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CLASSICS

Donizetti

NUITS D'ÉTÉ À PAUSILIPPE

LETIZIA CALANDRA *soprano*
FAUSTO TENZI *tenor*
ILARIO NICOTRA *piano*

Gaetano Donizetti 1797-1848
Nuits d'été à Pausillippe

6 ariettes et Six Nocturnes (1836)

1	Il Barcaiuolo. Barcarolle	3'06
2	Il Crociato. Romance	3'17
3	A Mezzanotte. Ariette	3'56
4	La Torre di Biasone. Ballade	6'46
5	La Conocchia. Chanson Napolitaine	2'28
6	Le Crepuscule. Romance	4'09
7	Il Giuramento. Nocturne a deux voix	2'23
8	L'Aurora. Nocturne a deux voix	2'48
9	L'alito di Bice. Nocturne a deux voix	3'18
10	Amor voce del cielo. Nocturne a deux voix	2'23
11	Un Guardo ed una voce. Nocturne a deux voix	2'59
12	I Bevitori. Brindisi a deux voix	3'39

Soirées d'automne à l'Infrascata (1839)

Pour faire suite aux Nuits d'été à Pausillippe	
13	La lontananza. Arietta 2'28
14	L'amante spagnuolo. Bolero 1'59
15	Amore e morte. (Odi d'un uomo che more) Arietta 3'18
16	Me voglio fa na casa. (Amor marinaro) Chanson -Napolitaine 2'29
17	Qui dove mercè. (Il fiore) Duettino pastorale 2'36
18	L'incostanza di Irene. (Saria più fida Irene) Duettino 3'02

Collezione di canzonette (1840)

19	Eterno amore e fè. Arietta 3'26
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Letizia Calandra *soprano* · Fausto Tenzi *tenor* · Ilario Nicotra *piano*

Posillipo is a luxuriant hillside overlooking the island of Megaride, where the Greeks first landed to found Paleopolis, the ancient city of Neapolis, or Naples as we now know it. According to legend it was here that the siren Parthenope cast herself into the sea and drowned when her songs failed to entice Odysseus.

Gaetano Donizetti (Bergamo, 29 November 1797 – Bergamo, 8 April 1848) stayed and worked in Naples, taking a house in Via Nardones, near the Teatro San Carlo, an area that bordered on the Posillipo district and the Chiaja waterfront. He lived there most of the time from 1822 to 1838.

As a composer he was particularly prolific in the field of vocal chamber music, to the extent that he almost rivalled Rossini. The catalogue compiled by Luigi Inzaghi, which includes the manuscript scores, comprises a total of 281 works in this genre, of which 154 were printed.

Between 1835 and 1842, the Neapolitan publisher Bernardo Girard published six main collections, with titles in French in keeping with fashions of the time: apart from the *Nuits d'été à Pausillippe*, they comprise *Soirées d'automne à l'Infrascata*, *Un hiver à Paris*, *Matinées musicales*, *Inspirations viennoises* and *Dernières glânes musicales*. They speak of four seasons and three cities, but it's Naples that takes the lead role.

Nuits d'été à Pausillippe is a collection of 6 arias and 6 nocturnes for voice and piano that were probably published in 1836 by Bernardo Girard in Naples, though a few days later they were also printed by Bernard Latte in Paris.

1. *Il barcaiuolo* (Mariner's Song) is a gently rocking andantino in 6/8 time in which the composer has set verses by Tarantini to music. Dedicated to Signora Grassi, it opens with a bar in indeterminate mode that the voice part then helps define. The piece is not entirely typical of the happy mariner genre, since it ends with images of the lovers meeting their death in a storm, a situation that is accentuated by the harmony in the minor key of the B section.
2. *Il crociato* (The Crusade) is a romanza on verse by Carlo Guaita, dedicated

