

# A donizettian life

## Nicola De Giosa

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*“Tra gli scolari ch’egli ebbe allora e in seguito, vanno annoverati Achille Pistilli,<sup>i</sup> Salvatore Sarmiento,<sup>ii</sup> il Badia,<sup>iii</sup> il Salvi,<sup>iv</sup> l’Agnelli,<sup>v</sup> Marcello Pepe,<sup>vi</sup> Giulio Benoni,<sup>vii</sup> e uno che ancora oggi ricordato come valente compositore, il De Giosa. Sotto la direzione di Donizetti, questi scrisse due operette che sembrano disperse e un intero corso di contrapunto sul quale il Maestro aveva segnato di proprio pugno consigli e ricordi. Una domestica vendette il prezioso manoscritto a un pizzicagnolo! È un incerto a cui non di rado van sottoposte le fatiche dei valentuomini”<sup>viii</sup>*

In this way Giuliano Donati-Petteni<sup>ix</sup> introduced Nicola<sup>x</sup> Donato De Giosa almost a century ago. He was, as the list suggests, the most vivid of Donizetti’s pupils, the closest, as well as the most loyal to his memory. Irrespective of his own operatic works it was this determined *barese* who single-handedly resuscitated a succession of submerged operas by his beloved maestro in the 1850’s and 1860’s, it is to him we owe, arguably, the survival of *Maria Stuarda*<sup>xi</sup> after the Malibran *naufragio* of 1835 as well as the rescue of the tragic ending of *Pia de’Tolomei* from the Venetian lagoon<sup>xii</sup> - both of them key items in a brave series of bold Neapolitan revivals in editions as faithful to the original as was feasible in the recollection of the schoolboy he had been when first he came under the spell of the great composer.

The precocious De Giosa (Bari 1819 – <sup>ivi</sup>1885) was fifteen years old when he entered Donizetti’s composition class at the Naples Conservatorio and nineteen when the Bergamasc abandoned his precious musical post in the soon-to-be-betrayed capital city after being denied his coveted appointment as its Director.

De Giosa never forgot Donizetti, never neglected his cause, and never forgave Saverio Mercadante who took his place - an unprincipled and unworthy usurper - nothing but a dim musical cuckoo in Donizetti’s nest (or so he told anyone willing to listen). Though loyal to the Bari of his youth he immersed himself body and soul in the volcanic city of his adoption and as effectively as the repudiated *altamurese* became as Neapolitan as any native spirit, his music reveling in the flair and effrontery, the giddy volatility of its indomitable backstreets and dingy palaces in their transcendental setting, taking pains to cultivate the idiosyncratic resource essential for Parthenopean survival and thus emerging eager and armed to face the contrary sorties of a varied and troublesome professional career.

Famed for his captivating Neapolitan songs, intrepid and restless, a great traveller, conductor's baton in hand he was destined to feature dramatically on a turbulent international podium while at the same time throwing-off high-calibre stage works in all the genres, almost all of which remain in the shadows. Of his fifteen or so completed operas (there remains a pile of fragments and sketches) a few retain the imprint of his unforgettable maestro but true to insights of his own - and De Giosa was certainly a child of his own time - there are important *opere serie* among the *farse* and *buffe* some of which braved the most imposing portals in the peninsula - but never alas quite making the impact he would have wished. A modern re-evaluation is overdue.

Irrespective of his willing graft upon Neapolitan roots his engagement with the pulsating southern city was far from unclouded, beginning with the moment in 1841 when he shook off the dust of the Conservatorio after a violent tiff with the despised Mercadante. Though not at all dismayed - there were the important precedents of Errico Petrella and Luigi Ricci - a confrontation with the coterie of Neapolitan apologists of the *altramurese* was not long to emerge and to rankle. Happily his ability to outflank aggression thanks to the redoubt he built for himself at the Teatro S. Carlo became a conspicuous feature of his everyday existence, offering blow for blow and making sure that any such mindless musical caucus suffered a severe rebuff for every single slight he received. He became a major musical figure in Naples but his life and personality were sadly conditioned by the combative stance which resulted and that distorted much of his later image.

Initially he sustained himself with an operatic output in the footsteps - as he saw it - of his idol, attracting flatteringly the same kind of envy and denigration. But his formal *début* in the year following his scholastic defection could not have been more encouraging: *La casa di tre artisti* staged on 29 June 1842<sup>xiii</sup> at the Teatro Nuovo in Naples was repeated twenty-six times and revived (as *L'arrivo del signor zio*) at Turin and Genoa soon after. *Elvina*, in the same theatre, on 11 May 1845 enjoyed only a modest success but it was the favourable impression of these two operas that earned him the attention of the all-powerful Tuscan impresario Alessandro Lanari with the result that successor comedies like his *Ascanio il giojelliere* at the Teatro d'Angennes of Turin on 10 June 1847<sup>xiv</sup> and *Le due guide* on 30 December 1847 at the Teatro degli Avvalorati of Livorno<sup>xv</sup> (revived in 1855 at the Teatro degli Intrepidi in Florence with later revivals still) were destined to spread his name widely. Both proved exceptions to the rule, however, that almost everything would be conceived for and in his devoted *mezzogiorno*. It was his *Don Checco* at the Teatro

Nuovo in Naples on 11 July 1850 that transformed his theatrical expectations. With a libretto (like *Elvina*) by Almerindo Spadetta, *Don Checco* was one of those semi-apocalyptic *quasi-comic* offerings of the mid-century that created such a winning-streak post *Don Pasquale*, its score putting De Giosa firmly on a par with such advocates of black-comedy as Lauro Rossi, Antonio Cagnoni and the fratelli Ricci - subversive band of intrepid suppliers of extended problematic farce that was not *actually* funny, instead arcane rather than amusing, pessimistic and disturbing yet hoisting on a last major pedestal the inordinately voluble and insuppressible *basso buffo napoletano*.

