Renato Meucci

Changes in the role of the leader in 19th-century Italian orchestras

In a paper on Italian operatic orchestras of the 18th and early 19th century I dealt in some length with the role then played by the leader of the ensemble.[1] This involved the twofold practice of performing and conducting at the same time, a function called here-after ›leader/conductor‹, customary in Italy throughout the 18th century and well into the first half of the following one.[2] Beginning in the 1830s, however, a significant change began to develop which ultimately left conducting in the hands of one person, a conductor in the modern sense of the term. In Italy this was only fully achieved in the 1860s and 70s, much later than in most other countries.[3]

In discussing this process the primary texts to be considered are: Galeazzi (1791), Scaramelli (1811), Paganini (1835/36), Belgiojoso (1840 ca.), Biscottini (1846) and Folegatti (1874). The first two are acknowledged sources, yet deserve a brief commentary and the last is an unknown text while the others are less familiar, having been examined only once in modern studies.

To this evidence must be added a number of archival documents,[4] in particular those related to the orchestra of La Scala which increasingly assumed the leadership among opera houses in Italy.[5]

Observations will be limited to 1) opera orchestras (traditions were very different for the two other performance venues, private halls and churches), 2) instrumental ensembles

1 Renato Meucci: La trasformazione dell'orchestra in Italia al tempo di Rossini, in: *Gioachino Rossini 1792–1992. Il testo e la scena*, ed. by Paolo Fabbri, Pesaro 1994, pp. 431–464. An international perspective is offered by Daniel J. Koury: *Orchestral performance practice in the nineteenth century*, Ann Arbor 1986 and, for the preceding period, by Neal Zaslaw and John Spitzer: *The birth of the orchestra. History of an institution, 1650–1815*, Oxford 2004.

2 On the subject of violin-conducting see also Spitzer and Zaslaw: *The birth of the orchestra*, pp. 291–393.

3 Adam Carse: *The orchestra from Beethoven to Berlioz*, New York 1949, reprint 1969, p. 317. An invaluable contribution is also found in Gregory W. Harwood: Verdi's reform of the Italian Opera orchestra, in: *19th-Century Music* 10 (1986), pp. 108–134.

4 These sources have been investigated by a group of five researchers, whose findings were published under the editorship of Franco Piperno in: Le orchestre dei teatri d'opera italiani nell'Ottocento. Bilancio provvisorio di una ricerca, in: *Studi Verdiani* 11 (1996), pp. 119–221.

5 The archival material related to La Scala orchestra is preserved at the Archivio Storico Civico in Milan. It was with great surprise that I found there in 1986 a huge unknown documentation, unsuccessfully sought after beforehand by many scholars, and even considered destroyed during the riots of 1848.

of major theatres, contemporary practices in smaller opera houses having been too unstable to be representative for this study.

With the sole exception of the Florentine theatre La Pergola,[6] the practice of ›double direction‹ adopted abroad from the beginning of the 19th century, was nowhere common in Italy. It implied the sharing of responsibility between a *Kapellmeister* and the leader, with the former involved in training and conducting singers and choir and the latter dealing with the orchestral members.[7] Rather, in Italy the first three performances of a work were usually under the leadership of the composer (generally a keyboard player). Further performances were usually taken over by the leader/conductor.

The apparent delay with which the latter's office was transformed in Italy with respect to other countries, must not be judged, however, as a conservative or regressive attitude. A more likely interpretation is that Italian operatic habits depended mainly, if not entirely, on what was best suited to an Italian *melodramma*, that is to say what was appropriate for singers and staging.

Let us begin with the role of the ›leader/conductor‹ in the late 18th century based on descriptions found in the two older sources.[8]

The most careful description is that of Francesco Galeazzi, *Elementi di musica con un saggio sopra l'arte di suonare il violino* (1791).[9] Galeazzi speaks with great admiration and praise of the orchestra of the Royal Opera House of Turin, then directed by Gaetano Pugnani, and gives a detailed seating plan of the establishment (figure 1).[10]

The author further lists some 15 musical skills which the leader/conductor must have: a good ear, an expert knowledge of counterpoint and other rules of composition, a superb rhythmic sense, an authoritative control over orchestral members, the ability to sight-read several measures at once, and, should the singer suffer a memory loss, the capability of leading the orchestra to the appropriate point without the public noticing. In order for these abilities to be fully satisfactory, the leader/conductor must have near him »some skilled *bassi* [cellos and double basses], an able leader of the second violins, and a well-trained violinist«.[11]

6 Gloria Staffieri, in: *Le orchestre dei teatri d'opera*, pp. 196–197.

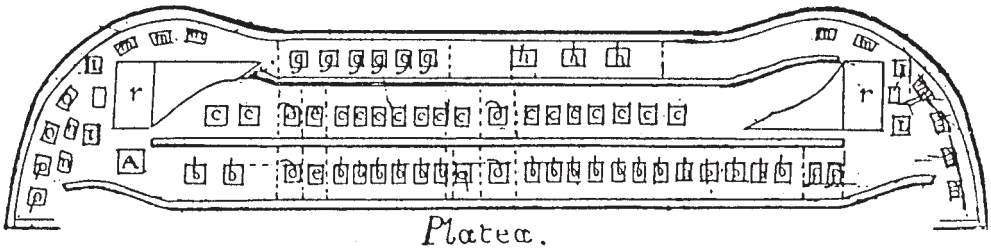
7 Koury: *Orchestral performance practice*, pp. 63–65.

8 Their remarks are summarized here, a closer examination being contained in my study already mentioned.

9 Vol. 1: Rome, Pilucchi Cracas, 1791; vol. 2: Rome, Puccinelli, 1796; reprint Courlay 2002.

10 This well-known document deserves closer study; apart from the normal seating plan for the instrumentalists one can see dashes which specify the seating for players and conductor when performing for ballets (*balli*), usually given between each act of the opera.

