

A Reappraisal of W Vincent Wallace (1812-1865) with new documentary information on his death

David Grant^[1]

There are two William Wallaces in British music: firstly the one under consideration here, usually however known as Vincent, who wrote the once-popular opera *Maritana* and five later operas including *Lurline* and *The Amber Witch*, in addition to much piano music and many songs and ballads: secondly the later Scottish composer and Royal Academy of Music professor, William Wallace (1860-1940), best known nowadays for his orchestral music. Some confusion between them is perhaps understandable, given that early biographical sources often referred to Vincent Wallace erroneously as a Scottish composer or as the son of a Scottish bandmaster. Wallace was of course Irish, born in Waterford; his father too was Irish (born Co. Mayo, 1789) and had a long career in the British army from 1804 to 1826, finishing as bandmaster of the 29th Regiment of Foot from 1823.

Wallace, by all accounts reserved and unassuming in his demeanour, was a multifaceted and highly colourful character. Berlioz describes him as 'a first class *eccentric* — as phlegmatic in appearance as certain Englishmen, at bottom as rash and violent like an American'. A great adventurer, Wallace traversed the globe by land and sea in the decade 1835-1845, before the age of screw steamships or of national railways. Having risen from humble origins, he developed his inborn talents largely by self-education to become a refined gentleman who spoke several languages and a greatly loved and much respected composer both in England and abroad. He was also fêted on his travels, both as a violin virtuoso of the first rank and as a highly accomplished pianist, and was a friend of many renowned musicians including Berlioz and Thalberg. Wallace's playing and his compositions were heard and appreciated in places as far afield as Sydney, Valparaiso, Vienna, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro and New York; however, only the first and by far the best known of his operas, *Maritana* (1845), was to keep his memory green. The operas in particular, and especially the fourth, *The Amber Witch* (1861), which he himself

regarded as his greatest work, are testimony not only to Wallace's considerable skill as a composer but to the extent of the loss suffered, due to his early death, by his adopted country England in its extended attempt to found a school of serious English opera during the mid-nineteenth century.^[2]

Maritana, described by Biddlecombe as 'one of the most exuberant English operas of the nineteenth century', had, in the words of critic J W Davison, 'one of the greatest triumphs ever witnessed on the stage of an English theatre', when it was premièred at Drury Lane under Alfred Bunn's management in November 1845. Nigel Burton, writing in *New Grove Opera*, while conceding that the libretto by Edward Fitzball now seems somewhat faded, praises the music's 'vigorous rhythms and bright elemental colours'. However, the justification of his assertion that it is Wallace's operatic masterpiece, despite the strong case he too makes for *The Amber Witch*, will have to await a long overdue reappraisal of Wallace's operatic oeuvre. *Maritana* was performed abroad in many locations to great acclaim; in particular, when conducted by Wallace himself at the Theater an der Wien in Vienna in January 1848, with the great bass-baritone Joseph Staudigl and, later, the celebrated Bohemian soprano Jenny Lutzer among the cast. Berlioz's friend in Vienna, Dr Alfred Julius Becher, had undertaken the translation of Fitzball's libretto into German for the production, a task which he accomplished with distinction.^[3]

Becher was in fact born in Manchester, of German parents, in 1803 and educated in Germany, where he was brought as a child. He travelled much in a very varied career, working first as a law advocate (in which he held a doctorate) and then as a newspaper editor in Germany. Becher was also a composer and held positions as a music professor, first at The Hague and then at the Royal Academy of Music in London. Moving to Vienna finally in 1841, he took up music criticism at the instigation of Mendelssohn, in addition to continuing his composing career. Berlioz says of him: "*Becher [is] a taciturn, introspective spirit, a dreamer, ...[who] is also an eminent writer, and his [music] criticisms are highly thought of by the Viennese press*". Politically however, Becher was a radical and was described by Wagner, himself a participant in the 1848 revolution in Dresden, as 'a passionate, highly cultivated man'.^[4]

In 1999 the autograph score of *Maritana*, long considered lost, was rediscovered by the present writer in the Austrian National Library (ONB), Vienna. The score was transferred there in the early 1900s from the archive of the Theater an der Wien, where it had lain since 1848. There is also a beautifully penned copyist's full score, containing Becher's lyrics, probably prepared for a projected post-1848 revival at the Vienna Hofoper (Staatsoper). The ONB also has a printed copy of Becher's libretto,

with the dramatic changes necessary to accommodate Wallace's alterations for the Viennese premiere. Both scores contain these extra movements written or modified for Vienna. Becher's high profile involvement in the 1848 revolution in the city precluded any further performances of *Maritana* there, and meant that Wallace would have been unwilling to return there even to retrieve his score. After the revolution Becher was court-martialled, found guilty of treason and executed by firing squad in the Stadtgraben in Vienna in November 1848. In the Paris Conservatoire there is a portrait of him sent in 1846 with a written dedication to Berlioz, under which the dedicatee later added the sad post-script: "*Shot down in Vienna by Windischgratz in ...1848. Poor Becher*". Nowadays, those who listen with a condescending hauteur to the martial air "Yes, let me like a soldier fall" (or in Becher's German: "Sterben möcht' ich auf dem Ehrenfeld"), from Act Two of *Maritana*, should perhaps bear in mind the oppressive times in which it was written and the revolutionary fervour with which it was first both performed and received.¹⁵

