 1828).

15. Federico Fornoni, *Oltre il belcanto. Direttrici drammaturgiche del teatro donizettiano* (Milan: Musicom.it, 2020), p. 15.

16. *Gaetano Donizetti*. *Carteggi e documenti.*

17. Zoppelli, *Donizetti*.

of his career and explores what it meant for a composer of his generation to gain recognition in Milan. Furthermore, the composer's limited interest in the Milanese revivals of his works is considered in relation to the consistent failure to engage with the multiple layers of Milan's vibrant cultural life, which extended far beyond the renowned Teatro alla Scala.

The article presents the Milanese production of *L'aio nell'imbarazzo* (1826) and the revival of *L'esule di Roma* (1828) at the Teatro alla Scala as case studies. Through philological and historiographical analysis, it contextualises the challenges these works faced, considering both their performances and critical reception. Finally, the success of *Anna Bolena* (1830) is reassessed in light of these findings, offering a broader perspective on Milan's theatrical life during the 1820s and illustrating how Donizetti's rise to success extended beyond the city centre and into its suburbs.

The Milanese version of *L'aio nell'imbarazzo* (1826)

L'aio nell'imbarazzo was staged at the Teatro alla Scala at the end of August 1826, marking nearly four years since Donizetti's music had last resounded in the theatre. Although the opera itself may have been unfamiliar to the public, its plot was undoubtedly well-known. The play of the same name by Giovanni Giraud, adapted into a libretto by Iacopo Ferretti and set to music by Donizetti two years earlier in Rome (Teatro Valle, 1824), had enjoyed remarkable popularity in the Lombard capital.[18]

Between 1820 and 1826, Giraud's play was performed numerous times in various venues, including the minor theatres Teatro Re, Teatro Lentasio, Teatro Carcano, and the Anfiteatro de' Giardini pubblici, as well as the Imperial Regio Teatro alla Canobbiana, by over ten different comic companies. The *Gazzetta di Milano* highlighted this widespread popularity, reporting that the play was so well known that there was no need to comment on the libretto, and even drawing a connection between Andrea Bertolucci, the bass singer portraying the tutor Don Gregorio in the opera, and Luigi Vestri, the celebrated actor who had gained fame for his portrayal of the same character in Giraud's play.[19]

Following the opera's premiere in Rome in 1824, Donizetti revised his work into a new version (known under the title *Don Gregorio*) which was successfully performed in Naples (Teatro del Fondo, 1826).[20] Letters from the

18. The play *L'aio nell'imbarazzo* was published in Milan in 1825 as the first work in a five-volume collection of Giovanni Giraud's works. See Giovanni Giraud, *Commedie*, 5 vols. (Milan: Manini, 1825).

19. *Gazzetta di Milano*, 237 (25 August 1826).

20. See Maria Chiara Bertieri, "L'*Aio* alla napoletana", in *Don Gregorio*, edited by Livio

composer reveal that after completing this revision, he intended to present the opera in Bergamo, possibly through his connections with the impresario Paolo Agazzi.[21] This effort likely paved the way for the opera's eventual arrival in Milan.[22]

The opera's plot centres around four main characters: an authoritarian father, Don Giulio Antiquati, a marquis who attempts, by any means, to protect his son Enrico from the perceived dangers of romantic entanglements; Gilda, Enrico's lover; and Gregorio, the son's tutor, who ultimately manages to help the young couple overcome Don Giulio's opposition. While Giraud's play—which Ferretti's libretto followed almost to the word—might have eased Donizetti's return into Milan's musical scene after his failure in 1822, critics still dwelled on his perceived and unforgivable lack of originality. The *Corriere delle dame* described the opera as an anthology of motifs by Rossini, Mercadante and Pacini.[23] Similarly, the *Gazzetta di Milano* criticized an aria performed by Giovanni Giordani in the role of Don Giulio, remarking: "An aria from the second act [...] could be transplanted directly into *Semiramide*. In hearing and seeing [Giordani], he seemed like Assur, wearing an old-fashioned wig and dressed in sword-bearing attire".[24] While the claim that the aria in question (Act 2, "Sugli occhi tuoi, spietata") bore Rossinian inspiration is not entirely unfounded, the accusation that Donizetti lacked originality is misplaced. In fact, a closer examination reveals that Donizetti did not compose that aria at all. It was taken from Giovanni Pacini's *La schiava di Bagdad* (Turin, 1820) and inserted into the opera most likely under the request of the singer Giovanni Giordani himself. Adapting or substituting arias to suit performers' preference was a very common practice at the time, further complicating attributions of authorship and challenging simplistic critiques of Donizetti's creativity.

Aragona and Federico Fornoni (Bergamo: Fondazione Donizetti, 2007), *Quaderni della Fondazione Donizetti*, 7, pp. 17–23.

21. This intention eventually did not take place. The opera would become the first of Donizetti's work to be performed in Bergamo, but not until 1830, thanks to the efforts of impresario Bartolomeo Merelli. See *Gaetano Donizetti. Carteggi e documenti*, pp. 611–614.

22. Even though no primary sources are available, it is important to note that impresario Domenico Barbaia was active during this period in both Milan and Naples, making it highly likely that he facilitated the introduction of Donizetti's opera in Milan.

23. "An anthology of Rossinian, Mercadantian, and Pacinian motifs, for the many flowers Donizetti gathered from those gardens, grafting them clumsily into a work he called his own". "Un'antologia Rossiniana, Mercadantesca e Pacinesca pei tanti fiori che da que' giardini raccolse il Donizetti, innestandoli con poca destrezza nel lavoro che diede per suo". *Corriere delle dame*, 34 (26 August 1826).

24. "Un'aria dell'atto secondo, [...] si potrebbe di pianta portar nella *Semiramide*. Nell'udirlo e vederlo [Giordani] pareami *Assur* in parrucca all'antica e in abito da spada". *Gazzetta di Milano*, 237 (25 August 1826).

What is certain is that the version performed in Milan differed from both the Neapolitan revision and the original premiere in Rome. Furthermore, the widespread circulation that the opera had in this form, makes it plausible to talk about a Milanese version of the work.[25] A closer look at the libretto printed in Milan[26] reveals the following alterations: Act 1. Don Giulio's cavatina "Basso, basso il cor mi dice" was replaced by the aria "Non è ver, che ognor la prole", not authored by Donizetti; Act 2. Donizetti composed a new duet for soprano and tenor ("Sempre a te fedele"), following which Pacini's aria was interpolated.

In the first act, the aria "Non è ver, che ognor la prole" originated from an opera based on the same source, with a libretto by Alberto Scribani, and music by the amateur composer Daniele Nicelli.[27] Dedicated to the Duchess of Parma, Marie Louise, the opera was staged in Piacenza in 1825, but no further performances are recorded. A key connection between the Piacenza and Milan productions is that in both, Don Giulio was performed by the bass Giovanni Giordani. However, it remains uncertain whether the version heard in Milan was actually Nicelli's music. Later that year, Giovanni Ricordi published the aria as a single piece, attributing the music to Donizetti's cousin Giovanni Gorini.[28] Around the same time, Francesco Lucca published Nicelli's original aria performed in Piacenza.[29] In the second act, in order to accommodate the new duet for Enrico and Gilda and Pacini's aria, the third scene was restructured into a more complex system, as can be seen in the table below.

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25. For a detailed account of the productions in Rome and Naples, see Maria Chiara Bertieri, "Roma–Napoli solo andata: Il caso *L'aio nell'imbarazzo–Don Gregorio*", in *Musica di ieri esperienza d'oggi. Ventidue studi per Paolo Fabbri*, edited by Maria Chiara Bertieri and Alessandro Roccatagliati (Lucca: Lim, 2018), pp. 273–296.

26. See *L'aio nell'imbarazzo. Melodramma giocoso da rappresentarsi nell'I.R. Teatro alla Scala l'autunno dell'anno 1826* (Milan: Fontana, 1826).

27. Daniele Nicelli (1798–1879), a local nobleman, studied music with Stanislao Mattei in Bologna. See Gaspare Nello Vetro, "Nicelli, Daniele", in *Dizionario della musica e dei musicisti del Ducato di Parma e Piacenza*, available at <https://www.lacasadellamusica.it/vetro>, last accessed 16 September 2025. For the libretto, see *L'aio nell'imbarazzo. Farsa tratta dalla commedia del conte Giovanni Giraud da Alberto Scribani e posta in musica dal maestro Daniele Nicelli per essere rappresentata nel teatro di Piacenza il Carnevale 1824–25* ([Piacenza]: Majno, [1824]).

28. G[iovanni] B[attista] Gorini, *Cav*[*atina*]*, Non è ver, per B., intercalata nell'opera "L'aio nell'imbarazzo" di Donizetti* (Milan: Ricordi, [1826]), plate 2954. Gorini (1805–1863, also spelled Corini) was "maestro al cembalo" and composer. Together with Donizetti, he was a pupil of Mayr in Bergamo. After studying from 1813 to 1824, he embarked on a career as a composer. See *Gaetano Donizetti. Carteggi e documenti*, p. 122.

29. *Non è ver che ognor la prole. Cavatina nell'"Aio nell'imbarazzo" del m.o Daniele Nicelli; eseguita in Piacenza dal sig.r Gio. B. Giordani* (Milan: Lucca, [1827]), plate 0093.

Rome, Teatro Valle (1824)	Milan, Teatro alla Scala (1826)
Scena III, Gilda, ed Enrico, indi il Marchese Giulio	Scena terza, Enrico e Gilda
Recitativo [Gilda, Enrico] "Quando avrò fra le braccia il figlio mio"	Recitativo [Gilda, Enrico] "Quando avrò fra le braccia il figlio mio"
	Duettino [Gilda, Enrico] "Sempre fedele a te"
	Scena quarta, Don Giulio di dentro, e detti
Recitativo [Gilda, Enrico, Don Giulio] "Aprite... aprite"	Recitativo [Gilda, Enrico, Don Giulio] "Aprite... aprite!"
	Scena quinta, Don Giulio afferra Gilda [...]
Terzetto [Gilda, Don Giulio, Enrico] "Signor... Se parli, o perfida"	Recitativo [Gilda, Enrico, Don Giulio] "Perfida! Se un accento"
Duetto [Gilda, Don Giulio, Enrico] "Donna rea, mi leggi in fronte"	Recitativo e Aria [Don Giulio] "Sconsigliata ignoravi – Sugli occhi tuoi spietata"

Instead of the more dynamic and seamless succession of recitativo, terzetto, and duetto, the scene was divided in two distinct *pezzi chiusi*: the newly composed duet and Pacini's aria. This modification not only disrupted the dynamic, the fast-paced rhythm characteristic of the entire opera, but also introduced an abrupt stylistic shift in Don Giulio's character.

In both Giraud's play and Ferretti's libretto, Don Giulio is portrayed as a stubborn and strict father, burdened by the responsibility of raising his children. This characterization is evident from his first appearance in Act 1, in a duet with Gregorio ("Le dirò... così a quattr'occhi"), where his paternal philosophy is epitomized in an archetypical *duetto buffo*. The piece distinguishes itself by the typical use of syllabic singing on a single repeated note that leaves the melodic line to the orchestra—a style that Donizetti would still be employ-

ing twenty years later in *Don Pasquale*. It is worth noting that both Don Giulio and Gregorio share the same vocal style, contributing to the opera's overall light-hearted tone, while the task of convening the father's stern character is left primarily to the libretto.

Donizetti's depiction of the character is disrupted in Act 2, where the interpolation of Pacini's aria marks a dramatic turning point transforming Don Giulio's vocal line to a more declamatory and melismatic, reminiscent of Rossini's Assur in *Semiramide*, or more generally of a style associated with *opera seria*.[30] While this could represent Don Giulio's inner turmoil—since it is the first time that he is confronted with his worst fear, the son's lover—it affects the opera to such an extent that it did not go unnoticed by the critic writing in the *Gazzetta di Milano*. The precision with which the press in this period consistently reported these interpolations is in stark contrast to the critic's failure to recognize that Donizetti had nothing to do with the aria. It leads to the conclusion that the critic was unfamiliar with the original Pacini music, since *La schiava di Bagdad* had been performed only briefly the year before at the Teatro alla Canobbiana, with little success.

In the interpolation, the aria's text was slightly altered to better fit the context of *L'aio nell'imbarazzo* (see the table on the front page). In Pacini's opera, the aria was sung by a caliph, who, upon learning from his confidant Tamas that a young man (Nadir) intends to steal his beloved Zora, reacts with fury against the treacherous couple. It is evident that the triangle formed by the caliph, Zora and Nadir parallels vocally with the one involving Don Giulio, Gilda and Enrico. Alongside the necessary modifications to the text, the interventions of Tamas and the chorus (*pertichini*) were eliminated.[31]

While it is likely that these modifications stemmed from Giordani's request for a larger number of solo parts in the opera, evidence suggests they were introduced specifically in Milan. This assumption is supported by comparisons of the surviving *libretti* from various productions. No trace of these changes appears in any of the librettos published prior to the Milanese perfor-

30. In the original duet for Gilda and Don Giulio "Donna rea, mi leggi in fronte", composed by Donizetti for this scene, the style did not shift so abruptly, and Don Giulio still maintained a more syllabic vocal line.

31. The original music and text of Pacini's aria are preserved in a later manuscript copy, see I-Nc, H.4.5, available at internetculturale.it (vol. 2, ff. 40*v*–58*v*), last accessed 16 September 2025. Adaptations of the aria, made for Donizetti's opera, are documented in I-OS, Mss. Mus. B 4276. Pacini's aria was performed in *L'aio nell'imbarazzo*'s production at the Teatro Regio in Turin in 1984, both CD and DVD recordings are available.

mance of August 1826, including the one printed in Venice for the performance at the Teatro San Benedetto earlier that same year.[32]

Furthermore, while both the modified version of Don Giulio's cavatina and the original one soon disappeared from the first act, the changes made to the third scene of the second act became an integral part of Donizetti's opera.

La schiava di Bagdad (Turin, 1820)		*L'aio nell'imbarazzo* (Milan, 1826)
Califfo Sugl'occhi suoi l'ingrata vedrà il rival trafitto invano al suol prostrata mi chiederà pietà. Bagnata di quel sangue anch'essa al suol cadrà.		Don Giulio Sugli occhi tuoi, spietata punir saprò l'indegno; invano al suol prostrata mi chiederai pietà. Punito un tanto eccesso dal mio furor sarà.
Tamas e Coro *Bagnata di quel sangue** *anch'essa al suol cadrà.*		
Califfo In chi fidavi o credule [*sic*]! Il più costante amore! Come disparve rapida la pace del tuo core! Il duolo di quest'anima eterno oh Dio! sarà. Su ti sveglia o mio coraggio, si sopprima il vile affetto; parli sol, m'avvampi in petto la vendetta, ed il furor.		A chi de' figli, o credulo, fidavi il bel candor? Come disparve rapida la pace, oh Dio! dal cor! *Come disparve rapida* *la pace, oh Dio! dal cor!* Si punisca omai l'indegno, si punisca un vile affetto. Parli sol, m'avvampi il petto la vendetta ed il furor.
Tutti Piomberà su tutti i rei il pugnal vendicator.		Ah! Su voi del cielo il nembo pregherò vindicator.

* The verses in italics are the one repeated according to music.

This version circulated in later performances to such an extent that Pacini's authorship gradually faded, and the aria began to be attributed to Donizetti. A strik-

32. See *L'aio nell'imbarazzo. Melodramma giocoso in due atti a sette voci da rappresentarsi nel Teatro di San Benedetto la primavera dell'anno 1826* (Venice: Rizzi, [1826]).

ing example can be found in the manuscript preserved in Dresden, which pertains to the 1828 production of the opera at the court theatre. While other additions, such as an aria taken from Michele Carafa's *Berenice in Siria*, are explicitly acknowledged in the manuscript, Pacini's aria is not attributed to its original composer.[33]

The critic's apparent confusion around the authorship shows that it had existed since the modifications had first appeared, later this was compounded by the publisher Giovanni Ricordi. In 1826, through the mediation of Giovanni Simone Mayr,[34] Ricordi published the piano reduction of the opera's Sinfonia, along with vocal scores for both the *buffo* duet and the newly composed duet.[35] As for the modifications, Ricordi published the aria composed by Gorini, while Pacini's aria was issued separately as belonging to *La schiava di Bagdad*, although it retained the lyrics and characters of Donizetti's opera.[36] This editorial decision perpetuated confusion in later editions of the vocal score, where Pacini's aria was often mistakenly attributed to Donizetti.[37]

The difficulties involved in reconstructing the Milanese version demonstrate that those who judged Donizetti's abilities did not always know what they were listening to at the theatre. It shows that the accusations of a lack of originality were misdirected at Donizetti, and (if at all) they should have been placed at the feet of Pacini. Furthermore, the confusion confirms that its critics were correct when they described the opera as an "anthology" of various works, just that Donizetti could not be held responsible for this. While Donizetti acknowledged how adhering to Rossini's style was essential to meet audience expectations, this was irrelevant for the aria in question.[38]

Despite the critics' failure to appreciate Donizetti's music, *L'aio nell'imbarazzo* became the highlight of La Scala's autumn season, remaining on stage continuously from its debut in August until November, and being performed again for the season's closing evening. In fact, the *Corriere delle dame*, despite

33. See *Il governo della casa (Das Hausregiment). Melodramma giocoso in due atti da rappresentarsi nel Reale Teatro di Sassonia* (Dresden: 1828). For the music, see D-DI, Mus.4864-F-503, available at <https://digital.slub-dresden.de/werkansicht/dlf/97354/1> (pp. 703–733), last accessed 16 September 2025.

34. See *Gaetano Donizetti. Carteggi e documenti*, pp. 608–609.

35. Gaetano Donizetti, *L'aio nell'imbarazzo, Opera per Pfte. Sinfonia*, plate 2841; *Duettino, Sempre fedele a te, per S. e T.*, plate 2919; *Duetto, Le dirò così a quattr'occhi, per Br. e B.*, plate 2953 (Milan: Ricordi, [1826]). See *Gaetano Donizetti. Carteggi e documenti*, p. 609.

36. See Giovanni Pacini, *La schiava di Bagdad, Opera per canto. Scena ed aria, Sugli occhi tuoi, per B.* (Milan: Ricordi, [1826]), plate 2920. The score features Don Giulio, Gilda and Enrico as characters and begins with Ferretti's lyrics "Aprite... aprite".

37. See Gaetano Donizetti, *L'aio nell'imbarazzo, Canto e pianoforte* (Milan: Ricordi, [1878]), plate 45735.

38. Zoppelli, *Donizetti*, p. 79.

its earlier criticism, nevertheless reported on the general success of Donizetti's opera.[39] In this context, it is of note that the opera was not always presented in its entirety. On several evenings, only the second act was performed, paired with *Amazilia* by Giovanni Pacini, *Camilla* by Ferdinando Paer, or the newly composed *Il precipizio* by Nicola Vaccai. This practice—combining works that earned greater recognition among the public with less successful ones in the same evening—was frequently employed to satisfy the *palchettisti*, the owners of the boxes.[40] In fact, throughout the 1820s, Rossini not only dominated opera seasons but also served as a reliable gap filler when new works failed or their premieres were delayed. A similar fate befell Donizetti's *L'aio nell'imbarazzo*.

In Rome and seemingly unaware of the modifications to his opera, Donizetti commented with detachment in a letter to Mayr:

> I read the article in the *Giornale delle dame* about my poor *Aio*... I already knew what awaited me in Milan, so be it. It didn't displease, and that's all. In Palermo, Naples, Rome, Florence, Malta, Messina, and Madrid, it pleased greatly, and if it didn't in Milan, I'm certainly not going to cry about it.[41]

The failure of his opera in 1822 remained vivid in the composer's memory, who, with feigned indifference, maintained a cold distance from Milan and its public throughout the 1820s.

The Milanese revival of *L'esule di Roma* (1828)

The year 1828 marked a turning point for the presence of Donizetti's music in the Lombard capital, as three of his works were presented at Teatro alla Scala. That year, *Il borgomastro di Saardam* was scheduled as the second opera in the Carnival season, *L'esule di Roma* was staged at the same theatre during the summer, and *L'aio nell'imbarazzo* returned later in the autumn.

The year, however, began inauspiciously. *Il borgomastro di Saardam* suffered the already mentioned catastrophic failure on its single performance on 2 January. This outcome was foretold by Vincenzo Bellini, who was in Milan

39. "An outcome that can be described as fortunate; after the performance, the leading actors were repeatedly called back to the stage with applause by the satisfied audience". "Un esito che può dirsi fortunato, dopo lo spettacolo vennero con frequenti plausi chiamati i primi attori dal soddisfatto pubblico". *Corriere delle dame*, 34 (26 August 1826).

40. See Carlida Steffan – Luca Zoppelli, *Nei palchi e sulle sedie. Il teatro musicale nella società italiana dell'Ottocento* (Rome: Carocci, 2023), pp. 104–111.

41. "Hò Letto il giornale delle Dame sul mio povero aio... Lo sapeva già che questo a milano mi aspettava, Pazienza. Non dispiacque, e basta. A Palermo, a Napoli, a Roma, a Firenze, a Malta, a Messina, a Madrid, ha fatto piacere e assai, se a milano nol fece, per questo non piango di certo". *Gaetano Donizetti. Carteggi e documenti*, no. 1826.13, p. 623 (30 September 1826).

at the time. In a letter to Francesco Florimo, Bellini commented on rumours he had heard about the dress rehearsal:

> Monday, they held the dress rehearsal for Donizetti's *Il borgomastro*, and tonight it premieres. I didn't attend any of the rehearsals, but those who were at the dress rehearsal told me that there's nothing in the first act, and that in the second act there's a duet that might, just might, please the audience. Overall, it will flop.[42]

Bellini's remarks reflected the prevailing prejudice against Donizetti, which had been evident in his reception two years earlier. According to the *Gazzetta di Milano*, the production was intended as a diversion to allow singers involved in Rossini's *Elisabetta regina d'Inghilterra* some rest.[43] A subsequent review in the same periodical confirmed Bellini's prediction, describing the disastrous evening and once again criticizing Donizetti's perceived lack of originality.

> This drama provoked such hilarity that, to avoid compromising public health, it was decided not to deprive the audience of their breath for more than one evening. As for the music, from the very first notes of the arias, duets, trios, or finales, one could already predict the rest. It was either Cimarosa, Rossini, Mercadante, or Pacini—poor composers robbed by Donizetti, and in what fashion![44]

A comparison of the libretto printed in Milan with that of the 1827 premiere at the Teatro Nuovo in Naples reveals numerous cuts and textual modifications, particularly to the parts in Neapolitan dialect, though no specific additions or interpolations were made. Nicola Vaccai, who was present in the theatre, reported in a letter to a friend that after the first act, accompanied by whistles, a person came out from the stage to announce that, as the performance had not met with the public's approval, some pieces would be omitted in the second act.[45]

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42. "Lunedì si fece la pruova generale dell'opera di Donizetti il Borgomastro e questa sera và in scena: io non ho inteso nessuna pruova, ma chi fù alla pruova generale mi disse che nel primo atto non v'è niente, che nel 2do vi è un duetto che forse forse piacerà, nel complesso farà fiasco". *Vincenzo Bellini. Carteggi*, edited by Graziella Seminara (Florence: Olschki, 2017), p. 80 (2 January 1828).

43. Rossini's opera opened the season on 26 December 1827.

44. "Questo dramma destava tale ilarità, che per non compromettere la pubblica salute, non si volle per più d'una sera far *perdere il fiato* a tanti uditori. – Se parliam della musica, alla prima battuta delle arie, dei duetti, dei terzetti, dei finali, si sapeva già il resto. Erano o Cimarosa, o Rossini, o Mercadante o Pacini i poveri svaligiati dal Donizetti, e in che modo!". *Gazzetta di Milano*, 5 (5 January 1828).

45. *Il carteggio personale di Nicola Vaccai che si conserva presso la Biblioteca Comunale Filelfica di Tolentino*, edited by Jeremy Commons (Turin: Giancarlo Zedde, 2008), p. 688.

Donizetti reacted to the failure of *Il borgomastro di Saardam* with more detachment than he did following the rejection of *L'aio nell'imbarazzo*. Writing to Mayr, he remarked cryptically: "Milan... I'll say nothing! *Il borgomastro* had over 35 performances in Naples, and it's still being performed there... Who knows if, come summer, they won't see *L'esule di Roma* with the same cast and applaud, those who now boo...".[46] Indeed, the production of *L'esule di Roma* was already planned for the following summer. As we shall see, it represented another significant chapter in Donizetti's reception in Milan.

While *Il borgomastro di Saardam* failed spectacularly in Milan, *L'esule di Roma* enjoyed significant success in Naples, where it premiered at the Teatro San Carlo on 1 January 1828. One of the highlights of the opera's debut was the bass Luigi Lablache, a singer with whom Donizetti would go on to establish a fruitful collaboration. Lablache was engaged for the Milanese production scheduled for the summer, which appears to have already been planned by February, as indicated in Donizetti's letter to Mayr.

The summer during which *L'esule di Roma* was performed could be considered a season designed specifically for Lablache. Upon his arrival in Milan in May—an event highly anticipated in the press—the theatre prepared productions of Domenico Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto* and Rossini's *La Cenerentola* specially for him. Later in August the same was done with *La prova di un'opera seria* by Francesco Gnecco.[47]

Donizetti's new opera clearly benefited from Lablache's Milanese season, a favourable circumstance comparable to the success of *L'aio nell'imbarazzo* in 1826. Could this be the composer's long-awaited success in Milan? Moreover, the work's positive reception in Naples, which had been reported in the local press, helped build anticipation among Milanese audiences, opening a way for Donizetti to finally gain the recognition the city had long denied him.

L'esule di Roma premiered in Milan on 12 July and remained on stage for no less than ten performances, continuing until the end of the month. Originally scheduled for early July, the premiere had been delayed due to Lablache's indisposition. While Lablache took the role of senator Murena, the exiled Set-

46. "Milano... Non dirò nulla! Il Borgomastro a Napoli si è fatto per più di 35 recite, e tutt'ora si fà... Chi sà che in estate non vedano il proscritto [*L'esule di Roma*] cogli stessi attori, ed applauda, chi ora fischia...". *Gaetano Donizetti. Carteggi e documenti*, no. 1828.4, p. 686 (2 February 1828).

47. In Gnecco's opera Lablache took the leading role of the Maestro di musica and performed an aria inserted into the Sinfonia which he sang directly from the orchestra. See *Gazzetta di Milano*, 218 (5 August 1828). Furthermore, the singer's popularity was such that critics could not agree whether he would better suit the role of Dandini or Don Magnifico in *La Cenerentola*, as his performance was considered remarkable in both cases. See, *Gazzetta di Milano*, 151 (30 May 1828).

timio was to be performed by tenor Berardo Winter, reprising his role from the Naples premiere, while Argelia, the senator's daughter was taken by soprano Henriette Méric-Lalande. Three days after the premiere the *Gazzetta di Milano* reported on the novelty presented at the Teatro alla Scala:

> With *L'aio nell'imbarazzo* and *Il borgomastro di Saardam*, Donizetti became known among us for his great fondness for imitations. Constant in this love, even in *L'esule di Roma*, he showed himself unfaithful only briefly. In a trio, in a duet, and in the largo of an aria, one can recognize an inspired student of Mayr; in the rest, there are more recollections than inspirations.[48]

The critic proceeded with an unenthusiastic assessment of the libretto. The text lacked formal quality and it was full of scenes familiar from other operas. The few comments on the music itself consistently returned to the accusation of imitation. Furthermore, the critic reported that during the second performance Lablache omitted his cavatina on the first act, likely due to his poor health, thus sparing the audience from yet another musical emulation.

The terzetto that concludes the first act—considered a masterpiece of modern opera theatre by critics in Naples—was, as Luca Zoppelli observed, decisive to establishing Donizetti as a key figure in the Italian operatic market.[49] Nevertheless, its originality went unnoticed in Milan, where critics limited themselves to reporting on the success it achieved with the audience.

The role of the senator Murena embodied the opera's novelty. Donizetti tailored the role to Lablache's specific abilities, offering him a dramatic and highly expressive vocal part that relied heavily on its performer's acting skills.[50] It is clear why, in Milan, no other singer could take on the role. Later, in December, when the opera was scheduled to return to the Teatro San Carlo in Naples, the production had to be postponed due to Lablache's delayed arrival in the city.[51] In Milan, however, Lablache did not receive the same acclaim that he was granted following the premiere in Naples. While the reviews did

48. "Coll'*Aio nell'imbarazzo* e col *Borgomastro di Saardam* Donizetti si fece conoscer fra noi per una gran tenerezza alle imitazioni. Costante in questo suo amore anche nell'*Esule di Roma*, non si mostrò infedele che alla sfuggita. In un terzetto, in un duetto e nel largo d'un aria si riconosce un allievo inspirato di Mayr; nel resto ci ha più ricordanze che ispirazioni". *Gazzetta di Milano*, 197 (15 July 1828).

49. Zoppelli, *Donizetti*, p. 158.

50. *Ibid*., p. 155.

51. See *Gazzetta di Milano*, 359 (24 December 1828). On that occasion, the opera achieved significantly less success compared to its premiere. Lablache was still in poor health and, as noted by Nicola Vaccai, had to omit several parts of the performance. See *Il carteggio personale di Nicola Vaccai*, p. 743.

not explicitly criticize his performance, the work's success appeared to be attributed evenly to the three lead performers.

While the Milanese production did not differ significantly from the version presented in Naples, Donizetti added a new aria for Settimio toward the end of the second act ("S'io finor, bell'idol mio – Si scenda alla tomba"), which helped to rebalance the three singers' stage presence, which had been weighted heavily toward Lablache in both acts. This aria in particular, along with the other *pezzo chiuso* written for the tenor, displayed a strong influence of Rossini's style.[52]

While Donizetti proudly acknowledged the unconventionality of concluding the first act with a terzetto,[53] the rest of the opera—Settimio's part especially—adhered more closely to operatic conventions. For instance, in Settimio's cavatina ("Aure di Roma!... Io vi respiro alfine!..."), it is difficult not to be reminded of Arsace's cavatina from *Semiramide* ("Eccomi alfine in Babilonia"), which included a similarly long orchestral introduction. Additionally, the aforementioned new aria in the second act seems even more manneristic. Both the cantabile and the cabaletta, featuring the involvement of the typical *pertichini* of the chorus, are excessively scholastic, with simple melodic lines incorporating the trills and melismatic figures—imitated by the orchestra accompaniment—more characteristic of the previous decade than the dawn of the 1830s. Perhaps Lablache's less effective performance, together with the addition of this manneristic piece for Winter, influenced the opera's reception and reinforced the prejudices critics already held against Donizetti.

Another insight in the opera's Milanese production is provided by Vincenzo Bellini, who reported the opera's failure to his friend Florimo:

> *L'esule di Roma* has failed, [...] the music is not liked at all, they say there is no singing, no new motifs, it is full of scholastic movements, and finally, some unbearable phrases are stolen; therefore, last night at the second performance, there was no one in the theatre, [...] this outcome disturbs me because I see that there is some good music.[54]

52. For a contextualization of what Rossini's style represented during this period, see Emanuele Senici, *Music in the Present Tense: Rossini's Italian Operas in Their Time* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2019), pp. 71–81 (Ch. 4, "Style").

53. See *Gaetano Donizetti. Carteggi e documenti*, p. 686.

54. "L'esule di Roma ha fatto fiasco, [...] la musica non piace niente affatto, dicono che non v'è canto, che non vi sono motivi nuovi, che è piena di movimenti scolastici, che finalmente qualche frase soffribile è rubata; perciò jersera seconda rappresentazione non v'era nessuno in teatro, [...] a me quest'esito mi disturba, perché vedo che ci stà della buona musica". *Vincenzo Bellini. Carteggi*, pp. 148–149 (14 July 1828). Bellini would employ the very same finale for his *Norma*, three years later in the same theatre. See Zoppelli, *Donizetti*, p. 158.

Donizetti's reaction to this repeated failure is not documented. However, is it clear that the composer's mixed feelings toward Milan persisted. Before the premiere of his opera in the city, Donizetti wrote to Mayr, mocking Alessandro Rolla, the first violin of La Scala's orchestra: "How will *L'esule* go in Milan? What will the Jesuit Father Rolla say about it? I may starve to death, but I'll never set a foot in Milan: I've said it, I've said it, and now I'm taking a breath".[55] The letter highlights a crucial point yet to be discussed. As already mentioned, Donizetti never set foot in Milan throughout the entire 1820s. While this can be attributed to his frustration towards a city that failed to recognize his ability, it is equally true that his absence may have contributed to his talent remaining unrecognized. In the nineteenth century, the composer's presence in the theatre was usually expected—often even contractually required—when a work was premiered. Visible as part of the orchestra that was not yet hidden in the pit, in a theatre that was not fully dark during the production, the composer was expected to take an active role in the performance.

As all were revivals, this was not the case with *L'aio nell'imbarazzo*, *Il borgomastro di Saardam*, or *L'esule di Roma*. Donizetti's absence not only led to unauthorized modifications but often resulted in a lack of public interest in the productions. Vincenzo Bellini's remarkable success in the city during the same period, by contrast, was always experienced in his presence and with works newly composed for the Teatro alla Scala (*Il pirata*, 1827, and *La straniera*, 1829). Donizetti's distance, as well as his lack of interest in subsequent revivals of his works, prevented him from achieving similar success.[56] In fact, when the difficult relationship between the composer and Milan finally came to an end with the success of *Anna Bolena*, Donizetti was present in the theatre, ready to receive the public's acclaim.

55. "Come anderà mai l'Esule a Milano? Il Padre Gesuita Rolla che ne dirà? morirò di fame ma a milano nemmeno un appoggiatura ci farò: ho detto, ho detto e prendo fiato". *Gaetano Donizetti. Carteggi e documenti*, no. 1828.13, p. 712 (15 May 1828).

56. The success he enjoyed in Naples with *L'esule di Roma* was met with suspicion by commentators in Milan, as they were unable to assess it firsthand: "If fame does not lie, *L'esule di Roma* caused a sensation on the stage in Naples. This success justifies the choice to present it in our theatre. Donizetti's opera also received praise here. If this praise wasn't as fervent, it may perhaps be due to the air, less volcanic on the Olona River than on the Sebeto". "Se la fama non mente, l'*Esule di Roma* fece furore sulla scena di Napoli. Quest'esito giustifica la scelta che se ne fece pel nostro teatro. – L'opera di Donizetti ebbe plauso anche fra noi. Se questo plauso non fu di furore, sarà forse colpa dell'aria, meno vulcanica sull'Olona che sul Sebeto". *Gazzetta di Milano*, 197 (15 July 1828).