11 Galeazzi: *Elementi di musica*, § 301, pp. 224–227.



A	Sito del Direttore dell'orchestra più elevato degli altri	Num. 1	L	Controbassi primi	2
b	Violini Primi	20	m	Bassi; cioè Violoncelli, e Controbassi	9
c	Violini Secondi	16	n	Altri Corni da Caccia	2
d	Oboe	4	o	Timpano	1
e	Clarinetti	2	p	Trombe	2
f	Corni da Caccia	2	q	Primo Violino de' Balli	1
g	Viole	6	r	Cembali	2
h	Fagotti	3			
i	Violoncelli primi	2		Totale	75

Figure 1 Seating plan of the Turin orchestra, from Galeazzi: *Elementi di musica*, Rome 1791

In the larger theatres in the 18th century it was the practice to have two continuo sections, complete with two harpsichords. A Neapolitan source clearly explains that it served »the comfort of the singers, whenever they are required to be on the opposite side of the stage«.[12] However, by the early 19th century this practice was falling into disuse as testified by Giuseppe Scaramelli in 1811. In his *Saggio sopra i doveri di un primo violino direttore d'orchestra*, he remarks: »In some larger theatres it is common to have a [second] cembalo at the end of the violins, but since it is of no value, many have dismissed it«.[13] Further evidence can be observed in an early 19th-century drawing of the San Carlo orchestra in Naples by the theatre's architect, Antonio Niccolini (figure 2; see also figure 3).

The leader/conductor can be seen in the more modern central position, as underlined by the accompanying text (1818 ca.), which reads as follows:

> »The leader, first violinist conductor, is in the center of an amphitheatric setting, so as to be visible at a glance by the entire ensemble. They are entirely dependent, as a group and individually, on the motion of his bow, their focus being on that unique point, as illustrated by the dotted lines«.[14]

12 This remark, by the composer Pasquale Cafaro, is reported in an essential article by Ulisse Prota-Giurleo: *La grande orchestra del R. Teatro San Carlo nel Settecento (da documenti inediti)*, Napoli 1927, p. 27.

13 Giuseppe Scaramelli: *Saggio sopra i doveri di un primo violino direttore d'orchestra*, Trieste, Weiss, 1811, p. 14, note 1.

14 Complete Italian text in Meucci: La trasformazione dell'orchestra, p. 447.

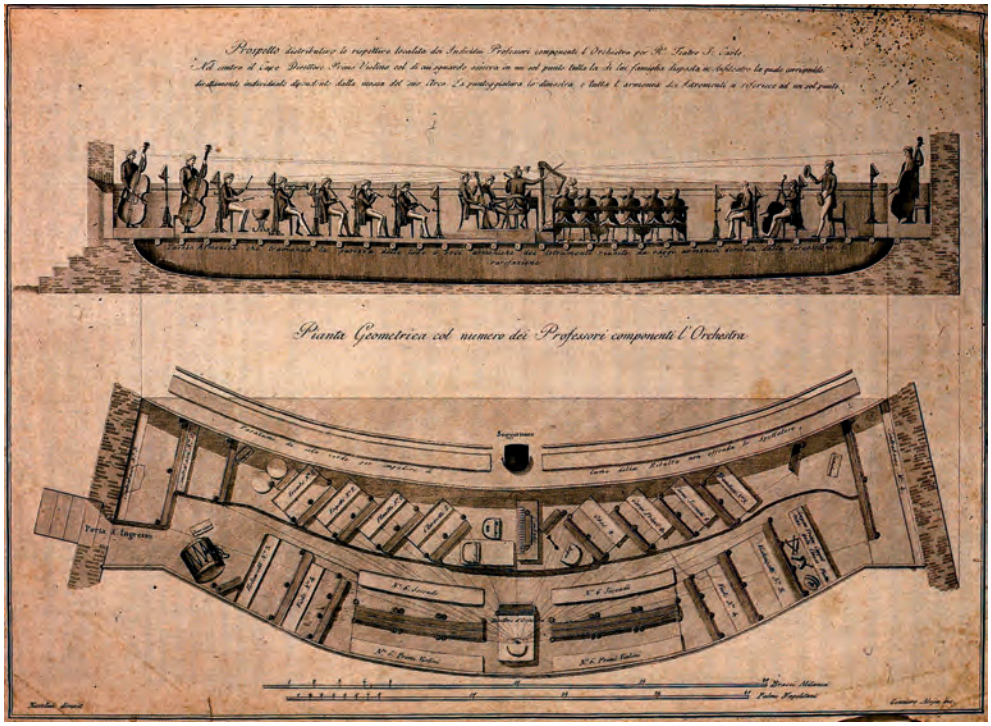


Figure 2 Antonio Niccolini: Seating plan of the S. Carlo theatre orchestra, 1818 ca., Naples, Museo Nazionale di S. Martino; anonymous painter

Figure 3 View of the interior of San Carlo theatre, 1818 ca., Chantilly, Musée Condé

The transformation of the conducting role By the beginning of the 1830s, however, the need for a further modification became apparent. The first step in this process was that of relocating the groups of string players, then still seated in parallel rows. The orchestra of La Scala – soon to become the leading orchestra in Italy – made this first step in 1833, at the instigation of its leader/conductor, Eugenio Cavallini. The strings were re-positioned in groups of two per each music-stand, with the two front-players of each section seated beside one another.[15] Cavallini's initiative and modification gained the enthusiastic approval of Donizetti whose comments also confirm the continuing practice of assigning the leadership of a work to the composer for the first three performances.

> »The principal quartet of the orchestra located in the centre can lead more easily the rest of the instruments; and the composer in the middle of them can (if this be the case) communicate to the leader beside him, both with voice and motion, his preferred tempos, a seating favorable to today's present style.«[16]

In a commentary, addressed to the impresario Visconti, Donizetti advises perseverance in maintaining the new orchestral configuration:

> »If you have enough wisdom to disregard those who slander, and if you are certain of the advantages, leave the orchestra as it now stands; thus, the followers of antediluvian ideas will eventually discover that the present age too is capable of enlightening improvements in cultivated arts«.

