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Catherine Hayes 1818-1861: The Hibernian Prima Donna
(review)

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Lurking in all the details are a number of misprints, misspelled words, and inconsistencies. One wonders if Flury was given the chance to proofread the final version of his book. The creator of Alfio — Gaudenzio Salassa — becomes Guadenzio in the listing of the world premiere (p. 33) and in the index (p. 402). Both the Brooklyn Academy and the Academy of Music in Philadelphia are listed as Accademy (p. 39). No hall is cited for the Metropolitan Opera's performance of *Cavalleria* in Philadelphia in 1907 (p. 40). Armida Parsi-Pettinella becomes Pettenella (p. 83 and also in the index). Sankt Gallen is referenced by its Italian name, San Gallo (p. 95). Hariclea Darclée has an accent shifted from the first to the second *e* in her last name in numerous references (p. 100 and elsewhere). Gavazzeni becomes Gavazzini (p. 108). A selection from the manuscript orchestral score of *Sì* is listed as *Coro Carnevalesco dele* (instead of *delle*) *serpentine* (p. 141). The Burgtheater in Vienna is cited as the Buergertheater (p. 142). Mario Filippeschi is spelled Filipeschi in the *Cavalleria* discography (p. 235). A television broadcast of *Cavalleria* in Hungary is credited to MTV (p. 244). Does that stand for Magyar TV? In the discography, the Melodiya label is abbreviated to Meldya., but the period is omitted in most references (p. 256 and elsewhere). The Sogno from *Guglielmo Ratcliff* is spelled *Songo* (p. 301). *Opera lirica* in the title of Giorgio Gualerzi's *50 anni di opera lirica alla RAI 1931–1980* is compressed into *operlirica* (p. 334).

Despite the lapses, this work will remain an enduring gold mine of information for all researchers digging into the life and music of Pietro Mascagni.

Robert Baxter

NOTES

1. David Stivender, *Mascagni: An Autobiography Compiled, Edited, and Translated from the Original Sources* (White Plains, N.Y.: Pro/Am Music Resources, 1988), and Mario Morini, *Pietro Mascagni* (Milan: Casa Musicale Sonzogno di Piero Ostali, 1964).

2. Allan Mallach, "The Mascagni Tour of 1902: An Italian Composer Confronts the American Musical World," *The Opera Quarterly*, vol. 7, no. 4 (winter 1990–91), pp. 13–37.

Catherine Hayes 1818–1861: The Hibernian Prima Donna

Basil Walsh

Dublin: Irish Academic Press; Portland, Ore.: IBS, 2000
390 pages, \$52.50

Before looking into Basil Walsh's biography of Catherine Hayes, I had come across her name principally in connection with an anecdote (not recounted there) involving William Makepeace Thackeray. In the April 1850 installment of the serially published *Pendennis*, the novelist made a passing reference to "the

greatest criminal, tyrant, booby, Bluebeard, Catherine Hayes, George Barnwell among us,” the reference being to the notorious eighteenth-century criminal Catherine Hayes (1690–1726), who had been executed for murdering her husband. His comment was published at the same time that Limerick-born soprano Catherine Hayes was appearing at Her Majesty’s Theatre and concertizing in London. Construing the allusion as an insult to the singer (and to Ireland), a writer for the *Freeman’s Journal* of Dublin came to her defense, accusing Thackeray of “unmanly grossness,” and other Irish papers quickly joined in the attack. According to Thackeray’s daughter, her father received a letter threatening a prolonged series of physical assaults, and one would-be assailant even took lodgings across the street for that purpose. After the matter was settled quickly (and without violence), Thackeray composed a comic ballad about the business for his own amusement. It ends with this ringing imprecation:

Accursed let his memory be,
Who dares to say aught in dispraise
Of Oireland, the land of the free,
And of beauty and janius and Hayes.¹

Some 150 years later, the beauty and genius of Hayes are given ample scope in this biography. The account of her life — she was born in poverty but, after belated musical training, triumphed on operatic stages around the world — makes a compelling story. On the opening page, Walsh attributes her remarkable success to “a mixture of luck, raw talent, strong character, timing and an innate business sense,” qualities overshadowed, he adds, by “an incredible desire to sing” (p. 1). Certainly, her life exhibits all those qualities and would have pleased such champions of luck and pluck as Horatio Alger and Samuel Smiles. Hayes was born in Limerick on 25 October 1818 (a baptismal record reproduced in the book indicates that she was not born in 1825, as many reference books — including the newest Grove — state). Her parents were Arthur William Hayes, a bandmaster with the local militia, and Mary Carroll Hayes, a household servant of the Earl of Limerick. Around 1823, Hayes’s father evidently abandoned the family, leaving her mother to bring up Catherine and her older sister Henrietta, the only two of their children to survive infancy.