With a handful of such mastodons *Don Checco* triumphed almost everywhere it surfaced.<sup>xvi</sup> An opera of southern verve and scope, innovative instrumentally, full of anarchic originality as well as good tunes, *Don Checco* proved an important addition to a once lighthearted genre at its ultimate apogee. This kind of opera would not survive the pumped-up voices, vast stages and Wagnerian bombast of the Italy about to emerge but enjoyed a genuine apotheosis in a cynical theatrical world on the brink of change. Its irreverent impact not to be challenged by any of the pseudo-comic contenders to appear in the decades to the end of the century.



*Don Checco* at the Festival of Martina Franca in 2015

The operas that followed this eventful score were not an anti-climax but nor did they live up to the expectations aroused by its reception. His first essay in serious opera came in its wake: *Folco d'Arles*, a melodramma tragico with a libretto by Salvatore Cammarano based upon Victor Hugo's 'Ruy Blas' and using a libretto originally written for his beloved Donizetti, no less; <sup>xvii</sup> it had a stylish launching before a sceptical audience at the Teatro S. Carlo on 12 January 1851 but won only a *succès d'estime* from those that thought it too soon to step into the shoes of defunct genius - even with a filial labour of love. It was not a failure, *Folco d'Arles* won grudging applause, several pieces became concert fare, and with such stars as Eugenia Tadolini and Achille De Bassini in the cast earned eight complete performances followed by a trail of reduced or partial appearances as was the mode. If only a contested tragic début with his detractors murmuring 'Donizetti' as if the latter been betrayed, this opera, like so many of its successors in all the genres, had a colouring and singularity (and especially an orchestral singularity) recognisably De Giosa's own. Oddly enough, in view of its disputatious reception, *Folco d'Arles* was awarded the unusual cachet of being followed at the S. Carlo by *Don Checco* when "vulgar" comedies were forbidden on that stage (on 30 March 1851 - its cast sharing the evening indigestibly with the *Medea* of Mercadante) but while *Don Checco* would be revived anew on that stage in 1853 and 1854 *Folco d'Arles*, with its authentic dramatic core and evident merits would never appear again under that proscenium but would be reborn, revamped and revised later in Florence with the success it deserved.

Another serious opera followed, this time it was the portentous tragedia lirica *Guido Colmar* with a libretto by Domenico Bolognese and staged at the same S. Carlo on 27 November 1852. The cast could not have been bettered with Teresa De Giuli-Borsi and Raffaele Mirate in the major roles but thanks to an untried production and poor rehearsal it survived for three performances only and must be accounted a failure. A week later the same cast applied itself to Verdi's *Ernani* which rampaged memorably into the following season. *Guido Colmar*, however, also did not disappear, it was restaged under the title of *Silvia* in 1864 at the same S. Carlo and had one of those surprising second careers that became so characteristic of this composer.

Until the end of that decade there was a fever of composition. There were honorific tasks: he wrote a votive cantata for the inauguration of a bust of Ferdinando II on 6 March 1853; on 4 February 1859 he supplied an *Inno* in honour of his son and heir - the Duca di Calabria newly wedded to Maria Sofia of Bavaria sister of the Empress of Austria - and sung at the Teatro Piccinni in Bari by a *coro di giovani e di signorine della città*, it concluded with a torchlight procession in honour of the composer, escorting the happy maestro to his lodgings. (He may well have reflected with satisfaction that

the cantata ‘*L’Olimpio ed il Walhalla*’ composed by Mercadante for the Coronation of this pair some months later was received with ostentatious yawns)<sup>xviii</sup> Naturally enough, his success did not endear him to Neapolitan radicals following the unification of Italy.

Among them came a whole succession of operatic false starts, *Ettore Fieramosca*, applauded at rehearsal, failed abjectly at the S. Carlo on 10 February 1855, its obvious merits went for nothing (rewritten as *La disfida di Barletta* it remains unperformed)<sup>xix</sup> Then came *Un geloso e la sua vedova* at the Teatro Nuovo on 8 January 1857, which, despite enthusiastic championship from the Milanese publisher Ricordi, passed without a ripple; *Isella la modista*, an opera giocosa with a dim text by Leopoldo Tarantini followed at the Teatro del Fondo on 15 June 1857 and was staged with some pomp, but in vain (it was given a *rifacimento* subsequently as *I galanti* but this too remains unperformed). An even more disturbing venture followed: *La cristiana* intended for La Fenice in Venice in 1858 was unable to surmount an ongoing management crisis at that theatre and was simply shelved;<sup>xx</sup> a similar fate foiled his *Ida di Benevento* which just dissolved into the unknown (the opera survives in manuscript with the title *Il seudan di Bari* provoking a lively dispute about its existence which has lasted for several years); *Il gitano* (revised oddly as *Lo zingaro*), an opera tragica, was his very last stagework of the decade<sup>xxi</sup> evaporating into the mayhem of the Risorgimento (its music was printed in vocal score by Cottrau of Naples).

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The age was no longer conducive to operatic composition, or so it would appear in the former-capital city at least. It is at this time that De Giosa took the step that gave him an upper hand in the politics of his chosen base. Though the blind Mercadante presented himself as the perfect embodiment of the lyric stage his unregenerate ex-pupil of sorts had other plans. Together with Giuseppe Puzone (1820-1914), yet another former student of Donizetti, he assumed the *de facto* artistic direction of the bereft S. Carlo, a "Real Teatro" nominally but deprived of all subvention from the palace next door. Indeed a stranded operatic whale with an indistinct future.

De Giosa now emerged as its rescuer with *Don Checco* as his badge of admission, a gifted upholder of the lost pride of the downgraded city. The precise extent of his artistic sway at the S. Carlo is confused. It began, it would seem, in the anxious days of 1860 in the disorderly interim at the S. Carlo when, thanks to De Giosa, Donizetti's "*Leonora di Gusman*" (19 May 1860) at last emerged under its "real" title *La favorita* (25 October 1860) in a more-or-less authentic edition. And his was a mandate lasting for some

eight years, his name initially heading the all important listing - the *maestranze della stagione* in 1860-1861 - as the leading figure of a quartet of orchestral directors, together with Antonio Farelli, Giovanni Donadio and Giuseppe Puzone, under the *soprintendenza* of the Duca di Satriano - an uneasy survivor of the *ancien régime*.<sup>xxii</sup>

