

GCD 921523

New release information

December 2007

Le Cantate Italiane di Handel, III

La Risonanza & Fabio Bonizzoni



G. F. Handel
Italian Cantatas, vol. III
Le Cantate per il Cardinal Ottoboni

Raffaella Milanese, soprano
Salvo Vitale, bass

La Risonanza

Mike Fentross, Andrea Mion, Rey Ishizaka, Nick Robinson, Carlo Lazzaroni, Barbara Altobello, Rossella Borsoni, Silvia Colli, Fabio Ravasi, Gianni De Rosa, Caterina Dell'Agnello, Olaf Reimers, Vanni Moretto

Fabio Bonizzoni, director

Glossa GCD 921523

Full-price digipak

Programme

Georg Friedrich Haendel (1685-1759)
 Italian Cantatas

1-7 *Ero e Leandro* (Qual ti riveggio), HWV 150

8-10 *No se emendará jamás*, HWV 140

11-13 *Spande ancora a mio dispetto*, HWV 165

14-19 *Ah! Crudel, nel pianto mio*, HWV 78

Production details

Total playing time: 66'32

Recorded at the English Church, Den Haag, Holland, in January 2007

Engineered by Adriaan Verstijnen

Produced by Tini Mathot

Executive producer: Carlos Céster

Design 00:03:00 oficina tresminutos

Booklet essay by Livio Marcaletti

English Français Deutsch Español



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NOTES (ENG)

In the third instalment in Fabio Bonizzoni's survey of the secular cantatas with instrumental accompaniment composed by Georg Frideric Handel during his stay in Italy, come a quartet of works associated with the Venice-born *maecenas* Pietro Ottoboni – including the substantial *Ero e Leandro*, the libretto for which is plausibly considered to have been written by the Cardinal Ottoboni himself. As well as the seldom-performed cantata for bass, *Spande ancora a mio dispetto* and *Ah! Crudel, nel pianto mio* scored for soprano solo, Bonizzoni also directs the Spanish-texted *No se emendará jamás*.

In this latest outing Bonizzoni continues with his policy of bringing forward accomplished singers with an intense and direct feel for Handel's Italian output. Where the first two volumes saw contributions from Roberta Invernizzi and Emanuela Galli, here, for this "Ottoboni" release, the spotlight falls on soprano Raffaella Milanese and bass Salvo Vitale. As before, our understanding of this neglected area of Handel's genius is enhanced by the accompanying booklet notes. Here they are provided by Livio Marcaletti, an expert on the music of Antonio Bononcini as much as on that of Handel.

NOTES (FRA)

Dans le troisième volume du parcours de Fabio Bonizzoni dans le corpus des cantates profanes avec accompagnement instrumental que Georg Friedrich Haendel composa durant son séjour en Italie, le chef milanais présente un quatuor d'œuvres associées au cardinal Pietro Ottoboni : ce mécène vénitien, dont le faste était célèbre dans toute l'Europe, a très probablement écrit le livret de la remarquable cantate intitulée *Ero e Leandro*. Aux côtés de *Spande ancora a mio dispetto*, la cantate pour voix de basse, rarement interprétée et de *Ah! Crudel, nel pianto mio*, écrite pour soprano, nous trouvons dans ce disque la cantate sur un texte espagnol ayant pour titre *No se emendará jamás*.

Bonizzoni applique ici encore sa somptueuse politique consistant à ne choisir que des voix de premier ordre, pouvant apporter la touche et l'intensité nécessaires à l'*italianità* du jeune Haendel. Alors que Roberta Invernizzi et Emanuela Galli se partageaient la vedette des deux premiers volumes, dans cet « Ottoboni » les projecteurs sont braqués sur la soprano Raffaella Milanese et la basse Salvo Vitale. De même que dans les volumes antérieurs, les notes du livret nous permettent de mieux aborder cette aire négligée du génie haendelien. C'est au tour de Livio Marcaletti, expert dans les musiques de Bononcini et de Haendel, de nous guider dans les cantates du compositeur saxon.

NOTAS (ESP)

En el tercer volumen del recorrido que Fabio Bonizzoni está realizando por el *corpus* de cantatas profanas con acompañamiento instrumental que Georg Friedrich Haendel compuso durante su estancia en Italia, el director milanés presenta un cuarteto de obras asociados por el mecenas Pietro Ottoboni, incluyendo la muy notable *Ero e Leandro*, cuyo libreto se considera con bastante fundamento que pudo haber sido escrito por el mismo Cardenal Ottoboni. Además de la raramente interpretada cantata para bajo *Spande ancora a mio dispetto* y de *Ah! Crudel, nel pianto mio*, escrita para soprano, el disco incluye la cantata con texto en español titulada *No se emendará jamás*.

