

PIERO MIOLI

STOOD THE MOURNFUL MOTHER WEeping

Stabat Mater from Jacopone to Caldara, Pergolesi and Rossini

1. A devotion, the lyric, much music

Stood the mournful Mother a dramatically sung ancient Christian song, one belonged to the genre of the “sequence” (that was even more ancient, since it derived from the typical melisma of the Gregorian *Hallelujah*). As a “moveable” part of the mass, it appeared in honour of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows on Good Friday or on the third Sunday after Easter, and later passed to the mass of the Sorrowful Mother celebrated on 15 September. However, the chronicle of its origin and developments is even more complex, due to the unreliability of testimonies and often conflicting documents.

According to gospel narration, seven were the sorrows the Mother of Jesus suffered and the fifth, the most terrible one, was the one she felt standing at the feet of the Cross, before her Son’s death. The devotion to the Sorrowful Mother started towards the end of the year 1000, but according to tradition, it should be on 15 August 1233. On that day, in Florence, seven young nobles belonging to the Arte di Calimala circle, who played an active part in the Laudesi Company (responsorial singers of Laude) were gathered before an image of the Virgin Mary in a local street, when they saw her move, come to life and dress in mourning. They immediately ascribed the miracle to the new sorrow the Virgin Mary felt because of the fratricidal struggles that steeped the city with blood, and soon after they set up the Congregation of the Sorrowful Mother, later called Servants of Mary or of the Servite Order. Thus, the specific Marian devotion grew further until Jacopone da Todi, the passionate and bold Franciscan friar born in around 1236, wrote a lyric, the *Stabat Mater*, to sing as sequence during the Holy Week, the

tragic Friday when Christ died. He wrote it between 1303, the year when his enemy Pope Boniface VIII, who excommunicated him, died and 1306, the year of his death. Century after century, other congregations arose and worked around the worship of the Virgin, and on 9 June 1668 the Sacred Congregation of Rites allowed the Servite Order to celebrate the Seven Sorrows votive mass on 15 September. The centrality of the Servants of Mary is thus patent in *Stabat Mater* history: from Italy to the entire world, and of course with the participation, in 2013 as in 1842, of the town of Bologna (perhaps from the foundation of the church of Santa Maria dei Servi, in 1346, forty years after Jacopone’s death).

The Latin lyric, actually attributed only to Jacopone (bar some less well known alternatives) is composed of twenty stanzas of two trochaic tetrameter in rhyme, and one catalectic trochaic tetrameter each: in the *AAb* rhyme each Latin stanza counts as an Italian stanza of two verses, one octonary and the senarius. From a musical point of view, the poetic lyric had a different intonation, one that dated back to the thirteenth century, in order to become a sequence to sing during the mass: as monodic and anonymous as every Christian song, the music flows on ten melodies, one for each couplet belonging to the second mode. This mode, also called hypodorian, stretches from low A upwards (until F, according to the hexachord) and as far as the melody is concerned, it ends on D as dorian mode, the former, on which it depends (the same is said about the plagal cadence, though only different in part).

Reached by the more majestic polyphony of Josquin, Palestrina, Lasso and others, the

Stabat Mater sequence started to sound unfamiliar to the authentic Gregorian chant, as nearly all other sequences, and thus the Trent Council (1563) decided to cancel it; however its beauty and popularity were so great that it was reintroduced in 1727. Then, it had the free modern, vocal and instrumental intonations of Scarlatti (Domenico), Pergolesi, Caldara, Traetta, followed by Haydn, Boccherini, Salieri, and then Rossini, and onto Schubert, Verdi, Dvořák, Perosi, Szymanovsky, Poulenc, Penderecki, and Pärt, often but not always written in Latin (in XXI century seven intonations exist). Among a variety of translations and paraphrases, Torquato Tasso's version affirms "Stava appresso la Croce/la Madre lagrimosa" (*lit.* "Stood next to the Cross/the tearful Mother") (*Rime*, 1704).

Eighteenth-century sacred music, at least that widely and quantitatively understood, boasts several pieces of music and authors, and for its greater fortune it also boasts two supreme masters, are Händel in UK and Bach in Germany. However, as the great city of Vienna, that exalts Mozart's *Requiem*, trembles at their presence, as well as generous Italy that cannot help drumming on Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*. Truly speaking, Austria also knew the vigorous masses by Fux and Haydn and Venice, Bologna and Rome, just to give three examples, knew the works by Galuppi, Martini and Pitoni. Indeed Naples, queen of the opera, was also the queen of the mass, the motet, the litany, the sequence: Pergolesi's intonation of *Stabat Mater* is one of those that reappeared first after the Trent eclipse, and is probably the most beautiful among many. Should it fear rivalry with regard to its beauty, this was with Rossini of course, who created his version between 1830 and 1842 and performed it first in Paris, in 1842, and then in Bologna.

