

ALBERTO RIZZUTI

JOAN OF ARC'S OPERATIC DEBUT
(VICENZA, 1789 - VENICE, 1797)

ESTRATTO

da

(IL) SAGGIATORE MUSICALE
2004/1 (gennaio/giugno) ~ a. 11



Leo S. Olschki Editore
Firenze

IL SAGGIATORE MUSICALE

Anno XI, 2004, n. 1



Leo S. Olschki
Firenze

IL SAGGIATORE MUSICALE

Rivista semestrale di musicologia

Anno XI, 2004, n. 1

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La redazione di questo numero è stata chiusa il 30 settembre 2004

Redazione

Dipartimento di Musica e Spettacolo - Università di Bologna
Via Barberia 4 - 40123 Bologna - Tel. 0512092000 - Fax 0512092001
E-mail: saggmus@muspe.unibo.it

Amministrazione

CASA EDITRICE LEO S. OLSCHKI
Viuzzo del Pozzetto (Viale Europa) - 50126 Firenze - c.c.p. n. 12707501
Tel. 0556530684 (quattro linee) - Fax 0556530214
E-mail: periodici@olschki.it

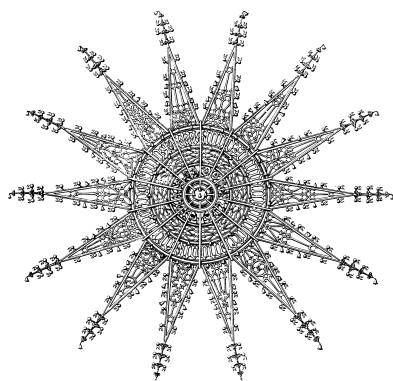
Abbonamento 2004: Italia € 47,00 (Estero € 65,00)

Abbonamento 2005: Italia € 60,00 (Estero € 82,00)

(segue in 3^a di coperta)

IL SAGGIATORE MUSICALE

Anno XI, 2004



Leo S. Olschki
Firenze

IL SAGGIATORE MUSICALE

Rivista semestrale di musicologia

fondata da

Lorenzo Bianconi, Renato Di Benedetto, F. Alberto Gallo,
Roberto Leydi e Antonio Serravezza

pubblicata col sostegno

dell'Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna
e della Fondazione della Cassa di Risparmio in Bologna

e con contributi del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività culturali
e del Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca



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ALBERTO RIZZUTI

Turin

JOAN OF ARC'S OPERATIC DEBUT

VICENZA, 1789 - VENICE, 1797

1. VICENZA, 1789

1.1. *Other occupations*

«Today I managed to purchase the other two bronze embouchures of which I wrote on the 2nd», Count Arnaldo Tornieri jots down in his notebook on 27 June 1789. After five more lines crowded with hydraulic details, the busy nobleman enters a full stop. The next sentence reveals that his dwelling on pipelines was a prelude to a fit of bad temper:

Stimo più tutte queste cose che non la grand'opera intitolata *La pulcella d'Orléans* che questa sera va in scena, per cui son giunti forestieri assaissimi e si trova in massimo movimento tutto il Paese. Cosa dee dirsi d'una nazione che non pensa che a divertirsi? Che segno è questo?¹

Since no other clues crop up in the following pages, it is likely that the surly Count did not attend the performance at the Teatro Eretenio, maybe in order to devote himself to one of his other occupations.

The following RISM abbreviations are used in this article: I-Bc = Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale; I-Pca = Padova, Biblioteca Antoniana (Archivio musicale della Venerabile Arca del Santo); I-PAc = Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, sezione musicale; I-Rsc = Roma, Biblioteca del Conservatorio di musica "S. Cecilia"; I-TSmt = Trieste, Civico Museo Teatrale della Fondazione "C. Schmidl"; I-Vas = Venezia, Archivio di Stato; I-Vcr = Venezia, Pia Casa di Ricovero; I-Vmc = Venezia, Museo Civico Correr; I-Vnm = Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana; I-VIb = Vicenza, Biblioteca Civica Bertoliana; US-SFsc = San Francisco, San Francisco State College Library, Frank V. de Bellis Collection.

¹ *Memorie di Vicenza del conte Arnaldo I Arnaldi Tornieri che cominciano dall'anno 1767 e terminano nel 1822. Copiate da Arnaldo III P^o Muzio Tornieri di lui figliuolo* (I-VIb, ms. 3108, III, *ad datum*).

No matter what Tornieri thought of it, three weeks before the storming of the Bastille Vicenza granted its theatre to the first celebration of the Maid of Orléans ever to take place on the stage. The librettist defines *Giovanna d'Arco* as a «dramma in quattr'atti per musica», whereas the Count calls it simply «grand'opera». The lack of the label *serio* betrays a difficulty in categorizing an opera which was neither comic, nor sentimental, but which undermined the social pyramid: in fact, Simeone Antonio Sografi and Gaetano Andreozzi's work challenged the fundamental social paradigm of the *ancien régime* by means of a shepherdess in armour endowed with a tongue sharper than her sword.²

1.2. Images

After two centuries of witch-hunting, the Enlightenment presented two contrasting readings of the figure of Joan, a theological-religious interpretation and a sceptical-rationalistic one.³ Between these extremes stands Voltaire's provocative poem *La pucelle d'Orléans* (1755) and the works that appeared as a reaction to it, above all those by Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and Louis-Sébastien Mercier.⁴

The works of these writers enjoyed considerable success in the territories of the Most Serene Republic of Venice thanks to the translations produced and circulated by Elisabetta Caminer. A leading figure of the Venetian Enlightenment, she had made her home in Vicenza in 1769 as a result of her marriage to the Vicentine physician Antonio Turra. As the director of the «Giornale enciclopedico», the prestigious showcase of modern European culture, Caminer managed to make the ideas of several first-rate

² *L'indice de' teatrali spettacoli* (cf. *Un almanacco drammatico. L'indice de' teatrali spettacoli 1764-1823*, ed. R. Verti, Pesaro, Fondazione Rossini, 1996, p. 249 f.) confirms the label of the libretto. The summary of the activity of the year (p. 258, original pagination) shows instead the conventional label *opera seria*, followed by the title, 'classically' misspelled as *Giovanna d'Arco*.

³ See J. VERCROYSE, *Jeanne d'Arc au siècle des Lumières*, in *Transactions of the Third International Congress on Voltaire and the Enlightenment* (Nancy 1971), «Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century», n. 90, 1972, pp. 1659-1729.

⁴ See VOLTAIRE, *La pucelle d'Orléans*, [Genève, Cramer], 1762, preceded by a handful of unauthorized editions appeared in 1755 (see the critical edition in VOLTAIRE, *Les œuvres complètes*, VII, ed. J. Vercruysse, Genève, Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1970); J.-H. BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE, *Études de la nature*, 4 vols., Paris, Didot, 1784-88 (first English trans. by H. Hunter, *Studies of Nature*, 3 vols., Worcester, Mass., printed for Nancrede, 1797); L.-S. MERCIER, *Jeanne d'Arc, tragédie en quatre actes et en vers*, Paris, 1775. See H. HUDDE, *Jeanne d'Arc zwischen Voltaire und Schiller*, «Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur», n. 91, 1981, pp. 193-212; ID., *Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, "Jeanne d'Arc", tragédie. Édition des plans et des fragments*, «Romanistische Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte», III, 1979, pp. 374-386.

authors known in Vicenza, a city which tended to be rather torpid. Together with Giovanni Scola and Alberto Fortis, this energetic woman animated a lively intellectual circle that was devoid of the academic tendencies of neighbouring Padua.