In the ensuing operatic black hole - one of almost total Verdian supremacy elsewhere in Italy - there began an exceptional series of donizettian revivals in Naples. Opening with a *Lucia di Lammermoor* starring Thérèse Tietjens, renowned international shooting star on a surprising visit to southern Italy, supported by Raffaele Mirate and Achille de Bassini (12 February 1864); her vaunted *Lucrezia Borgia* following (on 8 March), with the Bellinian *Norma* (on 19 March), and a series punctuated by a *Linda di Chamounix* (3 June) with a much less starry cast. 1865 saw the momentous appearance of a three-act *Maria Stuarda* in Naples (on 22 April)<sup>xxiii</sup> underpinned dramatically by the mounting of Schiller's play with Adelaide Ristori in the title role [in a summer series of prose offerings on that same S. Carlo stage (25 August)]. Then came a succession of similar resurrections: *Maria di Rohan* with Marcellina Lotti della Santa in the title role (12 November), succeeded by *Roberto Devereux* (21 December) with that same soprano. 1866 saw *Maria Stuarda* again, while 1867 featured the astounding appearance (for the S. Carlo) of *Le convenienze teatrali*. 1868 had a *Poliuto* and a *La favorita*, while 1869 had a *Parisina* with Lotti della Santa once more (6 January) and a *Belisario* with Luigi Colonnese in the title role and Lotti della Santa as Antonina (17 October). But by then De Giosa had stepped down from his podium of honour as the repertoire bears witness. On 24 October there was an *Anna Bolena* authentically enough but this was followed by a "*Gabriella*" purporting to be a genuine Donizettian *prima* (29 November) but in fact a *pasticcio* score prepared by Puzone and Paolo Serrao in an ignominious fudge that De Giosa would have furiously disclaimed.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Donizetti was not the only composer to have been championed in a period of decline and musical intrigue - unwonted corollary of unification and economic deprivation. In March 1867 De Giosa had taken over the direction of Giovanni Pacini's *Berta di Varnol* (almost his final opera) at the S. Carlo in flagrant public defiance of a cabal determined to prevent its staging. A campaign of disparagement of the once triumphant composer had been hatched in Milan. The timid management of the S. Carlo threatened with losing its access to Verdian performance rights suddenly announced - when rehearsal was well under way - that *Berta* would be cancelled. De Giosa, however, outraged by this breach of cultural integrity, gathered together the cast of *Berta*, the *coro*, *comparsa* and most of the orchestra with a host of outraged fans and together they marched to the office of the Director and made such a protest that *Berta di Varnol* was not

only staged as originally planned but ran to the end of the season. In a sequel to his memoirs Pacini acknowledged the intervention:

“...un orchestra che solo puo trovarsi a Napoli quando diretta da un De-Giosa(sic) uomo di cuore, d’intelletto e modello di onesta”<sup>xxv</sup>

It was as a result of such outrageous musical manoeuvres that the embattled *barese* felt obliged to grasp a more wholesome nettle. For this reason he decided to accept an engagement to conduct in the carnival season of 1868 at the Teatro La Fenice as a successor to Emanuele Muzio on a stage where the repertoire would be a relatively non-conflictual cross-section of international fare.<sup>xxvi</sup> It was this modest move that marked the beginning of his international career; foreign shores (and Venice was a foreign shore) began to beckon.

That same year he laid his complaints in a missive of notable protest before the distinguished scholar Alessandro Biaggi in the hope that his comments would be passed on to the Minister Broglio who concerned himself with musical reform. From his address in the Vicoletto del Vasto in Naples he poured scorn on the current musical decline in Naples, on the insolence of a compositional camorra in the Conservatorio under Mercadante with sarcastic references to the “*imparziale cieco*” and “*suo gesuitismo*”. He had suffered from a *blind* ostinato of denigration from the aficionadi of the *altamurese* for years with the reiterated motif that the latter's music was no longer to be heard at the S. Carlo under the baton of De Giosa. It was true of course, as it was under every Italian conductor of the day, this was the period when composers like Mercadante dropped out of the repertoire. But this long letter of complaint, cathartic more than effective it is to be feared, was most notable for its heartfelt envoi:

“Povero Collegio - Oh Tempi famosi di Donizetti”<sup>xxvii</sup>

In fact, an exotic intermezzo in his life was about to unfold. In the summer of 1870 he accepted an engagement to prepare the orchestra of the Teatro Vicereale in Cairo for international status. Taking leave of Naples he took up residence in the Egyptian capital for some eight months, literally desiccated by the heat and dust. Designated “*Principal Conductor*” of the brand-new theatre he seems to have been both applauded and insufficiently appreciated irrespective of the professionalism of his work. Hot, over-conscientious, overworked and introspective<sup>xxviii</sup> it was not the daunting circumstances of his residence or duties however, but a spat with Verdi that put a term to this colourful *incarico*. Egypt's effortful release from the yoke of the Ottoman Empire and its opening up to a wider world had led not just to the opening of the Suez Canal but also to the opening of an imposing opera house, Giuseppe Verdi had been commissioned by the Khedive to supply a suitably operatic “obelisk” to commemorate the event

hence *Aida* and the deafening publicity that went with it. But if De Giosa had been led to believe that conducting the *prima* - for which he had been training the orchestra - of his arch-antagonist's *Aida* would be his due, he was to be disillusioned. Verdi, unenthusiastic about southerners as a general principle and no friend of De Giosa in any case had his own ideas who should lead his masterpiece to public endorsement. He had made no bones about it, it is clear that Verdi never even considered De Giosa for such a role, Giovanni Bottesini who won the podium for the great event<sup>xxxix</sup> was the choice of the *soprintendente* of the viceregal theatre, Dranecht Bey, while its composer wanted Angelo Mariani or failing him Franco Faccio.<sup>xxx</sup> Nor, it seems, did Dranecht Bey even consider De Giosa as a possible candidate! It was the uncharacteristic surrender on the part of Verdi that led to Bottesini's appointment: "*Verdi non doveva tenere in gran conto il Bottesini quale direttore d'orchestra.*"<sup>xxxi</sup>

