

TUTTO FERRETTI?

During a recent visit to Italy I was pleased to find a handsome volume on Jacopo Ferretti. It is a series of papers resulting from a conference held 1996 by *Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia*, Rome, and published last year. The contents are useful and include transcriptions of three hitherto uncatalogued songs by Donizetti composed for the Ferretti family; there are numerous mistakes. Are these Donizetti's or the editor's? I was surprised to find that the deep sense of humour shared by composer and librettist is not explored or the originality of Ferretti's own thought, as may be noted, for example, in the text of *La cenerentola*.

The last contribution is by Gianni Legger and is a listing of Ferretti's works entitled *Tutto Ferretti?* This is a fascinating list but ignores the cantata written by Ferretti and set to music by Donizetti and listed in my 1991 *Donizetti*, number A149, *Qual fremito soave*. Since the cantata throws light on the lost cantata *Il fato* (which is catalogued), the following may be of interest to readers. Owners of the *atti* may safely add A149 to Legger's list.

When Ian Caddy and I were writing to libraries enquiring whether they had anything of interest by Mayr in their catalogues, we received a kind letter dated 3:9:86 from Prof. Piero Meldini, director of the *Biblioteca Civica Gambalunga*, Rimini. No, he had no Mayr of interest, but perhaps the enclosed text of a Donizetti/Ferretti cantata would be. If only all libraries were so caring over serious enquiries! I am now glad to make available the full text I wrote in 1986 which was later reduced for my book, see pages 36 and 37.

QUAL FREMITO SOAVE

A cantata for tenor and pianoforte

Words by Jacopo Ferretti

A song or cantata composed for Count Antonio Lozano; originally sung in the home of the Lozano family, Rome, on 13th June 1832

by Piero Angelini (tenor) with the composer at the piano.

This previously uncatalogued piece dates from the year of *l'elisir d'amore* and at a time when Donizetti enjoyed a sincere friendship with the Ferretti household. Ferretti wrote for Donizetti the texts of *L'ajo nell'imbarazzo* (1824), *Olivo e Pasquale* (1827), *Il furioso all'isola di San Domingo* (1833), and *Torquato Tasso* (1833).

Count Lozano's home was well-known for musical gatherings and frequented by high society. In the year after the performance of *Qual fremito soave* Donizetti wrote a short, interesting note to Ferretti dated 13:6:1833 (see Zavadini 98). It

records another performance at the Lozano household for the Count's birthday, this time of the lost cantata, *Il fato*. The text appears to have been shorter, but substantially the same in format as *Qual fremito soave*. Donizetti often abbreviated texts of occasional pieces due to pressure of work.

Lozano is called Antonio [13th June is the feast of St Anthony of Padua]

You: recitative and cavatina for the occasion

I: music to try out tomorrow evening

Angelini will sing it

I will accompany him

You, will know nothing

To us good health, to them a... [a toffee nose!]

To night I am coming to see you [to collect the text]

On the same day Donizetti also wrote to the publisher Giovanni Ricordi an interesting letter concerning publishing matters, in which he indicated that his hometown, Bergamo, was pressing him to compose for the St Cecilia Festival, a musical event instituted by Mayr. These were years when both composers, especially Mayr, were involved with composing simple melodies for hymns for the publication of the first Italian vernacular hymn book, the *Melodie Sacre*. The eventual publication was to words by Samuele Biava and music by Mayr and Luigi Gambale, for whom Ferretti wrote three operatic libretti.

Next day, in an amusing letter, Donizetti reported back to Ferretti (Zavadini 100), which helps to throw light on the previous cantata written for the Count, *Qual fremito soave*.

... Last night Count Lozano asked me who wrote the poetry. Here's what was said:

- Who wrote, etc.
- Ferretti.
- Did you pay him?
- No.
- Did you ask him the cost?
- No.
- Ask him, when it's convenient to you.
- Yes, Sir.
- I have already had words with Ferretti about something last year... concerning the cantata, that is the text, I never received it.
- That's true. I've got it! Since no one asked me for it perhaps because it was not to be published. It has remained with me but I can get it better copied out due to various cuts. I didn't have time to write something longer. [This

explains the structure of the verses of *Qual fremito soave*. For example, the verse, *Giorni ti scorrono* etc. requires extra lines for the sake of fluency!]

- Oh! Yes, yes! You make me happy! Do you know why I did not get it printed? Because I knew nothing of the matter! I seem to remember, however, that another work by Ferretti from last year was longer...
- I don't know, right, this evening I will have it well copied out and you will know the cost.
- Good!
- Conclusion: You, [Ferretti] today, copy out again, very clearly, as well as the larghetto *Il fato*; send me also if you still got a copy of last year's piece [*Qual fremito soave*] for St Anthony. [Donizetti is here being disrespectful to the Count.]

The remainder of the letter is similar in tone and ends in pater noster.

Donizetti, Ferretti and Angelini were on to a good thing, for two years running they had work commissioned by Count Lozano.

Qual fremito soave (Text and translation)

Qual fremito soave
d'improvvisi concetti
in questo all'armonia caro soggiorno
sovra l'ali de' venti
a poco a poco si diffonde intorno?

(What is this sweet sensation
on the wings of the winds
of unexpected thoughts
which little by little
circulate in this dear harmonious
home?)

Tutto gioja respira, e di natura
tutto pare un sorriso.
Sì, d'arcana cagione io ne ravviso:
sacro al santo del Tago, eroe sublime
spuntò coll'alba il dì.

One breathes all joy
And all nature appears as a smile.
Yes, I recognise a hidden reason:
the day was born with the dawn
sacred to the supreme hero,
the saint of the Tagus*.

[*St Anthony of Padua was born at Lisbon which is on the river Tagus.]

Lozano illustre, modello d'amistà
cuor generoso che rival[e] non hai,
perchè tutto a te plande oggi tu sai:
nel dì sacro al tuo nome
esultano gli amici,

Illustrious Lozano, model of
friendship,
a generous heart knowing no rival,
today you know all flows to you:
on the day sacred to your name
friends exalt,

brilla ogni cor,
 nè tace il labbro intanto
 e all'Eco insegna della gioja il canto.

Per cento volte e cento
 torni sì lieto giorno
 nunzio di bel contento
 a sfavillar così.

E a te verranno intorno
 e sposa e figli e amici,
 vorran col labbro esprimere
 come li fai felici,
 ma esprimere un arcano
 dolce piacer sovrano
 possibile non è.

Giorni ti scorrono
 quel rio che gli amori
 soavissimo, placido
 fa[n] scorrer tra i fiori,
 e limpido e placido
 al mar sen va.
 I Numi t'accordino
 di Nestore gli anni
 per te mai non spuntino
 momenti d'affani
 la vita t'infiorino
 amore e amistà.

Per cento volte e cento
 torni sì lieto giorno
 nunzio di bel contento
 a sfavillar così.



JACOPO FERRETTI, librettista.

every heart shines
 meanwhile lips keep silence
 whilst the joy of song finds response
 in Echo.

For a hundred times and a hundred
 return so happy a day
 to shine so clearly,
 messenger of happy contentment.

Around you will come
 wife, children, friends,
 they will wish to tell you
 how happy you make them,
 but it is impossible
 to express such a secret,
 sweet, supreme joy.

The days will flow to you
 that pleasant, peaceful stream
 that love makes to flow
 amidst flowers
 and unsullied and calmly
 makes its way to the sea.
 May the gods give you
 from Nestor many years
 that bad days
 may not come
 that life abounds for you
 in love and friendship.

For a hundred times and a hundred
 return so happy a day
 to shine so clearly,
 messenger of happy contentment.)

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