Donizetti's rise to success from Milan's suburbs

This theatre, vague and harmonious,
has two enemies: distance and bad weather.[57]

The Teatro Carcano, inaugurated during the Napoleonic era in 1803, was located on what was then the outskirts of Milan, at the far end of corso di Porta Romana, near the city walls. From its opening, the theatre offered both operatic and prose performances, alternating seasons without benefiting from specific impresarios or permanent planning, often being rented out to private performers. Its location was considered to be far from the city centre and difficult to reach, for this reason, it constantly sought new and innovative ways to attract audiences. For instance, in the summer of 1826, in a somewhat desperate attempt to draw the public, the entire theatre was decorated with special velvet drapery embroidered with silver.[58]

In 1829, a nobleman and two merchants approached the theatre's owner with capital to invest and a clear strategy. The proposal, spearheaded by Duke Pompeo Litta Visconti Arese and the merchants Giuseppe Marietti and Pietro Soresi, was hard to refuse. Their initiative to organize a theatrical season at the Teatro Carcano was a great success in the summer of the same year. The season saw the return to Milan of Giuditta Pasta, fresh from her success in Vienna, who performed to great acclaim at the suburban theatre in *Semiramide*, *Otello* and *Tancredi* by Rossini, as well as the popular *Nina, o La pazza per amore* by Paisiello and the pastiche that had become Zingarelli's *Giulietta e Romeo*.[59] This successful venture laid the foundation for the organization of another season, at the same theatre the following year.[60]

In Milan, aside from its two main court theatres, theatregoers could enjoy a great variety of entertainment in numerous secondary theatres. However, only the Teatro Carcano and the Teatro Re managed to offer opera seasons in the 1820s.[61] In part these seasons were contingent on when major theatres,

57. "Questo teatro, vago ed armonico, ha due nemici: la lontananza e il mal tempo". *Gazzetta di Milano*, 160 (9 June 1823).

58. *Gazzetta di Milano*, 197 (16 July 1826).

59. The season was staged from 21 April to 31 July 1829. See *Censore universale dei teatri*, 31 (18 April 1829).

60. A detailed account of the biographical events of the three entrepreneurs, as well as their involvement in organizing the theatre seasons at the Carcano, is contained in Vincenzo Bellini, *La sonnambula*, critical edition by Alessandro Roccatagliati and Luca Zoppelli (Milan: Ricordi, 2009), *Le opere di Vincenzo Bellini*, pp. XI-XVI.

61. Regarding Teatro Re's operatic seasons, see Steffan–Zoppelli, *Nei palchi e sulle sedie*, pp. 56–62.

like La Scala or La Canobbiana, endured their seasonal closure. Temporarily out of work musicians and singers who needed some extra income could seek employment in these smaller venues. In addition to this circular economy within Milan, companies from peripheral theatres in Lombardy underpinned this system.[62]

The season organized by the three entrepreneurs and opera enthusiasts at Teatro Carcano marked the first time in a decade that a theatre other than Teatro alla Scala inaugurated an opera season on the evening of 26 December. Furthermore, the Teatro Carcano's season was distinctive as no other theatre than La Scala had ever presented a newly composed work to the Milanese audience. With the sole exception of Carlo Valentini's *I falsi galantuomini* (Teatro Re, 1827), both secondary theatres always dealt with repertory. Needless to say, it was mostly comprised of Rossini's works but also included ones by other popular composers of the day, like Valentino Fioravanti's *Le cantatrici villane* or Carlo Coccia's *Clotilde*.[63]

The singularity of the season at the Teatro Carcano led the organizers to spare no effort in hiring the best talents available. While this event has also been interpreted as a patriotic initiative against the Teatro alla Scala—and, by extension, Habsburg rule[64]—it is equally true that attracting an audience was precisely what the theatre needed, as Pasta's success had fully demonstrated. To that end, they made every necessary effort to have both Bellini and Donizetti compose new operas, based on *libretti* by the renowned poet Felice Romani. Additionally, they enlisted the star singers Giuditta Pasta and Giovanni Battista Rubini. Both had recently enjoyed remarkable success in the Habsburg capital Vienna during the 1830 Italian opera season at the Kärntnertortheater. On that occasion, Rubini was appointed *Kammersänger* by Emperor Franz I, an honour Pasta had received the year before.[65]

With the same objective, large sums of money were invested in the press, ensuring extensive and positive coverage of the Carcano's season. An example of this was the pamphlet *Dialogo tra un abbonato del Teatro alla Scala e uno del Carcano* [Dialogue between a subscriber of the Teatro alla Scala and

62. The opera seasons at the Teatro Re were often reproduced at the Teatro de' Quattro nobili cavalieri in Pavia, or the Teatro Sociale in Monza.

63. Rossini's operas' presence in Milan during the mid-1810s to the mid-1820s is discussed in Senici, *Music in the Present Tense*, pp. 161–178 (Ch. 10, "Repertory").

64. Bellini, *La sonnambula*, pp. XI-XVI; Zoppelli, *Donizetti*, p. 190; and Fabrizio Della Seta, *Bellini* (Milan: il Saggiatore, 2022), p. 208.

65. The success of the two singers in Vienna was extensively covered in the local press. See, *Gazzetta privilegiata di Milano*, 122 (2 May 1830); 134 (14 May 1830); 144 (24 May 1830); 158 (7 June 1830); 170 (19 June 1830).

one of the Carcano Theatre] published in January.[66] Whether or not there was an anti-Habsburg motive behind it, this remains a unique episode in Milanese history, when a privately funded opera season was successfully carried out.

Given the favourable conditions, it becomes clear that the decentralized position of the Teatro Carcano and its distance from the Teatro alla Scala, the site of Donizetti's earlier failures, played a significant role in convincing him to return to Milan. For the first time in eight years, no accusation of imitation or lack of originality was directed at him.[67] It should also be noted that by 1830, the obsession with seeking imitations in new works had significantly diminished. As early as 1828, a critic noted that the rigor in judging imitations had become so sophistic that not even the most successful composers could escape such accusations.[68]

The significance of *Anna Bolena* in Donizetti's artistic life has already been extensively discussed elsewhere.[69] In this context, the fact that this opera exhibits neither more nor fewer Rossinian traits than many of the composer's earlier works underscores the motivations of his long-awaited success. Notably, it occurred not in the geographical and cultural heart of Milan but in its suburbs, in exceptional and favourable conditions. Despite repeated attempts, Donizetti had failed to penetrate the vibrant cultural life of a city divided among various theatres. While it might seem logical that gaining popularity in a secondary theatre would lead to opportunities at the main one, for Donizetti, the opposite was true. His many failures at La Scala had barred him from entering Milan's operatic network.

By contrast, Vincenzo Bellini's trajectory offers a telling comparison. His operas enjoyed great success at La Scala and the Teatro alla Canobbiana, and his popularity was such that even puppet theatres in the city, like Teatro al Ponte de' Fabbri and Teatro Girolamo, adapted his operas for their stages.[70] This widespread recognition was due not only to the success of his music but also to his social connection and active presence in Milanese cultural circles,

66. The pamphlet published in Milan by Bonfanti was advertised in the press. See *Gazzetta di Milano*, 19 (19 January 1831).

67. See *Gazzetta privilegiata di Milano*, 362 (28 December 1830).

68. See *I teatri. Giornale drammatico musicale e coreografico*, 2/1 (Milan: Ferrario, 1828), p. 121. A similar judgment was also rendered regarding the accusations against the Milanese revival of *L'esule di Roma*; see *ibid*., p. 242.

69. For instance, see Philip Gossett, *"Anna Bolena" and the Artistic Maturity of Gaetano Donizetti* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985). For a critique of Gossett's view see Zoppelli, *Donizetti*, pp. 188–196.

70. For instance, as evidenced by the periodical press, *Il pirata, con Girolamo suo seguace* (Teatro Fiando, 1827); *La straniera, con Girolamo* (Teatro al Ponte de' Fabbri, 1830); and *La sonnambula, con Girolamo sposo deluso* (Teatro Fiando, 1831).

which granted him access to influential networks. Donizetti's work presented in Milan during the 1820s never achieved the same level of popularization.

Furthermore, the search for novelty that pervaded the 1820s, in Milan was increasingly hampered by the gradual decline in the number of newly composed operas. Analysing the period from 1820 to 1830, it becomes evident that while the number of new titles under the Habsburg administration of the Teatro alla Scala (1821–1824) averaged five per season, this number soon dropped to just three. Probably due to the difficulties the theatre suffered in finding reliable impresarios that lasted in the position. Of the total forty-one operas composed for Milan in this decade, only two achieved the level of success necessary to secure widespread circulation: *Il pirata* and *La straniera* by Bellini.[71]

It is undeniable that Donizetti encountered significant challenges during a transitional period that simultaneously witnessed the dominance of the Rossinian model and its gradual decline. The composer, perhaps aware of the challenges posed by the Milanese scene, wisely kept a distance from it. Yet, he paid almost morbid attention to the outcomes, reading newspapers and inquiring in his letters with friends.

On one hand, the Milanese version of *L'aio nell'imbarazzo* provided a striking example of the complexities inherent in the operatic genre, illustrating how the fruition of opera was more varied and discontinuous than it might appear today. This had an impact on the way an opera was received and in some instances was even divorced from the merits of the original composer. The revival of *L'esule di Roma*, on the other hand, revealed the peculiar aversion of the Milanese audience to Donizetti. Despite the similarities to its successful Neapolitan premiere, the opera received a different reception in Milan, underscoring the uniqueness of an opera production and the relevance of the context in which a certain opera was presented. Finally, Donizetti's return to Milan in the Teatro Carcano marked a turning point. His triumphant return to the city with *Anna Bolena* and the consequent entrance into the city's cultural network demonstrated that, for once, the Teatro alla Scala was not the sole arbiter of taste.

By the late 1830s, Donizetti had firmly established himself in Milan, with an average of six different operas performed in a single season at La Scala. Secondary theatres, such as the Teatro Carcano—where his works were frequently revived—and the Teatro Re, played a crucial role in sustaining his

71. Bellini commented to Francesco Florimo: "Milan is too enthusiastic about that blessed *Pirata* and Rubini, and I see that all the other music falls". "Milano è troppo entusiasta per quel benedettisimo *Pirata* e Rubini, e vedo che tutte le altre musiche cadono". *Vincenzo Bellini. Carteggi*, p. 149.

presence. Despite his widespread popularity, Donizetti's reception in Milan ultimately ended with the sombre epilogue mentioned at the beginning. The lack of recognition in 1872 suggests that, even long after his death, the complex and often fraught connection between the composer and the city contributed to the neglect of his memory. While Donizetti overcame early scepticism and gained prominence, his legacy never fully took root within Milan's cultural identity. Instead, it developed primarily in the periphery—both in the city's suburbs and, most notably, in his hometown of Bergamo.

Abstract

This article examines the reception of Gaetano Donizetti in Milan during the 1820s, a crucial yet often overlooked period in his career. Despite later achieving fame as one of the foremost composers of Italian opera, Donizetti's early years in Milan were marked by struggles with public perception and critical skepticism. The study situates Donizetti's work within Milan's broader musical landscape, highlighting the dominance of Rossinian aesthetics and the challenges faced by emerging composers in establishing their artistic identity. Revisiting this critical decade, the article sheds new light on the challenges Donizetti's works faced in navigating Milan's competitive opera market. Drawing on archival research in Milan, periodical press, and extensive documentation from the recent edition of *Carteggi e documenti* by Paolo Fabbri it examines the obstacles Donizetti faced in the early stages of his career and explores what it meant for a composer of his generation to gain recognition in Milan. The article presents the Milanese production of *L'aio nell'imbarazzo* (1826) and the revival of *L'esule di Roma* (1828) at the Teatro alla Scala as case studies. Through philological and historiographical analysis, it contextualises the challenges these works faced, considering both their performances and critical reception. Finally, the success of *Anna Bolena* (1830) is reassessed in light of these findings, offering a broader perspective on Milan's theatrical life during the 1820s and illustrating how Donizetti's rise to success extended beyond the city centre and into its suburbs. By reassessing this early period, the study sheds new light on Donizetti's development as a composer and the intricate mechanisms of operatic reception in 19th-century Milan.

Michael Walter

Donizetti in Vienna, 1836–1843

In the mid-1830s, Donizetti had a concrete goal: to compose *grands opéras* for Paris. He hired an agent in Paris, opened a bank account there, practised French and tried to build up a network that would support him in Paris. He studied Halévy's *La Juive* and composed operas for Naples with *grand opéra* characteristics, such as *L'assedio di Calais* and *Poliuto*. In 1837, *Lucia di Lammermoor* was a sensational success at the Théâtre-Italien, which led to contracts to prepare *Roberto Devereux* and *L'elisir d'amore* at the same theatre, as well as a contract for a new opera at the Académie Royale de Musique. By the time he arrived in Paris in October 1838, Donizetti was well acquainted with the structures of the Parisian theatres, the key figures on the opera scene and business practices.

In Vienna, on the other hand, the conditions in the mid-1830s were neither particularly favourable nor did Donizetti's activities during this period indicate that Vienna was of any great importance to him, and he was certainly not prepared for the circumstances in Vienna, which were essentially unknown to him. It was not until Bartolomeo Merelli and Carlo Balocchino took over the management of the Kärntnertortheater (i.e. the Court Opera) in 1836 that he became interested in Vienna. Like his contemporaries, he probably considered the Kärntnertortheater's Italian season to be part of La Scala in Milan. In 1836, Donizetti attempted to finalise a contract for a new opera to be composed for the Kärntnertortheater, a plan he continued to pursue in 1837, without success.[1] The conventional proof of Donizetti's interest in a contract for Vienna is a letter he wrote to Giovanni Ricordi in August 1837: "Tell Pedroni that I would like to see Vienna, that he should talk to Merelli, as it's not suitable for me to do so".[2]

1. See Claudio Vellutini, *Cultural Engineering: Italian Opera in Vienna, 1816–1848*, Dissertation (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2015), pp. 229–234, see also Claudio Vellutini, *Entangled Histories. Opera and Cultural Exchange between Vienna and the Italian States after Napoleon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2025).

2. "Dì a Pedroni che io ho voglia di veder Vienna, che parli lui a Merelli che a me non conviene". Letter to Giovanni Ricordi dated 13 August 1837, in Guido Zavadini, *Donizetti. Vita - musiche - epistolario* (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1948), no. 249, p. 438.

The letter shows that at the time Donizetti already had a strained relationship with Merelli (although we do not know the reason behind their falling out). In this respect, Donizetti's situation differed considerably from that of Rossini, who had celebrated triumphs in Vienna in 1822. The city had been a suitable springboard for Rossini because Domenico Barbaia, the impresario of the Teatro San Carlo in Naples, who had also been impresario of the Kärntnertortheater in Vienna since December 1821, offered him the means of performing his operas and prepared the ground for him institutionally. Rossini's real international goal, however, was Paris. In Paris, Donizetti was already more advanced than Rossini some fifteen years before, but in Vienna he lacked support from either of the two impresarios of the Kärntnertortheater. On the contrary, he was at odds with Merelli, and Balocchino correctly recognised the financial risk that a contract for a new (or reworked) Donizetti opera would entail. Vellutini's suggestion that the passage in the letter quoted shows "that access to the Kärntnertortheater was not an easy matter for an Italian composer of his [Donizetti's] generation"[3] is puzzling, as the impresario's intentions seem to have been motivated by business considerations, not nationality or generation.

The complete list of Italian operas performed by Balocchino–Merelli at the Kärntnertortheater suggests that neither of them intended to run the theatre's Italian *stagione* as a quasi-independent Italian theatre. The Italian season of the Kärntnertortheater remained a branch of La Scala, run by Merelli as impresario. This was understood from the outset by both Italian contemporaries and the Viennese. For the Viennese, this dependence on La Scala, and especially on the singers whom Merelli contracted for La Scala and then sent to Vienna for the Italian season, was a considerable advantage in terms of repertoire and quality of singers.

Between 1836 and 1848 there were only six premieres of Italian operas at the Kärntnertortheater. The series began with Donizetti's *Linda di Chamounix* in 1842, followed by five other Italian operas newly composed for the Kärntnertortheater, including Donizetti's *Maria di Rohan* (1843). The other Italian composers of new operas were Matteo Salvi, Vincenzo Fioravanti and Lauro Rossi, i.e. composers of second or third rank at best (and therefore, it should be added, cheaply available). It is clear that Balocchino–Merelli had two considerations front of mind: 1. The Italian *stagione* in Vienna had to be inexpensive, which was achieved by importing operas to the Kärntnertortheater that had been reasonably successful in Italy. This meant that there was no need to invest in new operas, and rehearsal costs were kept to a minimum. The financial risk of performing an old opera was much lower for the impresario

3. Vellutini, *Cultural Engineering*, p. 230.

than for the contract of a new opera. 2. The Viennese public was much more interested in the singers than in the works and composers. Consequently, success above all depended on the skilful selection of singers. For this the two impresarios in Vienna were repeatedly praised.

The continued critical economic outlook in Vienna in 1837 was illustrated by the fact that the Kärntnertortheater was "on average often sparsely attended".[4] Investing in a new opera by Donizetti in this situation would have been associated with considerable risk. Moreover, Donizetti's operas did not become popular in Vienna until 1839–1840 and even in 1841 his operas (e.g. *Fausta* and *La figlia del reggimento*) were still being criticised, sometimes severely, in Vienna's newspapers, including the *Allgemeine Wiener Musik-Zeitung*. However, an important differentiation should be noted, in the early 1840s the public's attitude to Donizetti's works was generally enthusiastic and therefore different from the tepid critics' opinion. It was a difficult task for an Italian impresario like Merelli, who was not on the ground, to gauge the situation accurately.[5] Even in 1840, the economically risk-minimising decision would have been not to sign a contract with Donizetti for an opera composed specifically for Vienna.[6]

Donizetti's operas were quite expensive. In a letter to Paolo Branca from 1840 Donizetti rejected an offer from Merelli and argued, that he normally got 10,000 francs for a new opera in Venice, Naples or Rome.[7] One problem that was not unique to Donizetti in Vienna, and which can only be touched upon here, was currency. In the letter, Donizetti did not reduce his request to 10,000 *lire austriache*, as Vellutini believed: "I will convert my ten thousand French lire [= *lire italiane*] into Austrian [lire] — it makes little difference to me — but in Vienna I would like decent accomodation. [...] For Milan as well, I will make the same sacrifice into Austrian currency".[8] At the official exchange rate 10,000 *lire austriache* was worth only 8,700 francs. Donizetti's remark refers to the fact that he offered Merelli to pay him the full 10,000 francs in *lire austriache*, i.e. in another currency. He would also be prepared to accept the same for Milan, since, it should be added, Merelli did not conclude the

4. "[...] im Durchschnitt oft spärlich besucht". *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 33 (16 August 1837), col. 545.

5. See Donizetti's ironic remark about Merelli in the letter dated 14 June 1840 to Pietro Cominazzi, in *Studi donizettiani*, 1 (1962), p. 61.

6. And not only "at the beginning of their [Merelli–Balocchino's] enterprise" (Vellutini, *Cultural Engineering*, p. 236).

7. See Vellutini, *Cultural Engineering*, p. 234.

8. "Investirò le mie diecimila lire francesi in [lire] austriache che ciò poco mi fa, ma vorrei in Vienna l'*alloggio* e decente. [...] Per Milano pure farò lo stesso sacrificio in austriache". Letter to Paolo Branca dated 26 September 1840, in Zavadini, *Donizetti*, no. 348, p. 523.

contracts for Milan in *lire italiane*, which were identical to francs, but in *lire austriache*, whose ratio to the *lire austriache* was theoretically fixed (namely 1 *lira austriaca* = 0.87 francs). In practice, however, there could be considerable, if forbidden, currency fluctuations, which Donizetti had already taken into account three years earlier when he asked for 12,000 "franchi effettivi" (i.e. "real French francs", as opposed to an equivalent value in other currencies or bills of exchange) instead of just *franchi* in Vienna[9] (the higher amount is explained by the fact that Donizetti would have paid for the libretto himself).

Given the business background of the Impresa outlined above, it is all the more surprising that in the autumn of 1840 Merelli actually concluded a contract with Donizetti for a new opera for the Kärntnertortheater, namely *Linda di Chamounix* (and at the same time a contract for *Maria Padilla* for La Scala[10]). The reasons for Merelli–Balocchino's decision to sign a contract with Donizetti are unknown. It seems that Balocchino (as with any impresario) was occasionally subjected to political pressure in Vienna. Whether it played a role in this instance, however, is difficult to prove. From Merelli–Balocchino's point of view, the signing of two librettos with Donizetti for expensive operas remained the exception. In other instances, they continued to look for cheaper solutions.

The circumstances under which Donizetti came to Vienna, albeit a year and a half later, are striking. He arrived on 29 March 1842 with a letter of recommendation from Rossini for Prince Metternich. As early as 26 June 1842, Donizetti took part in a great soiree at Metternich's house. Donizetti's stay in Vienna was prepared by a "biographical sketch" by Leo Herz, published in the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung* on 11 May 1842. By the time Herz had begun to play a significant role in the construction of Donizetti's public image, many contemporaries must have realised that there was a political, if elusive, background to Donizetti's role in Vienna.

Leo Herz

Leo Herz is one of the best and least known music critics of the 1840s. He regularly appears in the notes of biographies or editions of letters, as he corresponded not only with Donizetti but also with Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Verdi, the impresario Merelli and many others. Additionally, Herz's reviews are often quoted or at least mentioned in passing. That he was mentioned more frequently than any other Viennese critic might have raised the

9. See Vellutini, *Cultural Engineering*, p. 231. However, the date of the document in which the sum is mentioned is uncertain. Vellutini himself translates "franchi effettivi" only as "francs", which does not correspond to the meaning of the term.

10. This was solely the decision of Merelli in his capacity of being impresario of La Scala.

question, who was Leo Herz really. But he has largely been neglected by Donizetti scholarship. If it is mentioned at all, it is noted that Donizetti and Herz were friends. However, Herz's role went much further than that.

Leo Herz was born in Lviv in 1808, the eldest son of a prominent Jewish merchant family. He received last rites when he died in 1869, a clear indication that he had converted to Catholicism at some point in his life. Herz is sometimes confused with his brother Johann Jacob Herz (since 1865 von Rodenau, died 1873), who was a year younger and made a career as a civil servant in the Austrian Empire, eventually becoming a ministerial secretary in the Austrian Ministry of Trade.[11] Both brothers had studied law in Lviv, but unlike his brother, Leo Herz is said to have obtained a doctorate in philosophy rather than law. When he wrote reviews under the pseudonym Leone, he sometimes extended this to Dr. Leone.

Herz, who performed as a violin virtuoso in Lviv at the age of twelve, undertook extensive concert tours in the 1830s under the name Ferdinand Leo Herz. His first tour probably took him to Vienna, Warsaw, Wrocław, Poznań and Berlin in 1831. By the mid-1830s he was also giving concerts in Italy (e.g. 1835 in Florence and Trieste, 1837 in Milan and Bologna, 1838 again in Trieste). In the 1830s Herz also accompanied the violin virtuoso Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst, who was six years his junior, on his concert tours. Probably serving in a kind of secretarial role he would also write the first (if short twenty-two-page) biography of his younger friend.[12]

This prehistory to Herz's activity as a music critic should not be underestimated, for it was the basis of Herz's enormous international network, the details of which have not yet been recorded. What remains unclear is when his personal acquaintance with Donizetti began. According to Angelo Eisner von Eisenhof, Donizetti accompanied Herz on the piano at an academy in Bologna on 3 December 1837, but at least on that specific date, this would have been impossible.[13] It is likely, however, that Donizetti and Herz met around

11. Another object of confusion is the later "Ministerialrat" in the Ministry of Agriculture in Vienna, Dr. Leo Herz (later Dr. Leo Ritter von Herz), who was probably a nephew of Leo/Leone Herz. Leo Ritter von Herz was a member of the committee of the Vienna Donizetti Exhibition of 1897, to which he himself contributed letters from the estate of Leo/Leone Herz. As Ministerial Concipient of the Ministry of Trade in 1849, Leo Herz was appointed "k.k. Börsen-Commissär" (see *Oesterreichischer Courier*, 277 of 21 November 1849, p. 1006). This appointment was followed by some confusion between the two persons Leo Herz.

12. Leone, *H. W. Ernst. Eine biographische Skizze* (Vienna: J. P. Sollinger, 1847).

13. Angelo de Eisner-Eisenhof, *Lettere inedite di Gaetano Donizetti a diversi e lettere di Rossini, Scribe, Dumas*[,] *Spontini, Adam, Verdi a Gaetano Donizetti* (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1897), p. 10. However—as Herbert Weinstock has already pointed out—the letter to Spadaro del Bosch of 3 December 1837, had been written in Naples (Zavadini, *Donizetti*, no. 281, p. 282). Therefore, Eisenhof's statement cannot be correct.

this time. Herz probably met Merelli in Milan in 1837, although there is no concrete proof of this either. What is certain, however, is that Herz corresponded with Merelli in the 1840s. By the early 1840s, Herz had already built up a dense network of personal acquaintances in the theatre and further afield, which gave him some influence behind the scenes. Contemporaries marvelled at the many anecdotes Herz told about the contemporary opera business and its artists. This was the humorous side of Herz's international network. However, his journalistic colleagues were sometimes irritated by the fact that he was said to have reported on Donizetti's success in the smallest Italian theatres in the Viennese *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*. The criticism was somewhat exaggerated, but Herz must have read foreign newspapers and magazines all the time—and not just ones of central importance to the theatre business—and was thus unusually well informed, as the exchange with the *Frankfurter Konversationsblatt* shows.

As a violinist, Herz was always described in reviews as having a very good technique but unclean playing, and by 1838 he probably realised that he could not compete as a first-rate virtuoso. While still playing, he began his journalistic career with the short-lived journal *Adria. Süddeutsches Centralblatt für Kunst, Literatur und Leben*, which was published from January 1838 onwards. The journal was edited by Jakob Löwenthal. He had been a court master and teacher in various cities and had written for the Viennese *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung* and other German-language Viennese, Austrian and Italian newspapers in the 1830s (he had a very good command of the Italian language). Based in Trieste from 1834, he founded the German-language journal *Adria*, which ceased publication after only a year as Löwenthal became co-editor of the *Journal des österreichischen Lloyd* (the newspaper pursued a conservative course loyal to the emperor). This is not the place to trace Löwenthal's career but, like Herz later, he was extremely well connected and, as editor-in-chief in Trieste and Vienna, ran various newspapers that today would be described as business journals and, in some cases, government journals. There is no evidence that Löwenthal was critical of the imperial family, only demonstrating loyalty to them and Metternich. Significantly, the second part of Löwenthal's 1859 *History of Trieste* is dedicated to Metternich.[14] Here, too, one can see that Herz moved in circles loyal to the emperor, which is probably where his contact with the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung* originated.

Initially, however, Herz wrote for the *Adria*, then for the Austrian *Lloyd.* He also worked as a correspondent from Italy for the Viennese journals *Der Adler* and *Der Humorist*, and possibly as a correspondent for the (German)

14. Jakob Löwenthal, *Geschichte der Stadt Triest. Zweiter Theil. Von der Regierung Kaiser Josephs II. bis zum Jahr 1820* (Trieste: Literarisch-Artist. Abtheilung des österr. Lloyd, 1859).

Allgemeine Zeitung.[15] In this early phase of his journalistic career, he wrote articles on Slavic wedding customs, the planned railway line between Venice and Milan (explicitly "in the Lombard-Venetian kingdom"[16]), or literature, mostly signed with Leone.

As a music critic in Vienna, he was regarded as a mouthpiece of the court, especially when it came to Donizetti: "Herr Leo Herz, by the way, can be sure that the censors will never cut a word from him, for that his patronage is too influential, and he is too well regarded among the higher ups".[17]

Herz must have been based in Vienna by the spring of 1841 at the latest, for from March he was writing reviews of performances in Vienna in the *Adler* and, a little later, in the *Humorist*, signing his articles Leone. He seems to have stopped working for these two journals in 1842, when he began to write for the Viennese *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*—probably as a full-time editor—where he signed articles with L., Leone or, more rarely, his full name. (There was never any doubt in Vienna as to who Leone was, and Herz himself made no secret of this.)

The *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung* was the most widely circulated newspaper in Austria during the *Vormärz* period. It was founded in 1806 by Adolf Bäuerle, one of the main authors of the so-called Alt-Wiener-Volkstheater, and existed until 1860, albeit under a frequently changing title. The title of a book Bäuerle published in 1834 shows how loyal he was to the emperor: *What Does Austria Owe to the Favoured Government of His Majesty Emperor Franz the First?*[18]

Herz remained loyal to his emperor even in 1848 (and as it seems not quite so loyal to the imperial administration), writing several pro-emperor political articles. In 1859, he published an excerpt about Prince Metternich from

15. From 1846 to 1858 from Vienna, "before that" he was "correspondent in Frankfurt". Eduard Henck, *Die "Allgemeine Zeitung". 1798–1898. Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Presse* (Munich: Verlag der Allgemeine Zeitung, 1898), p. 251. The latter would explain, on the one hand, why he was apparently still reading the *Frankfurter Konversationsblatt* in Vienna. On the other hand, it cannot be determined exactly when Herz settled in Vienna, so it may well be that after his tour of Italy he lived in Frankfurt from 1840 to 1841. However, it cannot be excluded a mistake or error on Henck's part.

16. Dr. Leo Herz, "Die Eisenbahn von Venedig nach Mailand, im lombardisch-venetianischen Königreiche", *Die Warte an der Donau. Oesterreichische Zeitschrift für Verstand, und Gemüth, zur Belehrung und Erheiterung*, 109 (10 July 1839), 110 (11 July 1839), 111 (12 July 1839).

17. "Herr Leo Herz kann übrigens sicher sein, daß ihm nie ein Wörtchen von der Censur gestrichen wird, denn dafür hat er eine zu einflußreiche Protektion, und ist er hoch oben zu gut angeschrieben". Asmodeus, "Wien", *Zeitung für die elegante Welt*, 23 (5 June 1844), p. 365. Asmodeus was a fierce opponent of Herz, who published his views abroad rather than in Austria.

18. *Was verdankt Oesterreich der beglückenden Regierung Sr. Majestät Kaiser Franz des Ersten?*, edited by Adolf Bäuerle (Vienna: Ant. v. Haykul, 1834).

his planned memoirs. Although this should be considered as a tribute and not proof of a close personal acquaintance.[19]

In short, Herz both privately and professionally moved in a milieu devoted to the emperor and, above all, to Metternich. A letter dated 17 October 1841 shows that Donizetti and Herz had met several times in Italy, probably between 1837 and 1839, after which they lost contact.[20] The letter also demonstrates that by the time Donizetti and Herz renewed their correspondence, Merelli had already rented accommodation for Donizetti in Vienna for the spring of 1842, when the composer was to rehearse *Linda di Chamounix*. It seems that Herz had sought to contact Donizetti on his own initiative, although it is impossible to say whether he did so. At that time the Viennese public did not know that Donizetti was going to compose an opera for Vienna, nor that he was coming to Vienna to rehearse it. Therefore, Herz could only have known about Donizetti's Viennese plans because of his good contacts in the capital.

Herz's contact with Donizetti, at a time when Merelli and Donizetti had already agreed on a new opera for Vienna; his advocacy for Donizetti in the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*, and for Donizetti's operas more generally—it strains credulity that all these were mere coincidences.

As mentioned, on 11 May 1842, Herz published an article in the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung* with the title "Gaetano Donizetti, eine biographische Skizze" [Gaetano Donizetti, a biographical sketch], in which he explicitly states that his piece is based on Donizetti's friendly oral communications. The two-page article, published on the frontpage, placed Donizetti alongside Rossini, and can be understood as preparing the periodical's readers for the upcoming premiere of *Linda di Chamounix*. Herz's article praised Donizetti to a truly remarkable degree. Donizetti, in turn, seems to have played a key role in Herz's appointment, in 1843, to the post of Regisseur (director) of the Kärntnertortheater, a position Herz held until 1845. It was Herz's adaptation of the German text of *Don Sebastian* in 1845 that brought a twofold praise from the critics in the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*: for Donizetti as composer and for Herz as adaptor of Donizetti's opera.

The Donizetti–Herz connection was, it must be assumed, the tip of an iceberg of personal networks between the Viennese press and the court. Although Donizetti spoke little German, at court and with people important to him in Vienna he was able to communicate in Italian or French. These net-

19. Dr. Leone, "Fürst Metternich als Musikdilettant. (Fragment aus meinen *Künstlermemoiren*)", *Wiener Theaterzeitung* [= *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*], 142 (26 June 1859), p. 569. Reprint in *Neue Wiener Musik-Zeitung*, 26 (30 June 1859), p. 103; *Iris. Pariser & Wiener Damen-Moden-Zeitung*, 11, 3/3 (15 July 1859), pp. 107–108.

20. Letter to Leo Herz, in Zavadini, *Donizetti*, no. 376, pp. 556–557.

works are difficult to trace because they manifested themselves in personal conversations and not always in letters or other written documents. However, on occasion they appear incidentally. For example, as a consequence of professional interactions Donizetti and Herz personally knew the powerful head of the police and censorship office, Josef von Sedlnitzky.[21] For Herz collaboration with Sedlnitzky involved censorship measures but also the casting of singers.[22] Donizetti socialised in the highest Viennese circles and had close contacts in the local nobility.[23] It is not possible to say to what extent also Herz had contacts with the nobility, but it seems likely that he knew people at court who were interested in the theatre.

Donizetti as *Kammercapellmeister*

Contrary to frequent claims, Donizetti did not become a *Hofcapellmeister*[24] (director of the court music) in Vienna. After a steady decline since the time of Maria Theresia, mainly due to cost-cutting measures, the court orchestra was essentially confined to the performance of church music. In 1840 it was nominally directed by Joseph Leopold Edler von Eybler, born in 1765, who had been a friend of Mozart. Since 1833, as the result of a stroke, Eybler was partially paralysed, and many of his duties were taken over by the deputy *Hofcapellmeisters*. These were Joseph Weigl from 1827 and Ignaz Assmayer from 1838 onwards (as "supernumerary" deputy *Hofcapellmeister* and court

21. See for example, the anecdote told by Eduard Hanslick about the examination of the singer Alois Ander in 1844; <https://hanslick-online.github.io/hsl-app/c__1864.12.18.html?> (retrieved on 7 November 2024). See (with regard to Donizetti) letter to Leo Herz dated 8 October 1842, in Zavadini, *Donizetti*, no. 445, p. 630; letter to Leo Herz dated 5 December 1842, *ibid*., no. 458, pp. 641–642; letter to Leo Herz dated 25 December 1842, *ibid*., no. 461, pp. 643–644; letter to Antonio Dolci dated 14 February 1843, *ibid*., no. 474, pp. 657–658; letter to Leo Herz dated 18 October 1843, *ibid*., no. 509, pp. 691–692; letter to Madame [la Comtesse Amélie de Taaffe] dated 11 July [?], *ibid*., no. 716, p. 855.

22. See letter to Leo Herz dated 25 December 1842, *ibid*., no. 461, p. 644 about Sedlnitzky's rejection of the coloratura singer "Bossini" (*recte*: Gabussi-Bassini), which Donizetti considers to be correct. In 1845 she seems to have been engaged at the Kärntnertortheater, despite all the criticism of her cutting voice.

23. "I am well acquainted with Count Kollovrath, Prince Metternich, and the Minister of Police Sedlnitzky; however, as for the offices and departments of Austria, Bohemia, Italy, and so forth, I do not know a single soul therein". "Conosco bene il conte di *Kollovrath*, il principe *Metternich*, il *ministro di Polizia Sedlinstk* [Sedlnitzky], ma perciò che si tratta Offici, Dicasteri d'Austria, di Boemia, d'Italia etc., io non vi conosco anima". Letter to Antonio Dolci dated 14 February 1843, in Zavadini, *Donizetti*, no. 474, pp. 657–658.

