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Oratorios by Pasquale Anfossi in Poland

A collection of Italian oratorios and cantatas exists in the Archives of the Krakow Cathedral Chapter. These works date back to the second half of the 18th century and were written by composers such as Giovanni Battista Casali, Baldassare Galuppi, Niccolò Jommelli, Niccolò Piccinni, Pasquale Anfossi, Antonio Sacchini, Giovanni Paisiello and other lesser known artists¹. This collection as a whole has just been presented, along with a list, by Irena Poniatowska in her article entitled "Kantata i oratorium włoskie w Polsce II połowie XVIII wieku"². Here we will limit ourselves to describe the most important facts connected with it.

The presence of such an extent repertoire of Italian oratorios and cantatas in Krakow is linked with the activity of the canon of the Krakow Cathedral Chapter, count Wacław Sierakowski³, who was a prefect of the cathedral "cappella" from 1773 to 1777 and later, from 1782 to 1787, a vice parish-priest of the cathedral. Probably just in 1781 he started organising regular oratorio performances there during the autumn and winter seasons⁴. Sierakowski must have become acquainted with Italian sacred music while travelling to Italy. He stayed in Rome twice: from 1763 to 1767 and, probably, from 1777 to 1780⁵. Both stays must have been very fruitful and interesting from the musical point of view as it has been the time of the greatest rise of the Roman oratory centres. It is also quite possible that during his first stay in Rome Sierakowski got to know one of the most celebrated Roman composers of sacred music, Giovanni

¹ As e.g. Giuseppe Maria Magherini or Nicola Digne.

² Irena Poniatowska, *Kantata i oratorium włoskie w Polsce w II połowie XVIII wieku. Kantaty tworzone w tym czasie w Polsce [Italian cantata and Oratorio in 18th century Poland. Cantatas composed during that time in Poland]*, in: *Historia i interpretacja muzyki [History and Interpretation of Music]*, Kraków 1993.

³ *Ibid.*, p.48.

⁴ Tadeusz Przybylski, *Wacław Sierakowski - działacz muzyczny Krakowa czasów Oświecenia (1741-1806) [Wacław Sierakowski – Animator of Musical Life in Kraków in the Age of Enlightenment (1741-1806)]*, in: *Muzyka* 1971 Nr. 1, p. 54.

⁵ *Ibid.*; Elżbieta Aleksandrowska, *Sierakowski Wacław*, in: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny [Polish Biographical Dictionary]*, vol. XXXVII/2, Warszawa-Kraków 1996, pp. 313-315.

Battista Casali and that the contact between them did not break when the former left the city⁶. It is also highly probable that a significant part of the oratorios and cantatas in the Archives of the Krakow Cathedral Chapter was brought from Rome⁷.

The compositions mentioned above are preserved, although often incompletely, in the form of score, score and parts or parts only. In several Polish libraries, i.e. National Library, Library of the Jagellonian University in Krakow and Library of the Warsaw University one can find also booklets with the Polish translations of Italian librettos, made by Sierakowski himself. All these sources prove that compositions brought from Italy were presented to the Cracovian audience.

In this collection one can find till the present day⁸ two extent oratorios by Pasquale Anfossi: *L'uscita dall'arca* (Kk I 693) and *La Betulia liberata* (Kk I 692 and 694). They attracted our attention for several reasons.

Firstly, both works are preserved completely and in carefully made manuscript scores⁹ which makes the analysis of their musical structure much easier and obviously facilitates their comparison with the copies of these compositions which can be found in various libraries and archives all over the world. We know about three other copies of *L'uscita dall'arca* which can be found in the Archivio dei Filippini in Rome, in the Civico Museo Bibliografico in Bologna and in the Biblioteca del Palazzo Ajuda in Lisbon. *La Betulia liberata* is preserved even in more copies. We know about at least four full scores of it. They can be found in the Archivio dei

⁶ In the Archives of the Krakow Cathedral Chapter one can find a significant number of Giovanni Battista Casali's compositions (3 oratorios, several cantatas and other minor sacred pieces). Among them there is a cantata *La Penitenza* dedicated to Wacław Sierakowski by Giovanni Battista Casali. The manuscript is dated 1769.