- to Signora Cinti-Damoreux. The dactylic rhythm reproduces the march of the crusader who “*dopo un lustro*” (five years later) returns to his Lady, who in the meantime has died and been buried, her grave marked by a gravestone.
3. The Arietta *A mezzanotte* (At Midnight) is a setting of an anonymous poem that the composer dedicated to Giovanni Battista Rubini. Underpinned by sensual, fleeting musical passages and reiterated suspension in the accompaniment, the text tells of an explicit invitation to indulge in a night of amorous dalliance, though the female protagonist coyly declares that Cupid will also be present.
 4. Dedicated to Signorina Carolina Unger, *La torre di Biason* (Biason Tower) is a ballad on verses also by Tarantini. Against a minimal, intermittent accompaniment, the melody evokes a mysterious nocturnal setting in which what is transient is invited to flee in a plea echoed by female voices.
 5. The lyrics of *La Conocchia* (The Spindle), a single-verse song dedicated to the great bass singer Luigi Lablache, are mischievously allusive. In Italian everyday language the spinning metaphor contains a degree of double entendre, and in this case it regards a girl who shrewdly drops the thread she is weaving so that the young man she loves can pick it up and with a sensual gesture hand it back, provoking a gasp of pleasure expressed in the words “*pilo pilo*”, which refers both to fine weaving and to intimate caresses. These culminate in the climactic finale: “*Ajemè!*”.
 6. The last of the six arias, *Le crépuscule* (Twilight), is dedicated to the Count of Bearn. Shaped as a romanza, it is a setting of verses by Victor Hugo taken from “*L'aube naît, et ta porte est close*”. It thus begins describing the new dawn, and continues with the lover's door that is closed.
 7. *Il giuramento* (The Oath) is the first of the pieces for two female voices that go under the general title of *Canto I* and *Canto II*. If the lower part is taken down to tenor G, the song can also be sung by mixed voices.

The nocturne for two voices on verse by Michele Palazzolo is dedicated to the Duchess of Cannizzaro. The gentle melodies embrace some interesting

embellishments in semiquavers, often using parallel thirds. The text comprises a rhetorical declaration of love.

8. *Laurora* (Dawn) is another piece based on a poem by Leopoldo Tarantini. It was dedicated to the great tenor Gilbert Duprez, considered the “inventor” of the high C, and the lyrics are essentially descriptive, evoking landscape, Vesuvius and the sea.
9. *Lalito di Bice* (Bice's Breath) on a poem by Francesco Puoti is a nocturne for two voices dedicated to Giulia Grisi. It involves musical imitation and parallels in thirds and sixths, with recurrent cadenza-like features.
10. Again a setting of a poem by Leopoldo Tarantini, the two-voice nocturne *Amor, voce del cielo* was dedicated to Signora Thayer, née Bertrand, and begins with a remarkably outright *Sì, t'amo*: “Yes, I love you”.
11. *Un guardo ed una voce* (One Look and a Voice) is a nocturne on verse by Michele Palazzolo, dedicated to Ivanoff. The lyrics tell of a “*nera pupilla*” (“dark pupil”) that strikes the heart, “*una voce, un angelico accento*” (“a voice, an angelic accent”) and the bitter realization that “*una gioia non torna mai più*” (“a joy never returns”). Thus the eyes and voice become a faint memory of what was once there.
12. The last piece in the *Nuits dété à Pausillippe* collection also features in *Il campanello di notte*. Based on verse by Tarantini, *I bevitori* (The Drinkers) consists of a toast for two voices, dedicated to Antonio Tamburini.

While Posillipo is a hillside overlooking the bay of Naples, Infrascata is a steep road leading from the city centre to another hillside, that of the Vomero. The frontispiece of the album *Soirées d'automne à l'Infrascata* bears a subtitle that reads: *Pour faire suite avec Nuits d'été à Pausilippe*, meaning that it was intended as a sequel to the earlier collection of songs.

Between the 16th and 17th centuries, when the Spanish nobility began building elegant residences on the slopes of the Vomero, a road was built to connect them

up with the city centre. From the early 19th century, what is now Via Salvator Rosa wound its leafy way up the hillside, providing those without a coach with secluded spots for amorous encounters.

Published in 1840, again by Girard, the collection includes *La lontananza*, *L'amante spagnuolo*, *Amore e Morte* and the famous mariner's song *Me voglio fa 'na casa*.

