

staging had been cut, this of Naples is staggering in its brevity. It is as if the age of Verdi with his repeated insistence upon "less words" had infiltrated even the profuse buffonaria of those operas of his predecessors which had survived. The opera was "*divisa in tre parti*", Act 1 has been split into two parts so that the concerted piece of Act 1 Scene V is promoted into a new finale primo. So now there are *two* intervals with, correspondingly, more opportunity for chat. There is no spoken dialogue "*com'era usuale*" in that city, but Pasquale sang in Neapolitan dialect as a concession to tradition. The major set pieces survive but are deprived of both their setting and any hope of a logical continuity. On the other hand there are certain gains in dramatic impetus, the whole has a kind of economy which wastes no time in coming to the point, Isabella sings a kind of précis of her aria finale. Maybe, one can only speculate, it is the kind of revision Donizetti himself would have proposed had he lived long enough to repolish his earlier scores in the changed world of an Italy united in its long slide to standardisation and a packaged response?

Alexander Weatherson

For further details of this score in revival see Newsletter 64 (January 1995)

Il domino nero

Lauro Rossi's unique comment upon his day and age

No one, simply no one, can deny that the Teatro Pergolesi of Jesi comes up with revivals of real quality, this year with an opera by a composer no one remembers at all, and with a work of extraordinary quality - the provocative, riotous romp we all need urgently, especially now. First staged at almost the mid-century, a companion-in-arms, metaphorically-speaking, of the Ricci brothers' equally cynical *Crispino e la comare* (1850) the Macerata-born Lauro Rossi (1810-1885), wide-ranging, much-travelled, splendidly-gifted, had an early triumph with his *Il domino nero* whose plot and content brandishes an hilarious summation of the musical theatre of his day. Casting a beady eye and ear over his competitors, his irresistible stream of high camp has the remarkable virtue of supplying a score in no way inferior to those of his victims! With happy verve he pounces upon Verdi, Pacini, Rossini, Donizetti and the rest, clothing the most absurd details of his non-plot with their most solemn statements, a parodistic genius that is both gentle and savage at the same time. So much splendid melody, situate somewhere between *opera-seria* and farce, it plunges from royal palace to brothel to convent without any kind of hitch, his dominoed-heroine co-existing merrily in all three. Everything is grist to his mill. Beautifully sung and staged this Operagoers Almanac for 1849 has been recorded by Bongiovanni. It will be reviewed more extensively in Newsletter 85.

AW

(opposite: A scene from the Act II duet of *Il domino nero* 'Io son figlia a Belzebù' with the most brilliant Donizettian parody imaginable, the irresistible Chiara Taigi in the title role and Mauro Buda as the unfortunate buffo). Photo Courtesy Teatro Pergolesi di Jesi