Maritana, as it left Wallace's pen, is a far more substantial work than the much reduced concert version published by Novello in 1914, by which the opera is now mostly, if at all, remembered. The Viennese version, more extensive even than the London original because of the new pieces written or revised for the production there, comprises twenty-eight numbers including the overture, and the author estimates that its three acts would, including dialogue, play for just under three hours in all. Also, Wallace's original orchestration, employing double woodwind, four horns, two trumpets and/or cornets à piston, three trombones and ophicleide, in addition to the usual strings and percussion, is much more lavish than the familiar version for small theatre orchestra by Emil Kreuz in the Novello edition. The following table shows the layout of the movements in the Viennese version of *Maritana*. The original London character names and locations have however been retained; they were changed, in Metternich's repressive Vienna, for political reasons :

<u>Number</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Title</u>
	Overture	
<u>Act I</u> <u>A Square in Madrid</u>		
1	Chorus	"Sing, pretty maiden, sing!" <i>segue</i>
2	Romanza	"It was a knight of princely mien" (Maritana)
3	Air with chorus	"'Tis the harp in the air" (Maritana, Chorus)
4	Chorus	The Angelus ("Angels that around us hover")
5	Duet	"Of fairy wand had I the power" (Maritana, Don José)
6	Air	"All the world over" (Don Caesar)
7	Ensemble, Chorus	"See, the culprit!" (Captain, Lazarillo, Dons Caesar & José)
8	Duet with chorus	"Pretty Gitana, tell us!" (Maritana, Don José, Chorus)
9	Finale	"Farewell my valiant captain!" (Principals, Chorus)

Act II

Scene 1 A Prison Fortress in Madrid

10	Arietta	"Alas! Those chimes" (Lazarillo)
11a	Duet	"Hither as I came" (Don Caesar, Lazarillo) <i>segue</i>
11b	Trio	"Turn on, old Time" (Lazarillo, Dons Caesar & José)
12	Cavatina	"Yes! Let me like a soldier fall" (Don Caesar)
13	Ballad	"In happy moments day by day" (Don José)
14	Quartet, Male Chorus	"Health to the lady!" (Don Caesar, Maritana, Lazarillo, Don José)

Scene 2 Montefiori Palace

15	Chorus	"Oh! What pleasure the soft guitar"
16	Waltz	(instrumental)
17	Cavatina	"Hear me, gentle Maritana" (The King of Spain)
18	Ballad	"There is a flower that bloometh" (Don Caesar)
19a	Quartet	"Let me from those starry eyes" <i>segue</i>
19b		"Ah! Confusion!" (Marchioness, Dons Caesar & José, Marquis)
20	Finale	"That voice, that voice" (Principals, Chorus)

Act III

Scene 1 Villa de Aranjuez (adjacent to the Royal Palace south of Madrid)

21	Intro & Recitative	"How dreary to my heart" <i>segue</i>
22a	Cavatina	"Scenes that are brightest" (Maritana)
22b	Duet	"Sainted Mother" (Maritana, Lazarillo)
23a	Air	"This heart by woe o'ertaken" (Don José) <i>segue</i>
23b	Cavatina	"No! my courage now regaining"
24	Duet	"I am King of Spain" (Don Caesar, The King)
25	Recitative & Duet	"A stranger here" <i>segue</i> "Oh! Maritana, wild wood-flow'r" (Maritana, Don Caesar)

Scene 2 The Gardens of the Royal Palace

26a	Chorus/Ensemble	"Dance in the dewy night" <i>segue</i>
26b	Quintet	"Oh! Let not dishonour" (Maritana, Lazarillo, Dons Caesar & José, The King)
27	Finale (Rondo)	"With rapture glowing" (Maritana, Chorus)

The main additions which Wallace made to the opera for Vienna occur in Act Three, viz. the new Gypsy Chorus (26a) and the following Quintet for all the principals (26b), a revision of the original penultimate Trio ("Remorse and dishonour"). Also, the duet for Maritana and Lazarillo (22b) was moved from its original position towards the end of the Act to near the beginning and is now placed immediately after "Scenes that are brightest". The Viennese première of *Maritana* took place on Saturday January 8th 1848. In a letter written the following week to his London friend, J W Davison, music critic of *The Times* and editor of *The Musical World*, Wallace enthusiastically reports as follows (both his capitalization and unusual punctuation have been retained; insertions in square brackets are by the present author) :^[6]

My dear Davison,

I have expressly delayed my letter to you until after the third performance of *Maritana*, you may judge for yourself what the success has been by the following:- the Overture was encored, but I would not play it a second time as the opera is already too long for a Vienna audience, 1st. act, Staudigl's duet with Mlle. Meyer encored [No.5], the Gypsy Chorus [No.8], applauded immensely for the first time, after the Finale the singers were call'd out, as also the unworthy Composer, - 2nd. act - the Trio "Turn on old time" encored [No.11b], also Staudigl's Ballad [No.13], every Number was applauded, after the Finale in which the Largo was received splendidly, I was call'd before the Curtain Twice, in the 3rd. act, the Duet between Lazarillo & Maritana [No.22b] was encored, and Staudigl nearly set the People Mad with his Grand Air [No.23a, segue 23b], every body says, that he never made such an effect before in Vienna; the new Chorus of Gypsies [sic] [No.26a], which I composed here was also repeated, at the end of the Opera all the artists and myself were call'd several times before the Curtain, so much for the third Performance - I have had much to contend with, the Prima Donna [Meyer] can neither sing or play, so that the part of Maritana was a complete nullity, in Fact, the Opera as it is play'd here, ought to be call'd "Don Jose"! for Staudigl's Part is at present the Principal one in the Piece, the Tenor sings very well, but he has not the most remote idea of acting, - Nothing could ever Tempt me to give another opera at this theatre, (the an[]der Wien) under the Present Management, the Imperial Theatre is the only one to look to, and I shall write an opera express[ly] for it, to be produced next season. All the artists of the Imperial Theatre are delighted with "Maritana", and I expect it will be Produced there, Immediately in the meantime Jenny Lutzer will study the Part, as the Public, is desirous of hearing her in it, this is [a] good thing for the Opera, as she is at present engaged at the an der Wien, Some of the Papers here have commenced a crusade against English art and artists, first Hatton, then Balfe, who is most unmercifully torn, my turn comes next. I am accused of not being of the English school, they say, I am one moment German, another, Italian, any thing but English, now! as I am at a loss when I am spoken to about an English Operatic School, never having heard of such a thing, It puts me much in mind of the Fable of the wolf and the lamb drinking at the stream, † for my part, I think that Music is an art that knows no locality but Heaven, whether one receives its inspirations through an Italian or a German Medium, I can but think that if the melody is good, the accompaniment correct, and the Dramatic sentiment in accordance with the exigency of the Scene, that one has attained the end desired, viz. to write a good opera - nothing can be more evident, than that a veritable Panic has taken hold of the Vienna Composers, the dread of a French Invasion in England is not half so great as that which they feel, knowing that Macfarren, Loder & Sterndale Bennet[t] may yet come over and complete the havoc which Balfe has begun. - There is not any one here that can approach Sterndale Bennet[t] as a pianist & composer for his Instrumen't. Nobody can write a symphony

