Un'alma innamorata

Francesca Aspromonte

BORIS BEGELMAN · ARSENALE SONORO

UN'ALMA INNAMORATA

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Mi palpita il cor, HWV 132b

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Total playing time: 67. 06

Francesca Aspromonte, soprano
Boris Begelman, solo violin and conductor

Arsenale Sonoro
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*second violin in Sonata a tre in G Minor

"Un'alma innamorata" is a program about...love.
Just another recital about love. Well, not exactly.

This time nobody is trying to condemn the little arrow-shooting kid. Poor Cupid...he is no tyrant, no cruel god, no sadist playing darts with human flesh. We are the ones to blame!

Through the series of fortunate and unfortunate events of life, love is one of the most beautiful, yet complicated experiences humans face. And how do we deal with it? We enjoy holding Love itself accountable for our feelings, singing incredibly beautiful arias, long lyric laments, desperate, angry coloratura...but still arguing we are the victims of the one little master of evil.

"Love made me do it!"
No. It's time to take responsibility, time to choose if infatuations and heartbreaks are going to define how we live our life.

The abandoned, rejected or betrayed lovers starring these cantatas, in an all-Handel line-up, actually lead us along the way, and through their singing it seems to hear them say: "I'm in love...and I must handle it".

Yes, silly pun intended!!!

Francesca Aspromonte

'Un vagabondo amore'

Handel's cantatas were almost all the product of his youth, written in the period 1706–1723, as he worked his way from Hamburg, through the most musically significant Italian cities, back to German lands and Hanover, and on to England in 1710. During this time, the young composer relied particularly on aristocratic support, from the Medici court to the Roman aristocracy – cardinals Benedetto Pamphili, Carlo Colonna, and (probably) Pietro Ottoboni, and the Marquis (later Prince) Ruspoli, who hosted the famed Arcadian Academy in his palace – and then the Hanoverian elector. After his 1710 arrival in London, too, Handel initially depended on the support and guidance of patrons, with the Earl of Burlington and James Brydges at Cannons hosting him during that first decade. Only when he moved finally into his own home in 1723 – the house in Brook Street, London that was to be his for the rest of his life – did he essentially stop composing these courtly but domestic works. Aside from a change in personal circumstances at that time, his shift in focus to opera (the most prestigious genre for any eighteenth-century composer) would have nullified the need to write cantatas. They were, after all, miniature dramatic works, alternating recitative and aria to depict an emotionally charged 'scene' for a single character or pair of characters.

Handel's cantatas have long remained largely unexplored: they were the only genre this otherwise enthusiastic self-promoter never published, and it is only relatively recently (in the last 50 years) that scholarly research has revealed them to be almost entirely the product of Handel's early Italian period, composed for important Roman patrons. The atmosphere of elite refinement that was cultivated in the courtly circles is captured exquisitely in the set of cantatas on this recording. The cantatas' instigators, the wealthiest of patrons, were able to circumvent the social and moral restrictions placed on other members of society, for example using the miniature dramatic spectacle provided in cantatas and their larger sisters, serenatas, to get around the papal ban on opera in Rome. *Un alma'inammorata*, written in June 1707 for performance at Vignanello, the country palace of Marchese Ruspoli, exemplifies the libertine spirit of his court in its gentle mockery of the faithfulness of the enamoured heart. While the faithful lover is full of pains and torments, the speaker instead revels in a 'roving love' ('un vagabondo amore'), which 'loves more than one heart', and accordingly can 'enjoy, laugh, and hope'; even Cupid himself is 'not equal to my desire'. The Marinist principle of antithesis is adopted here in the contrast between traditional faithful love, described in the first three 'numbers' (recitative, aria, recitative), and the free-wheeling narrator who sets out his or her position in the last three (aria, recitative, aria). This facilitates a similarly extravagant musical contrast in Handel's setting, with alternating angular and undulating writing shared between the voice and violin in the opening aria, depicting the chains and torments of the wounded faithful heart, set against the much more straightforward 'laughing' second aria, the joyous leaps and virtuosity of which indicate the singer's freedom. The sarabande-style final aria, declares the speaker's insouciant independence of Cupid in its carefree dance rhythms. To add to the frisson of this delightful cantata, it has been suggested that the soprano part was composed for a singer who was rumoured to have been Handel's lover at the time, Vittoria Tarquini. *Mi palpita il cor* seems to offer us the voice of just that forlorn, faithful lover.