24. In the sources you find both *Hofcapellmeister* and *Hofkapellmeister*. To impose some order the former spelling is used here in the text, except in instances where it is a direct quote. Then the original spelling is retained. However, the key is that despite the variation in spelling it refers to the same position.

organist). In 1845, Benedikt Randhartinger and Gottfried Preyer were added as further "supernumerary" vice *Hofcapellmeisters*, presumably to relieve the overworked Assmayer because neither Eybler nor Weigl were able to take over the actual direction of the court chapel. In any case, the court orchestra and its *Hofcapellmeister* were only of local importance for church music.

Even less important around 1840 was the position of *Kammercapellmeister und Hofcompositeur* (director of the emperor's chamber music and court composer). The position had been created by the court in order to be able to pay Mozart a regular salary to cover his living expenses.[25] Unlike the *Hofcapellmeister*, the position of *Kammercapellmeister* was not a fixed position within the court system, but based on *ad hoc* appointments. The position was not definitely abolished after Mozart's death, but recreated in 1792 for Leopold Koželuh (for similar reasons to Mozart's), who in turn was succeeded by František Krommer who held the post from 1818 to 1831. Subsequently, however, the office was abolished.

Of course, the position of *Kammercapellmeister und Hofcompositeur* could be revived *ad personam* at any time. This happened when the emperor appointed Donizetti *Kammercapellmeister und Hofcompositeur* on 3 July 1842. What appeared to be a simple appointment, made by the court to demonstrate its attachment to Donizetti, was in fact a rather ambiguous matter, both in terms of Donizetti's function and the title, the nuances of which was understood only in Vienna.

In the court and state schematism of the Austrian Empire, the position of the *Kammercapellmeister und Hofcompositeur* was assigned to the *k. k. Kammerkünstler* in 1843.[26] The title of *k. k. Kammerkünstler* was an honorary title. It had been bestowed on artists such as Giuditta Pasta, Fanny Tacchinardi Persiani, Giovanni Battista Rubini and Antonio Poggi, but none of them were paid by the court.

It is one of the usual contradictions of courtly bureaucracy that Donizetti's position was a hybrid one. Unlike the other chamber artists, Donizetti received a salary from the court. In his decree of 3 July 1842, the emperor granted Donizetti an annual salary of 2,600 florins, 400 florins in quarterly instalments and a further 1,000 florins "for which the latter shall periodically provide my court with suitable musical compositions upon request".[27] At the

25. Dorothea Link, "Mozart's appointment to the Viennese court", in *Mozart*, edited by Simon P. Keefe (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 39–64, here 56.

26. *Hof- und Staats-Schematismus des österreichischen Kaiserthumes. I. Theil* (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staats-Aerarial-Druckerey, 1843), p. 133.

27. Appointment decree of the emperor of 3 July 1842, quoted after Odo Aberham – Alfred Gänsthaler, "'Vienna è bella bella bella'. Donizettis Wiener Korrespondenzen", in *Donizetti und seine Zeit in Wien*, edited by Michael Jahn (Vienna: Der Apfel, 2010), pp. 51–112, here 66.

same time, he was granted the "seventh allowance band" ("siebente Diäten-Klasse"—out of 12); this was an amount of 6.4 convention florins (Gulden CM = Conventions-Gulden). Donizetti was thus formally assigned to be part of the *Kammer-Individuen* (chamber individuals) of the *k. k. Oberst-Hofmarschallstab*. These *Kammer-Individuen* were a group of court posts that were hard to categorise within the bureaucracy but broadly belonged to the emperor's entourage. They included hierarchically disparate positions such as the *Kammerheizer* (chamber stoker), the *Kammerheizerjung* (assistant to the chamber stoker) and the *Kammerfourier*.[28]

Donizetti had become an imperial civil servant as a result of this commission and could have made use of a daily allowance for official journeys or the regulations for the use of stagecoaches (as an alternative to using his private coach). As the relevant regulations were complicated and difficult to understand even for a German-speaking official, it can be assumed that Donizetti did not make use of his official rights—if he was aware of them at all.

4,000 florin CM was equivalent to 10,440 francs. This was no small amount. But by 1840 Donizetti was already receiving 10,000 francs for a single opera and usually half of the income from the rights. In 1842, the Viennese publisher Pietro Mecchetti paid Donizetti 6,000 gulden (= florin; about 5,220 francs[29]) for the publication of *Don Sebastian*[30] (the Viennese version of *Dom Sébastien*); Donizetti had received 16,000 francs (about 6,130 florins) for the original Parisian *Dom Sébastien*.[31] In 1844 he was offered 17,000 francs (about 6,513 florins) for the publishing rights alone for an opera to be performed at the Théâtre-Italien.[32] It is impossible to quantify (in modern terms) the flow of

28. See *Darstellung der bestehenden Vorschriften über die Vergütung der Fuhr- und Zehrungskosten für die im Dienste reisenden öffentlichen Beamten, ihrer Gebühren bei Substitutionen und Uebersiedlungen von Carl Trattinnick, Conceptsbeamten der k. k. allgemeinen Hofkammer, Doctor der Rechte etc. nebst dem vervollständigten Diäten- Schema für die verschiedenen Dienstes-Cathegorien sämmtlicher Hof, dann Staats-, ständischer, städtischer und privatherrschaftlicher Beamten der gesammten österr. deutsch, italienisch und ungarischen Erblande von Emanuel Hünner, Rechnungs-Officialen der k. k. Kameral-Hauptbuchhaltung. Erster Theil* (Vienna: In Commission bei Braumüller und Seidel, 1846), p. 5 of the "Diäten-Schema für sämmtliche k. k. Hofstäbe". In terms of court bureaucracy, this salary level was not assigned to Donizetti until 6 July 1842.

29. The conversion is based on the *lira austriaca* to franc rate. In reality, the usual conversion rates were slightly higher, and a decimal conversion would have increased the value even further. Thus, 17,000 francs would have been worth 6,800 convention florins (decimal conversion factor: 0.4).

30. See letter to August Thomas dated 14 November 1843, in Zavadini, *Donizetti*, no. 519, p. 702.

31. *Ibid*., p. 122.

32. Letter to Antonio Dolci dated 21 April 1844, *ibid*., no. 558, p. 744.

tantièmes that resulted from the frequent performances of his operas, which in the 1840s still depended on the contracts with the *impresari* and the legal situation at the performance venue. Therefore, Donizetti's fee from the Viennese court was a useful and regular extra income, but it did not play a central role in his total earnings.

Donizetti and Meyerbeer

More interesting than the question of Donizetti's courtly function is that of the date of his appointment and the title. In May 1842, *Linda di Chamounix* was premiered at the Kärntnertortheater causing a great sensation. On 11 June 1842, the King of Prussia appointed Giacomo Meyerbeer *Generalmusikdirektor* (general music director) and *Hofcapellmeister* in Berlin. A few days later, the Viennese court offered Donizetti the post of *Kammercapellmeister und Hofcompositeur*, this was followed by the official appointment by the Austrian emperor on 3 July 1842. Meyerbeer had to stay in Berlin for no more than six months a year, a condition that also applied to Donizetti in Vienna.

Unlike his predecessor Spontini, Meyerbeer was a Prussian citizen. Although Donizetti was Italian, as a citizen of Lombardy-Venetia he was a subject of the Austrian emperor. In Berlin, the most famous Prussian opera composer had been recruited as *Hofcapellmeister*; in Vienna, the most famous opera composer of the Austrian Empire had been recruited to an office which, as we shall see, was understood outside Vienna as the office of *Hofcapellmeister*.

Meyerbeer received 3,000 Prussian thalers for his work as *Generalmusikdirektor* and *Hofcapellmeister*. Donizetti in Vienna received 4,000 florins (convention coin) as *Kammercapellmeister* and *Hofcompositeur*. The Viennese press occasionally remarked that Donizetti received more than the Prussian *Hofcapellmeister*, but this was incorrect. 4,000 florins was equivalent to about 2,100 Prussian thalers or 12,000 *lire austriache* (which in turn was equivalent to 10,440 francs = *lire italiane*). The difference, however, was that Meyerbeer wanted to waive his salary (which was not possible for legal reasons) while Donizetti, presumably to the astonishment of the court, negotiated his salary up to 4,000 florins.

In July 1842, the *Intelligenzblatt* of the *Allgemeine-Literaturzeitung*, published in Halle, announced that "*Hofkapellmeister* Meyerbeer has been appointed *Generalmusikdirektor* in Berlin; Donizetti *Hofkapellmeister* [*sic*!] in Vienna".[33] In Vienna, Meyerbeer's appointment was reported in the *Allge-*

33. "[...] der Hof- Kapellmeister *Meyerbeer* [wurde] Generalmusikdirector in Berlin; *Donizetti* [wurde] Hofkapellmeister in Wien". *Intelligenzblatt der Allgemeinen Literatur-Zeitung*, 33 (July 1842), Section: "Personal-Nachrichten", col. 265.

meine Wiener Musik-Zeitung[34] and Donizetti's in the *Sammler*.[35] Other newspapers also reported the news; and in April 1843, an article on composers' salaries in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* began with the paragraph:

> Auber became director of the Paris Conservatory, Meyerbeer *Generalmusikdirektor* of the King of Prussia (with a salary of 3,000 thlr. and six months' annual leave), Donizetti *Hofkapellmeister* to the Emperor of Austria (with a salary of 4,000 silver florins). A newspaper remarked: "There is a lot in in these few lines".[36]

There is no further comment on this. But, as seen from the outside, in all three cases the country's leading composers seem to have been appointed to the most important musical position. In the case of Donizetti's title of *Kammercapellmeister*, however, this was by no means true. While in Vienna the title was almost always rendered correctly, abroad Donizetti was always referred to as *Hofcapellmeister* of the emperor. Vienna's complicated differentiation of titles was unknown abroad and there seems to have been no interest in Vienna in setting the record straight when the opportunity arose. From the Viennese point of view, the cultural and political advantage of this confusion was that Donizetti's position in Vienna seemed to correspond to Meyerbeer's in Berlin. Even Leo Herz maintained the fiction of the title *Hofcapellmeister* in relation to foreign countries by not correcting the term.

> Donizetti is the governor of all opera stages. The Bergamasque star [...] followed in the footsteps of the Swan of Pesaro, and wherever there is only the baton of a conductor to guide a state of operatic artists [...] his melodies resound. [...] In the learned, stiff North, as well as in the sedate South, his name has a good ring to it [...],

wrote the *Allgemeine Wiener Musik-Zeitung* in October 1841.[37] The "Bergamasque star", that is to say, a citizen of an Italian territory belonging to the

34. *Allgemeine Wiener Musik-Zeitung*, 79 (2 July 1842), p. 324 (with mention of the salary).

35. *Der Sammler*, 108 (7 July 1842), p. 451.

36. "Auber ist Director des Pariser Conservatoriums der Musik geworden, Meyerbeer General-Musik-Director des Königs von Preussen (mit 3000 Thlr. Gehalt und sechs Monate jährlichem Urlaub), Donizetti Hofkapellmeister des Kaisers von Oesterreich mit 4000 Silbergulden Gehalt. Eine Zeitschrift bemerkte dabei: 'in diesen wenigen Zeilen liegt viel'". *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 17 (26 April 1843), col. 305.

37. "Donizetti ist der Gubernator aller Opernbühnen. Der Bergamasker Staar tratt ist [*sic*] in die Fußstapfen des Schwanes von Pesaro und allüberall, wo nur der Tactstock eines Capellmeisters einen Staat von Operisten lenkt [...] tönen seine Weisen. [...] Im gelehrten steifen Norden, wie im gehäbigen Süden, hat sein Name guten Klang [...]". *Allgemeine Wiener Musik-Zeitung*, 124 (16 October 1841), p. 518.

Austrian Empire, dominated the opera stages even in the cultivated north, a reference to Berlin. Donizetti had succeeded Rossini, the "Swan of Pesaro", and thus brought Vienna, which lived from its past in terms of music and above all opera culture, back to the forefront of European cultural and operatic life. This exaggerated enthusiasm seems slightly overdone, but the goal was clear. Vienna was to be a direct competitor to Berlin in the field of court opera and the cultural and political character of the city of residence.

The fact that Donizetti's appointment as *Kammercapellmeister* was seen as a political act by his Italian circle of friends is demonstrated by the letters in which Donizetti tried to dismiss the criticism that could be expected as a result of his engagement with the emperor. Donizetti's strategic line was to point out not only the good salary of the position, but also its musical-historical significance, which had previously been held by Mozart, Koželuh and Krommer,[38] and its prestige, reflected in a gold-trimmed uniform (which, however, was not intended for the *Kammercapellmeister*).[39] Meanwhile, Donizetti's position as "maestro di cappella alla Corte di S. M. l'Imperatore d'Austria" does not seem to have aroused much interest in Italy and was rarely mentioned in the press, although it is included in the Lombard edition of the court schematism (*Manuale provinciale della Lombardia per l'anno bisestile 1844*[40]) from 1844 onwards.

Herz vs. Börnstein

In Vienna Donizetti's position was understood as a political one (perhaps to a greater extent than Donizetti himself realised), as demonstrated by a controversy between Herz and Börnstein. In November 1843, the *Frankfurter Konversationsblatt* published a polemical article by Walter vom Berge against Donizetti's *Dom Sébastien*, which had recently been premiered in Paris. The name, sounding medieval, was a pseudonym of Heinrich Börnstein, who had attended the same school (and class) as Herz in Lviv. In the second half of the 1820s, Börnstein wrote for the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*. As a result of a dispute with the short-lived journal *Iris*, which was printed in Ofen (Buda), the person behind the pseudonym was known in Vienna, at least in press circles, since 1827 at the latest. Börnstein had enjoyed a certain prominence both as an actor and as a journalist. Due to his revolutionary views, since

38. Letter to Antonio Dolci dated 16 June 1842, in Zavadini, *Donizetti*, no. 428, pp. 616–617; letter to Antonio Dolci dated 30 ("ultimo") June 1842, *ibid*., no. 429, pp. 617–618; letter to Antonio Vasselli dated 13 July 1842, *ibid*., no. 430, p. 618; letter to Antonio Vasselli dated 3 August 1842, *ibid*., no. 437, pp. 623–624.

39. See Aberham–Gänsthaler, "'Vienna è bella bella bella'", p. 67.

40. Milan: I.R. Stamperia, 1844.

1842 Börnstein worked in Paris as a correspondent for various German periodicals. Politically, he was well-known for his democratic republicanism, a fact that enraged the Prussian government to such an extent that it demanded that Paris expel him from France. Börnstein's short-lived (1844–1845) journal *Vorwärts! Pariser Signale aus Kunst, Wissenschaft, Theater, Musik, Literatur und geselligem Leben*, was co-financed by none other than Meyerbeer, who presumably wanted to stay on good terms with Börnstein,[41] suggesting that his journalistic influence should not be underestimated. Börnstein's revolutionary views were known in Vienna too; and it comes as no surprise that his review of the Paris premiere of Donizetti's *Dom Sébastien* shows related political undertones:

> One wondered whether the Donizetti of *Lucia* had not been replaced in Vienna or elsewhere *en route*, and whether a false Donizetti, merely outwardly similar to him, had taken his place and was aping the Parisians. — Poor Donizetti! it is really him, — but he has run out of melodies, lacks ideas, — he only makes scores, — and so he is a knight of several orders, — *Cavaliere*, — Imperial and Royal *Hofkapellmeister*, — but no longer a composer of music.[42]

In the same article, Börnstein comments on *Maria di Rohan*, which was performed the day after *Dom Sébastien* at the Théâtre-Italien and which, as he points out, "had first been performed in Vienna". Referring to an anecdote about Lessing, he says of Donizetti's music that "the good in it is not new, the new is not good".

Donizetti, whom Herz had apparently informed of the review,[43] did not care much about Börnstein's opinion, especially since, contrary to Börnstein's assertion, *Dom Sébastien* was a great financial success.[44] Herz, however, saw

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41. See the correspondence between Meyerbeer and Börnstein in 1844, in *Giacomo Meyerbeer. Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, 3, *1837–1845*, edited by Heinz Becker and Gudrun Becker (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1975), pp. 499, 500–502 and comment on p. 767.

42. "Man fragte sich, ob der Donizetti der *Lucia* nicht in Wien oder sonst unterwegs ausgetauscht worden seye, und ein falscher Donizetti, bloß ihm äußerlich ähnlich, seinen Platz eingenommen habe und die Pariser äffe. – Armer Donizetti! er ist es wirklich, – aber die Melodien sind ihm ausgegangen, die Ideen fehlen, – er macht nur noch Partituren, – und so ist er Ritter mehrerer Orden, – Cavaliere, – k. k. Hofkapellmeister, – aber kein Tondichter mehr". Walter vom Berge [= Heinrich Börnstein], "Aus Paris (17. November.)", *Frankfurter Konversationsblatt*, 322 (22 November 1843), pp. 1287–1288 and 323 (23 November 1843), p. 1290. Here quoted p. 1287.

43. Since Herz and Donizetti communicated in French, it can be assumed that Herz had summarized the review for Donizetti in French.

44. "After all, if the letters from Frankfurt speak ill; Börnstein gives his opinion; or if he is made to give one without having truly been present — it's all the same to me". "Après cela, si

things quite differently and, using the pseudonym Leone, responded to Börnstein's article with a heavy rhetorical touch. On the surface, Herz tried to refute the accusation that Donizetti had composed bad music to a bad libretto by Eugène Scribe; but (more importantly) he addressed Börnstein's criticism of Donizetti's political recognition:

> Furthermore, my learned correspondent, as long as you take up arms against the titles and decorations bestowed on Donizetti as a public tribute to his outstanding achievements in the field of art, and as the highest mark of that homage which even crowned heads pay to genius, I have no objections. — You are right to be annoyed that His Majesty the Emperor of Austria appointed him and not someone else as *k. k. Hofcapellmeister* [*sic*], even though Donizetti is not only Italian but also Austrian, for he is a Bergamo native and Bergamo is a city in Lombardy, and the Emperor of Austria is not only Archduke of Austria but also King of Lombardy. Finally, you are also right to be offended that the King of the French made Donizetti a Knight of the Legion of Honour, that the Pope made him a Knight of the Order of St. Sylvester, and that the Sultan Abdul Meschid awarded him the Order of Nischan Istichar in diamonds, and I advise you to call the cabinet of the Tuilleries, the Holy See and the Ottoman Porte to account for this.[45]

Herz, as a convinced monarchist and editor of a monarchist newspaper, aimed his rhetorical guns at a socialist and republican correspondent. In Vienna, where Herz was regarded as the voice of the court when it came to Donizetti, his intervention carried considerable weight as it represented the court's point of view.

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les lettres de Francfort disent du mal ; le Börnstein dit son opinion ; ou bien on la lui fera dire sans avoir assisté véritablement, cela m'est égal". Letter to Leo Herz dated 2 December 1843, in Zavadini, *Donizetti*, no. 528, pp. 711–712.

45. "So lange Du ferner, mein gelehrter Hr. Correspondent, gegen die Titel und Ordensverleihungen zu Felde ziehst, die Donizetti zu Theil wurden, als öffentliche Würdigung seiner ausgezeichneten Leistungen im Gebiete der Kunst, und als allerhöchste Merkmale jener Huldigung, die selbst gekrönte Häupter dem Genie darbringen, habe ich auch nichts einzuwenden. – Du hast Recht, Dich zu ärgern, daß Se[ine] Majestät der Kaiser von Oesterreich, ihn und nicht Jemand Anderen zum k. k. Hofcapellmeister [*sic*] ernannte, obschon Donizetti nicht blos *Italiener* sondern auch Oesterreicher ist, denn er ist ein Bergamasker und Bergamo ist eine Stadt in der Lombardei, und der Kaiser von Oesterreich ist nicht nur Erzherzog von Oesterreich sondern auch König der Lombardei. Du hast endlich auch Recht, Dich zu kränken, daß der König der Franzosen Donizetti zum Ritter der Ehrenlegion, der Papst ihn zum Ritter des St. Sylvester-Ordens ernannte und daß der Sultan Abdul Meschid ihm den Nischan-Istichar-Orden in Brillanten verlieh, und ich rathe Dir, Du sollst deshalb das Cabinet der Tuillerien, den heiligen Stuhl und die Ottomannische Pforte zur Verantwortung ziehen". Leone [= Leo Herz], "Ein Wort der Wahrheit über die boshaft hämische Korrespondenz im *Frankfurter Conversationsblatt* vom 22. November 1843, Donizettis *Dom Sébastien* betreffend", *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*, 284 (28 November 1843), p. 1236.

The argument that because his move to Vienna Donizetti had lost his ability to compose is vehemently rejected in the guise of apparent indifference. When Herz points out that Donizetti was Italian and Austrian, and that the Emperor of Austria was also the King of Lombardy, he was not appealing to his readers' cosmopolitanism, but sought to underline the Empire's rightful possession of Lombardy. Although Donizetti was not Viennese, his role in Vienna corresponded to an almost natural position, precisely because it symbolised Vienna's imperial ambition, reflected in the composer's double subjecthood as an Austrian and as an Italian. At the same time, of course, Herz took issue with Börnstein's polemic against Donizetti's titles in general, the purpose of which was to denigrate the composer as a pawn of the court, alienated from any creativity of his own.

Börnstein, for his part, mocked Leone's (Leo Herz's) background:

> Leone! *Ex ungue leonem*. Not: head director of the k. k. Hoftheater nächst dem Kärnthnerthore *in partibus infidelium*, not: real privileged reviewer of the k. k. Kärnthnerthorhoftheater,—not real comital—nothing of all that, but merely quite modest: Leone.[46]

Börnstein also points to the fact that his differences with Herz date back to the times when they attended school together, pointing to Herz's own diligence and contrasting it with himself as a "mauvais sujet". Behind this stands his view that Herz had always been on the side of those in power.

After a lengthy attempt to remove the factual basis for Herz's rebuttal of *Dom Sébastien*, Börnstein continues: "You could have spared yourself the patriotic allusions, dear Leone! — firstly, they look very well made, and secondly, nobody has questioned or attacked either your or Mr Donizetti's patriotic merits — here we were only talking about *Dom Sebastian*".[47] This was obviously untrue, but it was in line with Börnstein's tactic of only hinting at the political content or allowing it to appear in the background of seemingly harmless remarks.

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46. "Leone! Ex ungue leonem. Nicht: Ober-Regisseur des k. k. Hoftheaters nächst dem Kärnthnerthore in partibus infidelium, nicht: wirklicher privilegirter Rezensent des k. k. Kärnthnerthorhoftheaters, – nicht wirklicher gräflicher – nichts von allem dem, sondern bloß ganz bescheiden: Leone". W. v. B. [= Heinrich Börnstein], "Aus Paris (14. Dezember.) – An Leone in Wien", *Frankfurter Konversationsblatt*, 350 (20 December 1843), p. 1400. (The allusion to "gräflicher" [comital] seems to refer to Herz's courtly connections, although in light of current knowledge this cannot be confirmed.)

47. "Die patriotischen Anspielungen, lieber Leone! hättest Du Dir ersparen können; – erstens: sehen sie sehr gemacht aus, und zweitens hat ja Niemand weder Deine, noch Herrn Donizetti's patriotische Verdienste in Frage gestellt, oder angegriffen – hier war nur vom *Dom Sebastian* die Rede".

Herz's reaction to Börnstein's comment on Donizetti's courtly position was similarly strong when, in April 1845, the *Berliner musikalische Zeitung* and the Leipzig *Signale für die musikalische Welt* spread the rumour that Donizetti had been invited to conduct his *Dom Sébastien* at the Berlin Court Opera and was to succeed Meyerbeer as Prussian *Hofcapellmeister*. The way this news was reported was an insult to Vienna, for the *Berliner musikalische Zeitung* explained in detail that with Spontini, Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer great composers had been (or would be) lost in Berlin, because they had not received the necessary support. It seems, added the journal, as if great musicians could not assert themselves here or did not do well, as if Berlin were the promised land of composers and musicians of second rank, of noble mediocrity. It then indignantly reported that Donizetti was to be Meyerbeer's successor:

> If that were true, Mr Donizetti would by no means be swaying on lilies in Berlin, for the Prussian government does not issue new censorship instructions for his sake, as the Austrian does. We have proved often enough that we know how to appreciate Donizetti's talent, we have not made him a heretic out of a narrow-minded patriotic prejudice or envy of his successes, but to grant him such a position on our stage would be to open the door to the ruin of German opera.[48]

With his wealth, Donizetti could live much better as a private citizen than in an official position. "He should lighten his office, leaving the rehearsals of the operas to others, supervising them only, and directing the development of our operatic stage only as a commanding general".[49]

From the Viennese point of view, the article was clearly offensive, and so it was inevitable that Leo Herz (signing again as L[eone]) responded vehemently and more or less officially in the *Illustrierte Theaterzeitung* on 14 May 1845—the successor to the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*,[50] which at the time was published by the Habsburg loyalist Bäuerle:

> Donizetti never dreamed or wished to come to Berlin, or to become Meyerbeer's successor, nor does he know that he is to conduct his *Dom Sebastian* there. Doni-

48. "Wenn das wahr wäre, so würde Hr. Donizetti keinesweges in Berlin auf Lilien sich wiegen, denn ihm zur Liebe erlässt die preussische Regierung keine neuen Censurinstructionen, wie die österreichische. Wir haben oft genug bewiesen, dass wir Donizetti's Talent zu würdigen wissen, wir haben ihn nicht nach einem engherzigen patriotischen Vorurtheile oder aus Neid über seine Erfolge verketzert, aber ihm eine solche Stellung bei unserer Bühne einräumen, hiesse dem Verderben der deutschen Oper das Thor öffnen".

49. "Er erleichtere sich sein Amt, überlasse das Einstudiren der Opern Andern, überwache dies nur und leite die Entwickelung unserer Opernbühne nur als kommandirender General". "Nachrichten. Berlin", *Berliner musikalische Zeitung*, 14 (5 April 1845).

50. The journal often changed its name for reasons not to be discussed here.

> zetti, who occupies such an excellent position as *Kammercapellmeister*[51] and *Hofcompositeur* to His Majesty the Emperor of Austria, and who accompanies such an honourable court charge to his monarch, should long for Berlin and trade it for Vienna, where he enjoys himself so much and lives so pleasantly! — No, dear *Musikzeitung*, he has just as little desire for this as he has for the opera sceptre in general, since he has no contact whatsoever with the opera theatre in his position as *k. k. Kammercapellmeister* and *Hofcompositeur*, and does not even take or want to take direct part in the Italian opera season in Vienna.[52]

In other words, Donizetti already had an office in Vienna as "commanding general", he was not concerned with the Court Opera and its day-to-day business, but had a prominent position as "honourable court charge" to "his" and not just any monarch. It is very clear here that Donizetti was to play a role at the Viennese court and in Viennese politics, similar to Meyerbeer's position in Berlin. In Herz's article, the *composer* Donizetti was mentioned only at the end, and then only indirectly: "We must be surprised, however, that a journal in Berlin should take such a role—in protecting German art".

The German wording of Donizetti's official denial is known only indirectly through a summary of the letter in the *Wiener allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*. Its wording suggests that it was Herz who wrote this denial for his friend Donizetti.[53] Herz / Leone chose a more polite wording in the official version, but the textual similarities to the article that appeared in the *Wiener allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, which quotes Donizetti's letter, are striking enough:

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51. It is significant that Herz uses the term *Kammercapellmeister* here—as the official mouthpiece of the court, so to speak.

52. "*Donizetti* hat nie geträumt noch gewünscht, nach Berlin zu kommen oder Meyerbeers Nachfolger zu werden, und weis auch nichts davon, daß er seinen *Dom Sebastian* dort dirigieren soll. Donizetti, der als Kammercapellmeister und Hofcompositeur Sr. Majestät des Kaisers von Oesterreich eine so ausgezeichnete Stellung einnimmt, und eine so ehrenvolle Hofcharge bei seinem Monarchen begleitet [*sic*], soll sich nach Berlin sehnen und Wien, woselbst er sich so gefällt und so höchst angenehm lebt, mit Berlin vertauschen!? – Nein, liebe Musikzeitung, dazu hat er wahrlich ebensowenig Lust, als es ihn überhaupt nach dem Opernscepter gelüstet, da er vielmehr in seiner Anstellung als k. k. Kammercapellmeister und Hofcompositeur mit dem Operntheater in gar keiner Berührung steht, ja nicht einmal an der italienischen Opernsaison in Wien direct Antheil nimmt oder nehmen will". L[EONE], "(Donizetti als Schreckensfantom der Berliner Musikzeitung)", *Illustrierte Theaterzeitung*, 115 (14 May 1845), p. 464.

53. German version indirectly reproduced in "Berichtigung", *Wiener allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, 55 (8 May 1845), p. 220. This version was quoted in "Wien", *Berliner musikalische Zeitung*, 22 (31 May 1845), no pagination, last page of the issue. Italian version letter "Al Sig. Smith, Redattore della Gazzetta Musicale" in ZAVADINI, *Donizetti*, no. 633, p. 808. See also the letter to Tommaso Persico, *ibid*., no. 636, pp. 810–811.

> As far as the latter is concerned, Donizetti never received an invitation to stage his new opera *Dom Sebastian* in Berlin, but with regard to the former, the esteemed maestro declares that in his position as Hof-Compositeur und Kammer-Kapellmeister to H.M. the Emperor of Austria, it does not seem desirable to him to apply for a position of this kind elsewhere.[54]

An Italian version of the letter was sent to the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* by Donizetti himself, but was not published. The translated Italian version reads: "For the latter matter I had no invitation, and as for the former, it even could not have been considered, as the position I have the honour of occupying with H. M. the Emperor and King would not allow me to take on any other commitments of such a nature".[55]

It is noteworthy that the word "King" (namely: of Lombardy) is added here, which corresponds exactly to the argumentation in Herz's text, quoted above, and was important to Donizetti's position in Italy. What is more, the concluding sentence shows a sense of irony that was not unusual for Herz but not characteristic of Donizetti: "Also, [...] a country that counts men like Spontini, Meyerbeer and Mendelssohn among its own should hardly feel the need for other composers".[56] In 1845, none of these composers played an international role comparable to that of Donizetti in the number of stage performances. Spontini had gone out of fashion, Meyerbeer had not composed an internationally successful work since *Les Huguenots* (1836) and Mendelssohn enjoyed recognition in Germany and Britain only.

The *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* reported in November 1845 on the Prussian composer Meyerbeer's attempted resignation as *Generalmusikdirektor* (which had been rejected by the Prussian king).[57] However, there were no reports in May 1845 about the Italian (or rather Lombard) composer Donizetti's denial and his wish to retain his position at the imperial court in Vienna. Traditionally, Italian music critics stayed out of political disputes. In this re-

54. "Was das letztere anbelangt, so hat Donizetti nie eine Einladung, seine neue Oper *Dom Sebastian* in Berlin in Scene zu setzen, erhalten, in Bezug auf das erstere jedoch erklärt der geschätze Maestro, daß es ihm in seiner Stellung als Hof-Compositeur und Kammer-Kapellmeister S. M. des Kaisers von Oesterreich nicht wünschenswerth erscheine, sich um eine anderwärtige Anstellung der Art zu bewerben". "Berichtigung", p. 220.

55. "Per quest'ultimo oggetto non ebbi alcun invito, e circa il primo non ne ha potuto essere questione, giacché il posto che ho l'onore di occupare presso S. M. l'Imperatore e Re non mi permetterebbe d'assumere altri impegni di tal natura".

56. "Auch dürfte wohl, nach seiner Aeußerung, ein Land, das Männer wie Spontini, Meyerbeer und Mendelssohn zu den Seinen zählt, kaum ein Bedürfniß nach andern Componisten fühlen". / "E d'altronde in un paese dove trovansi riuniti Spontini, Meyerbeer, Mendelsshon [*sic*] è troppo a dovizia fornito per abbisognare d'altro".

57. "Notizie", *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, 47 (23 November 1845), p. 200.

spect, the refusal to print Donizetti's letter of denial is an indication that his role at the Viennese court was understood as more than a mere honorary post, that it was seen as a political position. It almost looks like an editorial accident that Donizetti's Austrian court title was mentioned in the newspaper, even if only once in the whole year of 1845.[58]

58. Nine lines of a report on a court concert at Schönbrunn that was, so to speak, politically conflict-free and limited to the facts, and in this context Donizetti's court title was mentioned: "The chamber chapel master and court composer Mr Gaetano Donizetti accompanied the singing pieces on the piano". "Il maestro di cappella di camera e compositore di corte signor Gaetano Donizetti accompagnò al pianoforte i pezzi di canto". "Altre cose", *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, 25 (22 June 1845), p. 108.

Abstract
Throughout the 1830s, Donizetti pursued plans to progress his career in Paris. Vienna played only a secondary role in his considerations, offering him less favourable conditions. When in 1842 he received a contract from the Vienna Court Opera, observers quickly recognised political potential behind the offer. Donizetti's main supporter in Vienna was Leo Herz, a leading Viennese music journalist, known to be loyal to the emperor and to Metternich. Donizetti's new role in Vienna was meant to mirror Meyerbeer's role in Berlin. In the ensuing debates, Herz pointed out that Donizetti was both Italian and Austrian, a native from the Austrian Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia. When rumours began to circulate that Donizetti considered the option of succeeding Meyerbeer in Berlin, Herz vehemently refuted these reports. According to Herz, Donizetti held such a prestigious position at the Viennese court that any consideration of moving to Berlin was out of question.

Anna Sanda

Donizetti in (Buda-)Pest: opera, national identity, and transcultural encounters in Habsburg Europe, 1837–1847

A decade after the zenith of Gaetano Donizetti's great success at Pest's National Theatre, in the autumn of 1862, the first Hungarian-language music journal *Zenészeti Lapok* [Musical Journal] published a short biography of the composer in five successive parts.[1] Put together by László Maszlagi, the text was an abridged translation of William Neumann's German biography of Donizetti, originally published in 1854. The work describes the late 1830s, the years leading to the summit of Donizetti's career, as the decisive ones in the composer's life.[2] The author's account of the circumstances of Donizetti's ultimate success is telling:

> after Rossini, Pacini and Bellini had faded away, Donizetti became the head of the new Italian composers, and in circumstances that only belong to such a great and envied position. [...] Even in Germany there were only a few cities, whose theatres did not perform his newest productions. *Alina, regina di Golconda*, *Anna Bolena*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Belisario*, *Lucia di Lammermoor* were all familiar to the German stage.[3]

1. *Zenészeti Lapok. Heti közlöny a zeneművészet öszes ágai köréből* [Musical Journal. Weekly Gazette from all the Branches of Music] (1860–1876): see a description of the journal prepared by János Kárpáti (with the introduction by Katalin Szerző) for the Répertoire international de la presse musicale: <https://www.ripm.org/index.php?page=JournalInfo&ABB=ZLA> (last accessed 27 July 2025). László Maszlagi, "Donizetti Cajetán élete", *Zenészeti Lapok. Heti közlöny a zeneművészet öszes ágai köréből*, edited by Kornél Ábrányi, 3/1 (2 October 1862), pp. 2–4; 3/2 (9 October 1862), pp. 10–12; 3/3 (16 October 1862), pp. 18–21; 3/5 (30 October 1862), pp. 35–36; 3/6 (6 November 1862), pp. 42–43. I would like to thank the editorial team and the reviewers of this essay for their invaluable comments and suggestions, which have considerably shaped its final version.

