**1 January 1858** A new decimal currency is instituted in Canada called the “dollar.”

*Halka*, an opera by Stanislaw Moniuszko (29) to words of Wolski, is performed in Warsaw for the first time. The public response is wild enthusiasm. See 18 February 1854 and 1 November 1848.

**2 January 1858** A grand “farewell concert” is given for and by Sigismond Thalberg (45) at the Academy of Music, New York. It includes four separate concerts: an opera, an orchestral performance, Thalberg and others, and Mozart’s (†66) *Requiem*. Thalberg premieres his *Variations on Lilly Dale* op.74. It is so successful it will be repeated in two days.

**5 January 1858** British and French forces occupy Canton. They capture and imprison the Imperial Viceroy Yeh Ming-chen.

**7 January 1858** A grand festival of Puerto Rican music is held in Ponce, organized by the visiting American, Louis Moreau Gottschalk (28). A makeshift stage is built at the local inn, over the coffin of a wealthy foreigner who recently died. While he is performing on the piano (which he had to tune), the stage collapses causing general pandemonium. Gottschalk survives unhurt.

**11 January 1858** Mehmed Emin Ali Pasha replaces Mustafa Resid Pasha as Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire.

**14 January 1858** In an effort to cool the atmosphere between himself and the Wesendoncks over the *ménage a trois*, Richard Wagner (44) leaves Zürich for Paris.

Felice Orsini, an Italian patriot and follower of Mazzini, leads a small band in throwing several bombs at the carriage carrying Emperor Napoléon III and Empress Eugénie to the Paris Opéra. Two people are killed. The Empress and about 150 others are injured. Orsini will be captured and executed. As the Emperor reaches his box at the Opéra, the audience, aware of the attempt on his life, nevertheless remains mute.

Giuseppe Verdi (44) arrives in Naples with an opera about killing a king. See 28 January 1858.

Francisco Javier Istúriz y Montero replaces Francisco Armero y Fernández Peñaranda, marqués de Nervión as Prime Minister of Spain.

**15 January 1858** *Le médecin malgré lui*, an opéra comique by Charles Gounod (39) to words of Barbier and Carré after Moliére, is performed for the first time, at the Théâtre-Lyrique, Paris in celebration of Moliére’s birthday. “My work was very well received,” the composer writes to Georges Bizet (19).

**19 January 1858** *Vibrationen* op.204, a waltz by Johann Strauss (32), is performed for the first time, in the Sophiensaal, Vienna.

Liberal leader Benito Pablo Juárez García becomes president of a Mexican government in opposition to the conservatives in Mexico City.

**21 January 1858** Félix María Zuloaga Trillo replaces Ignacio Gregorio Comonfort de los Ríos as President of Mexico.

**25 January 1858** Princess Victoria of Great Britain and Prince Friedrich of Prussia marry in the Chapel Royal, St. James’s Palace. Their use of Felix Mendelssohn’s (†10) “Wedding March” from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* will greatly popularize the practice.

*L’Enfantillage* op.202, a polka française by Johann Strauss (32), is performed for the first time, in the Sophiensaal, Vienna.

**26 January 1858** *Die Extravaganten* op.205, a waltz by Johann Strauss (32), is performed for the first time, in the Sophiensaal, Vienna.

**27 January 1858** Georges Bizet (19), in the company of other prize winners, reaches Rome to take up residence for his Prix de Rome year.

*Hellenen-Polka* op.203 by Johann Strauss (32) is performed for the first time, in the Palais Sina, Vienna.

**28 January 1858** The residence of the Imperial Viceroy in Canton is deliberately destroyed by French warships.

Giuseppe Verdi (44) submits his newly completed opera *Una vendetta in domino* (with revised libretto) to the Neapolitan censors.

John Knowles Paine (19) gives the first of three concerts in Deering Hall, Portland, Maine. They are to raise money for his musical education in Europe.