In the same period the piano, which had by then superseded the harpsichord, was also dismissed, and the accompaniment of the thorough bass was thenceforth entrusted to a cello soloist, a practice discussed elsewhere in the present volume by Claudio Bacciagaluppi.[17]

Two essential documents describe the subsequent stage of the renewal. The first is the project for the Ducal theatre orchestra in Parma (1835/36) by Nicolò Paganini; the second a pamphlet written a few years later by a certain »A. B.«, identifiable as the violin enthusiast Count Antonio Belgiojoso (1801–1858).

The renowned Ducal orchestra was in a state of decline (Galeazzi had considered it one of the »best orchestras in the world«) and in the mid-1830s, Paganini was temporarily engaged in its renewal. Appointed by the sovereign Maria Luigia, Paganini aimed to effectively adapt the orchestra to performing practices as espoused in other countries. The project was perfectly feasible but came to a standstill on a point which Paganini held

15 Meucci: La trasformazione dell'orchestra, p. 451.

16 Guido Zavadini: *Donizetti. Vita, musiche, epistolario*, Bergamo 1948, pp. 343–344.

17 See his article in this volume, pp. 138. An invaluable comment on this continuo practice by the cello player, is to be found in Ottmar Schreiber: *Orchester und Orchesterpraxis in Deutschland*, Berlin 1938, pp. 272–274.

of great importance – the actual role of the conductor.[18] Re-reading the preliminary plan envisaged by the celebrated violinist, it is apparent just how far behind Italian performance was from the rest of Europe in 1835:

> »In all major orchestras in Vienna, Munich, Berlin, Paris, and London there is a conducting kapellmeister (*maestro di cappella*) located in such a position as to communicate his thoughts to the singers and to the players. He has the score under his eyes on a square piano, which he plays with the left hand, standing if necessary. He gives the different tempos. He marks the measures, like a chronometer. He warns with his eyes, and is therefore the core of the musical ensemble. For many reasons, the first violin cannot take on the demanding requirements of the musical direction, both vocal and instrumental. It is only requested from him to have the quality of an excellent executor of the prescriptions given by the kapellmeister, the sole leader of the orchestra. A conductor at the square piano near the double bass[es] is of little use, because the leadership shared by him and the leader turns out to be detrimental for the unity of conducting [...] From the moment in which a kapellmeister effectively takes over the direction, the leader, like every other instrumentalist of the group, has nothing else to do than follow to the rhythmic prescriptions of the conductor.«

Notwithstanding these introductory remarks, the final text of the *Progetti di regolamento per la ducale orchestra di Parma* drawn up by Paganini in the following year (1836) left unchanged the role of the first violinist/conductor, who »will lead the orchestra, supervising it in all functions at court, at the ducal theatre, or at the church services«. Paganini's project also included the role of »*maestro di cappella* of the ducal theatre«, a musician which was required to »rehearse both operas and concerts given in the theatre« and to »introduce any changes necessary in the scores to be performed«. Nothing more is specified in the job description except for the qualification as »a distinguished musician«, a qualification also requested in the event that a substitute was to be named.

The theatre of Parma was not yet ready to radical changes in conducting, as were not other orchestras elsewhere in Italy.[19] Abroad these changes had been adopted, consequently allowing orchestral forces to keep up with the increasing complex demands in orchestral writing. If Italians continued to procrastinate this was not due to a conservative

18 See Meucci: La trasformazione dell'orchestra, pp. 452–453. All documentation can be found in Gian Paolo Minardi: L'orchestra di Parma. Un prestigio europeo e il suo progressivo declino, in: *Orchestre in Emilia-Romagna nell'Ottocento e Novecento*, ed. by Marcello Conati and Marcello Pavarani, Parma 1982, pp. 75–144: the passages quoted are at pp. 94 and 137.

19 As a further confirmation, one may cite a similarly unsuccessful attempt made at the San Carlo theatre in Naples by Julius Benedict, its conductor from 1825 to 1828, under the *impresario* Barbaja. He too failed in imposing modern concepts in conducting. Thereafter the function was reassumed by Giuseppe Maria Festa, its celebrated leader/conductor from 1805 to 1839; see Cesare Corsi: L'orchestra dei teatri reali di Napoli nell'età di Donizetti, 1820–1840, in: *Donizetti, Napoli, l'Europa*, ed. by Franco Carmelo Greco and Renato di Benedetto, Napoli/Roma 2000, pp. 337–350, in particular pp. 348–349.

attitude, however, but was rather a reflection of their devotion to one repertoire in particular, operatic music.

The changes in the role of the first violin proposed by the music-lover Antonio Belgiojoso were, however, much more up-to-date.[20] His project of reformation was published in 1845 in the volume *Il Mentore teatrale* by Francesco Avventi, whose editorial notes suggest that the pamphlet was written by the end of the 1830s.[21]

In his plan Count Belgiojoso carefully describes the new role of the conductor and two distinguished violinists in the orchestra, clearly defining three main violin roles: a ›dedicated conductor‹, a violin soloist called *concertino*, and a *spalla* or ›leader of the ranks‹. While clarifying the nature of the said offices, he also explains the unexpected origin of the puzzling term *spalla* (shoulder), still in use in present-day Italian orchestras to designate the leader.

Belgiojoso stresses the necessity of a ›dedicated‹ conductor, a violinist who does not play his instrument but rather conducts the orchestra in our modern sense of the term. The other two principal violinists take on, in turn, those responsibilities formerly assumed by the leader/conductor. The *concertino* assumes all virtuoso requirements and, of course, performs all the solo passages. The *spalla* plays continuously, guiding the other orchestral players throughout, a responsibility still held today by the first violin, though the role now also includes the function of soloist:

> »For those who are not artists or are untrained we will explain the necessity of the *concertino*. In order to perform solo passages perfectly all the physical and mental skills of the player need to be dedicated to that goal. In fact, the human mind cannot follow two different ideas or concepts at the same time! Now, if the conductor acts as a *concertino* who will guide the orchestra? Some will say the *spalla*! I disagree because the *spalla* needs to attend to the ›continuity‹ and cannot simultaneously undertake the entire leadership. The same axiom is valid for him as well, that no man can successfully take on two roles at once! Therefore, when a conductor does not have a *concertino*, either the solos of the violin will not be very well-performed, his mind being engaged in conducting the orchestra, or it will easily happen (for there is no one conducting), that the orchestra will be rhythmically unstable or will not accompany appropriately. Thus, either the solo played by the conductor will be poor or the orchestra out of tempo«.[22]

20 On this man, see Francesco Regli: *Dizionario biografico dei più celebri poeti ed artisti … che fiorirono in Italia dal 1800 al 1860*, Torino 1860, pp. 47–48.