Though the story of the discovery of Hayes’s voice sounds suspiciously like something from a sentimental novel of the time, it seems to be genuine (or at least what we would call fact-based today). One afternoon in 1838 Catherine had accompanied her mother to the estate of the Earl of Limerick and was in the garden, where her singing was overheard by Edmund Knox, the Bishop of Limerick, whose residence was adjacent to the estate. Knox was sufficiently impressed to arrange for her to sing for a group of his friends, who immediately raised funds for her to study formally. Her progress with a local teacher (unidentified) was so remarkable that in 1839 she was sent to Dublin to study with Antonio Sapia (1799–1851). Within a month, she made her first public appearance and by 1841 was established as one of the leading singers in Dublin’s active concert life.

When Luigi Lablache came to Dublin to appear in *Puritani* in that fall, Hayes sang for him. With his encouragement, she moved to Paris the following year, studying with Manuel Garcia from October 1842 to March 1844.

At Garcia's suggestion, Hayes next went to Milan to work with Felice Ronconi, who, after about a year's coaching, recommended her to Giuseppe Provini, the impresario of the Teatro Grand in Marseilles. She made her operatic debut there on 10 May 1845 as Elvira in *Puritani*, followed by performances of the title role in *Lucia* and Anaide in Rossini's *Mosè*. In November she debuted at La Scala in *Linda di Chamounix* and within a year had appeared there in leading roles in seven other operas by Rossini (*Otello*, *Mosè*, and *Ricciardo e Zoraide*), Donizetti (*Anna Bolena* and *Lucia*), Mercadante (*Il bravo*), and Federico Ricci (*Estella di Murcia*), the last receiving its premiere.

Hayes was soon appearing in other Italian houses and at the Kärntner-theater in Vienna. Walsh points out that when Hayes signed a contract as *prima donna assoluta* with Florence's Teatro della Pergola in January 1847, she inserted two unusual clauses. First, she required that lodging be provided in Florence for her mother and sister; and, more surprising, she stipulated that she not be required to sing in any operas by Verdi (p. 81). The latter clause occasioned some public discussion, as did her seemingly inconsistent decision to sing in the Italian premiere of *I masnadieri* in Verona in December of that same year. (She repeated *Masnadieri* in Florence and Genoa and would eventually add *Ernani*, *Trovatore*, and substantial excerpts from *Traviata* and *Rigoletto* to her repertoire.) While in Italy, Hayes took part in the first performances of several new operas as well. In addition to Ricci's *Estella*, she sang the premieres of Francesco Malipiero's *Alberigo da Romano* (Venice, Fenice, 26 December 1846); Federico Ricci's *Griselda* (Venice, Fenice, 13 March 1847); Gualtiero Sanelli's *Gennaro Annese* (Florence, Pergola, 5 April 1848); and Vincenzo Capececiatro's *Mortedo* (Milan, Scala, 25 November 1847).²

Because the political upheavals of 1848 were making conditions increasingly difficult in Italy, Hayes and her family went to London early in 1849. There, on 10 April, she made her local debut at the Royal Italian Opera, singing opposite Lorenzo Salvi and Antonio Tamburini in *Linda di Chamounix*. Hayes was very well received by public and press alike, no minor accomplishment in a city whose current soprano stars included Jenny Lind, Giulia Grisi, Fanny Persiani, and Henriette Sontag. Hayes quickly consolidated her success, appearing in *Lucia* with Mario and, with Mario and Pauline Viardot, taking part in the London premiere (in Italian) of *Le prophète*. She also sang in oratorio and concerts, toured the provinces, and, in November 1849, returned to Ireland for wildly acclaimed concert and operatic appearances. Her itinerary is staggering. In early 1850, for instance, she sang *Sonnambula*, *Norma*, and *Linda di Chamounix* on successive nights (March 14–16), as well as performing *Sonnambula* and *Norma* back to back on several other occasions. For the next two years, she continued to sing throughout Britain, somehow managing to work in an engagement of several months in Rome in 1850–51 as well.