In the autumn of 1735, the young Giambattista Pergolesi (Jesi 1710 – Pozzuoli 1736) performed the *Flaminio*, a real comedy full

of *humour* and sentiment, at Teatro Nuovo of Naples. He had already performed a drama at S. Bartolomeo theatre in 1733, *Il prigionier superbo*, whose rhythm was marked by two dynamic intermezzos of the *Serva padrona* in the intervals. Tired and increasingly sick (he suffered from consumption) he took shelter at the Capuchin Monastery of Pozzuoli, to work less, be quiet, rest, and try to treat his disease properly. Unfortunately, he received a new commission from the Archconfraternity of the Knights of S. Luigi di Palazzo, which "under the title of the Virgin of Sorrows" used to celebrate the specific feast with the *Stabat Mater* by Alessandro Scarlatti. In short, following a practice that still ignored the repertoire, they needed another intonation (after nearly twenty years, the appreciated composition of the Neapolitan school's first master could even end his performance: o tempora!).¹

Doomed to die on 16 March 1736, Pergolesi barely managed to finish his work, the manuscript of which is dated 17 March. As with its author, who was of course talented but so unlucky in life that he only truly became fortunate after his death, the work received immediate, broad and enduring appreciation, from the very first performance at the confraternity to its several rewritings (read predictable modernizations) by Paisiello, Salieri, Hiller, and even a parody by Bach.

Bach used its musical ensemble to compose a German motet with other words (and with minor but numerous variants) in the years 1745-47 in Leipzig. He created it quite soon indeed, and his writing showed the masterpiece nature and diffusion at its best.

2. *The divine Pergolesi*

Born in the region of The Marches, but educated in Naples, author of sonatas and cantatas, skilled and successful opera composer from *Lo frate 'nnamorato*, a comedy

¹ "O tempora o mores!" is a sentence by Cicero now used as an exclamation to criticize present-day attitudes and trends.

in Neapolitan to the *Olimpiade*, a drama in Italian, Pergolesi ordered the twenty stanzas of the venerable lyric in twelve parts (adding a final *Amen*) to be used as arias or duets. Efficient as well as author of sacred music, though always respectful of commission's dictates, with a view to a performance neither public nor spectacular but private and nearly for chamber music, the master excluded the choir and wind instruments and only wrote for voices and bowed string instruments with figured bass. According to a plausible hypothesis, there were two soloists, and neither ordinary tenors or basses, the female sopranos or contraltos, the former well accepted and the latter forbidden, at least in theory, by the church. The right solution consisted of a male soprano and contralto to wit, two musicians or castratos, one clear, the other dark. As far as the bowed instruments are concerned, their typical quartet extended from violins to bass violins is excellent though never without the bass. Should the church be the setting, the organ is an option (or rather a cymbal, for less formal occasions) perhaps with the accompaniment of a cello, and even a bassoon and a theorbo (and less probably a trombone). Here is the order:

1. "Stabat Mater", soprano and contralto;
2. "Cuius animam", soprano;
3. "O quam tristis", soprano and contralto;
4. "Quae moerebat", contralto;
5. "Quis est homo", soprano and contralto;
6. "Vidit suum dulcem Natum", soprano;
7. "Eja Mater", contralto;
8. "Fac ut ardeat", soprano and contralto;
9. "Sancta Mater", soprano and contralto;
10. "Fac ut portem", contralto;
11. "Inflammatum et accensus", soprano and contralto;
12. "Quando corpus morietur", soprano and contralto;
13. "Amen", soprano and contralto.

Despite the equal presence of monodies or

arias in the first half, and the prevalence of duets or *bicinia* in the second, the score is remarkably homogeneous. In an always simple and clear writing, likely to be pre-classic, the minor mode is constant, from F that starts and ends also reaching the sixth number, to G appearing three times, and C that also appears three times, but rises once to the corresponding major. Slow tempos highly outnumber fast ones, always performed between Andante and Largo; the eleventh number is rather agile and is one of the few upbeated to major mode (a unique B flat). In this major mode, there are three cases of E flat, one of them modulated by the relative minor (the fifth number). Often moderate, the singing also opens to embellishments and melismas, preferring trills (frequently repeated) and vocalizing (especially on the final *Amen*). Homorhythm is frequent between the two vocal parts, often distant from a third, though not to the detriment of certain efficient canonic movements. The formal arrangement is peculiar: except the fifth, the first eight numbers are all musically bipartite on scores that repeat themselves exactly. On the contrary, the numbers 5, 10 and 11 are completely bipartite, which is to say, they are composed of two different parts both poetry and music; only one section characterizes numbers 12 and 13, almost inevitable since it is a unique stanza in the first case and a unique word in the second. Section number 9 is also unique, although it even includes five stanzas and appears as the longest, most free and varied among others.

Is this work of divine Pergolesi sacred music? Yes, absolutely. Just where the highest inspiration wraps the word with intensively dramatic music but also where the voice moves according to that late-baroque abstraction that is also a part of operatic, profane or devotional music, whatever it may be; and, as sacred music, then, would excellently figure during the liturgy. However, if *La serva padrona*, a score created as a cou-

ple of opera seria intermezzos, has become a small separate opera, a true and fortunate small comedy, the *Stabat Mater* can also appear as a blessed concert music. In this case, it also exalts better its profound, distinctive vagueness and deep expressiveness.