21 [Antonio Belgiojoso]: Sulla importanza dell'elezione del primo violino nelle principali città d'Italia. Lettera scritta dal lago di Como a Bologna da un instruito dilettante di violino, e di composizioni musicali, 1840 ca., in: Francesco Avventi: *Mentore teatrale. Repertorio di leggi, massime, norme e discipline per gli artisti melo-drammatici e per chiunque abbia ingerenza e interesse in affari teatrali*, Ferrara, Negri, 1845, pp. 264–281. I would like to thank Biancamaria Antolini for having drawn my attention to this source and Agostina Zecca Laterza for help in identifying its author.

22 [Belgiojoso]: Sulla importanza dell'elezione del primo violino, p. 279, note 10.

Of course, the term *concertino* has a loose connection with the earlier, homonymous role of the Concerto Grosso, the respective player being entrusted with the performance of virtuoso passages. In Belgiojoso's opinion this role should be assigned to »young players, who have already manifested undoubted and reiterated public proofs of their excellence in this fascinating artistic role«.

It may be noted incidentally that the term *concertino* was also used for designating the music part of this player, as documented by Lichtenthal in 1826:

> »In some regions of Italy this name is given to the written part of the First Violin, leader of the orchestra, on which, for his convenience, the obbligato passages of the other instruments are notated«.[23]

Thus, by the end of the 1830s the major Italian orchestras were feeling a need for a proper conductor, while the roles of soloist and ›leader of the ranks‹ were taken over by two other outstanding players. This division of roles went hand in hand with a constant increase in orchestral forces and performance requirements in opera. There was in fact a constant increment in setting and performing requirements of contemporary operas.

A final quote from Belgiojoso on the many talents the new conductor should possess may be appropriate:

> »We now arrive to the most sublime class of the violin profession, the most complete one, as it sums up the mentioned skills [those of solo player and teacher] with the knowledge of counterpoint, at least in regard to scoring for full orchestra with accompanied voices or for instruments only. He must immediately understand if a low, a high, or a middle part contain errors, so that he can promptly correct those mistakes. He must also know the nature of wind, percussion and bowed instruments with respect to that of the violin; in addition, he must know the chorus ›par excellence‹, namely that formed by male and female singers, and that of the principal singers, when they perform together. Further, he should direct the military band, today frequently used on the stage. His main goal is that of obtaining homogeneity between the situation represented on the stage and the role of every performer, so that one does not overpower the other. Thus the audience, if educated, may perceive that all things fit together logically and seem natural; if the audience is not musically trained they will feel their senses captured by the whole enjoyable experience. And both parties would commend the performance as being to their complete satisfaction«.[24]

While attesting to the personal views of Belgiojoso, this document also confirms the principal concerns that were facing many of Italy's opera houses. The distribution of tasks between conductor, violin soloist (*concertino*) and ›leader of the ranks‹ (*spalla*) clearly derived from the increasing demands in operatic performance. However, the adoption of these new roles was by no means rushed into or universally accepted. Examples like that of the Apollo Theatre in Rome are clear evidence of this point. There, as late as 1859,

23 Pietro Lichtenthal: *Dizionario e bibliografia della musica*, Milano 1826, vol. 1, p. 183.

24 [Belgiojoso]: Sulla importanza dell'elezione del primo violino, pp. 269–270.