The birth of the agrarian academies is a phenomenon that, with its rethinking of material culture, was characteristic of Venetian society in the last decades of the Republic. The immediate metamorphosis of the ancient Accademia Olimpica into the new Accademia Agraria (1768) indicates the receptivity of the Vicentine milieu.⁵ The growing scientificization of knowledge also produced opposing trends: the success of the literary genre of the idyll is a most obvious example. The tendency to draw norms of moral behaviour from nature is more surprising, but the fortune of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Études de la nature* was largely based on it.

Entitled *Application des lois de la nature aux maux de la société*, the penultimate *Étude* contains an exhortation to produce a dramatic work pivoting on the character of Joan of Arc.⁶ The subject is singled out at the end of a long speech about the function of patriotic theatre. Opposing Voltaire's satire and preceding Schiller's *Jungfrau von Orléans* (1801) by a few years, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre introduces the lay cult of the young shepherdess – or, more probably, of the apprentice inn-keeper – from Domrémy into European literature. It is not easy to ascertain the number and standing of the playwrights who answered his call, also because several projects in this domain were never completed. The fulcrum of the action imagined by the French writer is the prison scene, aimed at showing Joan's «réflexions touchantes sur le néant des grandeurs et ses regrets naïfs sur le bonheur de la vie champêtre».⁷

Sografi, here in his debut as a librettist, states that the idea of a libretto based on Jeanne d'Arc came to him «leggendo le prodezze di quest'illustre eroina ristrette in un articolo del Moreri sotto il nome di essa e negli autori storici dallo stesso citati».⁸ Louis Moréri's *Grand dictionnaire historique*, which was published in Lyon in 1674 and reprinted several times, was easy

⁵ See M. BERENGO, *La società veneta alla fine del Settecento. Ricerche storiche*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1956; G. TORCELLAN, *Settecento veneto e altri studi*, Torino, Giappichelli, 1969; P. PRETO, *L'illuminismo veneto*, in *Storia della cultura veneta*, ed. G. Arnaldi and M. Pastore Stocchi, V/1: *Dalla Controriforma alla fine della Repubblica*, Vicenza, Pozza, 1985, p. 36.

⁶ See BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE, *Études de la nature* cit., III, pp. 258-261.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 197. These guidelines are remarkable for the absence of any hint of divine investiture and military victory, two basic features in later versions of Joan's story.

⁸ S. A. SOGRAFI, *Giovanna d'Arco*, libretto for Vicenza, Teatro Eretenio, 27 June 1789 (henceforth Vi89), p. 5.

to find in mid-eighteenth-century Venice. It paints a conventional portrait of the *pauvre bergère*. After a standard summary of her deeds, it offers an extensive discussion of the so-called “survivalist hypothesis”, according to which Joan continued to live after 30 May 1431, the day on which a double of hers had been burned at the stake at Rouen. It is hard to think that a dictionary entry like this could enlighten a novice’s mind, but a lack of further clues forces one to believe Sografi’s statement.⁹ The libretto reveals a stance not dissimilar to that of the *Études*: its author reduces the supernatural element to a minimum and presents Giovanna’s fictitious love affair with the son of the English leader Talbot as an antecedent fact.¹⁰ Hence, Giovanna becomes a stern guarantor of rights opposed to the arrogance of Enrico, the French lieutenant who is impatient to send his prisoners to the stake.

Aside from the morality of the subject, the difficulties of the Maid on her way to the stage depended, especially in France, on the impossibility of making her story obey pseudo-Aristotelian rules. Three years of a life spent roving across a devastated country, passing from a siege to a battlefield, from a coronation ceremony to a trial, from capture to prison were tough to compress in a unitary action.¹¹ The solution of singling out a particular episode was risky *per se*; the well known inconveniences of theatrical practice were additional bugbears; furthermore, in a cultural context dominated by classicism the choice of Joan of Arc as the protagonist of an opera required a good deal of courage.

1.3. *Music and scene*

Antonio Zardon, the impresario of Vicenza’s Teatro Eretenio, had engaged two famous singers for the summer season of 1789: the soprano Francesco Roncaglia and the tenor Matteo Babini. The idea of bringing the character of Joan of Arc to the stage without the presence of a great

⁹ The versions of the story found in the books listed in Moréri’s bibliography are not very different from his version; the only exception is that of Joan’s denigrator, B. DE GIRARD DU HAILLAN, *De l’estat et succez des affaires de France, depuis Pharamond, jusqu’au roi Louis onzieme*, Paris, L’Huillier, 1570, but it is unlikely that Sografi, whose intention was to magnify the Maid, made any use of it. The double is a standard sacrifice motif, see V. VALERI, *Uno spazio tra sé e sé. L’antropologia come ricerca del soggetto*, ed. M. Feldman and J. Hoskins, Italian trans. B. Lazzaro, Roma, Donzelli, 1999.

¹⁰ Bernardin de Saint-Pierre suggested the possibility of a love affair between Joan and Dunois, but the Bastard of France is not among the characters of Sografi’s libretto.

¹¹ Cf. TH.-J. DE PUYMAIGRE, *Jeanne d’Arc au théâtre 1439-1875*, Paris, Duniol, 1875 (rev. ed. *ibid.*, Savine, 1890).

primadonna may seem preposterous, yet a look at *Giovanna d'Arco* reveals that Sografi and Andreozzi's pivot is not the Maid, but the English leader Giovanni Talbot (henceforth simply Talbot). On the other hand, the youth and artistic immaturity of Teresa Macciorletti gave Giovanna an air of *vraisemblance* ideal for a work that introduced elements of bourgeois drama into the body of opera seria.¹²

The action of *Giovanna d'Arco* takes place at Orléans, where the defeated Talbot is about to be executed. His son Riccardo reveals to his friend Gilberto his past affair with Giovanna. Riccardo is willing to implore his former lover to release his father, offering his life in exchange. Giovanna, who still loves Riccardo but must be faithful to her mission, is desperate. When Talbot finds out that Riccardo has asked Giovanna to spare his life, Talbot becomes furious and curses his son. At the beginning of Act III the French sentence both men to death. Giovanna invokes the Heavens in the hope of obtaining some good advice, but in the next scene the young man shows his heroic determination to die. Talbot is now proud of his son, and blesses him. The French leader Enrico makes his soldiers prepare the stake, but Giovanna points out that no penalty can be inflicted before the arrival of the king. Enrico wants her to keep quiet, but she threatens him with her sword. Talbot stops them both declaring his indifference, thus highlighting his imposing moral stature. The Talbots are about to be burned at the stake, but then the king arrives. He grants Giovanna the right to the prisoners' lives. Giovanna thanks him and releases them both, then falls down in ecstatic rapture and reaffirms her wish to fight.

(continues on p. 58)

¹² Cf. S. CASTELVECCHI, *Sentimental Opera: The Emergence of a Genre*, Ph.D. diss., Ann Arbor, Mich., UMI, 1996. The name of Macciorletti is first recorded in the production of Astarita's *Ipermestra*, an opera based on a libretto by Metastasio first performed at Venice's Teatro di S. Benedetto during the Ascension season of 1789, with Teresa in the title role. The biography of Macciorletti (sometimes spelled Maciurletti, Marcioletti, etc.) is not very clear: it is possible to trace her career, which started in Italy and continued in Russia after 1796, until 1800; then it becomes obscure (cf. C. SARTORI, *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800*, Cuneo, Bertola e Locatelli, 1990-94, *Indici/II*, *sub voce*). Macciorletti's Turinese origins are suggested in C. L. CURIEL, *Il Teatro S. Pietro di Trieste, 1690-1801*, Milano, Archetipografia di Milano, 1937; a leaflet preserved in I-TSmt contains an anonymous sonnet «al merito impareggiabile della signora Teresa Marcioletti Blasi prima donna nel Ces. Reg. Teatro di Trieste nel carnevale MDCCCLXXXI». In carnival 1791 Macciorletti sang the roles of Medea and Ippolita in two new operas to as many Sografi librettos, both premiered at Venice's Teatro di S. Samuele (Giuseppe Gazzaniga's *Gli Argonauti in Colco, o sia La conquista del vello d'oro* and Sebastiano Nasolini's *Ercole al Termodonte, ossia Ippolita regina delle Amazoni*). The clue concerning her youth comes from the second quatrain, «Quella voce sì amena e sì gentile | se tu coltivi ognor con tanto impegno, | varcherai chiara ove erse Alcide il legno | ed alle sponde dell'estrema Tile [sic!].».