2. William Neumann, *Gaëtano Donizetti: Eine Biographie* (Cassel: Ernst Balde, 1854), *Die Componisten der neueren Zeit*, 8, <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/view/bsb10623716> (last accessed 21 November 2024).

3. "Most tehát Donizetti, Rossini, Pacini s Bellini elhallgatása után ott állott az uj olasz zeneköltők élén, s oly körülmények közt állt, melyek csak ily nagy és irigyelt állás sajátjai. [...] de még Németországban is alig volt valamire való város, melynek legújabb zene és drámai müveit előadni ne buzgólkodtak volna. A 'Golkondai királynő', 'Boleyn Anna', 'Bájital', 'Borgia Lucretia', 'Belizár', 'Lammermoori Lucia' dalmüvek a német színpadokon is otthonosak levének". Maszlagi, "Donizetti Cajetán élete", *Zenészeti Lapok*, 3/2, p. 11.

The article then explains Donizetti's recipe for success, a consequence of the composer's skill of subtly combining three distinct musical styles: "classical-German" instrumental music; French Romanticism, understood as the expression of an adventurous, twisty and mysterious character; and finally sweet Italian melodiousness and lightness. In his translation, however, Maszlagi slightly departs from Neumann's account by adding that Donizetti's *German training* came from Simon Mayr:

> Donizetti was brought up in Mayr's school [...], and so from his childhood listening to German classical and chamber music he had the best foundation [...].
>
> The French romance of the opera was combined with the light melodious, bravura coloraturas of the Italian convention, often ingeniously, in such a way that from this mixture came a tasty drink, whose intoxicating effect was triggered with each repeated enjoyment.[4]

What is noticeable in this short sketch of Donizetti's career, is its ambivalent nature. It explains the composer's popularity, but immediately (dis-)qualifies it. Only the favourable constellation of Vincenzo Bellini's death, as well as Gioachino Rossini's and Giovanni Pacini's withdrawal from the operatic stage, paved the way for Donizetti. Furthermore, his music's originality is dismissed as an almost random assemblage of different national traditions; and only the composer's proper German training was the basis for his success.

The purpose of this 1862 publication and its aims were closely linked to the Hungarian context in which it appeared. Much had changed in Hungary since Donizetti's arrival at the zenith of European operatic life in the 1830s and 1840s. Due to the changing political climate, Hungary's cultural and social life presented itself in a different and new light. Maszlagi's reference to Mayr and the Germanic origins of Donizetti's skills aligned with the musical ambition of *Zenészeti Lapok*, whose editors Mihály Mosonyi (1815–1870) and Kornél

4. "Donizetti a Mayr-féle iskolában nevelkedett [...], s így már gyermekorrától fogva a német klasszikus és kamarai zenét hallgatá ő tehát a legjobb alapokat szerzé meg [...] az opera francia regényességét az olasz szokásnak könnyü melódiás, bravour szökéseivel, gyakran genialis módon, olyképpen alakítá egygyé, hogy e keverékből jól izlő ital eredett, melynek részegítő hatása minden ismételt élvezésnél működőnek nyilvánult". Maszlagi, "Donizetti Cajetán élete", *Zenészeti Lapok*, 3/2, pp. 10, 12. Cf. Neumann, *Gaëtano Donizetti*, p. 18: "Etwas davon ['von jenen harmonischen Würfen, deren sich vorzüglich Frankreich bediente'] mußte auch nach Italien kommen, seitdem die Lebensklugheit des italienischen Opernfürsten vom Grafen Ory bis auf seinen Wilhelm Tell in oft genialer Weise die französische Romantik der Opernmusik mit dem leicht Melodischen und flüchtig Bravourmäßigen der italienischen Manier dergestalt in Eins zusammengegossen hatte, daß in der That ein neues wohlschmeckendes Getränk aus der Mischung wurde, das seine schnell berauschende Kraft bei jedem wiederholten Genusse als wirksam bethätigte".

Ábrányi (1822–1903, editor-in-chief) were enthusiasts of Franz Liszt and of Richard Wagner's *Zukunftsmusik* [Music of the future], referring to the essay the German composer had published, in French, in 1860.[5] The (aesthetic) mission of Hungary's first specialised music magazine, at least during its early years, was to be a "central theoretical forum", broadly didactic in character, with an intention to "educate" Hungarian audiences in line with "European" standards.[6] This strategy had to include Donizetti, but it also had to express a critical distance to Italian opera, a sentiment that had emerged among German language critics since the public's almost fanatical endorsement of Gioachino Rossini in the 1820s.[7] Finally, the series of articles on Donizetti also responded to Pest's current opera season: Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia* was about to return to the Hungarian National Theatre in a new production, to be premiered on 22 November 1862 (Figure 1b). The dramatist Ede Szigligeti (1814–1878) and the conductor Károly Huber (Karl Huber, 1828–1885) being responsible for the production's staging and music respectively.[8]

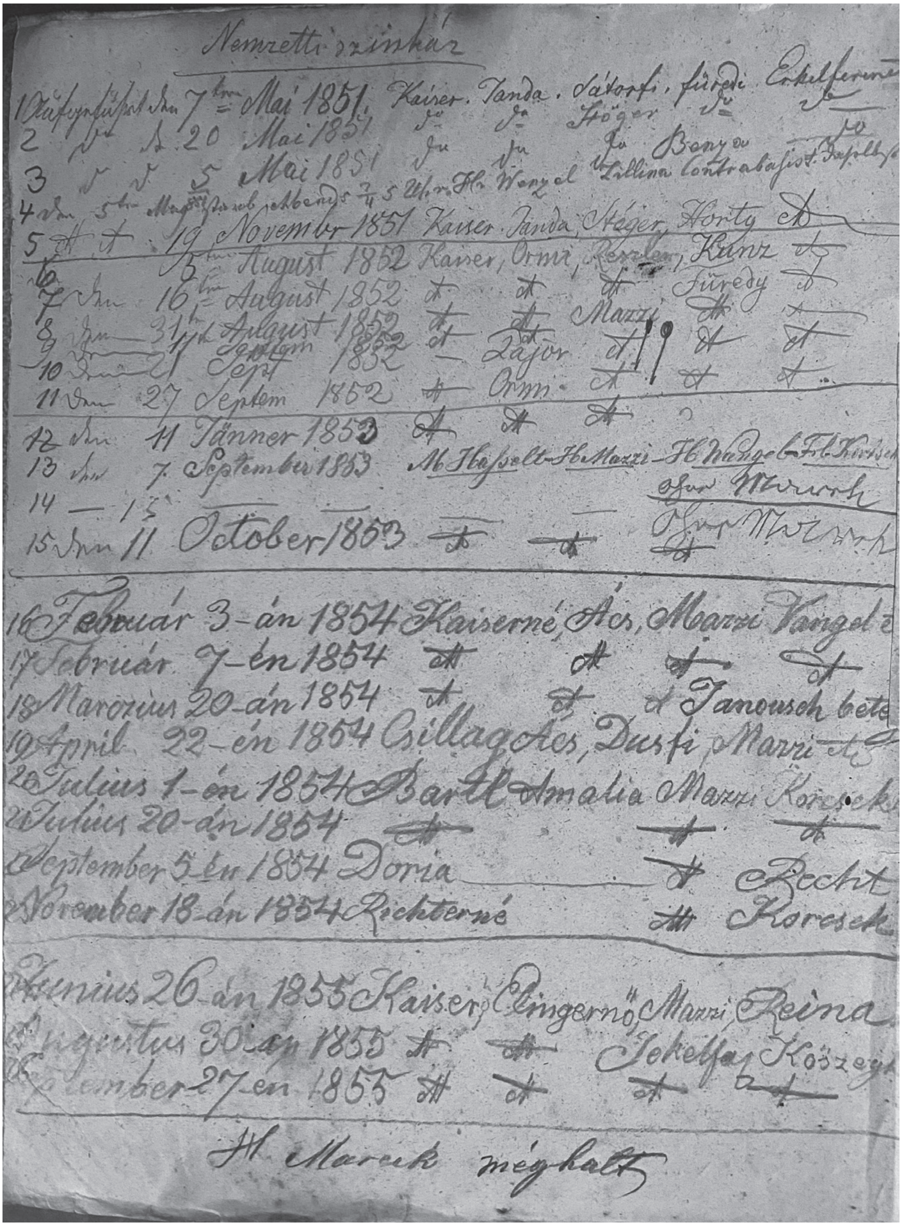
Taking this context into account, the publication of Donizetti's late and subtly polemical biography in the Hungarian periodical reflects not just German language debates on Italian opera; it also points to the distinctive historical and historiographical approach that characterises the composer's reception

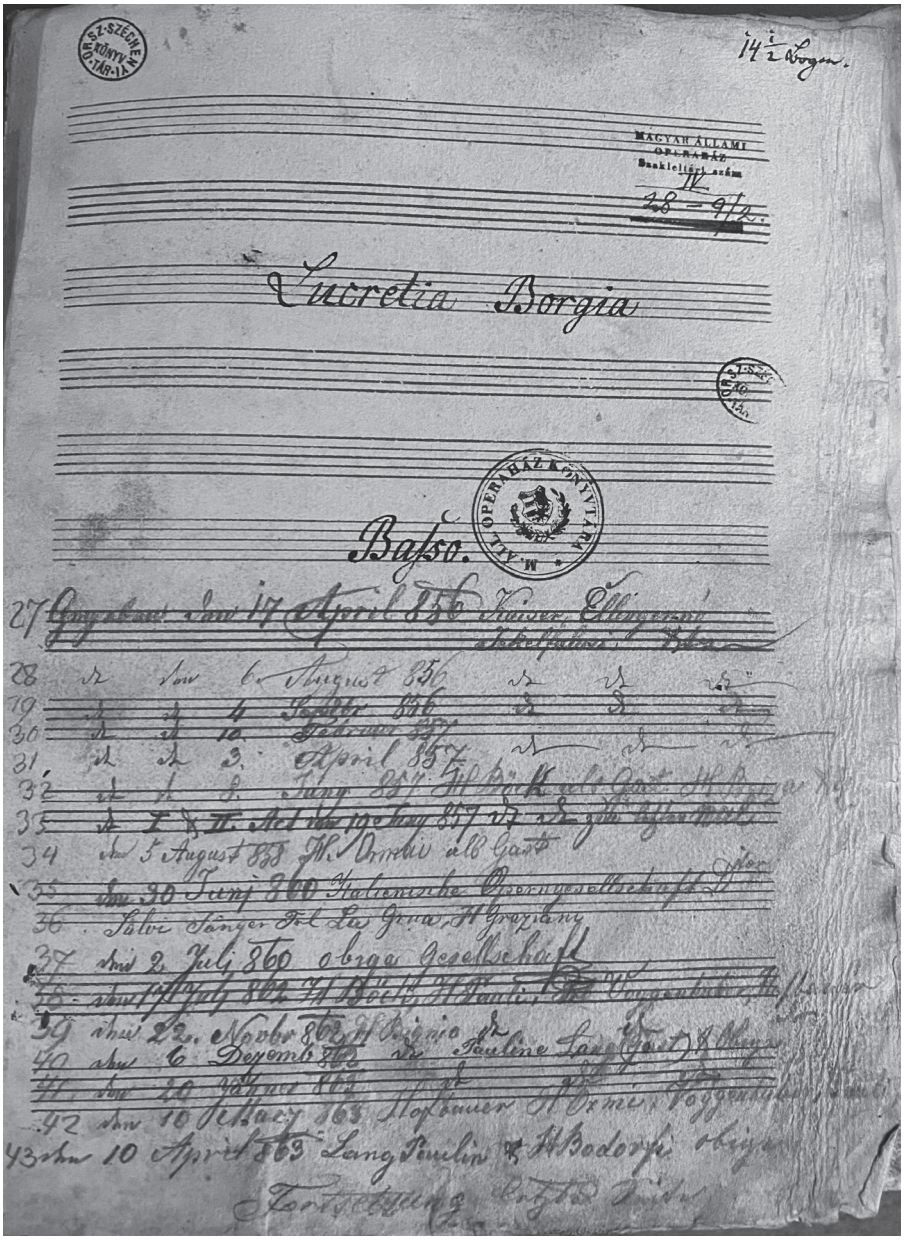
5. On the editors' aesthetic concepts see Tibor Tallián, "'Opern dieses größten Meisters der Jetztzeit.' Meyerbeer fogadtatása a korabeli magyar operaszínpadon", *Zenetudományi Dolgozatok* (2004–2005), pp. 1–60, here p. 24. *Zenészeti Lapok* was launched in the autumn of 1860 and run until 1876. For the first German version of Wagner's article see Richard Wagner, *Zukunftsmusik: Brief an einen französischen Freund als Vorwort zu einer Prosa-Uebersetzung seiner Operndichtungen* (Leipzig: J. J. Weber, 1861).

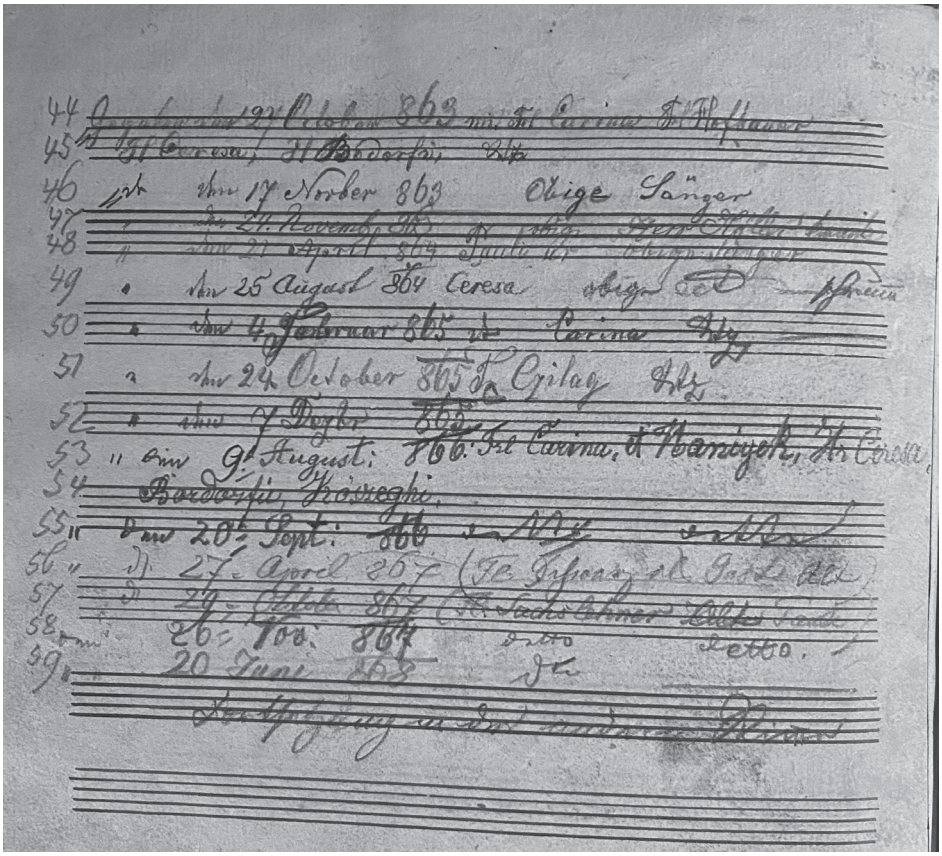
6. As Katalin Szerző has shown, from the beginning, articles published in the journal were devoted to theoretical subjects such as harmony and thorough-bass, music history, Hungarian musical idioms, operatic productions at Hungary's National Theatre, and to the premieres of works by Liszt, Erkel, Mihály Mosonyi and Ödön Mihalovich. The periodical also summarized in Hungarian the primarily German musicological literature of the period. These articles served the dual purpose of circulating contemporary information on music, thereby laying the foundations of Hungarian musicological terminology. See Katalin Szerző, "Introduction to János Kárpáti, *Zenészeti Lapok* (1860–1876)", *Répertoire international de la presse musicale*, p. X, <ripm.org/pdf/Introductions/ZLAintroEnglish.pdf> (last accessed 20 February 2025).

7. On the origin of this debate see *The Invention of Beethoven and Rossini. Historiography, Analysis, Criticism*, edited by Nicholas Mathew and Benjamin Walton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). On Rossini's reception in Habsburg Europe see Axel Körner, "Culture for a cosmopolitan empire: Rossini between Vienna and the lands of the Bohemian crown", in *Gioachino Rossini 1868–2018: la musica e il mondo*, edited by Ilaria Narici, Emilio Sala, Emanuele Senici, Benjamin Walton (Pesaro: Fondazione Rossini, 2018), pp. 357–380. Also *Rossini in Wien. Tagungsband*, edited by Reto Müller (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2024).

8. See the playbill: <http://resolver.szinhaztortenet.hu/collection/OSZMI134438> (last accessed 16 February 2025).


Nemzetti szinház
1 Aufgeführt den 7ten Mai 1851. Kaiser. Tanda. Sátorfi. füredi Erkelferenc
2 do d. 20 Mai 1851 do do Stöger do do
3 d d 5 Mai 1851 do do Hr. Wenzel Lillina contrabassist Benza
4 den 5ten ... 7/4 5 Uhr Hr. Wenzel
5 d d 19 November 1851 Kaiser Tanda Stéger Hority do
6 5ten August 1852 Kaiser, Ormi, Kessler, Kunz do
7 den 16ten August 1852 do do do Füredy do
8 den 31ten August 1852 do do Mazzi do do
9 den 7 Septem 1852 do do do do do
10 den 21 Sept 1852 — Zajor do do do
11 den 27 Septem 1852 do Ormi do do do
12 den 11 Jänner 1853 do do do
13 den 7. September 1853 M. Hasselt Hr Mazzi Hr Wangel Frl Kirschner
14 — 15
15 den 11 October 1853 do do do
16 Február 3-án 1854 Kaiserné, Ács, Mazzi Vangel
17 Február 7-én 1854 do do do do
18 Marczius 20-án 1854 do do do Janousch
19 April 22-én 1854 Csillag Ács, Dusfi Mazzi do
20 Julius 1-én 1854 Bartl Amalia Mazzi Koresek
21 Julius 20-án 1854 do do do
22 September 5-én 1854 Doria do Recht
23 November 18-án 1854 Richterné do Koresek
Junius 26-án 1855 Kaiser, Clingernő, Mazzi Reina
Augustus 30-án 1855 do do Jekelfay Kőszeghy
September 27-én 1855 do do do do
Hr. Mareck meghalt





Figures 1a–c
Performance dates of *Lucrezia Borgia* in the set of parts of the performing material, H-Bn, ZBK 80 f.

in the musical life of Pest during the years prior to the Hungarian Compromise of 1867, when Hungary would achieve independent statehood within the Habsburg monarchy. Maszlagi treats the public success of Donizetti's operas as "a tasty drink"[9]—nothing more than an invigorating entertainment that was not to be taken too seriously in terms of their cultural-political impact on Hungary's emerging nation-state.

A generation earlier, audiences in Pest had gradually acquired a taste for this "drink", beginning quite literally with the reception of a German *Liebestrank* (*L'elisir d'amore*) in the late 1830s, which continued to inebriate audiences until the 1850s.[10] By the time Maszlagi published his biography in 1862, signs of a "sobering phase" had become discernible, at least as the critics were concerned. The cultural and political landscape of Pest had changed significantly during this quarter of a century. After the 1848 Revolution—which led to the dissolution of the nation's estates-based social structure—Hungary went through a profound constitutional crisis, which was only resolved with the Hungarian Compromise of 1867 and creation of the dual monarchy, celebrated in Hungary by means of the coronation.[11] During the 1840s and 1850s, however, in quantitative terms alone, the proportion of Donizetti's operas within the repertoire of both the German and the Hungarian (later National) Theatre in Pest seems striking, speaking for the contemporary interest in Donizetti, even though this trend has been largely ignored by scholarship. Although performance lists,[12] playbills[13] and other materials documenting the

9. Maszlagi, "Donizetti Cajetán élete", *Zenészeti Lapok*, 3/2, p. 12.

10. The first premiere of an opera by Donizetti was *Anna Bolena*, produced at the Pest German Theatre (Royal Municipal Theatre) on 29 August 1833, but resulting in a failure. Much more successful was *Der Liebestrank*, also taking place at the German Theatre on 30 July 1838.

11. Cf. Judit Beke-Martos, "After 1848: the heightened constitutional importance of the Habsburg coronation in Hungary", in *More than Mere Spectacle: Coronations and Inaugurations in the Habsburg Monarchy during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, edited by Klaas Van Gelder (New York–Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2021), pp. 283–302.

12. On the German Theatre and German-language theatre life: Jolán Kádár, *A pesti és budai német színészet története* [The history of German theatricals in Pest and Buda 1812–1847] (Budapest: 1923), see the table of performances at the Pest German Theatre between Easter 1824 and 2 February 1847; Wolfgang Binal, *Deutschsprachiges Theater in Budapest* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1972); *Deutsche Theater in Pest und Ofen 1770–1850. Titelkatalog und Dokumentation I–II*, edited by Hedvig Belitska-Scholtz and Olga Somorjai (Budapest: Argumentum, 1995). On the Hungarian Theatre and beginning of the Hungarian language theatre life: Tibor Tallián, *Schodel Rozália és a hivatásos magyar operajátszás kezdetei* [Rozália Schodel and the beginnings of the professional Hungarian opera playing] (Budapest: Balassi, 2015); Jolán Pukánszkyné Kádár, *A Nemzeti Színház százéves története* [A hundred years of the National Theater], 2 vols. (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1938–1940).

13. Algernon László Hajdu, *A Nemzeti Színház műsorlexikona* [Programme lexicon of the National Theater], 5 vols. (Budapest: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, 1944); Géza Staud, "A

preponderance of Donizetti within the repertoire have been consistently collected by scholars over the last century,[14] no dedicated study to Donizetti's role during the formative years of Pest's theatrical and musical life has been attempted.[15] Pest's two theatres and their repertoire are generally studied in separation, although they shared a common pool of musicians and singers. The fact that Donizetti wrote no works specifically for Pest, and that he had no personal ties to the city's institutions, might have created a blind spot in opera research.[16] Even though recent research has discussed Donizetti in the context of his Viennese reception, it has done so without considering Hungary's role within the operatic culture of Habsburg Europe.[17]

Against this background, this article attempts to draw attention to the cultural-political and institutional circumstances of Donizetti's reception in Pest during the decade prior to the revolution of 1848. Moving the capital from Pressburg/Pozsony, the old site of Hungary's coronations, to (Buda-)Pest was more than mere symbolism and carried significant cultural and political prestige in its wake. Emerging as one of the Empire's new capital cities, Donizetti's oeuvre spoke to the city's cosmopolitan and imperial ambitions, as well as its national ones. The article therefore aims to add to this special issue's understanding of the relationship between opera and politics from the perspective of transnational encounters in Pest during the 1830s and 1840s—at a time when

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nemzeti színház műsora 1837–1964", in *A Nemzeti Színház*, edited by Székely György (Budapest: 1965), pp. 153–270.

14. <https://www.oszk.hu/en/music_collection> (last accessed 16 February 2025): The Theatre Music Collection of the National Széchényi Library in Budapest preserves the musical material of stage productions from the repertoire of municipal and rural theatres dating from around the 1830s, including the historical sheet music collections of the Népszínház (National Theatre), the Nemzeti Színház (National Theatre) and the Magyar Királyi Operaház (Hungarian Royal Opera House). The Collection of the Hungarian Theatre Museum and Institute preserves artefacts, playbills, pictures, photographs and other related documentations in large quantities.

15. In his monograph *Schodel Rozália*, Tibor Tallián discusses Donizetti's performances and operas, but from the perspective of Rozália Schodel's operatic roles.

16. However, there may have been an enquiry from the National Theatre in Pest to Donizetti to write a "Hungarian opera", which was never realised. Donizetti mentions this in a letter dated March 1843 addressed to Michele Accursi: "Volevano a Pest un opera Ungherese – anco là, a monte", in *Studi donizettiani*, 1 (1962), no. 101, pp. 94–96, here p. 96.

17. *Donizetti und seine Zeit in Wien*, edited by Michael Jahn (Vienna: Der Apfel, 2010); Claudio Vellutini, "Donizetti, Vienna, cosmopolitanism", *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 73/1 (2020), pp. 1–52; Claudio Vellutini, "Italian opera in *Vormärz* Vienna: Gaetano Donizetti, Bartolomeo Merelli and Habsburg cultural policies in the mid-1830s", in *Italian Opera in Global and Transnational Perspective. Reimagining Italianità in the Long Nineteenth Century*, edited by Axel Körner and Paulo M. Kühl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 96–112.

Donizetti's career is mostly associated with his position in the imperial capital Vienna. The repertoire performed in Pest's German and Hungarian theatres will take centre stage, as does the competition and interaction their respective productions were subject to.

Opera between national and cosmopolitan ideas (1837–1847)

It was a correlation and, admittedly, a coincidence: the first Donizetti premieres and the opening of the first Hungarian-language theatre in Pest overlapped and were therefore closely connected with each other. Taken together, they brought a new impetus to the city's operatic life and challenged the institutional standing of the German and Hungarian theatres—one firmly established, the other new, following long and arduous political lobbying. There was fierce competition for having a full house, since both theatres aspired to acquire a leading cultural position in the city and gain a reputation equal to other theatrical centres within the Habsburg Empire. Therefore, following the latest trends and performing works that were played elsewhere on European stages was not just a question of prestige, but also had more existential implications, raising the question whether the citizenry would be willing to support two leading theatres. Although Donizetti's works were performed in both theatres, the circumstances of their respective productions (especially during the first few seasons of the Hungarian Theatre) differed considerably.

Pest's German Theatre was situated on what today is Vörösmarty square (Figures 2a–b). It was an imposing three-storey building, able to accommodate 3500 spectators.[18] With these numbers the new theatre surpassed anything that had existed previously in the city, or in the Empire's eastern crownlands. The Rondellentheater, which had functioned as a permanent venue between 1774 and 1812, on the other side of the Danube in Buda, had a capacity of merely 500, with just eighteen boxes. Even the Royal German Theatre (Königlich deutsches Theater)—Joseph II had decreed in 1783 to convert the former Carmelite Church on the Buda Castle hill into a theatre—only had 1200 seats.

After it was ceremonially opened, Pest's German Theatre became, in the words of Jolán Kádár, "a vehicle of cultural values" and provided audiences in Pest and Buda a portal that connected them with major operatic centres else-

18. See the prize question "Miképen lehetne a Magyar játékszínt Budapesten állandóan megalapítani?" [How can the Hungarian theatre in Budapest be permanently established?], in *Magyar játékszíni jutalmazott feleleletek* (Buda: Magyar Tudós Társaság, 1843) with 19 submitted and 18 accepted answers; Graf István Széchenyi, *A Magyar játékszínről* [On the Hungarian theatre system] (Pest: 1832).

Figures 2a–b
Exterior and interior views of the German Theatre in Pest (Königlich-Städtisches Theater, 1812–1847), H-Bn, TR 2.520.

where in Europe.[19] This central cultural function was embodied by the famous actors and singers who accepted invitations to perform on the stage of this new august building. Its opening offered a prominent occasion for dynastic representation. Initially planned to coincide with the birthday of Emperor Francis I on 12 February 1812, the opening ceremony had to be brought forward by three days, because that year the birthday fell on Ash Wednesday. Prestigious commissions were meant to mark the occasion, including August von Kotzebue's works *König Stephan oder Ungerns* [*sic*] *erster Wohltäter* and *Die Ruinen von Athen*, accompanied by Ludwig van Beethoven's music.[20] In terms of its repertoire and performance practices, which included both plays and a variety of musical genres, the German Theatre orientated itself towards the Theater in der Josephstadt or the Theater an der Wien. The theatre's size and the artistic capacity of its ensemble were in line with what could be found in Vienna's suburban theatres.[21] Operatic productions mainly took place in German, with occasional exceptions. After a premiere with *Anna Bolena*, which failed to achieve a favourable reception and ended after a short run, Donizetti had his breakthrough at the German Theatre with a performance of *Der Liebestrank*. The ensuing frenzy around Donizetti (see Table 1) only ended when a fire destroyed the theatre in 1847, causing irreparable damage to the institution's cultural and political prestige.

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19. "But even in the most difficult years, despite all the imbalances in standards, this German theatre was a transmitter of cultural values, and a link that connected the audiences of Pest and Buda to Europe; it made theatre a necessity for them [for both cities] here. No one has ever mentioned this merit". "De a legmostohább években is, minden színvonalbeli egyenetlenség ellenére is kulturális értékek közvetítője volt ez a német színészet s ez is egy kapocs, amely Pest és Buda közönségét Európához fűzte; szükségletté tette itt a színházat számára. Ezt az érdemét soha senkisem [*sic*] említette". Kádár, *A pesti és Budai német színészet története*, pp. 102–103.

20. Ludwig van Beethoven, *Musik zum Festspiel-Nachspiel "Die Ruinen von Athen" von August von Kotzebue für Sopran, Bariton, Bass, Chor und Orchester* op. 113. The librettos are kept in the Széchényi National Library in Budapest: H-Bn SZT SZL Rest BP 1812.02.09. (Theatre Collection); H-Bn 208.437/2; 206.756/2 (General Collection). Cf. Robert Gragger, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur in Ungarn. Von Maria Theresia bis zur Gegenwart*, 1, *Vormärz* (Wien–Leipzig: Buchdruckerei und Verlagsbuchandlung Carl Fromme, 1914), p. 9; Mária Rózsa, "August von Kotzebues Stücke für die Eröffnung des königlich-städtischen Theaters in Pest", in *Kotzebue International*, <https://doi.org/10.58079/qn0r> (last accessed 22 November 2024).

21. Tallián, "Opern dieses größten Meisters der Jetztzeit", p. 1. Tallián points out that the German versions of international operas performed in Pest were in the vast majority originally produced at the Theater in der Josephstadt or the Theater an der Wien. Cf. Tibor Tallián, "A Nemzeti Színház zenekara Erkel Ferenc idejében [The Orchestra of the National Theatre under Ferenc Erkel]", in *Erkel Ferencről, Kodály Zoltánról és korukról*, edited by Ferenc Bónis (Budapest: Püski, 2001), pp. 26–40.

Table 1
Donizetti's operas at the German Theatre (Königlich-Städtisches Theater) in Pest until the fire of 1847.

Title (original)	Performance title	First performance	Last performance	Number of performances
Anna Bolena		29.08.1833	05.06.1840	6
L'elisir d'amore	*Der Liebestrank*	30.07.1838	11.09.1846	48
Belisario		03.11.1838	22.06.1846	28
Lucia di Lammermoor	*Lucia von Lammermoor*	13.01.1840	17.01.1846	26
Linda di Chamounix	*Linda von Chamounix*	10.09.1842	28.02.1846	19
Lucrezia Borgia	*Lucretia Borgia*	07.01.1843	24.09.1846	18
Gemma di Vergy		12.06.1843	14.06.1843	2
Maria di Rohan		04.01.1845	04.09.1845	6
La Fille du régiment	*Marie, die Tochter des Regiments*	09.04.1844	04.03.1846	15
Dom Sébastien, roi de Portugal	*Dom Sebastian von Portugal*	03.06.1846	07.11.1846	9
Parisina		25.01.1847		1

Across town, the Hungarian Theatre in Pest opened on 22 August 1837. After several decades of cultural and political debate, it relied heavily on the politically charged loyalties of its audience.[22] This allegiance was based on the cultural-political promotion of the Hungarian language, an issue tied to broader questions of Hungarian national identity. A central cultural-political aim of the theatre's foundation was to raise the Hungarian language to a "European lev-

22. József Bajza [first director of the Nationaltheaters 1837–1838], *Szózat a Pesti Magyar Színház ügyében* [Proclamation on the situation of the Pest Hungarian Theatres] (Buda: 1839), p. 5: "The number of those among us who mask their lack of patriotism with a fondness of art is not small; they go to German theatres despite being Hungarians, because they say that there the [artistic] perfection is higher". "Nem kicsiny közöttünk azoknak a száma is, kik hazafiútlanságokat művészet szeretetével palástolják; német színházakba járnak magyar létökre, mert, úgy mondanak, ott a tökély magasabb fokán áll". Cf. Wolfgang Binal, *Deutschsprachiges Theater in Budapest. Von den Anfängen bis zum Brand des Theaters in der Wollgasse 1889* (Graz–Vienna–Cologne: Böhlau, 1972), *Theatergeschichte Österreichs*, 10, *Donaumonarchie*, Heft 11, pp. 168–169.

el", comparable to the role other national vernaculars played in the European theatre industry. This meant that transnational connections and cosmopolitan ideas, as represented by the theatre's ambition to produce great works of European opera, were inseparable from national and linguistic aspirations. As a consequence, a permanent building for an exclusively Hungarian-language theatre in Pest was considered a momentous step to meet these expectations, but it remained a potentially risky experiment, as it was difficult to foresee whether the Hungarian language would hold up to the ambition of establishing itself as an idiom of operatic production. Initially the theatre was not run as a state institution, but as a joint stock company under the control of the city council in the then predominantly German-speaking city. Only in 1840 was it placed under state administration and renamed as Hungarian National Theatre.[23]

After its opening, the new playhouse had to quickly offer a fashionable repertoire, similar to that performed on major opera stages elsewhere in Europe.[24] The Hungarian premiere of *L'elisir d'amore* (*Szerelmi bájital*) became the theatre's first Donizetti opera, premiered on 7 November 1838.[25] This production was followed by the Hungarian premieres of *Gemma di Vergy*, *Lucrezia Borgia*[26] and *Il borgomastro di Saardam*, produced in quick succession over the following year. The first Hungarian-language performance of *Lucia di Lammermoor* took place on 4 August 1846. Following the revolution of 1848, during the years of passive resistance against Habsburg rule, Donizetti's creative output seems to have reached its peak at the Hungarian Theatre (see Table 2). His operas formed by far the largest section of the repertoire (18 premieres in total), comparable only to Verdi in the second half of the

23. Pest Hungarian Theatre took the name National Theatre on a symbolic occasion, the premiere of the first opera composed by Ferenc Erkel, *Mária Bátori* on 8 August 1840, and at the end of the year the institution was granted the status of a national theatre. Cf. *A Nemzeti Színház százéves története*, 2, *Iratok a Nemzeti Színház történetéhez* [The centenary of the National Theatre, 2, Documents on the history of the National Theatre], edited by Jolán Kádár Pukánszkyné (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1938), pp. 136–140; *Magyar Színháztörténet 1790–1873* [History of the Hungarian Theatre 1790–1873], edited by Ferenc Kerényi (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), vol. 1, pp. 284–285.

24. For a detailed description of the written and musical sources of the Pest Hungarian Theatre see: Adél Horváth, *A Pest-Budai zenés színjátszás forrásai. A Várszínház és a Pesti Magyar Színház előadásai 1833–1840 között* [The sources of musical theatre in Pest-Buda. Performances of the Castle Theatre and the Pest Hungarian Theatre 1833–1840], Master Thesis (Budapest: Liszt Academy of Music, 2013); cf. *A Magyar Színháztörténet forrásai* [Sources of Hungarian Theatre history], 3 vols., edited by Géza Staud (Budapest: Színháztudományi Intézet, 1962).