**30 January 1858** The Hallé Orchestra gives its first concert under that name, in Manchester.

**31 January 1858** The *Great Eastern* is launched in London. Designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, it is the largest ship in the world, with two screw propellers and two paddle wheels.

*Spiralen* op.209, a waltz by Johann Strauss (32), is performed for the first time, in the Redoutensaal, Vienna.

**2 February 1858** *Künstler-Quadrille* op.201 by Johann Strauss (32) is performed for the first time, in the Sophiensaal, Vienna.

**5 February 1858** Richard Wagner (44) returns to Zürich from Paris after receiving an Erard grand piano worth 5,000 francs from Madame Erard.

**9 February 1858** *Cycloiden* op.207, a waltz by Johann Strauss (32), is performed for the first time, in the Sophiensaal, Vienna.

Stephen Foster (31) signs his fourth contract with the publishers Firth, Pond & Co. in New York. This one is much more in favor of the company than earlier contracts with Foster.

**10 February 1858** The British blockade of Canton is lifted.

*Concordia* op.206*,* a polka mazur by Johann Strauss (32), is performed for the first time, in the Redoutensaal, Vienna.

**11 February 1858** Bernadette Soubirous has her first visions of the Virgin Mary in Lourdes, France.

**13 February 1858** Richard Burton and John Speake become the first westerners to see Lake Tanganyika, at Ujiji, having traveled eight months overland from Zanzibar.

**15 February 1858** *Jux-Brüde* op.208, a waltz by Johann Strauss (32), is performed for the first time, in the Sperl Ballroom, Vienna.

**17 February 1858** Queen Victoria officially names Ottawa as the capital of the Province of Canada.

**19 February 1858** An amendment to the Conspiracy to Murder Bill, amounting to censure of the government, is approved by the House of Commons. The bill is intended as a response to the attempt on the life of Napoléon III last month. It outlaws all conspiracies to commit murder regardless of where the intended crime is to take place. The vote will result in the fall of the Palmerston government.

**20 February 1858** Giacomo Meyerbeer (66) reaches agreement with Mathilde Heine, widow of Heinrich Heine (died 17 February 1856), to prevent publication of four of Heine’s poems which cast the composer in an unfavorable light. He pays her 4,500 francs. They will be published in 1869 after Meyerbeer’s death.

**25 February 1858** Edward Geoffrey Stanley, Earl of Derby replaces Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

**27 February 1858** Neapolitan censors return Giuseppe Verdi’s (44) new opera with a slashed and rearranged libretto and a new title: *Adelia degli Adimari*. The composer refuses to produce the work in Naples.

Following the attempt on the life of Emperor Napoléon III, the French government institutes several repressive measures in the Lois de sûreté générale.

**1 March 1858** *Das verlorene Paradies*, a sacred opera by Anton Rubinstein (28) to words of Schlönbach after Milton, is performed for the first time, in a concert setting in the Weimar Hoftheater.

**3 March 1858** *Mesdames de la Halle*, an operetta by Jacques Offenbach (38) to words of Lapointe, is performed for the first time, at the Bouffes-Parisiens, Paris.

**13 March 1858** Felice Orsini is executed by guillotine for the attempted murder of Emperor Napoléon III two months ago.

**16 March 1858** British forces recapture Lucknow from the Sepoys.

Ludvig Manderström replaces Elias Lagerheim as Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

**17 March 1858** Alyeksandr Borodin (24) reads his first published work to the Russian Academy of Sciences, “On the Action of Ethyl-iodide on Hydrobenzamide and Amarine.”

*La magicienne*, an opéra by Fromental Halévy (58) to words of Saint-Georges, is performed for the first time, at the Paris Opéra. The work is well received by the public, though the critical reaction is mixed.

The Irish Republican Brotherhood is founded in New York to support Irish independence.

**18 March 1858** Jan Jacob Rochussen and Peter Philip van Bosse replace Justinus Jacob Leonard van der Bruggen as chief ministers of the Netherlands.