10 **Allegro**

GIOVANNA
RICCARDO

(dopo qualche pausa)

TALBOT

(Che in - te - si! che a - scol - ta - i! qual mi si schiu - de i - nat - te - so mi -

Allegro

Violini I e II

Viola I e II

Bassi

p

13 (a Riccardo)

- ste - ro!) A tan - to giun - se <il> tuo per - fi - do cor!...

f

VI. I all' 8^{va}

sf

16 (a Giovanna)

A tan - to il tuo ma - le - fi - co po - ter!...

(errando furibondo per la scena)

Fu - rie d'A -

sf

Mus. Ex. 1 – G. ANDREOZZI, *Giovanna d'Arco*, Scena e Terzetto (II, vi: Scena).

19

- ver - no, che in que - sto or - ri - bil gior - no tut - te rac - col - te già mi sen - to in

fpp

22

sen, l'au - re che an - cor re - spi - ro, spar - ge - te d'in - fer - nal a - tro ve - le - no...

f

25

GIOVANNA

Ah du - ce!... Ah ge - ni -

RICCARDO

e fa - te che su d'es - si il mio fu - ro - re...

f

fpp

29

- tor!... Ah quan - t'or - ro - re! ah quan - t'or - ro - re!

con le parti

Ah quan - t'or - ro - re! ah quan - t'or - ro - re!

p

f

[*f*] segue Terzetto

The music of *Giovanna d'Arco* is preserved only in part. No clues about Andreozzi's autograph are known; a manuscript copy of the complete score once preserved in Ricordi's historical archive was last recorded in 1855; no printings – either complete, or of separate pieces – seem to have ever existed. The manuscript fragments that have surfaced thus far are preserved at Bologna, Padua, Parma, Rome, Venice, and San Francisco.¹³ They give an insight into the numbers listed below (Giovanna = G; Riccardo = R; Talbot = T):

<i>Act, sc.</i>	<i>ch.</i>	<i>piece</i>	<i>incipit</i>
I, vi	T	Aria	«Da quelle lagrime»
II, vi	GRT	Scena e Terzetto	«Che intesi! ... Perfido! riedi al campo!»
III, v [= IV]	R	Rondò	«Deh, se ancor ti parla al core»
III, vii	RT	Scena e Duettino	«Giuro pel tuo valore»
IV, ii	T	Scena e Aria	«No, quest'anime non sanno»

The first thing to notice is Giovanna's musical reticence: in fact, no evidence survives of her three individual numbers (I, v; III, iii; IV, iv). The pieces available today give some idea of the music written for the assignees of the roles of Giovanni and Riccardo Talbot. Two of these pieces exist in multiple copies: the most authoritative are those in Bologna's Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, the institution preserving several scores from the repertoire of Matteo Babini, the interpreter of Talbot's role the others prove how successful the music of *Giovanna d'Arco* was – especially Talbot's final Aria – until the mid-nineteenth century.

Therefore, the sources allow an outline of Giovanna's musical nature only in the Trio at the end of Act II, where the debutant interacts with the Talbots. In this scene – the first of the two emotional peaks of the opera, and by far the best piece surviving – Talbot's heroic character comes to the

¹³ I, vi: I-PAc (ms. Sanv. A. 20 34790); II, vi: I-Vnm, ms. It. IV 1546 = 11233; III, v [= iv]: I-PAc (ms. Sanv. A. 25 34795); III, vii: I-Bc (ms. CC.194), and US-SFsc (ms. *M2.5 v. 63); IV, ii: I-Bc (ms. CC.189), I-Pca (ms. 1460 D II), I-Rsc (Fondo Mario, A. Ms, 2719, cc. 88-93, and Fondo Mario, A. Ms, 2719, cc. 94-122), I-Vmc (Busta XIV, n. 196), I-Vnm (ms. It. IV, 11233/5), and I-Vcr (in the *Catalogo delle opere musicali teoriche e pratiche di autori vissuti sino ai primi decenni del secolo XIX, esistenti nelle biblioteche e negli archivi pubblici e privati d'Italia. Città di Venezia: Catalogo delle musiche possedute dalla Pia Casa di Ricovero, antico "Ospitaletto"*, ed. G. Concina and A. d'Este, s. VI/1, n. 3, Parma, Fresching, 1914, p. 69, the piece is said to have been inserted in G. de Gamerra's and G. Giordani's *Erifile*, Venice, Teatro di S. Samuele, autumn 1789, on the occasion of the revival that took place in the same venue of the debut on the inaugural night of carnival 1791).

fore no less than the impetus of his son, determined to obtain forgiveness from him for his shameful affair. In comparison to her partners, Giovanna has few chances to emerge, as the piece is dominated by the vigorous style of Talbot and by the passionate accents of Riccardo. The vocal line of the Maid does not display any remarkable features, hence there is no point in analyzing it in detail. By contrast, the accompanied recitative composed for Babini is Giovanna's best surviving output (Mus. Ex. 1, here p. 56 f.).¹⁴

The recitative builds up Talbot's anger over thirty tortuous bars. Giovanna and Riccardo's dismay («Ah, quanto orrore») yields to their appeal to the gods (ottonari, «Dèi pietosi che scorgete | le procelle di quell'alma»). Talbot's response draws strength from the heroic musical lexicon, showing an impressive movement in the bass, a perceptible increase in the harmonic rhythm, and some expressive breaks in the verse. The final quatrain is sung by the two culprits, whose submission to the moral figure of the old man is suggested by the way their singing slides into his musical sphere. Talbot burns a quatrain into the ears of his son («Perfido! riedi al campo; | torna di lauri cinto, | del genitore estinto | le offese a cancellar»); Andreozzi's setting shows an ability worthy of Gluck. (Mus. Ex. 2, here p. 60 f.). These features are peculiar to the old warrior's pieces. They are prominent in his individual numbers, yet they show up also in «Giuro pel tuo valore» (III, VII), the dramatic Duet in which Talbot is reconciled with Riccardo.

The dramatic effectiveness of these scenes was enhanced by the work of the scenographer Francesco Fontanesi.¹⁵ Since the founding of Vicenza's Teatro Eretenio in 1784, its scenes had been supplied by Antonio Mauro, who came from a family of painters active for decades in Venetia. Until the fall of the Republic (1797) the only exception to this rule was Fontanesi – an artist famous for the asymmetry of his scenes full of sentimental elements.¹⁶ Unfortunately, no production materials for *Giovanna d'Arco*

¹⁴ Babini had just refined his declamatory skills in Paris; cf. P. BRIGHENTI, *Elogio di Matteo Babini detto al Liceo Filarmonico di Bologna nella solenne distribuzione dei premi musicali il 9 luglio 1819*, Bologna, Nobili, 1821.

¹⁵ Cf. Francesco Fontanesi 1751-1795. *Scenografia e decorazione nella seconda metà del Settecento*, ed. M. Pigozzi, Reggio nell'Emilia, Grafis, 1988, p. 31.

