

# EDITORIAL NOTES

The second instalment of the series dedicated to songs for voice and piano with violoncello obbligato by Carlo Alfredo **Piatti** (1822—1901) switches to using an English text, a tell-tale sign that it might have been written while the composer was in England.

The song in question is titled “A Farewell” and bears the subtitle “Song with Violoncello Obbligato”. It is based on the poem of the same name by Samuel **Rogers** (1763—1855), a British banker and art collector who, during his lifetime, was one of the most celebrated of English poets. This specific poem can be found in his collection *Poems*, published in London in 1812 by *T. Cadell & W. Davies*, and already reprinted in 1814.

Piatti definitely moved to London in 1847, aged 25, when Rogers was already 85 years old, so it is unlikely the two met in person. He composed this song about fifteen years later, in two versions, both published by *Chappell & Co.*, a most prolific publisher that still survives to this day under the *Warner Chappell Music* label. The first version, plate 11899, is for voice, cello, and piano, while the second, plate 11905, is for voice and piano alone. The vocal line is the same in the two versions, while the piano part is dramatically different in the second one, having to account for the lacking of the cello part. We will analyse all differences in the *Critical Notes* at the end of this volume.

No autograph bearing the place and date of composition of this song was found in my research—as it was the case for the *Canto sopra uno studio di Duport*, but the *Chappell & Co.* catalogue seems to point at the 1863–4 biennium. It is clear from the events in Piatti’s life that he must have entrusted the autograph or fair copy manuscript to the publisher by October 1863 at the latest, since he would have soon afterwards left London, coming back only in the second half of 1864. In 1863, we find Piatti—already a star in England—playing a *Concerto* by Goltermann (1824—1898) in London (February 12), and a *Fantasia* by August Wilhelm Julius **Rietz** (1812—1877) alongside the *Sonata Pastorale* by Giuseppe **Tartini** (1692—1770) in the *Philharmonic Society* (June 29). He would then leave for his last tournée in Europe to play in Germany and for the *Società del Quartetto di Milano* in Italy.

Above the title, Piatti wrote:

*dedicated to General Oliver*

While he did not leave any further note about the dedicatee, this might have been John Morrison **Oliver** (1828—1872), a Union general during the American Civil War. How and whether the two met, or why Piatti dedicated this song to him, is unclear.

## Analysis of the song

The text is in five stanzas of four verses each, with rhyming structure ABAB—which gives a hint at how the word “adieu” must have been pronounced at the time. The structure of the song, though, is the classic ABA simple ternary form, so successfully used in this genre. *Part A* uses the first stanza, *Part B* the second and third ones, and the comeback of *Part A* the fourth one. The fifth and final one is employed for a slower and freer Coda.

The main difference between Rogers’ text and Piatti’s rendition is the word “maid” replacing “girl” in the very first verse of the poem. There are a few more divergences, but they are mainly punctuation marks, and they have been marked in the footnotes after the poem.

The piece opens with a lyrical line in the cello, in G major, accompanied by the piano’s discrete chords. The usage of the double-dotted rhythm and the highly modulating nature of this introduction are its most striking features. From G major, we touch E minor, F-sharp minor, B minor, and a D major digression with a lowered sixth degree, before settling back to the home key for the entrance of the voice.

The melody is characterised by being almost entirely based on the dotted rhythm, which encourages this *Andantino lento* to move forward without looking back. The cello part is very delicate when the voice is present, aware of the risk of covering it when playing in the higher register.

There is no modulating bridge between *Part A* and *B*, rather an abrupt stop with a perfect cadence in G major and an equally abrupt start in D major. This results in a burst of light, in perfect correspondence with the poem switching to a lighter character, as the poet remembers the fair features of his beloved one. Here the cello acquires a more active role, following the voice and filling in all gaps left by the melody.

The third stanza is the richest in modulations, with the poet asking for a lock of hair to bring along now that he has to go. The tension rises as the cello plays a virtuoso passage in quadruplets, while the piano rolls out a soft carpet of quavers, and the voice dares trying to insert triplets on the top. From D major, we visit A minor and B-flat major, alongside several of their secondary dominants.

A short entr'acte by piano and cello alone signals the return of *Part A*. To be noticed is the different length of the upbeat: initially it was a quaver, now it is a semiquaver. We are back home in G major, and we finally get to the fifth and final stanza, where the word “Adieu” (Farewell) is used to propel forward the dotted rhythm of this last section labelled *Lentamente* (slowly). The remaining few bars are composed like a sweet and gentle duet between the cello and the voice, with the piano waiting to close the piece in contrary motion with the cello.

Piatti doesn't mention explicitly the kind of voice this song was written for, but the range of C-sharp4 to F-sharp5 makes this ideal for a mezzo-soprano or a tenor. In other songs, Piatti mentions the name of who performed them, making it easier to identify their destination, but it is not the case this time.

This whole analysis has been based on the version *with cello*, but the structure is identical even in the version without it. Whenever possible, the piano will bear the burden of trying to substitute the cello part, but that happens mostly in the sections where the voice is silent.

## About this edition

This edition comes in two main variants: the earlier version for voice, piano, and violoncello obbligato (ASE 0056), and the later revision for voice and piano alone (ASE 0061). Each variant comes with a full score and a dedicated vocal part, as it was customary at the time. The first variant comes with a cello part containing the original annotations by Piatti himself. The full score volume also contains these *Editorial Notes* and the detailed *Critical Notes* at the end.

Notation-wise, the few aspects that had to be modernised to current standards were updated without further notice. Anything else is listed and described in the *Critical Notes*. Unclear passages for which edits have been proposed by the Editor have been added in dashed typeface (slur, ties, ...) and between square brackets (accidentals, notes, ...).

My deepest thanks go to the *Biblioteca Musicale “Gaetano Donizetti”* in Bergamo—and to its curator, M<sup>o</sup> Fabrizio **Capitano**—, for granting me access to this material. Being allowed to be in direct contact with the same scores from which Piatti played was an indescribable honour.

The Editor

Michele Galvagno

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# TEXT

by Samuel Rogers

Once more, enchanting girl<sup>1</sup>, adieu!  
 I must be gone while yet I may,<sup>2</sup>  
 Oft shall I weep to think of you;  
 But here I will not, cannot stay.

The sweet expression of that face.<sup>3</sup>  
 For ever changing, yet the same,  
 Ah no<sup>4</sup>, I dare not turn to trace<sup>5</sup>.  
 It melts my soul, it fires my frame!

Yet give me, give me, ere I go,  
 One little lock of those so blest,  
 That lend your cheek a warmer glow,  
 And on your white neck love to rest.

—Say, when<sup>6</sup> to kindle soft delight,  
 That hand has chanc'd with mine to meet,  
 How could its thrilling touch excite  
 A sigh so short, and yet so sweet?

O say—but no, it must not be.  
 Adieu! A long, a long adieu!  
 —Yet still, methinks, you frown on me;  
 Or never could I fly from you<sup>7</sup>.

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1 Piatti writes “maid” instead of “girl”

2 Period instead of comma.

3 Comma instead of period and, consequently, lowercase for the next word.

4 The printed edition with the cello part shows the word “us” instead of “no”. The edition with the voice alone corrects this.

5 Comma instead of period

6 Piatti inserts a comma after “when”

7 Ends with an exclamation mark instead of a period.