**23 March 1858** Eleazar A. Gardner of Philadelphia receives a US patent for a cable streetcar.

**29 March 1858** Emperor Seraj ad-Din Abu’l Mozaffar Mohammad Bahadur Shah Padshah II of India is deposed by the British who take over direct rule.

**30 March 1858** Joseph Joachim and his Hannover orchestra run through the Piano Concerto no.1 of Johannes Brahms (24), the composer at the piano, at a private rehearsal in Hannover.

**7 April 1858** Minna Wagner intercepts a letter from her husband to Mathilde Wesendonck wrapped in the first sketch of the Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*. She then confronts Mathilde with it, thus ending the “arrangement” between Wagner (44) and the Wesendoncks and bringing the affair into the open.

Louis Gerhard de Geer af Finspång replaces Claës Efraim Günther as Prime Minister for Justice of Sweden.

Anton Diabelli dies in Vienna at the age of 76.

**9 April 1858** Bedrich Smetana (34) and his family leave Sweden for Prague because of his wife’s ill health.

**10 April 1858** “Big Ben” is cast at Whitechapel Bell Foundry, London.

**11 April 1858** During a visit to Pest, Franz Liszt (46) is admitted to the Franciscan order as a confrater in a monastery nearby.

**12 April 1858** After almost three years of work, Hector Berlioz (54) dates the final scene of *Les Troyens.*

**15 April 1858** British and Sikh troops rout rebels at Azimghur.

Minna Wagner departs Asyl for Brestenberg for treatment of a heart condition.

**19 April 1858** *La chatte metamorphosée en femme*, an operetta by Jacques Offenbach (38) to words of Scribe and Mélesville, is performed for the first time, at the Bouffes-Parisiens, Paris.

**23 April 1858** Giuseppe Verdi (44) leaves Naples, determined to produce his new opera elsewhere. See 17 February 1859.

Ethel Mary Smyth is born in London, the fourth child of Major General John Smyth, currently in India, and Nina Struth, descended from minor nobility. The birth certificate says 22 April, but Smyth and her family will always celebrate 23 April.

**1 May 1858** After three days of fighting, Montenegrins defeat a Turkish army at Grahovac, forcing them to retreat.

**2 May 1858** Fromental Halévy’s (58) setting of *Adonay zecharanu* for soloists, chorus and orchestra is performed for the first time, at a wedding in Paris. The groom is the nephew of Halévy’s wife.

**4 May 1858** The Committee on Peasant Affairs, following the wishes of Tsar Alyeksandr II, forbids discussion of the termination of serfdom by the Russian press.

**11 May 1858** Minnesota becomes the 32nd state of the United States.

**12 May 1858** Texas Rangers and their Indian allies defeat Commanches at Antelope Hill on the Canadian River.75 people are killed.

**15 May 1858** Alyeksandr Borodin (24) successfully defends his dissertation “On the like action of arsenic and phosphoric acids on the human organism” for the degree of Doctor of Medicine.

The Covent Garden Opera House reopens after the devastating fire of 1856.

**16 May 1858** Louis Moreau Gottschalk (29) gives the first of several concerts in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

**19 May 1858** Pro-slavery gunmen invade Blooming Grove, Kansas and place eleven citizens before a firing squad. They manage to kill four of them.

**20 May 1858** British and French gunboats assault the Taku forts at Tientsin. After 90 minutes, the Chinese defenders flee.

**22 May 1858** A diplomatic conference opens in Paris which will create the constitution of the United Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia.

**27 May 1858** Franz Liszt’s (46) *Festgesang zur Eröffnung der zehnten allgemeinen deutschen Lehrerversammlung* to words of von Fallersleben is performed for the first time, in Weimar.

**28 May 1858** By the Treaty of Aigun (Manchuria), China cedes the north bank of the River Amur to Russia. The Amur is fixed as the border as far east as the Ussuri.