25. H-Bn MM. 13.533: Hungarian libretto, transl. Sámuel Filep Deáki, manuscript, 1838, 41 fols., 23 cm; Handwriting of Sándor Gillyén; H-Bn, ZBK 84/4, manuscript score.

26. H-Bn MM. 13.559: Hungarian libretto, transl. István Jakab, manuscript, 1839, 36 fols., 28 cm.; H-Bn, ZBK 80/a, manuscript score.

nineteenth century. The sheer volume of his works, as well as the number of performances, seem to have played a decisive role in the theatre's financial and artistic prosperity. These productions were successful with the public, often ensuring full houses and surpassing those of the German Theatre in Pest. This suggests that for the Hungarian nation, identification with Italian opera counted as an even more important signifier of national identity compared to the public of the German Theatre that situated itself within a larger context of cultural production. Archduke Albrecht (1817–1895), who assumed the role of civil and military governor of Hungary in 1851, is said to have been actively involved in the Hungarian Theatre's programme decisions. Following the model of the Viennese Court Theatre, the archduke's role demonstrates the Habsburgs' active contribution to giving the Hungarian nation a new post-revolutionary identity that responded to its national as well as to its imperial and European aspirations.[27]

Table 2
Performances of Donizetti's operas in the Hungarian (later National) Theatre in Pest until the opening of the Royal Opera House 1884.

Title (original)	Performance title	First performance	Premiere / renewal / new production
L'elisir d'amore	*Báj-ital*	07.11.1838	Hungarian language premiere (transl. Filep Sámuel Deáki)
Gemma di Vergy		30.07.1839	Hungarian language premiere (transl. István Jakab)
Lucrezia Borgia	*Borgia Lucrezia / Borgia Lucretia / Borgia Lucretzia*	31.08.1839	Hungarian language premiere (transl. István Jakab)
Il borgomastro di Saardam	*A saardami polgármester*	13.11.1839	Hungarian language premiere (transl. Károly Lengey)
Marino Faliero		25.04.1840	Hungarian language premiere (transl. István Jakab)
Roberto Devereux		22.03.1841	Hungarian language premiere (transl. István Jakab)

27. Cf. Lili Veronika Békéssy, "Celebrating the Habsburgs in the Hungarian National Theater, 1837–67", *Musicologica Austriaca: Journal for Austrian Music Studies* (3 April 2021), special issue: *Exploring Music Life in the Late Habsburg Monarchy and Successor States* <https://www.musau.org/parts/neue-article-page/view/102> (last accessed 3 February 2025).

Belisario	*Belizár*	19.05.1841	Hungarian language premiere (transl. Ferenc Gyergyay)
La regina di Golconda	*Golcondai királynő*	29.10.1842	Hungarian language premiere (transl. József Szerdahelyi)
La Fille du régiment	*Az ezred lánya*	14.03.1844	Hungarian language premiere (transl. Béni Egressy)
Linda di Chamounix	*Linda*	12.11.1844	Hungarian language premiere (transl. Béni Egressy)
Don Pasquale		10.01.1846	Hungarian language premiere (transl. Béni Egressy)
Dom Sébastien, roi de Portugal	*Dom Sebastian*	15.06.1846	Hungarian language premiere (transl. Béni Egressy)
Lucia di Lammermoor	*Lammermoori Lucia*	04.08.1846	Hungarian language premiere (transl. Béni Egressy)
Maria di Rohan	*Rohan Mária*	11.08.1847	Hungarian language premiere (transl. József Szerdahelyi)
Lucrezia Borgia	*Borgia Lucrezia / Borgia Lucretia / Borgia Lucretzia*	12.11.1849	renewal
Belisario	*Belizár*	17.09.1850	renewal
Lucrezia Borgia	*Borgia Lucrezia / Borgia Lucretia / Borgia Lucretzia*	07.09.1853	renewal
L'elisir d'amore	*Báj-ital*	01.06.1854	renewal
Dom Sébastien, roi de Portugal	*Dom Sebastian*	01.08.1855	new production
Dom Sébastien, roi de Portugal	*Dom Sebastian*	19.02.1856	renewal
Don Pasquale		30.03.1857	new production
Linda di Chamounix	*Linda*	02.10.1858	new production
L'elisir d'amore	*Báj-ital*	11.12.1858	renewal
Belisario	*Belizár*	29.12.1860	new production
Don Pasquale		23.01.1862	renewal

Lucrezia Borgia	*Borgia Lucretia / Borgia Lucretia / Borgia Lucretzia*	22.11.1862	new production
La Favorite	*A kegyencnő*	03.04.1869	Hungarian language premiere (transl. Gusztáv Bőhm)
Dom Sébastien, roi de Portugal	*Dom Sebastian*	18.12.1869	new production
Don Pasquale		22.10.1874	new production
La Favorite	*A kegyencnő*	11.08.1877	new production
Lucrezia Borgia	*Borgia Lucretia / Borgia Lucretia / Borgia Lucretzia*	07.12.1878	new production
Deux hommes et une femme (*Rita*)	*Rita*	04.03.1880	Hungarian language premiere (transl. Ede Kuliffay)

In addition to Donizetti's works, twenty works of *opera seria* by other composers were performed at the Hungarian Theatre during the first five years of its existence (until February 1843). *Grand opéra* also made for an important section of the repertoire, including productions of Spontini's *La Vestale* (*Veszta szűze*, 26 June 1838), Daniel Auber's *Gustave III ou Le Bal masqué* (*Bál-éj*, 26 February 1839) and *La Muette de Portici* (*Portici néma*, 14 August 1841), as well as Halévy's *La Juive* (*Zsidó hölgy*, 6 August 1842) and Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable* (*Ördög Róbert*, 15 February 1843).[28] Within this series of *grands opéras*, Donizetti's *Dom Sébastien* (*Dom Sebastian*) was performed for the first time on 15 June 1846.[29]

This overview of the repertoire indicates that both institutions kept in step with operatic developments in Vienna during the final decade prior to the revolution, with its suburban theatre programmes serving as a point of reference for Pest and for the interest in Donizetti's works. In some cases, Donizetti's operas premiered simultaneously in Vienna and Pest. Even the imperial capi-

28. Tallián, "Opern dieses größten Meisters der Jetztzeit", p. 4.

29. *Ibid*., pp. 4, 5, 7. Tallián analyses Meyerbeer's reception in Pest. On the Hungarian stage, French *grand opéra* was performed with varied success, reflecting the ensemble's artistic abilities. Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète* (*A próféta*) was first performed with great success on 12 June 1850.

tal had only seen seven of Donizetti's operas before 1836, of which only *L'elisir d'amore* was an indisputable success. At the same time, there remained a large variability as to the quality of production between what was performed at the Hungarian Theatre and on the Viennese stages.

Donizetti had been eager to gain recognition in Vienna, and from 1835 he expressed his interest in writing an opera specifically for the city.[30] Achieving this goal, however, took several years and was not realised until 1842 with the performance of *Linda di Chamounix*, which became his greatest success in Vienna.[31] In reconstructing the Viennese chapter in Donizetti's biography, Caludio Vellutini points to an important factor that played in the composer's favour.

> Reconsidering Donizetti's systematic attempts to become involved in Vienna's operatic life [...] it provides a case study for understanding the extent to which ideas of operatic *italianità* underpinned the transnational dissemination of opera even at times when—and despite the fact that—national ideologies had come to dominate the local discourse on it. [...] Such ongoing interest in *italianità* was a crucial component of Austrian cultural politics.[32]

This continuing interest in *italianità*, in Vienna and throughout the Habsburg monarchy, can in part be explained by the circumstances of what music historiography refers to as an "unspectacular" period in Viennese musical life.[33] The last two decades before the revolution of 1848, when the Rossini fever had subsided, and Beethoven and Schubert were both dead, left a vacuum in musical life that could only be filled with Italian opera, on as well as off stage in concerts and in the salon. Moreover, these circumstances, characterised

30. Vellutini, "Donizetti, Vienna, cosmopolitanism", p. 1. This happened in connection with the changing repertoire policy of the Kärntnertortheater. From 1835, the new impresario Bartolomeo Merelli organised two operatic seasons with Carlo Balocchino: "The period from April to June was dedicated exclusively to Italian operas, performed in their original language (the Italian season), while the rest of the year constituted the so-called German season, which was devoted to an international repertoire of German, French, and Italian works, all of which were performed in German". Cf. Odo Aberham – Alfred Gänsthaler, "'Vienna è bella bella bella'. Donizettis Wiener Korrespondenzen", in *Donizetti und seine Zeit in Wien*, pp. 51–112.

31. On the negotiation of the Viennese commissions: William Ashbrook, *Donizetti and His Operas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 160–162; Gabriele Dotto, "Historical introduction", in Gaetano Donizetti, *Linda di Chamounix*, critical edition by Gabriele Dotto (Milan: Ricordi, 2005), pp. XXXI-XXXII; Vellutini, "Donizetti, Vienna, cosmopolitanism".

32. Vellutini, "Italian opera in *Vormärz* Vienna", p. 97.

33. *Ibid*.

by the long-term financial consequences of the Napoleonic wars,[34] required a political reorientation that included the reorganisation of the Court Theatre (Hoftheater) and a restructuring of Viennese operatic life.[35]

A comparable change of circumstances was underway in Pest during these same decades. The gradual transformation of the city's cultural-political role within Hungary, and within the Empire, and a shift in the linguistic configuration of the city's population shaped public debates on the idea of a Hungarian cultural policy, including the debates in the Diet of Hungary (Parlamentum Generale).[36] This general sense of reorientation was accelerated by a catastrophic flood that heavily affected the health of the city's and the nation's finances. In 1838, the Danube burst its banks and devastated Pest, necessitating a substantial reconstruction that significantly altered the cityscape.

Within the context of changing operatic fashions, these volatile financial circumstances and the unsettled political climate in Hungary influenced Donizetti's reception in Pest. Moreover, his appointment as *Kammercapellmeister und Hofcompositeur*, discussed in more detail in Michael Walter's contribution to this special issue, impacted the use of aesthetic categories associated with national designations such as "German" and "Italian" music, a fact also reflected in Maszlagi's article. As Vellutini points out, Donizetti shaped "the image of Vienna as the capital of a multinational empire" and consequently his musical reception was associated with "ideas about what it meant to be Viennese".[37] Just as in Milan and Paris, Donizetti's efforts to satisfy the tastes of Viennese audiences illustrate the reciprocity of this dynamic. During the 1830s, a similar process took place in Budapest. Donizetti's operas became a laboratory of experiments about what makes a musical language "Italian", "German" and more generally "European", and how Hungary relates to this. What should be regarded as "Hungarian" in aesthetical and compositional terms emerged as a productive site of negotiation between national, transnational and imperial identities. Donizetti's skill to adopt and reproduce different musical styles, embedded with national significance, stood for a compositional practice that was born as a direct response to the tastes of his public in Paris, Milan or Vienna, or now Budapest. Often criticized by the press, this

34. On the effects of the Napoleonic wars on musical life in Europe see Axel Körner, "Music, power, and changing semantics of time in the long nineteenth century", *Chigiana*, 52, *Musica e Potere nel lungo XIX secolo*, edited by Fabrizio Della Seta and Massimiliano Locanto (Lucca: Lim, 2022), pp. 25–38.

35. Vellutini, "Italian opera in *Vormärz* Vienna", pp. 100, 104.

36. *Reformkori országgyűlések színházi vitái (1825–1848)* [Theatrical debates in the Diet of Hungary of the Hungarian Reform Era (1825–1848)], edited by Miklós Bényei (Budapest: Magyar színházi intézet, 1985), p. 39.

37. Vellutini, "Donizetti, Vienna, cosmopolitanism", p. 2.

practice resonated with audiences all over Europe and was a cornerstone of his popularity. Ultimately, he succeeded in writing opera in a cosmopolitan idiom—as also highlighted in Maszlagi's short biography—a skill deeply rooted in his training as a composer and his own biographical background.[38] In what follows, three case studies will help to sketch out the practical implications associated with the production of Donizetti's operas on Pest's stages.

Transcultural encounters: three case studies

1. As suggested above, Donizetti's operas played a significant role in the cultural-political formation of operatic life in Pest before the revolution of 1848, serving as a vehicle to draw symbolic or real connections with other operatic stages in Europe. Producing Donizetti's operas became an instrument to financially sustain Pest's theatrical institutions, a fact especially relevant for the Hungarian Theatre, but it also served to bring the city's theatres into line with the professional performance standards known from the Empire's other centres of operatic life. This development, however, did not proceed unchallenged. A striking example of the obstacles met during the production process occurred during the first full season of the Hungarian Theatre with its premiere of Donizetti's *Szerelmi bájital* (*L'elisir d'amore*).[39] Before its arrival in Pest, Donizetti's *melodramma giocoso* had provided a guaranteed success across European stages, making it a firm favourite among theatre agents and audiences.[40] It was therefore no surprise that the Hungarian Theatre would include it as part of its opening operatic season.

In May 1838, the Hungarian Theatre's first prima donna, Rozália Klein Schodelné, brought the score from Vienna to Pest, and her husband, János Schodel, commissioned a translation from Filep Sámuel Deáki (Figure 3a).[41] Instead of commencing rehearsals immediately, however, she and the theatre's music director Ferenc Erkel (1810–1893) decided to schedule a performance of Gaspare Spontini's *La Vestale* (*Vesztaszűz*), partly because they had already begun working on the production. At the time, duties between the theatre director Miklós Udvarhelyi (1792–1864) and Erkel in terms of programme decisions and scheduling rehearsal plans were not yet clearly delineated at the Hungarian Theatre.[42] A consequence of the organisational disarray was that on 30 July 1838 the opera was premiered at the German Theatre (see Table 1), and the Hungarian Theatre

38. Cf. also Maszlagi's argument: "Donizetti Cajetán élete", *Zenészeti Lapok*, 3/2, pp. 10, 12.

39. The production process is documented in the musical material relating to the premiere: H-Bn, ZBK 84.

40. On the opera's early success see Ashbrook, *Donizetti and His Operas*, p. 73.

41. Tallián, *Schodel Rozália*, pp. 63–69.

42. *Ibid*., p. 63. The first documented delineation of the two positions dates from 1865.

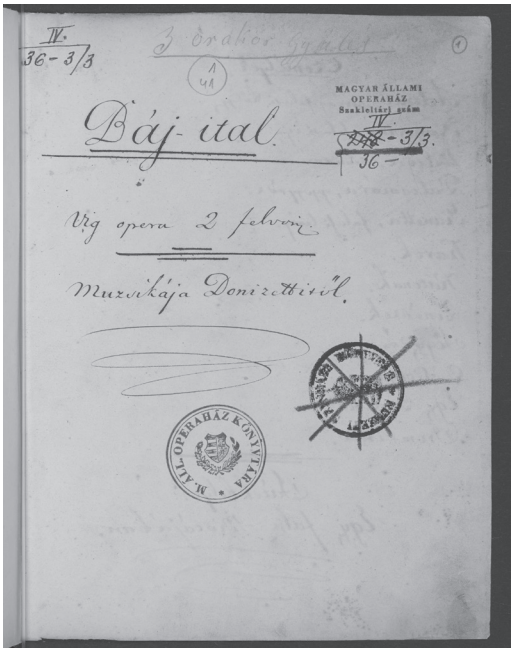

Figure 3a
Gaetano Donizetti, *Báj-ital* (*L'elisir d'amore*), cover of the prompt book, 1838, H-Bn, SZT MM 13.533.

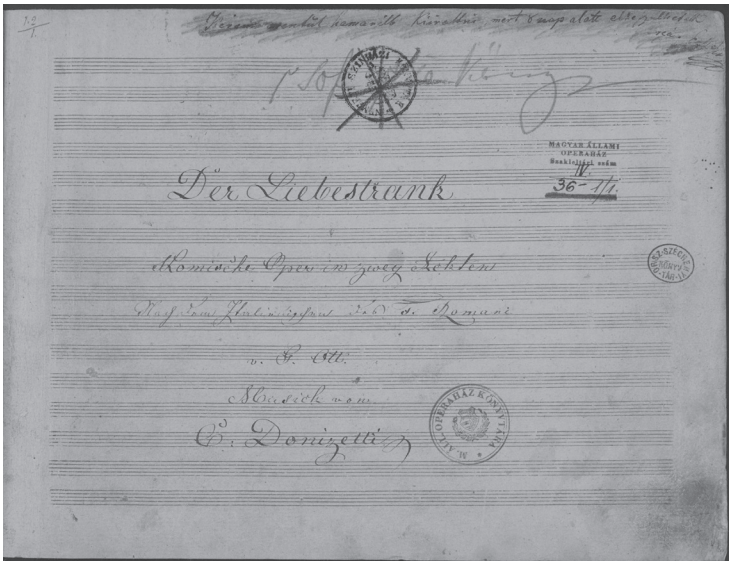

Figure 3b
Gaetano Donizetti, *Liebestrank*, score, cover page, short handwritten notice by Ferenc Erkel, H-Bn, ZBK 84/a.

missed a prestigious opportunity to raise its profile, locally and internationally. The production at the Hungarian Theatre would have to wait until November (Table 2). Erkel's frustration and regret is succinctly preserved in a handwritten note on the first page of the National Theatre's score: "Please get it out earlier from now on, because you can have it ready in 8 days. Erkel" (Figure 3b).

Apart from the missed opportunity, the example reveals the extent to which a small group of soloists was able to influence the theatre's programming. It also shows the different modes of repertoire acquisition, which in these early years was not yet consistently planned and implemented by the theatre management. For instance, over the following months and years the Schodels arranged to acquire several new scores for production at their theatre and announced their acquisitions in the newspaper *Honművész* [Homeland Artist] thus showing their familiarity with the latest successes on the Viennese stages.[43] In 1839, they bought scores of Donizetti's operas *Marino Faliero*, *Gianni di Calais*, *Roberto Devereux*, *Otto mesi in due ore*, and *Il borgomastro di Saardam*, with the intention of having these works produced in Pest.[44] Although in this instance the investment was agreed with the management in advance,[45] it shows the agency of individual singers at the theatre and their impact on its management.[46]

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43. Literary, art and fashion magazine published in Pest between 1833 and 1841. The *Honművész* enthusiastically supported the establishment of the Hungarian Theatre of Pest. Its theatre reviews were mainly concerned with the acting and the politics of the programme, while the debate between József Bajza and János Garay (1836) aimed to clarify aspects of theatre criticism. Cf. *Hungarian Theatre Encyclopedia*, <https://mek.oszk.hu/02100/02139/html/sz10/268.html> (last accessed 15 February 2025). *Honművész*, 6 (1838), p. 629.

44. Tallián, *Schodel Rozália*, p. 82.

45. *Ibid*.

46. The current state of research is reflected in the satirical inscription on the cover of the main inventory book of productions. It reads "BÁNYA" [MINE] in capital letters, pointing to its dusty and neglected condition: after hours spent with the materials, one gets dusty hands, as if coming out of a mine. This short descriptive inventory was used at the Hungarian National Theatre. It was then transferred to the Budapest Royal Opera House at the institution's opening in 1884. In addition to the names of the composers of each opera, the inventory contains a list of the types of musical material preserved at least the scores, piano scores, choral parts and instrumental parts. The collection finally came to the Hungarian National Library in 1981, where it is preserved as part of the Theatre Collection (Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Színháztörténeti Tár, A Nemzeti Színház és az Operaház régi kottatárának anyaga).To date, none of the material of "international composers" has been systematically studied. Questions regarding (a) critical-philological issues, regarding cuts and different versions of works; (b) the process of translation; and (c) performance traditions need to be examined from the ground up. For the purpose of this article, dates and names appearing in the performance parts have been used to date the extensive range of scores, orchestral, choral and soloist voice parts. Additional information has been drawn from prompt books and piano arrangements. For an initial overview of the preserved musical sources, see: Horváth, *A Pest-Budai zenés színjátszás forrásai*, pp. 64–67 (table).

2. The Hungarian Theatre was the first and for a long time the sole institution for the production of dramatic and operatic genres in Hungarian language. Nevertheless, the theatre's productions took place within a truly multilingual artistic environment, as documented in the musicians' notes in the performing material, which appear in different languages. French and Italian make an appearance, but German predominates. Furthermore, so-called *Einlagen-Arien* were regularly inserted in the productions to allow foreign stars to perform at the theatre in the languages they were more comfortable with. Despite this multilingual environment, typical of most theatres at the time in Habsburg Europe, issues around language arose occasionally. Illustrative is a prompt book for a performance of *Belisario*.[47] In this case, Donizetti's *tragedia lirica* was (at least partly) performed in Italian. As the document shows, the stage assistant seemingly tried to overcome his own linguistic difficulties with a "creative innovation", writing out the original Italian text, but using Hungarian phonetics to help him pronounce the Italian words correctly. This odd orthographic spelling shows, however, no consequent phonetic rearrangement. It only reduces some words that are presumably difficult to pronounce (Figures 4b–c):

Act I, Scena II, Irene: || p. 1 [without page numbering]

(Corri amica)
[...] voliam **sz**ulla **sz**ponda
All[']ample**ssz**o del forte che arriva.
Ve['] pe**i** trivi **dsia** [i.e. già] il popolo in**n**onda,
Odi il **sz**uon della calca fe**sz**tiva.
Delle trombe frammi**sztó** allo **sz**quillo
Del trionfo **dsia** [i.e. già] l[']inno intuon[ò].
Szalutando l[']augusto ve**ssz**illo
Che il terror || fra i nemici port[ò] || p. 2 [without page numbering]
[...]
La man terribile, del vincitor[e]
Di baci fervidi io coprir[ò].
E, al sen stringendomi del **ds**enitor [i.e. genitore],
Rapita in e**sztászi** – d[']**á**mor **száro** [i.e. sarò].
Un pianto tenero for**sz**e lyi [i.e. gli] acc**s**enti
Szul **labro** [i.e. labbro] tremulo mi trencher[à].
Ma quelle lagrime fieno eloquenti;
Ma quel **sz**ilenzio tutto dir[à]!

The purpose was duly noted on the prompt book's title page: "sült magyar súgónak való olasz súgókönyv", which playfully translates as "an Italian prompt book for a dummy Hungarian stage assistant" (Figure 4a).

47. H-Bn, ZBK 69 h.

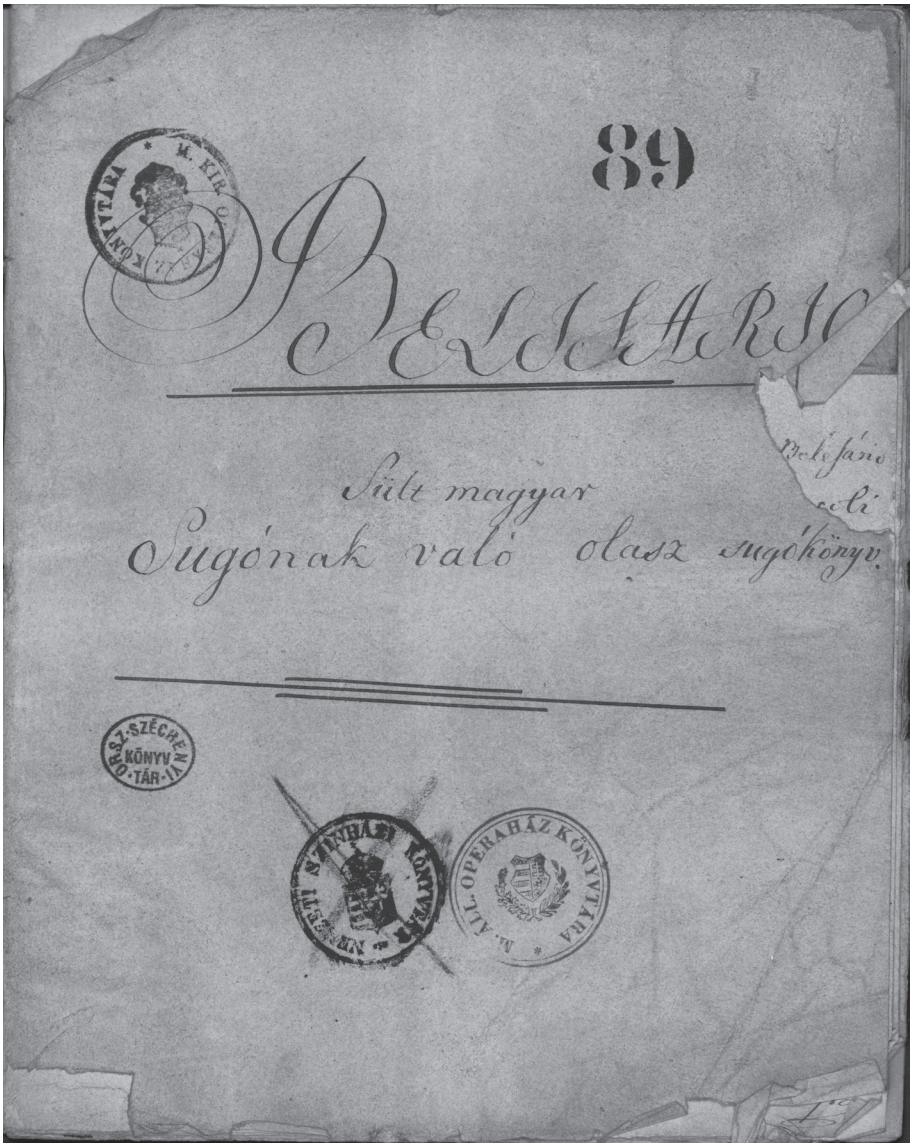
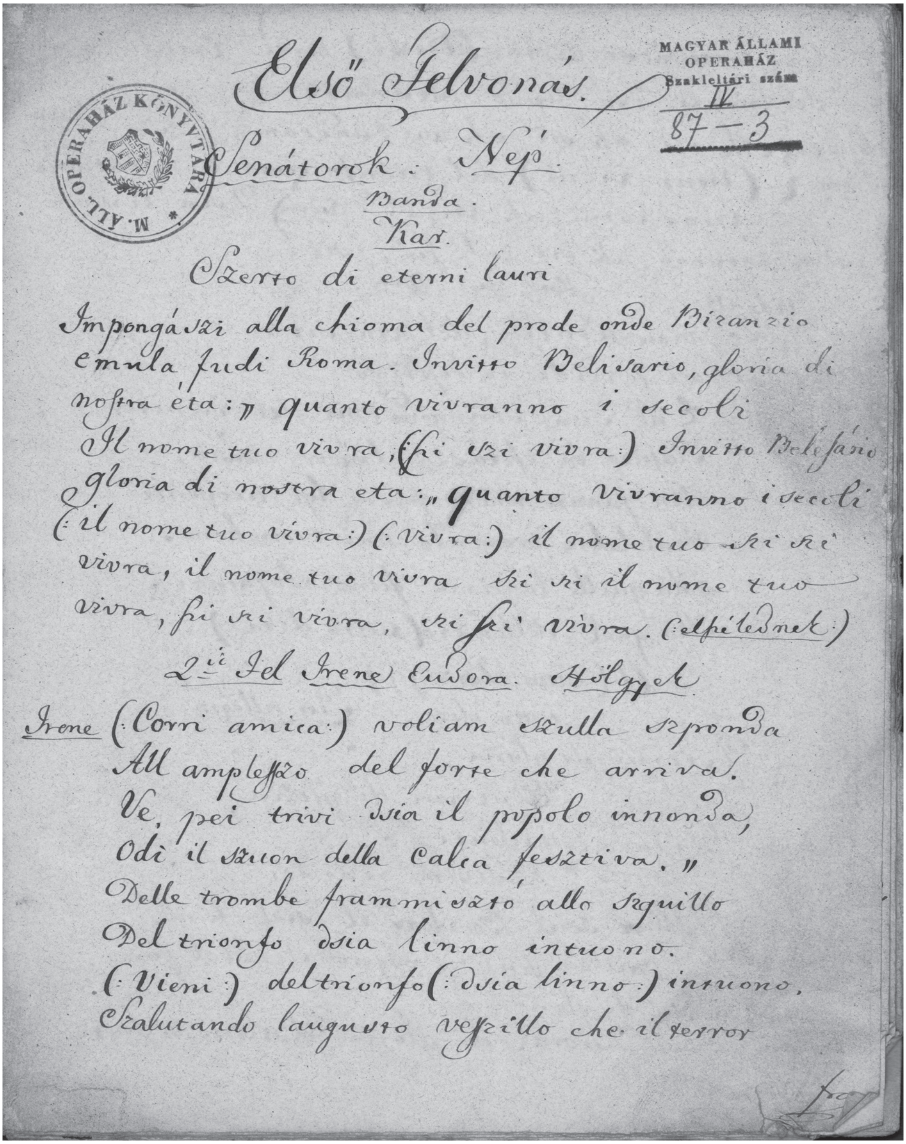


Figure 4a
Gaetano Donizetti, *Belisario*, second cover page of the prompt book, H-Bn, ZBK 69 h.


M. ÁLL. OPERAHÁZ KÖNYVTÁRA

MAGYAR ÁLLAMI OPERAHÁZ
Szakleltári szám
IV
87—3

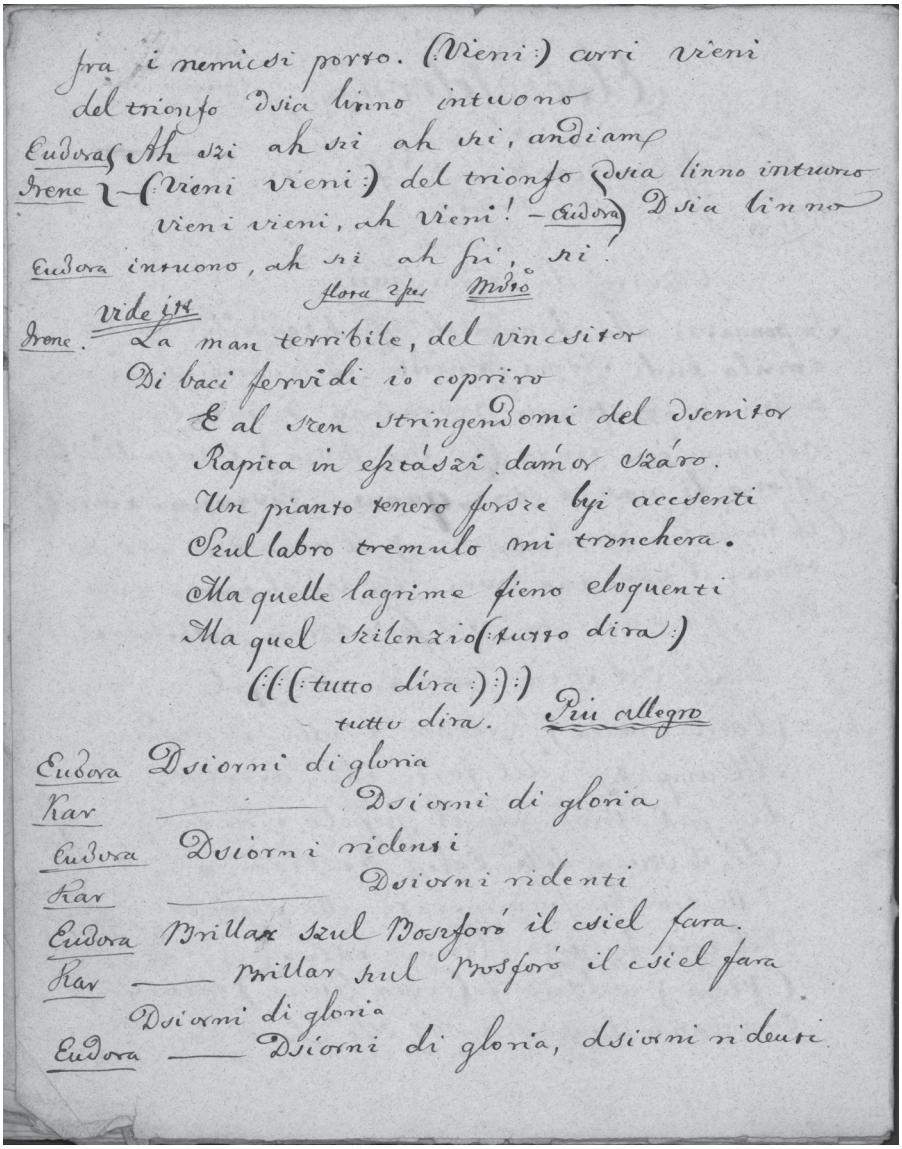
Első Felvonás.

Senátorok: Nép.
Banda.
Kar.

Szerto di eterni lauri
Impongászi alla chioma del prode onde Biranzio
emula fudi Roma. Invitto Belisario, gloria di
nostra età: „ quanto vivranno i secoli
Il nome tuo vivrà, (: si szi vivrà:) Invitto Belisario
gloria di nostra età: „ quanto vivranno i secoli
(: il nome tuo vivrà:) (: vivrà:) il nome tuo szi szi
vivrà, il nome tuo vivra szi szi il nome tuo
vivrà, si szi vivrà, szi si vivrà. (: elspilednek:)

2ik Jel Irene Eudora. Hölgyek

Irene (: Corri amica:) voliam szulla szponda
All amplesszo del forte che arriva.
Ve, pei trivi dsia il popolo innonda,
Odi il szuon della Calca fesztiva. „
Delle trombe frammiszto allo szquillo
Del trionfo dsia linno intuono.
(: Vieni:) del trionfo (: dsia linno:) intuono.
Szalutando laugusto vesszillo che il terror



Figures 4b–c
Gaetano Donizetti, *Belisario*, prompt book, pp. 1–2, partial Hungarian orthography for the Italian text as language support, H-Bn, ZBK 69 h.

The example points to issues of translation practice more generally. A preliminary observation of the repertoire at Pest's Hungarian Theatre suggests that Donizetti's Italian operas were mostly translated from the original Italian libretto but occasionally contained German text passages. As the German sections are not fully and consistently written out, these passages were probably not used in the actual performance—and therefore not sung in German—but served as a bridge between the Italian and the Hungarian versions, as an aide to help singers follow what they were supposed to perform. In contrast, Donizetti's French operas were generally translated from their German versions, with the librettos and scores acquired in Vienna. The choral parts prepared for the Hungarian National Theatre, however, usually contained only the Hungarian text—with some exceptions where they incorporated German or occasional Italian sections. These examples show that performing Donizetti in Habsburg Europe was never simple and always required complex linguistic operations: a price theatres, singers and audiences were obviously prepared to pay.

3. The confluence of different languages in operatic culture seems to have been a familiar experience not only in the Hungarian theatre, but also in Pest's wider cultural milieu. As theatregoers visited both institutions, they compared productions and developed preferences. *Honművész* documented the performances of both theatres between 1837 and 1841, demonstrating that readers of the Hungarian periodical retained an interest in the ongoings at the German Theatre. In August 1840 the magazine paid tribute to the anniversary of the Hungarian Theatre's opening in 1837, while also offering detailed reports of proceedings in both theatres.

