

= L 'ange de Nisida =

L 'ange de Nisida ( The Angel of Nisida ) is an opera semiseria in four acts by Italian composer Gaetano Donizetti , from a libretto by Alphonse Royer and Gustave Vaëz .

Parts of the libretto are considered analogous with the libretto for Giovanni Pacini 's Adelaide e Comingio , and the final scene is based on the François @-@ Thomas @-@ Marie de Baculard d 'Arnaud play Les Amants malheureux , ou le comte de Comminges . Donizetti worked on the opera in late 1839 ? its final page is dated 27 December 1839 . Because the subject matter involved the mistress of a Neapolitan king , and may thus have caused difficulties with the Italian censors , Donizetti decided that the opera should be presented in France . The theater company Donizetti contracted went bankrupt ; L 'ange was never performed and was reworked as La favorite in September 1840 .

= = Composition history = =

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Donizetti completed L 'ange de Nisida on 27 December 1839 , the date on the final page of the autograph score . He had been working on Le duc d 'Albe , but postponed work on the half @-@ completed score in favor of L 'ange and La fille du régiment .

Although Donizetti noted in correspondence to his close friend Tommaso Persico in Naples that L 'ange was " an opera in three acts " , both the autograph score and Donizetti 's contract with Anténor Joly , the owner of the theater company Donizetti contracted , make clear that L 'ange had four acts . Regardless , Donizetti 's letter has caused confusion among opera journalists and scholars . For example , The Musical Times journalist Winton Dean wrote of the Italian version of La favorite in 1979 : " [ I ] t was expanded from an unperformed three @-@ act French opera , L 'ange de Nisida . " Ashbrook speculates that Donizetti may have considered the first two acts as one .

= = = Contract and cancellation = = =

On 5 January 1840 , Donizetti signed a rehearsal and performance contract with his librettists and Anténor Joly , who was operating a company named Théâtre de la Renaissance and giving performances at the Salle Ventadour in Paris . Théâtre de la Renaissance chose L 'ange over Richard Wagner 's Das Liebesverbot . Joly 's company had premiered the French version of Donizetti 's Lucia di Lammermoor the previous year , and L 'ange was meant to be its successor . The contract , which is on display at the Bibliothèque @-@ Musée de l 'Opéra National de Paris , stipulates that L 'ange be performed uninterrupted twenty times unless three consecutive performances sold poorly , and that Joly could not premiere any other opera until the revenue from L 'ange started to decline . The contract contains nothing about Donizetti 's compensation ; therefore , it is possible that another contract existed . L 'ange was set to begin rehearsal on 1 February 1840 . Donizetti had two other operas in various stages of preparation at other theaters during this time : Les martyrs and La fille du régiment .

Later in January , Joly terminated all opera productions of the Théâtre de la Renaissance company due to financial hardship , despite a reported 5 @,@ 000 @-@ franc loan from Donizetti . Joly tried to keep the operation afloat by staging ballets , but it closed completely in May 1840 . He filed for bankruptcy and therefore avoided paying Donizetti the large fee owed for backing out of the production . Writing for the Cambridge Opera Journal , Mark Everist referred to L 'ange as one of " the most spectacular casualties of the collapse of music drama at the Théâtre de la Renaissance " .

= = = Reworked as La favorite = = =

Donizetti managed to retrieve the score of L 'ange de Nisida from Joly 's company and reworked it

as *La favorite* ( now more commonly known by its Italian title , *La favorita* ) in September 1840 for a December premiere in Italy . To circumvent the Italian censors Donizetti agreed to plot modifications ; *La favorite* is about a medieval King of Castile .

The presence and influence of *L'ange* is evident in Donizetti 's autograph score of *La favorite* , which features " large chunks " of *L'ange* " cut up and interleaved " in which new character names and text for *La favorite* overwrite the old . The final page of *L'ange* was used as the final page of *La favorite* ; therefore , both operas bear the same finish date on the last page . Donizetti 's contract for *La favorite* demanded a 1 December 1840 premiere , leaving him little time for dramatic changes . In his 1965 biography Donizetti , Ashbrook surmises that this tight deadline gave rise to the legend that Donizetti actually composed the last act of *La favorite* in a single night . In fact , the libretto of *L'ange* and the autograph score of *La favorite* make clear that the final act of *La favorite* was completed long before Donizetti began the rest of it in September ? Donizetti lifted it from *L'ange* with the exception of two solo passages . He brought in librettist Eugène Scribe to oversee the new text , which also required the approval of starring mezzo @-@ soprano Rosine Stoltz . The finished product was an amalgamation of the unfinished *Adelaide* , the never @-@ performed *L'ange de Nisida* , and new material worked into the score by Donizetti and into the libretto by Scribe . *La favorite* premiered on 2 December 1840 .

Ashbrook has compared the surviving autograph scores of *L'ange de Nisida* and *La favorite* to determine precisely how much material *L'ange* provided for the latter . While the events in *L'ange* are set in 1470 in *Nisida* and *Naples* , *La favorite* is set in *Santiago de Compostela* and *Castile* , both in *Spain* , prior to 1350 . Donizetti made fundamental changes to the first half of *La favorite* and little remains of *L'ange* . The central conflict of the story involving the marriage and subsequent death is essentially the same from one opera to the other , and some of the character names are also similar or identical .

A transcription of the *L'ange* libretto is kept at the *Fondazione Donizetti* library in *Bergamo* , and was printed in a 2002 issue of the Italian @-@ language journal for *The Donizetti Society* .

= = Roles = =

As the opera never got to the rehearsal stage , little is known about the intended cast . In a letter to his close friend *Tommaso Persico* , Donizetti expressed his desire to give the title role to *Juliette Bourgeois* , a temperamental soprano who requested a large sum of money to perform in *France* . ( She was later to create the title role in Donizetti 's *La fille du régiment* )

= = Synopsis = =

Time : 1470

Place : *Naples* and *Nisida*

*Leone de Casaldi* is an exiled soldier who makes a forbidden journey to the island of *Nisida* , outside *Naples* , *Italy* , to see *Sylvia* , with whom he is infatuated . Leone knows she is a noble but little else . While on *Nisida* , Leone encounters *Don Gaspar* , Chamberlain to King *Fernand* of *Naples* . After hearing Leone 's plight , *Don Gaspar* convinces him to travel to *Naples* to have his exile lifted . Leone and *Sylvia* meet in *Naples* , at which time Leone discovers that she is actually *Sylvia de Linares* , the King 's mistress . She declares her love for Leone but implores him to abandon her and his plans in *Naples* . When he refuses , the King discovers him and orders *Don Gaspar* to arrest and imprison him .

The King expresses to *Sylvia* his desire that she wed him . However , agents of *Rome* have been plotting to banish the mistress from *Naples* . When the King , dismayed , offers to grant her any request , she asks that Leone be set free . A monk appears , brandishing the Papal bull and threatening to banish *Sylvia* if she remains a mistress to the King . The King plots with *Don Gaspar* to free Leone and wed him to *Sylvia* , although Leone would be sent away and *Sylvia* would remain the King 's mistress . Leone and *Sylvia* marry , but when Leone discovers the plot , he breaks his sword in front of the King and leaves under the monk 's escort .

Leone is preparing to take his vows as a monk when Sylvia appears , having followed him disguised as a novice . When she confronts Leone and asks for forgiveness , he realizes his feelings and attempts to flee with her . Sylvia , who has been near death , dies at Leone 's feet despite his calls for help .

= = Recordings = =

See La favorite for recordings based on much of the music from this opera .