13. The “autumnal” collection opens with *La lontananza* (Distance), a melancholy little aria in E minor in which the composer has set to music verse attributed to Felice Romani. It is built around the metaphor of the lost flower that the ladylove will not replace with another posy because she prefers the thorns of a life without love to the new delights of other flowers.
14. *L'amante spagnuolo* (The Spanish Lover) is a virtuoso bolero in which the piano part imitates the *rasgueado* of the guitar.
15. The lyrics of *Amore e Morte* (Love and Death) are not attributed to anyone, and since the piece lacks a dedication the words could be by the composer himself. The accompaniment in semiquaver quadruplets of the *Lento* is written for soprano, expressing a languid farewell to a dying man whose “*estremo suono*” (“last sound”) is left to his beloved Elvira, like an “*appassito fiore*” (“withered flower”).
Written in F minor, a key of Lydian origins that conjures up a funereal atmosphere, in the B section the mood changes to the major mode with the reawakened pride implicit in “*Simbolo allor d'affetto, or pegno di dolor, torna a posarti in petto*” (“May this symbol of bygone love, and now of acceptance of grief, be harboured once more in the breast”).

16. *Me voglio fa 'na casa* (I'd Like to Have a House) is a Neapolitan barcarola that many major singers immediately included in their repertoires. Still well known to this day, it is full of melodic cohesion that prevails throughout, even in the deliberately emotional passage in the minor key where the main theme returns with altered intervals.

The light-hearted refrain that is a feature of the piece aims to evoke the young swain taking a walk and dreaming about living with his beloved in a fairy-tale home with “*d'oro e d'argento li scaline*” (“gold and silver steps”) and “*de prete preziose li barcune*” (“balconies set with gemstones”). Love itself has much in common with such an enchanting, unreal world.

17. *Qui dove mercé*, or *Il fiore* (The Flower), is described as a “pastoral duet” for soprano and tenor. It takes the shape of an Allegro in F major in 3/8 time, with a musical structure in dialogue and lyrics that tell in almost Arcadian terms of a flower that blooms where love was once denied. A flower plucked by a “*lieto augellin*” (“merry little bird”) is then dropped on the breast of the loved-one, where it will certainly be appreciated. In the finale the dialogue becomes more intense and ascends on the word “*L'amor*” (“Love”).
18. Dedicated to the Countess de Canizzano, *L'incostanza di Irene* (“Irene's Inconstancy”) is a duet intended for two soprano voices in the Girard edition. Largely articulated in parallel thirds, it also contains passages in imitation. The text is a sort of plea for less loveliness on the part of Irene, so that she is likely to be more faithful.
19. *Eterno amore e fe'* (Eternal love and faith) is a little aria that belongs to the *Collezione di Canzonette*: a declaration of love whose simple structure acts as a reverse image of love itself, that most complex of sentiments.

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Translation by Kate Singleton

Letizia Calandra

Widely acclaimed for the beauty of her voice, Letizia Calandra is today considered on of the foremost interpreters of the classic Neapolitan repertoire. Her sensitivity as a performer and the originality of her approach derive from her background in classical singing and early music.

She took a diploma in singing at the Santa Cecilia Conservatoire in Rome and then attended various master classes, winning the Teatro



Lirico Sperimentale competition in Spoleto and making her debut in Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona* in 2000. Her opera career continued in a busy schedule that included performances at the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome, the Arena in Verona, the Teatro San Carlo in Naples, the Teatro del Verme in Milan, the Auditorium Santa Cecilia in Rome, the Festival of the Toscanini Foundation in Parma, the Rossini Opera Festival in Wildbad (Germany), Incheon World Opera Festival (Korea) and other theatres in Canada and Australia. Her repertoire ranged from Mozart to Donizetti, Gluck, Cherubini, Verdi, Puccini and Wolf-Ferrari.