† The wolf, unable to find an excuse to eat the lamb, devoured it anyway! Æsop's Fables

like Macfarren[']s C# minor, and as to operas, I have been Present at the Production of three new Compositions, and only one of them had even a compa-[ra]tive success, the public of Vienna, is perhaps the most Musical in Europe, and while that Public comes in crowds to witness my Opera, I care very [little] what a few envious Professors may say through the Medium of [a] Journal. I shall send you the Papers that most praise the Opera, also the Journal which has spoken most severely against it. Many of the first artists have written to me to say how pleased they were, all these I shall have much pleasure in showing you on my return, in about Twelve Days I hope to have the Pleasure of seeing you, with best regards to Desmond Ryan, Rosenberg[,] dear White, and all friends.

*Believe me
ever yours*

W. V. Wallace"

While in Vienna, Wallace was also engaged in writing his third opera, *Lurline*, to a libretto by Fitzball based on the Lorelei legend, and intended for the next season at Covent Garden. It has often been suggested that *Lurline* was commissioned for the Paris Opéra, but no evidence to support this opinion has ever been adduced. It now appears, in the light of the comments in his letter, and given the suitability of its libretto, that Wallace was considering *Lurline*, when produced at the Imperial Theatre, Vienna, as the ideal work and venue to capitalize on his earlier success in that city with *Maritana*. Moreover, back in Autumn 1847, hearing of financial difficulties in both the Covent Garden and Drury Lane theatres, Wallace had been obliged to return to London post haste from Vienna to ascertain the likely fate of his new opera. The prospects were not good, apparently; writing to his young son Willy in London on his eventual return to Vienna at the end of 1847 (the letter is undated as to month) Wallace says :

"..... I am obliged to be most careful with regard to Money affairs, the House of Cramer & Beale being at present in great difficulty, owing to the failure of Covent Garden Theatre, Mr. Beale being obliged to retire from the establishment and Mr. Bunn having given up Drury Lane renders it probable that my Opera [Lurline] may not be Performed this year, this Change much affects my Interests, I was obliged to go to London to make new arrangements, and obliged to travel Day and Night, without ceasing, which has much injured my health, to enable me to get back to Vienna in time for the rehearsals of Maritana....."

For Wallace, the adverse situation in London must have made his plans for the production of *Lurline* in Vienna during the following season even more imperative.^[7]

However, as his first quoted letter above indicates, Wallace's success with *Maritana* in Vienna had not come without considerable opposition

too. His triumph had followed recent productions of operas by other British composers in the city; for example, J L Hatton's romantic opera *Pasqual Bruno* had appeared in 1844, featuring Staudigl in the name part, and was followed by a production of Balfe's *The Bohemian Girl* (in a translation by Staudigl titled *Die Zigeunerin*) in 1846. In relation to the 1848 production of *Maritana*, Vienna's principal music journal, the *Allgemeine Wiener Musik-Zeitung*, the paper for which Becher wrote, in an unsigned review in the issue of January 11th 1848, uses up quite a few column inches decrying Fitzball's libretto and asking why Becher should have bothered to translate it at all. The article then goes on to attack the music, criticisms which, as we have seen, Wallace addresses in his letter to Davison. In addition, the adverse reaction also of the German composer Albert Lortzing (1801-1851) * (who was then music director at the Theater an der Wien with the young Franz von Suppé as his assistant) was all, in Wallace's view, an inverted compliment to the current strengths of British music. With the recent passing of Mendelssohn, the German-Austrian musical tradition had just suffered a major blow to its long held dominance of the European musical scene, and the later towering figures of Wagner, Bruckner and Brahms had yet to make their mark.

Wallace and Becher's German revision of *Maritana* was brought out in vocal score by the prestigious Viennese publishing house of Diabelli & Co., in a sumptuous edition which is eloquent testimony to the high regard in which both men were held in Vienna and on the Continent generally. Following its Viennese première, the German version of *Maritana* was performed also in Hamburg in 1849 and in Prague in 1851, but was not taken up subsequently either in Britain or in other English-speaking countries. Therefore, the new critical edition of the opera, currently in preparation from the original sources by the present writer, and containing the composer's last thoughts on the work, will allow a long-overdue reappraisal both of *Maritana* itself and of its final revision for Vienna, the latter not heard now for over 150 years.^[8]

The eventual collapse of both Bunn's and Beale's theatrical enterprises in 1848 meant that, as expected, Wallace had to abandon plans to produce *Lurline* in London. As the Vienna option too was now closed to him, he had no choice but to put the work aside for more favourable times. The flamboyant impresario Louis Jullien took over from Bunn at Drury Lane and brought Berlioz with him from Paris as his musical director. Wallace and Berlioz met up some time during the winter of 1847-48 in London (most likely either in November 1847 or in early 1848), and Klein has given details of their ongoing friendship, which lasted for the rest of Wallace's life.