The opening alternation of recitative and arioso recalls the mad song popular in the seventeenth century for lovelorn abandoned women. Here, the (male)

character's instability is indicated by the fluctuations in form, as he shifts from sighing ascending appogiaturas for the 'palpitations' of his heart to firework virtuosity to express the agitated soul, and back to angular recitative for 'torments and jealousy'. A more dignified siciliana is summoned to describe the singer's pains in aria form, where the voice's duet with a plangent obbligato instrument allows ample opportunity for expressive suspensions and shared liquid falling lines. The final recitative and aria turn to hope that the beloved might in turn spurn her current favourite and return to the singer, which allows a virtuosic anticipation of joy. This cantata has a complex history, which is only partly visible today: Handel revisited one of his Italian cantatas, *Dimmi o mio cor* (HWV 106), adding the opening recitative and rewriting other elements. There are up to six different versions of *Mi palpita il cor* written between 1710 and 1713, once Handel was in London; two are in the composer's hand, of which one is the complete cantata with obbligato flute (HWV 132c) and the other a single aria (HWV 132d); other versions contain a range of variants, alterations, and embellishments, while HWV 132b was written for oboe rather than flute. Clearly, though Handel ceased writing cantatas shortly thereafter, these works were widely performed and enjoyed in elite circles in his early years in London; it is possible that the variations in this cantata's form and orchestration indicate that Handel used it for his various pupils in London. Willingness to present works in multiple different forms or for different instruments was common in this period: *Tu fedel? tu costante?* also has at least two versions, the second (HWV 171a) having been discovered only in 2015 in the private collection of Ton Koopman. Both versions were written in Italy, with HWV 171 completed by May 1707, written under the patronage of Marchese Ruspoli for a singer who would become Handel's long-term collaborator, Margherita Durastanti.

It opens with the kind of virtuosic evocation of a trio sonata necessary for an environment in which Arcangelo Corelli was a leading light. (We can hear the beautiful G minor trio sonata, HWV 391, in this light too, as it was written around the same time.) This cantata was as libertine (or, by modern standards, liberal) as *Un alma'inammorata*, proclaiming the protagonist's scornful rejection of her unfaithful lover, Fileno, and potentially of all men if she cannot find a more worthy replacement. Indeed, it seems almost a response to that cantata, complaining of a lover who 'boasts that your heart can be divided into a thousand pieces or more?' The opening recitative, like that for *Mi palpita il cor*, offers a carefully considered structure, beginning and ending with a textual and musical refrain: 'Tu fedel? Tu costante? Ah, non è vero!', but this woman is much more worldly wise, and launches into a measured but virtuosic repudiation of Fileno who 'Cento belle ami' ('loves a hundred beauties'). There is something deliberately comic about her enumeration in the following recitative of her named rivals' various attractions (as recounted to her by Fileno), which is then continued in both content and spirit in the light-hearted, syllabic aria 'Se Licori', in which she asks how many hearts Fileno can possibly have if he gives one to each of Licori, Filli, and Lidia, as well as herself. Despite her subsequent protestations of hurt feelings, the comic tone continues in 'Se non ti piace amarmi', with its compound duple metre and interpolated 'no, no' exhortations, and in the concluding, dance-like 'Si, crudel'.

Handel ceased writing cantatas after his transition to full-time opera composition for London, in part perhaps because opera itself offered more than ample opportunity for dramatic and passionate music. Single arias such as 'S'un di m'appaga la mia crudele', written between 1738 and 1741, were thus almost

certainly intended as operatic substitute arias at a time when Handel – ever the entrepreneur – was increasingly seeking to maintain his operatic fortunes.

Suzanne Aspden

Arsenale Sonoro
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Lyrics

Mi palpita il cor

1

Adagio - Allegro

Mi palpita il cor,
né intendo perché.
Agitata è l'alma mia,
né so cos'è.

My heart is racing,
I know not why.
My soul is agitated,
I know not what it is, no, I know not.

Recitativo

Tormento e gelosia
sdegno, affanno e dolore,
da me che pretendete?
Se mi volete amante
amante io sono, ma
oh Dio, non m'uccidete,
ch'il cor fra tante pene
più soffrire non può le sue catene

Torment and jealousy,
disdain, anxiety and grief,
what do you demand of me?
If you wish me to be a lover,
a lover I will be;
but, oh God! do not kill me,
amidst such pain, my heart
can no longer bear its chains

2

Aria

Ho tanti affanni in petto
che qual sia il più tiranno
io dir nol so.