¹⁶ Standard works tend to consider Mauro's replacement by Fontanesi as an accidental fact; see F. FORMENTON, *Storia del Teatro Eretenio di Vicenza dalla sua fondazione sino al giorno 22 settembre 1867*, Vicenza, Staider, 1868; R. SCHIAVO, *Il Teatro Eretenio tra cronaca e storia. Nel bicentenario della inaugurazione (1784)*, Vicenza, Accademia Olimpica, 1983; F. MANCINI - M. T. MURARO - E. POVOLEDO, *I teatri del Veneto*, II, Venezia, Regione Veneto - Corbo e Fiore, 1985, p. 263. As opposed to Mauro, Fontanesi never worked for different theatres simultaneously,

Allegretto

Oboe I e II

(dopo qualche pausa riavendosi, e nuovamente abbandonandosi allo sdegno)

TALBOT

Per-fi-do! per-fi-do! rie-di-al cam-po,

Allegretto

Violini I e II

Viole I e II

Bassi

Cor. Mi \flat

tor-na di lau-ri cin-to del ge-ni-to-re e-stin-to l'of-

Mus. Ex. 2 – G. ANDREOZZI, *Giovanna d'Arco*, Scena e Terzetto (II, VI: Terzetto).

9 Ob.

fe - se_a ven - di - car, l'of - fe - se_a ven - di - car.

f *p*

survive other than the libretto, hence the originality of Fontanesi's contribution can only be guessed from Sografi's descriptions.¹⁷

The scenery was clearly intended to focus the spectator's attention on Talbot, the character interpreted by Babini, the first heroic tenor in the history of Italian opera. In fact, this was consistent with the ideology of bourgeois drama, which involved a spectator attracted towards the stage, and no longer thought of as a passive subject seduced by a *virtuoso* drawing vocal arabesques in the dramaturgically neutral proscenium space.¹⁸ However important it might be, this new aesthetic tendency was only one of the features of a largely hybrid opera. With its substantial conformity to the Neapolitan tradition, the style of Andreozzi's music

except for a short period (1788-91) during carnival, when his contributions are recorded at Venice's Teatro di S. Benedetto and at the Teatro Pubblico of his native city, Reggio. Fontanesi's habit was to draw and paint new scenes for each production, without recycling materials from one to another, as most of his colleagues did.

¹⁷ See for example the setting of the very dramatic Act II: «Notte. Parte rimota della città corrispondente alla Loira ingombrata da siepi e sassi, che formano quasi ad arte vari nascondigli irraggiati alcun poco dal chiarore della luna, che lentamente s'illanguidisce a proporzione che va nascendo il giorno. Veduta in qualche distanza d'una parte abitata del paese dove suppongonsi le carceri, nelle quali sta rinchiuso Talbot»; with the fading moonlight revealing a series of hiding-places spread over a wild landscape, the description seems to be taken from a Gothic novel.

¹⁸ Cf. D. HEARTZ, *From Garrick to Gluck: The Reform of Theatre and Opera in the Mid-Eighteenth Century*, «Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association», XCIV, 1967/68, pp. 111-127.

shows this hiatus clearly: the plasticity of the recitatives, however, is a clue to his tuning into the newest trends.

1.4. *Pyramid and Wheel*

Sografi's libretto respects one of the paradigms of opera seria, the conflict between desire and duty, but introduces a variant in another one, the celebration of the magnanimous sovereign. Intervening as a *deus ex machina*, the king limits himself to approving Giovanna's wish.¹⁹ Blessed by Charles VII, the Maid of Orléans reaches the middle of the stage and utters a solemn speech:

GIOVANNA Clementissimo Re. Delle mie imprese
fia questa la minor. Sì, questo core
reso è per te maggiore
e di sì eccelso dono
farà veder che non indegna sono.

(*ai prigionieri*)

E libertade e vita
voi avrete da me; né fia per questo

(*ai duci e al popolo*)

che de' nostri guerrieri
obliando la sorte
trarli io non voglia dalle lor ritorte.
Riccardo, se in tal giorno
a tuo pro m'adoprai, se dissi almeno
questa sola mercé, le andate cose
copri d'eterno oblio,
né d'oscurar ti piaccia
il fulgido splendor del nome mio.
Clementissimo Re, duci, guerrieri,
popol, tutti m'udite.
Torneranno, lo giuro,
col favor degli dèi
sul cammin della gloria i giorni miei.

(*come invasa e rapita da marzial furore*)

Meco a pugnar discendano
dalle sublimi sfere
cento immortali schiere
di spiriti guerrier.

¹⁹ Vi89, IV, IV, Carlo VII: «A te su dessi, | armigera donzella, | ogni più esteso dritto | mi è grato l'accordar».

Vado riaccesa, intrepida
ad affrontar la morte,
tra i nembi della sorte
io m'aprirò il sentier.

At the end of the opera, it is the shepherdess who is at the top of the pyramid and not the king, as was the rule. Beyond this, *Giovanna d'Arco* also distances itself from the traditional schemata through the massive presence of the chorus, which is given a basically "Greek" function, and through the pre-eminence of (often accompanied) recitative, supplied in spite of the presence of great singers on stage: clearly, this is a stylistic choice which derives from the availability of an artist like Babini.²⁰

Every performance of *Giovanna d'Arco* was followed by a country dance («Ballo campestre») enriched by a ballet choreographed by Gaetano Gioia, another artist destined for a successful career who debuted at Vicenza's Teatro Eretenio on that very 27 June 1789. The title of his work, *La morte di Sofonisba*, cannot pass unnoticed in a production taking place in the city of Gian Giorgio Trissino, the author of a celebrated *pièce* on that subject. Unfortunately, the libretto of *Giovanna d'Arco* does not conform to the model of the 1784 and '87 seasons, which were lavish with information about ballet sources, subjects, and plots. Hence, it is impossible to establish whether Gioia, Zardon, or the members of the Accademia Eretenia meant to pay homage to the great Vicentine.²¹

The Carthaginian princess posed a tragic alternative to Giovanna's destiny: contrasting with the bloodless end of the opera (yet not with

²⁰ This is particularly remarkable considering the excision of all choral interventions in the works staged at Vicenza's Teatro Eretenio in the summers of 1784 and '87, the only two devoted to opera seria before 1789. (A negligible exception is the moralizing quatrain sung by the chorus in the last scene of Moretti-Sarti's *Idalide*, probably sung by all soloists together.)

²¹ The ballet could derive either from Trissino's tragedy, or from others, for instance from Vittorio Alfieri's recent one. A prototype of anti-Metastasian drama, the latter was begun in Colmar in the summer of 1784 and finished in the spring of '87. Soon thereafter, it was published in Paris by Didot, the publisher of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Études*. (For a critical edition, see V. ALFIERI, *Opere*, Asti, Casa d'Alfieri, XXX: *Tragedie*, ed. L. Rossi, 1989.) On the opposition between Alfieri and Metastasio, see A. W. SCHLEGEL, *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* (1808), 2 parts in 3 vols., Heidelberg, Mohr & Zimmer, 1809-11, part I, class 9. The absence of records leaves room for all possible hypotheses about the source exploited by Gioia, from ancient historians to Voltaire's recent work – a low-profile re-working of Jean de Mairet's *Sophonisbe* (1634) that disappeared from the scene after four performances in 1774 –, or one of the operas that flourished earlier in the century on librettos by Francesco Silvani, Antonio Maria Zanetti, Gaetano Roccaforte, Mattia Verazi, and Giovanni Gualberto Bottarelli. (Traetta's opera on Verazi's text, first performed at Mannheim's Court Theatre in 1762, is the most famous among them.)

