

Prague, 16 September 2016

From Rome to Styria

Lost, found and revived music of
Giuseppe Arena's arias for the opera *Achille in Sciro*
(Rome 1738 – Ljubljana, Slovenska Bistrica, Brežice, and Prague 2016)

PROGRAMME

Giovanni Battista Lampugnani *Allegro* from Sonata I, op. 1
(1708–1788)

* Act I *

Giuseppe Arena
(1713–1784) No, ingrato, amor non senti (Deidamia)
Involarmi il mio tesoro? (Achille)

Francesco Durante *Moderato* from Concerto a quattro VII in C Major
(1684–1755)

Giuseppe Arena
Si, ben mio (Achille)
Del sen gl'ardori (Deidamia)

* Act II *

Francesco Durante *Presto* from Concerto a quattro III in E flat Major

Giuseppe Arena
Dille che si consoli (Achille)
Non vedi tiranno (Deidamia)

* Act III *

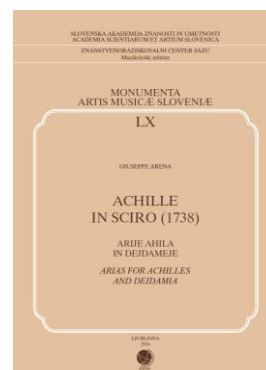
Francesco Durante *Adagio* from Concerto a quattro IV in E Minor

Giuseppe Arena
Non temer (Duetto)
Non paventar ben mio (Achille)
Chi puo dir, che rea son'io (Deidamia)
Ecco felici amanti (Coro)

This is the first modern production of Giuseppe Arena's arias for two main characters *Achille in Sciro* first produced in Rome in 1738. The arias were copied there for a noble patron (Ignaz von Attems from Graz) and brought by him to Styria to be reused for private music making and also to be included in local pasticcio opera productions of the following years.

The **HERA MusMig project** offered the possibility to research the musical and cultural context of these migratory arias and the travelling patron. The arias were published in a critical edition and the music revived in a concert.

This is an example of the European "CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS" in the past but also a case of the possible "USES OF THE PAST".



PERFORMERS:

musica cubicularis: Bernarda Bobro, soprano (Achille); Stanislava Mihalcová, soprano (Deidamia); James Toll, violin; Guy Button, violin; Domen Marinčič, violoncello; Tomaž Sevšek, harpsichord.

Begun as a trio in 2014, **musica cubicularis** soon established themselves as the leading early music ensemble in Slovenia. Their programmes often include lesser-known music and works still unavailable in modern editions. The ensemble has appeared at festivals in Slovenia, Italy, Croatia, Germany and Spain, collaborating with singers, string players, lutenists, harpsichordists, pianists, harpists, flutists, recorder players, cornettists, sackbut players, dancers, actors and a jazz saxophonist. Their first recording project was a programme of Slovenian baroque music for Radio Slovenia and the Institute of Musicology at the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. In 2009 this was followed by a CD of Tartini's violin sonatas. Their more recent CDs feature live recordings from their ongoing concert series HARMONIA CONCERTANS – Early Music on the New Square in Ljubljana.

Bernarda Bobro graduated from the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz and started her career with appearances at the Steirischer Sommer, the Klagenfurt Stadttheater and Teatro Verdi in Trieste. She was a member of the Vienna Voksoper for five years and has appeared on opera stages in Amsterdam, Brussels, Hamburg, Cologne, Leeds, Lille, Nancy, Naples, Seattle, Stuttgart, Tallinn, Tokio and Covent Garden, at festivals in Bregenz, Glyndebourne, Gstaad, Salzburg, Solothurn, Baden-Baden and Peralada (with John Malkovich). She worked with Nikolaus Harnoncourt at the Vienna Musikverein and the Styriarte festival, she collaborated with Claudio Abbado and Christopher Hogwood. At the beginning of this year, she made her US-debut as Countess Almaviva at the Seattle Opera.