Then, in the fall of 1851, Hayes embarked on an unprecedented tour that not only brought her to the United States and South America but eventually took her to Australia, New Zealand, and India. She landed in New York in September 1851 and made her way to San Francisco by November 1852 (stopping to sing in Panama on the way). After appearing in Chile and Peru (including a number of operatic outings), she returned to San Francisco for more concerts. She next sailed for Hawaii, where she arrived in July 1854, and then went on to Australia, landing in the middle of September. Early 1855 found her concertizing in Calcutta, then singing *Lucia*, *Don Pasquale*, and individual acts of *Sonnambula* and *Norma* with a resident French troupe in Java. By midyear she was back in Australia, where she sang in concert and opera, appearing under conditions often far from ideal. For instance, the unavailability of a tenor meant that the roles of Elvino (*Sonnambula*), Edgardo (*Lucia*), Pollione (*Norma*), and Thaddeus (*Bohemian Girl*) were undertaken by a soprano or mezzo. Hayes gave a farewell concert on 11 July 1856 and was back in England a month later — thus concluding a tour that had lasted nearly five years and circled much of the globe. She was quickly concertizing again, and she undertook an extensive series of operatic appearances in Ireland in the spring of 1857.

In October 1857 Hayes married William Avery Bushnell. Bushnell, who had been Jenny Lind's manager during her American tour, had become Hayes's manager early in the course of her American tour and accompanied her to South America and the South Pacific. Walsh speculates that they became lovers by the time they arrived in Sydney (pp. 261–62), but because Bushnell was already married (though long estranged from his wife), it was necessary for him to return to Connecticut and obtain a divorce. By then, Bushnell was already seriously ill with tuberculosis and died the following July, less than a year after their marriage.

Hayes resumed her career with a series of concerts in January 1859. Although she confined herself to concert work that year, the following January she undertook a new operatic role, the title part of Gluck's *Iphigenia in Tauride*, appearing with Sims Reeves and Charles Santley. She remained active on the concert scene until the summer of 1861, when she canceled several concerts because of illness. In early August, she evidently suffered a stroke. She had another on 11 August 1861 and died later that day, only a few months short of her forty-third birthday.

Quite apart from its considerable interest as a narrative, an account of the life of Catherine Hayes would seem to offer twenty-first-century readers more than an event-filled saga of one woman's success over adversity. Because her relatively brief life and career brought her into contact with an unusual number of musical institutions, her experience and the documents related to her life could well provide useful insights into a number of aspects in nineteenth-century musical life. Her early years, for instance, could add to our knowledge of the subscription concerts that were such an important part of musical Dublin well into the twentieth century. Her studies with Sapio and Garcia could prove a source of

information about vocal pedagogy, while her letters and contracts from her years in Italy could tell us much about conditions in both leading and secondary theaters at a period of great musical (and political) ferment. The same is true of Hayes's years in London, an era of unusually rich operatic activity. For that matter, the concerts in which Hayes so often participated were remarkable events involving a number of well-known vocalists singing a great variety of music. One illustration (p. 152) reproduces the program for an 1850 concert that not only features Sontag but also promises a trio for three basses, a trio for three sopranos, and a trio for three tenors — in comparison, today's three-tenor events seem paltry indeed. Likewise, her participation in concerts and opera in more provincial areas might fill in our understanding of that aspect of nineteenth-century musical life. Of even greater potential value are the accounts of Hayes's travels in the United States, South America, and Australia. The physical and artistic conditions under which music was made, the financial details, and the reception of these performances are seldom-examined aspects of the dissemination of European art music around the globe. As an unmarried woman who made her way in a male-dominated profession seemingly without offending the proprieties of the day, Hayes warrants study as well.

Although Hayes's life provides such opportunities for enlarging our understanding of nineteenth-century musical life, Walsh's treatment is generally disappointing in this respect. He has clearly devoted hundreds of hours to collecting data about Hayes, and, as the closing three or four pages of the text indicate, he certainly has intended to convey something of the larger significance of Hayes's life. However, the text often fails to integrate the biographical, historical, and critical, so that the welter of details does not coalesce into the larger view needed. The opening chapters, for example, call for an overview of musical life in Limerick and especially Dublin in the early years of the nineteenth century. Rather than a sustained exposition of that topic, Walsh presents biographical information about Hayes, constantly interrupting it with details about musical Dublin. Mention of a person or place associated with the singer is followed by a page or so of details — the larger significance of which are not always made clear — before returning to the narrative of Hayes's life. When the choice of a Dublin teacher for Hayes is considered, for instance, we learn that Bishop Knox consulted the Pigott family, which owned a music store at 112 Grafton Street in central Dublin, that Samuel J. Pigott was a respected cellist, that he owned a 1720 Stradivarius that would later come to be known as the "Piatti cello," and that "the Pigott name is still associated with the retail music business in Suffolk Street, Dublin, today" (pp. 9–10). Pigott and his Piatti reappear on pages 13 and 21, the cello making a last appearance (without Pigott) on page 270. Likewise, though Hayes's acquaintance with Emanuele Muzio may be significant, when he is introduced readers do not particularly benefit from learning that he conducted the first performance of *Aida* in America or the first performance of *La forza del destino* in France (p. 45), events that took place a dozen or more years after her death.