Joan's historic destiny, universally acknowledged in her biography), Gioia's ballet introduced the missing ingredient in the whole spectacle at the time (classical tragedy plus modern history plus progressive scenography).²² The composition of *La morte di Sofonisba* and that of *Giovanna d'Arco* followed independent routes, but the structure of the Vicentine nights was anything but accidental: featuring only one opera, the season established a fixed pairing in the representation of Giovanna's and Sofonisba's stories.²³

Enriched with a tragic ballet, an opera seria with traces of bourgeois drama and imbued with egalitarianism made up a spectacle in tune with a most flagrant upsetting of the social pyramid: the showing of a machine called "La ruota" ("The wheel", see Plate 1). This fantastic machinery was the key feature of the Vicentine celebrations for Corpus Christi Day:

La forma della stessa è di alta ed elegante piramide, la di cui altezza supera i sessanta piedi vicentini. Perfetta poi si è la sua struttura, ed i suoi lineamenti son maestosi insieme e brillanti, per formarsi la giusta idea basta il dire esser l'essenziale suo disegno dell'immortale Palladio. Un'ampia scalinata guardata da due cavalli co' suoi cavalieri, e da alcuni fanti vestiti in abito eroico, apre nobilmente l'ingresso a un grand'atrio formato da due colonne o cariatidi coi corrispondenti pilastri, e terminato da una nobile cornice corinzia. Entro a detto arco o volta si osserva una rotonda macchina ove in mobili cune si ritrovano collocati vari fanciulli in uniforme elegante vestito, i quali girano all'intorno col girare di detta ruota, restando però sempre col capo in natural positura.

Al di sopra poi la gran macchina va gradatamente restringendosi, onde proporzionatamente prendere quell'acuta forma che nella sua sommità ritiene; e dopo alcuni membri architettonici ed ornamenti, fra cui si osserva in tutto rilievo lo stemma della città, sorge un'ampia loggia sostenuta da vario ordine di colonne, in mezzo a cui si scorge un fanciullo rappresentante la Giustizia colle bilance e spada fra le mani, manto reale pendente ed aurea corona al capo. Al di sopra si riscontrano le insegne del principe sovrano, e dopo alcuni piedi di altezza si vede posto alla sommità della gran macchina un picciolo garzone, ma di grande ardire, il quale

²² In his discussion of *Sofonisba*, Schlegel underlines the inconsistency of Trissino who, in spite of his pseudo-Aristotelian orthodoxy, used the guidelines of ancient tragedy to stage history instead of myth.

²³ An excerpt from Zardon's address to the Most Excellent Lords sheds light on his desire to stage a performance capable of rewarding the high expectations of his audience (Vi89, p. 3 f.: «Alcune sinistre combinazioni troppo facili a succedere in sì malagevoli imprese, se hanno saputo spargere qualche ombra di sospetto sulle mie direzioni, hanno per conseguenza eccitato nell'animo mio un nuovo e più forte stimolo, onde manifestare con tutti gli sforzi possibili quanto io preghi l'onore della pubblica opinione»). Such a statement is without precedent in librettos of earlier seasons of opera seria at Vicenza.

agitando fra le mani una rossa bandiera eccita la sottoposta moltitudine alla festa e agli evviva. Viene poi l'eccelsa mole coronata da elegante coperta sul gusto cinese, e ad ogni tratto della stessa si osservano collocati de' fanciulli armati di scudo e lancia, che servono di ornamento e animano in certo modo la macchina stessa, la quale inoltre per ogni lato si scorge ornata di scudi, di usberghi, di elmi ed altri antichi guerrieri ornamenti, come pure degli stemmi gentilizi dei nobili deputati attuali della città. Una tal eccelsa piramide è portata in giro da circa cento nerboruti facchini tutti ornati da uniforme e colorato berretto.²⁴

The origin of the Wheel dates back to the decades following Vicenza's submission to the Lion of Saint Mark (1404).²⁵ The machinery was originally intended by its patrons (the College of Notaries) as a definitive embellishment of the tabernacle taken around during the procession on Corpus Christi Day.²⁶ Accordingly, the Wheel was constructed for the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the "Dedizione" (1444) to represent the alternation of the offices among the notaries. Even if its display was linked to the religious service, the Wheel gradually acquired a parallel, independent status. The growing appeal of the machine did not please the Church, which worried about the decreasing interest of the people in the holy procession.²⁷ The display of the Wheel took place after the service and before the horse-race (*Palio*) run on the parade-ground in the afternoon. Sometimes, however, it was so spectacular that it led to a change in protocol: the *Palio* was run first, the service followed, and the

²⁴ *Notizie delli due secoli XVIII e XIX spettanti alla Città di Vicenza raccolte da me Giuseppe Dian Mansionario della Cattedrale*, ms. I-VIb, fasc. III (1780 - July 1797), p. 540 f. The lengthy description of the service and of the procession (pp. 536-549) is a sort of Appendix to the chronicle of the year 1790; hence, Dian's portrait comes at an ideal point to the ends of this study. Yet at the time of the procession described in the *Notizie* – a work begun in 1806 – the chronicler was only nine. The volume containing the report is the third of seven pieces covering the years 1700-1825 and may have been written around twenty years after the event.

²⁵ The historic circumstances of the "Dedizione" – the submission to Venice – are summarized in E. FRANZINA, *Vicenza. Storia di una città*, Vicenza, Pozza, 1980. For a detailed overview about the development of the Wheel over the centuries, see W. and A. STEFANI, *Vicenza e la Rua*, *ibid.*, 1985.

²⁶ Although it was not mentioned in the bull in which Urban IV established Corpus Christi's Day feast, everywhere in Italy the procession became a gorgeous pageant in which sovereigns and princes took part, as well as magistrates and members of trade and craft guilds. In the 15th century the custom became almost universal of following the procession with the performance of miracle plays and mysteries, generally arranged and acted by members of the guilds who had formed part of the pageant.

²⁷ Contrary to Dian's statement, Palladio did not make the drawings for the Wheel but limited himself to directing the hundredth exhibition in 1543. In 1785 the Wheel acquired the status of Vicenza's official civic symbol and began to be funded by the city council.

secular procession became the culminating event of the day. Acquiring the features of a Bacchanal, the display of the Wheel in eighteenth-century Vicenza surpassed even Carnival's festive proceedings. By the mid-sixteenth century the original idea of alternation in notarial offices embodied by the Wheel had already developed into that of the instability of Fortune. Quite spontaneously, a decodification of the symbol in terms of an icon for (the hope of) social change had been the next step. Though political claims were never attached explicitly to the procession, the blurring of social barriers at the time of the first operatic seasons at the Teatro Eretenio had become the primary ingredient of the festivity:

A' giorni nostri osserviamo che quelle pubbliche dimostrazioni di religiosa pompa, istituite da' nostri maggiori per onorare il prezioso oggetto che in tal giorno ci propone la fede da venerarsi, sono convertite in profano e clamoroso spettacolo. Fuori infatti della solenne processione, un tal giorno in Vicenza è tutto dedicato al bagordo e alla profanazione ... Terminatasi nella cattedrale la solenne processione con la benedizione del Venerabile, immediatamente i vari ordini de' cittadini si dedicano alla comparsa, all'allegria, alla festa e al tripudio. Le piazze e le contrade principali della città si veggono affollate dalla baccante turba popolare. Si veggono frammischiati nobili e plebei, cittadini e artieri, i quali tutti confondendosi fanno un solo popolo. Si osservano gli uni armati di spada fra le mani, gli altri portano lunghi ed acuti legni, od allegorici emblemi, o festosi agitano colorate bandiere; chi canta o suona, chi fischia o schiamazza, chi danza o corre invitando in tal modo di rinnovellare l'annua nazionale festa e spettacolo, di far girare cioè per le vie della città quella grandiosa macchina che volgarmente Ruota appellasi.²⁸

The populace took an active role in the spectacle of the Wheel, an open-air event with highly theatrical features organized by an impresario who was asked to honour a three year contract. Hence, the procession acted as a pop-cultural counterpoint to the operatic performances taking place at the Teatro Eretenio. In 1791 the late occurrence of Corpus Christi (23 June) caused a merging of every possible spectacle:

Vicenza è allagata da ieri da un torrente incredibile di forastieri, che cominciò a piombar ieri e proseguì tutt'oggi senza interruzione. Basti dire che da 22 ore fino alle 24 entrarono per la porta di Padova 63 legni di forastieri. Non è già per la funzione del Corpus Domini che sarà domani, ma sì perché questa sera va in isce-na un'opera seria di qualche aspettazione, secondo l'entusiasmo del secolo per il teatro. Non mi chiedete che contrassegno sia questo.²⁹

²⁸ DIAN, *Notizie* cit., pp. 536 and 540.

