

EDITORIAL NOTES

While the production for voice and piano is simply endless, add one instrument to the ensemble and, suddenly, the game changes. The repertoire for voice, piano, and cello is, indeed, surprisingly scarce. When digging through the rocks looking for the brightest gems, though, we know in advance we will not find many of them, and such is true for these beautiful, unfairly forgotten pieces. The present edition, thus, marks the beginning of a new series dedicated exclusively to the production for this specific ensemble. It begins with the complete unearthing of Carlo Alfredo **Piatti**'s production, which counts eighteen confirmed surviving titles. Some of them were published at the time, while others came to us exclusively in their manuscript form.

The first title of this new series, never published during Piatti's lifetime, is simply titled "*Canto*", but it is its subtitle what is most striking, as it says: "*sopra uno studio di Duport*". Every cellist had to face Jean Louis **Duport** (1749—1819) and his *Twenty-one Studies* at one point or another in their career and, if you ask anyone around for what is the one they remember the most, they will all, in choir, reply: "Number 7!"



Excerpt from the original edition (Imbault, Paris - 1806)

Most of those twenty-one studies are for two cellos, while this (and no. 8) are unaccompanied. Piatti decided to take this study, that for sure had contributed to his becoming the master he was, add to it a vocal line, and a piano accompaniment. The result is simply stunning, so let's dive in.

The story behind the piece

The manuscript of this edition is held in Piatti's original wall cupboard, in the *Biblioteca Musicale "Gaetano Donizetti"* in Bergamo, and bears a faint marking in the top-right corner of the first page, stating:

Bergamo, 1840

Thanks to this kind message from Piatti himself, we can narrow our focus on the point of his life when he composed this *Canto*. In 1840, Piatti was 18 years old,

and yet had already been a graduated cellist for three years. He had recently come back home from his failed fortune-seeking travel attempt in Vienna (1838). There, he had met Gaetano **Donizetti** (1797—1848), who had literally told him that:

... of better-fortune-seeking musicians the air was full in there [in Vienna] as well

He suggested the young Piatti to stop wasting time and money and to return home. He did so and, around 1840, we find him between Milano and Bergamo, playing in orchestras where his abilities were clearly being wasted. We know from concert records that, after March 28th 1840, he was offered a cello position in Torino in the seasons of the *Teatro Carignano* (during the summer) and of the *Teatro Regio* (during the winter). He didn't go back to Bergamo until February 1841, so we can assume with a certain degree of certainty that he composed the *Canto* before leaving Bergamo for Torino.

Piatti's handwriting is passionate and quick, with several, strongly inked, corrections, especially in the vocal line. The cello part, while faithful to the original, shows dynamics throughout in coherence with the vocal and piano lines, something that Duport's part didn't have. With the rhythmical side excellently covered by the cello's sixteenth-notes, Piatti was free to write a very lyrical piano part, and it wouldn't surprise me if he initially thought of this in a choral setting.

For the vocal part, Piatti doesn't specify whether this should be sung by a female or male voice, but given the usage of treble clef and a general range of [D⁴-A⁵], we can assume this was written for a high voice (Soprano-Tenor). Concerning words, he chose a very influential figure of the time: librettist Giuseppe Felice **Romani** (1788—1865). After writing two librettos for composer Johann Simon **Mayr** (1763—1845), "*La rosa bianca e la rosa rossa*" and "*Medea in Corinto*", he quickly became the most highly regarded of all Italian librettists of his age, producing nearly one hundred of them. His long life allowed him to collaborate with all the major opera composers of the time, namely Vincenzo **Bellini** (1801—1835) ("*La sonnambula*", "*Norma*" among others), Gioacchino **Rossini** (1792—1868) ("*Il turco in Italia*"), and Gaetano **Donizetti** ("*Anna Bolena*" and "*L'elisir d'amore*"). Even Giuseppe **Verdi** (1813—1901) used one of his librettos, though not

originally destined to him, in his early comedy “*Un giorno di regno*”.

Beside his very generous production of opera librettos, he was also a respected poet. A book collecting all of his poems was published in two volumes under the title “*Liriche*” in 1841. It is therefore possible that Romani’s poems had been publicly available in smaller collections and leaflets before being officially published all together. The text chosen by Piatti belongs to Volume 2 “*Odi, Romanze e Anacreontiche*”, and is titled “*La Lontananza*” – *Anacreontica IV*, with the signature “Genova, 1818” at the bottom of the second page.