3. *The fruitful Caldara*

Some months after Pergolesi's death, Caldara also died; of course, the two representatives of Italian late Baroque were not peers, since Giambattista died at age 26 and Antonio at age 66. After short working periods in several Italian and foreign cities, in 1716 Antonio Caldara (Venice 1670-Vienna 1736) dwelled in Vienna, and worked there for the following twenty years as imperial vice-conductor under Fux, Emperor Charles VI's protégé.

As opera composer, he first set to music different texts such as those of Zeno or Metastasio, regularly staging Metastasio's operas for the Emperor or the Empress' birthdays or name days. Despite his Venetian education, he also absorbed the Neapolitan vocal system and the instrumental tradition of Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna. He published a number of collections of masses, motets, cantatas, sonatas, but wrote even more, leaving about 3,400 works. Apart from love and celebrative cantatas, he composed 42 oratorios and 78 melodramas, ever improving his relevance in instrumental and counterpoint technique on the base of traditional melody and vocalization. He first set to music the operas *Demetrius*, *Hadrian in Syria*, *Olympiade*, *Demofonte*, *The Clemency of Titus*, *The Chinese Women*, *Achilles on Skyros* (in 1736, for the wedding of the Archduchess Maria Theresa of Hapsburg, Emperor Charles's daughter, with Francis I of Lorraine) and Metastasio's *Themistocles*. Among all these great works by Metastasio, as music poet he also embraced the ancient Jacopone da Todi, who at that time was nothing but a name (neither certain as author of the sequence) though it stood up on

the first page of a very popular text (perhaps due to the papal readmission). Much shorter than Pergolesi's version, and for this reason rather compact, Caldara's *Stabat Mater* draws a certain unit from the frequency of the ternary rhythm, the constancy of the Tempo Lento (Largo, Adagio, Andante). Its tone is less sharp and more soft, typical of the eighteenth rather than the nineteenth century (that is to say, not too sensitive to Rameau's "naturalness" or Bach's norm), played around G minor. The division of text in often very short sections is possible thank to the fast change of the performers, while the rhythms are unitary and lower in number (those indicated in n° 1,9,11 and 14 continue in the following numbers; only n° 8 is separate):

1. "Stabat Mater", Adagio, chorus;
2. "Cuius animam", soprano, contralto, tenor, bass;
3. "Quis est homo", soprano;
4. "Vidit suum dulce Natum", contralto;
5. "Eja Mater", tenor and bass»;
6. "Fac ut ardeat", soprano and contralto;
7. "Sancta Mater", chorus;
8. "Tui Nati vulnerati", Largo, tenor;
9. "Fac me tecum pie flere", Andante, chorus;
10. "Juxta Crucem", soprano, contralto and bass;
11. "Virgo virginum", Largo-Adagio, chorus;
12. "Fac ut portem", contralto;
13. "Flammis ne urar", soprano and bass;
14. "Christe, cum sit hinc exire", Adagio, chorus;
15. "Quando corpus morietur – Amen", Adagio-Andante, chorus.

The text novelty of the penultimate verse is evident, since, entirely, it sounds as follows: "Christe, cum sit hinc exire, / Da per Matrem venire / Ad palmam victoriae" (*Lit.* "Christ, when it comes [the time] to exit from here, let me achieve the palm of victory through the Virgin Mother"). Here is another textual

variant: “fac me Cruce inebriari” becomes “et cruore inebriari” and “Inflammatum et accensum” becomes “flammis ne urar accensum”.

In Caldara, brevity does not mean simplicity, nor of course oversimplification: there are four soloists and the chorus intervenes repeatedly, inter alia to open and close. Besides the strings, the instruments employed also include trombones, leaving the bass to the keyboard, to the cello, of course and freely to the bassoon. Vocal writing is a core element, often syllabic, even if inclined to the style of melisma with regard to contralto (for instance, on the word “cruore”, the ever flowing blood). The initial imitation is perfect, passing the two key words from soprano to four-voice bass in the time of four measures; the examples of perfect chord are multiple, especially at the level of those “tutti” that almost appear to be the refrains of a *concerto grosso* (until the final *Amen*). The way the singing shapes the word is actually sensitive: “o quam tristis et afflicta” is a verse that starts with an augmented octave and ends with a diminished octave, though inside this interval falls with semitones in order to express accurately the sadness and the sorrow. Nor among several examples, it can help standing out just at the beginning, where the stillness of the Mother next to the Cross is depicted with a quick descending rhythm, as if the eye fell on the Mother from above the Cross, and intervals are unfortunately less or even painfully diminished.

