

July 30, 2020 – Gaetano Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*

“Lammermoor lass goes mad, stabs fiancée to death” is the headline that might have appeared in *The Scotsman* following the premiere of Gaetano Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*, which is featured on this week’s **Thursday Night Opera House**. Loosely based on Sir Walter Scott’s historical novel *The Bride of Lammermoor*, the opera benefitted greatly from a European interest in the history and culture of Scotland: the perceived romance of its violent wars and feuds, as well as its folklore and mythology, intrigued nineteenth-century readers and audiences. *Lucia* premiered on September 26, 1835 at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples. It has always been the best-known of Donizetti’s tragic operas and has never fallen out of the standard repertory.

In seventeenth-century Scotland, Lucia (soprano **Andrea Rost**) loves Edgardo (tenor **Bruce Ford**), the dispossessed master of Ravenswood and an enemy of her family. The couple exchange rings and vows before Edgardo leaves the country on a mission, and Lucia’s brother Enrico (baritone **Anthony Michaels-Moore**), learning of this, is outraged. He wants his sister to make a politically advantageous marriage to Lord Arturo Bucklaw (tenor **Paul Charles Clark**) and shows her a forged letter supposedly written by Edgardo that “proves” his infidelity. In the light of this and persuaded by the chaplain Raimondo (bass **Alastair Miles**), Lucia reluctantly agrees to the marriage. Months later Edgardo returns, interrupts the wedding celebration, curses Lucia and flings her ring at her, provoking Enrico to challenge him to a duel in the Ravenswood cemetery. The strain proves too much for Lucia, who goes bonkers, murders Arturo, and hallucinates about a marriage with Edgardo. Arriving for the duel, Edgardo is told by Raimondo that Lucia is dead. In anguish, Edgardo stabs himself to death.

Sir Charles Mackerras conducts The Hanover Band and London Voices in this 1998 Sony Classical recording.

From a 1991 concert performance, **Renée Fleming**, **Dolora Zajick**, **Luciano Pavarotti**, **Marcello Giordani**, **Haijing Fu**, and **Paul Plishka** sing the famous Sextet from Act II (“Chi mi frena il tal momento”): <http://youtu.be/zPISJ0IKbPM>.

As a bonus, we’ll hear arias and ensembles for Donizetti’s *Rosmonda d’Inghilterra*, *Zoraida di Granata*, *Grabriella di Vergy*, *Anna Bolena*, *Ugo Conte di Parigi*, *L’Assedio di Calais*, and *Emilia di Liverpool*.

Please join me next Thursday, August 6th, for two settings by Christoph Willibald Gluck of the Orpheus and Euridice story: the original 1762 Vienna version, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, with **Maureen Forrester** and **Teresa Stich-Randall**; and the 1774 Paris version, *Orphée et Euridice*, with **Jean-Paul Fouchécourt** and **Catherine Dubosc**.

The **Thursday Night Opera House** is heard every Thursday evening at 7 o’clock in the Eastern time zone on 89.7 FM in central North Carolina, and we’re streamed online at <http://www.theclassicalstation.org>, and you can listen on WCPE’s Android or iPhone apps.

Bob Chapman

W. Robert Chapman, Host of the **Thursday Night Opera House**