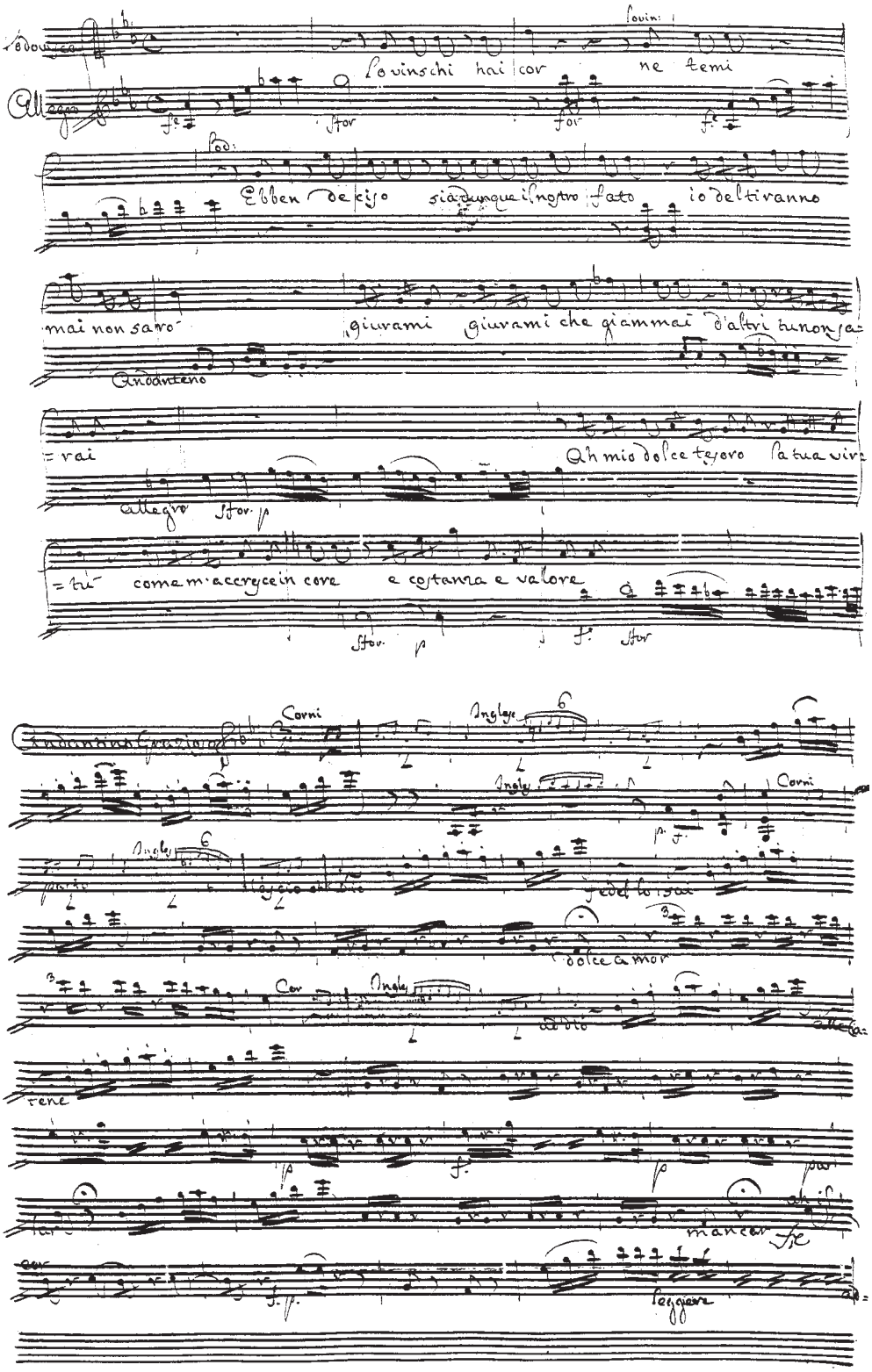


Figure 4 Parts for Concertino from J. S. Mayr's Lodoiska, Milan, Conservatorio ›G. Verdi‹

FIGURE 6 Raised chair for the conductor from the middle of the 19th century, Florence, La Pergola Theatre; after Marcello de Angelis: *La musica del Granduca*, Florence 1978, ill. 39

maestro Emilio Angelini conducted Verdi's opera *Un ballo in maschera* seated on a raised chair and playing the violin, thereby attending to all his duties in a *melodramma* whose performing complexities, especially in the finale of the 3rd Act, are well known to any who have some experience of its staging.[25]

In any event, the process of change had irreversibly begun. With the advent of Meyerbeer's Parisian operas, which enjoyed enormous success in Italy as elsewhere, Italian orchestras and their leaders were confronted with unprecedented difficulties in operatic performance and conducting. This became apparent with the first Italian performance of *Robert le diable* in 1844, which was criticized in an in-depth review in the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*. The reviewer, Alberto Mazzucato, who was not a violinist, was to be charged, in 1854, with the pioneering role in Italy of training and conducting the orchestra of La Scala with modern principles.

In his review Mazzucato tackles with the Milanese performances of *Robert le Diable*, given first at the Carcano Theatre in 1844 and then at La Scala in 1846.[26] Of the former performance he complains about the inadequacy of the opera house and of human forces with respect to a dramatic work of such complexity:

25 The fact is reported in Tancredi Mantovani: *Angelo Mariani*, Roma 1921, pp. 17–18.

26 On the Milanese representations of operas by Meyerbeer and unconventional reuse of his music, see Anna Tedesco: *Opere a macchina. La fortuna di Giacomo Meyerbeer in Italia*, PhD Dissertation, Bologna University, 1998, pp. 42–47.

»The performance succeeded better than prior rumours had predicted but remained, however, far from what could be expected and what it should have been. This was partly due to the paucity of string instruments. Windinstruments, particularly brass, have an important and continuous role requiring a threefold increase in the number of strings: a need which the impresario could have at least partially coped with. The same was also true for the lack of male and female voices, for the paucity of some needed instruments (for example four timpani instead of two), for the suppression of the piston cornets, whose absence, however, cannot be attributed to the impresario, as this instrument has not yet been adopted here. Apart from all these things, there was still the impossibility for this work to be adequately performed in a theatre as small as the Carcano«.[27]

The première of *Robert* at La Scala is in turn commented by Mazzucato in a detailed report on contemporary Italian operas and the customs of Italian orchestras. It was his opinion that the easiness and ›popularity‹ of Verdi's works had made orchestras and their players lazy and consequently unable to perform complex compositions.

»Much good intention on the part of some of the instrumentalists and chorus singers; a praiseful attitude too; but the other performers are incapable of doing the same. Thus, a continuous oscillation of the tempo, not less than in all the performances of Italian operas; with the difference that in the latter all proceeds nonetheless intelligibly; whereas, in *Roberto il Diavolo* the slightest oscillation or the smallest uncertainty leads to confusion and chaos«.[28]

Francesco Antonio Biscottini, supervisor of La Scala orchestra, has left us another invaluable piece of information concerning the orchestra's situation in 1846.[29] In this text Biscottini criticises the fact that the seating had been changed three times in thirteen years. This happened again at the insistence of the leader/conductor Eugenio Cavallini (see above),[30] but, according to Biscottini,

»with this he only obtained the disapproval of most of the best players, especially the principals from whom I repeatedly heard strong complaints. I reported the fact to the impresario (*appaltatore*), who instead approved of it. Relying on the assertion of maestro Verdi, who had assured him that the orchestra was well distributed, he gave no value to my own objections. I am convinced, however, that the *appaltatore* misunderstood the comment of the foretold maestro. From reliable sources who spoke

27 Alberto Mazzucato: Critica melodrammatica I: Roberto il Diavolo, in: *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* 3 (1844), p. 83.

28 Alberto Mazzucato: A proposito di Roberto il Diavolo, in: *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* 5 (1846), pp. 154–156, 163–164, 209–212. See also Antonio Rostagno: La Scala verso la moderna orchestra. Gli eventi e i motivi delle riforme da Merelli ad Aida, and Gloria Staffieri: Un'altra esecuzione è possibile. *Robert le Diable* e la riforma delle orchestre italiane negli anni Quaranta, in: *Studi Verdiani* 16 (2002), pp. 157–216 and 219–246 respectively.