4. *Gioachino towards the sacred*

Rossini has never set a *Requiem* to music, hence he never obliged himself to sing “Tremens factus sum ego, et timeo”, but many times, in his long life, he felt those sensations, and lived those emotions. The author of the funniest and most extravagant music one could ever imagine, from the concertato of the *Italian Girl in Algiers* to the rhymes of opera buffa characters such as

don Magnifico and don Profondo, he was a controversial artist, an anxious and desperate man, a figure pitifully suited his world and its aesthetic. Born in Pesaro in 1792, he died in 1869 in Paris, and was active in theatre only from 1810 to 1829, author of some forty operas both comic and serious, as well as semi-serious among the most proficient and durable in the history of this genre. Still popular today, and extraordinary popular at that time, apart from his most important opera, Rossini also tested himself with church and chamber music. If the late *Péchés de vieillesse* are whimsical music for voice or voice and piano, whose titles say it all about certain brilliant bourgeois trend but also about his human and creative *decadence*, the major sacred, mature, late music, or however successive to his theatrical triumphs, reveals as well a troubled and often tormented soul. A personality piercingly split between old and new, in a nutshell, an insecure, nervous, usually even contradictory man.

When he was well into his seventies (unexpectedly also for him) he started work on the *Petite messe solennelle* (another strange title, with a nice oxymoron between the two adjectives), composed for soloists, chorus, two pianos, a harmonium and demanded for a private performance, a chamber one, in the house of a Parisian noblewoman before few guests. It was 1864 and he did not hesitate to forbid other executions but when, some years later, feeling death approaching and afraid that, sooner or later, some “modern” colleague would arrange it for great romantic orchestra, perhaps in Berlioz style, he arranged his beautiful obsolete mass (one of the twenty rich and varied masses on the catalogue) himself. He did it in the old-fashioned way, and however, he forbade even one unique execution (after his death, on 13 November, the opera finally appeared on the following 24 February, posthumously, and received immediate appreciation).

Once he gave up the stage after the *William Tell* in 1829 (though without too much conviction), Rossini, barely forty, accepted to set a *Stabat Mater* to music, but between a first (though partial) and a second version he waited about ten years. Was it down to lumbago? Did he have other personal, marital or economic problems? Other operative and organizational commitments? Not at all. Rossini managed to work again on his forgotten opera sooner after he had accepted the onerous direction of the Bologna Philharmonic high school. Was he actually a director? Never. He was only a “perpetual advisor”, one more play on words by the one who arranged onomatopoeias as “in my head a bell is ringing with a maddening din din” and then tac tac, cra cra, boom boom (as in cited in the finale of the *Italian Girl in Algiers*). Nevertheless, here is the prehistory of *Stabat Mater* (according to tradition, the title is meant to be masculine, as every “piece” of music, though sometimes it is read as feminine, giving for granted its affinity to the genre of the sequence, as you will see).

The rather long genetic chronicle of the score confirms it all (when the specific bibliography, quite brief today, will be long as well, all the vicissitudes will be easier to understand). In 1831, Rossini followed his friend Jorge de Aguado, banker and Marquess of las Marismas, to Spain and in Madrid, where his operas had been popular since at least 1816, receiving a triumphal welcome (as elsewhere, indeed). Apart from being highly praised, he also had a concrete offer: Don Manuel Fernández Varela asked him to arrange the ancient text of *Stabat Mater*. Gioachino knew it, especially the Pergolesi version (that Paisiello had updated since 1810 for the feast of the Mother of Sorrows in Naples cathedral) since he worked on it in 1736 (shortly before he died at the age of 26), and of course, he remembered wondering about who would be fool enough to arrange it again, thus standing the ardu-

ous comparison. However, the Archdeacon of Madrid insisted and he, besides being a very good man incapable of saying no, was perhaps a little crazy as well. Eventually he accepted, on condition that only the client had access to the work, he returned to Paris, worked hard and felt pleased of the generous idea to prefer this Mother and this Son to any other noblewoman or heroic knight typical of melodrama (of course he remembered his beloved mother, Anna Guidarini, who died four years before). He arranged some pieces of Jacopone da Todi’s venerable sequence (probably numbers 1 and 5-9 out of the total ten) then he felt tired and left his sleeves rolling down to his hands, which were already immobile and useless. However, Madrid was impatient so the master, gathering his courage, resorted to the practice of “pastiche”, more or less as old as the genre of the opera: another composer would arrange the remaining parts, for example, his friend of a similar age, and fellow disciple Giovanni Tadolini set to work eagerly with decently results.

So he did, to Varela’s partial satisfaction (first in Madrid, in the Chapel of S. Felipe el Real on Good Friday 1833) and with an inevitable artistic gap, though less evident stylistic difference. This situation went on for several years. For Rossini, these were marked by the *Soirées musicales*, his stable return to Bologna (where he studied and lived many years), the divorce from his wife Isabella Colbran, his father’s death and the news that, after Varela’s death, his noble heirs sold the *Stabat Mater* to someone who had an even more noble intention to transform the manuscript in a tempting music printing. Hence, in 1839, just after accepting the office at the Bologna high school, and feeling his health getting worse, he wanted to roll up those blessed sleeves and compose the remaining music, substituted it for Tadolini’s, and while Troupenas was publishing it, he required the entire score to be performed in public in 1842.

