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**LE SCELTE LETTERARIE NELLA ROMANZA DA
CAMERA DELL'OTTOCENTO**

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When planning this dissertation, the author implemented a research strategy based on sources of literature and reviews of the period, regarding both the musical and literary aspects.

With regard to the main subject, i.e. the “the choice of text for vocal chamber music compositions”, the author’s most important finding has certainly been that there is a very close correspondence between the literary taste of the time and the texts applied.

The 'bad reputation' of the Italian chamber romance, which is regarded as commonplace, was earned by the poor poetic and aesthetic choices determined by the bad taste of musicians and singers who, because of ignorance and indolence, neglected the great poets of their time.

The author believes to have demonstrated that the literary choices made by the musicians when composing *ariette, notturmi, romanze, ballate et similia*, perfectly corresponded to the mainstream taste of poetry ‘consumers’ of the time.

The fact that Perucchini and even Donizetti gave precedence to the easy verses by Metastasio rather than to the extraordinary but difficult poems by Leopardi, cannot be fully explained by the extreme lyricism and ease of the verse of the ‘poeta cesareo’;

The simple reason is that almost until the 1850’s Leopardi was still an outsider in literary public eye, while Metastasio’s huge volumes of poetry, were real bestsellers of the time, despite the harsh criticism by the advocates of Romanticism.

The present study examines the vocal chamber music works created in Italy from the Napoleonic era to the Unification of the country. For practical reasons the period has been divided in two parts with the division line of the early 1830’s, the date of publication of the collection *Soirées musicales* by Gioachino Rossini.

TASTE , MUSIC AND CULTURE IN ITALY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Before presenting his main points, the author gives a general overview of the available studies on chamber music romances and on Italian taste, music and culture of the nineteenth century.

These studies clearly show that the Italian cultural and musical spectrum of the time was overwhelmingly dominated by the melodramma, which - in the form of paraphrases, variations and *rimembranze* of highly popular pieces ‘for all sorts of instruments’ -, conquered the theatre as well as the literary salons.

SALON: THE PLACE, THE PLACES

Before analyzing the cultural, musical and literary aspects of the *romanza da camera*, the author makes it a point to describe the place, the places where this particular musical genre was not only performed but very often created.

It is interesting to note that females take a leading role in the salons. In most cases it is women who make these places alive, and not only by their silly conversations or marriage-arranging practices, or embroidery workshops.

To partially offset the rather sexist and, in some way, retrograde culture of the time, the author has also aimed to honour the women of the salons, who, from these private or semi-public sites, effectively contributed to remarkable musical achievements and who, with perseverance, from simple animators became protagonists of the place, holders of new ideas of freedom and independence which eventually will lead to the Resurgence and the Unification of Italy.

There are few direct testimonies of the everyday life of the nineteenth-century salons and even fewer of those concerning the music 'consumption', the habits and the likes of the *habitué* of this world which had such a crucial impact on the culture, the political and social life of the nineteenth-century Italy.

Therefore, particular emphasis has been given to the available information on some cities, in particular on Milan. In fact, since the beginning of the 19th century, Milan was the cultural capital of Italy, and this supremacy was based not only on the numerous business ventures in the publishing sector, the cultural periodicals, the theatres but on the strong presence of salons attended and animated by the most important Italian and foreign intellectuals of the period.

The Clara Maffei salon is certainly the most outstanding and also the most prestigious example of this particular form of socialising. Her salon was attended by some of the greatest figures of the Italian Risorgimento, by distinguished poets, and more importantly for us, by iconic musicians of the era, like Liszt or Verdi.

Even more attention has been dedicated to another salon in Milan, the Branca house, where the musical aspect of the gathering was even more explicitly represented and because two concerts hosted there were also documented in primary sources of the time. As it is extremely rare to come across such sources, the author has decided to quote the complete text of the two reviews.

The musical scene in the salons of Rome was certainly less lively, with the exception of the Ferretti house, a meeting place for poets and intellectuals organized and managed by the hostesses of the house, mothers and their daughters. The relevant documentary sources have also been quoted extensively.

Naples has been featured more strongly in this essay. The reason for this is that Naples, the capital of a vast kingdom, one of the largest European cities at the time, - at least in terms of music -, was challenging the supremacy of Milan.

The fall of the Revolution in 1799 had led to the *diaspora* and made most of the Neapolitan intellectual class disappear. Gradually, during the 19th century, centred around figures like the great intellectual, Basilio Puoti, a new class of poets, scholars, artists was established. They formed intellectual circles where very often women of finest minds played a leading role. Some of these women represent real literary and musical value and expertise for their time, either producing romances and chamber music in general themselves or providing a source of inspiration for others. Among others the names of Irene Ricciardi Capocelatro and sisters Capece Minutolo are worth mentioning.

THE VERSES CHOSEN

Coming finally to the main point, a large chapter has been dedicated to Metastasio. *Ariette, notturni, canzonette, romanze*. the entire set of the 19th-century vocal chamber music works in Italy applied verses written by the poeta cesario.