* "the bread snatched from his mouth in the very city he had hoped to transform into his chief stronghold" - as quoted in John W Klein: *Berlioz and Vincent Wallace*, op cit, pp.139-140.

Wallace apparently was often in indifferent health at this time and in 1849 was struck down by a recurrence of ophthalmia, a condition which had first afflicted him in 1847 during the run of his second opera, *Matilda*, and which threatened blindness. Wallace had apparently started work on a new short two-act opera commissioned by Frederick Beale and in February 1849 was in Paris. There he was visited by a much harassed Berlioz, then at work intermittently on his *Te Deum*, and with his own difficulties over his wife Harriet's decline to contend with. In a letter from Paris to his sister, Nancy, Berlioz writes :

"I've never had so many things to do, so many demands on my time, and with this sad preoccupation I have hardly any to spare. I've also had to deal with one of my London friends (Wallace) who had no sooner arrived in Paris than he was struck down with ophthalmia, which is keeping him in his room in total darkness. I'm sorry for the poor young man, and go to keep him company when I can. All the time there are musical events which I have to attend, then my articles to write and I can't do any work on my Te Deum."

Berlioz kindly arranged for Wallace to have medical treatment for his eye condition. Unable to compose and having to earn a living somehow, Wallace during 1849 took up an offer from a touring opera company to travel with them to Brazil and eventually ended up in New York, where, as Berlioz remarked, 'on the pretext that he is making thousands of dollars out of drawing room compositions that the Americans are crazy about, he forgets his friends ... and ... is satisfied to live a dull life among people who are sunk in the deepest civilization.'^[9]

Maritana was produced in New York in October 1854 by the Pyne and Harrison Opera Company, once again conducted by Wallace himself, and another performance took place the following month. Myers states that these were Wallace's last concert appearances in the USA. *Maritana* had been premièred in the United States by the Seguin Opera Company, first in Philadelphia in 1846 and then in New York in 1848, and the opera retained its popularity there for many years. At this period, however, opportunities for English opera performance in London remained scarce. Covent Garden Theatre burned down in 1856 and did not reopen until 1858, after which Pyne and Harrison commenced there the most determined effort in mid-Victorian times to establish an English opera company in the capital. This new resurgence in the fortunes of English opera finally enabled Wallace, having returned to London from his sojourn in New York, to put the finishing touches to *Lurline*, and it was produced at Covent Garden in February 1860. The grand opera, *Lurline*, which scored as great a success as *Maritana*, though a less enduring one, is undoubtedly Wallace's most lyrical and Romantic score and, apart from *The Amber Witch*, his most lavish, showing the influence of both Weber and Mendelssohn, as opposed to the largely Italian influences evident in *Maritana*.^[10]

Lurline, though not completed until 1859, was largely a product of 1847, and in the intervening period the development of Wallace's musical language, nurtured by his long study of the scores of Meyerbeer, Halévy and perhaps early Wagner also, meant that the style of his next opera, *The Amber Witch* of 1861, with its heavy orchestration and chromatic harmonies, was a long way from the early-Romantic world of *Lurline*. When we realize that no complete Wagner opera was produced in London until 1870, it is not surprising perhaps that *The Amber Witch* had no more than a critical success at Her Majesty's Theatre, despite the advocacy of the most distinguished singers of the day (including Lemmens-Sherrington, Sims Reeves and Charles Santley) and conductor Charles Hallé. Gerald Abraham claims that, in these circumstances, 'the legend that British opera has failed because it has never been given a chance is merely — a legend.' What, may one ask, of the many now established works, including Bizet's *Carmen*, which made little impression at their first performances? Contrariwise, Nigel Burton in *New Grove Opera* points out that: "*Wallace's style reached its full maturity in The Amber Witch... the musical palette is as colourful as ever, but more refined, and one has only to compare the powerful symphonic overture [recte Introduction] with the pot-pourri of Maritana to see how far Wallace [had] developed.*" The failure of *The Amber Witch*, however, undoubtedly put paid at least to Wallace's more grandiose operatic ambitions.^[11]

By now Wallace had a second partner and a young family to support, as well as allowances to pay to his estranged wife, Isabella, and to his eldest son, Willy, and with the ongoing success of the Pyne and Harrison enterprise at Covent Garden he wrote two further lighter operas for them in his later years, despite rapidly failing health. These were the French-style *Love's Triumph* (1862) and the colourful *The Desert Flower* (1863), based on the plot of Halévy's *Jaguarita l'indienne* (1855) and set in exotic Dutch Guyana. The libretto of *Love's Triumph* by the veteran J R Planché, who had written the book of *Oberon* for Weber (1826), seems, at least on a read-through, one of the better and more literary of its kind. The critics, however, were unanimous in declaring the libretto of *The Desert Flower* (the adaptation was by A Harris and T J Williams) to be far beneath Wallace's considerable talents as a composer. Wallace's operatic career had in fact come full circle, for this lighter *Maritana*-like work was to be his last completed opera. He started on yet another (*Estrella* or *Estrellita* — to a book by Henry Farnie) in 1864 but, suffering from heart trouble, was unable to complete it.

