

Giovanni Battista Viotti
**Tre quartetti per
flauto, violino, viola e
violoncello op. 22
(WII: 16-18)**

a cura di
Mariateresa Dellaborra e Claudio Paradiso



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Partitura /
Full score



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Introduzione

Nota biografica

Giovanni Battista Viotti (1755-1824) divise la sua esistenza di quasi settant'anni tra l'Italia, la Francia e l'Inghilterra affrontando vari generi musicali destinati al contesto sia pubblico sia privato. Dopo una luminosa tournée in giro per l'Europa e la Russia con il suo maestro Gaetano Pugnani, nel 1782 debuttò al Concert spirituel di Parigi ottenendo un successo senza precedenti.¹ La permanenza parigina si protrasse sino al 1792 prevedendo sia *performances* solistiche (a cui destinò 18 concerti per violino) sia esecuzioni in ensemble cameristici (tre raccolte di quartetti) sia un'attività impresariale che lo portò a gestire le sorti di alcuni teatri cittadini. Nel 1792, in piena rivoluzione, Viotti emigrò in Inghilterra, trovando un'accoglienza analoga a quella francese. Il 7 febbraio 1793 fece il suo debutto con un nuovo concerto per violino e iniziò ancora una folgorante attività (interrotta soltanto dal periodo di esilio forzato tra il 1798 e, probabilmente, il 1801), che lo confermò come uno dei protagonisti più ammirati nel panorama concertistico contemporaneo. A Londra i concerti e l'attività di impresario furono affiancati da un esercizio commerciale legato all'importazione del vino. Le esibizioni musicali pubbliche lasciarono sempre più spazio agli intrattenimenti familiari, tra cui si ricorda in particolare la frequentazione di un'importante famiglia londinese: i Chinnery. Dal 1816 il commercio del vino e l'attività musicale domestica presero il sopravvento, ad eccezione di una breve, ma dolorosa parentesi come impresario all'Opéra di Parigi tra il 1819 e il 1821. La morte sopravvenne improvvisamente il 3 marzo 1824 e fu comunicata lapidariamente dai giornali londinesi.

Il quartetto con flauto all'inizio del XIX secolo e l'op. 22

I tre quartetti op. 22 si attestano verosimilmente entro il 1806 e rappresentano l'unico contributo originale di Viotti alla formazione per flauto con trio d'archi.² La silloge è compo-

1] Si intende qui tracciare un breve profilo biografico che offra semplicemente le coordinate per inquadrare il personaggio. Per un approfondimento cfr. Mariateresa Dellaborra, *Giovanni Battista Viotti*, Palermo, Lèpos, 2005.

2] La raccolta delle *Six serenades for flute, violin, tenor & bass op. 25*, London, Clementi, [1801-1810] (WIIa:6-11) è arrangiata da *Three duets serenatas for two violins op. 23*, book 1-2, London, Clementi, [1804-1810] (WIV: 31-36).

sta durante il periodo londinese e dedicata a Philip Cipriani,³ «one of the Chief Clerks in the Treasury» e dunque collega di William Chinnery al Tesoro e caro amico della famiglia frequentata da Viotti. Come si apprende dal necrologio,⁴ Philip, morto il 17 settembre 1820, oltre ad essere un gentiluomo elegante e ammirato, era anche «skilful performer on the flute, and his private concerts were admirable treats for his friends». La raccolta op. 22 rappresenta dunque un vero e proprio omaggio di Viotti all'amico esecutore dilettante e all'ambiente dei salotti, in cui si respirava un'aria decisamente più lieve e disimpegnata di quella delle sale pubbliche. Rispetto alle altre sillogi dell'autore e a quelle contemporanee, rappresenta un «ritorno al passato» sia per la scrittura dei singoli strumenti, non particolarmente impegnativa, sia per il fatto di prediligere tre movimenti che richiamano alla struttura più diffusa a livello europeo nell'ultimo decennio del XVIII secolo. In essa andamenti, tonalità e ritmi si organizzano secondo logiche ricorrenti e costanti e il tempo lento si presenta nella tonalità del relativo minore o maggiore e in un solo caso (terzo quartetto) è nella stessa tonalità dei restanti tempi.⁵

3] Philipp era figlio di Giovanni Battista, e nipote di Lorenzo Angelo, un cantante buffo del King's Theatre, cfr. Denise Yim, *Viotti and the Chinnerys*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004, p. 167 e Warwick Lister, *Amico: The Life of Giovanni Battista Viotti*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 466.

4] «The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle», vol. 90, part. II (from July to December 1820), p. 280. Poiché il documento non è noto, lo si riporta integralmente: «He was the eldest son of the celebrated artist, whose works are characterized by grace, elegance, and beauty. They were the favourite subjects for the graver of his friend Bartolozzi, who derived a great share of his well-merited estimation from the admirable skill with which he copied the beautiful originals. The gentleman who has just paid the awful debts of nature possessed an hereditary taste for the fine arts, as well as for musical excellence. He was a skilful performer on the flute, and his private concerts were admirable treats for his friends. But he was better characterized by worth, knowledge, and good sense, than by accomplishments. His manners were kind, conciliating, and marked by an easy and unaffected frankness. His health had long been declining, and he was subject to the gout, which debilitated his frame, and at length brought him to the grave, through not far beyond the meridian of life».

