The musical and literary texts of many of Donizetti’s operas, as they have come down to us, pose numerous problems. These are due in part to the inevitable accumulation of layers of changes made by generation after generation of interpreters, whose tastes were ever further from the musical and dramatic aesthetics of Donizetti’s times. Changes, often made with the best of intentions, were motivated in some cases by the urge to modernize the orchestration, the phrasing or even the structure of some pieces; in other cases by the demands of local censorship or by the need to shorten the works or otherwise alter the structure for pragmatic reasons. Sometimes interpolations of extraneous material were made to accommodate the wishes of performers.

In this climate, and in the background of an ever-burgeoning “Donizetti Renaissance” in which almost all of the composer’s nearly seventy operas have been revived in the last forty years, a critical edition was badly needed. For these reasons Casa Ricordi, with the collaboration and contribution of the Comune di Bergamo, began the Donizetti Critical Edition in 1988.

The current project does not aim toward the publication of the complete operas, but rather seeks to offer a wide variety and complexity of Donizetti’s works for the theatre. Operas still in the repertory are of course included, but the series also publishes a selection of lesser-known titles that, for historical or musical reasons, are particularly significant for a better understanding of Donizetti’s career and the historical context in which he worked. As the Donizetti critical edition nears its first quarter-century of activity, many of its scores have become the de facto standard for performance.

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Don Pasquale
La Favorite *
La figlia del reggimento
La fille du regiment *
Les martyrs
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Lucrezia Borgia
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