

Bjarne Jørnæs; The Danish Prometheus
Recovery of a Song by Donizetti

As a young man, Thorvaldsen plied his musical interests among a closed circle of friends, but later in adult life he became a listener, especially to the operas of contemporary Italian composers.

For many years his exact date of birth was unknown, and the anniversary of his arrival in Rome, 8 March, 1797 – his so-called

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Roman birthday – was celebrated instead. At such times music was frequently performed, and in 1836 a piece was written especially for the occasion by Gaetano Donizetti.

The composer stayed in Rome for a few days at the beginning of March, 1836, on his way from Venice, where he had attended the first night of his opera *Belisario*, via Milan to Naples, where he was to start work on the operas *Il Campanello* and *Betty* for the Teatro Nuovo. When the song was performed in honour of Thorvaldsen at the home of the Danish Puggaard family, who were staying in Rome at that time, Donizetti was in Naples.

As Mr. Alexander Weatherson, Chairman of the Donizetti Society, writes in a letter, the music is in Donizetti's "ceremonial style." It accompanies a text, presumably intended for choral singing, by a certain "Cavaliere Barberi", who we may assume as being identical with the author Gaetano Barbieri.