The performance took place in Paris at the Théâtre Italien on 7 January, in Bologna at the Archiginnasio on 21 March (one of the two previous Italian performances, in Milan, had no female chorus and the other, in Florence, was private), in Vienna on 3 May. At the age of 50, Rossini completed the first of his major sacred works that often excellent singers performed: Giulia Grisi, Emma Howson, Giovanni Matteo de Candia, known as Mario, and Antonio Tamburini (the first and the fourth voice already committed to Bellini's *Puritani* and both, with the third, near to performing Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*) in Paris. Clara Novello, Clementina degli Antoni, Nicola Ivanov, Pompeo Belgioioso in Bologna. The Archiginnasio choir also featured Carlo Zucchelli, the famous singing bass, one of the best interpreters of *The Barber of Seville* and Marietta Alboni, sixteen-year old contralto with a bright Rossinian future. Over ten years had passed since his last theatrical work, apart from isolated fragments, but before that formidable composer started to write again, at least another fifteen years should pass. Meanwhile, the path of Italian music move forward: in Bologna the *Stabat Mater* was conducted by Donizetti, who in Milan had just attended a much appreciate *Nabucco* by a certain Giuseppe Verdi, at the Scala theatre. When Rossini died, on the above-mentioned 13 November 1868, Verdi himself promoted a great Requiem in his memory. It actually should appear as a collaboration between several authors, a sort of "pastiche", and though being composed it never saw the light in those years (later Verdi, fed up, held his part and included it in his Manzonian *Requiem*) and had to wait over a century, until 1988 (in Stuttgart and Parma). The town of Bologna wanted to compose another *Requiem Mass* in Rossini's memory thanks to its Philharmonic Academy, and managed to do it in a very short time: on 9 December 1868, less than a month after his death, the church of S. Giovanni in Monte celebrated its most il-

lustrious fellow (as he had been since 1806) in music.

5. *An overview of Rossini's work*

Some influential propaedeutic remarks: "Premendo a fondo l'acceleratore, aggiungeremmo non conoscere altro lavoro rossiniano del pari invasivo di una tale ansia incontenibile di comunicazione espressiva, riversata in un'invenzione corrusca e compatta come lava vulcanica. [...] Mai come in questa pagina [*Quando corpus morietur*], che suona come vivo brandello palpitante strappato dai precordii del suo artefice, ci è forse dato di attingere all'enigma profondo della sua creatività" (Carli Ballola).² Did Wagner such profane censures sacred music? Heine defended it with the usual irony against real and third-rate critics. Nor did Verdi have any doubts about *Stabat Mater* and *Petite messe solennelle*: "io [...] credo nel valor musicale di quei due componimenti, e specialmente nei pezzi a voci sole nella cui distribuzione e collocazione Rossini è tanto grande da superare forse perfino gli Italiani antichi".³

Created for two sopranos (first and second, the latter surely equivalent to mezzo-soprano, and of course also contralto), tenor, bass, 4 mixed-voice chorus and orchestra (2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings), the Rossini *Stabat Mater* develops in ten numbers as follows:

1. Introduction, *Stabat Mater dolorosa* (chorus, tenor and orch.);
2. Aria, *Cuius animam gementem* (tenor and orch.);

² Lit. "Flooring the accelerator, we should add that we do not know another Rossinian work so overwhelmed with uncontrollable anxiety of expressive communication, poured over an invention as blazing and compact as volcanic lava. [...] nowhere as in this page [*quando corpus morietur*], that sounds as lively, palpitating shreds torn from its creator's chest, we are allowed to draw from the profound enigma of his creativity" (Carli Ballola).

³ Lit. "I [...] believe in the musical value of those two compositions and especially in the parts for solo voices, whose distribution and collocation Rossini is so good at that perhaps he even outdoes ancient Italian writers".

3. Duet, *Quis est homo, qui non fletet* (soprano I and II and orch.);
4. Aria, *Pro peccatis suae gentis* (bass and orch.);
5. Chorus and recitative, *Eja Mater fons amoris* (a cappella chorus and bass);
6. Quartet, *Sancta Mater, istud agas* (soprano I and II, tenor, bass and orch);
7. Cavatina, *Fa cut portem Christi mortem* (soprano II and orch);
8. Aria and chorus, *Inflammatum and accensum* (soprano I, chorus and orch.);
9. Quartet, *Quando corpus morietur* (soprano I and II, a cappella tenor and bass);
10. Final, *In sempiterna saecula. Amen* (soprano I and II, tenor, bass, chorus and orch.).