With extensive documentary evidence both in the dissertation and in the appendix containing the list of the most important nineteenth-century editions of Metastasio's works, the author has proved that composers opted on choosing Metastasio's verses not only because written for this purpose, they were particularly convenient 'to be put in music', but also because the target audience of the time had a strong demand for Arcadian poetry and a certain classicist style.

Similarly, the influence of Anacreonte, of the works attributed to him and the relative influence of these poems on the Italian literature between the 18th and 19th centuries, have also been highlighted.

Then the works of Jacopo Vittorelli, have been examined thoroughly. Jacopo Vittorelli a poet almost unknown today enjoyed huge popularity in the first decades of the 19th century and his poems served as a literary source for *notturni, arie, canzonette, romanze* for over a century. The number of the compositions applying his verses listed in the appendix, gives convincing evidence of the great importance of this poet.

Moving further, the author presents some less conventional text choices, showing the gradual shift from the texts relating to Arcadia and classicism towards a romantic style and vision. This new trend, apart from favouring contemporary poets, brought about the rediscovering of the works by Torquato Tasso, Dante Alighieri and, - to a lesser extent -, Francesco Petrarca, while adopting a new approach to these works. Once again it is demonstrated that the choice of text for the romances is heavily dependent on the literary taste of the period.

The new world of chamber romance was no more just about entertaining and being entertained by the finely worded songs. In some way, people wanted to 'make a theatre' in the salons as well: the singer (often a female one) becomes a character, and the most appealing characters were the purely romantic ones, the troubadour, the gypsy woman, the exile. Inspired by this latter character (the exile) an array of patriotic songs came to life, which from first being sung in the salons, conquered the streets, the barricades and the battlefields.

LANGUAGES OR DIALECTS? A MUSICAL DILEMMA ABOUT THE NEAPOLITAN, THE VENETIAN, THE TUSCAN LANGUAGES

An entire chapter has been devoted to another crucial issue, the importance of dialects in Italy in the nineteenth century, including cultured environments.

The third and fourth decades of the century saw a great revival of the Italian language. From a kind of dead language, the 'purity' of which was strenuously protected by the academies, it evolved into a lively, modern language assimilating words from other languages, adopting words from dialects and innovations used in new poetry and prose.

We can say that in the wake of achieving the political unity of the country, the Italian language gradually became a common language for all the inhabitants of the Peninsula. It all happened thanks to the great popularity of the historical novels, the spread of newspapers and periodicals, the proliferation of booklets for women-readers or those of religious content and the spectacular success of *strenne* and almanacs, all pieces written in a very simple colloquial language. Music also had much to contribute to this change through the language of operas, - especially that of the comic and light ones -, and, to a lesser but still remarkable extent, through vocal chamber music compositions.

In order to describe this latter trend the pieces by 'specialist' vocal chamber music composers have been brought into focus, like those of Teodoro Cottrau (Naples), Antonio Buzzolla (Venice) and Luigi Gordigiani (Tuscany). They nicely illustrate how the same composer can produce their own pieces with dialect words as well as adapt music and verses of popular origin.

ITALIAN VOCAL CHAMBER MUSIC IN EUROPE IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

A separate chapter has been dedicated to the spreading of the Italian language in Europe through vocal chamber music literature. The emphasis has been placed on Italian and foreign composers of this musical genre, who lived and worked mainly in Paris and Vienna.

For several reasons a special attention has been given to the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. First of all Italian music, - and not only the Opera -, had been enjoying great success and attention for centuries here. Secondly, Vienna was the hometown of Pietro Metastasio, who, using his position of influence, always helped poets, composers, singers, musicians arriving from the Italian peninsula.

In this respect, a good example is Mauro Giuliani, who in the early decades of the nineteenth century achieved notable success in music and musical publishing in this very city and thus contributed substantially to the spread of his instrument, the guitar, both as a solo instrument and as an ideal accompaniment of vocal chamber compositions.

Particular attention has been paid to the pieces by Beethoven and Schubert in Italian language. The oeuvre of Schubert has key importance thanks to the outstanding quality of his *Lieder* and the arising opportunity to compare his compositions in German and Italian.

Another foreign capital, Paris, also played a crucial role in the historical aesthetic achievements in the history of Italian music. Surviving in different ways the ordeals of the 1789 Revolution, the Napoleonic era, the Restoration and the bourgeois revolution of Louis Bonaparte, a great number of Italian musicians ended up on the banks of the Seine. Regarding the chamber romance, it is important to emphasise its role in spreading Italian language of the kind, both through the works of famous opera writers, who sporadically diversified into chamber romances, and that of the specialists of the genre.

In this respect Felice Blangini seems to be an outstanding figure for several reasons. Firstly, his chamber compositions, his *notturmi* in particular, were widely circulated in Europe for

decades. Secondly, his extensive autobiography provided a very precise description of the 'singer-teacher' in the early-nineteenth-century Europe, alongside with the music 'consumption' and the musical taste prevailing in the French aristocratic and bourgeois salons.