**4 June 1858** Lord Elgin begins negotiations with Imperial Chinese commissioners at Tientsin.

**12 June 1858** Sigismond Thalberg (46) plays his last concert in North America, in Peoria, Illinois. In the last 21 months, Thalberg has performed over 300 times in 79 cities.

**13 June 1858** The first of four agreements known collectively as the Treaty of Tientsin is signed by representatives of Russia and China. By these agreements, China is forced to open ten ports to western trade, admit European ambassadors, grant religious (Christian) toleration and pay indemnities to France and Great Britain.

While traveling on the Mississippi near Memphis, the boiler in the side-wheeler *Pennsylvania* explodes. Approximately 250 people are killed with about 200 rescued. Among those who survive the blast is Henry Clemens, who will die of his wounds in a week. His job on the *Pennsylvania* was obtained by his brother Samuel, who left the ship on 5 June in a dispute with the pilot.

**17 June 1858** Deciding to devote himself entirely to music,Modest Musorgsky (19) resigns his commission in the Preobrazhensky Regiment of Guards.

**18 June 1858** The second of four agreements known collectively as the Treaty of Tientsin is signed by representatives of the United States and China.

While writing *Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin receives a package from Alfred Russel Wallace in the Molucca Islands with a paper describing Darwin’s own theory of evolution.

**19 June 1858** The last major stronghold of the Sepoy rebels, Gwalior (Madhya Pradesh), 350 km south of Delhi, falls to the British.

**25 June 1858** *Hamlet*, a symphonic poem by Franz Liszt (46) is performed for the first time, for a private performance of Shakespeare’s play in Weimar. See 2 July 1876.

**26 June 1858** The third of four agreements known collectively as the Treaty of Tientsin is signed by representatives of the United Kingdom and China.

**27 June 1858** The fourth of four agreements known collectively as the Treaty of Tientsin is signed by representatives of France and China.

**30 June 1858**  Leopoldo O´Donnell Joris, conde de Lucena replaces Francisco Javier Istúriz y Montero as Prime Minister of Spain.

**1 July 1858** The Wallace-Darwin theory of evolution is presented publicly for the first time, to the Linnaean Society in London by geologist Charles Lyell and botanist Joseph Hooker. The ideas are included jointly in a paper entitled “On the tendency of species to form varieties; and on the perpetuation of varieties and species by natural means of selection.” Neither Wallace nor Darwin are present.

**3 July 1858** The Treaty of Tientsin is signed by representatives of China and Great Britain. China is required to pay £1,300,000 in silver to Britain. Foreigners are allowed to travel freely throughout China. Ambassadors will be allowed in Peking. Trade will be allowed on the Yangtze as far as Hankow. More treaty ports are designated. The Chinese will cease using the term “barbarian” to refer to the British.

**4 July 1858** A second Treaty of Tientsin is signed by representatives of China and France. China is required to pay 16,000,000 francs in silver to France. Chinese Christians now imprisoned must be released.

**7 July 1858** John Knowles Paine (19) sails from New York aboard the *Athena* making for London.

**8 July 1858** Governor-General Lord Canning proclaims the end of the Sepoy Rebellion in India.

**10 July 1858** Anton Bruckner (33) passes examinations in harmony, figured bass and organ with Simon Sechter.

**13 July 1858** An Overture in d minor by Arthur Sullivan (16) is performed for the first time, at the Royal Academy of Music. This marks the end of his studies at the Royal Academy.

**15 July 1858** After three months in Brestenberg for treatment of her heart ailment, Minna Wagner returns to her husband Richard (45) at Asyl.

**17 July 1858** The French Minister of the Interior appoints a commission to investigate a universal pitch, what this pitch should be and how to insure it becomes universal. Much of the investigative work will be done by Hector Berlioz (54). Other members include Daniel-François-Esprit Auber (76), Gioacchino Rossini (66), Giacomo Meyerbeer (66), Fromental Halévy (59), and Ambroise Thomas (46).

