

August 27, 2020 – Georges Bizet's *La Jolie Fille de Perth*

On this week's Thursday Night Opera House, I'm pleased to present one of Georges Bizet's lesser-known operas, *La Jolie Fille de Perth* (*The Fair Maid of Perth*), which was first performed in Paris the day after Christmas in 1867. Commissioned by the Théâtre Lyrique following the success of *The Pearl Fishers*, it was set to a French libretto by Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint Georges and Jules Adenis based loosely on Sir Walter Scott's novel of the same title. Despite its Scottish setting, the opera lacks any distinctively Scottish music. *La Jolie Fille de Perth* was well received at its premiere but lacked the staying power of Bizet's most popular work, *Carmen*, or of *The Pearl Fishers*.

Set in the Scottish town of Perth, the armorer Henry Smith (tenor **Alfredo Kraus**) is in love with Catherine Glover (soprano **June Anderson**). Smith agrees to provide shelter for the Gypsy Queen Mab (mezzo-soprano **Margarita Zimmerman**). Later, he's visited by Catherine, her glove-making father Simon (bass-baritone **Gabriel Bacquier**), and his apprentice Ralph (bass-baritone **José van Dam**), who's also in love with Catherine. The Duke of Rothsay (baritone **Gino Quilico**) invites Catherine to his castle and asks Mab, who's his former mistress, to help him abduct her. Mab pretends to agree but foils the Duke's machinations and engineers a reconciliation between Catherine and Henry.

Georges Prêtre conducts the New Philharmonic Orchestra and the French Radio Chorus in this 1985 EMI recording.

As a bonus we'll celebrate the artistry of the Irish-born American tenor **John McCormack** (1884-1945), singing arias by Verdi, Donizetti and Gounod.

Be sure to join me next Thursday, September 3rd, for a landmark in the history of American musical theater, Jerome Kern's 1927 Broadway musical *Show Boat*, featuring **Frederica Von Stade** as Magnolia Hawks, **Jerry Hadley** as Gaylord Ravenal, **Teresa Stratas** as Julie LaVerne, and **Bruce Hubbard** as Joe. **John McGlinn** conducts this 1988 EMI recording.

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. We're also streamed online at <http://www.theclassicalstation.org>, and you can listen to us on the WCPE Android or iPhone apps.

Bob Chapman

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