⁷ This question still needs more researches.

⁸ There were also two other oratorios by Pasquale Anfossi in the collection of Wacław Sierakowski: *Sant'Elena al Calvario* and *La Madre de' Maccabei*. Unfortunately the music of the former was not preserved until today. The music of the latter, however, exists - but only in parts with Polish text.

⁹ Besides there are also instrumental and vocal parts to these compositions (*L'uscita dall'arca* - complete set of parts, *La Betulia liberata* - only parts of Ozia, Charmi and Achiorre preserved); on vocal parts there is also written down a Polish translation of the text. Moreover there are booklets with the printed translations of the Italian libretti.

Filippini and the Biblioteca privata Massimo in Rome (Italy), in the Santini-Bibliothek in Münster (Germany) and in Einsiedeln (Switzerland)¹⁰.

Secondly, the personage of their author seems very interesting for us. Anfossi was one of the most prolific oratorio composers of his generation, held in high reputation¹¹. Here we would like to refer to the most important facts from his biography linked with his career as an oratorio composer. Pasquale Anfossi was born in Taggia (Liguria, in the north of Italy) in 1727 and died in Rome in 1797. In 1765 his first work in this genre, *La madre de' Maccabei*, was performed in the Roman oratorio centre at the church of San Girolamo della Carità. Since then Anfossi had been connected with Oratorians, however with those from the church of Santa Maria in Vallicella, known also as Chiesa Nuova, and, as Joyce Lynne Johnson reports¹², just in 1774 he was chosen by the Congregation to be the successor of their "maestro di cappella", Giovanni Battista Casali. Then Anfossi worked for several Roman churches, first of all for the Chiesa Nuova and the Basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano, in both places holding the post of "maestro di cappella" after the death of Casali (from 1792 until the end of his life). Apart from that he was member of the Accademia of Santa Cecilia in Rome from 1791 on. In the same time, just from the beginning of seventies, Anfossi was active as an oratorio composer also in Venice. Probably from 1773 to 1777 and maybe even longer he worked in the Ospedale dei Derelitti, named also Ospedaletto

¹⁰ There are also scores of *La Betulia liberata* in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana in Rome (only part I), in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris (only part II) and in the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. (only part I). In the Conservatorio di Musica Giuseppe Verdi in Milan one can also find a manuscript score of *La Betulia liberata* by Anfossi but as Helen Geyer stated, this work is another setting of this famous libretto done by the composer (Helen Geyer, *Osservazioni sulla Betulia di Pasquale Anfossi*, in: Mozart, Padova e "La Betulia liberata", ed Paolo Pinamonti, Firenze 1991).

¹¹ In his output there are about 70 operas and at least 14 oratorios. Joyce Lynne Johnson states in her dissertation (Joyce Lynne Johnson, *The Oratorio at Santa Maria in Vallicella in Rome, 1770-1800*, University of Chicago 1983, vol. I, p. 77) that five of the oratorios belonged to the list of most popular and most often performed oratorios at Santa Maria in Vallicella in Rome in the period from 1770 to 1800.

¹² Joyce Lynne Johnson, *The Oratorio at Santa Maria in Vallicella in Rome, 1770-1800*, Ph. D. dissertation, University of Chicago 1983, vol. I, p. 181.

being a "maestro di coro" there. Generally from 1773 to 1797, as Denis and Elsie Arnold state¹³, his oratorios were still performed in Ospedaletto and then in another Venetian Ospedale, called dei Mendicanti. Because of the fact that the composer worked for various oratorio centres we can find in his output oratorios with Latin texts (written for Venice) as well as those with Italian ones (written for Roman centres).

Thirdly, these two oratorios preserved in Krakow are both considered his most interesting works in that genre. Johnson inserted their brief analyses into her Ph. D. dissertation¹⁴, while Helen Geyer¹⁵ wrote about *La Betulia liberata* making a comparison between Anfossi's work and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's setting of the same libretto by Metastasio.

