

September 24, 2020 – Vincenzo Bellini's *Il Pirata*

On this week's Thursday Night Opera House I'm pleased to present Vincenzo Bellini's *Il Pirata* (*The Pirate*), his third opera. Set to an Italian libretto by Felice Romani, the opera was based on Charles Nodier's 1826 melodrama *Bertram, ou le Pirate*. *Il Pirata* was premiered at Milan's Teatro alla Scala on October 17, 1827.

Set in Sicily in the middle of the thirteenth century, Gualtiero (tenor **Bernabé Marti**) is driven into exile by his rival, Ernesto (baritone **Piero Cappuccilli**), and turns to piracy. After being defeated by Ernesto in a sea battle, Gualtiero and his men run aground in their native Sicily. Gualtiero meets his beloved Imogene (soprano **Montserrat Caballé**), who's been forced to marry Ernesto in order to save her father, despite still being in love with Gualtiero. Ernesto and Imogene have a son. Disguised, Gualtiero and his men are presented to Ernesto, who's suspicious—especially after Imogene offers them her protection. Ernesto badgers Imogene into admitting her love for Gualtiero. He learns from a messenger that Gualtiero has returned to Sicily. Imogene tells Gualtiero that she cannot leave with him. Ernesto overhears them and challenges Gualtiero, who kills his rival and then gives himself up to the authorities. At this point Imogene goes mad, after which Gualtiero is condemned and led off to be executed.

Gianandrea Gavazzeni conducts the Radiotelevisione Italiana Chorus and Orchestra in this 1971 EMI/Angel recording.

From a 2013 Barcelona concert, **Mariella Devia** sings the Act 2 aria "Col sorriso d'innocenza": <https://youtu.be/Pq9rDTP8diA>.

As a bonus we'll hear two excerpts from Bellini's *I Puritani* sung by **Lucia Aliberti**, **Michele Pertusi** and **Carlos Alvarez**.

Please join me next Thursday, October 1st, for Richard Strauss's 1911 homage to Mozart, *Der Rosenkavalier*, with **Kiri Te Kanawa** as the aging Marschallin, **Anne Sophie von Otter** in the "trouser" role of Octavian, **Barbara Hendricks** as Octavian's young love Sophie, and **Kurt Rydl** as the lecherous Baron Ochs. **Bernard Haitink** conducts this 1990 EMI recording.

The Thursday Night Opera House is heard at 7:00 p.m. Eastern on 89.7 FM in central North Carolina. We're also streamed online, and you can listen as well on WCPE's Android or iPhone apps.

Bob Chapman

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