Some basic element of cohesion and characterization should be presented before drawing an interpretation. With regard to voices, each soloist has his own solo, the only duet involving the ladies, the gentlemen regain the tenor with a solo in the introduction and the bass with a recitative, a trio is lacking but there are two quartets (one a cappella). Choral parts are frequent (one a cappella) enough to demarcate the solo part worthily, in the beginning and in the end, until ascending to a level of centrality perfectly plausible with a religious composition. Among the tempos, there are a Largo, an Adagio, an Allegro (in the end), four cases of Allegretto (two maestosi and two moderati), an Andantino moderato and four cases of Andante (especially in the second half, two mossi, one maestoso and one grazioso) with the prevalence of a poised *medietas* of ensemble between slow and rarely fast parts. As for tonalities, there is a prevalence of minor (A flat), flat minor (in particular G flat minor opening and closing, C minor and D minor) and flats in general (three A flat major and one F major) with an arioso effect and intense lyricism that certain dramatic parts have the power to change but

not to contradict. The instrumental part is typical of Rossini's operas, for instance Venetian operas such as *Tancredi* (2 horns and no trombones) Roman operas such as *Cinderella (idem)*, Parisian ones as *Le siege de Corinthe* (drum, bass drum and snare drum in addition). Bellini's *Norma*, considering the date of the first edition, shares the same orchestra with *Stabat Mater*, and in addition, bass drum, cymbal and harp, while Verdi's *Nabucco*, considering the date of the second version, only adds a cymbal.

6. For a partial reading

The introduction starts with some thirty instrumental measures, a long Andantino moderato in G minor and 6/8 time: almost imperceptible, the theme originates from cellos and bassoons that rise and harp in Pianissimo, to be soon joined by the oboe, clarinet and flute. Here it comes, the chorus, sotto voce and in fake canon singing the first stanza from the bottom to the top, *Stabat Mater*, immediately insisting on the adjective "grieving", then opening up in Fortissimo, with even seven D in unison on the dramatic words "on which her Son was hanging" (the catalectic trochaic tetrameter, seven syllables worthy of seven notes). Generally, it has a style that is indeed polyphonic, but remains homorhythmic and equal, though marked with variations. Consequently, the tenor takes the stage, singing a sort of arietta on a rhythm already heard in the orchestral introduction, but the conclusion pertains to the chorus that, by repeating the word "Son", cannot help embittering it with strong dissonance, and in the end also performs a quick crescendo. Essentially, it is a subdued, doleful, dismayed introduction worthy of the comparison with the famous and upsetting "scene of the darkness" that insinuates in the biblical *grandeur* of *Moses in Egypt* (and the French-styled *Moïse et Pharaon*).

The tenor's aria, that lasts three stanzas, is sinuous and cabalistic, vibrating with the-

atrical features. And indeed, this Allegretto maestoso in A flat major bemoaning *Cuius animam*, was and still is the target, the wonderful target of a reasonable purist critic who knows very well and claims the distinctions between sacred and profane music, church and stage (as well as chamber) style, religious and operatic melody. Despite the frequent verbal and sound repetitions, it consists of three parts where the two beginnings of a new verse (*Cuius animam* and *Quae morebat* in major) develops around a central verse (*O quam tristis* in minor). However, the pressure that the signs of *sforzando* operate in Forte on the word “gladius”, the final word of the first stanza and on its syntactic subject, should be sufficient to reveal or at least suggest the presence of a general dramatic feeling, not necessarily theatrical, to the rest of the number as well. Is this *Cuius animam* a Cabaletta? Is it perhaps a duplicate of “*Corriam, voliam*”, the cabaletta for tenor of *William Tell*? On condition that, the tempo does not become Allegro, the phrasing remains that of “piano legato” and the hammering accent avoids any tone of superficial exuberance, so that the piece would still belong to a specific expressive musicality, of religious as well. Or is it not true that the ascendant, sharp puntato, also for octaves, has a sort of illustrative feature, just like a sword that hits and hits again, deeply wounding a poor body? If the sword, the famous gladius, then, comes later, actually at the end, better so, since its lethal action is described first by music and then by words. On the contrary, at the opera’s court, a prosecutor who perhaps wears blinkers could vehemently recall the names of the first tenors who sang the *Stabat Mater*. Two high note masters as Mario, the Sardinian and Ivanov, the Russian to whom is destined a sudden high D flat (by the way after the affectation of a small group), on the word “incliti” at the end of the lyric. Since it is not possible to forget about some leading-ladies who often sing in duet, such as Amenaide

and Tancredi for instance, or Semiramide and Arsace; the female duet, who wonder *Quis est homo*, boasts a liquid, *cantabile* melody that flows on the agitated rhythm of a particularly dense orchestra with short sounds, though syllabic, composed, nobly as well. Where the beginning Largo in E major for four horns and bowed instruments sounds first as a “moment of contemplation, instant of transcendence from the earthly” and then as “awakening to the human reality of tragedy, starting from the very strong fit of the entire orchestra in a sudden ascending chromatic cadence” (Rognoni). The final cadence trills twice for two voices that relate to the most typical composition of belcanto, but at the end the part of the second voice is a little denser than the first. As had already happened in the eighteenth century, between Francesca Cuzzoni clear tone and Faustina Bordoni low one, there is no reason to “maintain” or emphasize more the highest voice and, undoubtedly (even if not only for this of course) Rossini here prefers to evoke Händel, the famous patron of the two mentioned divas and rivals, rather than anticipate Verdi.

