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Gioachino Rossini and His Relation with Two Famous Urologists: Jean Civiale and Auguste Nélaton

Introduction & objectives: To present the relation between the great music composer and two of the most famous surgeons and urologists of those times, Jean Civiale (1792—1867) and Auguste Nélaton (1807—1873), as well as to attribute to his health problems the key for the mystery of his voluntary end to a fabulous career.

Methods: The review of many sources on the History of Opera and certain biographies of Gioachino Rossini combined with medico-historical sources.

Results: Gioachino Rossini (1792—1868) composed his first opera at the age of 18 and his last at 37. This early retirement at the peak of his universal fame gave birth to several reasons, with most probable an acute form of depression combined with a tormenting venereal disease, as a result of his early life, when he had been infected with gonorrhea. Despite all kinds of palliative therapies, the disease had become chronic with many episodes of re-infections due to new adventures (obesity, smoke and alcohol abuse). Chronic urethritis with purulent liquid and reduced urinary flow occurred because of cicatricial urethral strictures. In 1843 his friends arranged an appointment with the most famous of European urologists, Jean Civiale in Paris and he underwent urethral dilation and catheter placement, (all these endoscopic approaches lasting for a whole month) aiming to the establishment of effective drainage of the urinary bladder. In 1868 a rectal cancer was diagnosed and Auguste Nélaton performed a pioneer operation in St Louis Hospital. A second look operation was soon considered necessary and was performed again by Nélaton. Due to complications created possibly by an incompletely sterilized lancet, the patient's situation resulted to peritonitis and death.

Conclusions: Rossini met the two French surgeons and urologists during two different periods of his life and had been patient of both in Paris. Civiale (the inventor of lithotriptic removal of stones) and Nélaton, (also a brilliant general surgeon and inventor of the homonymous probe), on the other side, had treated several celebrities and leaders and were recognized as the best of their times.

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