Wallace went to Paris in 1864 for a heart operation and spent a lengthy convalescence of some eighteen months there. He was cared for all this time by his devoted second partner, Hélène Stoepel (born c1827, probably in Berlin; died New York, 1885), who was apparently of mixed

French-German extraction and with whom Wallace had lived since his sojourn in New York in the 1850s. Finally, in early to mid-September of 1865, Héléne moved him to the South of France, to the château of her sister, the Baroness de Saintegême, in the Haute Garonne, where he died shortly afterwards.^[12]

There has been much confusion over the years concerning the name and location of this château in the foothills of the Pyrénées, where Wallace died in October 1865. All the early sources in fact have its correct name and general location but not its precise address. The Wallace entries in most current music and biographical dictionaries, however, have incorrect information, which comes from W H Grattan Flood's *William Vincent Wallace, A Memoir* (1912), published in Wallace's native city of Waterford in the centenary year of the composer's birth. I am pleased to report definitively details of the name and location of the château in question: Wallace in fact died at the Château de Bagen, Sauveterre de Comminges, near Barbazan, Haute Garonne, France.



Château de Bagen
Reproduced by courtesy of Mr & Mrs H & S Persyn

The château was at the time the residence of the Baron and Baroness de Saintegême, and Hélène, together with their two sons, Clarence S and Vincent, had accompanied the ailing composer there in the hope that he might recover his health. It was not to be, however, and Wallace, after a stay of less than a month at the château, passed away on Thursday October 12th 1865, at five o'clock in the evening.

The following day, the death was duly registered at the Mairie of Sauveterre, the local town hall, and signed by, among others, the Baron de Saintegême, who was also mayor of the locality. I am grateful to the present owners of the Château de Bagen, Mr and Mrs H and S Persyn, for supplying a copy of Wallace's death certificate (Acte de décès), which is here published for the first time :

N^o 43.
 Décès
 de
 M^r Wallace
 M^r William Vincent
 (Londres)

Plan mil huit cent soixante cinq de l'Ezige Octob. à midi
 - En devant nous Fedeu the Jean Jacques, adjoint au maire
 délégué par Monsieur le Maires Cellier et étant l'empêché, officier
 de l'état civil de la Commune de Sauveterre, Secours nommé
 M^r William Vincent de Saint-Gaudens, Département de la Haute-Garonne.

Ont comparu Monsieur le Baron de Saintegême
 (Henri-François-Gabriel, et noble) âgé de quarante sept
 ans, propriétaire résident et Maire, demurant au dit Sauveterre
 parent par alliance avec le Defunt, et Monsieur Dougué
 Jean-Bertrand, âgé de 31 ans, un an instituteur public
 demurant au dit Sauveterre, ami de la famille du Defunt.

Lesquels ont déclaré que
 Monsieur William-Vincent Wallace, époux de Marie
 Hélène Stœpel, âgé de cinquante ans, natif de
 Waterford (Irlande), profession de Grand-Compositeur
 Lyrique (Noëtte) demurant à Londres, fils de
 Monsieur William Wallace, et de Madame Wallace,
 veuve et décédée,

Est décédé le jour d'aujourd'hui douze Octobre courant, à cinq heures
 du soir, dans le Château de Bagen, appartenant au dit Monsieur le

Baron de Saintegême et sis à Bagen en Sauveterre
 Après nous être assuré du décès, nous en avons dressé le
 présent acte que les Héritiers ont signé avec nous après que
 lecture en a été faite.

M^r de Saintegême Dougué
 et moi

Death Certificate (Acte de décès) of W Vincent Wallace, October 1865
 La Mairie de Sauveterre de Comminges

"No.43 Death [Certificate] of Mr. Wallace, William-Vincent (London)

Embalmed and brought to London

The year one thousand eight hundred and sixty-five and the thirteenth of October at midday,

— In the presence of Fadeuilhe Jean-Jaques, deputy Mayor, delegated by the Mayor, the latter being unable, registrar of the Commune of Sauveterre, Arrondissement of Saint-Gaudens, Département of the Haute-Garonne.

— [There] appeared the Baron de Saintegême (Henri-François-Gabriel-Anatole) aged forty-seven years, landowner of private means and Mayor, residing in the said Sauveterre, related by marriage to the deceased, and Monsieur Bouigue, Jean-Bertrand, aged fifty-one, state school teacher, resident in the said Sauveterre, a friend of the family of the deceased,

— The aforementioned have declared that —
Mr William-Vincent Wallace, spouse of Madame Hélène Stoepel, aged fifty years, native of Waterford (Ireland), by profession a Great Lyric Composer (Maestro), resident in London, son of Mr William Wallace and of Mrs Wallace, of private means and deceased,

— Died yesterday, the twelfth of October inst., at five o'clock in the evening, in the Château de Bagen, belonging to the said Monsieur the Baron de Saintegême, and situated in Bagen in Sauveterre.

We, having confirmed the death, drew up the present Certificate which the informants signed with us after it had been read.