29 Renato Meucci: Osservazioni del m.° Francesco Antonio Biscottini sull'orchestra scaligera del 1846, in: *Il flauto dolce. Rivista per lo studio e la pratica della musica antica* 17/18 (1987/88), pp. 41–44. This document is mentioned in the two studies by Rostagno and Staffieri cited in the preceding note.

30 A further document on Cavallini's reforms was recently discovered, and is currently being studied by Emmanuel Hervé of the University François Rabelais of Tours (France).

with Verdi on this issue, I was told he appreciated not the distribution of the present orchestra, but the fact that its leader had grouped all the cellos, who had previously been separated, into a unique section as Verdi wished«.[31]

Cavallini's changes, undertaken shortly before Biscottini wrote his objecting report, followed a controversy that arose between Verdi and the *appaltatore* over the revival of *I lombardi* and the first performance of *Giovanna d'Arco*. The composer had numerous disagreements with the theatre management, and on 22 December 1844 had a serious quarrel over the insufficient number of violins and double basses in the orchestra. As a consequence of this disagreement Verdi gave up writing new operas for La Scala for nearly 24 years.[32]

The road was however opened towards a new ›direction‹ – both meanings of the word being fitting here – which exempted the (former) violinist from having to perform and thus opening the way to the role of the modern conductor. This function, subsequently called *maestro concertatore e direttore dell'opera* (coach and opera conductor) was first assumed at La Scala in 1854 by Alberto Mazzucato. He was engaged in the same role the following year for an opera by Meyerbeer, *Il profeta*.[33]

Date	Title	Coach	Conductor
7 May 1846	*Roberto il diavolo*		Eugenio Cavallini
23 May 1855	*Il profeta*	Alberto Mazzucato	Alberto Mazzucato
31 December 1855	*Il profeta*	?	Eugenio Cavallini
15 January 1857	*Gli ugonotti*	Alberto Mazzucato	Alberto Mazzucato
5 March 1859	*Il crociato in Egitto*		
24 November 1859	*Gli ugonotti*	Alberto Mazzucato	Alberto Mazzucato
31 August 1861	*Roberto il diavolo*	Alberto Mazzucato, Francesco Pollini	Eugenio Cavallini
12 February 1863	*Il profeta*	Alberto Mazzucato	Alberto Mazzucato
23 February 1864	*Gli ugonotti*	Alberto Mazzucato	Alberto Mazzucato
1 March 1866	*L'africana*	Alberto Mazzucato	Alberto Mazzucato
7 November 1866	*L'africana*	Alberto Mazzucato	Alberto Mazzucato
1867	*L'africana*	?	?
1868	*Gli ugonotti*	?	Eugenio Terziani
1869	*Gli ugonotti*	Eugenio Terziani	Eugenio Terziani
26 January 1870	*Dinorah*	?	Eugenio Terziani
16 February 1870	*Gli ugonotti*	Eugenio Terziani	Eugenio Terziani
5 April 1870	*Roberto il diavolo*	Franco Faccio	Franco Faccio
1870	*L'africana*	Eugenio Terziani	Eugenio Terziani

Figure 6 Operas by Meyerbeer at La Scala in the 19th century, and the respective coaches and conductors

31 Meucci: Osservazioni del m.° Francesco Antonio Biscottini, p. 43.

32 The situation is fully described in Harwood: Verdi's reform, pp. 108–134 (the episode is discussed at p. 113). See also Rostagno: La Scala verso la moderna orchestra, p. 163.

33 Giampiero Tintori: *Duecento anni di teatro alla Scala. Cronologia opere-balletti-concerti 1778–1977*, Milano 1979, p. 399. See also fig. 6.

Therefore, Mazzucato was the first Italian conductor in the modern sense, having preceded by several years Angelo Mariani, who is usually cited as the founder in 1860 of modern conducting in Italy.[34]

The concluding step in the process was clearly summarized in an enlightening pamphlet written by Ercole Folegatti in 1874. Here the old role of leader/conductor is totally ignored and, as for the ›supreme‹ conductor described by Belgiojoso, all the leading tasks are taken over by a director in the modern sense.

> »To lead the orchestra today a conductor must have a thorough knowledge in music; and though he is not actually teaching he must be learned in counterpoint, understand voices and the handling of both string and windinstruments, including those of the band which often has to play on the stage. He must be acquainted with history and costumes in order to verify period clothing. He should amend any disharmony, lack of intonation, false notes or mistakes that may be found in the parts of instrumentalists, singers or chorus singers. In the event of a mishap by the performers, the conductor must have his eye ready to help the principal parts. In a word, he is responsible for all that happens in the orchestra and on the stage in the course of the performance«.[35]

But the list of skills required of the ›new‹ conductor continues:

> »He must have in mind the equal balance of the vocal forces with the instruments and the place where the music is being performed. Taking into account the ability of each player, the conductor should put a few skilled performers close to him: a first violin player, first of the second violins, first viola and double bass. It is he who chooses a good balance in the number of woodwinds and brass, as well as the so-called Turkish music (*bassa musica*). Once the appropriate number of performers has been decided on he must know how to distribute them since a good distribution of the orchestra members has much influence on the performance, and thus one admires or blames the good or bad skills of the conductor«.[36]

At last, the duties of the ›supreme conductor‹ had been codified and have remained so ever since. There was still one relevant difference however: the conductor remained seated throughout: »The conductor then seats in the middle of the orchestra, and the musicians must never cease watching him«.[37] In addition, Folegatti's treatise also reports the first known mention in Italy of the distinctive conductor's tool:

34 This assumption is first found in a series of six biographical articles on Mariani published by Antonio Ghislanzoni in the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* 22 (1867) starting with the issue 30, pp. 36–37. The same claim was repeated by Filippo Filippi: Schizzi biografici. Direttori e compositori contemporanei. Angelo Mariani, in: *Il mondo artistico* 2 (1868), issue 23, and taken over by Mantovani: *Mariani*. It is still assumed in Luke Jensen: The Emergence of the Modern Conductor in 19th-Century Italian Opera, in: *Performance Practice Review* 4 (1991), pp. 34–63 (mostly dealing with Mariani's activity).