Bonizzoni continúa en esta entrega con su política de utilizar a una variedad de cantantes de primera fila que puedan aportar un toque intenso y directo a estas obras «italianas» de Haendel. Si los primeros dos volúmenes contaban con la colaboración de Roberta Invernizzi y de Emanuela Galli, en este «Ottoboni» el foco se centra en la soprano Raffaella Milanese y el bajo Salvo Vitale. Igual que en ocasiones anteriores, las notas contenidas en el libreto nos ayudan a comprender este repertorio tan desatendido de Haendel. Aquí es el profesor Livio Marcaletti, experto en las músicas de Bononcini y de Haendel, quien nos guía por las cantatas del maestro sajón.

NOTIZEN (DEU)

Der dritte Teil von Fabio Bonizzonis Einspielungen weltlicher Kantaten mit Instrumentalbegleitung aus Georg Friedrich Händels italienischer Zeit beinhaltet vier Werke, die in Zusammenhang mit dem in Venedig geborenen Mäzen Pietro Ottoboni stehen. Darunter ist auch die bekannte Kantate *Ero e Leandro*, deren Libretto mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit Kardinal Ottoboni selbst verfasst hat. Neben der selten aufgeführten Bass-Kantate *Spande ancora a mio dispetto* und *Ah! Crudel, nel pianto mio* für Sopran dirigiert Bonizzoni auch die Kantate *No se emendará jamás* über einen spanischen Text.

In dieser neuesten Veröffentlichung verfolgt Bonizzoni seine Strategie weiter, versierte Sänger herauszubringen, die einen intensiven und direkten Zugang zu Händels italienischen Werken haben. Während in den ersten beiden CDs Beiträge von Roberta Invernizzi und Emanuela Galli zu hören waren, stehen in dieser »Ottoboni«-Aufnahme nun die Sopranistin Raffaella Milanese und der Bassist Salvo Vitale im Rampenlicht. Wie auch in den vorangegangenen Aufnahmen dienen die begleitenden Ausführungen im Booklet zum besseren Verständnis dieser vernachlässigten Werke des genialen Händel. Diese wurden von Livio Marcaletti, einem ausgewiesenen Kenner der Musik von Antonio Bononcini wie auch der Werke Händels, verfasst.

Fabio Bonizzoni talks about the third volume of Handel cantatas

by Mark Wiggins



In the third instalment in Fabio Bonizzoni's survey of the secular cantatas with instrumental accompaniment composed by Georg Frideric Handel during his stay in Italy, come a quartet of works associated with the Venice-born *maecenas* Pietro Ottoboni – including the substantial *Ero e Leandro*, the libretto for which is plausibly considered to have been written by the Cardinal Ottoboni himself. As well as the seldom-performed cantata for bass, *Spande ancora a mio dispetto* and *Ah! Crudel, nel pianto mio* scored for soprano solo, Bonizzoni also directs the Spanish-texted *No se emendará jamás*.

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The quality of the musical (and scholarly) results in these Handel Cantatas being accomplished by Fabio Bonizzoni and his associates is happily being recognized in a number of very positive ways. Since the commencement of this series of recordings more and more audiences across Europe are having the opportunity to enjoy performances of these Cantatas in what is fast becoming a hectic but satisfyingly creative schedule for Bonizzoni and his ensemble La Risonanza. Moreover, critics are welcoming the series also. The first volume, *Le Cantate per il Cardinal Pamphili*, with Roberta Invernizzi, has been awarded The Stanley Sadie Handel Recording Prize for 2007, an achievement which prompted Fabio Bonizzoni to comment, "We are delighted and honoured to receive this validation of our work on the Handel Cantatas. Starting in this way is definitely encouraging for the whole series to come."

With the fourth of the projected seven volumes in his Handel series waiting in the wings, Fabio Bonizzoni is certainly not resting on his laurels. He is currently directing performances of Handel's *Messiah*, an opera is being prepared for performance and his "additional career" as a keyboard recitalist is not being allowed to rest either.

In addition to being associated with Pietro Ottoboni, do the cantatas on this new disc reflect a unity of approach in Handel's composing at the time?