[Signed]

Baron de Saintegême Bouigue &c. Fadeuilhe &c ^[13]

Wallace's embalmed remains were brought back to London, and on a day of suitably dismal weather, Monday October 23rd, a cortège set out from 76 Harley Street, the home of his first son Willy and also, fittingly, the address where both Jullien and Berlioz had lodged while in London in 1848, to his final resting place at Kensal Green Cemetery. Many of the great musical names of the country attended, among whom were Sterndale Bennett, George Macfarren, Julius Benedict, Henry Smart and the young Arthur Sullivan. It was the latter — like Wallace, the son of a military bandmaster of Irish descent — who with his collaborator, W S Gilbert, would reap the benefit in the Savoy operettas of the earlier pioneering efforts of Wallace and his contemporaries to convince English audiences of the merits of a distinctive native opera in the vernacular. However, the hopes of serious English opera in the mid-nineteenth century had indeed died with Wallace, despite the best efforts over the previous thirty years of native composers like Barnett, Loder and Macfarren, as well as the non-natives Balfe, Benedict and Wallace, to further the cause. Arthur Pougin, the French music writer, perceptively said as much in the first biography of Wallace published the year after the composer's death.^[14]

Both the reason for, and the history of, the confusion concerning the name and location of the château where Wallace died are worth recounting. The composer died intestate, and in December 1865 Letters

of Administration of his estate were issued at the Principal Registry in London to his eldest son and namesake, known in the family as 'Willy'. Incidentally, Wallace's wife, Isabella (née Kelly), the mother of Willy, survived him by many years and was at this time resident in Dublin. However, since she and the composer had been separated for most of the previous thirty years, it is hardly surprising that she renounced the administration of his estate.

WV

ON the *2nd* day of *December* 1865,

Letters of Administration of all and singular the personal Estate and Effects

of *William Vincent Wallace*

formerly of *Suffolk Villa South Norwood*

in the County of *Surrey*,

but late of *Paris* in the

Empire of *France*, Musical Composer

who died on the *12th* day of *October* 1865, deceased,
at *Chateau Bagen* *Byronnes* in the Empire of *France*

intestate,

were granted at the Principal Registry of Her Majesty's Court of Probate

to *William Vincent Wallace* of *No. 76*

Harley Street Cavendish Square in the

County of *Middlesex* Artist the Natural

and lawful Son and only next of kin

of the

said deceased, he having been first sworn duly to administer

Isabella Wallace the lawful Widow and Relict

and next of Kin of the said deceased, having renounced survived

the said deceased, but died without having taken upon the Letters

of Administration of *his* personal Estate and Effects.

Effects under £ 800 *JB*

W Vincent Wallace, Letters of Administration of his estate
The Principal Probate Registry, London

In this document, which up to now was the primary source for the château's name, it is given correctly as Château de Bagen, although no precise address or location is supplied. Pougin in his biography also has the correct name and furthermore supplies the general location (the Haute Garonne). He also states that the château belonged to one of Wallace's friends but gives no name for its owner. That information was supplied by Micheál Cavanagh, who in his monograph *Waterford Celebrities* states that the Château de Bagau [sic] belonged to the Marquise de Sante Geme [sic], the sister-in-law of Wallace. The family name Saintegème proved to be a key piece of information in allowing the present writer to locate the correct château.^[15]

In 1912 W H Grattan Flood, best known for his *History of Irish Music* and about to complete his centennial *Memoir* of Wallace, approached the French musicologist, M Michel Brenet (the pseudonym of Marie Bobillier) in a laudable attempt both to verify the château's name (which had probably at this stage suffered some corruption when printed in various sources) and to find its precise location. Brenet, having failed to locate any château called Bagen, opted instead for a Château de Haget, adjacent to the hamlet of Vieuzos, north of Lannemezan in the Hautes-Pyrénées. From the information supplied in the *Memoir* it seems that Brenet's only justification for choosing this place was her questionable assumption that the name 'Bagen' was in fact a corruption of 'Haget'. It appears that no attempt was made to verify whether this was in fact the château where Wallace had died, and Flood, for his part, seems to have accepted Brenet's conclusion without seeking any corroborative evidence either. Brenet's work, it must be said, has generally a high reputation for accuracy, and she was among the first researchers to adopt a scientific approach to musicology. However, even Homer sometimes nods!^[16]

Thereafter, for the greater part of the last century Brenet's incorrect conclusions have largely, via Flood's *Memoir*, been accepted without question. The early editions of *Grove*, adhering presumably to the information in the Letters of Administration, give the château name correctly but with no address. In the later editions, however, Brenet's version of the address was generally adopted; an exception occurs in *Grove* 5th Edition, where the contributor, Perceval Graves, adds in a footnote a reminder that the name appears as 'Château de Bagen' in the Letters of Administration. In all subsequent editions of *Grove*, however, including the present one, the incorrect château name and address still appear.^[17]

At the time of his death and for half a century afterwards, Wallace was regarded as being among the most significant composers of English opera of the recent past. This opinion seems to have been widely held, not just in Britain but also in America. For example, Brown's *Biographical*

Dictionary of Musicians (1886) says of Wallace and his works :

"One of the most successful British composers, and with Balfe the only one of the British school whose works keep the stage. Maritana is no doubt the most popular opera we have, and is also one of the best, excepting the same composer's Lurline, which is of very high merit. The musical merits of Wallace's works are in general much higher than are common to those of Balfe, and there can be no doubt that his works unite a greater degree of richness and fine melody than any other English writer. His Pianoforte music is refined and graceful."