Here we will focus only on two selected topics. Firstly we will present the results of the comparison made between Krakow's copies and the selected manuscripts incorporating these compositions from Italy. Secondly we will show the results of the analyses of the most interesting excerpts of both oratorios.

The existence of hand-written copies of the oratorios *L'uscita dall'arca* and *La Betulia liberata* by Pasquale Anfossi in the Archives of the Krakow Cathedral Chapter is mentioned in none of the encyclopaedias which give the places of occurrence of his works¹⁶.

In the case of *L'uscita dall'arca* from the three copies known to us we had a microfilm of the manuscript copy of that work from the Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale in Bologna (I-Bc, CC 200). On its basis we compared these two sources. The comparison revealed several differences, both musical and textual, between them. To the first group of differences we can count the difference in the key of the aria *Godi o terra* from the first part of this oratorio (the Krakow version is in A major, the Bologna version in F major). In the consequence the recitative before that aria must

¹³ Denis and Elsie Arnold, *The Oratorio in Venice*, London 1986, pp. 95-96.

¹⁴ Joyce Lynne Johnson, *The Oratorio at Santa Maria*, vol. II, analysis of *L'uscita dall'arca* - pp. 429-434 and analysis of *La Betulia liberata* - pp. 392-397.

¹⁵ Helen Geyer, *Osservazioni sulla Betulia di Pasquale Anfossi*, in: Mozart, Padova e "La Betulia liberata", ed. Paolo Pinamonti, Firenze 1991.

¹⁶ Robert Eitner, Pasquale Anfossi, in: *Quellen-Lexicon der Musiker und Musikgelehrten der christlichen Zeitrechnung*, vol. I, Leipzig 1900, pp. 150-151; Michael F. Robinson, Pasquale Anfossi, in: *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie 1980, vol. I, p. 423.

have been changed. We also observed differences in leading parts, particularly in these of wind instruments (oboes and French horns), in several arias, e.g. in the aria *Quando riposo prendi* from the second part of the oratorio. To the second group of differences we shall count the textual differences in recitatives or arias. Some of them evidently caused major or minor differences in the musical setting when another number of syllables in the verse or simply words with another accent were applied. The observed differences do not disturb the main structure of the work but on the other hand they suggest that the manuscript from Bologna might not be the prototype of the Krakow copy. It seems very unlikely that someone could make changes in the score while copying this oratorio without any cancellations and with such a great care in preserving the right Italian accent.

In the case of the oratorio *La Betulia liberata* a facsimile edition of that work from the Archivio dei Filippini in Rome is available (I-Rf, D. VI.)¹⁷. On its basis we compared both copies. The comparison showed that there are no musical differences between these two sources. We found only two textual variants of minor importance so we can assume with quite great probability that the manuscript from Krakow was copied from that one from the Archivio dei Filippini in Rome.

The question of where the Krakow copies of Anfossi's oratorios were copied from would be finally solved by making further comparisons between them and other manuscripts of these works from Rome. Taking into consideration the close relationship between both examined manuscripts of *La Betulia liberata* it is fairly possible that the copy of *L'uscita dall'arca* was also brought to Krakow from Santa Maria in Vallicella in Rome.

¹⁷ Pasquale Anfossi, *La Betulia liberata*, facsimile edition in the series: The Italian Oratorio 1650-1800, vol.XXX, Garland Publishing, New York-London 1987.

L'uscita dall'arca

This oratorio was performed for the first time in Santa Maria in Vallicella in 1783. As Johnson and Osthoff underline¹⁸ it is the original version of the earlier work by Anfossi, oratorio *Noe sacrificium* to the libretto by Pietro Chiari. The latter composition was written probably in 1773 for the girls from Ospedaletto in Venice. For the Roman performance the composer reduced the number of characters (only Noe, his wife Melchia, their son Sem with his wife Zabila), introduced male voices and full choir (SATB)¹⁹.

