

The Pescadero Opera Society presents

Lucia di Lammermoor



Music by Gaetano Donizetti
Libretto by Salvatore Cammarano

Based on Sir Walter Scott's historical novel,
"The Bride of Lammermoor"

Opera in Three Acts
Sung in Italian

Setting: Scotland
Time: end of the 16th century

Characters

Lucia (soprano) Joan Sutherland
Lord Enrico Ashton, Lucia's brother (baritone) Pablo Elvira
Sir Edgardo di Ravenswood (tenor)..... Alfredo Kraus
Lord Arturo Bucklaw, Lucia's bridegroom (tenor) Jeffrey Stamm
Raimondo Bidebent, Lucia's teacher and confidante (bass) Paul Lishka
Alisa, Lucia's handmaid (mezzo-soprano) Ariel Bybee
Normanno, captain of the Ravenswood guard (tenor)..... John Gilmore
Retainers and servants, wedding guests

Conducted by Richard Bonyng
The Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Chorus and Ballet

Première performance on September 26, 1835 at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples, Italy

Synopsis

Background. The action is set in Scotland, at the end of the 16th century, against the background of feuding between factions, and between Catholics and Protestants. The opera concerns a feud between two families, the Ashtons of Lammermoor and the Ravenswoods (supporters of Mary, Queen of Scots).

When the opera begins, the Ashtons have taken possession of Ravenswood Castle, the ancestral home of their rivals. Edgardo (Sir Edgar of Ravenswood), last surviving member of his family, has been forced to live in a lonely tower by the sea, known as the Wolf's Crag. The Ashtons, despite their success, are threatened by changing political and religious forces, and their fortunes have begun to wane. In political disfavor, Enrico (Lord Henry Ashton of Lammermoor) stakes all on uniting his family with that of Arturo (Lord Arthur Bucklaw), whom he means to force his sister, Lucia (Lucy Ashton), to marry.

Act I

Scene 1: The gardens of Ravenswood Castle



In a ruined park near Lammermoor Castle, Normanno, captain of the castle guard, and other retainers prepare to search for a mysterious trespasser. Normanno tells Enrico that he believes that the man is Edgardo, and that he comes to the castle to meet Lucia. It is confirmed that Edgardo is indeed the intruder.

Normanno remains behind to greet Enrico, who decries Lucia's refusal to marry Arturo. Lucia's elderly tutor, Raimondo, suggests that grief over her mother's death keeps her from thoughts of love. Normanno reveals that Lucia has been discovered keeping trysts with a hunter who saved her from a raging bull. He suspects that the stranger is none other than Edgardo. Enrico rages and, as retainers confirm Normanno's suspicions, he swears vengeance, reaffirming his hatred for the family and his determination to end the relationship.

Scene 2: By a fountain in a park, near Ravenswood Castle

At a fountain near her mother's tomb, Lucia, fearful of her brother, awaits a rendezvous with Edgardo. In her famous aria, "Regnava nel Silenzio," Lucia tells her handmaid, Alisa, that she has seen the ghost of a maiden who was killed on the very same spot by a jealous Ravenswood ancestor and who now haunts the fountain. Alisa warns Lucia of a tragic end to her love for Edgardo and implores her to give up her love for Edgardo, but Lucia cannot restrain her love.

Edgardo enters. He explains he must go to France on a political mission but wishes to

reconcile himself with Enrico so that he and Lucia may marry. Lucia, knowing her brother will not relent, begs Edgardo to keep their love a secret. Though infuriated at Enrico's persecution, he agrees. The lovers seal their vows by exchanging rings, then bid each other farewell.

Act II

Scene 1: Lord Ashton's apartments in Ravenswood Castle

Preparations have been made for the imminent wedding of Lucia to Arturo. In an anteroom of Lammermoor Castle, Enrico plots with Normanno to force Lucia to marry Arturo. He worries whether Lucia will really submit to the wedding.

As the captain goes off to greet the bridegroom, Lucia enters, distraught but still defiant. Enrico shows Lucia a forged letter, seemingly proving that Edgardo has forgotten her and has taken a new lover. Crushed, she longs for death, but Enrico insists that she marry at once to save the family fortunes. Raimondo, Lucia's chaplain and tutor, urges her to consent to the wedding, invoking the memory of her mother and asking her to respect the family's desperate situation and renounce her vow to Edgardo and marry Arturo. Lucia finally consents, and Raimondo reminds her that there are heavenly rewards for earthly sacrifices.

Scene 2: The Great Hall in Ravenswood Castle

In the great hall of Lammermoor, as guests hail the union of two important families, Arturo pledges to restore the Ashtons' prestige. Enrico prepares Arturo for Lucia's melancholy by pleading her grief over her mother's death. Arturo signs the marriage contract, followed reluctantly by Lucia.



No sooner has the marriage contract been signed when Edgardo suddenly appears in the hall. Returning earlier than expected, he has learned of the wedding and has come to claim his bride. Raimondo prevents a fight by commanding the rivals put away their swords. He then shows Edgardo Lucia's signature on the marriage contract. Enraged, Edgardo confronts Lucia, demanding that they return their rings to each other. He then tears his ring from Lucia's finger and tramples it on the ground. He is forced out of the castle. Hardly comprehending Edgardo's words, Lucia collapses.

