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JULIAN RUSHTON



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CAMBRIDGE OPERA HANDBOOKS

General preface

This is a series of studies of individual operas, written for the serious opera-goer or record-collector as well as the student or scholar. Each volume has three main concerns. The first is historical: to describe the genesis of the work, its sources or its relation to literary prototypes, the collaboration between librettist and composer, and the first performance and subsequent stage history. This history is itself a record of changing attitudes towards the work, and an index of general changes of taste. The second is analytical and is grounded in a very full synopsis which considers the opera as a structure of musical and dramatic effects. In most volumes there is also a musical analysis of a section of the score, showing how the music serves or makes the drama. The analysis, like the history, naturally raises questions of interpretation, and the third concern of each volume is to show how critical writing about an opera, like production and performance, can direct or distort appreciation of its structural elements. Some conflict of interpretation is an inevitable part of this account; editors of the handbooks reflect this – by citing classic statements, by commissioning new essays, by taking up their own critical position. A final section gives a select bibliography, a discography and guides to other sources.

In working out plans for these volumes, the Cambridge University Press was responding to an initial stimulus from staff of the English National Opera. Particular thanks are due to Mr Edmund Tracey and Mr Nicholas John for help, advice and suggestions.

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In memory of my father
who, like Leopold Mozart, died while his son was at
work on *Don Giovanni*. I shall always be indebted to
the example of his knowledge and love of Mozart, and
of this work in particular.

Contents

General preface	page v
List of illustrations	ix
Acknowledgments	ix
1 Introduction	1
2 Synopsis	8
3 Don Juan before da Ponte <i>by Edward Forman</i>	27
4 The libretto	45
5 <i>Don Giovanni</i> in the theatre	66
6 Don Giovanni as an idea <i>by Bernard Williams</i>	81
7 The music	92
8 The literature of <i>Don Giovanni</i>	122
Notes	139
Select bibliography	153
Bibliography for Chapter 3	157
Discography <i>by Malcolm Walker</i>	159
Index	163

Illustrations

- | | | |
|---|--|----------------|
| 1 | Julius Quaglio, graveyard scene (Mannheim, 1789) | <i>Page</i> 70 |
| 2 | Joseph Quaglio, design painted by Angelo I Quaglio, graveyard scene (Munich, 1791) | 72 |
| 3 | <i>a</i> Plan of revolving stage; <i>b</i> mechanism of revolving stage with graveyard; Anna's room; (inset) garden of Commendatore's house. By Carl Lautenschläger (Munich, 1896) | 77 |
| 4 | <i>a</i> Garden of Commendatore's house (Act I, Tableau 1; Act II, Tableau 2); <i>b</i> graveyard. By Carl Lautenschläger (Munich, 1896) | 78 |

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I should like particularly to thank the other contributors to this volume, Dr Edward Forman of the University of Bristol, whose essay (Chapter 3) is noteworthy for demonstrating da Ponte's indebtedness to the popular tradition, and Bernard Williams, Provost of King's College, Cambridge, whose magnificent summary of conceptions of Giovanni has spared me a good deal of reading and is itself a highly original contribution to the debate. I would also like to thank the discographer of the series, Malcolm Walker; Michael Black, Clare Davies-Jones, Rosemary Dooley, and Ruth Smith of Cambridge University Press; for help with illustrations, John Deathridge and David Charlton; for obtaining copies of original libretti from the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna, John Gloscheskie; for a lavish supply of reprints, Pierluigi Petrobelli; and for discussion and ideas, the above-named, and also Alexander Goehr, John Warrack, Edmund Tracey, Lionel Friend, Brian Trowell, and Peter Branscombe. Figs. 1-4 are reproduced courtesy of the Deutsches Theatermuseum, Munich.

Julian Rushton

King's College, Cambridge
September 1980