L'uscita dall'arca - structural outline:

Kk I 693	Tonality
<i>Overtura</i>	D major
PARTE PRIMA	
1. Aria [Cavatina]. Angelo, <i>Godi, o terra</i>	A major
2. Coro. Coro, soli, <i>Questa terra rinovata</i>	C major
3. Aria [Cavatina]. Zabila, <i>Torna colomba al nido</i>	A major
4. Aria [Cavatina]. Sem, <i>Cedi all'aura</i>	G major
5. Aria. Noe, <i>Lambisce all'innocenza</i>	D major
6. Coro. Coro, soli, <i>I tuoi figli supplicanti</i>	B flat major

¹⁸ Joyce Lynne Johnson, *The Oratorio at Santa Maria*, vol. I, p. 187; Wolfgang Osthoff, Pasquale Anfossi maestro d'oratorio nello spirito del melodramma metastasiano, in: *Metastasio e il mondo musicale*, ed. Maria Teresa Muraro, Firenze 1986.

¹⁹ The question concerning the changes introduced to this oratorio by the composer himself while he was preparing its Italian version is, in our opinion, still open. Johnson and Osthoff limited themselves to the comparison of musical incipits of arias from both textual versions and they neglected the recitatives, both "secco" and "obbligato".

<i>Overtura</i>	D major
PARTE SECONDA	
7. Aria. Angelo, <i>Vivi pure, umana prole</i>	E flat major
8. Duetto. Zabila, Melchia, <i>Non è di fiori il prato</i>	A major
9. Aria. Noe, <i>Odi voci lagrimose</i>	E flat major
10. Aria. Sem, <i>Quando riposo prendi</i>	C major
11. Coro. Coro, soli, <i>Tornin pure le vivande</i>	D major

Among the most interesting fragments of the score are three cavatinas (settings of a text consisting of only one stanza) and the accompanied recitatives which precede the arias nos. 1 and 9²⁰. However the choruses attract even more attention. They appear in *L'uscita dall'arca* three times, every time with the participation of soloists grouped in various ways. Such a shape of choruses was probably caused by the fact that they are versions of "ensembles" from the oratorio *Noe sacrificium* written for eight solo voices. These "ensembles" have just attracted the attention of musicologists as they see in them similar musical solutions as in the "ensembles" from the "opere buffe"²¹.

Each chorus from *L'uscita dall'arca* has another formal structure. The first one, entitled *Questa terra rinovata*, is a kind of presentation of the four seasons. Its text consists of four irregular stanzas. The setting follows the great ternary pattern as the composer repeats the first stanza at the end. Between those frames the choruses alternate with the regularly grouped soloists (Zabila + Melchia, Melchia + Noe, Noe + Sem etc.). The middle sections sung by the choir have the character of a refrain as in the orchestral accompaniment the composer introduces the motives from the opening ritornello.

²⁰ Anfossi's mastery in composing accompanied recitatives in this particular oratorio was underlined by Joyce Lynne Johnson (The Oratorio at Santa Maria, vol. II, p. 434).

²¹ Denis and Elsie Arnold, The Oratorio in Venice, pp. 65-66.

The chorus *Tornin pure le vivande* which closes the part II of the oratorio has the longest text (nine stanzas). It is a typical thanksgiving chorus so that its musical setting is clear and uncomplicated. It consists of five parts marked by changes of tempo and meter: A (Allegro con spirito, C), B (Allegro, 3/8), A' (Allegro comodo, C), C (Allegretto, 3/4) and D (Allegro con spirito, C). The choir sings in parts B and D. In parts A, A' and C appear also solo voices. In parts A' and C they are grouped symmetrically (Noe→Melchia, Sem→Zabila, choir, Melchia→Noe, Zabila→Sem).

The most interesting however is a chorus which concludes the first part of this work. It consists in fact of two choruses linked together by an accompanied recitative which explains the emotional transition from the suppliant chorus to the thanksgiving one. This final chorus of part I as a whole has therefore the ternary pattern from the textural point of view.

Throughout the first chorus solos alternate with full choir. The latter is in fact a refrain as this chorus as a whole has a rondo structure. Its formal design is shown in the diagram in example 1 (1-ritornellos, choruses and solos or duets; 2-periods and their motivic material; 3-tonality, 4-lines of the text, 5-protagonists).