²⁹ TORNIERI, *Memorie di Vicenza* cit., 22 June 1791, p. 205. The next day the chronicler informs

Dian's report matches standard Carnival descriptions, but the lack of masking and the connection with a religious feast move the procession of the Wheel away from simple fiction. Vicenza's unique event acquired the features of a popular reconfiguration of the social order and dramatised year by year the fading of class distinctions ideally supported by Freemasonry and pursued by the Agrarian Academy.³⁰ The fact that one of the five patrons of Vicenza's main theatre (Gualdinello Bissari) was, at the same time, a freemason, a Jacobin *in pectore*, an Agrarian Academician, and the Superintendent of the Wheel, is still not enough to explain why the stage of the Eretenio was so suitable for Joan of Arc's debut: in fact, there is a final good reason for Vicenza being the place where the Maid of Orléans was first performed.

1.5. *Vi(n)cenza*

For a quarter of a century following the "Dedizione", Vicenza was afflicted by a plague epidemic that reached its peak between 1425 and '28. On the morning of 7 March 1426 the Holy Virgin appeared to the pious septuagenarian Vincenza Pasini on Monte Berico, the hill that dominates the city from the right bank of the Retrone. (Vicenza's new theatre was named after this river which was called Eretenus in Latin.) The country-woman was bringing food to her husband, who was working in a vineyard in the neighbourhood. The surprise made her fall flat on her face, but she managed to save the food. The Virgin told Vincenza to go down into the town and announce to the Vicentines that, in order to recover healed from the plague, they had to build a church on Monte Berico. The events that followed are predictable: nobody believed the old woman, yet she climbed the hill each morning and spent hours praying on her knees in the place where the Virgin had appeared. Two-and-a-half years later, on 1 August 1428, Mary reappeared and repeated her order to Vincenza. On 25 August, twenty-four days after the second apparition and twenty-four

us that the protocol of the celebrations had unfolded itself as follows: (1) procession of the tabernacle; (2) procession of the Wheel; (3) *Palio*, and (4) opera (Sografi-Nasolini, *La morte di Cleopatra*, new libretto in I-VIb). The impresario's address to Vicenza's captain vice-podestà Girolamo Barbaro (pp. 3-5 of the libretto) includes an apology for the delay, presumably of several days, with which the opera was performed. Therefore, the original intention of the impresario – the above-mentioned Zardon – was to start the season well ahead of Corpus Christi Day.

³⁰ The Vicentine lodge used to meet at Count Velo's home (a few steps away from the Teatro Eretenio) was closed by an official decree on 9 May 1785. This measure had the indirect effect of strengthening the Academy and making its members work on practical projects of agrarian reform.

years after the beginning of the epidemic, the foundation stone of the Marian church of Monte Berico was laid. Since then the virulence of the plague began to decrease and Vicenza recovered.

The mixture of truth, fiction, and symbols in the report is self-evident. A vast amount of literature was written about the case, based on the sole contemporary document existing, a manuscript written after Vincenza's death.³¹ This is not the place to undertake the task of separating myth from facts: what is important in this context is the importance given to the legend by Vicenza, documented also in a polyptych painted at the end of the sixteenth century and preserved in the sacristy of the sanctuary.³² Even today, Vincenza is Vicenza's most beloved blessed soul, and nothing could suggest this popularity better than the onomastic contiguity between the two names.³³ Monte Berico was visited by all battle-winners for over five centuries, and until this day a procession to the sanctuary takes place every 25 August.

To sum up, the city of Joan of Arc's stage debut had its own visionary heroine. The events that make her a protagonist of history took place while the girl of Domrémy was becoming the Maid of Orléans. Vincenza was neither a youth, nor a female warrior raiding her country from one place to another: she was a very serene woman who spent her active life on the fertile ground of the Most Serene Republic. However, like the Maid, she was able to gain the hearts of her fellow-citizens, and to convince them to help her in what she felt compelled to do. Much as the Vicentines followed Vincenza in their fight against an invisible but even more deadly enemy, the French followed Joan in their fight against an overbearing intruder. Together with the tradition of the Wheel and the syncretistic vocation of

³¹ Dated 18 January 1431 but possibly later, the manuscript preserved in I-VIb (*Processus factus in modum verae informationis...*) is transcribed in S. RUMOR, *Storia documentata del Santuario di Monte Berico*, Vicenza, Officina grafica pontificia S. Giuseppe, 1911, pp. 397-428. Two major studies on the subject are G. MANTESE, *Memorie storiche della Chiesa vicentina*, III/2: *Dal 1404 al 1563*, Vicenza, Pozza, 1964, and G. M. TODESCATO, *Origini del Santuario della Madonna di Monte Berico*, Vicenza, Edizioni dei Servi di Maria, 1982.

³² The polyptych is reproduced in RUMOR, *Storia documentata* cit.

³³ The identity of Vincenza was never ascertained: her alleged last name, Pasini, was very popular in her birthplace (Sovizzo, a village in the valley of the Retrone); her first name – already recorded in the manuscript of 1431 («*Vincentia si quidem ut rei originem non omitam femina oriunda ex Villa Sovicii Vicentini districtus jamque diutinis temporibus civitatis Vincentiae habitatrix...*») – was probably drawn from that of the city that owed its salvation to her faith. Until 1810 a portrait of Vincenza, painted in 1428 by the Senese Girolamo Tonisi (reproduced in TODESCATO, *Origini* cit., p. 67), was preserved in Vicenza's Chiesa di Ognissanti, the place where the blessed was first buried. Her corpse was then transferred to the sanctuary of Monte Berico, together with her portrait.

its receptive intelligentsia, the exemplum of Vincenza makes Vicenza anything but puzzling as the place for the stage debut of the Maid of Orléans.

2. VENICE, 1797

2.1. "Hommage à Bonaparte", or rather to a great tenor

Eight years after its debut, *Giovanna d'Arco* was revived in the extraordinary summer season organized at La Fenice during the French occupation that culminated in the visit of Bonaparte. The inspirer of the project carried out by the revolutionary Bureau for Public Education was Sografi who, in the meantime, had become a leading Jacobin.³⁴

During the Ascension season Sografi had succeeded in staging two truculent subjects of his own: Cimarosa's *Gli Orazi e i Curiazi* and Zingarelli's *La morte di Mitridate*. After opening with the story of another tyrant's death (*La morte di Cesare*, by Gaetano Sertor and Francesco Bianchi), the summer season ended with the bloodless triumph of the Maid of Orléans. Celebrating opposition to tyrants through the deeds of the king of Pontus and of Junius Brutus respectively, La Fenice then paid homage to its occupiers by means of an openly Francophile opera.³⁵ A major contribution to the visual and phonic impact of the work was the bigger choir: that of La Fenice was almost three times larger than the one used at the Eretenio (thirty-six people instead of thirteen). This increase is meaningful not so much in comparison to Vicenza's 1789 production, but in comparison to the production that had taken place at La Fenice two months before: during the Ascension, in fact, the choir of La Fenice counted no more than sixteen singers. French grandeur was a basic requirement for paying homage to France's First Consul, but a veto on the production of patriotic arias was also necessary. In fact, in May this prohibition was made explicit in a list of duties given to the impresario by a member of the Bureau.³⁶

³⁴ After the debut at Vicenza, the only ascertained revival of *Giovanna d'Arco* is the one at Trieste's Teatro di S. Pietro (22 May 1790, libretto now missing, impresario Zardon, singers Macciorletti and Babini). The performance of the «dramma serio la *Giovanna d'Arco*» was announced in the press twice (cf. the «Notizie di Mare», XXXVIII, 12 May 1790, p. 446, and the «Osservatore triestino», XXXIX, 15 May 1790).