Rather than representing a unified set of characteristics I feel that the three Italian-texted cantatas here demonstrate their own individuality. During these years in Italy Handel was proving to be extremely flexible in his approach towards composition; the better to adapt to – or indeed to build on – the librettos that he was presented with. Of the three works *Ero e Leandro* is perhaps the most striking. The strength of the text seems to have drawn a very deep response from Handel: the extreme sentiments within it inspired him to produce matchingly extreme solutions in painting the despair of *Ero* in music. Two examples of this can be seen in the striking contrast between the "A" part of the first aria (which depicts *Ero's* tempestuous sentiments) and its corresponding "B" part (which, I would add, I believe is one of the most touching lamentos ever written), and secondly, the incredible strong power encapsulated in the last aria, a true *marche funèbre*, suffused with the dark colour of the violins and the unison oboes. When one considers *Spande ancora a mio dispetto* it seems to be the case that Handel had access in Italy to bass singers with incredibly wide tessituras: that is why his bass compositions of this time tend to be at the limit of vocal possibilities. Although the writing in this cantata is not as intense as you find in the famous *Polifemo* role it is still very exacting and well-written for the bass.

How did Handel come to write a cantata with a Spanish text in *No se emendará jamás*, the fourth of the works performed here?

Providing his compositions for the greatest nobility in Rome, Handel was clearly in a position to write for audiences who were very highly cultivated and thus capable of handling more than one language alone. I think that Handel wrote successfully in Spanish, demonstrating that he was well acquainted with the idiom. Of course, the largest part of his output is written to Italian texts but it is worth noting that we have at least one further non-Italian cantata in the soprano work with French words in *Sans y penser*. Although I still have much research to do on the repertoire of cantatas from Spain from around this time – composers such as José de Nebra or Joseph de Torres, for example – I can already appreciate that there are many beautiful and hidden treasures waiting to be uncovered.

Beyond the actual recording process that you are involved in with the Handel Cantatas project your concert performances of the works have been increasing recently. In addition, you recently took part in an international conference in Rome focusing on the cantatas. Has all this been assisting your interpretations?

With the concerts the chance of performing in front of a live audience is always a marvellous one to have, especially as it allows you to balance the dramatic elements in these works more successfully. That balance then becomes so much easier to achieve in the recording. And even if we are now very experienced in the recording process, aiming always to achieve a CD which is "perfect" (from the recording point of view) and true and lively, it remains an enjoyable activity to perform a programme before actually recording it. The Rome conference proved to be a splendid opportunity to meet a number of people and discuss relevant issues concerning the performance

of these works; positive discussions to add to the ongoing work of our staff of musicologists who assist me in preparing each new programme. Thus there is a process of continuous development going on! That process is including us working on the substantial dramatic cantata *Clori, Tirsi e Fileno* (*Cor fedel in vano spero*). We are also reconsidering a number of issues involved with *La Resurrezione*, the oratorio which we are due to be recording in 2009.

***La Resurrezione* is not the only oratorio of Handel that you are currently considering in that you are also performing *Messiah* this year in various cities in Spain. What do you make of this, substantially later, composition?**

Naturally I think that *Messiah* is a great work, one which was perfectly suited for the purposes it was written for. You can see how successful Handel was in working in this way from the masterly control that he was able to give to his activities as an impresario in London. There is a substantial gap between the Italian cantatas and *Messiah*, not just in terms of the years that separate them but in their projected audiences. The Italian cantatas were intended for a small but highly-cultivated and select audience whilst *Messiah* is much more of a "popular" work. I am using "popular" in a positive sense here, the more so because *Messiah* is incredibly effective seen in this light. I consider that the distance between the cantatas and *Messiah* is basically the same as that which separates those same cantatas from the works of, for example, Vivaldi. By this I mean that with the cantatas there is what can be described as an incredible overabundance in the quantity of musical ideas, subtleties and colours whilst with *Messiah* Handel provided "just" what was needed. This demonstrates how at that later stage in his career he was crafting in a masterly way.

I am interested also in the way that Handel reuses material from older pieces in new works to the point that I am currently studying this question in relation to his opera *Agrippina*, which makes such a lot of use of the music from the Italian cantatas. It represents a process which I think is especially fascinating in Handel because most of the time he is focusing more on a single aspect of a certain aria or movement rather than exploiting several aspects of a musical idea. You can describe this as Handel presenting the essential substance (perhaps even the "highlights"!) of an earlier musical idea. This attitude of mine might be coming over as representing a rather too positive approach to Handel's reworkings. In truth, I have to admit that in some cases the original musical material embodied a greater and stronger link to the texts and dramatic situations that Handel was writing to than what later turned up in some of these "reworkings". That is why, once again, I want to underline the incredible quality of Handel's Italian cantatas, because that is where the genuineness of his inspiration is complete.

As a solo recitalist what is your opinion of Handel as a composer for the keyboard?

To me the harpsichord music of Handel comes over very much as orchestral music, whilst being scored for keyboard alone. Even when he is writing in the typical keyboard forms of the time (such as suites) Handel is clearly trying to impose upon the harpsichord the sound of his orchestra. His writing is thus very different to that of Bach or Domenico Scarlatti, both of whom composed so idiomatically for the keyboard.