Possible timeline for the creation of Wallace's *Lurline*

Russell Burdekin, February 2026

William Vincent Wallace's opera, *Lurline*, started life as a dialogue and song work in 1847 but morphed over time to be performed as a through composed work at its first performance in February 23, 1860. The following is a tentative timeline of this transition.

The initial 1847 version had some recitative, for example, the opening "All is silent", dated by Wallace as 13 July, 1847. Such recitative was included in the original numbering of the autograph score, in this case as No. 1. In all the work was divided into 32 numbers plus the overture[1].

There are then further recitatives that appear to have been done after the initial laying out of the opera but before the final set of dialogue conversions. They include Rhineberg's "Suspicion haunts my mind" and Lurline's "Dearest! I give thee wealth" in Act 2, Scene 3, which were identified as 20 ½ and 21 ½ in the autograph score, although as part of Nos. 20 and 21 in both editions of the vocal score. Perhaps these were done as part of the revisions for the planned 1848 production and were included in the manuscript libretto.

Finally, there are the remaining dialogue conversions that show up as alterations on the manuscript libretto as noted in the "Dialogue and Recitative in Wallace's *Lurline*". All of these have autograph score numbers that include ½, except for No. 9 where the new recitative was tacked onto existing recitative. Some of these changes were done early enough to be included sequentially in the autograph score page numbering and in both editions of the vocal score, whereas some, viz.: 5½, 6½, 15½, 17½ and 18½, were added later. These exceptions were included as extra pages in the second edition of the vocal score[2], along with 23½, 24½ and 25½, but none were included in the first edition[3].

There was a certain amount of rewriting of existing material. There was little more than a melodic line in the autograph score for Lurline's opening number, which was later to become "Flow on, oh silver Rhine" (No. 3). There was a comment "Put words – A M", presumably Alfred Mellon the conductor for the 1860 production, thus showing that the text must have been added quite late in the creation cycle. George Biddlecombe[4] wrote that in Act 2, "Troubadour enchanting" (No. 18, Scene 2) and "The nectar cup may yield delight" (No. 20, Scene 3), were composed in 1859-1860. However, for the former there was an earlier version of the ballad in the autograph score with the comment "wait for new words from Fitzball". For the latter case, this seems to have been more a question of resetting existing text presumably brought about with other changes to Rhineberg's part after Wallace heard Charles Santley sing[5]. Elsewhere in Rudolph's Act 1, Scene 3, Romanza, "Our barque in moonlight beaming" (No. 10) had the comment "Fitz to change words", although in practice the changes made were minor.

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[1] The final number, No. 32, has September 23, 1848, written on it.

[2] W.V.Wallace, *Lurline* vocal score (London: Cramer , Beale and Chappell, 1860), British Library H.220.f. Dated 1860 by the library. This was an edition used by George Perren for performances at Crystal Palace in 1873.

[3] W.V.Wallace, *Lurline* vocal score (London: Cramer , Beale and Chappell, 1859) British Library H.220.d, dated 1859 by the library, although *The Examiner* (Feb. 11, 1860) talked of the vocal score being ready for delivery after the first performance, i.e. February 1860.

[4] George Biddlecombe, *English opera from 1834 to 1864 with particular reference to the works of Michael Balfe.* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), p. 136 and 134.

[5] Sir Charles Santley, *The Art of Singing and Vocal Declamation* (London: Macmillan, 1908), pp. 17-18, claimed that his part as Rhineberg in the final act Wallace "wrote expressly for me" (so in 1859-1860) after he had heard him sing.