> Hungarian Stage:
> PEST, on August 21, *Fidelio*, grand opera in 2 acts [...]. Although Italian opera [Donizetti's *Liebestrank*] was performed in the German Theatre, our National Theatre had such a large audience that there only a few seats were left empty, and only in the balcony. Mrs. Schodelné in the title role again proved herself a great artist, received a resounding applause and was repeatedly called back on stage. It was a pity that Mr Váray (Rocco) was hoarse today.
> On the 22nd (the anniversary of the opening of this theatre), *The Family of Mizbán*[48] (original drama in 3 acts, with 1 act prelude; written by Szigligeti [Ede]) was performed to a very large audience.
> On the 23rd *Bál-éj* (*Ball-Night*) grand opera in 5 acts by Auber (translated by Szerdahelyi) [*Gustave III, ou Le Bal masqué*], was performed on our stage be-

48. Ede Szigligeti, *Micbán családja. Eredeti dráma 3 felvonásban, előjátékkal, amely először adatott a pesti magyar színpadon, 1840. máj. 30-án* (Pest: 1840); *Miczbán családja*, historical drama (play) in three acts.

> fore such a large audience that (with the exception of a few empty boxes) we have not seen such a crowded audience in this house for a long time. Today Mr. Stöckl, as a guest, took part in the dances. The whole performance, still retaining its long-standing interest, was received with great favour. Luiza Eder appeared again in the role of the page Oscar, and was kindly received. Ribbing was performed by Mr. Egressy.
> *Peleskei notary* was advertised for the 24.[49] The present fare seems to be a particularly favourable income to our national stage, and we find that it is attended with excellent interest of locals and foreigners of all languages.[50]

As was customary, the Hungarian Theatre combined the international repertoire with Hungarian works and hosted a wide range of different theatrical genres. The popularity of Beethoven and Auber are no great surprise, however the specific mentioning of the wider appeal of Hungarian works both with audiences beyond the city and linguistic boundaries are noteworthy. The magazine, which was committed to supporting Hungarian-language theatre, might not have been entirely objective in its assessments of the performances' success. Yet its impartiality at least stretched to reporting the achievements on the German stage.

> German Stage:
> PEST, on the city stage, on 21 August, the reprise [second performance] of the Italian *L'elisir d'amore* was given. It was not attended by as large an audience as the first time; but on the following day (22 August), when Donizetti's opera *Borgia Lucretia* [*Lucrezia Borgia*] was given on this stage for the first time, and by Italians, the theatre was sold out; and although the Italian *Lucretia* was far from providing the experience seen on our national stage, the excellent performance of Mr Bezzi (Gennaro) and of the choruses had a good effect on the audience. The role of Maffio Orsini was played by Signora Cassiani, who was most popular in the drinking song [*Trinklied*]. The fine-voiced Mr Polonini (Alfonso) repeated his aria à la polacca after a prolonged applause. Among the German singers who took part today were Rötzer (Gizella), Donua (Jeppo) and Saag (Ascanio). This opera was again announced for the 25th.[51]

These reports suggest that in Pest going to the theatre was a transnational cultural practice, as well as point to institutional links between the two theatres. These in particular call for further investigation to fully understand the boundaries between different nationalities and languages in Pest's operatic life. Both institutions formed independent entities and functioned as

49. József Gaál, *Peleskei nótárius* (comedy).

50. *Honművész*, 69 (27 August 1840), p. 559.

51. *Ibid*.

separate communicative spaces, but they shared repertoires and performers. This included a national icon like Ferenc Erkel, who began his career as conductor at the German Theatre, before moving to the Hungarian National Theatre.

These examples raise the issue whether Donizetti's works were perceived differently when they were performed in German or in Hungarian. Such questions, however, are difficult to assess. Contemporary press coverage can only serve as an imperfect guide. Its focus was mostly on the quality of the performers, the interest productions evoked among local or foreign guests, always with particular attention to reactions from prominent members of the audience. Other common topics of discussion were financial issues or the production's general artistic achievements. Therefore, it remains unclear to what extent the use of a particular language in a production shaped the possible understanding of the works' political implications, and whether it impacted on the evocation of national sentiments, imperial consciousness or cosmopolitan ties.

The vernacular and Hungarian national identity within Habsburg Europe

From the late 1820s, the topic of Hungarian-language theatre, including operatic performances, was repeatedly raised in parliamentary debates. The foundation of a Hungarian Theatre as a central national institution was decidedly political as demonstrated by the following contribution to parliament on 17 February 1836.

> Since there is no educated nation in Europe that is in need of a theatre without a national language, explains the long nurtured desire of the nation that, a permanent theatre should be built in our country, suitable to the nation's ornament, [...] to be built according to a plan which will be seen to be the most suitable ornament for such a national undertaking, the most suitable to new and finer tastes, and the most suitable for the artistic development and the permanent existence of the institution [...].[52]

52. "Mi végett is a nemzet ama régolta nevelt kívánságát, hogy midőn Európának egy mívelt nemzete sincsen, mely honi ajkú színház nélkül szűkölködne, hazánkban is valahára egy állandó s a nemzet díszének megfelelő színház épüljön [...] oly terv szerint leendő felállítására, mely egy nemzeti vállalathoz illő dísznek, az új s finomabb ízlésnek leginkább megfelelőnek, és az intézet művészeti fejlődésének és állandó fennmaradása céljának elérhetésére legalkalmasabbnak fog tapasztalni [...]". *Az 1832–36. évi országgyűlés írásai* [The protocols of the Diet of Hungary 1832–36], vol. 6, pp. 245–246, in *Reformkori országgyűlések színházi vitái*, p. 39. The protocol only mentions a general statement without naming the representatives.

With a similar intent, the newly established Hungarian Academy of Sciences had set a prize question on "How to establish the Hungarian theatre in Budapest on a permanent basis?"[53] The Academy received nineteen responses, which turned the matter into a subject of public debate.[54] These political and institutional debates, took place in the context of wider cultural and literary efforts to further develop the Hungarian language.[55] It should be noted that until 1844 Latin had remained as the official language of the Hungarian state administration.[56] To respond to modern national sentiments, however, more works of Hungarian literature were published, European classics were translated, and modern editions of old documents and manuscripts were produced in Hungarian. As part of this linguistic flurry of activity the National Theatre was supplied with a new repertoire in Hungarian, drama as well as opera, Hungarian and foreign in origin. As part of these efforts, from 1832 onwards, every year the best tragedy and the best comedy performed in Hungarian at the theatre received a prize of 100 gold pieces.[57]

A central reason for the establishment of the Hungarian-language theatre, therefore, was the "elevation" of the Hungarian language to the linguistic and literary standards of other European languages.[58] As a speaker in the parliamentary debate of 17 February 1836 opined, "the greater cultivation of the Hungarian language being among the most fervent desires of the nation, everything that can be expected to promote this goal becomes a worthy object

53. Cf. "Miképen lehetne a Magyar játékszínt Budapesten állandóan megalapítani?" [How can the Hungarian theatre system in Budapest be permanently established?], in *Magyar játékszíni jutalmazott feleleletek* (Buda: Magyar Tudós Társaság, 1843) with 19 submitted and 18 accepted answers.

54. Graf István Széchenyi, *A Magyar játékszínről* [On the Hungarian theatre system] (Pest: 1832).

55. Tibor Tallián, "'Az operában ki gyönyörködik?' Irodalmi adalékok a magyar operai művelődés történetéhez" ["Who delights in opera?" Literary additions to the history of Hungarian operatic culture], in *Zenetudományi dolgozatok 2000. Szabolcsi Bence emlékére*, edited by Márta Sz. Farkas (Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi Intézet, 2000), pp. 117–168.

56. On 13 November 1844, Emperor Ferdinand ratified the Act II of 1844, which made Hungarian the official language of the Kingdom of Hungary.

57. Ferenc Szabolcs, *A nemzeti játékszín eszméje. A magyar és a német irodalomban* [The idea of national theatre. In Hungarian and German literature] (Budapest: 1938).

58. These efforts mirrored the promotion of the Czech language in Habsburg Bohemia. See Axel Körner, "National movements against nation states. Bohemia and Lombardy between the Habsburg Empire, the German Confederation, and Piedmont-Sardinia", in *The 1848 Revolutions and European Political Thought*, edited by Douglas Moggach and Gareth Stedman Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 345–382, p. 349.

of concern for the [political] parties".[59] For the participants in these debates, national identity was tied to the realisation of a linguistic ambition. Therefore, the production of opera in Hungarian, irrespective of its origin, was seen as part of this "national agenda". In other words, Donizetti operas, performed in Hungarian, shaped the idea of what it meant to be Hungarian in a multinational empire.

Meanwhile, debates on the use of Hungarian on stage underwent a qualitative shift in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the Compromise of 1867 serving as a dividing line. Language policies became increasingly more radical in the Empire's Hungarian part, as summarised by a poem published on the occasion of the closing of the last German Theatre in Budapest, on 16 September 1880:[60]

> The tyranny of language reigns in the land of the Magyars;
> intolerance throughout the whole beautiful realm;
> does freedom's stronghold — which made all equal
> lie within the laced garment of splendour?
> But there you shackle humanity in chains,
> to hospitality you deal the deathblow.
> By what name should one call such actions?
> Who can recognise the Hungarian people in this?[61]

Eluding easy translation, the German poem laments the increasing intolerance towards Hungary's multilingual and cosmopolitan heritage. Linguistic coercion reigns, hospitality is dead. Returning to Pest's operatic life around 1848, the city's cultural communicative spaces were decidedly transformed by the opening of the Hungarian Theatre. At the same time, however, the analysis of its repertoire and surrounding debates, points to the need of moving beyond national categories: Italian opera, as well as imperial politics of culture, had the potential of promoting the cause of Hungary's linguistic revival. Cristina Magaldi has argued for "critical explorations and the questioning of bor-

59. "A honi nyelvnek a nagyobb kimívelése a nemzet legforróbb kívánságai közé tartozván, minden, amitől e célnak előmozdítását reményleni lehet, a Karok gondoskodásának méltó tárgyává válik". *Reformkori országgyűlések színházi vitái*, p. 39.

60. Jakob Perl Ostland, *An die deutschfeindlichen Ungarn. Eine Epistel geschrieben bei Schließung des deutschen Theaters in Budapest am 16 September 1880* (Vienna: Verlag von T. Rosner, 1880), no. 8, 8 pp. [poem], here: stanza 3.

61."Der Sprachenzwang herrscht im Magyarenlande, | Unduldsamkeit im ganzen schönen Reich; | Liegt denn im schnürverzierten Prachtgewande | Der Freiheit Hort – der alle machte gleich? – | Die Menschheit aber schlagt ihr dort in Bande, | Der Gastlichkeit gebt ihr den Todesstreich. | Wie soll solch Handeln man mit Namen nennen? – | Wer kann daran das Ungarvolk erkennen?" I would like to thank Quirin Lückbe for providing the English translation.

ders—of culture attachments, identities, and aesthetic stances—to suggest that shared spaces of cultural belonging allow for alternative thinking, imaginations beyond the local, and multifaced and multidirectional artistic creativity".[62] In this sense, opera served as an art form that always crossed geographical, cultural and linguistic boundaries. Donizetti's fortunes in Budapest between 1838 and 1847 offer a striking example of this fact, irrespective of the symbolic importance associated with the premiere of Ferenc Erkel's first Hungarian grand opera, *Mária Báthori* on 8 August 1840. Both Donizetti and Erkel formed part of a "tapestry" of operatic culture that simultaneously spoke to national, imperial and cosmopolitan identities.

Unlike in Vienna or Milan, Donizetti never accepted a commission to compose an opera specifically for Pest. The first performances of his operas in Hungary, however, became a laboratory for exploring opera's role in the cultural and political formation of the Hungarian nation and its future capital city. The musical versatility of Donizetti's works helped to establish a generation of well-trained singers, thereby enabling (Buda-)Pest to measure its emerging operatic life against that of the empire's other cultural centres.[63] In terms of compositional styles, the extent to which Ferenc Erkel—as conductor and composer—absorbed Donizetti's works in forging a distinctively "Hungarian" national opera remains subject to further inquiry.

62. Cristina Magaldi, "Cosmopolitanism and music in the nineteenth century", in *Oxford Handbooks Online*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935321.013.62> (last accessed 16 February 2025). Magaldi refers here to Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), Kindle edition, p. 5.

63. Tallián, *Schodel Rozália*, p. 82.

Abstract
The article discusses the reception of Gaetano Donizetti's operas in (Buda-) Pest between 1837 and 1847, a formative period in the development of the city's cultural landscape and in Hungary's national self-definition within Habsburg Europe. Productions of Donizetti's operas within the institutional and cultural-political context of Pest's German and Hungarian theatres show how these works became a site of negotiation between national, transnational, and imperial identities. Three case studies sketch the circumstances of staging Donizetti (*L'elisir d'amore*, *Belisario* and *Lucrezia Borgia*) at Pest's Hungarian Theatre during its first operatic seasons. They demonstrate the challenges of multilingual encounters, and the fluidity of linguistic and artistic boundaries (in terms of operatic repertoires, performers and audiences) in the context of Pest's competitive theatrical landscape, where the newly founded Hungarian Theatre vied for prominence alongside the established German institution. The examples illustrate how Donizetti's music facilitated Pest's alignment with European operatic trends, while also contributing to Hungary's evolving cultural identity. Ultimately, Donizetti's role in Pest underscores the city's dual aspiration—its cosmopolitan determination within the Empire and its emerging national consciousness.

Axel Körner

Donizetti *à la* Offenbach[1]

Rethinking opera beyond text

The 1838 catalogue of the Giovanni Ricordi publishing house, preserved at the Archivio storico Ricordi in Milan, lists thirteen piano reductions of complete operas by Donizetti, six complete operas arranged for four hands, as well as eight arrangements for piano solo "in stile facile", two complete Donizetti operas arranged for string quartet, and three operas for mixed quartets.[2] Quite obviously, Donizetti seems to have played a role beyond the opera house.

Just for Donizetti's 1832 *opera buffa L'elisir d'amore*, the catalogue counts eighteen single pieces arranged for four hands, six *pezzi staccati* for piano solo, six arrangements for voice and guitar, seven *pezzi staccati* for solo voice, seven further arrangements for violin and piano, as well as a complete version of the opera arranged for violin and piano, the same for flute and piano, in addition to arrangements for solo violin and for solo flute. At the time of the Ricordi catalogue's publication, *L'elisir d'amore* was Donizetti's most frequently performed opera in Italy; and the most popular opera after Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and Bellini's *Norma* and *La sonnambula*, explaining the work's frequent adaptations for productions off stage.[3] The catalogue also advertises numerous mixed albums containing *pezzi staccati* from

1. Written within the framework of ERC research project *Opera and the Politics of Empire in Habsburg Europe, 1815–1914* (Grant agreement no. 101018743), the research for this article has benefitted from a generous fellowship at the Remarque-Institute of New York University. I am grateful to Barbara Babić, Quirin Lübke, Riccardo Mandelli and the anonymous readers for their help with my research.

2. Archivio storico Ricordi, Milan: *Catalogo della musica pubblicata nell'I.R. Stabilimento nazionale privilegiato di calcografia, copisteria e tipografia musicale di Giovanni Ricordi in Milano, Contrada degli Omenoni, N. 1720* (Florence: Giovanni Ricordi e S. Jouhaud, [1838]). For the relationship between the composer and Casa Ricordi see Mimma Guastoni, "Il compositore Donizetti e l'editore Ricordi: un lungo rapporto", in *L'opera teatrale di Gaetano Donizetti. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studio, Bergamo, 17–20 settembre 1992*, edited by Francesco Bellotto (Bergamo: Comune di Bergamo, 1993), pp. 111–117.

3. Between 1830 and 1839, *L'elisir d'amore* was scheduled in a total of 214 seasons throughout Italy. Marcello Conati, "Presenze delle opere di Donizetti nei teatri italiani nella prima metà dell'Ottocento", in *L'opera teatrale di Gaetano Donizetti*, pp. 433–436, p. 434.

different operas by Donizetti, including again numerous pieces from *L'elisir d'amore*, in addition to mixed potpourris of different operas, *marcie ed altra musica facile*, as well as so-called *souvenirs des opéras modernes*, and other mixed variations and arrangements from Donizetti's works, many of them taking up tunes from *L'elisir d'amore*.

The 1838 Ricordi catalogue consists of a book of one hundred pages in small print. Issued by one of the world's leading publishers for staged music, rather than advertising complete scores of operas, the catalogue mostly lists arrangements and extracts from operas: music to be used at home, in the salon, in coffee houses, or even the concert hall. Comprehensive catalogues like this were not produced every year, nor did they appear on any regular basis; for internal use Ricordi mostly relied on register books in manuscript form (*libroni*).[4] The catalogue's 1838 version was printed ten years before Donizetti's death, at a time when he was still to write about a dozen more operas, including some of his most famous works: *La Fille du régiment* (1840), *La Favorite* (1840), *Linda di Chamonix* (1842), *Don Pasquale* (1843), *Maria di Rohan* (1843). Therefore, the catalogue gives us just a partial view of the importance of sheet music related to Donizetti's work and its circulation in Italy and in Central Europe. Nevertheless, along with arrangements of Rossini's most popular works, Donizetti dominated the market for arranged music.[5]

In some cases, *pezzi staccati* and arrangements for different ensembles were produced, or at least authorised, by the composers themselves, with the copyright remaining with the opera's original publisher, as we see with the works listed in Ricordi's catalogue. This was not necessarily the case when variations on the theme of an opera or paraphrases were written by other composers. These works would not be included in Ricordi's catalogue, or would appear under the name of the composer who arranged them. The same is true for variations and sometimes arrangements that were published by independent companies or smaller print shops, meaning that the number of available arrangements always exceeded the number of works listed in the catalogue of the work's original publisher. In addition to Italy and the German speaking lands, France with its countless musical salons was a particularly important

4. See for instance Archivio storico Ricordi, Milan: Catalogo I, 1-2440 (Ms Rari, Librone 1), <https://www.digitalarchivioricordi.com/it/catalogo?relatedPeople=Antonio%20Melchiori&page=1&listTipDataCatalogoIta=Data%20Libroni>, last accessed 17 January 2025.

5. We find further evidence for the role of Donizetti "off stage" in correspondence and diaries that report the performance of arias and extracts. For *L'elisir d'amore* see for instance the diaries and letters of the architect and amateur singer Giovan Tommaso Benevento, who regularly performed extracts of the opera at private salons: *Caro Aniello. I carteggi donizettiani del Fondo Moscarino (1836–1847)*, edited by Carlo Moscarino (Bergamo: Fondazione Donizetti, 2008), pp. 188, 225, 234, 238, 247, 253, 292, 294.

market for this genre of sheet music. Periodicals such as *Le Ménestrel* catered to the salons by publishing arrangements, thereby becoming another lucrative way of circulating operatic music.[6] In 1840 the music publisher Heugel bought *Le Ménestrel* and used it systematically to promote the composers he had under contract.[7] In these different ways, approximately 250,000 pieces of music were published in France every year since the 1830s, with print runs often starting at 500 copies. From France they were sold all over Europe, including the musical centres of the Habsburg monarchy, either as reprints or licensed copies. Successful composers received up to 500 francs for each piece and potentially much more for complete collections.[8] One of the many masters of this genre in Paris was Jacques Offenbach, long before he established himself as director of the Bouffes-Parisiens. Much of it he wrote for his own instrument, the violoncello, including paraphrases of operas from Mozart, Rossini, Bellini, Meyerbeer, and from Donizetti: from *Anna Bolena*, *Parisina* and *L'elisir d'amore*. The salon, where he performed these pieces, later became a topic in the plot of his operetta *Monsieur Choufleuri restera chez lui* (1861).[9]

Taking the example of Jacques Offenbach's arrangements of extracts from Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* for violoncello solo (Figure 1),[10] this article discusses the nature and function of this genre of music, the relationship between original and its adaptation, and it contextualises Offenbach's work within debates on the authority of musical texts: how nineteenth-century music, and operatic music in particular, is to be understood in the context of the use people made of it in different cultural settings.[11] The article argues that in order to understand opera in nineteenth-century European culture, scholars have to take account of opera being performed offstage, in its multiple forms

6. Ralf-Olivier Schwarz, *Jacques Offenbach. Ein europäisches Porträt* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2019), p. 41.

7. For a study of periodicals in France see Katharine Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France. "La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris", 1834–80* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

8. Schwarz, *Jacques Offenbach*, p. 41.

9. Péter Bozó, "Offenbach and the representation of the salon", in *Musical Salon Culture in the Long Nineteenth Century*, edited by Anja Bunzel and Natasha Loges (Martlesham: Boydell & Brewer, 2019), pp. 139–152.

10. Jacques Offenbach, *Mélodies de "L'elisire d'amore" de Donizetti* (Mayence: Schott's Söhne, [n.d.]), plate 11880. For further information on the editorial context see the Appendix.

11. Opera offstage and music for the salon is to be read as part of the nineteenth-century popular music revolution when new styles began to assert their independence and distinct values. See Derek B. Scott, *Sounds of the Metropolis: The 19th Century Popular Music Revolution in London, New York, Paris and Vienna* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

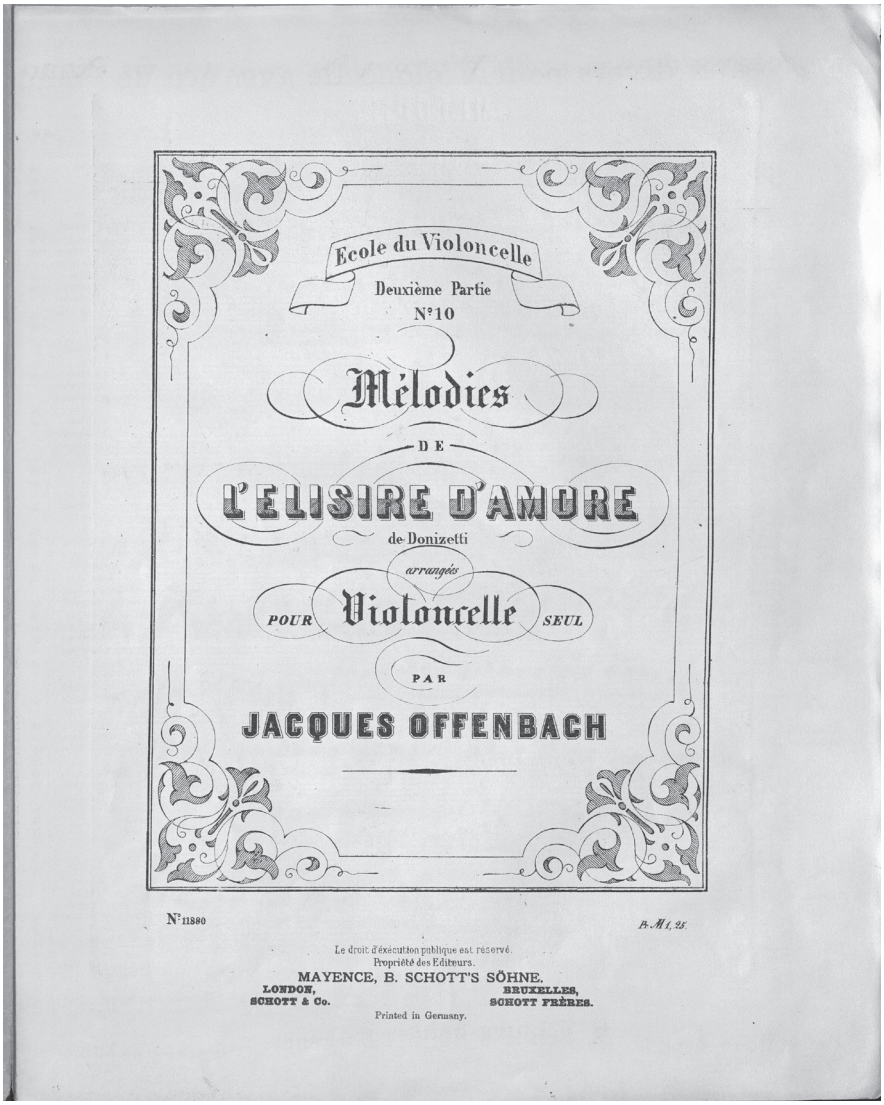


Figure 1
Jacques Offenbach, *Mélodies de "L'elisire d'amore" de Donizetti* (Mayence: B. Schott's Söhne, [n.d.]), plate 11880. See München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Mus. Schott.Ha 12796-1, <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/details/bsb00152572>, last accessed 17 January 2025.

and functions: how operatic music penetrated and impacted different ways of making and consuming music beyond the theatre.[12] Arrangements of Donizetti's operas, written during a career that span just over two decades, offer a prime example for such an investigation. Due to its specific musical culture, Habsburg Europe presented an important market for any kind of arranged operatic music.

Musicking Donizetti

A quarter of a century ago, Christopher Small introduced the term "musicking" to challenge musicologists' narrow focus on the scores of great works as well as to widen our concept of research in music to include "the social and participatory nature of music as a human activity".[13] Small's concept of musicking redefines the relationship between composer and performer, and between performer and listener, to question hierarchies as well as authority in making music. Paraphrasing Small, music is not a thing but something that people do.[14] This includes what musicians make of an existing score: performers, but also composers that adapt or arrange music, or use it for purposes the original composer has no impact on. Conventionally, musicologists study performance "as a one-way-system of communication, running from composer to individual listener through the medium of the performer".[15] Performance, however, "does not exist to present musical works, but rather musical works exist in order to give performers something to perform".[16] Approaching Italian opera through the ways it was adapted, arranged and parodied in performance gives us new clues to understanding opera within its changing social and cultural contexts. Especially north of the Alps and in Habsburg Europe this form

12. For Italy, and in particular the role of "salotti" in the diffusion of operatic music, see Carlida Steffan – Luca Zoppelli, *Nei palchi e sulle sedie. Il teatro musicale nella società italiana dell'Ottocento* (Rome: Carocci, 2023). For a study of Italian opera "off stage", including music in the home and salon, the repertoire of brass bands, opera in puppet theatres and the diffusion of opera via music boxes, see also Roberto Leydi, "The dissemination and popularization of opera", in *Opera in Theory and Practice. Image and Myth*, edited by Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), *The History of Italian Opera*, 2, *Systems*, vol. 6, pp. 287–376. Organ grinders and mechanical music boxes, produced principally by French or Swiss clock makers and circulated widely in Europe, often played extracts from Donizetti's works. See Derek Turner, "Donizetti and the Victorian musical machine", *Donizetti Society Journal*, 1 (1974), pp. 129–135.

13. Franziska Schroeder, "Musicking", in *The SAGE International Encyclopedia of Music and Culture*, edited by Janet L. Sturman (Sage Publications, 2019), online.

14. Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meaning of Performance and Listening* (Middletown: Weslyan University Press, 2011[2]).

15. *Ibid*., p. 6.

16. *Ibid*., p. 8.

of engagement with Italian opera marked musical life on a daily basis, and in many different geographic and social settings.[17]

Applying the concept of musicking to Donizetti sounds less radical if one considers that the composer himself regularly adapted his operas to changing contexts of performance, making it almost impossible to speak of his works in terms of a definite text. As Roger Parker has argued,

> the man wrote (and revised what he wrote) ceaselessly for a quarter of a century; audiences all around Europe heard countless performances; many of them producing copious amounts of text special to the event; his music was consumed in spaces large and small, public and private. At present the prospect of controlling this proliferation seems highly unlikely.[18]

And should we attempt to control it? Re-arranging operas was also a way of questioning local conventions and challenging rules about musical forms and structures. With his 1827 comical one-act drama *Le convenienze ed inconvenienze teatrali*, Donizetti himself made the caricature of—and the break with—theatrical conventions the topic of one of his earlier works, a practice that was not uncommon to theatres in Vienna, London or Paris.[19] Moreover, in order to make full use of his musical language, he understood his role as composer to go beyond the semantic content of his operas' literary origins and the work of his librettists. As Luca Zoppelli has shown, he rarely limited himself to simply "clothing" in music the drama provided by his librettist.[20] Instead, he chose to apply his own rationale to the drama and to directly in-

17. Central to this argument, see Nancy November, *Opera in the Viennese Home from Mozart to Rossini* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023). In Vienna, parodies of popular Italian operas were a key feature of suburban theatres at least since the Congress of Vienna. See Barbara Babić, "The weight of lightness: Italian opera and parody in Congress Vienna", *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 37 (2025), pp. 53–77, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954586725000011>. Barbara Babić, "Rossini in *Krähwinkel*? Una parodia del *Tancredi* viennese", *Bollettino del Centro rossiniano di studi*, 56 (2016), pp. 9–61. For Offenbach's adaptations of Italian music in Vienna see Walter Obermaier, "Offenbach in Wien", in *Jacques Offenbach und seine Zeit*, edited by Elisabeth Schmierer (Laaber: Laaber, 2009), pp. 77–96.

18. Roger Parker, "Prefazione/Preface", in *Donizetti a Casa Ricordi. Gli autografi teatrali*, edited by Alessandra Campana, Emanuele Senici, Mary Ann Smart (Bergamo: Fondazione Donizetti, 1998), pp. XI–XIV, p. XIII. See also Luca Zoppelli, *Donizetti* (Milan: il Saggiatore, 2022), pp. 11–13.

19. Luca Zoppelli sees a dramatic analogy between scenes of Donizetti's short opera *Il fortunato inganno*, set around the rehearsals of an opera company, and Offenbach's *Vie parisienne*. The connection suggests that Offenbach took an interest in Donizetti's play with operatic conventions: Zoppelli, *Donizetti*, p. 115.

20. Luca Zoppelli, "Narrative elements in Donizetti's operas", *Opera Quarterly*, 10/1 (1993), pp. 23–32.

tervene in the action provided by the libretto. Zoppelli sees Donizetti as a composer "who emerges from the text to mediate, order, make palpable [...] certain fundamental elements relevant to the ultimate meaning of the composition".[21] Subsequent composers, arranging Donizetti's work for different purposes, engaged in the same kind of activity, taking their own subjectivity as a new point of departure.

The countless versions of Donizetti's works, changed and adapted over and over again for different singers, stages and cities, suggest that the composer was not too concerned about any definite versions of his works. This quality offers enormous possibilities to performers, as well as to musicians when rearranging his works. In *Remaking the Song*, Roger Parker shows how sketches from Donizetti's works that did not make it into the versions of his operas as we know them today might inspire a singer to "new variations, new accommodations" between a singer's voice and "the text Donizetti left us of his opera".[22] Parker uses such examples to argue for the impact that performers can have on our evolving response to canonical works of the operatic repertory. The aim here is to "hear afresh works we thought we knew everything about".[23]

If we apply Parker's interest in the semantic potential of the musical text's variations to what musicians might subsequently do with it, we get close to the practice of musicking Christopher Small wants us to explore; but taking this material into consideration also relates to what musicians and composers like Jacques Offenbach did with the works they arranged, adapted and often changed in their semantic content.[24] When writing his *mélodies* on *L'elisir d'amore*, Offenbach understood his work less as that of a composer than as the musical practice of a famous cellist, who regularly performed in salons and bigger concert venues, and therefore constantly had to expand his repertoire and adapt it to changing occasions.[25] He also needed material to sell to publish-

21. *Ibid*., p. 30.

22. Roger Parker, *Remaking the Song. Operatic Visions and Revisions from Handel to Berio* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 21.

23. *Ibid*., p. 2.

24. For a detailed analysis of Offenbach's approach to the adaptation and paraphrasing of operas see Matthias Brzoska, "Offenbachs Meyerbeer. Zu den *Réminiscences à Robert le diable*", in *Der "andere" Offenbach. Bericht über das internationale Symposium anlässlich des 200. Geburtstages von Jacques Offenbach in der Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Frankfurt am Main am 18. und 19. Oktober 2018*, edited by Alexander Grün, Anatol Stefan Riemer, Ralf-Olivier Schwarz (Köln: Dohr, 2019), *Beiträge zur Offenbach-Forschung*, 4, pp. 53–58.

25. For Offenbach's career as a cellist and cello teacher see Fabian Kolb, "Die Bühne im Blick: Jacques Offenbach als Cellist und seine Kompositionen für Violoncello", in *Durch die Brille – Jacques Offenbach: Einblicke und Perspektiven*, edited by Arnold Jacobshagen, Fabian Kolb,

ers, and occasionally to teach his own pupils. In a review of Offenbach's new opera *Pépito*, published in 1853, just two years before the composer opened his own theatre on the Champs-Elysées, *The Musical Times* still introduced him to its readers as "Offenbach, the violoncello player".[26] At that time he was frequently referred to as the "Paganini-" or the "Liszt of the violoncello", being admired as a virtuoso, but also occasionally mocked for his exaggerated style of performance or his obsession with using his instrument to imitate animal voices, other musical instruments, or all kind of different environmental noises.[27] These facets of his success notwithstanding, the cellist Offenbach also played a significant role in familiarising European audiences with the most successful operas of his day, as well as with original material written for his instrument, including Beethoven's sonatas for piano and violoncello.[28]

Not just Offenbach's inventiveness as a composer and arranger of music formed the basis of this career, but also a combination of obvious talent for his instrument, diligence and training. His early musical education, first in the context of his father's activity for the synagogues in Deutz and Cologne, then as a pupil of two respectable local cellists, Joseph Alexander (1772–1840) and Bernhard Joseph Breuer (1808–1877), went hand in hand with his early experience of performance: starring with his siblings in local inns, and subsequently getting to know the operatic repertoire through puppet theatres and his

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Ralf-Olivier Schwarz, Jean-Claude Yon (Köln: Dohr, 2023), *Beiträge zur Offenbach-Forschung*, 5, pp. 61–106. Also Jean-Claude Yon, *Jacques Offenbach* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), p. 12. Schwarz, *Jacques Offenbach*, pp. 16–64. For just a short overview see Fabienne Ringenbach, "Offenbach violoncelliste", *Revue internationale de musique française: recherche, enseignement, formation*, 11 (June 1983), pp. 93–102. With biographical mistakes and rather critical of Offenbach's abilities as a cellist see Wilhelm Joseph v. Wasielewski, *The Violoncello and Its History* [1888], translated by Isobella S. E. Stigand (New York: Da Capo, 1968), p. 172. Several standard works on the instrument's history and its masters, however, ignore Offenbach's role as a cellist. Julius Bächi, *Berühmte Cellisten* [1973] (Zürich: Atlantis, 1987), p. 66 mentions Offenbach only in relation to Auguste Franchomme. Valerie Walden, *One Hundred Years of Violoncello. A History of Technique and Performance Practice, 1740–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and George Kennaway, *Playing the Cello, 1780–1930* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014) concentrate more on the history of instrumental technique, with emphasis on the period prior to the modern school Offenbach stands for.

26. *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, 5 (1 December 1853), p. 303.

27. For an overview of contemporary comments and the frequent caricatures of the cellist see Kolb, "Die Bühne im Blick", pp. 61–63. Also Peter Hawig, *Jacques Offenbach. Facetten zu Leben und Werk* (Köln: Dohr, 1999), *Beiträge zur Offenbach-Forschung*, 2, pp. 38, 51. It should be noted that at the time the term "Paganini of the violoncello" was applied also to other cellists, eg to François Servais of the Belgian school. See Margaret Campbell, "Nineteenth-century virtuosi", in *The Cambridge Companion to the Cello*, edited by Robin Stowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 61–72, p. 64.

