

OLIVO E PASQUALE

by Serge Lacabanne

Melodramma giocoso in 2 Acts:

The festival that takes place in the charming village of Barga is not one of those that attracts the international critics. It does not propose to present the most celebrated works by artistes of worldwide renown but chooses instead the little known works by great masters interpreted by a team of youthful singers many of whom have not yet even become professionals.

I pazzi per progetto by Donizetti was given a few years ago at the teatro dei Differenti. This year the choice has fallen on another comic work by the Bergamasc composer: Olivo e Pasquale. Created at the teatro Valle in Rome on the 7th January 1827, Olivo e Pasquale counts amongst the best of Donizetti's buffo style operas in his first manner i.e. in the years before Anna Bolena). More than in other works of the same period Donizetti shows his gradual detachment from the Rossinian formulae which until then had tended to stifle his own personality, his sensitivity and his charm. (With the exception, that is, of such masterpieces as L'Ajo nell'imbarazzo and La lettera anonima). It is therefore not surprising that in this melodramma giocoso there are elegiac passages which reveal the inspiration of the composer of Don Pasquale. Thus Act 1 presents a ravishing duet between Camillo (mezzo) and Isabella (soprano): 'Non sa che sia doler'; in Act 2 the duet between Le Bross (tenor) and Isabella can be counted amongst the best pages by Donizetti (the second half of this 'Non dubitar mia vita' anticipates all the future joys of those duets in Linda di Chamounix). The buffo section does not quite reach such heights. (It is well to point out that the very conventional libretto does not help much).

Nonetheless it is noticeable that the sharp musical difference between the two buffi Olivo and Pasquale, is happily done: Olivo being ebullient and pugnacious (in his brilliant aria for instance in the 2nd Act), and Pasquale, peacable and more tractable. The ensembles too, are well conceived despite their very Rossinian cast - such as the hilarious quartet in the 1st. Act and the superb septet/finale at the end of this same act. The conducting of Maestro Rigacci to whom we owe the exhumation of this score (aided by Edizioni Musicali OTOS) was precise and brilliant. In it resided the best of the evenings offerings. Mostly because it is necessary to say that a work of this kind needs interpreters skilled in the enormous difficulties presented by the opera buffo of the beginning of the nineteenth century.

With the exception of Estelle Maria Gibbs (Isabella) of the attractive technique who triumphed valiantly over the terrible snares of her rondo finale, the rest of the cast remained below that which the music requires (reaching the limits of the supportable with the tenor Giovanni Ovidio Mastino). However it was an especially interesting experience to hear the bringing-to-life of such a work, which, in many places, is a real little masterpiece; an experience for which one must thank Maestro Rigacci, Edizioni OTOS, and this town of Barga which even with tiny resources, has preferred to opt for originality. (It should be noted that the opera has been recorded 'live' by Bongiovanni Editions of Bologna). (Translated by Alexander Weatherson - copies of original avail:)



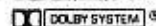
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Side/Seite 1:

"La favorite"
Introduzione delle danze - Passo a tre -
Passo a sei - Finale delle danze

"Les Martyrs"
Air de danse No. 1 - Air de danse
No. 2 -
Air de danse No. 3

Side/Seite 2:

"Dom Sébastien"
Passo a tre - Passo a due -
Ballabile di Schiavi

"L'assedio di Calais"
(Le siège de Calais)
Danza militare - Ballabile

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