Act III

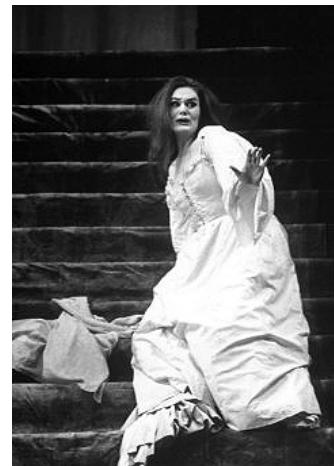
Scene 1: At the foot of Wolf's Crag Tower

As a storm rages, Edgardo sits in a chamber at the foot of Wolf's Crag tower, deep in thought. Enrico visits Edgardo to challenge him to a duel, telling him that Lucia is already enjoying her bridal bed. Edgardo agrees to fight him. They plan to meet at dawn by the graveyard of the Ravenswoods, near the Wolf's Crag.

Scene 2: A Hall in Ravenswood castle



Raimondo rushes into the hall, interrupting the continuing marriage celebrations. He announces to the guests that Lucia has gone mad and has stabbed and killed her bridegroom, Arturo, in the bridal chamber. Disheveled and unaware of what she has done, Lucia then enters the room. In her aria, "Il dolce suono," she imagines herself with Edgardo, soon to be happily married.



Enrico rushes in and at first threatens Lucia for what she has done.

He is silenced by the sight of her pitiful condition. Lucia collapses. Raimondo blames Normanno for setting up the entire tragedy.

Scene 3: The graveyard of the Ravenswood family

Among the tombs of his ancestors, Edgardo, last of the Ravenswoods, laments Lucia's supposed betrayal and awaits his duel with Enrico, which he hopes will end his own life. Guests leaving Lammermoor Castle tell Edgardo that Lucia is dying and has called his name. As he is about to rush to her side, Raimondo arrives to tell him that she has already died. Resolving to join Lucia in heaven, Edgardo stabs himself and dies.



Domenico Gaetano Maria Donizetti

Born November 29, 1797 in Bergamo, Cisalpine Republic
Died April 8, 1848 in Bergamo, Lombardy, Austrian Empire



Donizetti was an Italian composer. Along with Vincenzo Bellini and Gioacchino Rossini, he was considered a leading composer of *bel canto*¹ opera. His most famous work is *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835).

The youngest of three sons, Donizetti was born in 1797 in Bergamo's Borgo Canale quarter, located just outside the city walls. His family was very poor with no tradition of music, his father being the caretaker of the town pawnshop. Nevertheless, Donizetti received some musical instruction from Johann Simon Mayr, a priest at Bergamo's principal church (and also himself a composer of successful operas).

Donizetti was not especially successful as a choirboy, but in 1806 he was one of the first pupils to be enrolled at the Lezioni Caritatevoli school, founded by Johann Simon Mayr, in Bergamo, through a full scholarship. He received detailed training in the arts of fugue and counterpoint, and it was here that he launched his operatic career.

After some minor compositions under the commission of Paolo Zanca, Donizetti wrote his fourth opera, *Zoraida di Granata*. This work impressed Domenico Barbaia, a prominent theatre manager, and Donizetti was offered a contract to compose in Naples. Writing in Rome and Milan, in addition to Naples, Donizetti achieved some success. His 75 operas were written in the space of just twelve years and were usually popular successes, but the critics were often unimpressed.

Donizetti was not well-known internationally until 1830, when his opera, *Anna Bolena*, was premiered in Milan. He almost instantly became famous throughout Europe. *L'elisir d'amore*, a comedy produced in 1832, came soon after, and is deemed one of the masterpieces of the comic opera, as is his *Don Pasquale*, written in 1843. Shortly after *L'elisir d'amore*, Donizetti composed *Lucia di Lammermoor*, based on the Sir Walter Scott novel *The Bride of Lammermoor*. It became his most famous opera, and one of the high points of the *bel canto* tradition, reaching stature similar to Bellini's *Norma*.

After the success of *Lucrezia Borgia* (1833) consolidated his reputation, Donizetti followed the paths of both Rossini and Bellini by visiting Paris. His opera, *Marino Faliero*, suffered by comparison with Bellini's *I puritani*, and he returned to Naples to produce *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

As Donizetti's fame grew, so did his engagements, as he was further hired to write in both France and Italy. In 1838, he moved to Paris after the Italian censor objected to the production of *Poliuto* (on the grounds that such a sacred subject was inappropriate for the stage). There he wrote *La fille du régiment*, which became another success.

¹[Italian: bel, bello, beautiful + canto, singing.] A style of operatic singing characterized by full, even tones and a brilliant display of vocal technique.

Donizetti's wife, Virginia Vasselli, gave birth to three children, none of whom survived. Within a year of his parents' deaths, she died from cholera. By 1843, Donizetti exhibited symptoms of syphilis.