Once the Ladies have poured out, here comes another Gentleman. The aria of the bass cries *Pro peccatis* with a majestic Allegretto in A minor and major starting on a roll of timpani alternated to bowed instruments, and rises to a tenuto chord of woodwinds and brasses. Since a certain baroque rhythmic still persists, that of Händel for example, the two stanzas enlarge in four small parts, where each second part repeats the text of the first, only changing mode and melody, while the meter is very similar to that of *Cuius Animam* (though remarkably passing to 4/4 and 3/4). Moreover, each first stanza, so stubbornly dotted, has something of the tenor’s aria, as quick and augmented as it is (though also descending, later).

The fifth compositional number is particularly original. Opening on a minor and closing on a major, *Eja Mater* is considered as

a chorus for solo voices and recitative for bass, but in the meantime the soloist is careful not to “act” and rather tends to phrase and declaim in arioso. In addition, the ensemble is so good at changing and altering tempos, rhythm and tones with remarkable ease. Here they come: Andante mosso in D minor and tempo perfetto, Allegretto moderato in C major and 6/8 (with regular intervals of seventh, octave and tenth downwards). Andante again, Adagio in F major on the final “ut sibi complacem” (“sibi” a Dative of third person pronoun that in classic Latin would be “ei”, Allegretto, Andante and Adagio again. The expressivity of the words “in á-/mandó / Chri-stúm / De-úm” is also worth mentioning, with sudden and iambic octave diminutions.

7. *Santa Madre so be it*

The *Sancta Mater* quartet stretches over five stanzas, to give each voice the chance to express itself without sacrifice. In order, there are the tenor, the first soprano, the bass, the second soprano (only the tenor sings as soloist, however, the successive voices follow a previous one that is never silent), and when the bass resumes the first theme solo, then the real quartet begins, a voice overlapping, sometimes quite animated sometimes disciplined in harmonious verticality. Neither is this theme beyond reproach for its operatic fluency, and of course, the severe counterpoint of Father Martini, master of Mattei who was Rossini’s master, has disappeared somewhere in this centrifugal text. In general, it is true that the author’s classic vein never complies with a materially realistic dramatic style, but it is not impossible that once again the author was conquered by the lyric’s continuation, that talks about *flere*, *condolere* and *plangere* (to tear, moan together, cry loud). He reacted to all this melting his heart in the touching, gentle, melodious fluency of an authentic, restorative belcanto, also thank to the round A flat major that initiates the Allegretto moderato.

This is a unique pride of the eternal, indestructible Italian ability to sing.

After a long wait, the second or mezzo-soprano claims two stanzas, *Fa cut portem* and *Fac me plagis* singing nothing less than a Cavatina, an Andante grazioso in 6/8 modulated from the minor (C#) to the corresponding major (E). It is still composed of three parts, and the theme is doubled but when the very ancient *aba* scheme is confirmed, it occurs that the second *a* has the words of *b* and the melody of the first *a*. The iambic pace is then remarkable, “*fac út portém*” and so it be at the cost of overwhelming the poor Latin; the scansion is characteristic because it also enjoys a ninth or a twelfth; the extension is classic, from low B to high G flat (except the pre final corona and its ability to improvise). The caption? Cavatina, this time, should only mean little cavata, a short piece highlighting the solo virtues of a voice already heard in ensemble.

The antepenultimate and penultimate stanza of this *Stabat Mater* belong to the soprano (with chorus), who on a still dotted trill of brass starts with *Inflamatus et accensus* in alto and Forte with full emphasis, the sturdiness premise to a firm Andante maestoso teso soloists-choral, while the tempo ascends from the minor (c) to its major counterpart (C). If the chorus repeats the varied and compact chord until it reaches the unison, though through instable triplets, the soprano vibrates on the augmented trill (four trills repeated twice) and rises to the very high C. Is all this theatre, scene, music and drama, melodrama? Since the text already prays to the Virgin for all humanity, asking her to exercise her Son’s death as pledge for absolution on doomsday. Hence, trumpets are needed from the ancient Carissimi to every possible *Requiem*.

Perhaps the tradition of a cappella singing is doomed to end, the *stylus antiquus* exalted by Renaissance, Baroque and Classicism masters (here, Carli Ballola quotes some “evil spirits” such as Monteverdi and

Cherubini). The second quartet, Andante in G minor *Quando corpus morietur*, sings a chromatic, uneven, sharp melody and traditionally develops isolating the bass, coupling the mezzo-soprano and tenor to the bass then adding the soprano and eventually gathering all four parts in the central registers. Then, the first soprano, who has been the last voice to intervene, will also be the last to pronounce the text, and for this reason, she rushes to pronounce everything over the mezzo-soprano and tenor's slow vocalizations, while the bass holds dominant for almost seven measures. In the meantime, the text has reached "a purity that goes beyond any model and idea of style and taste" and has become "one of the deepest openings of Rossini's soul, after the operatic renunciation" (Rognoni). In sacred music, only an *Amen* can actually

end a piece. *In sempiterna saecula* sings the final chorus, great Allegro in G minor (as the initial Andante) which orders the four voices and moves, urges, intersects, literally sets them in "fuga" on a stream of eight notes and sometimes central, uniform, vocalized and almost medieval semiquavers. The Andante moderato of the true Amen in 6/8 is more careful, while the first tempo floridly resumed is in Animato. Nevertheless, the richness of writing never establishes major mode to augment: absolutely, besides letting some initial thematic cues emerge, Rossini's *Stabat Mater* ends in the classic measure of minor mode and counterpoint style, in the same sense of character and level of writing in which it had begun. Praise to clear these shadows with a great soloist, rhythmic and melodic liveliness, and, why not, even melodramatic in some middle parts.

