

## IL FORTUNATO INGANNO REVIVED IN SWEDEN

"I love art and I love it passionately", thus wrote Donizetti. Unless we too love art passionately, frankly it is better not to involve ourselves with Donizetti's art. Passion calls for feeling and intellect, suffering and joy. This is why all too many revivals and performances seem to lack some essential ingredient. Consider Donizetti's art and you will recognize it to be a *passione*. Then consider the privilege of finding oneself caught up in a performance of a hitherto virtually unknown, certainly neglected opera, *Il fortunato inganno*, and discovering music, performers and audience passionately involved with Donizetti's art, and you will appreciate my sheer delight!

To whom do we owe this special *godimento* of Donizetti's art? To the Vadstena Academy Music Festival and to Anders Wiklund. In 1983 he became director of repertoire research in the Vadstena Academy, and has been responsible for 26 discoveries (no less!) and critical editions of unknown operas from the 17th and 18th centuries. From 1992 onwards he has been artistic director of the Academy and there are few alive who work more passionately for the music of Mayr and Donizetti. It was he who brought to our attention his country's long established love of the latter, tracing and editing the autograph manuscript of *Maria Stuarda*. This gentle Swede, like a mighty Titian working on more than one canvas at the same time, is occupied in making critical editions of Mayr's *L'avaro*, *Fedra* and *Belle ciarle e tristi fatti* and Donizetti's *Le convenienze ed inconvenienze teatrale* and *Gianni da Calais*. Remember *Che originali!* and *Gianni di Parigi*? They were his work too.

Let me first describe a little the place: Vadstena is a most beautiful town on the lakeside of the Vättern, a vast expanse of water in the south of Sweden. The focal points are the abbey church where St. Bridget is buried and the Castle where once a year the banqueting hall becomes a theatre, a perfect balance between the sacred and the profane!

Sweden's music students are second to none and the performance I heard stands out in my mind as one of the very, very best Donizettian memories - a dedicated orchestra (a correct gathering of 25 players under the enthusiastic direction of Michael Bartosch), singers who sang and acted a 150% as if their lives depended upon their art, a production which reminded me of the verve of Stratford-upon-Avon's Swan Theatre, and an audience which hung on every note and word, bringing an ovation of approval.

The music of *Il fortunato inganno* (1823) surprisingly stands out as an important step in Donizetti's maturing creativity. It is possible to hear the musical roots of *L'elisir d'amore*; for example, the duet for the impresario Lattanzio and the Colonnello Cavaliere Franceschetti (Act I Sc 2 'Amico, senza velo/ Sincero a voi favello...' etc); also *Don Pasquale*; Malatesta's 'Collo torto, bocca stretta' etc, in the *tempo di mezzo* or central section of Aurelia's and Fulgenza's scene after the failure of their opera (Act II Sc 5 'Per darti una lezione/ stonar volli un pochetto' etc.). Musically arresting is the central slow movement of the duet between Aurelia and Lattanzio when both regret their anger before their reconciliation ('Eppur non merita tanto dispetto...Il poveretto mi ama davvero' etc.) The free and well-considered Swedish translation of Tottola's text was totally justified, involving the audience from beginning to end, no more so that for the Colonnello's aria during which he considers his life with opera-seria dramaticity (Act II Sc 2 'Scaccia dal cor colei/ Che, cruda, t'inganno' etc.) I cannot praise one singer more than another, for each one gave their all to the unity of the evening's success.

However, special mention must be made of Lorenzo Mariani's scintillating production heightened by costumes designed and made by Ulla Eson Bodin. Remember Fellini's love of the circus, the commedia dell'arte, the pathos of *La strada* and the big box bed of *Casanova*? Fellini would have felt at home at Vadstena. Imagine a stage on which is placed a huge, wooden, old-fashioned container box awaiting opening. Well, Donizetti's box of delights opens a bit at a time to reveal all the illusions and follies of a Neapolitan travelling Opera Company attempting to make its mark in Rome. We see the fountains and streets of the City; even the interior of the old La Scala of Milan; the halls of 'Versailles'; even smelly dressing rooms, odd corners where life may bristle for a while and then fade away. Mariani is an exponent of Italy's theatrical genius (which so often unnerves cold northern pruders!); it is a unique genius which turns dream into reality, reality into dreams, life into passion, passion into joy (*godimento*), joy into sadness, and then tears back into dreams. Ah! What is life unless our dreams become its stuff, and it is so dangerous to dream for it may lead to the world's worst as well as its best and

Opposite: Vadstena Castle