



A Donizettian début? "Oh come palpita il cor nel seno"

It is not often that we can publish an item as truly fascinating as this one. Earlier in the year (just days too late to feature in Newsletter 65), we had news from the scholar and conductor PierAngelo Pelucchi that in the vast accumulation of music in the Fondo Mayr at Bergamo he had been able to identify a Terzetto con coro e orchestra, in the hand of Mayr but which can most plausibly be attributed to the young Donizetti, then his most remarkable pupil.

It was composed for one of the annual concerts which Mayr presented to show off the talents of his music school. These *Accademie per le Lezioni Caritatevoli di Musica* were a kind of *pot-pourri*, in Maestro Pelucchi's own words: "*une vera e propria opera teatrale (sempre farsesca) realizzata interamente dagli allievi della scuola*" in which the young musicians sang, played and interpreted arias and ensembles composed by Mayr and other celebrated composers to a text supplied by their famous teacher, before an intimidating audience consisting of the notables responsible for their continuing existence. Rarely, one of the numbers was written by a pupil, but the title page (these diminutive *pasticcio* operas were admirably presented) of the printed libretto for the *Accademia Finale di Musica Vocale ed Istromentale degli allievi delle Lezioni Caritatevoli di Musica* given on 24 August 1813 makes clear that the programme featured a *Coro, composto dall'allievo Gaetano Donizetti* which followed upon an overture composed by Mayr himself.

The text of the brano identified as a work of the young Donizetti is self-evidently the *cri-de-coeur* of a youngster in this testing situation

Oh come palpita il cor nel seno
le gambe vacillano, la voce vien meno,
le vene qual brivido cercando mi va.
E come mai sciogliere il canto possiamo,
fanciulli se siamo di tenera età?
qual'altro rifugio avremo pertanto
se non sotto il manto di Vostra bontà?
Dunque o magnanimi Signor donateci facil perdono
se i nostri Cantici del Vostro merito degni non sono.
Né l'ira accendavi la nostra troppa temerità.
Che la memoria d'un tal favore
nel nostro cor scolta indelebile ognor sarà.

The opening words are most engagingly set with a musical palpitation (see opposite) which appears in the strings in the 15 bar orchestral introduction mockingly echoed by the woodwind. Now which of the maestri in question was responsible for this imaginative touch? PierAngelo is inclined to take the view that the style probably indicates the younger of the two "...infatti Mayr attribui al Clarinetto ed al Fagotto un ruolo predominante, tale da offuscare assai spesso sia il Flauto che l'Oboe. Al contrario in questa partitura si evidenziava da un lato l'assenza del Fagotto e dall'altro alcuni inconsueti parallelismi e omoritmie fra Flauto e Clarinetto su cui sempre si imponeva il Flauto." Indeed, this may well be a case of Mayr's loving polish applied to Master Donizetti's original.

And on page 5, is there not a correction or two in a boyish hand? The very proximity of which, on the same page as the vocal text written by his world famous teacher, makes the heart beat a little faster...

Alexander Weatherson

Handwritten musical score on ten staves. The notation includes various rhythmic values, slurs, and dynamic markings. The lyrics are written below the staves.

Lyrics:

- da comu
- infidic
- ic
- cor nel
- sem
- il cor nel
- sem