OPERA COMPOSERS AND SALON MUSIC

The author has considered it useful to highlight the vocal chamber music works written by the five major Italian opera composers of the century, Bellini, Mercadante, Rossini, Donizetti, Verdi. Not only because they are iconic figures of the history of music, but because they also represented a different approach in composing and they made a major, sometimes outstanding, contribution to vocal chamber music as well.

Their musical activity in the salons offers a glimpse into a variety of relations: between musicians and poets, between music and literature, art and politics and even between professionalism and the need to adapt to conventions and social requirements.

Rossini's figure has also featured heavily because he had an appeal for composing chamber music, which stemmed from his attraction to salon socializing. His *Soirée musicales* mark a divide between an old and a new way of writing vocal chamber music. The *Péchés de Vieillesse*, besides being the most substantial work of his late career as a composer, are the most valuable pieces of salon music. They were the ideal 'soundtrack' of the famous parties which Rossini and his second wife, Olimpie, in their homes in Paris and Passy, turned into worldly ceremonies celebrating the two greatest passions of the composer, food and music.

Based on the author's previous studies, Giuseppe Verdi's importance has also been underlined as the research on him generated research on some other crucial figures of the nineteenth-century culture, like Wolfgang Goethe, Alessandro Manzoni and Andrea Maffei. The latter is almost unknown today but at the time was a famous translator, great disseminator of foreign literature in Italy and an important animator of the Italian cultural scene. Knowing the relationship between the three men, one can have a more precise idea about the relationship between musicians and writers of the time and about how much music and composers were considered aliens to the 'republic of culture', bearers of lowbrow and popular knowledge, tradesmen of verses rather than talented poets.

The chapter on Mercadante also constitutes an important part of the present study. The Apulian composer, apart from being an excellent opera composer, was the last great representative of the *Naepolitan school*, as a teacher of both composition and singing.

The section dedicated to Bellini implies a kind of regret because of the tragically early death of the composer. His chamber music pieces were of extraordinary quality but scarce in number, just like the composer's years.

Unlike Bellini, the corpus of Donizetti's works is enormous, both in terms of opera and chamber music romances. And in this vast collection all the main changes of vocal music of the nineteenth century can be traced. Around the 1830's a series of 'revolutions' took place: the methods of editorial production and circulation changed, the literary taste gradually

shifted towards affection for romantic instances, the use of dialects was introduced and a more complex and articulate composing style came of age. All these changes are reflected in the masterpieces by Donizetti.

THE ECONOMY OF CULTURE, SOME FIGURES

The essay concludes with a different, somewhat unconventional topic, the economy of culture. A list of data about the costs of culture compared to the everyday living costs and the earnings of poets and musicians might give a deeper understanding of the age when intellectuals and artists were in a precarious, often dramatic wage-earning situation. Their position gradually improved as public demand for culture was growing and intellectual property rights got recognized in Italy, which guaranteed them earnings more or less adequate for intellectual work.

CONCLUSIONS

One final note: given the topic of research, the author, as much as he could, has avoided the use of 'technical' musical terms and the analysis of the musical forms and structures, which in some other context would have deserved greater focus.

Before and during the PhD. courses the author of this doctoral dissertation carried out research in some major European libraries, including the Library of the Conservatorio ' Giuseppe Verdi ' in Milan, the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in Venice, the Library of Accademia Filarmonica in Bologna, the Austrian National Library in Vienna, the Library of Conservatorio ' Santa Cecilia' in Rome, the Library of the Conservatorio' San Pietro a Majella' in Naples and the local Library 'Giuseppe Greggiati' in Ostiglia .

Below there's the list of conferences the author has attended as a lecturer or a participant and that of the author's publications relating to the subject of the dissertation:

Giulio D'Angelo *Le romanze da camera di Verdi: musica, letteratura, salotti... aneddoti* in Nuova Corvina Rivista di italianistica n. 24 2012, pp. 96-112

Giulio D'Angelo *Jacopo Vittorelli, fortuna letteraria, fortuna musicale* in Nuova Corvina Rivista di Italianistica n. 25 Istituto Italiano di Cultura Budapest, 2013: pp. 112-120

Giuseppe Verdi *La musica vocale da camera nelle prime edizioni* a cura di **Giulio D'Angelo e Paolo Troian**. Forni Editore Bologna 2013

Conference attended as a lecturer

8 th of November 2013 **Piliscsaba** Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem Giornata di Studi Internazionale di Italianistica per Dottorandi Lecture: *Jacopo Vittorelli: fortuna letteraria, fortuna musicale*

Presentation of the book *Giuseppe Verdi La musica vocale da camera nelle prime edizioni*

3rd of december dicembre 2014 **Varsavia** Istituto Italiano di Cultura

8th th of December 2014 **Debrecen** Kodály Zoltán Zeneművészeti Szakközépiskola és Zeneiskola

9th of December **Budapest** Olasz Kultúrintezet

11th of December 2014 **Ostiglia** Biblioteca musicale 'Giuseppe Greggiati'

12th of December 2014 **Bologna** Museo di San Colombano – Collezione Tagliavini

13th of December 2014 **Trieste** Civico Museo Teatrale 'Carlo Schmidl'

16th of December 2014 **Rionero in Vulture** Biblioteca "Giustino Fortunato"