

Giorgio Appolonia , **Le voci di Rossini**, prefazione di Giorgio Gualerzi, Eda, Torino, 1992, pp. 499, L. 28.000

Nell'anno rossiniano l'Italia non ha prodotto alcuna degna monografia, ma diversi volumi di vario, anche notevole interesse documentario fra cui questa indagine sulle voci che provvidamente, fra l'altro, non poteva non allargarsi anche ai compositori prossimi a Rossini. L'argomento, di per sé molto suggestivo vista la fiducia artistica che il grande maestro commetteva ai creatori della sua musica, esigeva comunque una trattazione non solo critico-estetica, ma anche cronachistica, di ricerca pura e semplice. E davvero ardua. Appolonia ha spogliato riviste e giornali d'epoca, cronologie teatrali italiane e straniere, memoriali ed enciclopedie, strenne e almanacchi, e ha disegnato un quadro che sarà sempre un logico punto di partenza per altri studi. Il lavoro annovera e prende in esame i cantanti degli anni giovanili, fra cui la Marcolini, Galli, García e la Belloc. Poi i cantanti della maturità, dalla Colbran a Lablache, da Nozzari a Donzelli. Quindi i cantanti del periodo francese, dalla Cinti-Damoreau alla Malibran (non tutti primi esecutori, come si vede). Dopo qualche annotazione sui residui belcantistici dell'Ottocento (la Alboni e le Marchisio), ecco una logica selezione novecentesca che raccoglie la Supervía, la Perderzini e la Simionato. Prima degli indici, un'appendice di lettere di cantanti. Di ogni cantante si racconta brevemente la vita e si fornisce una tabella con tutte le informazioni relative alle presenze rossiniane. E una tabella come quella fornita sulla carriera di Giuditta Pasta può servire a esemplare sia il lavoro di Appolonia che l'improvvisa virata di gusto registrata negli anni Trenta dell'Ottocento, dalla cronaca trapassando alla storia e alle complesse vicende della cultura. Dopo il '30, la grande primadonna cantò ancora qualche Semiramide, Tancredi e Desdemona, personaggi suoi diletti, e anche diversi concerti rossiniani: intanto cantava anche personaggi nuovi come Norma, Beatrice, Anna Bolena, ma non poi tanto spesso. Insomma la celeberrima creatrice della **Norma** di Bellini in realtà aveva impostato la sua carriera soprattutto su Rossini, sagacemente trascegliendo il soprano di **Semiramide** e il contralto di **Tancredi** (non Arsace, per l'appunto, né Amenaide). Di qua gli eletti meriti storici, dunque, e di là i folti, numerosi e onerosi meriti contingenti. A conoscere i quali, e non solo sulla persona artistica della Pasta, soccorre zelantemente il libro pubblicato dall'intraprendenza della Eda di Torino.

Piero Mioli

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Bergamo

Musical notices from Città e Provincie



Recently has not been an entirely happy time at the Teatro Donizetti with few full houses, criticism from subscribers about the choice of programme and some of the refurbishments. The XI Festival "Donizetti e il suo tempo" has come and gone, with, it seems, less than the fullest support. Despite reports to the contrary there were many unoccupied seats at both performances of the double-bill *Betty* (2-act version), and *Il campanello*. Disenchanted subscribers may have accounted for some of them in which event there must be greater concern. The even greater number of empty seats at the second performance must have been noted from the stage and one felt that the artist's enthusiasm suffered though some were quicker and better into their singing than at the *prima*. Comments overheard later revealed surprise at their enjoyment and credit goes to all taking part but particularly to Enzo Dara (Don Annibale in *Il campanello*) who directed both operas with a proper feel and respect for these examples of the maestro's "unbuttoned-mood". The music deserves no less attention than more substantial scores and the marriage of words and music, for obvious reasons, provided many delights in performances generally well sung and played. Matteuzzi's enthusiasm was plain to see but his Daniele sounded a bit thin at first but recovered well for the duet "Dolce istante inaspettato" with Patrizia Pace who sang pleasingly throughout; at the second performance one had the impression she was intent on further impressing the listener with, sadly, an unpleasant edge to the voice in the upper register. Marco Chingari as Max made a more than acceptable contribution, wanting only a little more control over his big voice. There was sympathetic support from the pit where "I Pomeriggi Musicali" were ably led by the local "boy" Fabrizio Carminati. The sets by Sandro Angelini had their antecedents in the 1948 productions and there