At other times — perhaps perversely — I would like to see Walsh pursue some peripheral matters more thoroughly, though in a note rather than in the text. For instance, when a pianist was added to the group of musicians performing with Hayes on her American tour, we are told that he was “Eduard Boulanger, a pupil of Chopin (possibly the father of Nadia and Lilli Boulanger)” (p. 209). A concert program reproduced on page 199 lists him simply as E. Boulanger and indicates he played a single number, a solo of his own composition. (Incidentally, Boulanger is listed in the index as Eduardø Boulanger, one of many such inconsistencies in the book.) There is no discussion of the possibility suggested in the ambiguously placed parentheses, nor is there any documentation to allow the reader to pursue this question, which seems as if it ought to be fairly easy to answer. Biographical materials about the Boulanger sisters indicate that their father was Henri-Alexandre Ernest Boulanger (1815–1900), a composer (winner of the Prix de Rome in 1836) and eventually a singing teacher at the Paris Conservatoire. Nothing indicates that he studied with Chopin, a connection likely to be stressed; however, according to Jérôme Spycet, Boulanger père did, in fact, tour the United States as a pianist in 1851–52.³ In short, the identification really is much more probable than its offhand — seemingly careless — presentation suggests.

Walsh’s handling of documents is disappointing. Despite an early comment that Hayes was “quite literate and generally a good letter writer” (p. 17) and a late reference to the “frankness” of her correspondence with the Italian impresario Lanari (p. 296), Walsh seldom quotes from her letters (and nothing in the preface or acknowledgments indicates that he was prevented from doing so). The account of Hayes’s debut in Marseilles suggests that Walsh is providing his own imaginative re-creation of that event, but a close look at the notes reveals that he is drawing on an interview printed in the Dublin *Evening Packet*. That is, the passage is actually more “authentic” than it appears.

In contrast, Walsh generally gives secondary documents more space, sometimes more space than they warrant. In sections of the book that deal with Hayes’s career after 1849, he tends to quote reviews rather too generously. Published accounts of the same performance are predictably repetitious; and, unfortunately, rather than extracting significantly different details or particularly telling phrases, Walsh reproduces whole passages that duplicate information about repertoire, attendance, or the singer’s appearance. This tendency is especially annoying when a particularly vacuous account is followed by a review that addresses technique or interpretation in an obviously informed way but receives little or no accompanying commentary. At times, in fact, reviews provide the discussion the author fails to supply. For instance, readers will likely be surprised to learn that Hayes’s concert programs regularly included “Ah! mon fils” from Meyerbeer’s *Prophète*. Walsh simply lists this contralto aria as part of the program (p. 159), leaving it for a reviewer in the *Times* to make something of this apparent anomaly: “this air brought out the compass of her fine voice, and the hearers were evidently astonished at the richness of her lower

notes" (p. 173). It is another fifty pages before Walsh himself remarks on Hayes's frequent performance of the piece, speculating that her voice was darkening but cautioning that we do not know what key she sang it in (p. 224).

The text is also plagued with a variety of errors. Some are obviously nothing more than typographical errors, as when Hayes's mother is described as "a women" (p. 97), Vienna's Kärntnertortheater is transformed into the "Kärntnertortheter" throughout the Chronology of Performances/Travels (pp. 319–20), or when Emanuele Muzio's first name temporarily loses its final *e* (p. 45). Others are common lapses, such as the reference to vocal "chords" (pp. 36, 80) and the substitution of "tenderhooks" for "tenterhooks" (p. 117). Others are of little consequence, such as the (understandable) assumption that the opening phrase of Henry Bishop's showpiece is "Lo *hear* the gentle lark" (p. 25) (Shakespeare's text, from *Venus and Adonis*, actually begins, "Lo, *here* the gentle lark, weary of rest, / From his moist cabinet mounts up on high"). More troubling are such things as the use of the nonsensical "basso cantata" in place of "basso cantante" (p. 54) and the repeated description of soprano Angelica Catalani as a mezzo (pp. 12, 87). Sir George Macfarren's name is given as "Macferren" (though spelled correctly in the index), and the title of his cantata *May Day* is evidently confused with William Sterndale Bennett's similarly named *The May-Queen*, both of which Hayes sang (pp. 279–80, 282).