She then began to expand her focus to include baroque music, singing with *I Barocchisti* under the baton of Diego Fasolis, *La Venexiana* conducted by Claudio Cavina, and *La Cappella della Pietà dei Turchini* conducted by Antonio Florio. She has sung in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* by Monteverdi, *Dido and Aeneas* by Purcell, *L'Ercole amante* by Cavalli, and a wide range of 17th century Italian cantatas and motets. With harpsichordist Francesco Cera and the Ensemble Arte Musica she

has sung madrigals by Luzzasco Luzzaschi, the *Cantata sulla Passione* by Giovanni Battista Martini and *l'Orfeo dolente* by Domenico Belli. With Francesco Cera and lutenist Michele Pasotti she recorded the CDs *Scarlatti* and the *Neapolitan Song and Erotica Antiqua*. Neapolitan Villanellas for the Brilliant Classics label. She has performed at the Festivals of Maguelone, Saint Michel en Thiérache, Valloire, Sagra Musicale Malatestiana, etc.

She has given voice to her passion for Neapolitan songs in numerous concerts, as well as the CDs *Classico Napolitano* volumes 1 and 2 for the Lucky Planets label, both of which were very well reviewed. In this repertoire she has worked closely with musicians such as Fausto Cigliano, Riccardo Minasi, Marcos Madrigal and Francesco Cera. She has also worked with the contemporary composers Pietro Pirelli and Roberto Cacciapaglia.

Ilario Nicotra

Born into a family of music-lovers with a special passion for singing, Ilario Nicotra studied composition and singing, taking a first-class diploma in piano at the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatoire in Milan under Antonio Beltrami and Bruno Canino, and going on to make a name for himself in various piano competitions.

He is a versatile musician who plays both as a soloist and in chamber ensembles. He has also



coached opera singers of international renown, such as Adriana Lazzarini, Ernesto Palacio, Lucia Aliberti, Maria Dragoni, Ines Salazar and Wladimiro Ganzarolli.

From 1995 to 1998 he worked with Luciano Marconi on a series of afternoon concerts presented by Quirino Principe at the Teatro Nuovo in Milan, accompanying singers in opera arias, chamber works and lieder.

He has helped train numerous young musicians for auditions with artistes such as Luciana Serra and Renata Scotto, and with conductors such as Riccardo Chailly and Sir Colin Davis.

In 2011-12 he taught at the Domenico Cimaroso Conservatoire in Avellino.

He founded the choir of the University of Milan-Bicocca, which he conducted from 2002 to 2012.

He teaches at the Civica Scuola di Musica Claudio Abbado in Milan.

Fausto Tenzi

On hearing Mr. Tenzi in a performance at the Accademia di S. Cecilia in Rome, the authoritative Italian critic and musicologist Teodoro Celli wrote: "...the tenor Fausto Tenzi, whose voice is endowed with a magnificent timbre...is capable of those dramatic accents that characterize him as a true Heldentenor. And he is not simply a voice: behind the voice there is a great personality.

Swiss-born Fausto Tenzi is a guest singer at many theatres and international festivals such as the Teatro alla Scala in Milan, Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome, Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino in Florence, Metropolitan and Carnegie Hall in New



York, Berliner Festwochen, Alte Oper in Frankfurt, International Music Festival of Luzern, Théâtre du Châtelet, TMP and Théâtre des Champs Elisées in Paris, Opera Theatre in Seoul and other events including concerts in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Odessa.

He has recorded for Deutsche Grammophon, Philips, Arts and Nuova Era.

His wide operatic repertoire includes *Il Trovatore*, *Ballo in Maschera*, *Don Carlos*, *Traviata*, *Otello*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Tosca*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *La Bohème*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Dame de Pique*, *Kovanshina*, *The Legend of the City of Kitez*, *The Golden Cockerel*. Also impressive is his concert repertoire that comprises Verdi's *Requiem Mass*, *Credo*, Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, *Petite Messe solennelle*, Puccini's *Messa di Gloria*, Beethoven's *Symphony nr.9*, Scriabin's *Symphony nr.1 "Glory to art, glory for ever"*, Bruckner's *Te Deum*, Janacek's *Messa Glagolitica*, Liszt's *Psalm XIII*, and Mendelssohn's *Walpurgisnacht*.

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