After being institutionalized in 1845, he was sent to Paris, where he could be cared for. After visits from friends, including Giuseppe Verdi, Donizetti was sent back to Bergamo, his hometown. After several years in the grip of insanity, he died in 1848 in the house of the noble family, Scotti. After his death Donizetti was buried in the cemetery of Valtesse, but in the late 19th century his body was transferred to Bergamo's Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, near the grave of his teacher, Johann Simon Mayr.

Lucia di Lammermoor

Lucia di Lammermoor is a "dramma tragico" (tragic opera). Salvatore Cammarano wrote the Italian libretto, which is loosely based upon Sir Walter Scott's historical novel, *The Bride of Lammermoor*. The opera, very successful from its inception, remains one of the leading *bel canto* operas of today's opera repertoire.

The French version. The opera premiered on September 26, 1835 at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples, Italy. Donizetti revised the score for a French version of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, which was commissioned for the Théâtre de la Renaissance in Paris which opened on August 6, 1839. The libretto, written by Alphonse Royer and Gustave Vaëz, is not simply a translation of the original, as Donizetti altered some of the scenes and characters. The French version is not performed as often as the Italian, but it was revived to great acclaim by Natalie Dessay and Roberto Alagna at the Opéra de Lyon in 2002. It was also co-produced by the Boston Lyric Opera and the Glimmerglass Opera in 2004.

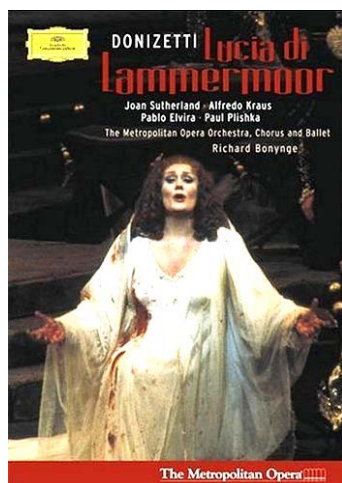
The "Mad Scene" has historically been a vehicle for several coloratura sopranos, providing a breakthrough for Dame Joan Sutherland. It is a technically and expressively demanding piece. Some sopranos, most notably Maria Callas, have performed the scene in a *come scritto* ("as written") fashion, adding minimal ornamentation to their interpretations. Most sopranos, however, add ornamentation to demonstrate their technical ability, as was the tradition in the *bel canto* period. This involves the addition and interpolation of trills, mordents, turns, runs and cadenzas. Almost all sopranos (most famously Joan Sutherland) append cadenzas to the end of the aria, sometimes ending them on a high E-flat. Maria Callas often opted not to sing the E-flat, although she did sing it in some performances conducted by Tullio Serafin.

The "Mad Scene" has also been inspirational for many musical arias outside the opera house." It has been in two movies and several TV series. Most recently it was used in an episode of "Law & Order: Criminal Intent," involving the murder of a young violinist by her opera singer mother who performs the aria right after the murder.

The "Lucia Sextet" had a life of its own outside the opera house. It was recorded in 1908 by Enrico Caruso and five others and released at the price of \$7.00, earning it the title of "The Seven-Dollar Sextet." The film, "The Great Caruso," incorporates a scene featuring a performance of this sextet. The Three Stooges used the sextet in two short films, "Micro-Phonies" and "Squareheads of the Round Table." Paul Muni whistles the aria as he guns down a gang lord in the movie, "Scarface." Three Warner Bros. cartoons use pieces of the aria, as does Disney in a 1906 film short, "The Whale Who Wanted to Sing at the Met." The "Sextet" is also featured in the comedy film, "The Money Pit," as well as the 2006 film, "The Departed."

Lucia di Lammermoor: The Video (1982)

Starring Joan Sutherland and Alfredo Kraus; conducted by Richard Bonyng



An exhilarating performance of her signature role, Dame Joan Sutherland captivates the audience in this elaborate production of Donizetti's *bel canto* masterpiece, taped during its celebrated 1982 run at the Metropolitan Opera.

This was Sutherland's first performance at the Met in four years and was clearly as much a celebration of the most memorable opera performance of the last half-century. This was an audience that came fully intending to give the diva ovation after ovation, especially at the end of the famous "Mad Scene," where they try to coax the soprano back up on her feet after her character has flung herself to the floor in despair.

At the height of her talent, Dame Joan is teamed with a cast that includes the sumptuous voice of Pablo Elvira as Enrico, and the elegant, poised tenor of the late Alfredo Kraus as Edgardo. This Lucia is awesome both visually and acoustically. The conductor is Dame Joan's husband and coach, Richard Bonyng, arguably the finest conductor of *bel canto* opera. But the performance all comes down to Sutherland, and, for those who were not fortunate to have heard her before her retirement, this DVD is overwhelming evidence of why she was referred to as "La Stupenda!" Vocally spectacular, with a range, fluidity and temperament that makes this as close to a perfect performance as one is likely to see, Dame Joan literally brings the house down at the end of the "Mad Scene."