Stanislava Mihalcová studied singing at the Žilina Conservatory and with Magdalena Hajóssyová at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. In 2011, she won first prize in the category Lied at the International Singing Contest in Carlsbad. She sang the role of Sirena in Handel's *Rinaldo* in Prague's National Theatre, followed by performances in Caen, Rennes, Luxemburg and in Versailles. She has appeared at festivals such as the Prague Spring, Concentus Moraviae, the St. Wenceslas Festival, the Vienna Resonanzen, in Sablé, Chaise-Dieu, Utrecht, Gent and Bilbao, working with specialist ensembles such as Musica Florea, the Ensemble Inégal, Collegium 1704, Hipocondria, Capella Augustana and Collegium Vocale Gent.

James Toll graduated from the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. He has performed with many of the UK's finest ensembles on both historical and modern instruments such as the Academy of Ancient Music, English Baroque Soloists, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Orchestra of the Sixteen, London Chamber Orchestra, Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. As a chamber musician, he appears with Arcangelo, the Dante Quartet, Albion Chamber Ensemble, and with pianist John Paul Ekins.

Guy Button is a graduate of both Robinson College, Cambridge, and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He has appeared as chamber musician and soloist at The Wigmore Hall, St. Johns' Smith Square and many other high profile venues throughout the UK, Europe and Asia. He regularly appears as a soloist with the European Union Chamber Orchestra in his role as principal second violin. As second violin of the Ruisi Quartet, he has been privileged to work with Simon Rowland-Jones, Peter Cropper, Levon Chilingirian, Christoph Richter, James Boyd, and the Maggini String Quartet.

Domen Marinčič studied the viola da gamba, harpsichord and thorough bass in Nuremberg and Trossingen. In 1997 and 2000 he won prizes at the International Bach-Abel Competition in Cöthen. He has performed throughout Europe, in Canada and in the Middle East with the Ensemble Phoenix Munich, the recorder player Stefan Temmingh, and with musicians such as Emma Kirkby, Pino De Vittorio, Dan Laurin, William Dongois and Manfredo Kraemer. He has recorded for Accent, Aeolus, BIS, Harmonia Mundi France, Oehms Classics, Ricercar and Sony/DHM.

Tomaž Sevšek graduated from Musikhochschule Freiburg, Germany, where he studied the organ with Zsigmond Szathmáry and the harpsichord with Robert Hill. He later enrolled at the Eastman School of Music, Rochester NY, where he studied the organ with David Higgs and the harpsichord with Arthur Haas. He appears as soloist and chamber musician in Slovenia, Austria, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and the USA, giving recitals on important historical organs. He regularly plays harpsichord continuo with the Chamber Orchestra of the Slovenian Philharmonic and other ensembles.



“[...] Zukünftigen Montag fangend die *opera* im *Theatro: liberta*, an, sie heisset: **Achille in Sciro**, die *Historie*, und *Poesie* ist ienige, welche zu wienn bey dem beylaager der Erzherzogin ist repraesentiret worden, die *Musique* ist aber hier Verändert worden. Nach der helfte vom fasching solte eine andere aufgeföhret werden. [...]”

With these words, the Styrian nobleman Count Ignaz von Attems (Graz, 27 February 1714 – Vienna, 15 June 1762), who was approaching the age of twenty-four, opened a letter addressed to his father in Graz shortly after arriving in Rome towards the end of 1737, shortly after reaching the final destination of his Grand Tour – Italy. The letter is dated 4 April 1738 when performances of the mentioned opera *Achille in Sciro* have not yet started. However there have been already talks about the opera in the high Roman circles, especially the Princes Corsini. This is not surprising for Filippo Corsini, the “pronipote” of the Pope Clement XII, was the dedicatee of this opera production and Count Attems was among the guests at Corsini’s palace just before the première of the opera on 7 January.

The *Achille in Sciro* of 1738 was composed by Giuseppe Arena, “Maestro di Cappella dell’Eccellentissimo Sig. Principe di Bisignano”. Arena, born in 1713 in Malta, was schooled in music in Naples. One of his teachers there was Francesco Durante. *Achille in Sciro* was his first known opera. He later composed operas for Rome, Turin, Venice and Naples, where he died in 1784. His operatic music – although today completely unknown – met in the eighteenth century with enough approval to find its way to operatic productions outside Italy. In 1739 and in the following year arias by Arena were included in five different pasticcio operas produced in Graz, and in 1741 in one such opera at London’s Haymarket Theatre. Contrary to the statements of most of the music reference books the music for Arena’s operas is not completely lost, for apart of separate known arias, scattered in Italy, Germany, France, Sweden and last but not least Slovenia (5 arias in the collection of the Attems family from Slovenska Bistrica), the complete score of his earliest known *drama per musica* has survived in Berlin.