5] Secondo Christian Speck, *Einige Beobachtungen an den Quartetten Op. 22 von Viotti, mit einer Anmerkung zur Verschiedenartigkeit von Wiener Klassischem Streichquartett und 'Quatuor Concertant'*, in *Giovanni Battista Viotti: a Composer between the Two Revolutions*, ed. by Massimiliano Sala, Bologna, Ut Orpheus, 2006, pp. 337-361: 347, utilizzando la forma



Introduction

Biographical sketch

Giovanni Battista Viotti (1755-1824) spent his nearly seventy years of life in Italy, France and England, tackling various musical genres destined for both the public and private milieus. After a triumphant tour of Europe and Russia with his teacher Gaetano Pugnani, in 1782 he debuted at Paris's Concert spirituel to unprecedented success.¹ He remained in Paris until 1792, giving concerts both as a solo performer (for which he composed 18 violin concertos) and in chamber ensembles (three quartet collections); he was also active as an impresario, managing some city theatres. In 1792, with the Revolution in full swing, Viotti moved to England, where he received as warm a welcome as he had in France. On 7th February 1793 he debuted in a new violin concerto, once again launching into a dazzling career (only interrupted by a period of forced exile between 1798 and, probably, 1801), which sanctioned him as one of the most admired protagonists of the concert scene of the day. In London he added to his activities of performer and impresario a commercial business of wine import. Public concerts gradually gave more and more way to private performances, the important London Chinnery family being one of those he most frequented. From 1816 the wine business and private performances became his main occupations, except for a short but painful period as impresario at Paris's Opéra between 1819 and 1821. He suffered a sudden death, on 3rd March 1824, which was tersely announced in London newspapers.

Viotti's Op. 22 and early 19th-century flute quartet

The three *Quartets*, Op. 22 are Viotti's sole contribution to the flute-and-string-trio repertoire. They probably date from the London years, that is, not later than 1806,² and are dedicated

to Philip Cipriani,³ "one of the Chief Clerks in the Treasury", that is, a colleague of William Chinnery's and a dear friend of the Chinnery's, a family Viotti attended. Mr. Cipriani was to pass away on September 17, 1820. As we learn from his obituary,⁴ he was widely admired for being a dapper gentleman, as well as a «skilful performer on the flute, and his private concerts were admirable treats for his friends». Hence, Viotti's work is a tribute to Cipriani, the amateur performer, as well as to the drawing-room world, a more light-hearted environment than public halls.

By the early 19th century, the flute repertoire was growing, due to contributions by composers from all over Europe (Onslow, Gianella, Crusell, Kotzeluch, Danzi, Reicha, Rosetti, Krommer; J. Ch. Bach, Hoffmeister, Stamitz, Wendling, Schwarzenord; Bréval, Gossec, Devienne; Pleyel, Gyrowetz; not to mention Mozart's and Haydn's collections), including Italians, active either at home or abroad—Luigi Boccherini (*Six Quartets*, Op. 5), Giuseppe Cambini (collections of *Six Quartets* each, numbering Op. 1, 2, 6, 9, 10, 13, 19, 23, and 24), Bartolomeo Campagnoli (*Six Quartets*), Domenico Cimarosa (*Six Quartets*), Felice Giardini (*Six Quartets*, Op. 25), Tommaso Giordani (*Six Quartets*, Op. 2), Pietro Guglielmi (*Conversation Quartet*), Federigo Fiorillo (*Six Quartets*, Op. 4, *Six Quartets*, Op. 7), Giovanni Paisiello (*Six Quartets*, Op. 23, *Six*

3] Philipp Cipriani was a son of Giovanni Battista's and a grandson of Lorenzo Angelo's, the latter a *buffo* singer at the King's Theatre. See Denise Yim, *Viotti and the Chinnerys*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, 167. Warwick Lister, *Amico: The Life of Giovanni Battista Viotti*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, 466.

4] *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, Vol. 90, part II (July–December 1820), p. 280. The document is as yet unpublished and is reproduced here in its entirety. «He was the eldest son of the celebrated artist, whose works are characterized by grace, elegance, and beauty. They were the favourite subjects for the graver of his friend Bartolozzi, who derived a great share of his well-merited estimation from the admirable skill with which he copied the beautiful originals. The gentleman who has just paid the awful debts of nature possessed an hereditary taste for the fine arts, as well as for musical excellence. He was a skilful performer on the flute, and his private concerts were admirable treats for his friends. But he was better characterized by worth, knowledge, and good sense, than by accomplishments. His manners were kind, conciliating, and marked by an easy and unaffected frankness. His health had long been declining, and he was subject to the gout, which debilitated his frame, and at length brought him to the grave, through not far beyond the meridian of life».

1] This is meant as a concise biographical profile, simply intended to offer the main facts of Viotti's life. For more, cf. Mariateresa Dellaborra, *Giovanni Battista Viotti*. Palermo: Lèpos, 2005.

2] The collection entitled *Six serenades for flute, violin, tenor & bass*, Op. 25. London: Clementi, [1801-1810]), WIIA:6-11, is an arrangement from *Three duets serenatas for two violins*, Op. 23, Books 1-2. London: Clementi, [1804-1810], WIV:31-36.



Andante

Flauto

Violino

Viola

Violoncello

6

11



Allegro vivace

16

Musical score for measures 16-21. The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Cello/Double Bass, and Bass. Dynamics include *pp* (pianissimo) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The first staff has a repeat sign at the beginning. The music consists of rhythmic patterns and melodic lines with accents and slurs.

22

Musical score for measures 22-27. The score continues in the same key signature and time signature. It features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Cello/Double Bass, and Bass. Dynamics include *pp* and *mf*. The music continues with rhythmic patterns and melodic lines, including a key signature change to one flat (B-flat) in measure 25.

28

Musical score for measures 28-33. The score continues in the same key signature and time signature. It features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Cello/Double Bass, and Bass. Dynamics include *pp* and *mf*. The music continues with rhythmic patterns and melodic lines, including a key signature change to two flats (B-flat and E-flat) in measure 31.