I bear such sorrows in my breast,
that I know not which
is the greater tyrant.

So ben che do ricetto
a un aspro e crudo affanno
e che morendo io vo'.

Well I know that I carry
a raw and bitter grief in my heart,
and of this I will die.

3

Recitativo

Clori, di te mi lagno!
E di te, oh Nume, figlio di Citerea,
che il cor feristi,
per una che non sa che cos'è amore!
Ma, se d'egual saetta a lei feristi il core,
più lagnarmi non voglio
e riverente innanzi al simulacro tuo,
prostrato a terra,
umil, devoto, adorerò quel Dio,
che fe' contento e pago il mio desìo.

Chloris, of you I complain,
and of you, oh God, son of Venus,
that you have pierced my heart
for one who knows not the meaning of love.
But if you pierced her heart with that same arrow,
I will complain no more;
and filled with reverence
prostrated before your image,
humble and devout, I will worship that God,
who gladdened and fulfilled my yearning.

4

Aria

S'un dì m'adora
la mia crudele,
contento allora il cor sarà.

Che sia dolore,
che sia tormento
questo mio seno più non saprà.

If one day my cruel beloved
will adore me,
then my heart will be happy.

And that which be pain
or torment
my heart will no longer know.

Un'alma innamorata

9

Recitativo

Un'alma innamorata,
prigioniera d'amore vive troppo infelice.
Divien sempre maggiore
il mal, che non intende
allor che dell'amar schiava si rende.

A soul in love
is a prisoner of love, and lives so unhappily.
The pain becomes so strong
that it does not realize when it
becomes a slave to love.

10

Aria

Quel povero core
ferito d'amore
sospira, s'adira
se vive fedel.

Sia il solo dolore
geloso timore
le pene, catene
martire crudel.

The poor heart
wounded by love,
sighs and rages
if it lives faithfully.

Let its only pain
be jealous fear,
and let cruel torments
be its chains.

11

Recitativo

E pur, benché egli veda
morta del suo servir la speme istessa,
vuole col suo languir viver con essa.

And yet, although it sees
the very hope of his service (of love) dead,
it still wishes to live with her through its
suffering.

12

Aria

Io godo, rido e spero
ed amo più d'un core
e so ridir perché.
Se segue il mio pensiero
un vagabondo amore
cercate voi dov'è!

I enjoy myself, I laugh and I hope,
and love more than one sweetheart,
and I can tell you why.
So, if it follows my thoughts,
try and find
any vagabond love.

13

Recitativo

In quanto a me,
ritrovo del riso ogni diletto
se sprezzo dell'amore
le sue severe leggi ed il rigore.

As for me,
I find again the delight of laughing,
if I disdain
the harsh and rigorous laws of love.

14

Aria

Ben impari come s'ama
in amor chi vuol goder!
Non ha pari alla mia brama
il rigor del Nume arcier!

Those who wish to enjoy love,
must first learn the way of loving:
The rigour of the armed Cupid
is no equal to my desire.

Tu fedel, tu costante

20

Recitativo

Tu fedel, tu costante?
Ah, non è vero!

You, faithful? You, constant?
Ah, that isn't true.

Tu usurpi ingiustamente titoli così belli,
empio Fileno.
Tu fedel, cui scintillano nel seno
sempre nuove faville?
Tu costante, che il core vanti diviso
in mille parti e mille.
Incostante, infedele, traditore.
Questi, Fileno, giusti titoli sono e pregi tuoi,
onde superbo ir puoi spergiuro, menzognero!
Tu fedel, tu costante?
Ah, non è vero.

You claim such noble titles unjustly,
evil Fileno.
You, faithful, in whose desire
there is always a new fire burning?
You, constant, who boast that your heart can
be divided into a thousand pieces?
Inconstant, unfaithful, traitor
these, Fileno, are your correct and true titles,
and yet you walk around proudly, you liar, you
deceiver.
You, faithful? You, constant?
Ah, that isn't true!

21

Aria

Cento belle ami, Fileno
e poi vanti avere in seno
un costante e fido cor.
Stolta è ben colei che crede
ch'in te sia costanza e fede.
Empio, infido mentitor!