The libretto informs us that the Roman *Achille in Sciro* is a setting of Pietro Metastasio’s text, although it was subjected to some of the ‘usual’ minor modifications in order to fit the context of the new setting. The Imperial poet wrote the original text for the marriage of Archduchess Maria Theresa of Austria to Francis Stephen in 1736, and it was performed with Antonio Caldara’s music as part of the wedding celebrations. The text was reused in 1737 by Domenico Sarro for the production in Naples. The opera plot is based on a story taken from classical mythology, a lesser known episode from the story of the warrior Achilles.

THE PLOT OF THE OPERA

We are in the middle of the Trojan war. Achilles had been sent by his mother to the island of Skyros – to circumvent the prophesy of his early death in war. At Skyros Achilles was concealed, dressed as a girl named Pirra, and lived among King Lycomedes’ daughters. There he fell in love with Princess Deidamia. But another prophesy suggested that the Trojan war would not be won without Achilles, so he was sought out by the Greek warriors. The libretto opens with the arrival at Skyros by a Greek delegation, led by Ulysses, in order to find the disguised Achilles and take him to Troy. Ulysses cunningly arouses Achilles’ interest with a show of splendid weapons and words of honour and heroic deeds, so that Achilles finally reveals his identity. His desire for fame, however, conflicts with his love and his sense of remorse at abandoning Princess Deidamia, to whom he has been secretly betrothed. The dilemma is finally resolved by the king Lycomedes: Achilles is allowed to marry Deidamia and then embraces his destiny by joining the Greek fleet to conquer Troy.



The beginning of Act I of *Achille in Sciro* in the illustrated edition of Metastasio's works printed in Venice by Antonio Zatta (1783).

Among the singers of Arena's opera in Rome were the famous castrato Gioachino Conti, detto Giziello, in the title role, and another rather well-known soprano castrato, Giovanni Tedeschi, who played Achille's lover Deidamia. In the Roman production two arias were changed at the last moment. One of these was also a rather popular non-Metastasian aria *Non paventar ben mio* for Achilles in Act III. All but one aria (a short *Si ben mio*) of the present selection are composed in a typical *da capo* (ABA) form with a longer and emotionally shaped A section with coloraturas in the soprano part and a short B section followed by a complete repetition A section. The score is rather abundant with dynamic markings.

The Styrian Count Ignaz von Attems was so enthusiastic about the arias sung by the two main protagonists that he ordered copies of all Achilles arias as well as the only duet. He also commissioned special adapted parts for a transverse flute, his own instrument. Four arias and the duet survived out of originally nine music pieces in the family music collection. The copies now preserved at the Provincial Archives of Maribor are of the type used for private music making: a score for voice and a keyboard instrument and added parts for optional flute and two violins. The Count's wife Josepha was indeed a soprano singer and possibly played also keyboard instruments.



The first page of the aria for **Achilles** in the Act II of the opera *Achille in Sciro*, copied for Count Ignaz von Attems in Rome and brought to Styria. Now kept at the Provincial archives of Maribor, Slovenia within the Attems family documents from Slovenska Bistrica.

The story of Arena's arias travelling with an amateur musician to be later put to further use in private circles as well as in public theatre in Graz is an eloquent example of the many possible pathways in the patterns of the migration of music in Europe through personal initiative. The same Count Attems, later founder of the family branch with its official seat at Slovenska Bistrica, who spent the first half of the year 1737 studying in Prague, acted at least in 1739 also on behalf of the mighty Moravian music patron Cunt Johann Adam von Questenberg providing upon his wish music of some popular operas from Italy. Thus Prague seems to be especially appropriate for the performance of arias travelling with Attems from Rome to other European destinations.



Dr Metoda Kokole (PI)

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