Example 1

Chorus: *I tuoi figli supplicanti*, Andante sostenuto, B flat major, 2/4

1	R ₁	C ₁	S ₁	C ₂	S ₂	C ₃	S ₃	C ₄	S ₄	C ₅
2	a	a ₁	b	a ₂	b ₁	a ₃	c	a ₂	c ₁	a ₄
3	B flat	F	B → F	F→ B	B flat	g	B→ F	F→ B	B flat	
4		1,2, 3,4	5,6	1,2	7,8	3,4	9,10	1,2	11, 12	1,2, 3,4
5			M		N		Z		S	

This chorus leads directly to an accompanied recitative sung by Melchior supported by strings and continuo only. As the previous chorus has the accompaniment of full orchestra with oboes and French horns Anfossi removes the winds gradually in the first six bars of the recitative. Thanks to that the textural change in the transition between chorus and recitative is not so sudden. Throughout the recitative the composer changes the tempo several times from Allegro to Andante or Largo. On the other hand the tonal structure of this recitative is very stable as it is written mainly in B flat major and accidentally in F major. Directly after this recitative, without any initial ritornello the next chorus begins. Its formal scheme is shown in the diagram in example 2.

Example 2

Chorus: *Già pronta ne viene*, Allegro, B flat major, 2/4

1	C ₁	S ₁	D ₁	S ₂	D ₂	C ₂	R ₁
2	a	b	a	c	d	A	fig.
3	B flat						
4	1,2,3	4,5	5,6	4,5	5,6	1,2,3, 4,5,6	
5		Z → M	Z + M	N → S	N + S		

The formal shape of this chorus resembles the three part pattern with solos and duets in the middle, framed by choruses. Throughout this piece, like in the chorus mentioned above, there are no orchestral ritornellos between the sections. In fact there is only an initial ritornello at the beginning of chorus *I tuoi figli supplicanti* and a final one at the end of the second chorus *Già pronta ne viene*. Their presence only in these points and the same key and meter of these two choruses underline the composer's idea of a real final at the end of the first part of this work instead of a simple closing chorus with solos which normally appear in oratorios in those days. We insist on treating these two choruses along

with the recitative as a kind of musical continuity instead of treating them as three independent numbers as Johnson does²².

La Betulia liberata

On the score of this oratorio the date 1781 is written on the title page and probably it was composed in that year. The basis of this setting was the famous libretto by Pietro Metastasio. Some changes were, however, introduced to it. Some of them appeared in the setting of this libretto made by Niccolò Jommelli in 1743. As Johnson reports²³, Anfossi could have known the music by Jommelli as there are some musical similarities between Jommelli's and his setting. On the other hand, according again to Johnson²⁴, these similarities could be only coincidental.

La Betulia liberata - structural outline:

Kk I 692	Tonality
<i>Sinfonia</i>	D major
PARTE PRIMA	
1. Aria. Ozia, <i>D'ogni colpa la colpa maggiore</i>	A major
2. Aria. Charmi, <i>Non hai cor</i>	B flat major
3. Coro. Ozia, coro, <i>Pietà, se irato sei</i>	G minor
4. Aria. Giuditta, <i>Del pari infeconda</i>	G major
5. Cor. Ozia, coro, <i>Pietà, se irato sei</i>	G minor
6. Aria. Achior, <i>Terribile d'aspetto</i>	D major
7. Aria. Giuditta, <i>Parto inerme e non pavento</i>	E flat major

²² Joyce Lynne Johnson, *The Oratorio at Santa Maria*, vol. II, pp. 430-431.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 395-396.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 395.