Writing from New York in 1914 at the time of Wallace's supposed centenary, Francesco Berger, a pianist who had met the composer in the United States, paid a similar tribute to Wallace the ardent melodist :

"As long as there are people who demand that music shall be melodious, so long will Wallace hold a corner in their affection and their esteem."^[18]

It is not surprising therefore that *Maritana* held the stage in Britain until the 1930s. However, from 1873 it was mostly performed by the Carl Rosa Opera Company and from 1897 also by the rival Moody Manners touring opera company. In the period 1900-1930 *Maritana* found a home at the Old Vic and was, along with Balfe's *The Bohemian Girl* and Benedict's *Lily of Killarney*, regularly performed there by Lillian Baylis's company. However, the performance history of this trio of works in the twentieth century has been lacklustre to say the least. Beecham's recollections from the start of his operatic conducting career in 1902 give a good indication of what contemporary productions of these operas were like :

"I enjoyed myself hugely, conducting in addition to Carmen and Pagliacci that trilogy of popular Saturday-nighters dubbed facetiously 'The English Ring'....But all the fun and excitement I extracted from the experience could not blind my soberer perceptions to the truth that if there was one especial way in which opera should not be given, then here it was in all its rounded perfectionof attempt at production there was none, and both scenery and dresses were atrocious.... I could not help comparing the wretched conditions under which great works of art were being presented to the public with the care, preparation and even luxury bestowed upon any of the half-dozen musical comedies or farces then running in the West End."

Despite this decline in fortune, Professor Edward J Dent, writing in *The Musical Companion* (1934), had this to say about these by then somewhat faded and much-embattled mid-Victorian operas :

"To English audiences they are out of the reach of analysis or criticism, and if we ever came to possess a state-supported national opera house, they would certainly have to be permanent items of the nation's classic repertory."^[19]

While these operas have not for a long time been part of the regular repertoire, it is I think high time that the historical links binding them were broken and that, in the context of any possible revival, each work should now be allowed to stand or fall on its own merits. This is particularly relevant at the present time, since the next decade will witness the bicentenaries of the births of their respective composers (Benedict in 2004, Balfe in 2008, and finally Wallace in 2012). The difficulty of course in recent times (as Richard Bonyngue discovered when he undertook a new recording of *The Bohemian Girl* in 1990) is that there were no new editions of these operas available with which any reappraisal, either in study or performance, might take place. However, such a reassessment is worthy of consideration for several reasons. Firstly, these operas, along with many other worthy English operas of the period 1834-1864 enumerated in Biddlecombe's book, are, whether we like to admit it or not, an inseparable part of British musical history. Secondly and more significantly perhaps, they were what the early Victorian mostly middle class public, who frequented Drury Lane and other London theatres, flocked to hear. Furthermore, the Old Vic company which, in its reincarnation at Sadler's Wells from 1931, brought about the modern renaissance of English opera with the première of Britten's *Peter Grimes* in June 1945, would probably not have survived financially in the earlier period of 1900-1930 without frequent recourse to the crowd-pulling power of these old favourites. In that regard Edward J Dent, writing in the *Pelican Opera* (1940) asks :

"What would those old operas be like if they were subjected to a scholarly revision from the original manuscripts and earliest editions, and then rehearsed with as much 'loving reverence' as we are all supposed to put into Mozart and Beethoven? I wonder if the audiences would enjoy them as much as they did in the bad old days?" ⁽²⁰⁾

Now, the first of Dent's linked questions can at long last be addressed, at least with respect to Wallace's *Maritana*. The time has finally come too, surely, to stop judging these mid-nineteenth century English operas by the standards of more seamless late-nineteenth century continental operas, particularly when we bear in mind the often adverse and even precarious conditions under which the earlier works were written. They are of course products of their time and place, with all the uncertainty, experimentation and, yes, borrowing of a developing musical language. Interestingly, when Stravinsky came to write *The Rake's Progress* (1951), he chose to bypass later developments in opera and to go back to the earlier 'opera by numbers' style and to conventions which he says 'were adjudged by all respectable (i.e. progressive) circles to be long since dead'. Posing the question as to whether a composer can re-use the past but still move forward, Stravinsky asks the listener 'to suspend the question ... and ... to try and discover the opera's own qualities'. There is no reason why the modern listener or opera producer cannot do likewise

with the English operas in question, for they too have their own strengths, not least a homespun quality in their melodies which is very endearing. As Michael Hurd writes :

"The great strengths of the finest English romantic operas are to be found in their unfailing tunefulness and unabashed vitalityunder better conditions the British composer(s) of the mid-nineteenth century might have produced work of genuine distinction. Even as it is, what they wrote deserves to be remembered in its own right, and not merely as a source of parody or an object of nostalgia. If the operas of certain minor continental masters are thought worthy of the occasional serious revival, there is no reason why their English counterparts should not be honoured to the same degree."^[21]

As further musicological research into the early Victorian period continues, the foundations of the British musical renaissance are being discovered as having been laid down up to fifty years before the once generally accepted date of 1880, and over a century before that historic première of *Peter Grimes* in 1945. Furthermore, Wallace's *Maritana* and several of Balfe's operas were performed abroad extensively in the mid-nineteenth century, and these composers received as much recognition at that time as the majority of their foreign contemporaries. In conclusion, when Pyne and Harrison's laudable enterprise of the Royal English Opera was coming to an end in March 1864, just as Wallace's life was beginning to ebb away and he finally left these shores, they made the following valedictory remarks, which now serve equally well as a fitting tribute to the heroic efforts of Vincent Wallace and his fellow composers working in the field of early to mid-Victorian English opera :

"Whatever the result to our own fortunes, we feel, at any rate, that we have made an honest effort to advance the art which is to us a labour of love, and that in the face of much discouragement, we have persevered to the end..."^[22]