**20 July 1858** Emperor Napoléon III and Prime Minister Count Cavour of Sardinia meet at Plombières to prepare the unification of Italy. They agree that a war against Austria will be necessary.

**23 July 1858** An act of the British Parliament removes disabilities of Jews.

**26 July 1858** Baron Lionel de Rothschild becomes the first Jewish member of the British Parliament.

**28 July 1858** William James Herschel, a civil servant in Jungipoor, Bengal, concludes a contract with Rajyadhar Konai. Herschel requires that Konai leave his handprint on the document so that Konai will not deny his signature. It is the first known use of finger or handprints for identification.

**29 July 1858** Japanese and US officials reach a treaty agreement at Tokyo. It calls for exchange of diplomats, opening six more Japanese ports to US trade each with a US consul, a fixed tariff, opening of three Japanese ports as US Navy supply depots, and abolition of the opium trade.

After one failure, the *USS Niagara* and the *HMS Agamemnon* reach a point in the middle of the Atlantic and begin laying telegraph cable. The *Niagara* makes for Newfoundland, the *Agamemnon* for Ireland.

**2 August 1858** As a result of the Sepoy uprisings of 1857, Great Britain institutes the Government of India Act. The British East India Company is dissolved and the British government begins direct rule through a viceroy. This is to take effect 1 November.

**T**he British Parliament organizes the territory of New Caledonia into the Crown Colony of British Columbia.

**3 August 1858** John Speake, having split off from Richard Burton reaches Isamiro Hill, near present Mwanza (Tanzania), and becomes the first white man to see the great lake he names Lake Victoria. He identifies it as the source of the White Nile.

**4 August 1858** The cable layer *USS Niagara* reaches Trinity Bay, Newfoundland.

**5 August 1858** The cable layer *HMS Agamemnon* reaches Valentia Bay, Ireland. The first Atlantic cable is completed and the first message is sent from Ireland to Newfoundland. Cyrus Field then telegraphs New York with the message “The cable is laid.”

John Knowles Paine (19) reaches London aboard the *Athena* from New York.

**8 August 1858** Ferdinand Hiller writes to Johannes Brahms (25), offering him a position teaching piano at the Paris Conservatoire. He will decline.

**10 August 1858** *Fürst Bariatinsky-Marsch* op.212 by Johann Strauss (32) is performed for the first time, in Pavlovsk.

**11 August 1858** Christian Almer and Peter Bohren of Switzerland, and Charles Barrington of Ireland complete the first ascent of the Eiger (3,970 m).

**12 August 1858** *Champagner-Polka* op.211 by Johann Strauss (32) is performed for the first time, in Pavlovsk.

**15 August 1858** John Hughes, Bishop of New York, lays the cornerstone for St. Patrick’s Cathedral.

**16 August 1858** Queen Victoria and President James Buchanan exchange greetings over the newly completed transatlantic cable.

**17 August 1858** Pursuant to the end of his relationship with the Wesendoncks (see 7 April 1858), Richard Wagner (45) leaves Asyl, the cottage near Zürich provided for him by Otto Wesendonck. He heads for Venice where he will continue the composition of *Tristan und Isolde*.

**18 August 1858** A Treaty of Friendship and Commerce is concluded between Japan and the Netherlands.

**19 August 1858** A Treaty of Friendship and Commerce is concluded between Japan and Russia.

By agreement of Austria, Prussia, France, Great Britain, Russia, Sardinia and the Ottoman Empire, Moldavia and Wallachia are united, essentially creating a Romanian state.

**21 August 1858** The first debate between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas takes place in Illinois.

**23 August 1858** John Knowles Paine (19) reaches Bremerhaven from London.

**26 August 1858** A Treaty of Friendship and Commerce is concluded between Japan and Great Britain.

**29 August 1858** Richard Wagner (45) arrives in Venice and sees the city that will be such a large part of his life, for the first time. He is accompanied by his young friend Karl Ritter.