PARTE SECONDA	
8. Aria. Ozia, <i>Se Dio veder tu vuoi</i>	F major
9. Aria. Giuditta, <i>Ah, non più vi chiami al pianto</i>	B flat major
10. Aria. Ozia, <i>Prigionier che fa ritorno</i>	G major
11. Aria. Achior, <i>Te solo adoro</i>	C major
12. Aria. Charmi, <i>Quei moti che senti</i>	E flat major
13. Coro. Coro, soli, <i>Lodi al gran Dio</i>	D major
14. Aria. Giuditta, <i>Si: dai tuoi celesti giri</i>	C major

In this work the chorus is of minor importance in spite of the fact that the chorus *Pietà se irato sei* certainly belongs to the most expressive music that Anfossi has ever composed²⁵. Instead there is a great variety of aria patterns in this oratorio. There are no *dal Segno* arias. Anfossi uses various ternary and binary patterns, the latter with a second part contrasting in tempo, meter and character. Johnson focuses in her brief analysis²⁶ exactly on this type of arias. Instead we would like to show a particular type of a so called transformed *da Capo* aria. In *La Betulia liberata* this pattern appears in the aria *Parto inerme e non pavento* sung by Giuditta at the end of the first part of this oratorio as the original Metastasian closing chorus has been removed. The formal scheme of this piece is shown in the diagram in example 3.

²⁵ Helen Geyer, *Osservazioni*, pp. 142-143.

²⁶ Joyce Lynne Johnson, *The Oratorio at Santa Maria*, vol. II, pp. 394-395.

Example 3

Section A (Allegro Vivace, C)

1	S ₁	R ₁	S ₂	R ₂	S ₃	R ₂	S ₃	R ₃
2	a b	fig.	c + kol. d	a ₁	e	a ₁	e	fig
3	E flat		B flat					
4	1,2 3,3		4,5,6,7 6,7		6,7		6,7	

Section A'

1	R ₄	S ₄	R ₄	S ₄	S ₅	R ₅	S ₆	R ₅	S ₆	R ₇
2	F	a ₂	f	a ₂ b ₂	c ₁ + kol. d ₁	a ₃	e ₁	a ₃	e ₁ + kol.	fig
3	E flat → c				E flat					
4		1		2 3,3	4,5,6,7 7		6,7		6,7	

The formal structure of this aria is really interesting. Its general design AA' is the same as a simple binary pattern AA' which is often used in cavatins and ariettas consisting of only one stanza. However, this aria is a setting of two complete stanzas of Metastasian text and both stanzas were set in music just in the A section. The next appearance of the second stanza is then not necessary. The virtuosity and large scale of both sections of this aria do not resemble the simpler vocal style of cavatins. Because of that such formal designs are sometimes treated by musicologists as a derivation of the ternary pattern²⁷ and called a transformed "da Capo" aria with the omitted middle section. Sections A and A' are so extensive also because of the fact that the composer interrupts solos with short orchestral ritornellos. In this way he gains a certain motivic homogeneity as some of them (marked on the scheme with letter "a") contain the

²⁷ Howard E. Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, vol. III: *The Oratorio in the Classical Era*, Oxford 1987, p. 79.

principal motive of the whole aria. This motive is really very characteristic. The initial orchestral ritornello is in this area omitted and the principal motive, built on the notes of the descendent E flat major triad, appears at the beginning of the solo part, reinforced with strings and continuo which play it "colla parte" with the soprano. The homogeneous structure of the aria as well as its principal motive can be named as devices to support the meaning of the text of this aria. Its both stanzas confirm Giuditta's faith that God is with her so from the point of view of the dramatic construction there is no need to introduce to this aria the contrasting middle section as it occurs in the typical ABA' pattern.

The role of short orchestral ritornellos dividing the phrases of soloists really grows in this oratorio. This procedure can be seen in Giuditta's aria *Ah, non più vi chiami al pianto* from the second part of the oratorio. Its formal scheme is presented in the diagram in example 4.

Example 4

Section A (Cantabile, Alla reve)					Section B (Allegro, C)		
1	R ₁	S ₁	S ₂	R ₂	S ₃	S ₄	R ₃
2	a	a ₁ + rit	b+kol.	fig	c	d e rit. e ₁ rit e ₂ rit e ₃	fi g
3	B flat		F			B	
4		1,2	3,4,2,1,3,4		2,1	5 6 7,8 6 7,8	

The ritornellos appearing in section B are so brief that there is no reason to differentiate them on the level 1 in the diagram (ritornellos and solos). The composer introduces them to underline the meaning of the text as the second stanza speaks about the victory and the renewal of joyful singings and playing zithers.