35 Ercole Folegatti: *Il violino esposto geometricamente nella sua costruzione*, Bologna, Fava e Garignani, 1874, p. 76.

36 Folegatti: *Il violino*, p. 77.

37 Both this and the following quote are from Folegatti: *Il violino*, p. 79.

»He will hold in his hands a white baton 55 centimetres long, supporting it with the first, second, and third fingers, and shaking it as little as possible since if the director beats unseemly one has the impression that he is not leading the players appropriately«.

The transformation imposed by modern conducting technique also implied a change in the layout of the full score. The top staff, previously assigned to the leader/conductor, was reattributed to the highest instrument of the orchestra, so that the first violins found their part just above the other strings, as ever since.

Finally, comparing orchestral leadership in former times with that of his own time, Folegatti emphasizes the strict respect of the composer's intent and imagination in previous times whereas he offers a cutting description of the new-found ›conductor's freedom‹:

»As everything is concentrated in the hands of a unique conductor, he tries, in order to be original, to obtain effects that the composer never intended so that the audience will applaud him. In this way he is compensated for the responsibility in every performance of its good or bad outcome«.

Appendix From Ercole Folegatti: *Il violino*, Bologna, Fava e Garignani, 1874, pp. 75–80

Del Direttore d'Orchestra

Ogni qual volta ci fu dato di udire spettacoli e prove di essi nei teatri, non mai abbiamo sentito una perfetta unione del primo Violino direttore col maestro Concertatore, del che crediamo essere cagione l'attendere l'uno a comparire a preferenza dell'altro, lo che chiamassi gelosia di mestiere.

L'unico vantaggio, che presentava un Maestro, ed un primo Violino direttore, era quello, che concertando ambidue, od almeno il Maestro, il palco scenico, ed il Violino, l'orchestra, nei tempi e nell'interpretazione della musica, veniva molto di più rispettata la volontà del compositore. Oggi poi, che tutto è concentrato nel direttore ed è padrone assoluto, per farsi distinguere, cerca di ottenere degli effetti, che il maestro giammai immaginò, affinchè il pubblico l'applauda, per contrabilanciare la responsabilità del bene o del male, a cui esso è esposto nell'esito dello spettacolo.

Se il Violino era oltre essere direttore, anche concertista, come in passato usava, era ben difficile che potesse essere addentro nelle moltissime cognizioni, che occorrono ad un direttore. Basta pensare a tutte le ore, che impiegò nell'esercitarsi nel suo strumento, che posto il caso che abbia studiato dieci anni, non possono essere meno di ore 18,300 [footnote: Si calcola che Camillo Sivori abbia sonato circa 80.000 ore], e tutto questo tempo [p. 76] sarebbe stato utilizzato al rovistamento di molte partiture ed opere classiche. Perciò dovendosi occupare dell'orchestra con li requisiti che diremo più abbasso, conviene abbandoni il suono dello strumento, perchè il tempo non rimane; ed in allora resta, od eccellente violinista, o discreto maestro, o viceversa; ma eccellente in tutte due le materie, e rinvenire un tal uomo, è cosa ben di pochi e rarissima.

Per la direzione dell'orchestra, come oggi è ammessa, il direttore conviene che sia enciclopedico in musica; e sebbene non tutto sia materialmente da lui fatto apprendere, pure è troppo necessario, che ei sappia di contrappunto, che conosca alla perfezione le voci, e così il maneggio di tutti li stromenti da corda e da fiato, ed anche diversi strumenti della Banda, dovendo spesso concertare sul palco scenico. Conviene sia istrutto nella storia e costumi, per potere qualche volta rimediare a certi sconci di epoca troppo palmari. Deve inoltre provvedere agli sconcerti, alle disunioni, alle stonazioni, correggere li sbagli, che rinvenir si

possono nelle parti dei singoli sonatori, cantanti e coristi. E caso qualunque inavvertenza negli esecutori, deve aver l'occhio pronto ad unirsi alla parte principale, in una parola esso è responsabile di tutto ciò, che accade nell'orchestra e palco scenico nel corso dello spettacolo.

Da questa breve descrizione ognuno può formarsi un'idea di quanto devono essere estese le cognizioni in un direttore, che sostiene sì luminoso posto.

Ora esaminiamo da vicino tutti questi vari soggetti. [p. 77]

Prima di tutto un Direttore deve saperne molto di più di un cantante, perchè prima di giungere a quel posto, deve avere molto faticato nello studio della musica; ma il compenso che viene retribuito sta in proporzione di 5 al direttore, e 100 al cantante, e ciò non è una proporzione troppo consolante per un uomo, che conviene abbia, come sopra dissi, nozioni estesissime acquistate con fatica e studio.

Le cure poi, che il direttore deve avere presenti sono. La proporzione dei coristi, cogli stromenti, o il luogo dove devesi eseguire la musica. Intorno alla qualità e bravura dei sonatori, dovrà il direttore assicurarsi d'aver vicino un bravo 1.° Violino, 1.° dei Secondi, 1.a Viola e Contrabasso, e sapere bene proporzionare il numero delli stromenti da fiato e di legno, e quindi quelli da fiato d'ottone e bassa musica. Formato il numero proporzionato degli esecutori, è necessario saperli ben situare, e conviene persuadersi assai ad attuare una perfetta esecuzione, e così si ammira o si biasima il buono e il cattivo ingegno del Direttore. La disposizione dei sonatori e cantanti deve esser relativa al luogo, ove viene eseguita la musica.

Fatto quanto abbiamo detto, esaminiamo i doveri del direttore.

I.° Deve essere un buon leggitore di spartiti, ed un buon accompagnatore, per poter subito a colpo d'occhio far comprendere la musica ai cantanti o sonatori sottoposti alla sua direzione.

II.° Deve avere una battuta a piombo e sicura da sapere regolare il tempo, e mantenerlo eguale dal principio al fine di ciascun pezzo, maneggiando la bacchetta non col braccio; ma bensì col polso. [p. 78]

III.° Converrà sappia la musica da eseguirsi quasi a memoria, ed abbia buona vista, onde potere coll'occhio fissare quei dati stromenti, che devono essere pronti nelle sortite; così li cantanti o coristi quando devono entrare.