28. Kolb, "Die Bühne im Blick", p. 85.

teacher Breuer. Breuer played at Cologne's cathedral orchestra (*Domkapelle*) and in the local theatre orchestra, where Offenbach started playing as a substitute as early as 1832. When at the age of fourteen he moved to Paris, where Luigi Cherubini admitted him to the Conservatoire, he stayed for just a year and then preferred taking private lessons with Louis Norblin, while starting to play in different local theatres, including the Opéra-Comique. Then he began writing and arranging music for the cello, and performing it in salons and concert venues. He came to it with a not very long, but certainly intense experience in the pit. The composer Offenbach therefore always also remained the musician Offenbach. As Jean-Claude Yon has recently shown, musicians figure everywhere in Offenbach's works for the stage. He suggests that this "portrait de groupe" can in fact be read as an "autoportrait d'Offenbach" himself.[29]

Roger Parker begins *Remaking the Song* with an epigraph from Jerome McGann's *Byron and Romanticism*, which argues that "meanings multiply, like people, through intercourse".[30] Taking Offenbach's Donizetti adaptations as an example, this article will show how musicians arranged and adapted the works they encountered and thus multiplied their meanings. When arranging extracts of Italian opera for his instrument, Offenbach found himself in the good company of some very famous composers, like Sigismond Thalberg and Franz Liszt, the latter writing about seventy paraphrases of operas. Other famous colleagues of Offenbach's own guild of cellists were similarly active in this genre: Adrien Servais, Justus Johann Friedrich Dotzauer, Auguste Franchomme, Friedrich August Kummer, Georg Goltermann and Donizetti's fellow-*bergamasco* Alfredo Piatti.[31] All of them wrote, published and performed fantasias for violoncello based on famous, mostly Italian, opera arias. In Piatti's case this includes extracts from Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Linda di Chamounix*, published with Schott and advertised on the back of Offenbach's own paraphrases. These works represented a core aspect of the contemporary concert repertoire, and of these men's careers as cellists. Some of them though went beyond writing well intended arrangements of

29. Jean-Claude Yon, "Un autoportrait diffracté. Les figures des musiciens dans le répertoire offenbachien", in *Offenbach, musicien européen*, edited by Jean-Claude Yon, Arnold Jacobshagen, Ralf-Olivier Schwarz (Arles: Actes Sud, 2022), pp. 175–188.

30. Parker, *Remaking the Song*, p. VI. The quote refers to Jerome J. McGann, *Byron and Romanticism*, edited by James Soderholm (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

31. For this list see Robin Stowell, "Other solo repertory", in *The Cambridge Companion to the Cello*, pp. 137–159, p. 158. Piatti also stands for a further connection to Donizetti and Bergamo, where he played a role in the Italian reception of Beethoven's cello sonatas, as documented by an original sketch for Op. 5 at the Istituto musicale Gaetano Donizetti: Andreas Holschneider, "Unbekannte Beethoven-Skizzen in Bergamo", in *Studien zur Italienisch-Deutschen Musikgeschichte*, 7, edited by Friedrich Lippmann (Köln: Böhlau, 1970), pp. 130–134.

famous operas their audiences loved. In Cologne, Offenbach's teacher Bernhard Breuer was a member of the local carnival society, for which he regularly wrote and arranged songs. Many of these carnival songs were parodies of well-known tunes from operas, sung in local dialect, usually including elements of political mockery.[32] In addition to tunes from Weber, Lortzing and Marschner, but also Verdi (*Rigoletto*), a particularly popular song of Cologne's carnival, frequently reprinted in collections of the city's carnival associations, was the *Donizetti-Lied*: a parody of Dulcamara's Barcarola "Io son ricco e tu sei bella" from *L'elisir d'amore*, which Offenbach included in his own arrangements of the opera.[33]

As these examples show, opera offstage deeply marked musicking all over Europe. This was also the case for the Habsburg monarchy. In the empire, operatic culture reached far into its Eastern and Southern peripheries, into countless towns, cities and regional capitals that all had their own theatres, music schools, concert halls and coffee houses.[34] In these venues, musicians, repertoires, and related sheet music circulated widely across national, social and religious boundaries, and it was here where they were performed, arranged and adapted for ever changing contexts. Throughout the nineteenth-century the newspapers of provincial towns in Habsburg Europe regularly reported on opera performances in the monarchy's cultural centres of Vienna, Budapest, Milan or Lemberg/Lwów/Lviv, but they also included reports on productions in smaller theatres: Olmütz/Olomouc, Hermannstadt/Sibiu or Temesvár/Timișoara. The *Wiener Theaterzeitung*, but also countless daily newspapers, advertised arrangements and extracts from the latest operas—local prints, or new editions from Vienna, Leipzig or Milan; and they reported what happened in theatres beyond the monarchy's borders, in London, Paris, Berlin or Odessa.

32. Schwarz, *Jacques Offenbach*, p. 22. This was possible only, because these operas circulated widely and were obviously well known in German translation. For an overview of German libretto editions of Donizetti's operas see James P. Cassaro, *Gaetano Donizetti. A Research and Information Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2009[2]), p. 152.

33. Paul Mies, *Das Kölnische Volks- und Karnevalslied. Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte der Stadt Köln von 1823 bis 1923 im Lichte des Humors* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1964), *Denkmäler Rheinischer Musik*, 2, p. 190 (the author wrongly identifies the song as an extract of *La favorita*).

34. Most studies on this topic take a local or regional focus, and cannot be listed here. For a short overview see Stefan Schmidl, "Nationalismus, Weltanschauung und Moderne in der Kunst- und Unterhaltungsmusik Österreich-Ungarns", in *Das kulturelle Leben. Akteure–Tendenzen–Ausprägungen*, edited by Andreas Gottsmann (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2021), *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, 10/2, *Materielle und Immaterielle Kultur*, pp. 1285–1313.

Empires in turmoil

Despite the modest origins of a boy being born in a dark basement flat of the narrow Borgo Canale on the edges of Bergamo's *città alta*, connections with the wider world marked Donizetti's life early on.[35] Contrary to what some biographers claim, Donizetti was not a native of Lombardy, or of the old Duchy of Milan, even if Milan was just about 45 kilometres away. At the time of his birth, in 1797, Bergamo had just adhered to the Cispadane Republic, a consequence of the region's French occupation. Before that, the city had belonged to the Republic of Venice for centuries: a world power marked by cultural and economic exchanges that reached far into the Adriatic Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean, including many different national, linguistic and religious communities.[36] Simon Mayr, Donizetti's Bavarian teacher and lifelong paternal friend, reached his position at Bergamo's Santa Maria Maggiore via Venice, a city that remained central to his international career as a composer.[37] Likewise for Donizetti, Venice was the city of his operatic debut, with the first performance of his *Enrico di Borgogna* in 1818, at the Teatro San Luca; and until the success of his *Anna Bolena* at Milan's Teatro Carcano, as late as 1830, not Milan but Naples and Rome were the cities where he established his reputation. The fact that Naples was a court theatre meant that its operatic culture differed considerably from the operatic life of smaller theatres in Lombardy-Venetia, an experience that mattered in the context of his later appointments in Vienna. Even before the success of his works in Vienna and Paris, Donizetti was a musician and composer active within many different operatic cultures, an idea that does not easily fit with the concept of an "Italian" composer.[38]

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35. For a colorful description of Donizetti's modest origins see William Ashbrook, *Donizetti and His Operas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 3. Ashbrook's image is largely derived from the biography included in Guido Zavadini, *Donizetti. Vita - musiche - epistolario* (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1948), p. 3. For a critical reevaluation beyond the cliché see Zoppelli, *Donizetti*, pp. 34–36.

36. For an overview of the two regions' historical connections see Marco Meriggi, *Il Regno Lombardo-Veneto* (Turin: UTET, 1987). For Habsburg rule in the region see Brigitte Mazohl-Wallnig, *Österreichischer Verwaltungsstaat und administrative Eliten im Königreich Lombardo-Venetien 1815–1859* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1993). For a revisionist account of Habsburg rule in Venetia see David Laven, *Venetia under the Habsburgs, 1815–1835* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

37. For an introduction see the chapters in *Werk und Leben Johann Simon Mayrs im Spiegel der Zeit*, edited by Franz Hauk and Iris Winkler (Munich: Katzbichler, 1998), *Mayr-Studien*, 1.

38. For this argument see Axel Körner, "Dalla storia transnazionale all'opera transnazionale. Per una critica delle categorie nazionali", *Il Saggiatore musicale*, 24/1 (2017), pp. 81–98. Axel Körner, "Beyond Nationaloper. For a critique of methodological nationalism in reading nineteenth-century Italian and German opera", *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 25/4 (2020), pp. 402–419.

Especially during the composer's early years, important sections of Bergamo's local population, as well as the city's surrounding countryside, remained loyal to Venice, partly due to religious convictions, which tended to clash with the anti-clerical propaganda of France's political regime in the occupied territories (or local perceptions thereof). Donizetti's musical upbringing, within the religious framework provided by Simon Mayr and the city of Bergamo, should be seen in this context. Meanwhile, and despite the city's close integration into the world of the Venetian Republic, Bergamo's geographical proximity to Milan stood for its exposure to the Habsburg monarchy, to its crown lands in Central and Eastern Europe, and to Vienna. The fact that both Mayr and Donizetti maintained connections to masonic circles does not need to be read as a contradiction to their religious allegiances, especially in a region and at a time when religious life was influenced by the Catholic enlightenment, which sought to reconcile reason and religious belief. It was mainly through the intellectual life of Milan and its connection with the Habsburg monarchy that enlightened ideas reached the surrounding cities and lands, prior to the import of new ideas as a consequence of the French Revolution.[39] Emphasising this intercultural and political context of Donizetti's early life is relevant to our understanding of his later development as a composer and explains his openness towards different musical conventions. More than other composers of his time, Donizetti had to be open towards changing cultural contexts and the musical expectations of different theatres.[40]

In addition to this multi-cultural world of changing state structures, military turmoil was another key factor in Donizetti's early experience of life. Francesco Izzo has argued for "the significance of militarism as a vehicle for humor" in 1830s *opera buffa*, referring specifically to the character of Belcore in *L'elisir d'amore*.[41] Subsequent to northern Italy's encounter with Napoleon's

39. Carlo Capra, *La felicità per tutti. Figure e temi dell'illuminismo lombardo* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2017). Carlo Capra, *I progressi della ragione. Vita di Pietro Verri* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2002). *Italien in Europa. Die Zirkulation der Ideen im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, edited by Thomas Kroll and Frank Jung (Paderborn: Fink, 2014).

40. For examples where Donizetti accommodated the needs of his casts see David Kimbell, *Italian Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 485. For his strategies in adapting versions of his work to the conventions of different theatres and cities see the article by Roger Parker in this special issue.

41. Francesco Izzo, *Laughter between Two Revolutions. Opera Buffa in Italy, 1831–1848* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013), pp. 48, 199–230. On the role of the tamburo in introducing the military context see Luciano Alberti, "Donizetti, Romani, Sanquirico insieme per *L'elisir d'amore*", in *Il teatro di Donizetti. Atti dei Convegni delle celebrazioni 1797/1997–1848/1998*, 3, *Voglio amore, e amor violento. Studi di drammaturgia. Bergamo, 8–10 ottobre 1998*, edited by Livio Aragona and Federico Fornoni (Bergamo: Fondazione Donizetti, 2006), pp. 361–373, p. 363.

international armies, the wars led to the successive presence of Austrian and Russian troops in Bergamo, which served as the prelude to the decision taken at the Congress of Vienna to create the Austrian Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia. Only then did Bergamo become part of the Lombard section of this new kingdom, divided from its Venetian part by the river Mincio. For Bergamo this development meant regular visits of successive Austrian emperors and, even more frequently, other members of the imperial family with their accompanying military entourage. During his childhood, and later during the early stages of his career as a musician, Donizetti was surrounded by family members, neighbours and acquaintances that fought in the Napoleonic wars, under different flags, returning from battlefields far afield and being conscripted again.[42] When Gaetano was called up for military service, in 1820, two of his brothers were under arms, in Austrian and Sabaudian service. He only avoided conscription thanks to the noble woman Marianna Grattaroli Pezzoli, who bought the young composer an exemption, a common practice at the time, not dissimilar to Adina's gesture towards Nemorino in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*.[43]

Gaetano's older brother Giuseppe also trained as a musician under Mayr, as well as under the boys' uncle Giacomo Corini. He started his career as a military bandsman in the French army, staying with Bonaparte all the way to his exile in Elba and then following him to Waterloo. Subsequently, after service as a musician in the Sardinian army, he moved to Constantinople as Sultan Mahmud II's Chief of Military Music at the Sublime Porte.[44] This occurred during a period of dramatic internal and external turmoil affecting the Ottoman Empire, while at the same time the percentage of Ottoman subjects living in the empire's European domains continued to shrink.[45] Under Mahmud's successor Sultan

42. For the war's impact on operatic life see Emanuele Senici, *Music in the Present Tense. Rossini's Italian Operas in Their Time* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019). Also Axel Körner, "Music, power, and changing semantics of time in the long nineteenth century", *Chigiana*, 52, *Musica e Potere nel lungo XIX secolo*, edited by Fabrizio Della Seta and Massimiliano Locanto (Lucca: Lim, 2022), pp. 25–38.

43. Ashbrook, *Donizetti*, p. 20; Zoppelli, *Donizetti*, p. 214.

44. *Giuseppe Donizetti Pascià. Traiettorie musicali e storiche tra Italia e Turchia*, edited by Federico Spinetti (Bergamo: Fondazione Donizetti, 2010). Emre Araci, "Giuseppe Donizetti at the Ottoman Court: a Levantine life", *The Musical Times*,143/1880 (2002), pp. 49–56. Vittorio Cattelan, *Orizzonti della musica italiana a Costantinopoli nel primo Ottocento. Tre storie (1828–1856)* (Turin–Lucca, De Sono–Lim, 2021); see also Larry Wolff, *The Singing Turk: Ottoman Power and Operatic Emotions on the European Stage from the Siege of Vienna to the Age of Napoleon* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), p. 361. The following volume contains numerous documents relating to his Ottoman military career: Emre Araci, *Giuseppe Donizetti. Il Pascià bergamasco* (Rome: Sandro Teti, 2022).

45. For a general overview of the period see Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 54–74. For a more recent account

Abdülmecid I, the architect of the Tanzimat era of reforms and a great supporter of European music, Giuseppe Donizetti was elevated to the rank of pasha, comparable to that of a general or a provincial governor.[46] In this function, he trained the palace musicians, recruited among the children of leading notables, and composed the Mahmudiye March, which became an Imperial anthem and was subsequently paraphrased by Franz Liszt.[47] Later Johann Strauss would also dedicate a composition to Abdülmecid I, in turn recognized by the gift of a precious ring.[48] As part of his imperial duty, Giuseppe Donizetti organised an annual opera season at Constantinople/Istanbul, as well as in nearby Pera/Beyoglu.[49] His role mirrors the efforts of the Ottoman state to modernize its administration according to Western models, at a time when more and more officials were trained abroad in order to import knowledge and administrative practices into the empire. Western music became a key symbol in the representation of the reforming state, similar to the Ottomans' use of new technologies such as the telegraph, railroads and photography.[50] After Giuseppe's death in 1856 he was succeeded by another Italian, Calisto Guatelli, appointed court composer and writing further *marşlari* for successive sultans and the Ottoman state.

While we know little about how Giuseppe's career at the Porte was perceived by his family and locals in Bergamo,[51] his ascension to the highest ranks of Ottoman musical life overlaps with the decline of Ottoman power in the world, which was regularly covered by the European press at the time,

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see also Adrian Brisku, *Political Reform in the Ottoman and Russian Empires. A Comparative Approach* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), pp. 63–105. For a literary portrait of transnational exchanges between the Ottoman- and Habsburg-Empires, France and Russia see Ivo Andrić, *The Days of the Consuls* [*Travnička hronika. Konsulska vremena*, 1945] (London: Forest Books, 1992).

46. See Gaetano Donizetti to Tommaso Persico, 6 June 1842, in Zavadini, *Donizetti*, no. 426, pp. 614–615.

47. Selim Deringil, "The invention of tradition as public image in the late Ottoman Empire, 1808–1908", in *The Ottomans, the Turks, and World Politics. Collected Essays* (Istanbul: Isis, 2000), pp. 137–146, p. 143.

48. *Ibid*., p. 143.

49. Nicholas Tarling, *Orientalism and the Operatic World* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), p. 1.

50. Deringil discusses these developments comparatively and, with reference to Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger, as examples of an "invention of tradition". See Deringil, "The invention of tradition". At about the same time when Giuseppe Donizetti invented Ottoman military music, Mahmud II also commissioned an Italian artist to create a new version of the Ottoman coat of arms. *Ibid*., p. 140.

51. Giuseppe remained a frequent subject of exchange in Gaetano's correspondence with his family, but without offering much commentary on his career. See Zavadini, *Donizetti*.

not without ironic undertones.[52] With Mozart's *Entführung* as a particularly famous example, to be followed by Rossini's and other composers' operas on Turkish themes, Ottoman officials had been a constant subject of caricature for over a century, especially on the operatic stage, setting the tone for representations of military authority in Europe more generally.[53] Gaetano Donizetti always remained interested in his brother's Ottoman career, in particular his uniforms;[54] and still at the time of his *Dom Sébastien* he showed amazement at how audiences would embrace the representation of "colonelli, generali, ciambellani".[55]

Warfare, and the impact of the military in civil society, figure prominently in many of Donizetti's works,[56] as well as in the paraphrases, adaptations and parodies of his operas by other composers. In *L'elisir d'amore*, the sergeant Belcore is handsome but loathsome at the same time. Love makes the rustic Nemorino a fool, leading to his decision to enlist in the army and to leave his village (and Adina!). Romani's libretto for the opera, based on Scribe's *Le Philtre*, composed by Auber,[57] speaks to a tradition in Italian literature, and to operatic conventions, where "love and warfare" were frequently confused, a trope that can be traced to Tasso, Ariosto, Monteverdi, and later adaptations

52. Comments on changing clothing laws during the Tanzimat era were a powerful symbol of Western representations of the East: Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 66. Deringil, "The invention of tradition", pp. 142–143. For a balanced comparative account see Brisku, *Political Reform in the Ottoman and Russian Empires*.

53. Larry Wolff has argued, however, that "modern Orientalism of the Other was in fact very different from the operatic idiom of the Enlightenment in which Europeans and Turks were closely connected by a set of overlapping cultural, musical, vocal, and personal resemblances". See Wolff, *The Singing Turk*, p. 403.

54. Gaetano Donizetti to Giuseppe Donizetti, Vienna, 14 June 1843, in Zavadini, *Donizetti*, no. 488, pp. 668–669, p. 669.

55. Gaetano Donizetti to Giuseppe Donizetti, Vienna, 29 July 1845, *ibid*., no. 642, pp. 817–818, p. 818.

56. *L'elisir d'amore* shows that for Donizetti the role of the military in civil society remained an element of popular folklore. On *Volkstümlichkeit* in Donizetti see also Friedrich Lippmann, "Die Melodien Donizettis", in *Studien zur italiensch-deutschen Musikgeschichte*, 3 (Köln: Böhlau, 1966), pp. 80–113, p. 109. On *Volkstümlichkeit* and national style see Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, 3, *Music in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 119–186.

57. On the sources of the libretto and its background in Franco-Italian exchanges see Anselm Gerhard, "Ein missverstandener Schabernack: Gaetano Donizettis eigenwilliger Umgang mit Felice Romanis *L'elisir d'amore*", in *Una piacente estate di San Martino: studi e ricerche per i settant'anni di Marcello Conati*, edited by Marco Capra (Lucca: Lim, 2000), *Quaderni di Musica/Realtà. Supplemento*, 1, pp. 117–126. Also Mark Everist, *Opera in Paris from the Empire to the Commune* (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 292–309. Izzo, *Laughter between Two Revolutions*, p. 28.

of these themes by Rossini and many others.[58] As the remainder of this article will show, it was this aspect of Donizetti's operas that attracted musicians and composers when paraphrasing his works, among them Jacques Offenbach.

Offenbach's *L'elisir d'amore*

Consisting of nine separate pieces for violoncello solo, based on different scenes of both acts of the opera, Offenbach published his *Mélodies de "L'elisire d'amore" de Donizetti* as a print with Schott,[59] but also included it as no. 10 of the second part of his *École du violoncelle (2ème partie)*. In addition to Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*, the second part of his *École* consisted of six collections of *Fantasies pour violoncelle et acc. de piano* on operas by Grétry, Bellini, Boieldieu, Mozart and Rossini, in addition to four collections of *mélodies* for violoncello solo on themes of Donizetti's *Parisina* and *Anna Bolena*, as well as on Bellini's *Beatrice di Tenda*.[60] By including these arrangements as melodic etudes into one of his main pedagogical works, he followed the example of other well-known cello teachers like Justus Johann Friedrich Dotzauer or Sebastian Lee, Offenbach's German colleague in the theatre orchestras of Paris. This does not mean that these works were not intended for public performance, which is equally the case for the duos of his other pedagogical work, his *Cours de violoncelle*.

The following provides an overview of the nine numbers of Offenbach's *Mélodies de "L'elisire d'amore"*. In the original edition there are no titles or descriptions to the different numbers; for better orientation, this overview takes up the different parts of Donizetti's opera.

No. 1 "Preludio and Chorus: 'Bel conforto al mietitore'", is the opening chorus from Act 1, featuring the peasants.

No. 2 re-arranges Adina's cavatina "Della crudele Isotta". The piece's true protagonist, however, is not Adina. Instead, Offenbach chose the peasants in the piazza—in Donizetti's original represented by the orchestra's tune. For ease of the cellist, the piece is transposed from E to F major.

No. 3 is Dulcamara's aria "Così chiaro è come il sole" from Act 1, including his aide's trumpet solo. Transposed from A to D major.

No. 4 takes up the finale of Act 1, "Fra lieti contenti". Transposed from E♭ to F major.

No. 5 is the introduction to Act 2, miming the trumpet solo as a reference to Belcore's military world. Transposed from C to D major.

58. Tarling, *Orientalism and the Operatic World*, p. 133.

59. Offenbach, *Mélodies de "L'elisire d'amore" de Donizetti*. The 1873 edition was sold for 1,25 M, showing that it was available independent of the edition of his *École*.

60. For details of publication and plate numbers see the Appendix to this article.

No. 6. consists of Dulcamara's *barcarola* from Act 2, "Io son ricco e tu sei bella". Transposed from B♭ to D major.
Nos. 7 and 8 suddenly return to Act 1, to Belcore's *entrata*, transposed from C to G major, followed by his cavatina "Come Paride vezzoso", including the *stretta*.
No. 9. is a transcription of Adina's "Una tenera occhiatina" (Act 2) from her duet "Quanto amore" with Dulcamara, transposed from E to D major.

Offenbach did not change the character of Donizetti's and Romani's main protagonists, as Franz Liszt did in his *Rigoletto Konzertparaphrase*, where arguably he turned Giuseppe Verdi's Duca di Mantova into a romantic lover.[61] Through his rearrangement of the different numbers Offenbach did, however, change the dramatic structure of Donizetti's opera. There are three characters in Offenbach's version of the plot: Adina, Dulcamara, and Belcore. Offenbach introduces the village sergeant only after Dulcamara, suddenly switching back from the second into the first act. Belcore enters with a flock of soldiers, approaches Adina, and salutes her with his cavatina "Come Paride vezzoso" (like a charming Paris).

Even more surprising is what Offenbach leaves out. As Emanuele Senici has argued, "Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* is universally known as the opera of 'furtiva lacrima'. [...] Its reception has been fundamentally influenced by the fame of this piece, which until our days dominates every production and discussion of the opera".[62] Not so, however, for Offenbach, where Nemorino is absent from the cast, cutting the opera's most popular and sentimental character: by far Offenbach's most radical intervention into the plot.[63] Instead, Offenbach decided to foreground Dulcamara, a charlatan and quack doctor, and Belcore, a bold and ignorant military man, turning his version of the opera into a farce of almost grotesque characters. Even Adina only appears on the plot's margins: a capricious landlady, proud of her irresistibility, presented in Offenbach's version exactly as Romani and Donizetti invented her.[64] The

61. Franz Liszt, *Rigoletto Konzertparaphrase* (1859), written for Hans von Bülow and based on the quartet of the opera's third act. I am grateful to Emanuele Ferrari (Milan) for sharing his insights into this piece.

62. "*L'elisir d'amore* di Donizetti è universalmente noto come l'opera della 'furtiva lacrima' [...]. La ricezione critica e popolare dell'*Elisir d'amore* è stata influenzata in modo fondamentale dalla fama di questo pezzo, che tuttora domina ogni esecuzione e discussione dell'opera". Emanuele Senici, "Le furtive lacrime di Giambattista Genero, primo Nemorino", *La Fenice prima dell'opera*, 6 (2010), pp. 11–24, p. 11.

63. For a musical analysis of Nemorino's role see Federico Fornoni, *Oltre il belcanto. Direttrici drammaturgiche del teatro donizettiano* (Milan: Musicom.it, 2020), pp. 40–42.

64. For a character portrait of Adina see William Ferrara, *Staging Scenes from the Operas of Donizetti and Verdi. A Guide for Directors and Performers* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), pp. 3, 58.

only other role in Offenbach's version of the plot is given to the people, naive and manipulable, not dissimilar to the pastoral canvas Donizetti and Auber, or Scribe and Romani, had used as an intertextual inspiration: the peasants from Rousseau's *Le Devin du village*.[65] In changing the plot and its cast, Offenbach turned Donizetti's *melodramma giocoso* into a sarcastic farce, a story freed of any romantic intentions.

From Donizetti to Rossini...

That Donizetti represented an important model for the dramatic development of Offenbach's own work was obvious to his contemporaries.[66] Laurence Senelick and Luca Zoppelli, among others, have pointed out how Offenbach's *La Périchole* of 1868 was read as a parody of Donizetti's *La Favorite*, for its Peruvian-Spanish setting.[67] *La Fille du tambour-major* (1879), set during Napoleon's Italian campaign, was accused of copying Donizetti's *Fille du régiment*. Similar arguments have been made regarding Offenbach's *Dragonette* of 1857.[68] All of these works by Donizetti were still regularly performed at the time and remained known beyond the stage due to the existence of many arrangements for the salon or use at home. Beyond noticing these intertextual connections between Donizetti's and Offenbach's works, a more interesting argument seems the recognition that Donizetti's mastering of many different operatic styles prepared the stage for Offenbach, a few decades on, when Offenbach, the musician who had learned his trade in the pit, used Donizetti's models to diversify his own operatic and dramatic language. Donizetti wrote over sixty works for the stage, adapted and changed them, tried out different genres, from the *farsa* with dialogues to *grand opéra* and *opera buffa*. As a composer for the stage, Offenbach arrived at what would become his most authentic style through similar stages of experiments. Arranging Donizetti was one of the ways of exercising exactly this skill.[69]

In the case of his *Mélodies de "L'elisire d'amore" de Donizetti* Offenbach intervened in the semantic content of Donizetti's opera, but he did not go much beyond what Donizetti himself did when he used Henry Bishop's *Home, Sweet*

65. For this connection see Zoppelli, *Donizetti*, pp. 212–213.

66. Offenbach himself claimed that Donizetti's *opéra comique* served as a model for his own genre of *opéra bouffe*: Jean-Claude Yon, "Das gefährliche Debüt Offenbachs an der Opéra-Comique: *Barkouf* (1860)", in *Jacques Offenbach und seine Zeit*, pp. 65–76, p. 73.

67. Zoppelli, *Donizetti*, p. 417. Laurence Senelick, *Jacques Offenbach and the Making of Modern Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 51.

68. *Ibid*., pp. 58, 89, 193. Yon, *Jacques Offenbach*, p. 189.

69. This connection was noted even by contemporary observers. See Yon, *Jacques Offenbach*, p. 599.

Home in the "Mad Scene" of *Anna Bolena*: a piece that in its original setting fulfilled a rather different role than what Donizetti intended when introducing it in his opera.[70] Not in every case a musician's or a composer's intervention in an original work had to be carried to the extreme that we find in the case of William Schwenck (W.S.) Gilbert's burlesque *Dr Dulcamara or the Little Duck and the Great Quack*, which was directly based on Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*. Gilbert used the original work to produce a completely different kind of music theatre. First presented at London's St. James Theatre in 1866, it became the very model of the extremely successful comic operas W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan championed in London, and then all over the (colonial) world.[71] Although Offenbach's arrangement of *L'elisir d'amore* stayed much closer to the original than Gilbert's burlesque, and was not intended as a parody, by cutting Nemorino from the plot and moving the focus on Dulcamara and Belcore, Offenbach also changed the semantic content of Donizetti's work, exploring his characters' dramatic potential and eliminating the original plot's sentimental elements. His version of *L'elisir d'amore* should become something of a prelude to a much more drastic intervention into the world of Italian opera.

As Jean-Claude Yon has shown, the direct model for the new repertoire of Offenbach's Bouffes-Parisiens, inaugurated in 1855 on the Champs-Elysées, were the works of Hervé (with real name Florimond Ronger), formerly an organist and pupil of Auber, who had composed the original version of Scribe's libretto, which then became the basis of Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*.[72] Hervé's 1853 *Les Folies dramatiques* were explicitly meant as "parodies du genre italien", adapted for the French stage. They took the most famous works of Italian opera to turn their plots into a new genre of absurd theatre. Among oth-

70. Ashbrook, *Donizetti*, pp. 319, 693–694. In its original version, Bishop's song referred to an Italian setting (Milan and/or Sicily). It is therefore another case of an "invented" Italian setting travelling back from its Anglo-American origin to Italy, where in turn it illustrates the feelings of English Queen Anne Boleyn.

71. For a discussion of the example see Roberta Montemorra Marvin, "Burlesques, barriers, borders, and boundaries", in *Operatic Migrations. Transforming Works and Crossing Boundaries*, edited by Roberta Montemorra Marvin and Downing A. Thomas (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 205–215. For the date see *The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan*, edited by David Eden and Meinhard Saremba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Appendix 2, p. 244. The parody of Donizetti's work was Gilbert's first great success in the genre. See also Tarling, *Orientalism and the Operatic World*, p. 264.

72. Yon, *Jacques Offenbach*, pp. 129–130. Also Schwarz, *Jacques Offenbach*, pp. 68–69. On Hervé's influence see also Siegfried Kracauer, *Jacques Offenbach and the Paris of His Time* [1937], translated by Gwenda David and Eric Mosbacher (New York: Zone Books, 2002), pp. 163–165. See also Mark Everist, "Jacques Offenbach: the music of the past and the image of the present", in *Music, Theater and Cultural Transfer: Paris 1830–1914*, edited by Mark Everist and Annegret Fauser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 72–98.

er scenes, Hervé's first success adapted the overture of Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* for a play with music: a great success with audiences and critics alike. Building on the French genre of the *vaudeville*, this new kind of parody of existing works established a novel genre, for which Hervé opened his own theatre on the Boulevard du Temple.

For Hervé's *Oyayaye ou La Reine des îles*, premiered in 1855, Offenbach wrote some of the music, again based on parodies of Italian opera. Subsequently, arrangements, adaptations and parodies of Italian opera became the foundation of what Offenbach created at his own theatre on the Champs-Elysées, which made his breakthrough as composer and entertainment manager in Paris.[73] When applying to the French government for his license, originally linked to the opening of the 1855 Exposition universelle held on the Champs-Elysées, Offenbach explicitly argued that he wished to create a new kind of music theatre based on the Italian model of *fantoccini* and *commedia dell'arte*.[74] On 5 July 1855 the curtains at his sumptuously decorated theatre of the Bouffes-Parisiens lifted. For the opening night, Offenbach presented a set of four one-act plays, concluding with the pantomime-ballet *Arlequin barbier*: a parody of Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*.[75] Innocent *mélodies* and *fantasies* on operas, that had their origin in Offenbach's own career as a cellist in the pit of Cologne's and Paris's theatres, had become the foundation of a new musical genre, the latest reinvention of *opera buffa* in a new guise.

73. On the role of theaters' location within the urban landscape see Suzanne Aspden, "Introduction. Opera and the (urban) geography of culture", in *Operatic Geographies. The Place of the Opera House*, edited by Suzanne Aspden (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), pp. 1–11.

74. Yon, *Jacques Offenbach*, p. 131; Schwarz, *Jacques Offenbach*, p. 70.

75. Yon, *Jacques Offenbach*, pp. 142–143.

Appendix
Opera arrangements in Jacques Offenbach's *École du violoncelle*

Differentiating between Jacques Offenbach's smaller composition for violoncello and their various editions throughout the mid- and second half of the nineteenth century is complicated. Some pieces were composed and published mostly for pedagogical purposes; others were written to be performed in public. Most of them were available as single sheet music with separate plate numbers, as well as integrated in collections of pieces for one or two violoncellos.[76]

The *Mélodies de "L'elisire d'amore" de Donizetti* for violoncello solo were published as no. 10 of the second part of Offenbach's *École du violoncelle*, but also available as separate prints (Mayence: Schott's Söhne, [n.d.], plate 11880). The second part of his *École* contained six collections of "Fantasies pour Violoncelle et acc. de piano" on extracts of operas by Grétry, Bellini, Boieldieu, Mozart and Rossini (Op. 69–74, nos. 1–6 of the second part of his *École*), in addition to his four collections of *mélodies* for violoncello solo on themes of Donizetti's *Parisina* (no. 7; Paris: Cotelle, [n.d.], plate 1006) and *Anna Bolena* (no. 8; Paris: Cotelle, [n.d.], plate 1005), as well as on Bellini's *Beatrice di Tenda* (no. 9; Mayence: Schott's Söhne, [n.d.], plate 1181) and Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* (no. 10; Mayence: Schott's Söhne, [n.d.], plate 11880). These *mélodies* nos. 7–10 had no separate opus numbers. The first part of Offenbach's *École du violoncelle* contained four collections of three duos for violoncello, Op. 19–21 and Op. 34 (Berlin: Schlesinger, [n.d.], plates S.3543–S.3545).

The two parts of Offenbach's *École* are not to be confounded with his better-known *Cours méthodique de Duos pour deux violoncelles*, which contained his Op. 49–54 (Mainz: B. Schotts Söhne, [n.d.], plates S.1370.1–S.1370.3).[77]

76. For an overview in the context of Offenbach's wider oeuvre for violoncello see Kolb, "Die Bühne im Blick".

77. For a detailed study of the *Cours méthodique* see Peter Hawig, "Erste Einsichten in Offenbachs *Cours méthodique* (1847) für zwei Celli", in *Der "andere" Offenbach*, pp. 39–52. For a recent discussion of these works' modern editions and its different parts see Paul Edward Christopher, "The Cello Duos of Jacques Offenbach: *Cours de Méthodique de Duos pour Deux Violoncelles*, Opus 49–54", *American String Teacher* (May 2007), pp. 52–62. On Offenbach's other, mostly romantic pieces for violoncello solo see Stowell, "Other solo repertory", pp. 151–152.