De Giosa soon found out. He took his treatment and rejection as a personal affront, which, despite a subsequent Verdian *amende honorable*<sup>xxxii</sup> led to lasting acrimony. He shook off the dust of Cairo and returned to Naples fuming. In the end the only memento that survived of his traumatic Egyptian stay was an album of six songs with the title *al Nilo* a copy being dutifully placed in the library of S.Pietro a Majella.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

An even more exotic adventure was to follow. On 27 February 1873 he signed a contract with the Società Lirica del Teatro Colon di Buenos Aires to conduct for an entire season at the world famous theatre. Was it his friend Lauro Rossi's picturesque example that encouraged him to take such a bold step? The latter, an ex-student of Naples (and championed by Donizetti) had now accepted the direction of the Conservatorio following the demise of Mercadante in 1871. Rossi's own wanderlust (he had been musical director of a company touring Mexico some three decades earlier followed by a circuit of half the world) may have proved irresistible to the restless De Giosa. The *barese* maestro arrived in Buenos Aires in early summer and the season at the Antigo Teatro Colon (ancestor of the actual Teatro Colon which dates only from 1908) began on 14 May 1873, on 24 May he surprised the audience with a performance of *La alborada de la libertad* (The sunrise of Freedom), a sinfonia alegorica he had specially composed for the occasion including quotations from the Argentinian National Anthem. This happy notion was much applauded and repeated several times during his time on the momentous podium. The repertoire for the season was of the very highest-quality international fare as could be expected on such a celebrated stage.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Casts included Ersilia Cortesi and Antonietta Pozzoni as primedonne sopranos, Ernestina Stoika as



primadonna mezzo-soprano, Salvatore Anastasi and Luigi Gulli as primi tenori, and Luigi Colonnese as primo baritono with Marcello Junca as primo basso. The season opened with *Lucrezia Borgia* with Cortesi in the title role; then *Traviata* with Pozzoni; *Ernani* with Gulli in the title role; then *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Cortesi, Gulli, Colonnese and Junca; *Trovatore* followed with Gulli, Pozzoni and Stoika; *Ballo in maschera* with Anastasi, Colonnese, Pozzoni and Stoika; *Rigoletto* with Cortesi; *La favorita* with Pozzoni, Gulli, Colonnese and Junca; *Faust* with Gulli and Pozzoni; and ending with Mercadante's *La vestale* (!) featuring Amelia Pasi in the title role. The second half of the season began on 22 September with *Gli Ugonotti* with Pasi and Pozzoni; then *La muta di Portici* with Gulli and Pasi; *Maria di Rohan* with Colonnese as Enrico and ending on 4 October with the one absolute novelty of the whole season: the Buenos Aires première of Verdi's *Aida* with Pozzoni in the title role, Stoika as Amneris, Anastasi as Radames, Colonnese as Amonastro, Junca as Ramfis and Carlo Trivero sporting the tiara of the Pharaoh. *Aida* ran for ten performances and was an utter triumph.

Thus De Giosa did conduct the *prima* of *Aida*. In Argentina. Verdi notwithstanding.

Despite lengthy absences, De Giosa was more-or-less omnipresent in Naples both during and after Mercadante's reign at the Conservatorio. He had featured, for example, as a "*consigliero dello Sezione Musica*" of the Neapolitan "*Associazione degli Scienziati, Letterati ed Artisti*" from 1861 onwards. His portrait can be seen even shoulder-to-shoulder with his myopic antagonist in an amazing group photo-montage portraying all those taking part in the "Primo Congresso Musicale Italiano" at Naples in 1864: De Giosa, as *Assessore*, is depicted hilariously at the very summit of a mountain of faces, his photo pasted next to that of Mercadante as *Presidente Onorario*. They are looking in opposite directions.

De Giosa had been allotted the special duty of chairing a committee for "*l'incoraggiamento ai giovani compositori teatrali*". Sometime later he was *Presidente* of the "Associazione dell'Arte Musicale Italiana" (during which *incarico* he raised Francesco Florimo to the status of 'Officer' on 10 December 1869), and in 1874 he became *socio onorario and direttore alla Società Filarmonico di Napoli*.

Post-Mercadante, and post-Argentina, indeed, he became heavily in demand again as a conductor in Naples and remained so until June 1881 even if in these final years his role became primarily consultative. In 1877 he joined Lauro Rossi, Paolo Serrao and others in founding a publishing house "Associazione musicale industriale" in Naples to improve "*le condizioni economiche ed artistiche dei culturi*" of the art of music. The intention primarily was to print the compositions of the associates (many

of them didactic publications). Though it was retro in some ways - publishing the *Stabat Mater* of Traetta for example - it was part of Lauro Rossi's despairing attempts to reform the Conservatorio.<sup>xxxv</sup>

His later operas? These years were not without their reward. His *Il pipistrello* had emerged two years before at the Società Filarmonico of Naples. This was one of his more obscure *rifacimenti*, a trifle originally intended for the Opéra-comique in Paris but which never materialised on that stage. François Bazin was one of his contacts in the French capital and his (unperformed) opérette comica *La Chauve-souris en un acte* with a *livret* by Auguste de Forges had been proposed for a new setting by De Giosa (possibly even as early as 1847 - the extant manuscript is inconclusive), according to legend the project was revived - given a new lease of life - when he passed through Paris on returning from Argentina. At any event this trifling *Il pipistrello* was given a suitably light-hearted production honourably enough in Naples so many years later on 28 January 1875 in an Italian version.<sup>xxxvi</sup> But a far more important offering was imminent, his irresistible *Napoli di carnevale*. Barely a year later at the Teatro Nuovo this glittering score emerged truly memorably, an opera giocosa in tre atti with a giddy libretto by Marco d'Arienzo it proved to be the true heir of the irresistible, almost timeless Neapolitan Piedigrotta effervescence of Luigi Ricci and his kith and kin. Staged on 28 December 1876 it ran for 85 consecutive evenings.

Giovine<sup>xxxvii</sup> insists that this archi-Neapolitan firework display was a reply to the "*Can Can*" mode - that alien gallic fervour pounding through Italian operetta in these years - flung skirts and gallops to the fore. It may well have been true and in this respect especially *Napoli di carnevale* was something in the nature of a shameless retro indulgence, but whatever its timing or its predictable explosion of high spirits and dances no one can possibly doubt that it was a wholehearted tribute to the native genius of the great city which had been the focus of his life and art.