was much to please the eye, confirming Angelini's claim that he had tried to avoid mid-19th cent. idyllic laxity and relate more to the characteristics of the music. This and Dara's sure hand in rationing the comedy avoided any "longueurs" that lead some to prefer the 1-act version. There is plenty of comic material in *Il campanello* too, but it was, again, judiciously employed with appropriate understatement - Dara's silent questioning of the lackey about the quality of the wine he was serving to the guests at his wedding was masterly; even the unending roll of computer paper emanating from the prompter's box on which were Enrico's interminable list of ingredients for his wife's prescription was "handled" adroitly (by Don Annibale, Enrico and Spiridone). Roberto Frontali carried off his disguises well though was rather less winning in his "plain clothes" duet with Gemma Bertagnolli; she was rather outshone by Cristina Mantese as Serafina's mother whose singing and acting made as much as possible of the role. One wished for a rounder tone from Carlo Gaifa, long experienced a Spiridone, and what seemed a slightly disheartened Dara employed rather more "parlando" at the second performance. There was always acceptable - occasionally very good - singing from the chorus who were well directed and their involvement was neither fussy nor static. One or two breakdowns in communication between pit and stage did no real harm to performances in which - and this is a rare occurrence in the opera house nowadays - music and mise-en-scène were always in harmony. All in all a success largely unappreciated by many who are difficult to persuade that an evening at the opera ought sometimes to be fun.

The Festival calendar extended from 27 September to 14 November, with up to a fortnight between performances, and one wondered if more enthusiasm and a festive atmosphere would be generated by a shorter - or busier, event? Is it likely to obtain further recognition and support if visitors must be in Bergamo a whole month to hear five performances? Indeed, between 5 and 17 October there was no event of any sort in the Festival calendar! Fortunately there were, as usual, numerous musical happenings in the city and its environs: could not some of them be accorded quasi-official (fringe) status? Not necessarily increasing costs beyond their inclusion in publicity material? During the period in question there were, for example, three organ recitals and three concerts of baroque music. These may not have been of particular interest to Donizettians, but then a number of Festival events included much that was not by Donizetti. There will always, of course, be differing vested interests to complicate matters but the "umbrella" of the official Festival might, with advantage to all, be extended to cover some of these initiatives in a prolific musical scene.

Among many reports, the shortest possibly concerned the first hearing of the "vetrofono", said to be a new instrument invented by a Danish percussionist which comprised "about 100 glass receptacles partially filled with wine (!) covering an area of 40 square metres." Said to be a "descendent of the 18th cent.glassharmonica" can anyone add more to this description or confirm the method of playing it?(Manoeuvring around 40 square metres!). And is there anything to learn that might shed a light on Donizetti's preference for the score of *Lucia*?

The Circolo Mayr-Donizetti (not to be confused with Circolo Mayr - see later) with local authority support, seeks to establish a "Rassegna delle Scuole di Canto", the winning school to present highlights of an opera in the 1994/95 season. This season opened with highlights of *La Figlia del Reggimento* (with Patrizia Pace fresh from *Betty*) and will continue for 11 further concerts. The Circolo Mayr unveiled a new bust of Mayr, sculpted in bronze by Guidotti, a Bergamasque; the first concert of their season was a soprano/baritone recital of operatic items from Sarti through to Cilea via Rossini, Donizetti and Verdi. Later in the season there are to be concert performances of *La Traviata* and *Lucia*, and an evening dedicated to Gavazzeni (their Honorary President). At the first international lyric workshop at San Pellegrino, the two weeks' proceedings concluded with a concert performance of *Don Pasquale*.

Brian Thornton

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