Appendix

Score and volgarizzamento

On 1 February 1843, Rossini performed the *Stabat Mater* in his native Pesaro for a charity event, as had already taken place in Bologna. On that occasion, Giovanni Marchetti's *Score* and *Volgarizzamento*, to wit the Latin text divided in all its parts, and Marchetti's Italian translation were printed. Here, they were printed again to ease the reading and the hearing (in Bologna, a first edition of the brochure in 1100 copies sold out).

I. Introduction

Stabat Mater dolorosa
Juxta Crucem lacrymosa
Dum pendebat Filius.

Stava immersa in doglia e in pianto
La pia Madre al Figlio accanto
Mentre il Figlio agonizzò.

II. Aria for tenor

Cujus animam gementem,
Contristatam et dolentem
Pertransivit gladius.

Di Maria l'anima afflitta,
Gemebonda, derelitta,
Una spada trapassò.

O quam tristis et afflicta
Fuit illa benedicta
Mater unigeniti!

Come trista ed infelice
Fu la santa Genitrice
Dell'unigeno Figliuolo!

Quae moerebat et dolebat,
Et tremebat dum videbat
Nati poenas inclyti.

Oh quai gemitu traeva
Quando aggiunta in Lui vedea
Pena a pena, e duolo a duol!

III. Duet for soprano and contralto

Quis est homo, qui non fletet,
Matrem Christi si videret
In tanto supplicio?
Quis non posset contristari
Piam Matrem contemplari
Dolentem cum Filio?

Qual crudel mirar potria
Tanta ambascia di Maria
Senza lagrime e sospir?
Chi potria con fermo ciglio
Contemprar la Madre e il Figlio
A un medesimo martir?

IV. Aria for bass

Pro peccatis suae gentis
Vidit Jesum in tormentis,
Et flagellis subditum.

Per gli error di noi rubelli
Star Gesù sotto i flagelli,
Fra' tormenti vide star.

Vidit suum dulcem natum
Moriendo desolatum,
Dum emisit spiritum.

Vide il Figlio suo diletto,
Lacerato il molle petto,
L'egro spirito esalar.

V. Chorus for solo voices and recitative for bass

Eja Mater fons amoris,
Me sentire vim doloris
Fac, un tecum lugeam.

O Maria, fonte d'amore,
Provar fammi il tuo dolore,
Fammi piangere con te.

Fac, ut ardeat cor meum
In amando Christum Deum,
Ut sibi complaceam.

Fa che accendasi il cor mio,
Ch'arda tutto dell'Uom Dio,
Tal che pago Ei sia di me.

VI. Quartet

Sancta Mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas
Cordi meo valide.

Delle man, del sen, de' piedi
Tu le piaghe a me concedi,
Tu le stampa in questo cor.

Tui nati vulnerati,
Tam dignati pro me pati
Poenas mecum divide.

Del tuo figlio, che il mio bene
Ricomprò per tante pene,
Fammi parte nel dolor.

Fac ut tecum pie flere,
Crucifixo condolere
Donec ego vixero.

Io sia teco, o Madre, afflitto,
Io con Cristo sia trafitto
Sino all'ultimo mio dì.

Juxta Crucem tecum stare,
Et me tibi sociare
In planctu desidero.

Starmi sempre io con te voglio,
Tuo compagno nel cordoglio,
Presso al tronco ov' Ei morì.

Virgo Virginum praeclara,
Mihi jam non sis amara,
Fac me tecum plangere.

Fra le Vergini o preclara,
Non mostrarti al prego avara,
Fammi teco lacrimar.

VII. Cavatina for contralto

Fac ut portem Christi mortem,
Passionis fac consortem,
Et plagas recolare.

Di Gesù fa mia la sorte,
Fa ch'io senta in me sua morte,
Di sua morte al rimembrar.

Fac me plagis vulnerari,
Fac me Cruce inebriari,
Ob amorem Filii.

Dona a me lo strazio atroce,
M'innamora della Croce
E del sangue di Gesù.

VIII. Aria for soprano and chorus

Inflammatum et accensus,
Per te, Virgo, sim defensum
In die Iudicii.

Come a noi verrà l'Eterno
Giudicante, dell'inferno
Scampo al foco mi sii Tu.

Fac me Cruce custodiri,
Morte Christi praemuniri,
Confoveri gratia.

Sieno a me custodi e scorte
Quella Croce e quella Morte,
Porga man la Grazia a me.

IX. Quartet for solo voices

Quando corpus morietur,
Fac, ut animae donetur
Paradisi gloria.

Quando il corpo egro si muoja,
Nella gloria nella gioia
Venga l'anima con Te.

X. Final chorus

In sempiterna saecula Amen.