

by  
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Except for one season (1858) all Donizetti operas were sung at the old Theatre Royal, later to be burned down in 1880 during a Pantomime performance. The first work was "L'ELISIR D'AMORE" which opened what was termed an 'Italian Opera Buffa' season on February 27th, 1838; following this were "BETLY" and "IL CAMPANELLO DE NOTTE" on March 3rd, whilst "TORQUATO TASSO" was sung on 19th April. The next opera was "ANNA BOLENA" on September 11th, 1840. This was repeated in the September season of 1842 with Grisi and Mario, as was "L'ELISIR D'AMORE". Two years later on 12th, September 1844, Grisi, Mario, Lablache, and Tamburini all appeared in Dublin's first "DON PASQUALE", the conductor was Signor Schina, whose song 'Sognai' was very popular in the last century. During the August-September season of 1846 "LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR" AND "BELSARZO" were produced, Madam Castellan was the star of this season, as was Madam Anna Bishop of an early one in 1847 when "LINDA DI CHAMOUNIX" was heard here for the first occasion, as well as a repeat of "ANNACOLENA". Grisi and Mario were back in August 1848 in Pasquale.

The big attraction of this year, however, was the appearance of Jenny Lind on the 14th October in "THE DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT" and also Lucia. Balfé and Benedict were conductors, and the engagement was just for 6 nights, with an operatic concert at the Rotunda Hall; Monsieur Roger was the Tenor, with Frederick Lablache the bass.

One great sensation on 1849 (September) was Albani in "DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT" among other works. An English Opera season, as distinct from the usual Italian, had Lucia in October, still later was the debut in an Italian season of the Limerick Bonn soprano Cathrine Hayes as LUCIA, this was on 6th November. She had first appeared at the Scala in "LINDA DI CHAMOUNIX" as also for her Covent Garden debut on 10th April 1849. Never can a native debutante on any other indeed, have been fated to appear under more unfavourable circumstances nor can such an extraordinary night ever have taken place during an operatic presentation. Sims Reeves, foremost British Tenor, of his time having concluded his engagement, was sitting in a box as a spectator. Incidentally, he stated in his memoirs that Cathrine Hayes was the greatest of all Lucias he had sung with, and these had included Patti and Christina Nilsson. The tenor chosen for the role of Edgardo this night was a Signor Paglieri, who was certainly not a favourite. A portion of the audience, that lively section which occupied the gallery affected to regard the Italian 'Primo Tenore' as a fellow Irishman, and referred to him throughout as 'Leary', and better still as 'Paddy Leary'. Evidently they were anything but proud of their fellow Irishman. The unfortunate singer was seriously hissed, and with such an Edgardo, a new Lucia would have no chance. The determined manager replaced Paglieri with a tenor named Danke 'who happened to be at hand' - an announcement being made to that effect. The mere mention of Danke's name was enough to tickle the humour of the Irish audience, already in the mood for mirth; the last syllable of the singer's name suggested jokes on the word 'key', while the name as a whole, called to mind (especially when the vocalist had started to sing) its resemblance to 'donkey', and such remarks, as "You haven't got the right key, Mr. Donkey", and "Its down in your boots Mr. Donkey" soon resounded from parts of the house, and it immediately became evident that the second Edgardo, like the first, would have to quit. Then it was that Sims Reeves was spotted in his box, and was at once called to the rescue. Another account said that the first tenor, Paglieri was shouted down for his ludicrous inefficiency, and with a variety of ingenious mimicries from the wags, and so the curtain came down amidst a hurricane of catcalls. An indescribable scene of tumultuous excitement followed; cheers, groans, laughter, and hisses forming a very Babel of discord.

The following February (1850) Hayes repeated her Lucia as well as singing her first Dublin Linda. During October she returned again singing both parts, as well as "LUCREZIA BORGIA". "LUCIA" was again heard in the September 1851 season, with Sims Reeves and Grisi were the particular singers for this engagement. Grisi, Lario and Lablache were all heard in 1852 with repeats of the "DON PASQUALE" AND "LUCREZIA BORGIA". These two operas with LUCIA were staged in August 1855, with the same singers, whilst LUCIA was sung again in a September

"LA FAVOURITE" was sung here for the first time on 20th. September 1856; Gaisi and Mario were the principals, and "DON PASQUALE" was again presented. A short nights season on 14th. October introduced Marietta Piccolomini to Dublin in "THE DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT", and "DON PASQUALE". Following this, a four-week season of English Opera commenced on the 27th, and again included "DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT".

On 16th. March 1857, a season opened with Cathrina Hayes singing three nights a week for three weeks. Her Donizetti operas were: LUCIA: LINDA: LUCREZIA: AND DON PASQUALE. She returned on 21st. April, and repeated "LUCREZIA BORGIA".

On 3rd. August an Italian opera season opened for two weeks, and the leading soprano was Victoria Balle, daughter of the composer. Donizetti works performed were: "LUCIA" AND "LUCREZIA" AND also "LA FAVOURITE", this time with the French mezzo-soprano Constance Martier-Didiel in the role of Leonore. An additional season on 21st. September had Alboni as the particular star, "LUCREZIA BORGIA" was the only Donizetti opera this time, but two more weeks of Opera started on 12th October and Marietta Piccolomini repeated her former success as Marie in "DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT". The same opera, with "LUCIA" was included in the August 1858 season. There had previously been a three week season at the Queen's Theatre during April, with "LUCIA" AND "LUCREZIA" being the two Donizetti operas performed.

Italian opera returned to the Theatre Royal on 28th. March 1859, and for this season, the great mezzo Pauline Viardot Garcia sang 'Maffei Orsini' in "LUCREZIA BORGIA". The first appearance in Dublin of Therese Tietjens took place during the August season as Lucrezia. "La FAVOURITE" was also performed. Two more weeks from 12th October had Piccolomini once again in "DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT", as well as "LUCIA" AND "LUCREZIA".

February 1860 had the same three operas and the same soprano, who must have been a particularly esteemed artist. The three weeks September season brought Gaisi and Mario back in "FAVOURITE", and Pauline Viardot Garcia repeated her 'Maffeo Orsini'.