

GHOSTS, WARNINGS, AND VOWS:
PERFORMANCE NOTES FOR ACT I, SCENE 2 OF *LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR*

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Lucia di Lammermoor premiered on September 26th, 1835 at the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples, Italy. The opera's libretto, written by Salvatore Cammarano, is based on a historical novel by Sir Walter Scott, *The Bride of Lammermoor*. The libretto was set to music by the Italian composer Gaetano Donizetti. Cammarano's libretto takes a large leap away from the original story by removing Lucia's parents all together and placing Enrico, her brother, in the place of both the parents. By way of this, as well as other changes, Cammarano provides an early insight into Lucia's destined madness. Lucia's unstable state can be seen the moment she steps on the stage in Act I, Scene 2.

At twilight, Lucia waits for her secret lover Edgardo to meet her in the garden just outside the Lammermoor Castle. They approach the old fountain, now in ruins, and Lucia shivers at the thought of the ghost she has seen haunting it. A member of the Ravenswood family, the family which Edgardo belongs to, stabbed his lover in jealousy; he left her for dead in the waters of the fountain. Lucia admits that she has seen the ghost of the woman before. Lucia yelps in terror and advises Lucia to stop seeing Edgardo. Lucia, so enraptured by her love of Edgardo, refuses to let him go. Alisa spots him coming and hides in order to keep a close eye on Lucia. Edgardo informs her that he is to set sail for France, but he wants to speak to Enrico first to offer a hand in peace and to ask for Lucia's hand in marriage. Lucia demands that their love be kept a secret. Edgardo, attempting one last time, pledges his love to Lucia and places a ring on her finger. The two exchange their vows before God and depart.

That previous night, Edgardo had been spotted by Normanno, the captain of the guard, as an intruder on the grounds of the Lammermoor Castle. Normanno sends out his men to find Edgardo on behalf of Enrico Ashton who is now lord of the Lammermoor Castle. The castle was the ancestral home of Edgardo, and while plotting to take it back, he falls in love with his

enemy's sister, Lucia. This intrusion confirms Enrico's and Normanno's suspicions that Lucia and Edgardo were secretly meeting and in love. Enrico is troubled with this news. His family's fortune is in danger, and the only thing that can save them is the arranged marriage between Lucia and Lord Arturo. Raimondo, the chaplain, as well as Lucia's tutor, urges Enrico to be patient; Lucia is still grieving the death of her mother.

Through an ear that is unfamiliar with the Italian language, the entire plot of *Lucia di Lammermoor* pays homage to its English predecessor *Romeo and Juliet*. If *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Romeo and Juliet* are stripped down to their skeletons, the two stories have a great amount in common with each other: 1) two houses at odds with each other, to the point of murder, 2) two members from each house fall in love and meet in secret, 3) the lovers are kept from each other, but they get married in secret without their families knowing, 4) the woman is later betrothed to another man, 5) upon realization that his true wife is dead, the man kills himself to be with his beloved. When the details are filled back in, the two stories are classics of their kind in their own rights. The heroine in *Lucia di Lammermoor* can no longer handle the stress that is placed upon her, and she erupts into murderous madness, while Juliet can handle the pressure of her family and nearly succeeds in escaping; what the two women have in common is a deep passion for their star-crossed lovers.

Donizetti's music for this scene provides a clear picture. The lush and thriving garden at the cusp of dawn is represented in the cadenza-like solo harp line that introduces the scene. The harp's graceful nature conveys an atmosphere that both the scene and its characters are only concerned with beauty and elegance of not only their castle, but of the love that will close the scene. This music continues up to Lucia's recollection of the ghost she saw in the water. It is almost as if the harp also represents the water that should be streaming from the fountain but is

only flowing through the memories of those who witness it. Lucia's retelling of her ghostly vision alters the mood of the music into a minor key. It's chromaticism and exoticism pry the listeners away from the haven that the harp founded and disposes them to a foreign realm. Edgardo's entrance is boosted by the full orchestra as if he is enlisting their full ranks for his journey to France and to give him strength to ask Enrico for peace and Lucia's hand. The texture of the music loosens its ropes and begins a more fluid motion. Strings slur up and down scales and arpeggios while woodwinds provide countermelodies for the vocalist. This sinuous orchestral texture is a cornerstone for the moment Edgardo and Lucia exchange their vows before God. While the couple rejoices, the full orchestra is at work with supporting the vocal lines with harmony and fast tremolo-like figures in the strings. As they depart, the jarring half-step trill like oscillation foreshadows the evil events to come later in their love story, but the brass and woodwinds try to hide the eeriness by playing joyful and uplifting chords. The oscillating ceases upon arrival at the final note of the act, and as the curtain closes, we are left with a false sense of satisfaction that everything will be ok.

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