Notes

- [1] Dr David Grant is currently a part-time research student of the Music Department, The Open University, Milton Keynes. He lives in Wallace's native city of Waterford and is researching aspects of the composer's life and works. His email address is: <davegrant@eircom.net>
- [2] Hector Berlioz: *Evenings with the Orchestra*, translated by Jacques Barzun [Chicago, 1956; reprinted Phoenix Edition, 1973] pp.366-367
- [3] George Biddlecombe: *English Opera from 1834-1864 with particular reference to the works of Michael Balfe* [New York, 1994] p.139;
J W Davison quoted in John W Klein: 'Vincent Wallace, A Reassessment' in *Opera*, XVI [1965], pp.709-716 (709);
s.v. 'Wallace, W Vincent', article by Nigel Burton in *New Grove Opera*, ed. Stanley Sadie [1994], IV, p.1095;
John W Klein: 'Berlioz and Vincent Wallace' in *Music Review*, XXX/2 [1969], pp.138-144 (139)
- [4] s.v. 'Becher, Alfred Julius', article by John Warrack in *New Grove II*, ed. Stanley Sadie [2001], III, p.37;
Hector Berlioz: *Memoirs*, translated by David Cairns [2nd edn, London, 1977] pp.380-381
- [5] *Maritana* sources in the Musiksammlung of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna :
(a) autograph full score: shelfmark Mus.Hs. 25.788 (4 volumes);
(b) Viennese copyist's full score: shelfmark OA 170 (3 volumes);
(c) libretto, frei übersetzt von Dr A J Becher, printed copy (Als Manuscript gedruckt): shelfmark 685.226 - B.M.TB.
- [6] Wallace's letter [January] 14th 1848 to J W Davison is in the British Library Music Collections, Add.70924, fols.169-172.
- [7] Biddlecombe, p.140; Wallace's letter to his son Willy is reproduced in Kathleen Hellyar Myers: *William Vincent Wallace: Life and Works*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, 1980 (4 volumes), pp.587-588.
- [8] Eric Walter White: *A History of English Opera* [London, 1983] pp.335-336 (Hatton), p.282 (Balfe);
Allgemeine Wiener Musik Zeitung, January 11th 1848, pp.1-2;
Maritana, Oper in 3 Akten, Vollständiger Clavierauszug, Diabelli et Comp. [Vienna n.d. (c1848)], British Library Music Collections: shelfmark H220h;
Alfred Loewenberg: *Annals of Opera (1597-1940)* [3rd edn, London, 1978] col.852
- [9] John W Klein: *Berlioz & Vincent Wallace* (op.cit.);
Selected Letters of Berlioz, ed. Hugh McDonald, translated by Roger Nichols [London, 1995] p.257;
Berlioz: *Evenings with the Orchestra*, pp.375-376
- [10] George Odell: *Annals of the New York Stage*, 15 volumes [New York, 1931], V, p.351; also VI, p.344; quoted in Myers, pp.99 and 139 respectively
- [11] For details of *Lurline* and *The Amber Witch* see Biddlecombe, pp.133-141;
Gerald Abraham: *A Hundred Years of Music* [3rd edn, London, 1964], pp.134-135
- [12] See G A Osborne: 'Mr Vincent Wallace' in *The Orchestra*, August 26th 1865, p.349
- [13] Wallace's death certificate has only his approximate age. He was actually 53 years and seven months at the time of his death, based on his birth date of March 11th 1812, as given by W H Grattan Flood in *William Vincent Wallace: A Memoir* [Waterford, 1912], p.7.
- [14] For details of Wallace's funeral see *The Orchestra*, October 28th 1865, pp.76-77; Wallace lies next to his compatriot Balfe in the main Anglican cemetery, near the south-west quadrant of the Circle, his grave marked by a now much weathered slab of Carrara marble;
Arthur Pougin: *William-Vincent Wallace: Etude Biographique et Critique* [Paris, 1866] p.38
- [15] Administration of the estate of W V Wallace, dated December 6th 1865, The Principal Probate Registry, London;
Pougin, p.22; Micheál Cavanagh: *Waterford Celebrities* [Dublin, c1900] pp.39-41
- [16] Flood: *Memoir*, pp.29-30;
s.v. 'Archives and Music', article by François Lesure and others in *New Grove II*, I, pp.857-860 (859);

- Pauline Alderman: 'Four Generations of Women in Musicology' in *Journal of the International Congress on Women in Music*, June 1985, pp.1-13
- [17] s.v. 'Wallace, (William) Vincent', article by Perceval Graves in *Grove*, 5th edn, ed. Eric Blom [1954], IX, pp.145-147
- [18] s.v. 'Wallace, William Vincent' in *Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, James Duff Brown [London, 1886], reprinted Georg Olms [1970], p.606;
 Francesco Berger: 'Retrospects II' in *Monthly Musical Record*, December 1st 1914, pp.331-2, quoted in Myers, p.197
- [19] Edward J Dent: *Opera* [Pelican Books, 1940] p.183;
 Thomas Beecham: *A Mingled Chime* [1944], quoted in *The Faber Book of Opera*, ed. Tom Sutcliffe [London, 2000], pp.342-357 (344);
 Edward J Dent in *The Musical Companion*, ed. A L Bacharach [London, 1934], pp.359-360
- [20] Andrew Cornall, booklet, Argo recording of *The Bohemian Girl* [1991], pp.19-20;
 Biddlecombe, pp.331-337; E J Dent: *Opera*, p.184
- [21] Igor Stravinsky, CBS complete recorded edition notes, quoted in *The Faber Book of Opera*, pp.238-241 (239);
 Michael Hurd: 'Opera: 1834-65' in *Music in Britain: The Romantic Age 1800-1914*, ed. Nicholas Temperley [London, 1981], pp.307-329 (329)
- [22] Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling: *The English Musical Renaissance: 1840-1940* [2nd edn, Manchester, 2001] p.219 and Chapter 1;
 Pyne and Harrison's printed farewell address of March 1864 was published in *The Musical World*, April 2nd 1864, and is reproduced in Myers, p.591.
- [23] The author wishes both to thank and to acknowledge the considerable help of the following in his researches on Wallace :

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