### The composer at its Genoa revival in 1880

*Napoli di carnevale* was a culminating point, but not in any way the end of his composing. Not even a Swan Song. The extension of his orchestral means plus a vivid, not-to-say radical musical fantasy already conspicuously nascent in the *Requiem per Donizetti* of his Cairo years suddenly came to an unprecedented flowering. It was as if his foreign sights and sounds had impelled a belated ripening, 1877 saw the completion of his opera comica politica *Rabagas* with a text by Enrico Golisciani on a plot by Sardou, which, paired with the more topical (that is to say Ponchiellian) *Il conte di S. Ronano* of 1878 marked an unexpectedly modish apotheosis on his part. It is clear that in his final years in Naples he made Herculean efforts to update his compositional mode to the scale and dimension of the northern élite. *Il conte di S. Ronano*, with its text too by Golisciani, was staged before *Rabagas* (with a prima at the Teatro Bellini in Naples on 11 May 1878) while the earlier opera, lurid and far-fetched (revised in 1881 emerged only at the Teatro Argentina in Rome on 23 March 1882) and though both were sustained by the publisher Francesco Lucca the first of them only was to be issued in vocal score. Both were highly-coloured, muscular offerings to the lyric stage: *Il conte*

*di S.Ronano*, ambitious, a dramma lirico in four acts set in sixteenth-century Venice and based on a gallic bloodbath, mixing picaresque crowd-scenes, high-drama in gilded palaces with scenic phantasmagoria, disappointed in one respect only - it failed to break the blanket ban of the Verdian years which discouraged the revival of successful operas by other composers. These two late scores may be counted among the casualties of the era and may well be those most in need of full investigation today.

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Other operas survive in his portfolio<sup>xxxviii</sup> in a reserve of complete and incomplete scores, ill-assorted pages for the most part, manuscripts retouched and reshuffled constantly in his very last years. But among them one real mystery remains. Donizetti was to re-emerge, if only as a phantom - as a ghostly presence arm-in-arm with his astonishing pupil. It was as if, in De Giosa's declining days, his extreme youth was to return in all its initial emotional primacy when he had been seated at the side of his celebrated master.

*Le due regine*  
*Tragedia lirica in 4 parti*  
*tratta*  
*Dalla Maria Stuarda di Schiller*  
*con musica*  
*di*  
***Donizetti e De Giosa***

This remarkable frontispiece poses more questions than answers. Was *Le due regine* ever performed? A copyist conductor's score exists, a manuscript *spartito* and orchestral parts co-exist with De Giosa's part-autograph manuscript. Alfred Giovine alone insists that this amazing opera *Le due regine* was staged in a posthumous unveiling at the Teatro Piccinni of Bari on 7 April 1891.<sup>xxxix</sup>

But when, actually, could it have been composed? This is a most elusive question.<sup>xl</sup> The manuscript appears to consist of nothing more or less than an overlooked Donizettian holograph which De Giosa has overwritten, completed, amended or updated - indeed all four at once - in order to create a new opera of his own devising. Now and then Donzetti's faded music emerges covered under bold additions. A forgotten manuscript apparently incomplete has been brought to a surprising conclusion, its timeworn script only dimly visible. It is certainly a *Maria Stuarda*. But a

*Stuarda* of what period? Of 1834? Of 1835? Or merely of any date prior to the master's death and/or departure from Naples?

Whatever could have been the genesis of this strange collaboration? An extremely tantalizing clue comes from the Neapolitan Journal 'L'Omnibus' of 23 May 1863, two years before the important revival of the Bergamasc maestro's now celebrated *Maria Stuarda* at the S. Carlo in Naples on 22 April 1865 conducted by De Giosa himself.<sup>xli</sup>

*“Il maestro De Giosa ha scoperto un tesoro musicale del maestro Donizetti, rimasto finora nei scaffali dell'editore di musica sig. Cottreau (sic) a Napoli. - Opera che nel 1834 arrivò fino alla prova generale, ma che non si rappresentò al teatro S. Carlo per l'improvvisa proibizione della censura napoletana. Ora parlasi in Napoli di eseguirla col suo vero titolo: cioè Maria Stuarda, e pomposamente decorarla.”*

Surprising as a statement this is the persuasive point of departure for De Giosa's *Le due regine* and maybe of *Maria Stuarda* as we should know it.

Together with his polyglot score is a manuscript libretto which differs from that of any we know of today. How does it relate to that attributed to Giuseppe Bardari? Does it predate that which the Bergamasc himself supervised, tightened-up and made dramatically practicable? Or was it simply a draft? Did De Giosa, in 1834, keep a copy of such a draft for his own use? Its resemblance (notably its personaggi) to that of the Carlo Coccia *Maria Stuart, regina di Scozia* in 1827<sup>xliii</sup> seems to indicate an intermediate phase between the text of Pietro Giannone<sup>xliiii</sup> for Coccia and that of Bardari for Donizetti... could Bardari himself have presented De Giosa with a copy of his original text? As Giuseppe Bardari died on the threshold of the revival of *Stuarda* in Naples in 1865 this is not as improbable as it might sound. Or is it an entirely new confection commissioned by De Giosa? The paper and handwriting tell us very little. Possibly it was a sport passed on by Enrico Golisciani author of his *Rabagas* (composed 1877) and *Il conte di S. Ronano* (staged 1878) in the wake of a *Maria Stuarda* he had supplied to Costantino Palumbo, staged at S. Carlo in 1876 with only modest reception? Such an eventuality would date *Le due regine* somewhere around 1880.

The survival of a holograph manuscript of *Maria Stuarda* on the shelves of Cottrau would appear to have been an oversight of some kind.<sup>xliv</sup> Could it have been retained covertly? We simply do not know.

If, however conjecturally, we have under this chaotic neglected

manuscript of De Giosa nothing less than the prima *stesura* of Donizetti's opera dating back to the abortive rehearsals so brutally terminated in 1834 but later adapted to a text of the 1860's (or much later still), we have in this *Le due regine*, a shadowy conflation of the very beginning and the very end of the reign of the Queen of Scots over her triumphant Italian operatic universe.