It is a poignant text, perfectly fitting the G minor key of the piece, in four unrhymed strophes of four verses each (*quatrains*). The first verse of each strophe is a nine-syllable line, the second and third verses are senariuses, and the last verse is a quinary.

The Canto sopra uno studio di Duport

The piece starts with four bars of solo cello and piano. When the voice enters, it immediately contributes to creating a dissonance by repeating the same note, a fifth of the tonic chord that becomes the root of the dominant in second inversion, on the word “*Per-ché*” (Why?). The first verse occupies four bars, and so does the second, repeated twice. The third verse (“*Sì querulo perché*”) is altered by Piatti who adds an extra “*Perché*” and repeats it twice, for a total of 6 bars where the cello part suggests exploring chords from neighbouring keys. The last verse, to which Piatti adds again an extra “*Perché*”, occupies only 3 bars, greatly increasing the rhythm alongside the chordal progressions.

The second strophe starts as an upbeat to b 22, with the first verse occupying only 3 bars, up to the modulation to C minor. Here Piatti replaces the original word¹ “*chini*” with “*mesti*”; the difference in meaning is on an emotional level, where the original words meant “bent” referred to flowers, while the replacement means “miserable, dejected”. To provide the best possible performance material, the edition adds the lyrics Piatti modified in parentheses under the original ones. The rhythm continues to urge, with the second verse occupying just 2 bars, preparing us for a tense 5-bars section where we finally realise that we are heading towards the dominant, D major.

The third strophe, thus, starts on b 35, where Duport uses a D major harmonic scale (with lowered 6th, B-flat) as a standing platform. The first verse resumes some regularity, lasting 4 bars and repeating the central word (“*v’intendo*”). This is logical, since these bars simply alternate tonic and dominant chords. The second verse would love to also last 4 bars, but is impolitely interrupted by a diminished seventh chord of G minor, which drives the tale over the waves of the third verse for the following 4 bars. The last verse, occupying only 2 bars, abruptly silenced by the double-dominant sequence of bb 47-50. Here again Piatti changes one word, this time the name of the girl the poem talks about, replacing “*Léride*” with “*Cloride*”.

The fourth and last strophe starts on b 48, with the first verse summoning back the Zephyr wind of the beginning for 3 and a half bars. The second verse lasts 2 and a half bars, introducing us to the final section of the piece. The third verse, prompting flowers to wither because our beloved one has left, lasts 5 and a half bars, and understandably so, since the cello part is at its most active here, changing chord at almost every beat. The closing verse is housed in the last two and a half bars, where a *rallentando* is added by Piatti to emphasise the hopeless resignation of the poet.

The cello line—of which Piatti doesn’t provide a separate part, assuming every cellist would know this by heart—is faithful to the original by Duport, with a few small differences. First, Piatti adds slurs throughout the piece, while Duport only draws them for the first six bars. Then, Piatti writes only a few fingering suggestions here and there, compared to Duport writing many of them in each bar—after all, Duport’s *Essai* is a treatise on fingerings. Finally, Piatti doesn’t use the old treble clef (sounding one octave lower than written) used by Duport, leaving the whole line in bass clef throughout. Dynamics have been added to match those of the piano and of the vocal line.

About this edition

This edition is made up of this main volume containing the full score, a separate cello part and, unconventionally, a separate vocal part. It is not common for modern editions to include a separate vocal part, but I decided otherwise to provide a comfortable option

¹ We actually do not know if it was Piatti to change the word or if Romani updated it in the final edition published in 1841, thirteen years after the original creation of the poem. The only surviving text today is the 2nd edition from 1845, which may also have been altered from the first one.

without page-turns for the singer.

My deepest thanks go to the *Biblioteca Musicale* “*Gaetano Donizetti*” in Bergamo—and to its curator, M^o Fabrizio **Capitano**—, for granting me access to this most precious manuscript. Being allowed to be in direct contact with the same paper where Piatti’s hand penned these notes was a unique honour.

The Editor

Michele Galvagno

Belgrade, August 21st, 2023

TEXT

LA LONTANANZA

Anacreontica IV

Perché sù mesto, o zeffiro,
Sospiri intorno a me?
Sù querulo perché
Mormori, o fonte?

Perché sù chini (mesti) e pallidi,
Fioretti, in vostro stel,
Più non alzate al ciel
La bella fronte?

Ah, ch’io v’intendo chiedermi
Nel vostro usato stil,
Dove la mia gentil
Léride (Cloride) è gita.

Sempre sospira, o zeffiro,
Lagnati! o fonte, ognor,
Inaridite, o fior...
Ella (Essa) è partita!

Genova, 1818