

Violoncello Obbligato Edition

Domenico Gabrielli

The solo-obbligato violoncello arias

‘Se il tiranno caderà’ – *Il Rodoaldo* (Male soprano, Violoncello, Continuo)

‘Se ragion consiglia’ – *Il Clearco* (Countertenor [alto], Violoncello, Continuo)

‘Bellezza tiranna’ – *Il Clearco* (Soprano, Violoncello, Continuo)

‘Mesti pensieri’ – *Il Maurizio* (Countertenor [alto], Violoncello, Continuo)

‘Si bella io spererò’ – *Silvio Rè d’Alba* (Countertenor [alto], Violoncello, Continuo)

‘Vuoi tù lasciarmi amore’ - *Silvio Rè d’Alba* (Soprano, Violoncello, Continuo)

edited by

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INTRODUCTION

In Northern Italy after 1685 the violoncello began to appear regularly as an *obbligato* instrument, i.e. not as part of the continuo, in opera and oratorio arias. Domenico Gabrielli, Bernardo Sabadini and Giovanni Bononcini and composed more than twenty-five such arias, although other composers sporadically employed the *obbligato* violoncello in arias as early as the 1670s, and by the early 1690s its use was relatively widespread. Despite the ongoing debate on the early violoncello's playing position and the recent surge of interest in the reduced sound of the late seventeenth-century performing ensemble in Italian opera, no publication is available to players of these relatively unknown arias. These three volumes bring together for the first time Gabrielli's, Sabadini's and Bononcini's *solo-obbligato* violoncello arias, i.e. arias scored for voice, violoncello and continuo.

This first volume collects all such arias by Gabrielli, a composer and cellist who worked in San Petronio in Bologna and for Francesco II, Duke of Modena. However, he also frequently travelled throughout Northern Italy to direct and play the cello in his operas and oratorios. As a result, he composed some of the finest examples of *solo-obbligato* violoncello arias, which make use of advanced techniques, such as double-stops and chords.

IL RODOALDO

In 1685 this opera was performed at the San Moisè theatre in Venice. The associated libretto by Tomaso Stanzani was published the same year by Francesco Nicolini in Venice, and a copy is held in *I-MOe* 83.B.9.¹ In the *Argomento* at page 8 of the libretto there is confirmation that 'la Musica è stata composta dal Signor Domenico Gabrieli'.² The sole extant MS score of this opera is held in *I-MOe* Mus. F. 418 and contains the *solo-obbligato* violoncello aria 'Se il tiranno caderà'(ff.85r-87r) in the third scene of the third act.³ This aria is sung by Elviro who has just unmasked the plot orchestrated by Rodoaldo, King of Italy, to eliminate his daughter, Arnelinda. Feelings of relief mix with joy at the idea that the King might be now murdered. Here is the text in the libretto:

Se il Tiranno caderà,
Tutto gioia, e tutto riso
Oggi il Tebro esulterà:
a fedele, e nobil alma,
che a la colpa unqua diè palma
sempre il Cielo assisterà.⁴

In the score the aria 'Se il tiranno caderà' is labelled 'Aria con la Viola' using the Venetian term for violoncello. Since the 1670s, 'viola' had often been used to refer to a violoncello-like instrument in Venice. Thus, the use of such terminology in *Il Rodoaldo's* score illustrates the connection between this MS and *la Serenissima*.

IL CLEARCO

In 1685 Gabrielli composed the music for another opera, *Il Clearco*, which was also performed in Venice. *I-MOe* Mus. F. 424, the score of this opera, contains two arias for *solo-obbligato* violoncello, labelled with the Venetian term, 'viola'.⁵ Gabrielli's *Il Clearco* was favourably received, enjoying, during the composer's life, two Venetian productions: one in Bergamo in 1687 and one in Reggio Emilia in 1689, under the patronage of Duke Francesco II d'Este. It is not known for which performance the Modenese score Mus. F. 424 was produced, however the two Venetian libretti do not entirely match the MS. In the first of these libretti, published in 1685, Arcoleo writes to the audience ('Al Cortese Lettore) to come to the performance of *Il Clearco* 'ad ammirare almeno la Musica del Signor Domenico Gabrieli da tè così gradita nel Rodoaldo'. This confirms the favourable reception *Il Rodoaldo* had in Venice earlier the same year.⁶

The aria with *solo-obbligato* violoncello 'Se ragion consiglia à l'armi' is in the sixth scene of the third act (ff.105r-107r). It is sung by Aceste, Olinda's brother. Olinda is in love with Clearco, King of Tebe, and the couple have promised each other eternal love but Clearco disobeys his word and leaves her.

¹ T. Stanzani, *Rodoaldo Re' d'Italia*, libretto (Venezia: Nicolini, 1685), *I-MOe* 83.B.9. Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, Modena, is subsequently mentioned using the RISM library sigla *I-MOe*.

² Engl. trans: 'the music has been composed by Domenico Gabrieli'.

³ D. Gabrielli, *Il Rodoaldo*, opera, *I-MOe* Mus. F. 418.

⁴ There are minor differences in the text in the MS.: 'che ah la colpa unqua diè calma'. 'If the tyrant (Rodoaldo) dies (falls), today the people from Tebro will cheer with joy and smile. The trustworthy and noble soul, who takes the responsibility to kill him, will be always assisted by the Gods (the sky)'.

⁵ D. Gabrielli, *Il Clearco* or *Clearco in Negroponte*, opera, *I-MOe* Mus. F. 424.

⁶ Engl. trans: 'to admire at least the Music of Domenico Gabrieli that you appreciated so much in *Il Rodoaldo*'. A. Arcoleo, *Clearco in Negroponte*, libretto (Venezia: Nicolini, 1685), *I-MOe* M.D.L.27.

Il Rodoaldo

Domenico Gabrielli

Act III - Scene III

Aria 'Se il tiranno caderà'
(I-MOe Mus.F.418, ff. 85r-87r)

Aria con la viola

Presto

4

Se il ti-ran - no ca - de-rà

7

se il ti-ran - no ca - de-

6

10

rà] tut - to gio - ia e tut - to ri - so og - gi il Te - bro e - sul - te - rà _____

6 6 6 6 6 6# 6