Other inconsistencies or outright errors are still more serious. The most glaring occurs in connection with the opera Hayes premiered at Fenice on 25 December 1846. In the text it is described as *Albergio da Romano* and said to be written by "a young composer and a member of the nobility called Malespeno, who possibly was related to one of the directors of La Fenice" (p. 73). In an appendix listing Hayes's repertoire and roles, the title of the opera is given as *Albergo da Rommano* and the composer as Malespino (p. 358). None of the variations seems to be correct. According to the list of premieres on Fenice's Web site, the opera was *Alberigo da Romano* by Francesco Malipiero, the title and composer also given in Alfred Loewenberg's *Annals of Opera*.⁴ The list of repertoire and roles on pages 357 and 358 is particularly problematic. According to this list, for instance, Hayes sang Smeton in *Anna Bolena* during her first season at Scala, whereas the text gives Giovanna Seymour as her role (p. 55)—as does Carlo Gatti in his chronology of performances at that theater.⁵ The first performances of Ricci's *Estella di Murcia* took place in Milan, not London; Sanelli's *Gennaro Annese* was given its premiere in April, not March, 1848; Hayes first sang sing *Trovatore* in 1857, not 1847 (when the opera had not yet been written).

In short, the text is to be used with a good deal of caution. Despite such considerable reservations, though, Walsh's book also has considerable value. Even if he does not always explore the significance of Hayes's career as thoroughly as I would like or provide a sustained exposition of certain aspects of her life and times, he does supply a great many documents not readily available elsewhere. In addition to the many reviews quoted in his text, the book includes a

generous number of illustrations (many from his own collection) ranging from Hayes's baptismal, marriage, and death records to concert announcements and programs, a photo of a bronze statue of a race horse (a winner) named after the diva, and a final rather melancholy shot of the singer's poorly tended gravesite. These materials provide absorbing reading and, more important, may well provide a starting point for future work in this neglected area.

Joe K. Law

NOTES

1. See Gordon N. Ray, *Thackeray: The Age of Wisdom, 1847–1863* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958), pp. 133–35. A more detailed account appears in W. J. Lawrence, "A Forgotten Thackeray Episode," *Musical Quarterly* 4 (1918): 347–52.

2. Walsh gives the date of the premiere as 25 October 1847 (p. 320), but 25 November is the date given in Carlo Gatti, *Il Teatro alla Scala: Nella storia e nell'arte (1778–1963): Cronologia completa degli spettacoli e dei concerti*, ed. Giampiero Tintori (Milan: Ricordi, 1964), p. 47.

3. Jérôme Spycket, *Nadia Boulanger*, trans. M. M. Shriver (Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 1992), p. 10.

4. The URL of Fenice's Web site is

<http://www.teatrolafenice.it/>. See also Alfred Loewenberg, *Annals of Opera, 1597–1940*, 2d ed., rev. and corrected (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1970), p. 859. Although Walsh describes *Alberigo da Romano* as a fiasco, Loewenberg calls it the most successful of Malipiero's operas and lists two revivals in Venice, one at the Teatro Apollo (1869) and another at the Teatro Goldoni (1886). Fenice's Web site further indicates that two other operas by Malipiero were given their first performances in that theater—*Fernando Cortez* (1851) and *Linda d'Ispahan* (1874). Today Francesco Malipiero (1824–1887) is remembered principally as the grandfather of Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882–1973).

5. Gatti, *Il Teatro alla Scala*, p. 46.

Dialogues and Discoveries: James Levine: His Life and His Music

Robert C. Marsh

New York: Scribner, 1998
331 pages; \$27.50

"Monologues and Obfuscations" might be more like it. Robert C. Marsh has enjoyed the privilege of extensive access to, and conversation with, the increasingly reclusive James Levine, as documented herein. One might reasonably expect some illumination about one of the most predominant and cryptic musicians of our era. Alas, what we get is heavy on bulk but decidedly light of weight.

An immediate pall is cast, on page 11, when Marsh admits that Levine vetted the final text. Given the Cheshire Cat-like persona that Levine evinces in *Dialogues and Discoveries*, the reader has reason to fear that, given the opportunity, Levine blue-penciled anything remotely revelatory. At its best—when, for instance, Norman Mailer interviews Madonna or Ned Rorem goes one-on-one