**30 August 1858** Having fled the Wesendoncks, Richard Wagner (45) takes up residence in the Palazzo Giustiniani in Venice.

**31 August 1858** After five years, Edvard Grieg (15) is taken out of Tank’s School in Bergen to pursue music.

**1 September 1858** French naval forces attack and occupy Da Nang, Vietnam.

*Anatomy: Descriptive and Surgical* by Henry Gray is published for the first time, in London, on approximately this date.

Cyrus Field is given a parade up Broadway and a banquet at night. In Newfoundland, however, the messages are so scrambled as to be unusable. The cable itself soon fails.

**5 September 1858** *Abschied von St. Petersburg* op.210, a waltz by Johann Strauss (32), is performed for the first time, in Pavlovsk. Also premiered is *Bonbon-Polka* op.213.

**11 September 1858** Swiss Hieronymus Brantschen, Johann Kronig, and Johann Zumtaugwald, along with J. Llewelyn Davies of Great Britain, become the first to reach the top of Dom (4,545m) in the Swiss Alps.

**13 September 1858** The German steamship *SS Austria*, out of Hamburg, catches fire and sinks east of Newfoundland. 449 passengers and crew are lost, 65 rescued.

**16 September 1858** Jules Massenet (16) gives his first public piano recital, in Tournai, Belgium.

**18 September 1858** Gioachino Rossini (66) buys land from the city of Paris near the Bois de Boulogne on which he will build his villa. The city approves the sale on condition that they are able to buy it back upon his death.

**23 September 1858** *Gedankenflug* op.215, a waltz by Johann Strauss (32), is performed for the first time, in Pavlovsk.

**24 September 1858** *Flis*, an opera by Stanislaw Moniuszko (39) to words of Boguslawski, is performed for the first time, in Warsaw.

**27 September 1858** An English portrait artist named William Usherwood makes the first photographic image of a comet (Donati’s Comet), on Walton Common near Reigate in Surrey.

**30 September 1858** *La Favorite* op.217, a polka-française by Johann Strauss (32), is performed for the first time, in Pavlovsk.

**1 October 1858** The first secondary school in Finland wherein classes are conducted in Finnish opens in Jyväskylä.

Texas volunteers attack a Commanche camp in Rush Springs, Oklahoma killing 70.

**6 October 1858** Edvard Grieg (15) officially enrolls in Leipzig Conservatory.

**7 October 1858** *Die Einsiedelei* D.337 for male vocal quartet by Franz Schubert (†29) to words of Salis-Seewis is performed for the first time, before the composer’s birthplace in Vienna.

King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia is removed from power because of mental incapacitation. His brother Wilhelm is named regent, a post he has been filling unofficially for a year.

**9 October 1858** A Treaty of Friendship and Commerce is concluded between Japan and France.

**20 October 1858** Modest Musorgsky (19) appears in a one-act play “A Fair Copy” by Viktor Krylov, premiered to celebrate the marriage of Cesar Cui (23) to Malvina Bamberg.

**21 October 1858** *Orphée aux enfers*, an opéra-bouffon by Jacques Offenbach (39) to words of Crémieux and Halévy, is performed for the first time, at the Bouffes-Parisiens, Paris. The public is tepid, the press is negative. It will eventually succeed.

**26 October 1858** Hamilton Erastus Smith of Philadelphia receives a US patent for a washing machine. It features crank-operated, rotary action, with a wooden tub and a moving cylinder in the center.

**28 October 1858** Prime Minister Ferdinand von Zschinsky of Saxony dies and is succeeded by Friedrich Ferdinand, Baron von Beust.

Rowland H. Macy opens a dry goods store at Sixth Avenue and 14th Street in New York.

**1 November 1858** Governor-General Charles John Canning, Viscount Canning of India proclaims Queen Victoria sovereign over all India. All powers and territories held by the British East India Company are transferred to the British crown. Viscount Canning becomes the first British Viceroy of India.

