

Editorial

THE VIOLINIST PAOLO ALBERGHI AND HIS MUSICAL NETWORK, OR THE RECONSIDERATION OF A TRADITION

ANNIVERSARIES TRADITIONALLY present a reason for celebrating famous composers. More recently, they also become an occasion for rediscovering the works of lesser-known musical personalities. These events are often promoted by public administrations that decide to invest in the revaluation of a cultural asset that is closely connected to a defined territory, thus revitalizing the local cultural agenda.

This was precisely the intention of the Comune di Faenza (Italy), when it decided to embrace the project presented by Ensemble Symposium and by his Artistic Director, the author of the present editorial. The idea was to rediscover the output of the violinist Paolo Alberghi (1716-1785) on the occasion of his tricentennial: following a slight delay (Alberghi was born on 31st December 1716), the Ensemble Symposium and the Centro Studi Opera Omnia Luigi Boccherini organized an International Conference titled *The Italian Violin Tradition 1650-1850*. The conference took place from 6 to 8 April 2017 in the Ridotto of the Teatro ‘Angelo Masini’ (Faenza), a splendid structure opened in 1788 and restored in 2013, characterized by an abundance of neoclassical decorations.

Centred on the figure of Alberghi, who was born and died in Faenza, the conference addressed several aspects of the Italian violin tradition during the age of its greatest efflorescence, embracing two centuries and a broad geographic spectrum delineated by the European routes of the Italian masters. At the same time, it investigated other topics related to Tartini’s school and his didactic method, and the biographies of other lesser-known violinists such as Giuseppe Agus (1722-1800) and Domenico Dall’Oglio (1700-1764).

Apart from a short residence in Padua, Alberghi never left Faenza. In Padua, he studied with Giuseppe Tartini, in that hotbed of violin talents nowadays known as the ‘Scuola delle Nazioni’. He was one of Tartini’s first students, along with Dall’Oglio and Pietro Nardini (1722-1793). This connection between Faenza and the Tartini school was underlined by the support received in organizing the conference from *Tartini2020*, a project aimed at promoting the legacy of the Piranese violinist. *Tartini2020* began in 2014 from a collaboration between the Associazione Veneta Amici della Musica, Comune di Padova, Veneto Region, Università degli Studi di Padova and the Conservatorio ‘C. Pollini’. Its intention has been to coordinate a series of events that will culminate with the celebrations for the 250th anniversary of Tartini’s death, in 2020.

There are a couple of peculiarities that characterise research on Alberghi’s output. The main one is the composer’s isolation. At the age of 16, he became violinist in the Duomo di Faenza under his brother Francesco’s direction, and then succeeded him in the role of *maestro di cappella* in 1760. Not a single note of his music was published, but he still developed a good

reputation in the surrounding towns, running a school of a some significance. Nicola Petrini Zamboni (1785-1849), a violinist from Cesena, recalled in his memories: «Anche Faenza vantò in quel tempo una classica Scuola di violino, perocché Paolo Alberghi, discepolo del Tartini vi chiamava da ogni parte dei giovani per apprendervi la bell'arte. Benché ne' suoi alunni molto fortunato non fosse, pure uscirono Antonio Bioni ed il famigerato Buscaroli Imolese, suonatore animatissimo, soave e gran quartettista»¹. As pointed out by Petrini Zamboni, Alberghi, unlike his teacher, did not manage to establish a widely recognised school, and he mostly attracted pupils from Cesena, Imola and the surrounding towns, in a radius of about forty kilometres from Faenza. Nevertheless, these pupils often managed to pursue a good career in the local theatres and, in some cases, abroad. It must be considered that young violinists were traditionally attracted by locations where they could earn a salary as performers or teachers, and certainly the limited size of Faenza could not grant economic stability.

The second characteristic of Alberghi, related to the first, is his strict and conservative adherence to Tartini's style. Out of the main cultural routes, and arguably untouched by the musical developments that were transforming the Italian and European violin tradition (or traditions?), Alberghi cultivated an elegant musicality that was rooted in the late Baroque school. His consistency is portrayed in about twenty manuscript violin concertos, most of which are conserved in Berkeley at the Jean Gray Hargrove Music Library. These works, composed between 1730s and 1760s, reflect Tartini's direct influence and the solidity of a brilliant soloistic technique that relegated the accompanying ensemble (generally two violins, a viola, cello and organ) to a role of mere support.

Nevertheless, Alberghi's school left some traces that deserve to be followed and explored. Antonio Bioni, nicknamed 'Il Rossetto', was one of the most successful among Alberghi's pupils. He succeeded Alberghi in the role of *maestro di cappella* in Faenza. According to Vaccarini, Bioni could also have collaborated with the Forlivese Andrea Favi in the creation of the collection bequeathed in 1840 by the nobleman Carlo Villa to the Conservatorio di Milano². Another pupil of Alberghi's, Cristoforo Babbi (1748-1814) from Cesena, was the son of Gregorio Babbi (1708-1768), a renowned tenor who performed in operas by major composers of the time such as Hasse, Vivaldi, Albinoni, Galuppi, Porpora, Jommelli and Perez. Cristoforo became *accademico filarmonico* in Bologna in 1774 as *suonatore*, and, from 1776, as *compositore*; soon after he was appointed as principal violin in Bologna's theatre and, from 1781 onwards, he pursued an international career in Dresden, at the Saxony court. In Dresden he met Ignazio Alberghi, Paolo's son, who was employed as a tenor (1803-1810). Ignazio's daughter, Rosa Alberghi Salvigni, was a soprano of some importance in the first half of the nineteenth century.

These connections show the consistency of a musical network that extended from Bologna to Rimini, with ramifications in the Accademia Filarmonica in Bologna and in the 'Scuola delle Nazioni', in Padua. This context became the substratum of the early nineteenth-century opera tradition and was central to the birth of a number of theatrical institutions, widespread in almost every city, town or village in the Romagna area. Theatres began to

¹. PETRINI ZAMBONI, Nicola. *Memorie di un violinista cesenate* (1785-1849), edited by Franco Dell'Amore, Cesena, Comune di Cesena, 1995, p. 144.

². VACCARINI, Marina. 'Il fondo Villa della biblioteca del Conservatorio di Milano', in: *Fonti Musicali Italiane*, no. 18 (2013), pp. 25-78.

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open everywhere: at Forlì (1776), Imola (1781), Faenza (Teatro Masini, 1788), Cesena (Teatro Spada, 1796–1797), followed by several others in the first half of the nineteenth century (Imola, Ravenna, Brisighella, Bagnacavallo, Cesena, Rimini). These new cultural entities provided an occupation for the local musicians, who could finally earn a living without the need to emigrate, especially in a historical moment when the religious institutions, a traditional stronghold of the Italian musical tradition, began to decay after the Napoleonic invasion.

The International Conference *The Italian Violin Tradition 1650-1850* thus provided an overview of local musical production as well as of the social relevance of artistic personalities that, in many parts of Italy, nourished a social and cultural environment that we mostly encounter through accounts of the European experiences of the touring musicians. These local achievements and the network to whose creation they contributed needs to be defined in its full complexity, starting from its smallest elements. Further studies will then unveil the relevance of a misjudged instrumental tradition and will also contribute to a deeper understanding of the emergence of the nineteenth-century Italian melodrama, from Rossini through to Verdi, and up to Puccini.

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