³⁵ *Giovanna d'Arco* was performed 16 times at La Fenice between 19 August and 17 September 1797 (cf. «Giornale dei Teatri di Venezia», then issued together with the «Teatro moderno applaudito», XV, September 1797).

³⁶ I-Vas, «Democrazia», 88.6.14; cit. in M. FELDMAN, *Opera, Festivity, and Spectacle in*

According to a widely accepted thesis, apart from the episode of the *Festa in Teatro gratis al popolo* (28 May 1797), La Fenice was the embalming room for several Most Serene myths. Martha Feldman concludes her study of Zingarelli's *Mitridate* stating that «if the revolutionary opera at La Fenice shattered some axioms of aristocratic absolutism, in other ways it merely retooled them through new modes of mystification that reclaimed collective celebration as the central aim of opera seria».³⁷

The hybrid nature displayed by Vicenza's *Giovanna d'Arco* shows much interest in the adaptation worked out on the occasion of the Venetian repechage. In line with French custom, according to which the only genre of entertainment suitable for the solemnity of great events was the *tragédie lyrique*, the first novelty in the libretto of La Fenice (henceforth Ve97) is the appearance of the term *opera seria* on the frontispiece. Another novelty is less evident at first sight, but much more important: as expected, in the operas performed in those months Babini interpreted the heroic roles of Marco Orazio, Mitridate, and Giunio Bruto; quite strangely, he shows up in *Giovanna d'Arco* in the role of Riccardo.³⁸ Talbot's role, historically his own, went to Elisabetta Gafforini, the contralto celebrated in Stendhal's *Vie de Haydn, de Mozart et de Métastase* who at the start of her career used to sing as *primo uomo*.³⁹ From the time of the debut of Bianchi's opera at Venice's Teatro di S. Samuele on the opening night of carnival 1789, the role of Giulio Cesare had been sung by a castrato, hence the fact that it was assigned to Gafforini indicates a change in singing praxis. In contrast to that case, the exchange of vocal register between the Talbots (originally a tenor, Giovanni became a contralto *en travesti*; originally a castrato, Riccardo became a tenor) took away much of the energy of a "heroic" tenor from the pivotal character of *Giovanna d'Arco*. Obsequious to the idea of democracy, the Venetian production eradicated the role of the king, which was scenically marginal but ideologically essential. Whether

"Revolutionary" Venice: Phantasms of Time and History, in *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297-1797*, ed. J. Martin and D. Romano, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, pp. 217-260.

³⁷ FELDMAN, *Opera, Festivity, and Spectacle* cit., p. 260.

³⁸ On the occasion of the debut of Cimarosa's *Orazi e Curiazi* (Venice, Teatro La Fenice, 26 December 1796), Babini had begun performing roles of famous historic characters wearing historically plausible clothes.

³⁹ Gafforini had just interpreted the title-role in Bianchi's *La morte di Cesare*. The qualities for which she became famous were the exceptional amplitude, versatility, clarity, and sonority of her voice.

deliberate or depending on contingency, these choices had the effect of giving more status to Giovanna.

This refashioning can be summarized as follows: (1) Giovanna is no longer praised for her purity (Vi89, I, IV, Coro: «O immacolata guerriera donzella»), nor for her mission (*ibid.*: «per lei ritorna | agli oscurati gigli | il primiero candore»); (2) Giovanna does not name her sword («acciaro»), something she did twice in Vi89 (I, v, in an Aria certainly revised as for the music: in fact, the meaning of its verbal text remained unaltered, while the meter of its quatrains was changed from ottonari to settenari), nor does she raise it in her dispute with Enrico (fuelled by the antagonists, a skirmish takes place between the members of the two factions, but their respective leaders do not actively participate in it); (3) Giovanna now has a confidante, Elisa, who (a) replaces the chorus in legitimizing the brave deeds of the Maid (Ve97, I, IV), (b) invokes the Gods in the Aria (III, VI) that links the Duet of reconciliation between the Talbots and the scene in which Enrico orders his bravoos to execute the judgement; (4) the missed arrival of the king (as mentioned above, in Ve97 Carlo does no longer appear in the list of characters) simplifies the conclusion. In the space of just two lines the Maid orders the immediate sending away of Enrico, stopped by his own soldiers in the scuffle, and releases the two Englishmen. Then the Choir praises her clemency in a Chorus that replaces the scene in which, furious about the mercy he had never pleaded for, Talbot opposes his anger to the general rejoicing.

The king's appearance, which stops the action, once again affirms the central praxis of opera seria at Vicenza's Eretenio: walking towards the proscenium between two wings of shouting crowds, the sovereign *deus ex machina* administers justice in the most traditional way, indifferent to the remarkable non-traditional features of the opera (Fontanesi's asymmetries and Giovanna's upsetting of the social pyramid).

The most brutal cut in the Venetian reworking concerns the Duet between Giovanna and Riccardo (Vi89, III, v). The fault in the suture is evident in the libretto of La Fenice at the end of the Maid's monologue, where the direction for Giovanna, *va per partire*, is followed by an unprepared prison scene (Ve97, III, III). At Vicenza the heroine was stopped by the French officer Raimondo, who informed her of Riccardo's desire to meet her alone: the basic ingredients of the dialogue between the two former lovers were the overflowing passion of Riccardo, ready to die to save his father, and Giovanna's problems of self-control: she had just sworn to seek nothing but the honours of war.

Even if in line with raising the Maid to the status of symbol, this cut also sheds light on a practical reason for it. French obedience to the schemata of opera seria had led to the role of Talbot being assigned to a high voice, in this case a contralto. Babini had been diverted to the character of Riccardo: musically this was a problem, especially in the Duet of reconciliation, a piece in which the shape of Riccardo's line was rather distant from Babini's style. Obviously, the piece could have been adjusted, revised, or completely rewritten by Andreozzi or by someone else. Unfortunately, there is no way of ascertaining this: if it were the case, it is probable that something similar happened in the impressive final scene of Act III, now assigned to Gafforini. Conceived for the great Babini, at the Eretenio this heroic piece showed Talbot at the peak of his expressive eclecticism and ready to get involved in the dispute between Giovanna and Enrico, if only «un ferro in questa mano | potesse lampeggiar».

The Venetian refashioning of this scene is a risible masterpiece of pragmatism (III, VIII). Giovanna stops the rebels without pointing out the investiture received under the oak and the mission assigned her by the king. When Enrico, the despiser of rights, displays all his haughtiness («Con qual dritto | oserai di vietarmi...»), for the first and only time the Maid draws her sword. After Enrico's violent reply, the *great tenor* intervenes. The difference lies in the role assigned to Babini on the two occasions, that of Talbot at Vicenza and that of Riccardo in Venice. This is what Babini sang at the Eretenio (III, IX):

TALBOT (*a Giovanna con sarcasmo*)
 La tua pietà sospendi,
 (*a Enrico con irrisione*)
 dell'ire il fren rallenta,
 (*a Riccardo con severità*)
 il tuo dover rammenta,
 (*ai prigionieri, scorgendo in essi qualche indizio di dolore*)
 per voi degg'io tremar?

