



"Tu lo sai"

Giuseppe Torelli
dʒuzɛp:pe torel:li

Poetic idea

"I really loved you; remember that!"

This aria is the final movement of a solo cantata, *Come potesti mai lasciarmi, infida?* (How could you ever leave me, unfaithful woman?). The piece as a whole is the complaint of a lover who feels that his deep and sincere affection has been unjustly betrayed.

Background

The earliest operas, including those of Peri and Monteverdi, used a musical style that fluctuated smoothly between sung narrations and dialogues and more tuneful songs. By the late 1600s operatic music was clearly divided into two contrasting styles: *recitativo*, in which every phrase is uniquely shaped to reflect the meanings of the words; and *aria*, in which rhythms and melodic ideas are repeated to produce attractive musical forms.

Recitatives were used to deliver information and carry the story forward, while arias expressed the characters' emotions as they reflected on events in the story. Today, if we listen to operas of this period, we are acutely aware that the music comes to a full stop at the end of each recitative and each aria, and the smooth flow of earlier operas no longer exists.

Solo cantatas in the late 1600s also used the same two styles of writing for voice, alternating recitatives and arias. Great numbers of solo cantatas were composed throughout the period of two centuries represented in this book. Voice students learned cantatas before they were ready to sing operatic roles, professional singers performed cantatas at elegant social gatherings in noble houses, and composers used them to practice their skills between larger commissions.

tu lo sai kwanto tamai
Tu lo sai quanto t'amai,
You [it] know how-much you-I-loved,

tu lo sai lo sai krudɛl
Tu lo sai, lo sai, crudel!
You [it] know, [it] know, cruel-one!

jo non bramo altra merce
Io non bramo altra mercé,
I (do) not desire other compensation,

ma rikɔrdati di me
Ma ricordati di me,
but remember [-yourself of] me,

e poi sprɛt:sa un infedɛl
E poi sprezza un infedel.
and then despise an unfaithful-one!

Source

"Tu lo sai" has become famous in an adaptation made by Albert Fuchs for his book *Bel Canto* (Braunschweig: Litolf, 1901?). He presented the aria in D-flat Major with a tempo marking of *Andantino*; neither that key nor that tempo were used in Torelli's time.

Fuchs found the arias for his collection in the Royal Library in Dresden, which is now called the Sächsische Landesbibliothek (Saxon State Library). *Come potesti mai* was contained in a collection of manuscript cantatas with the call number 1-K-37. Unfortunately, this was one of about 200,000 volumes that were taken to the U.S.S.R. at the end of World War II. If it still exists, it may be somewhere in Russia.

According to the library's catalog, 1-K-37 contained cantatas by Bononcini, Caldara, Lotti and other composers, all of whom were active in the period 1690–1710. Even though the music bears Torelli's last name

only, the composer may have been Giuseppe Torelli, a famous violinist of that time.

By observing the way Fuchs treated arias taken from other manuscripts in Dresden, one can see that he usually shortened them and wrote new accompaniments in a Romantic style. "Tu lo sai" may turn out to be a quite different piece of music if the original manuscript ever becomes available again.

The complete text of *Come potesti mai* is known from a beautiful cantata by Pietro Paolo Bencini (c1670–1755). Although it has not been printed in a modern edition, Bencini's cantata exists in early manuscripts located in: Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome (Ms. 5109); Biblioteca del Conservatorio di Musica, G. Verdi, Milan (Noseda C-65-7); Biblioteca del Vaticano (Chigi Q-VI-83). Other early copies of the same cantata were attributed to Giacomo Perti and Alessandro Scarlatti.



“Già il sole dal Gange”

from *L'Honestà negli amori*,
lonesta ne:l:li amori

Alessandro Scarlatti
ales:sandro skarlat:ti

Poetic idea

“How happy the whole world is at sunrise!” The person singing is Saldino, a pageboy, in the opera *Honesty in Love Affairs*. He is alone onstage, admiring the sunrise. The scene is Algeria in North Africa. (“*Dal Gange*” is merely a figure of speech meaning the east.)

Background

Scarlatti was born in Palermo, Sicily, but he was sent to Rome at age 12 to study music. When he wrote this, his second opera, in 1680, he was 19 years old. He was already married and a father, and he had been appointed the music director to Queen Christina of Sweden, who lived in Rome.

The unique character of Roman society in the 1600s affected the creation of music there. The popes were the rulers of the Papal States; as guardians of public morality, some of them permitted theaters to operate, but others did not. Women almost never sang in public in Rome. Women could perform at private opera theaters maintained by wealthy persons, most of whom were relatives of popes and had received noble titles and important church posts.

This opera was sung for the first time in the palace of an exceptionally wealthy person who had no noble title, Giovanni Bernini (1598-1680). Bernini rose through his artistic talent and long service to many popes as a sculptor and architect. It is said that in his private theater Bernini designed the scenery, and he may have written the libretto of this opera. The preface to the libretto hints that the name, Felice Parnasso, which means “happy-one-who-has-reached-the-heights,” was the pen name of someone famous.

dʒail sole dal gandʒe
Già il sole dal Gange
Already the sun from-the Ganges (the East)

pju kja:ro sfavil:la
Più chiaro sfavilla
more brightly sparkles

e tʃɛrdʒeɔn:ni stɪl:la
E terge ogni stilla
and dries every drop

del:lalba ke pja:ndʒe
Dell'alba che piange.
of-the-dawn, which weeps.

kol ra:dʒo dorato
Col raggio dorato
With-the ray gilded

indʒɛm:maɔn:ni stɛlo
Ingemma ogni stelo
it-adorns every blade

e l:la:stri del tʃɛlo
E gli astri del cielo
and the stars of-the sky

dipɪndʒe nel prato
Dipinge nel prato.
it-paints in-the field.

Sources

(1) *L'Honestà negli Amori*, manuscript score of the opera in Biblioteca Estense, Modena, F.1057 (a 10-measure ritornello for string orchestra precedes each stanza); (2) *Arie*, manuscript collection, Biblioteca musicale governativa del Conservatorio di musica “S. Cecilia,” Rome, A Ms 249. Both sources appear to be in the same handwriting. For voice (soprano clef) and continuo. Original key: A major.

The familiar edition was made by

Parisotti in *Arie Antiche*, vol. 2 (Milan: Ricordi, 1890), when the singing of long runs was somewhat out of fashion with singers and audiences. In order to modernize Scarlatti's music, Parisotti used repeated words to break up the runs, a practice that others also used into the early 1900s. This destroyed the symbolism of the word “sun” rising on a scale, and emphasized the insignificant word “Ganges.” The aria became popular, but in a false and inferior form.