

Lucia al fresco

The Real Bride of Lammermoor

: Wigtown Festival Company and Scottish Opera, Baldoon Castle, Bladnoch
30th September 2007

This planned event married a retelling of the story of Janet Dalrymple's ill-fated marriage to David Dunbar of Baldoon with excerpts from Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. The idea of doing it 'on site' where the real bride died a month after the wedding was an idea of the Wigtown Book Festival and is intended to bring the story on which Scott's novel and the opera are based back into local (and wider) awareness. Readers of this newsletter won't need much reacquaintance following my articles in Newsletters 93 and 94.

To schedule an event *en plein air* in Scotland for the last day of September shows either intemperate bravado or a cool head. I was relieved to see a 'wet weather venue' at Bladnoch Distillery, and rather hoped 'rain stopped play' and we all finished up in the warmth.

On 30th September the heavens sent, not rain but a glorious still autumnal evening with the beginnings of a long drawn out sunset. The birds sang joyously as they probably did at this time of year even in 1669 (the year and season of Janet's death).

The retelling of the tale gave full endorsement to the 'Old Wives' Tale' that there was some devilish or criminal intervention (perhaps by the jilted bridegroom) within the locked bridal chamber. Local tradition includes the haunting of ruined Baldoon Castle by a 'White Lady'. If she was listening (but chose not to 'apparate') it may have been the intemperate adjustment of the audio system that put her off.

The *Lucia* excerpts were provided by Scottish Opera and sung by Christina Dunwoodie (soprano) and Colin Judson (tenor). The singers may have suffered a little from the *Pagliacci*-like trailer onto which the performers were required to mount carefully. With electronic aid their voices engulfed the audience leaving the subtleties of performance hard to discern. The balance favoured the accompaniment (a synthesiser manned by James Grossmith). It was a pity he resisted the temptation to give us a theremin-like tone for the mad scene (in simulation of the glass harmonica): perhaps another reason for the ghost's non-appearance on the walls of the ivy-covered ruin.

Douglas M. Bennett

An accompanying booklet (The Real Bride of Lammermoor (Lucia di Lammermoor) by Rosemary Bythell) is available from www.wigtown-heritage.org as a free download.