Instead of Talbot's quadruple bristling, Babini – now acting in Riccardo's clothes – was assigned at La Fenice a dramaturgically absurd recitative in which he asks Giovanna to plunge into *his* chest a sword which she would only plunge into that of Enrico:

RICCARDO Numi! dove col ferro?... Ah, per pietade
 lo immergi in questo petto
 pria che del genitore,
 spietata!, ei giunga a trapassare il core.

Squarcia, squarcia le vene
dell'abborrito sangue
di cui hai tanta sete e fa' che appieno
sia estinto il tuo furor dentro il mio seno.

Once he has given vent to his implausible thirst for blood, Riccardo recycles the first quatrain of his old Duet with Giovanna, cut in the reworking:

Deh, se ancor ti parla al core
la mia voce, il pianto mio,
calma, oh dio!, col tuo furore
il mio barbaro dolor.

This earns him nothing more than a rebuke:

(*Talbot con tutti i prigionieri dal fondo*)
TALBOT Figlio ingrato, e qual spavento?
 Guarda: imita il genitor.
(*incamminandosi tutti.*) (*Riccardo in disparte a Giovanna*)
RICCARDO Per pietade (ah, che tormento!),
 deh, mi salva il genitor.
GIOVANNA Qual furore!
TALBOT *e prigionieri* E qual spavento!
RICCARDO Che momento di terror!
(*entra numeroso popolo per le volte del carcere sulla scena. Veggonsi tratti a forza Riccardo e Talbot; con gran confusione e disordine termina*)

In short, the protagonist of the Act III Finale *had to be* the great Babini, no matter in what role he was singing: character and dramaturgy were secondary issues.⁴⁰ This circumstance is hardly sensational, yet the Bureau's project of welcoming Napoleon with an opera on Joan of Arc does not seem as ideological an operation as one might expect.

2.2. Two little shepherdesses

The only lagoon theatre that dared to offer an alternative to the local debut of the Maid of Orléans was the Teatro di S. Cassiano. The Teatro di Sant'Angelo had broken up its company two weeks before; the Teatro di

⁴⁰ Ironically, no musical sources for this scene survive either in the Vicentine or in the Venetian version. The only evidence available is a vocal score probably intended for recital use; this shows a new recitative and a virtuosio aria – a *rondò* – for Riccardo, and no clues of Giovanna's presence (I-PAc, ms. Sanv. A. 25 34795).

S. Benedetto, whose company kept on performing up to 10 September, remained closed on 19 August. Not surprisingly, the same thing happened at the Teatro di S. Giovanni Grisostomo, which functioned as a civic theatre and therefore was open almost every night.

Hence, a curious competition arose in the Venetian theatres: while La Fenice celebrated the triumph of an extraordinary creator of her own and others' destiny, the old cradle of entrepreneurial opera – still owned, as in Monteverdi's time, by the Tron family – hosted that of another shepherdess: Eurilla, a poor little girl who is informed of her nobility *in extremis* by Don Polibio, the governor of Belprato.⁴¹ The plot of *La pastorella nobile* – such is the title of the opera – is radically different from that of *Giovanna d'Arco*: Eurilla, a girl living in the neighbourhood of Naples, loves Caloandro, a boy of hot temper but not gifted for studying. Caloandro loves Eurilla, but his father Don Polibio sends him to Padua to study at that famous university. While her beloved is five hundred miles away, Eurilla is courted by the old Marquis Astolfo. When Caloandro returns to Belprato, he is deeply in debt and more ignorant than before he left. Downcast, Eurilla goes back to her flock. Casually, she meets her beloved, who has just managed to escape from the money-lenders thanks to a pastoral disguise, and recognizes him. Astolfo breaks into their idyll out of the blue, and Caloandro confronts him. The sun is high, the swords shine, the air is frozen. All of a sudden, Don Polibio enters and announces loudly: «Lei di questo feudo ameno | è la vera e degna erede». Eurilla is bewildered. Then, addressing the equally astonished Marquis Astolfo, Don Polibio adds: «Vostro padre che vel diede | al suo [Eurilla's] padre l'usurpò». Hence, the shepherdess is noble and the Marquis is a poor man: thus, innocent love triumphs. Honour and glory go to a woman who, instead of facing destiny sword in hand, complied with it by going back to her village.

A few months before *Giovanna d'Arco*, the Teatro Eretenio had offered the Vicentines precisely these emotions of Eurilla, the *pastorella nobile*.⁴² Eight years later the two operas were performed simultaneously by two different theatres: *Giovanna d'Arco* at La Fenice, the *Pastorella nobile* at S. Cassiano, overlapping on five nights out of eight. The performances of the extraordinary 1797 summer season at La Fenice were attended by a fair

⁴¹ F. S. ZINI - P. A. GUGLIELMI, *La pastorella nobile* (Napoli, Teatro del Fondo, 1788).

⁴² On this occasion (carnival 1789) the scenes were coproduced by Mauro and Fontanesi (first documented coproduction, cf. SARTORI, *I libretti italiani a stampa cit.*, *Indici/I, sub voce*).

number of Venetian bourgeois and by hundreds of Frenchmen, mainly in full uniform: in fact, French occupation and an awful heat had pushed three quarters of the noble owners of the boxes out of town. Even if in those turbulent months Vicenza had no operatic performances to offer, many Venetians went as usual to their villas in its neighbourhood.⁴³ There is no way of knowing whether Tornieri and his peers were ever informed of the pedagogical commitment of the Bureau established in Venice, or of the performances organized there by the occupants. His memoirs show that he, the Vicentine Count from which my narrative began, did not care for shepherdesses, whether noble or plebeian, docile or battle-trained, silent, mild or otherwise.

The Venetian revival had no continuation: no news of further stagings is known, nor is there proof of any further printings. Yet the cultural importance of *Giovanna d'Arco* lies precisely in its relation to the fortunes of the fading Republic of St. Mark.

RIASSUNTO – Lo studio delle fonti letterarie e musicali del dramma serio *Giovanna d'Arco* di Simeone Antonio Sografi e Gaetano Andreozzi (Vicenza, Teatro Eretenio, 27 giugno 1789) consente di gettare uno sguardo critico sulla prima opera in musica che prende a spunto la figura della Pulzella d'Orléans.

Per ascendere al rango di personaggio d'un dramma destinato alla scena – *Die Jungfrau von Orléans* di Friedrich Schiller vedrà la luce solo nel 1801 – Giovanna d'Arco dovette attendere tre secoli e mezzo, e accontentarsi di una ribalta secondaria oppressa dall'afa estiva: prendendo le mosse da questi dati, l'articolo indaga l'ambiente culturale in cui il progetto prese forma (la Repubblica Serenissima, pochi anni prima che giungesse al termine la sua storia plurisecolare) ed evidenzia come la penetrazione capillare della cultura francese nelle città venete di Terraferma venisse a interagire con le tradizioni popolari vicentine.

Nella seconda parte vengono indagate le circostanze che indussero gli autori a modificare l'impianto ideologico dell'opera in occasione della ripresa alla Fenice di Venezia, durante l'occupazione napoleonica nell'estate del 1797.

⁴³ In the summer of 1797 the Teatro Eretenio remained closed, except for the performance of *La morte di Cesare*, a play by an unknown author; this took place on the anniversary of the Revolution (14 July) before an audience almost exclusively formed of French officers.

Direttore responsabile
GIUSEPPINA LA FACE BIANCONI
Autorizzazione del Tribunale di Firenze n. 4456 del 22-2-1995

TIBERGRAPH s.r.l. - Città di Castello (PG) - maggio 2005

IL SAGGIATORE MUSICALE

Rivista semestrale di musicologia
fondata da Lorenzo Bianconi, Renato Di Benedetto, F. Alberto Gallo,
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ISSN 1123-8615