[See Appendix outline]

Nicola De Giosa spent so much time rewriting his own operas, however could he have resisted writing one by Donizetti?

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Any such study upon Nicola De Giosa can end only with Donizetti's own unforgettable adieu to his pupils:

*“ Dite a tutti que' giovinetti, che il serbo sempre dolcissima memoria di loro, di loro obbedienza, del loro amore per lo studio, e dell'amicizia per me. Dite agli altri come dico a voi, che dove io possa sarò sempre pronto a darvi giovamento qui, e più lontano. Che, nè per tempo, nè per lontananza, scorderò tutto l'interesse che prendevete ad ogni mia produzione. Non fate (come alcuno fece) che un giorno io sappia che di me male diceste nel tempo di mia assenza, datemi sempre nuove de' vostri successi anco infelici, che troverò balsamo per sanarvi le piaghe che altri in me sanarono.”*<sup>xlv</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Achille Pistilli (1820-1881), composed a handful of operas for Naples. He died insane. Cfr Andrea Sessa *Il melodramma italiano 1861-1890* (Firenze 2003) 380

<sup>ii</sup> Salvatore Sarmiento (1817-1869) became Court composer in Naples, wrote a *Valeria la cieca* (Fondo, Napoli 1837 to which Donizetti may have contributed), as well as a cantata *Alfonso d'Aragona* (S. Carlo, Napoli 1838) that may have had some relevance to the *La Favorite* story. Further operas include at least one for Paris. Cfr Carlo Schmidl *Dizionario universale dei musicisti* (Milano 1929) 449 Cfr Zavadini *Epistolario* Letter No 295, 474. Cfr William Ashbrook *Donizetti* (London 1965) 432

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<sup>iii</sup> Luigi Badia (1819-1899) Lived for a time in London, composed an *Il conte di Leicester* (Pergola, Firenze 1851). A high profile composer of songs. *Cfr* Schmidl op cit 95

<sup>iv</sup> Matteo Salvi (1816-1887) *concittadino* of Donizetti whose prentice operas he supervised. Later ousted Alessandro Nini from Mayr's position at the Bergamo charity school the latter had founded. Coordinated the completion of Donizetti's *Le Duc d'Albe* as *Il duca d'Alba* (1882). *Cfr* Pierluigi Forcella *Matteo Salvi* (Ponteranica (BG) 1987)

<sup>v</sup> Salvatore Agnelli (1817-1874) Composer of operas and ballets both for Naples and Marseille, including an *Apoteosi di Napoleone I* for the Emperor Napoleon III to be played in the Tuilleries Gardens (1856). *Cfr* Schmidl op cit 17

<sup>vi</sup> Marcello Pepe (1816-1901) a nephew of Gabriele Pepe, the celebrated constitutional activist General in the Cività Campomarano (Molise); the young man made a series of reductions of Donizetti's operas after the composer's death. *Cfr* Herbert Weinstock *Donizetti* (London 1964) np262

<sup>vii</sup> Julius Benoni (1834-?) a very youthful pupil ("*l'enfant*" he was called by the composer) and Bohemian protégé of Donizetti as well as of his friend Count Taaffe. A "*Wunderkind*" with three later operas, to his credit: *Die Wunderblume* privately performed in Vienna (1847); *Emma ossia Il protettore invisibile* with a libretto by Bartolomeo Merelli, staged importantly at the Kärntnertortheater in 1851 with Achille De Bassini and Raffaele Scalese; and *Giovanni da Ponte* staged in Prague in 1855. *Cfr* The Donizetti-Amélie von Taaffe letters, Moldenhauer Archive, Seattle

<sup>viii</sup> This list omits Uranio Fontana (1813-1881) who claimed to have been a student of the Bergamasc and who played a role in the restitution of the latter's *Elisabeth ou La Fille de l'exilé* (1839-40) a French *rifacimento* of *Otto mesi in due ore* (1827) incomplete at the composer's death [in the form of a not entirely convincing *Elisabeth ou La Fille du proscrit* for Paris (1853)]. Factually, Fontana had been a pupil at the Milano Conservatorio from 1829 onwards, studying voice and composition at the time of Vaccai's directorship. *Cfr* *Il carteggio personale di Nicola Vaccaj* a cura di Jeremy Commons (Torino 2008) Vol II, 574-5. *Cfr* Alexander Weatherson *Elisabeth ossia Otto opere in un anno* [in] *The Donizetti Society Journal* 7 (London/Bergamo 2002) 483-5. It also omits Giambattista Bisaccia (1813-1897) a singer and composer of a *Don Taddeo* (Nuovo, Napoli 1858), Donizetti refers to him affectionately in his correspondence. The list also omits Michele Puccini (1813-1864) father of Giacomo and a Donizettian student according to Schmidl (but the paternal contact with Donizetti was probably minimal). *Cfr* Schmidl 188 and 321 . Giuseppe Puzone (1820-1914) should be included, a fellow student briefly he joined De Giosa as conductor at the S.Carlo in the period immediately following unification, a fluent composer with several operas to his credit, until late in his life he taught Harmony at the Naples Conservatorio. *Cfr* Schmidl 326. Angelo Catelani (1811-1866) received a few lessons from Donizetti and was active in the theatre before becoming a musical historian of note. *Cfr* Schmidl 311 *Cfr* Luigi F.Valdrighi *Cataloghi della musica di composizione e proprietà del M<sup>o</sup> Angelo Catelani preceduti dalle sue memorie autobiografiche* (Modena 1893)

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This listing above is of course nothing but a sample, many students attended his classes in Naples, sometimes once or twice, sometimes on a regular basis

<sup>ix</sup> Giuliano Donati-Petteni *Donizetti* (Milano 1930) 170-1. De Giosa also received lessons from Pasquale Buongiorno, Francesco Ruggi and fleetingly from the aged Zingarelli

<sup>x</sup> He was baptised "Nicola" but usually signed-himself "Niccola de Giosa" as was common usage among his *barese* contemporaries