Abstract
Taking the example of Jacques Offenbach's arrangement of Gaetano Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* for violoncello solo, the article discusses the nature and function of this popular genre of adaptations and contextualises it in debates on the authority of musical texts: how nineteenth-century music, and operatic music in particular, is to be understood in the context of the use different people made of it in a variety of cultural settings, from the private home and the salon to the concert hall. The article argues that in order to fully understand opera in nineteenth-century European culture, scholars have to take account of opera being performed offstage, in multiple forms and functions. Exploring Offenbach's interest in Donizetti, the article shows how operatic music penetrated and impacted different ways of making and consuming music beyond the theatre. Arrangements of Donizetti's many operas, written during a career that span just over two decades, offer a prime example for such an investigation.

Luca Zoppelli

Words after words. Donizetti's Europe as a historiographical challenge

"An opera he composed for Germans"

When I was invited to contribute to the *Donizetti in Habsburg Europe* conference held in Leipzig and asked to reflect on "what does it mean to write a biography on Donizetti today?" I immediately thought that it was an excellent opportunity to reflect on historiographical challenges in writing the biography of a European composer. As regards my book on Donizetti, I had already grappled with this exact question and was confronted with certain methodological choices, some of which are examined in the book's preface.[1] Two years after the completion of the book, enlightened by the distance that comes with the passing of time, the Leipzig conference has compelled me to expand this historiographical reflection. Moreover, the conference aimed to reflect on Donizetti in a transnational perspective, something that from the start of my work on the composer has seemed fundamental, and which raises huge historiographical questions in and of itself.

Before the book was commissioned, I had never planned to write a biography of Donizetti. If anything, I was thinking about a study dedicated to the dramaturgy and cultural history of Italian Romantic opera—a study in which Donizetti's works written for Italian theatres would have played an important role and which would have problematised the discourse on Romanticism. But in the end I was asked for something different. The book was to be part of a series (*L'opera italiana*) of five volumes of an informative nature on the most famous *Italian opera composers* (the others being Rossini, Bellini, Verdi and Puccini[2]). On the one hand, as part of the editorial norms, this meant that it had to follow the traditional life-and-works model. On the other hand, this model forced the five authors to take into account the entire output of each composer, including those works that cannot be defined as "Italian" or those that do not belong to the operatic genre. Especially for Donizetti this created a problem of consistency (although similar problems exist for Rossini and Verdi).

1. Luca Zoppelli, *Donizetti* (Milan: il Saggiatore, 2022), pp. 13–26.

2. The respective books have been written by Andrea Chegai, Fabrizio Della Seta, Paolo Gallarati and Virgilio Bernardoni.

My immediate response was to focus on the drawbacks of the life-and-works model. For many generations, so my reasoning goes, it was the instrument of the Romantic cult of genius, and its aim was to develop the artistic biography as a *Bildungsroman*, the narrative of "how an artist becomes himself", in the form of a coherent, inner maturation. Twentieth-century critics measured the development of an artist's production on the basis of an unique teleological model; they went through the works one after the other, in chronological order, in search of a "stylistic evolution" towards what they normatively saw as his "true voice", without worrying about the fact that each work was calculated to fit specific needs, primarily the *genre* to which the work belongs, the characteristics of the performers, the expectations of a specific public, and so on. Accordingly, these authors paid little attention to the role that the production's context and cultural trends had in determining artistic choices. This critical attitude is particularly unsuitable in the case of Donizetti, who in the first part of his career mainly composed works belonging to genres such as semi-serious opera or farce with spoken dialogues, which are impossible to compare with the works of his final decade. This model also encouraged a narrow national vision of an artist's development, since it started from the assumption that an Italian composer, for example, cannot do anything other than develop and complete the forms and aesthetics inherited from his national tradition.

I soon realised, however, that a life-and-works monograph is not necessarily condemned to fall into this outdated style of representation. With some corrections, it could become a useful tool for understanding not only Donizetti's artistic career, but also other aspects of the European opera system. This system is comprised of the network of professional, social, cultural and subjective forces that contributed to making each work what it is; and it has not been studied sufficiently. In particular, audiences should be considered a determining force in shaping the features of each specific work of art. The *Erwartungshorizont* is not the same in Venice as it is in Naples, not the same at the Teatro del Fondo as it is at the San Carlo.[3] Even if one considers individual theatres, what the audience expected and desired changed as one moved from the stalls to the boxes; and expectations would be different again in case of a gala or a regular performance.

3. In our recent study, *Nei palchi e sulle sedie. Il teatro musicale nella società italiana dell'Ottocento* (Rome: Carocci, 2023), Carlida Steffan and I attempted to examine nineteenth-century Italian opera from the perspective of audiences, their practices and their needs. It became clear that the tastes and behaviours of the audiences were very heterogeneous, even within the same venue and on the same occasion. For the term *Erwartungshorizont* see Hans Robert Jauss, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft* (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag, 1969), pp. 34–37; Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1988), pp. 349–375.

Accordingly, I devised a structure that would allow me to avoid these historiographical shortcomings. The book is divided into chapters that do not correspond with "operatic milestones" but rather deal with the major steps of Donizetti's institutional and symbolic position in the operatic market.

The first chapter covers the years preceding Donizetti's definitive detachment from Bergamo and his entry into a career as an opera composer. This is followed by a chapter on his "anni di galera" (1822–1827), far more dramatic than those experienced twenty years later by Verdi. A further chapter considers the years of his recognition as a major composer (1828–1832). Statistics, starting in 1833, show that Donizetti would be the most performed composer in Italian theatres, ahead of Bellini and Rossini. This implies another rupture, which has previously gone unnoticed by many biographers. Owing to his prestige, Donizetti was able to leave Naples. He interrupted his collaboration with the Royal Theatres and, after a brief return at the end of that year to stage *Sancia di Castiglia*, he remained absent from Naples until 1834.

In the following period (1833–1835) he was active in Rome, Milan, Florence, Naples and then in Paris for *Marino Faliero* at the Théâtre-Italien. In this phase, thanks to his recently acquired symbolic capital and position in the European operatic market, Donizetti developed new strategies in the choice and treatment of dramatic sources, assuming increasing responsibility for the adaptation of theatrical texts.

From spring 1835 to autumn 1838 he was once again based in Naples; after prestigious engagements in Milan and Paris, his professional position had been strengthened, enabling him to demand much higher fees; moreover, throughout this period he taught at the Conservatorio. His productivity became highly regulated, only two *opere serie* a year, one for Naples in the late summer/autumn and one for the Carnival season in Venice, where La Fenice was directed by the impresario Alessandro Lanari.

In the autumn of 1838, a series of professional and personal events led him to leave Naples and settle in Paris, which remained his main residence for about three years. By assimilating the characteristics of French national genres, and writing for all of the city's operatic stages, he became a protagonist of the Parisian theatrical scene.

In the subsequent years, from 1842 until his mental collapse in the autumn of 1845, he divided his time between Paris and Vienna. His final masterpieces, with the exception of *Dom Sébastien*, are considered "Italian" operas, but all of them were strongly influenced by European contexts and experiences.

Within each chapter the reader will find a biographical and professional synopsis and an examination of the operas, presented not in strictly chronological order, but grouped by genres and shared features. This was a significant choice, avoiding the traditional "evolutionary march" from *Enrico*

di Borgogna to *Lucia* and from *Lucia* to *Caterina Cornaro*, and instead to present each work as a response to a set of expectations, conditions and specific codes. This division is quite different from what is common in Donizetti literature. Previous studies have always emphasised the importance of *Anna Bolena* (1830) as the watershed between Donizetti's youthful period and his artistic maturity, and the work that assured him a place in the Olympus of Italian opera. A careful examination shows that, from an artistic point of view, *Anna Bolena* is a much less personal opera than those that preceded it; while, from the point of view of the prestige of its author, its decisive influence did not depend on the first Milanese production of 1830, but on the international marketing strategy set up by the publisher Ricordi. Therefore, *Anna Bolena* cannot be considered as a fracture in Donizetti's career, but only as an episode in his gradual affirmation, which begins with *L'esule di Roma* in 1828 and was completed around 1832, when he felt entitled to leave Naples and embarked upon a "freelance" career.

Furthermore, old biographies tend to dedicate a single chapter to the final part of Donizetti's career, after his definitive departure from Naples. The unspoken assumption behind this decision is largely negative in nature. Donizetti is "abroad"; he no longer resides in Italy. However, there are notable differences between the productive dynamics of the three-year period in Paris (1839–1841) and those of the following three-year period, in which, while continuing to frequent Paris, Donizetti became gradually more tied to Vienna. The Viennese and Parisian theatre worlds were very different, and so were their audiences, which oriented the composer's artistic choices in very different directions.

Let us take the case of the works composed by Donizetti for Vienna. Although he was hired as a composer of Italian operas, based on Italian librettos, there is no doubt that the three operas composed for the Habsburg capital—*Linda di Chamounix*, *Maria di Rohan* and *Caterina Cornaro*[4]—are very different from those he composed elsewhere in the preceding years. They are formally unpredictable and very sober in their use of "belcanto"; furthermore, the overtures of *Linda di Chamounix* and *Maria di Rohan* can be considered a tribute to the Viennese symphonic tradition. This, at least, was the opinion of the Viennese press. In the case of *Linda di Chamounix* the reviewers, accustomed to judging Italian opera severely for its stereotyped forms and the ornamental abstractness of the vocal profiles, were impressed by the accuracy and

4. The composition of the *Caterina* was interrupted when Donizetti learned that Franz Lachner's German opera on the same subject would be performed in Vienna: in the end the opera had its premiere in Naples. Based on the press reactions, it is reasonable to assume that the Neapolitan public failed to appreciate it precisely because of these "Viennese" features.

strength of the characterisation; and in *Maria di Rohan* they saw a dramatic force, concentration and restraint perceived as eminently "Germanic", hailing this opera as the beginning of a new stage in Donizetti's career:

> The overture already shows that Donizetti went to work with the seriousness that is unmistakably expressed throughout the entire opera [...] the primarily dramatic attitude of this music, the brevity and compactness of the musical style, the unity and wholeness of the form, we want put all this on our account and believe that Donizetti wanted to give an opera that he composed for Germans that air of seriousness and dignity that is so close to the character of the Germans.[5]

"We want put all this on our account". In reality, such a proud assertion of co-authorship could be made by all audiences in the performing arts, but here it succinctly expresses the self-awareness of the Viennese theatrical and musical culture at this stage.

Transcultural beginnings

If used correctly, the life-and-works formula has a great advantage. It forces us to take into consideration the entire path of a composer's life, and therefore of his changing position in the different operatic fields he is active in. (I use the term *field* in the sense of the sociological theory of Pierre Bourdieu.) This is no easy task, but it must be said that far more information and sources are available today than fifty years ago, when William Ashbrook was preparing his pathbreaking study on the composer. We are more aware of how artistic choices are the result of an artist's position in the field, of his endowment of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital, as well as of his hierarchical position with respect to the impresario, the singers, the audiences and the press. We are better situated to observe how composers negotiated between this set of conditions and their own subjective "project", and also that this project, in turn, depends on their "habitus". (Their social origin and their trajectory in the field partly determine what at first glance may appear to be their "nature" or their artistic choices.)

5. "Schon die Ouverture zeigt, daß *Donizetti* mit jenem Ernste ans Werk gegangen sey, der sich in der ganzen Oper unverkennbar ausspricht [...] die vorzugsweise dramatische Haltung dieser Musik, die Kürze, Gedrungenheit des musikalischen Styles, die Einheit und Ganzheit der Form, wir wollen dieses Alles auf unsere Rechnung schreiben, und glauben, *Donizetti* habe einer Oper, die er für *Deutsche* componirte [*sic*], jenen Anstrich von Ernst und Würde geben wollen, die dem Charakter des Deutschen so nahe liegen". A[ugust] S[chmidt], *Allgemeine Wiener Musik-Zeitung*. Article reprinted in *Le prime rappresentazioni delle opere di Donizetti nella stampa coeva*, edited by Annalisa Bini and Jeremy Commons (Rome–Milan: Accademia nazionale di Santa Cecilia–Skira, 1997), p. 1153.

If studied from this perspective, Donizetti's career proves extremely interesting, because it is anomalous in many respects. Unlike Donizetti, Rossini, Bellini and Verdi, but also Mercadante and Pacini quickly gained an important position in the Italian opera market. If we ignore Rossini, who started his career in the distinct context of Napoleonic Italy, a study of the careers of Donizetti's contemporaries shows that in Habsburg-dominated Italy of the 1820s or 1840s a talented young composer could quickly rise to a position of prestige, provided he enjoyed aristocratic protection. Bellini, at the end of the 1820s, and Verdi, from 1840, were "adopted" by the Milanese aristocracy, comparable to the "construction of genius" associated with Beethoven in Vienna during the 1790s.[6]

The young Donizetti, however, relied on his cultural capital. He was certainly the most capable and refined of his contemporaries, but he desperately lacked economic capital. As for his social capital, Simon Mayr's recommendations were enough to make him known among musicians, especially in the cities where Mayr himself had contacts, but they did not give him access to the networks of aristocratic *dilettanti* that influenced the operatic activity of the Italian peninsula. For many years, he was active almost exclusively in the smaller theatres of Venice, Rome and Naples, where *opera buffa* and *opera semi-seria* were performed. After his arrival in Naples, *impresario* Barbaia kept him on the fringes of the San Carlo, only commissioning occasional works to be performed out of season, with which it was impossible to gain recognition. This had two main consequences for Donizetti's career. For a whole decade he was confined to the lower margins of the operatic field, forced to write for minor theatres or obscure occasions, and within genres that did not help him build his reputation. These were poorly paid jobs that forced him to write a great deal, confining him to an almost proletarian condition, and reinforcing in him the *habitus* of one who can survive only thanks to the ability to write many scores in a short time: a working practice that remained with him even when his wealth and prestige improved. Secondly, the lack of prestige—of symbolic capital—meant that throughout this period Donizetti did not have the bargaining power to propose stylistic solutions other than the Rossinian *koiné* that dominated the operatic world. As he told his friend Bonesi, it was first necessary to win the sympathy of the public by following "the genius of Rossini", and only then would it be possible to do it "his way".[7] This, however, took longer than expected, causing him several periods of an-

6. I am referring to the study of Tia DeNora, *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius: Musical Politics in Vienna, 1792–1803* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

7. *Cenni biografici su Gaetano Donizetti di Marco Bonesi*, edited by Guido Zavadini, *Bergomum. Bollettino della Civica biblioteca*, 40/3 (1946), pp. 81-89, p. 87.

guish and depression. The idealistic narrative of the artist/hero in search of his "artistic maturity", to quote an expression by Philip Gossett,[8] cannot explain the path of a talented musician who since his debut showed great competence and, from time to time, the ability to write pages of surprising originality, but who, according to the *fable convenue*, remained a "promising young artist" for almost fifteen years, and only found "his voice" at thirty-three.

Therefore, a more in-depth study of the works composed by Donizetti in the 1820s holds some surprises. It reveals that, although forced to follow the Rossinian path, Donizetti possessed alternative models, which he resorted to on a few but significant occasions. It is not surprising that one of these models was Simon Mayr, especially in the genre of heroic opera. His influence is evident in *Zoraida di Granata* (which Donizetti probably composed as a replacement for the maestro, and under his supervision), and then in some scores from the end of the decade (e.g. *L'esule di Roma*). Even more unexpected, however, is that in the comic and mixed genres, the most unconventional pages show a profound assimilation of Mozart's operatic style. It is well known that Donizetti had studied and imitated the Viennese masters in Bergamo, particularly in the context of the performance and composition of string quartets; as for Mozart's theatrical production, he had certainly examined the scores under the guidance of Mayr but had rarely had the opportunity to listen to it. In almost every of his *buffa* and *semi-seria* operas of the 1820s one finds one or two numbers of excellent quality, many of them with an unmistakable Mozartian flavour (probably the consequence of Mayr's teaching) and written in an unconventional and idiosyncratic style. It was as if Donizetti had wanted to insert at least one "message in the bottle", an indication of what he would like to do, if allowed to.

Let us examine two examples. First, the initial segment of Finale I of *La zingara* (Naples, Teatro Nuovo, 1822). This is one of the most surprising passages in all *Ottocento* Italian opera. The young gypsy girl Argilla has managed to arrange a brief meeting between the lovers Ines and Fernando. To divert the attention of Amelia, the girl's governess, Argilla gets the servant Sguiglio (buffo) to distract her. Finally, Argilla deals with the other buffo, Papaccione, organising a masquerade that will enable her to recover the keys to the prison where her father languishes. In the libretto, the three dialogues appear one after the other, and are characterised by three different metres: *settenari*, mainly as *tronchi* for the lovers ("Ah come sul mattin"), *ottonari* for Argilla and Papaccione ("Quando il gufo a mezza notte") and *senari* for Sguiglio and Amelia ("E botame 'nfaccia") in Neapolitan dialect. Donizetti

8. Philip Gossett, *"Anna Bolena" and the Artistic Maturity of Gaetano Donizetti* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

decided to emphasise the simultaneity of the action and superimpose these segments (nothing in the libretto indicates that this was Tottola's intention). The different metres generate different musical rhythms, and the contrasting nature of the singing entrusted to the characters (lyrical for the lovers, syllabic for the buffos), mean that the musical phrases given to the three groups vary in character, density, rhythm and extension. The three layers intersect in a subtle interplay of clusters and displacements, creating a tableau of remarkable complexity. When listening, however, it appears evident that the musical management of this complexity is achieved through the adoption of Mozartian devices and sonorities.

The second example is the duo between Emilia and Don Romualdo in *Emilia di Liverpool* (Naples, Teatro Nuovo, 1824). Many years earlier Emilia, the protagonist, had rejected her betrothed Don Romualdo, a Spanish/Neapolitan aristocrat (*basso buffo*, pompous but not entirely farcical), to elope with a man who first seduced and then abandoned her. By chance they meet again. Don Romualdo presents himself with a grotesque catalogue of his names and noble titles, rattled off in the usual manner of the buffo catalogue aria. Without allowing him to finish, Emilia reveals herself and begs for his forgiveness in tones of extreme pathos. Here, two contrasting dramatic types are juxtaposed and then brought together, their characters accentuated by divergent vocal writing. Emilia expresses herself in passionate lyrical melodies characterised by an intense play of appoggiaturas and frequent harmonic shadows, in a manner unequivocally drawn from the great Mozartian heroines, while Romualdo accompanies or alternates with her in his skipping *declamato*.

These two examples show that a more in-depth examination of Donizetti's "youth" production allows us to understand that he possessed outstanding skills and was already experimenting with that fusion of comic and tragic elements that was becoming a hallmark of Romantic poetics; and that the transcultural dimension of his production was already present at the beginning of his career. Years later, when he entered the service of the Habsburg court, he showed immense pride in occupying a position that had once been Mozart's.[9] This veneration was not simply an abstract attitude. Twenty years earlier Donizetti had demonstrated that when he wrote unshackled from Rossinian conventions, Mozart's operatic style was his main point of reference.

Studying *Emilia di Liverpool* allows us to raise another point, one that concerns both the methodology of research on musical theatre and the recovery of the transnational dimension in the narration of early nineteenth-century

9. See his letters to Antonio Dolci (16 June 1842) and Antonio Vasselli (13 July 1842 and 3 August 1842) in Guido Zavadini, *Donizetti. Vita - musiche - epistolario* (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1948), pp. 616, 618, 624.

Italian opera. In writing my book, I paid close attention (more than most of my predecessors did) to the literary, theatrical and iconographic sources from which the works were taken. By Donizetti's time, the choice of the subject matter no longer depended solely on individual taste; authors were strongly influenced by what the public knew and loved. It could originate in reading literary dramas, but also in everyday entertainment, performed on commercial stages, found in the hebdomadary series of *Teatro applaudito*, or be inspired by extracts from the periodical press. Iconography also contributed to creating a system of interests and expectations: exhibitions, engravings, illustrated books, end-of-year almanacs. The endings of *Marino Faliero* and *Roberto Devereux* obviously derive from the tragedies of Casimir Delavigne and François Ancelot, but these, in turn, owe much to the paintings of Eugène Delacroix and Paul Delaroche respectively, which had caused an uproar in the Paris Salon. It is important to realise that Romantic opera developed in the context of a new media system. The source was thus no longer just material, or a pretext, for the development of a libretto, but it remained part of the semiotic structure of the operatic performance. The audience, or an important part of it, wanted to find in the musical drama situations that resonated with them, and comparison between different media was part of the pleasure of watching a performance. Sources were not chosen at random but depended on the circulation of cultural trends; they not only had a genetic relevance, but a true cultural presence. For this reason, I invested a considerable amount of time in establishing not only where each story came from (in some cases the source had been unknown), but also to study its diffusion, relevance and significance in the cultural market of the time. If we assume, as it was usually done, that a libretto is a mere scaffolding in which to insert a few stereotypical "belcanto" arias and duets, the nature of its source seems peripheral. Yet a more nuanced and fruitful approach is to hold that *stories* mattered, and that composers often made a serious effort to match the message on paper with what was subsequently expressed on stage. This procedure also has the advantage of underlining the transnational aspects of *Ottocento* "Italian" opera. Italian opera librettos of the time were mostly taken from non-Italian plays, first and foremost French ones, although not exclusively. The phenomenon is well known, but its importance has been mostly overlooked. We should consider these non-Italian "sources" as a powerful factor of cultural exchange.

Precisely for this reason the case of *Emilia of Liverpool* is of interest. Its anonymous libretto was a reworking of another anonymous libretto that Vittorio Trento had set to music in 1817 with the title *Emilia di Laverpaut*. (The first act is almost the same, the second extensively altered.) The source is the drama *Emilia, o La benedizione paterna*, published by the famous playwright and librettist Bartolomeo Benincasa as a "translation" of August von Kotze-

bue (today mostly known for his assassination in 1819—and what Metternich made of it). No play ascribed to this author (there are approximately 240) has a comparable title. However, for an unequivocal identification it was not necessary to read all of Kotzebue's writings. As expected, the plot of Emilia derives, very freely, from that of *Misanthropy and Repentance* (*Menschenhass und Reue*, 1790), which circulated widely throughout Europe. It was translated into many languages and is one of the most representative pieces of Kotzebue's melodramatic conservative ideology. The young Donizetti had already set to music two librettos taken from well-known dramas by Kotzebue: *Enrico di Borgogna* (Venice, Teatro di San Luca, 1818; from *Der Graf von Burgund*, 1798) and *Le nozze in villa* (Mantua, Imperial Regio Teatro, 1819, from *Die deutschen Kleinstädter*, 1802), both written by Bartolomeo Merelli (who would be the impresario of the Vienna Kärntnertortheater at the time of *Linda di Chamounix* and *Maria di Rohan* a quarter of a century later). These works force us to reflect on a phenomenon normally overlooked by (Risorgimento-biased) narratives of Italian culture in the Habsburgs-dominated "età della Restaurazione"; despite the massive presence of French theatre, an important cultural transfer occurred, which saw the circulation of texts from German-speaking areas, and whose ideological content seems to have differed to that of French dramas.

An Italian in Paris (and Vienna)

Traditional historiography never questioned the idea that the historical value and the aesthetic rank of a work are expressed by its current canonical position, and that the status of masterpiece (or of second-rate work) corresponds to its objective qualities and is attributed permanently. Today this principle seems like a myth, since we are aware that such rankings depend on countless contextual elements: institutional support, censorship, market dynamics, practical issues, the needs of performers, and many others. *Anna Bolena*, as mentioned before, has long been described as Donizetti's first masterpiece, the work in which, after years of craftsmanship generally spent imitating Rossinian models, he found his own mature and independent voice. But it is simple to demonstrate that Donizetti had previously already composed operas which can be considered as stylistically more personal and innovative, and that *Anna Bolena* is a rather conventional score, even if carefully written. Nineteenth-century critics considered it a rather diffuse work in which Donizetti synthesised the styles of Rossini and Bellini, trying to captivate the different sections of the audience, to give everyone what they wanted to hear, at the cost of renouncing his customary conciseness (if performed in its entirety, *Anna Bolena* is almost as long as *Parsifal* and not much more entertaining). But in fact it was the first Donizetti opera to be distributed according to new

market and media practices. As I have tried to show, the decisive factor was that the impresa sold the package consisting of the scores of *Anna Bolena* and Bellini's *La sonnambula* to the publisher Ricordi, who not only proposed, as was customary, to print the piano-vocal scores, but also to manage the rental of the scores in Italy and abroad. It was the beginning of an innovative business model with a great future. Rubini, Pasta and Lablache sang *Anna Bolena* in London and Paris, Italian theatres soon felt obliged to revive it, thereby quickly turning it into the fashionable opera *par excellence*. The myth of *Anna Bolena* was then renewed, in the twentieth century, by the role it played in the Donizetti revival, starting with the famous performances at La Scala in 1957 starring Maria Callas, with Gianandrea Gavazzeni conducting and Luchino Visconti as director.

One aim of my book was therefore to investigate the mechanisms of reception and the reasons for the selection made by the repertoires and canons in force from then until today, showing that the current image of certain works has been created over time, because of the role attributed to them by audiences and performers. What happened to Donizetti's image in the opera market and in opera historiography? Until the 1870s at least, he was perceived, in the Italian and European musical world, as being on the "modern" side of the border between old and new opera, the initiator of a new phase, dramaturgically and musically, later continued by Verdi. This was followed by an abrupt change. A part of the public, the one that considered the operatic experience according to the traditional ways of "conspicuous consumption"—something to be enjoyed in an intermittent and detached way—seems to have looked with annoyance at the dramatic tendencies represented by such composers as Verdi, Gounod and—above all—Wagner. It was in response to the needs of this group (not necessarily the largest, but one which coincides with the higher social strata of the public) that the narrative of a "golden age of the belcanto" was developed—the term itself only became widespread after 1870—and that a specific place in the repertoire was reserved for operas that seem to revive the happy era in which music theatre was a luxury good, a display of virtuosity and a source of pure sensual enjoyment. This supposed "golden age of belcanto", invented to offer an alternative to the dominance of "dramatic opera", is meant to include Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti, and it is characterised by its discontinuous structure ("number" opera) and the use of coloratura singing.

When creating a label, the products offered must obviously correspond to its concept. Within the Italian repertoire of the *primo Ottocento*, works that presented this type of musical writing were favoured, the others were discarded (Bellini's *Il pirata*, for example). In the case of Donizetti, his late works, too close to Verdi's aesthetics, were expelled from the repertoire, or survived in versions with heavy coloratura additions. The latter was true for the para-

doxical case of *Linda di Chamounix*, which remained in the repertoire thanks to a single aria, "O luce di quest'anima", that was not part of its original version, and which has very little to do with the rest of the opera. In a similar context "the invention of *Lucia*" takes place. *Lucia di Lammermoor* is perhaps, among the *opere serie* of the last decade of Donizetti's production, the least representative. The singing style of the title-role, and in part the work's formal strategies, are determined by the fact that Donizetti had to write for a singer of outstanding technical qualities, but who at the same time was a bad actress. With remarkable dramaturgical insight, he took advantage of Fanny Tacchinardi Persiani's voice to depict an individual whose extreme suffering has led to a sort of abstract, crystalline, paradoxical detachment from reality. From the start, *Lucia* was one of Donizetti's most popular operas, but a modern-day opera lover would certainly be surprised to learn that the mad scene—perhaps the most iconic blockbuster in operatic repertoire—contributed very little to its popularity in the Europe of the Romantic age. The newspapers, both Italian and French, mentioned it *en passant*, giving it far less importance than the closing duet of Act 1 "Verranno a te sull'aure", the *concertato* "Chi mi frena in tal momento" (Act 2), or the tenor's aria at the end. For some thirty years, prima donnas chose to replace it with some other Donizettian *rondò*. No theme drawn from it appears among those used by Liszt and others in their transcriptions and reminiscences of the opera, and the scene fails to appear, unlike the episodes mentioned above, in the engravings that adorn them. Even Gustave Flaubert's Emma Bovary, distracted by Léon's presence, leaves the theatre before the opera ends. The "mad scene" only became the blockbuster we know today in the 1880s, when a spectacular cadenza with *concertante* flute, in one version or another, became part of the performance practice. Its insertion shows that about half a century after the creation of *Lucia*, Donizetti's output had been definitively pigeonholed in the category of abstract *belcanto*.

With regard to Donizetti, a transnational perspective is necessary to explain his education, his cultural references and an important part of his theatrical career. Furthermore, such perspective clarifies how his image was fixed and how the Donizetti canon was formed and handed down to our times. This becomes clear when one realises that the "invention of belcanto" is foremost a phenomenon linked to extra-Italian *clichés* of the *bel paese*, not an Italian one: it was the spectators of London, Paris or Vienna who constructed an ideal of Italian opera that stood for the inversion of the tendencies present in modern "dramatic" musical theatre. Consequently, they demanded that Italian opera conform to this *cliché*. Thus, when Donizetti went to Paris, first in 1835 for *Marino Faliero*, and then at the end of the 1830s, he found himself at the centre of a strange misunderstanding. He felt an intellectual fascination

with Paris, the centre from which ideas, tastes, theatrical and literary novelties radiated out. He had already given a musical form to dozens of *mélodrames*, comedies and tragedies of Parisian origin, and he had thrown the doors of Italian opera open to Victor Hugo's plays. As a consequence, he could hardly fail to see Paris as a sort of promised land of the new music drama. But the expectations of the fashionable public of the Théâtre-Italien were quite different. They wanted beautiful melodies, well sung by Grisi, Rubini and company. *Marino Faliero* was a moderate success, with the press amazed by the austere and dramatic nature of the work, and the public dissatisfied with the fact that Rubini died halfway through the opera, and Grisi did not sing at the end. The impression was that Donizetti, in the excitement of writing for Paris, had misunderstood the needs of the city's different audiences. He had assimilated the principles of the new Parisian Romantic dramaturgy, and then realised that in Paris any Italian opera had to correspond to the *cliché* of the Italian opera. The same situation repeated itself five years later, when he made his debut at the Académie Royale de Musique (Opéra) with *Les Martyrs*, his first *grand opéra*. To some critics it seemed that the opera still retained too many signs of its Italian origin, while others complained that Donizetti had pushed his assimilation of local modes too far, shedding the opera's exotic "Italianness". The former complained about the predictability of the melodic and formal devices, as well as the inappropriately frivolous tone of some passages compared to the situations; the latter reproached the opera for being "slow, plaintive, heavily solemn, devoid of singing, monotonous and tedious", that is, not Italian at all. Parisian audiences instead welcomed *La Favorite*, likewise a French opera, but heavily indebted to the formal structures and vocal profiles of the Italian tradition. An Italian is expected to write as an Italian, that is what we pay him for.

In Vienna, on the contrary, audiences and critics seemed inclined towards a pedagogical discourse that positively evaluates Donizetti's efforts to Europeanise his style, and hailed, as we have seen, the quality of operas "written for Germans". How to explain this difference in attitudes? The Parisian theatrical field—broader, more competitive, more modern since it was based on the clear separation of genres, audiences and ways of experiencing the performance[10]—was disturbed by the experiments of the late Donizetti, who gave the impression of going beyond the boundaries, of leaving his own "Italian" hunting grounds. In contrast, the world of theatre in German-speaking countries seems to have been characterised by a notable permeability between genres, that created a favourable framework for Donizetti's attempt to bring

10. See Christophe Charle, *Théâtres en Capitales. Naissance de la société du spectacle à Paris, Berlin, Londres et Vienne* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008).

a new dramatic paradigm to music theatre. Viennese critics, therefore, welcomed *Linda di Chamounix* and *Maria di Rohan* as the expression of a new "Germanised" type of Italian opera.

The success Donizetti enjoyed in Vienna, however, was soon forgotten, the consequence of a Germanic-chauvinist musical criticism and related historiography. It is possible that over the years, the structure and needs of Vienna's musical world had become increasingly modern, similar to the Parisian one. Unquestionably, the political tensions of 1848 also left an impact, when the ideal of a supranational Habsburg culture, as described in Claudio Vellutini's studies,[11] gave way to the feeling of opposing and irreconcilable identities. In 1843 the Viennese press had praised *Maria di Rohan* for its German seriousness; in 1848, when the news of Donizetti's death arrived, the young critic Eduard Hanslick (the future author of the famous treatise *On Musical Beauty*) wrote an obituary. He affirmed that Donizetti "could have written five good operas, had he not written fifty mediocre ones", and that "the frivolity closely connected with his nationality and temperament made him perceive and treat music merely as a means of pleasant entertainment".[12]

What had happened between 1843 and 1848? The curse of identity, it seems, had come to Habsburg Europe, and had left its impact on its cultural life: perhaps the political situation (Venice and Milan had just chased out the Austrians) contributed to exacerbating the opposition. In any case, even in Vienna Donizetti was now included in the *cliché* of light and brilliant Italian music—forced to retreat, so to speak, to the reserve of "belcanto".

Writing a book on Donizetti, therefore, was an exciting opportunity to study the cultural dynamics of mid-nineteenth century Europe. No other composer, not even Rossini and Verdi, would have allowed me to do the same.

11. Claudio Vellutini, "Italian opera in *Vormärz* Vienna: Gaetano Donizetti, Bartolomeo Merelli and Habsburg cultural policies in the mid-1830s", in *Italian Opera in Global and Transnational Perspective. Reimagining Italianità in the Long Nineteenth Century*, edited by Axel Körner and Paulo M. Kühl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 96–112.

12. "Er hätte gewiß fünf gute Opern schreiben können, hätte er nicht fünfzig schlechte geschrieben"; "der mit seiner Nationalität und seinem Temperament eng zusammenhängende Leichtsinn, welcher ihn die Tonkunst lediglich als ein Mittel zu angehnemer Unterhaltung auffassen und behandeln ließ". Eduard Hanslick, "Ein Todtenkranz für Donizetti", *Wiener Zeitung* (24 September 1848), p. 104.

Abstract

The article reflects on the historiographical challenges posed by writing a monograph on a nineteenth-century European composer, based on my experience as the author of *Donizetti* (Milan: il Saggiatore, 2022). For a long time, the traditional "life-and-works model" has been the instrument of a Romantic cult of genius, where authors pay little attention to the role that a production's context played in determining a composer's artistic choices: the expectations of particular audiences, cultural trends, or transnational dynamics. Moreover, authors rarely consider the role of a work's current canonical position in determining its historical and aesthetic appreciation. Taking account of these flaws can help us to turn the "life-and-works" model into an advantage. For instance, it forces us to take into consideration the entire path of a composer's life and output, allowing us to better understand the dynamics of his changing position in different operatic fields, and the reasoning behind his aesthetic decisions. In Donizetti's case, this also means to identify the networks that determined his relationship with Habsburg cultural policies, whether it concerns his formative years, or the masterpieces he composed for Vienna during the last phase of his career. After 1848, and marked by chauvinistic undertones, German music criticism soon consigned the immense success Donizetti had enjoyed in Vienna to oblivion. This background influenced the treatment of Donizetti in international music historiography; and to some extent it still conditions his current image within the discipline.

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critiques des œuvres de Bellini et de Donizetti. Parmi ses parutions récentes : une monographie sur Gaetano Donizetti (Milan, 2022), un volume sur le rôle de l'opéra dans la société italienne du XIXe siècle (*Nei palchi e sulle sedie*, avec Carlida Steffan : Rome, 2023), une étude sur les sources historiques et littéraires du livret de *Guillaume Tell* (Pesaro, 2025) et une monographie sur *L'Anneau du Nibelung* (Rome, 2025).

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