Oliver Wendell Holmes dates the preface to his collection of essays, *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table,* in Boston.

**6 November 1858** Karl Anton, Prince Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen replaces Otto Theodor, Baron von Manteuffel as Prime Minister of Prussia.

**8 November 1858** An agreement between France, Great Britain, Prussia, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire, reached in Constantinople, sets the boundaries of Montenegro.

**12 November 1858** Prince Alois II of Liechtenstein dies in Eisgrub (Lednice), Moravia, and is succeeded by his son Johann II.

**15 November 1858** After years of growing depression, Johanna Mockel Mathieux Kinkel kills herself by jumping from the bedroom window of her London home, aged 48 years, four months, and seven days. The death will be listed as a heart attack. Her mortal remains will be laid to rest in Woking (Brookwood) Cemetery.

**17 November 1858** France annexes Clipperton Island.

Robert Owen dies in Newtown, Montgomeryshire at the age of 87.

**19 November 1858** Created by the British Parliament on 2 August, the Crown Colony of British Columbia is proclaimed at Fort Langley.

**22 November 1858** Land speculator William Larimer stakes a mining claim on the South Platte River near Auraria and names it after the Governor of the Kansas Territory, James W. Denver.

**24 November 1858** Franz Liszt (47) writes from Weimar to the poet, Ludwig Eckardt, “Art is for us none other than the mystic ladder from earth to Heaven--from the finite to the Infinite--from mankind to God: an everlasting aspiration and impulse towards redemption through love!” (Williams, 351)

*Tritsch-Tratsch-Polka* op.214 by Johann Strauss (33) is performed for the first time, in “Zum großen Zeisig,” Vienna.

**30 November 1858** John Landis Mason receives a US patent for his invention known as the Mason jar.

**7 December 1858** France and Spain begin a blockade of Cochin-China following attacks on European missionaries and others.

**8 December 1858** An electric light is first used in a public installation, an arc lamp, in the lighthouse at South Foreland, Kent, England.

**15 December 1858** *Der Barbier von Bagdad*, a comic opera by Peter Cornelius (33) to his own words, is performed for the first time, in the Weimar Hoftheater conducted by Franz Liszt (47). Although the work and performance are excellent, there are noisy demonstrations in the audience which Liszt takes to be against him. In the face of this, he will resign his post of Grand Ducal Director of Music Extraordinary at Weimar.

**17 December 1858** Franz Liszt (47) conducts an all-Beethoven (†31) concert in Weimar, his last performance as Kapellmeister in that city. He receives a standing ovation.

**18 December 1858** The first of the “Samedi soirs” takes place at the Rossini (66) residence in Paris (they will later be held at Villa Rossini). Over the next ten years, Rossini and his wife will entertain the giants of the artistic world. Composers who will attend at least one of these Saturday Nights include Auber, Boito, Gounod, Liszt, Meyerbeer, Rubinstein, Saint-Saëns, Thalberg, Thomas and Verdi. Other notables include Sir Julius Benedict, Delacroix, Ernest and Gustave Doré, Dumas pére, Hanslick, Joachim, Tito di Giovanni and Giulio Ricordi, and Sarasate.

**22 December 1858** Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria Puccini is born at Lucca, the fifth of nine children born to Michele Puccini, an organist and choirmaster at San Martino, and Albina Magi, member of a prominent local family.

**23 December 1858** Manuel Robles Pezuela replaces Félix María Zuloaga Trillo as acting President of Mexico.

**24 December 1858** Aleksandar Karadjordjevic is deposed as Prince of Serbia by the Parliament. They declare Milos Obrenovic as prince.

**25 December 1858** *Oratorio de Noël* for chorus, strings, harp and organ by Camille Saint-Saëns (23) to words from the Vulgate Bible is performed for the first time, in the Madeleine, Paris.

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11 January 2016