<sup>xi</sup> There had been a series of revivals of *Maria Stuarda* between 1840-1 including stagings at Florence, Bologna and Venice (some of them with Giuseppina Ronzi De Begnis in a title role for whom it had been composed), some also in Spain - a few of which had authentic amendments to the score. But the opera had drifted out of sight until De Giosa supervised a revival at the S.Carlo in 1865

<sup>xii</sup> In a version that sought to restore the opera to its original dimensions, but in fact with many contentious amendments, in Naples in 1857

<sup>xiii</sup> Donati-Petteni implies that this opera was written under the ægis of Donizetti before he left Italy for Paris, which may of course have been true

<sup>xiv</sup> According to Alfredo Giovine *Niccola de Giosa* (Bari 1968) 12-13 *Ascanio* had only a muted reception as its unfortunate librettist (Sesto Giannini) had the reputation of being a "jettatore" [ie he had the "evil eye"]

<sup>xv</sup> Cfr Marcello De Angelis *Le cifre del melodramma* Vol 2 (Firenze 1982) 147/206, 172/208

<sup>xvi</sup> Cfr Paola Ciarlantini *Il "Don Checco" di Nicola De Giosa* [in] *L"altro melodrama"* (Bari 2008) 26-54

<sup>xvii</sup> Donizetti had intended to write an opera based upon 'Ruy Blas' for Naples, Cammarano prepared a synopsis based on a play called 'Folco Melian' which had judiciously evaded the anti-Hugo ukase then current in that city, but the Bergamasc - although he had begun writing sketches - had second thoughts and renounced his contract replacing it with *Caterina Cornaro*. Seven years later Cammarano completed the text for his pupil. Cfr John Black *The Italian romantic libretto: A study of Salvatore Cammarano* (Edinburgh 1984) 83-5

<sup>xviii</sup> Cfr Amedeo Tosti *Maria Sofia, ultima regina di Napoli* (Milano 1947) 46-47

<sup>xix</sup> Cfr Pierfranco Moliterni *Nicola De Giosa tra opera seria e opera nazional popolare* [in] *L"altro" melodramma* (Bari 2008) 9-19

<sup>xx</sup> On 10 April 1864 he resurrected sections of *La Cristiana* at the S.Carlo as *Il bosco di Dafne*, a *dramma cristiano* with a curious text by Michele Achille Bianchi incorporating some of the music from the abortive Venetian project. It was no great success.

<sup>xxi</sup> The one-act French-language *Chauve-souris* is attributed to these years (by Florimo for example) and indeed was scheduled for the Opéra-Comique in Paris at an imprecise date, but though probably begun in that period the tiny opérette



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is more responsibly dated to the years after his return from Buenos Aires. His *Chauve-souris* appeared in Italian as *Il pipistrello* in Naples on 28 January 1875. Cfr Maria Pia Panunzio *Tesi di Perfezionamento*, Università degli Studi di Bari, anno 1997/8 (inedita)

xxii De Giosa returns to the *maestranza* listing for the stagione 1861-2, together with Puzone; he is absent in the 1862-3 season when Puzone is alone; but reappears in 1863-4, and then shares the rostrum with Puzone continuously to the end of the stagione 1866-7. He is missing from this listing for 1867-8, again for 1868-9 (when ominously the "*direttore della musica*" is declared to be Saverio Mercadante), but De Giosa is again listed for 1869-70 once more with Giuseppe Puzone, but after that he no longer appears except for one solitary reappearance together with Paolo Serrao, Ferdinando Pinto and Puzone for the season 1876-77. After that there is no further entry for his name

xxiii The cast included Rosa de Ruda (*Elisabetta*), Emilia La Grua (*Maria Stuarda*), Raffaele Mirate (*Leicester*), Marco Arati (*Talbot*), Giovanni Morelli (*Cecil*), and Carolina Cetronè (*Anna*). The opera was repeated five times with one partial performance. Perhaps the most unexpected feature of the staging is that the word "*Bastarda*" was eliminated by a still very severe censura!

xxiv This pasticcio "*Gabriella*" included very little of the music that Donizetti had composed for either of the extant versions of *Gabriella di Vergy* and was a conflation of music from a medley of forgotten scores including some of his songs

xxv Giovanni Pacini *Le mie memorie artistiche* (Firenze 1865: 1875 ed,) 222 [*Autobiografia riscontrata sugli autografi e pubblicata da Ferdinando Magnani*]

xxvi The La Fenice repertoire consisted of *Un ballo in maschera*, *Dinora*, *La sonnambula*, *Il trovatore* and *L'africana*

xxvii Letter of 19 August 1868 coll. Lo Presti, Bruxelles

xxviii According to Angelo Inglese, conductor and *revisore* of the *Requiem per Gaetano Donizetti dal suo allievo Nicola De Giosa* (programme Book for the Festival delle Val d'Istria, Martina Franca 1997 p71) it was precisely during this period in Cairo that, unhappy and introspective, he began work on the Requiem Mass for his unforgettable teacher

xxix 24 December 1871

xxx cfr *Copialettere di Giuseppe Verdi* (Milano 1913) 252. Faccio conducted the first Italian performances of *Aida* in 1872

xxxi Cfr Piero Santi *Bottesini e Verdi* [in] 'Giovanni Bottesini e la civiltà musical cremasca' (S.Agostino, Crema 1991) 11-13

xxxii See Giovine op cit 18-19

xxxiii The Khedive belatedly sent him a medal

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xxxiv The bulk of this information has been supplied by the distinguished musical historian of the theatre in Argentina - the late Cesar A. Dillon of Buenos Aires whose research was invaluable

xxxv Cfr Bianca Maria Antolini ed. *Dizionario degli Editori Musicali Italiani 1750-1930* (Pisa 2000) 57

xxxvi The text by de Forges had been translated by Enrico Golisciani and somewhat enlarged in the weeks before the staging.