Fileno, you love a hundred beauties,
and then boast
that you have a constant and faithful heart!
Stupid is she, who believes that in you resides
truthfulness and loyalty,
You wicked, you treacherous, you liar!

22

Recitativo

L'occhio nero vivace di Filli a te dà pena.
Di Licori ti piace il labbro lusinghiero.
Di Lidia il biondo crine al tuo core è catena.

Filli's lively dark eyes strike pain in your heart;
in Licori, it is her luscious lips you love;
Lidia's blonde hair chains your heart.

In me ti piace il brio.
E, con vario desio,
or per Lidia, or per Filli, or per Licori ed or per me,
vantando nel tuo seno nudrir costanti ardori,
con volubile genio ed incostante,
sei di tutte, oh Fileno, infido traditor,
non fido amante!

in me, it's my vivacity that pleases you;
and with constantly-changing fancies,
for Lidia, for Filli, for Licori, and now for me,
you claim to have a constant heart,
with such a fickle nature
you are in truth, O Fileno, betraying all of us,
and in no way a faithful lover!

23

Aria

Se Licori, Filli ed io
abbiam parte nel tuo core,
come puoi dir, traditore,
ch'il tuo core è tutto mio?
Se a me doni ed a Licori
ed a Lidia il cor, Fileno,
quanti mai racchiudi in seno,
dillo, ingrato, quanti cori?

If Licori, Filli and I
all share your heart between us,
how can you say, traitor,
that your heart belongs only to me?
If you give your heart to me, and to Licori,
and to Filli, Fileno,
how many hearts does your breast have?
Tell me, you ungrateful, how many?

24

Recitativo

Ma se non hai più d'un sol cuore in petto
o tralascia d'amarmi,
o fai che sola io sia dell'amor tuo gradito oggetto.
Che a me più duole e pesa
del non esser amata,
l'esser da te tradita e vilipesa.

But if you do not have more than one sole heart,
either stop loving me,
or ensure that I alone am the object of your desire;
for what gives me most pain,
more even than not being loved by you,
is being an object of betrayal and scorn.

25

Aria

Se non ti piace amarmi,
forzar non ti poss'io.
Se amor mi vuoi negar,
non mi potrò doler.
Ma se per oltraggiarmi,
quel cor, che già fu mio,
ad altri vuoi donar,
io non saprò tacer.

If you do not want to love me,
I cannot force you.
If you deny me your love,
I won't find cause to complain.
But if, in an insult to me,
you give your heart to another,
this heart which once was mine,
then, I will not be able to keep silent!

26

Recitativo

Ma il tuo genio incostante
non può lasciar d'amare
e si fa sempre amante
or di questa, or di quella
che sembra agli occhi tuoi vezzosa e bella.
Che farò, dunque? Che farò?
Spietato, infido, traditor, spergiuro, ingrato!
Più non mi tradirai,
sì, lascerò d'amarti
e tanto t'odierò quanto t'amai!

But your fickle nature
cannot cease from loving,
and it means that you are always a lover,
either of this beauty or of that one,
who seems beautiful and attractive in your eyes.
What shall I do, then? What shall I do?
Cruel, faithless, disloyal, liar, ungrateful lover!
No more will I let you betray me.
Yes, I will stop loving you, and soon
I will hate you as much as once I loved you.

27

Aria

Sì, crudel, ti lascierò!
Nuovo amante troverò,
che per me sia tutto amor.
Se non trovo, tornerà
all'antica libertà
senz'amar questo mio cor!

Yes, cruel one, I will leave you.
I shall find a new love,
who will love me alone.
If I don't find a lover, my heart will return
to its old freedom,
and live without love!

28

S'un dì m'appaga

S'un dì m'appaga
la mia crudele
contento e lieto l'adorerò.

S'è bella e vaga
io, ancor fedele,
con grato core mi mostrerò.

If one day my cruel one fulfills me,
I will contently and happyily adore her.
.

If she be beautiful and lovely,
I, still faithful,
will show her my grateful heart.

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Acknowledgements

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Francesca Aspromonte and Boris Begelman photography **Nicola Dal Maso, RibaltaLuce Studio** (photoshoot at Rocca Lupi Meli di Soragna, Italy)
Cover Design **Marjolein Coenrady**
Product management & design **Kasper van Kooten & Francesca Mariani**

This album was recorded at Auditorium "Arcangelo Corelli" in Fusignano, Italy in December 2022.

We sincerely thank Riccardo Minasi for his helpful research suggestions.

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