IV.° Collocherà vicino a sè un bravo Violino da potersi ben fidare, acciocchè in caso possa prestarsi in quello, che può occorrere rispetto alli cantanti ed orchestra.

V.° Deve avere un orecchio finissimo e sensibile, per accorgersi di ogni minimo disordine; avvisare riguardo all'espressione, giacchè esso più di ogni altro deve intendersi, e conoscere li momenti di adoperarla.

VI.° Ad ogni pezzo od atto di opera, che dà principio, onde evitare il frastuono dell'accordatura degl'istrumenti da fiato e da corda, dovrebbe dare due colpi sulla latta, la quale deve avere un suono morto e non oscillante; ed il primo significa che tutti devono cessare di preludiare, od accordare lo strumento, e dopo tre minuti di silenzio, dare la seconda battuta per l'attacco.

VII.° Deve il direttore adattarsi per quanto lo comporta la musica, a mettersi d'accordo coi contanti [cantanti]: quanto poi alla musica istrumentale, quando non sia marcata coi numeri del Metronomo, toccherà a lui staccare quei tempi, che crederà opportuni, prima per penetrare nel pensiero del maestro, secondo per ottenere l'effetto, che troppo richiesto è necessariamente dalla musica.

VIII.° Per qualunque composizione, che si debba da quasi tutti improntare, converrà prendere il tempo un poco lento in sul principio, per poi, quando è avviato, terminare con brio ed effetto. [p. 79]

IX.° Deve pensare a far accordare l'orchestra dal 1.° Violino, e meglio sarà se a mezzo dell'opera nel riposo di nuovo si farà accordare.

X.° Il direttore poi siede in mezzo all'orchestra, tutti li professori all'atto dell'esecuzione non devono abbandonare coll'occhio un momento il direttore. Esso, come sopra abbiamo detto, terrà nelle mani una bacchetta bianca della lunghezza di 55 centimetri, sostenuta dalle tre dita; police [sic], indice e medio, e maneggierà il meno possibile la bacchetta. Poichè, se il direttore batte scomposto, sembra che abbia sotto

alla sua direzione dei professori poco capaci, invece che se tutti gli prestano attenzione, esso coll'occhio ed un piccolo movimento di bacchetta dà il segno per le entrate, e tutti entrano, e così tutti li concerti e convenzioni prese nelle prove riguardo la musica vengono eseguite.

XI.° Conviene che il direttore consideri che le voci cantano a mente, e sono inoltre frastornate dall'azione e dalla pantomima, e perciò fa mestieri che il direttore sia sempre alla vedetta, se alcun cantante esce di tempo, secondarlo quanto può, e quindi se occorre saltare quarti, battute e righe, e tosto comunicarlo a tutta l'orchesta [sic] se è possibile; in una parola fare il meglio, affinchè gli spettatori non se ne avvedano.

XII.° In fine il direttore deve sapere che l'esito buono o cattivo dello spettacolo tutto viene rimesso a lui; stuonano i cantanti, uno stromento sorte prima del tempo, li tempi al pubblico non sembrano giusti, si fa qualche taglio che non a tutti accomoda, si ammala un cantante, i cori, la banda escono di tempo, subito si dice è il direttore che non sa il suo conto. [p. 80]

Le scene, il vestiario non sono troppo adattati è il direttore che non sa di costumi e di storia.

Dopo tutto ciò vi dico che vi sono moltissimi maestri di musica [footnote: La città di Bologna abbonda di moltissimi professori e rinomati maestri di musica]; ma di tali uomini enciclopedici si difetta assolutamente, e ciò eziandio perchè le cognizioni, che con massima fatica e studio si richiedono per trasmettere agli altri, mancano a loro stessi.

O viva Dio, arrossiscano li magistrati, quando cercano di spilorchiare pochi franchi al mese, quando vogliono fare acquisto di tali persone, che gli apportano lustro e decoro nel paese e fuori. Finchè il vero merito non avrà giusto compenso, e preferenza sul nullismo e sul illusorio, niente di utile ne verrà, e sarebbe pochezza di mente lo sperarne. Dunque perchè vi affannate per volere le cose a questo punto? Risponderò che gli uomini conviene prenderli come sono, non come dovrebbero essere ma intorno le cose, è ben egoista colui, che non tende a quel meglio, che potrebbe e dovrebbe esser, e che se al presente non è, lo potrà essere un giorno, mentre le circostanze d'oggidì in specie tendono all'avanzamento di qualunque miglioria atta a condurre l'arte alla possibile perfezione.

Inhalt

Vorwort 7

Daniel Leech-Wilkinson Early recorded violin playing: evidence for what? 9

Marianne Rônez Pierre Baillot, ein Geiger an der Schwelle zum 19. Jahrhundert. Ein Vergleich seiner Violinschulen von 1803 und 1835 23

Rudolf Hopfner Nicolaus von Sawicki – Paganinis Geigenbauer in Wien 58

Robin Stowell Henryk Wieniawski: »the true successor« of Nicolò Paganini? A comparative assessment of the two virtuosos with particular reference to their caprices 70

Heinz Rellstab und Anselm Gerhard »Möglichst zugleicherklingend« – »trotz unsäglicher Mühe«. Kontroversen um das Akkordspiel auf der Geige im langen 19. Jahrhundert 91

Beatrix Borchard Programmgestaltung und Imagebildung als Teil der Aufführungspraxis: Joseph Joachim 106

Renato Meucci Changes in the role of the leader in 19th-century Italian orchestras 122

Claudio Bacciagaluppi Die »Pflicht« des Cellisten und der Generalbaß in der Romantik 138

Lucio A. Carbone Fernando Sor and the Panormos: an overview of the development of the guitar in the 19th century 156

Roman Brotbeck Aschenmusik. Heinz Holligers Re-Dekonstruktion von Robert Schumanns Romanzen für Violoncello und Klavier 167

Namen-, Werk- und Ortsregister 183

Die Autorinnen und Autoren der Beiträge 192

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