xxxvii Giovine op cit 26

xxxviii They include *Il capitano Mario*, commedia lirica in quattro parti nd, and *La schiava polacca* (variously retitled *Osmano II*) an opera romantica in tre atti which would seem to date from the same period as *Il conte di San Ronano*

xxxix Giovine op cit 30

xl 'Il Catalogo della Musica di Fondo' of Bernardo Girard e Compagni of Naples "Proprietari assoluti delle opere nuove de'Reali Teatri" with a date of 31 July 1835 gives the most detailed precision of the existence of this music in Naples. This list makes it quite clear that both *Buondelmonte* and *Maria Stuarda*, both operas clearly differentiated in its schedules, were available in vocal score ("sono di assoluta proprietà degli editori") and were also available by the date of publication in full score and parts for hire: "la *Maria Stuarda*...ec. de'quali spartiti si cedono o si danno a nolo le partiture, le parti di canto e quelle di orchestra, a prezzi assai moderati". (Cfr ppIV and 86) This confirms that Donizetti had completed his *Maria Stuarda* fully after the check of *Buondelmonte* (18 October 1834) and that a copyist manuscript full score had been handed over to Girard. Many years later this Girard Archive of manuscript scores was transferred to the Conservatorio library. The date of publication of this catalogue, five months before the La Scala prima of *Maria Stuarda* (30 December 1835 with the ailing Malibran) establishes that the three act opera was in prior existence, and that in order to create the two act version (factually an opera *in quattro parti*) for Malibran he had copied sections - or extracted sections - of the autograph music he retained in his possession. It is this later - only partly-autograph - manuscript full score (the overture, composed especially for Milan, being detached) found in Stockholm, that forms the basis of the Ricordi "Critical Edition". The La Scala contract, in contradiction to the Girard assertion of proprietorship, ensured that Donizetti was obliged to create a second "autograph" score for La Scala. Francesco Florimo (*La Scuola musicale di Napoli e i suoi conservatori* 54, IV, 337), aware of the unperformed nature of this three act version upon its emergence in Naples in 1865, based upon a manuscript in the possession of the library he conserved, consequently refers to it as an "*Opera postuma*"

xli Cfr Annalisa Bini and Jeremy Commons *Le prime rappresentazioni delle opere di Donizetti nella stampa coeva* (Roma 1997) 426

xlili Text by Pietro Giannone, staged at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket in London on 17 June 1827 with Giuditta Pasta in the title role and with Giacinta

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Puzzi-Toso (Donizetti's Elisabetta at La Scala in 1835) as her overbearing rival Queen of England

<sup>xliii</sup> Pietro Giannone (1792-1872). Born in Modena, a political exile in London and Paris he was tutor to Giuditta Pasta's daughter Clelia

<sup>xliv</sup> Teodoro Cottrau owned the rights to the following operas by De Giosa

*La casa di tre artisti*

*Elvina*

*Il biglietto al lotto stornato*

*Le due guide*

*Lo zingaro (rvsd version)*

*Don Checco*

*Folco d'Arles*

*Isella (rvsd version)*

*Guido Colmar o Diego Garias*

(1857 catalogue republished by F.Seller)

Some of his scores were still available in 1913 - viz the catalogue of Giuseppe Santojanni (active in Naples 1880-1935) "*già edizioni T.Cottrau*".

The Girard/Cottrau collection of manuscript scores expropriated by the State were deposited in the library of the Conservatorio di S.Pietro a Majella

<sup>xlv</sup> Donizetti to Salvatore Sarmiento 4 February 1841 [in] *Studi donizettiani 1* (Bergamo 1962) 63

### Appendix outline schedule

## Le due regine

Donizetti e De Giosa

MS FS BIBLIOTECA NAZIONALE DI BARI

Ms A V 1

1° Parte

### 1. INTRODUZIONE

CORO E flat major 2/4 Allegro vivo

Qui s'attenda ell'è vicina

CAVATINA ELISABETTA

Recit 4/4

CANTABILE

Si, la regal mia destra chiede

CABALETTA

G flat major 3/4 Andante

Ah! dunque il deggio accogliere

### 2. DOPO L'INTRODUZIONE

Recit (strings) Allegro mosso

Fra voi perchè non veggio Leicester?

### 3. ARIA MELVIL

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F major 9/8 Andante  
Ah! Sul paterno cenere  
(arrival of Leicester - tempo di mezzo)  
Favellarti...In Forteringa...  
LEICESTER Che ascolto?  
MELVIL Un angelo d'amor

4. DUETTO MELVIL/LEICESTER  
D major? Allegro  
Se fido tanto colei m'amo

5. DUETTO FINALE PRIMO  
ELISABETTA /LEICESTER  
Maestoso  
Sei tu confuso?  
STRETTA  
LEICESTER (solo)  
Deh vieni al mio amor

2° Parte

6. CAVATINA MARIA  
C major 4/4 Vivace  
Recit (ANNA) Allenta il piè regina  
Andantino  
Quando su prati appare  
CANTABILE  
Larghetto  
D flat major/B flat minor (con malinconia)  
Oh nube che lieve  
(orchestral bridge passage)  
CABALETTA  
Fin la pace del mesto riposo

7. DUETTO MARIA/LEICESTER  
D flat major 6/8 Andantino  
Ahimè, deserto, e sola  
in grembo al mio dolore

8. FINALE SECONDO  
B flat major 9/8 Andante sostenuto  
ELISABETTA  
La perfida è desta  
DIALOGO DELLE DUE REGINE  
MARIA

No!  
Dei tuoi sozzi infami amori  
Nota è omai la tresca oscena,  
Degna figlia di Bolena  
L'onestade in te non scese!

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Profanato è il soglio Inglese  
Vil bastarda dal tuo piè...  
Io, la figlia dei Tudori  
Io...tu prostra...Io son tuo Re!  
ELISABETTA  
Guardie!

3° Parte

9. INNO INGLESE  
CORO Scena (banda di dentro)

10. GRAN SCENA ED ARIA DI LEICESTER  
(Recit MELVIL Non giunse ancor)  
G major 6/8 Andantino  
Sotto la scure. Ahi misera

11. DUETTO MARIA/CECIL (CONFESSION SCENE)  
Allegro moderato 4/4  
La perfida insultarmi

4°Parte

12. ARIA MARIA CON CORO  
E flat major 4/4 Moderato/Maestoso  
Io vi rivedo alfin

13. ARIA FINALE MARIA  
B flat minor 4/4 Maestoso  
CABALETTA  
Alla soglia dei regni superbi  
Tu mi guida al confin di miei pene