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.


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](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