

G.F. HANDEL

APOLLO E DAFNE
CANTATA FOR TWO VOICES
AND CHAMBER ORCHESTRA



EDITIONS DE L'OISEAU-LYRE

LOUISE B.M. DYER

122, RUE DE GRENELLE - PARIS VII^E



(1685)

G. F. HANDEL

(1759)



APOLLO E DAFNE (Cantata for two voices)

Soprano : MARGARET RITCHIE - Baritone : BRUCE BOYCE

Ensemble Orchestral de l'Oiseau-Lyre : Conductor-ANTHONY LEWIS

Violin : Georges ALÈS - Oboe : Pierre PIERLOT - Harpsichord : Antoine GEOFFROY-DECHAUME

Handel's dramatic cantata 'Apollo e Dafne' was composed during the years he spent in Italy. This is a particularly fascinating period in Handel's career, since it marks the end of his apprenticeship years in Germany and the beginning of the full flowering of his genius. Furthermore the works of this period are not only interesting in themselves but also for the way in which they represent an artistic storehouse of ideas from which Handel was drawing until the end of his life. In this early maturity the stream of his inspiration flowed so rapidly and freshly that in later years he turned again and again to it as a source of creative material. Handel left Hamburg in 1706 and remained in Italy until 1710, having visited most of the chief musical centres. In Rome, where Handel first arrived in 1707, he devoted a great deal of his energies to the composition of chamber cantatas, which were at that time enjoying an especial popularity. This was due to a papal ban on opera, which caused the musical public who were determined opera-lovers to turn to the chamber cantata as a kind of substitute. Most of the cantatas were quite short, but they contained much the same forms of aria and recitative as were to be heard in the contemporary operas and dealt with similar emotional situations. Some of them were quite long and amounted to self-contained dramatic scenes without action.

'Apollo e Dafne' is one of these large-scale dramatic cantatas. The narrative is carried through by means of the type of *recitativo secco* common to the operatic conventions of the day, and alternating with recitatives are arias which comment upon the various emotional situations. In the opening recitative and aria Apollo proclaims his triumph over the monster that had been the terror of Greece, and boasts that the whole world owes its preservation to the power of his conquering arm. In the scoring of the aria Handel makes much use of dialogue between oboes, bassoon and strings. Apollo then expresses his scorn for the vaunted might of Cupid, saying that one who has merely wounded a thousand lovers cannot be compared with one who, like himself, has slain a serpent single-handed. In an aria that starts with a mock-martial refrain on oboes and bassoon, he tells Cupid to break his bow since he has no hope of touching him with his arrows.

Now Dafne is heard singing in a grove sacred to Diana. In an aria which is one of the most appealing that Handel ever wrote, she describes her happiness in the service of the goddess and tells of the joy that awaits those that know true liberty. The scoring of this aria is most original, the oboe solo being accompanied by violins, violas and cellos *pizzicato* with the doublebass playing *arco* and sustaining the actual bass line. Much of the time Handel adopts a kind of organ registration for the *pizzicato* strings in that the violas play an octave below the first violins and the cellos an octave below the second violins.

On hearing Dafne's song Apollo is enraptured by her singing and by her beauty. He pleads his suit but Dafne repulses him. In an aria in which solo oboe and solo violin are the obbligato instruments, she repeats her vows of loyalty to Diana. A brief but heated exchange of conflicting views leads to a spirited duet in which the two characters express their respective emotions. Apollo continues his endeavours by warning Dafne that the charms she now possesses are fleeting and will perish in the course of time. In an aria of great lyrical power he holds up to her the example of the rose whose beauty may flourish one day and be gone the next. Another short and sharp exchange in recitative introduces a kind of dialogue aria in which Apollo entreats to the pleading strains of a solo flute and Dafne asserts her determination with the agitated accompaniment of strings.

The scene now rises to its climax. Apollo declares that he will love Dafne for ever; she replies that she will hate him for as long and flees from his passionate approach. The chase begins and the two protagonists are graphically represented in the music by solo violin and solo bassoon respectively, but just at the moment when Apollo thinks he has caught Dafne, she is miraculously changed into a laurel. In the final recitative and aria the now repentant Apollo pays homage to the tree and declares that its leaves shall for ever be a symbol of renown.

ANTHONY LEWIS

Apollo :
La terra è liberata,
La Grecia è vendicata,
Apollo ha vinto!
Dopo tanti terrorie tante stragi che
Desolaro e spopaloro i regni giace
Piton per la mia mano estinto.
Apollo ha trionfato
Apollo, Apollo ha vinto!

Aria (Apollo) :
Pende il ben dell' universo
Da quest' arco salutar.

Ch' il superbetto
Amore de le saette
Mie ceda a la forza;
Ch' ommai più non si vanti
De la punta fatal d' aurato strale;
Un sol Piton più vale
Che mille accesi
E saettati amanti.

Aria (Apollo) :
Spezza l' arco e getta l' armi
Dio dell' ozio e del piacer.
Come mai puoi tu piagarmi,
Numeignudo e cieco arcier,
Numeignudo e cieco arcier.

Aria (Dafne) :
Felicissima quest' alma
Felicissima, quest' alma, ch' ama
sol la libertà, la libertà.

Apollo :
Che voce! Che beltà!
Questo suon, questa vista
Il cottra passa : Ninfa!

Dafne :
Che veggo? ah! lassa;
e chi sarà costui,
che mi sorprese.

Apollo :
Io son un Dio,
ch' il tuo bel volto accese.

Dafne :
Non conosco altri Dei fra queste selve,
Che la sola Diana;
Non t' accostae divinatà profana.

Apollo :
Di Cintia io son frater :
s' ami la suora abbi,
o bella, pietà di chi t' adora.

Aria (Dafne) :
Ardi adori e preghi in vano solo a Cintia,
Solo a Cintia io son fedel.

Apollo :
Che crudel!

Dafne :
Ch' importuno!

Apollo :
Cercò il finde' miei mali.

Dafne :
Ed iolo scampo.

Apollo :
Io mi struggo d' amor

Dafne :
Io d' ira a vampo.

Duetto :
Una guerra ho dentro il seno che soffrir
più non si può.

Temo e peno temo peno s' all' ardor non
metti freno pace
A ver mai non potrò Ardo gelo temo,
peno, temo, peno

s' all' ardor non metti freno pace a ver
mai non potrò.

Apollo :
Placati al fin, o cara, la beltà che m' infiamma
Sempre non fiorirà ciò che natura di più
vago formo,
Passa e non dura.

Aria (Apollo) :
Come rosa in su la spina presto viene e
presto va,
Tal con fulgar repentina passa il fior
della bellà,
Tel con fulgar repentina, tal con fuga
repentina
Passa il fior della beltà. Passa il fior
della beltà.

Apollo :
Odi la mia ragion

Dafne :
Sorda son io

Apollo :
Orso e tigre tu sei

Dafne :
Tu non sei Dio.

Apollo :
Cedi all' amor o proverai la forza

Dafne :
Nel sangue mio questa tua fiamma
amorza.

Aria (Apollo-Dafne) :
Deh lascia addolcire deh lascia addolcire
Quell aspro rigor deh! lascia addolcire,
quell' aspro rigor.

Più tosto morire, più tosto morire che
perder l' onor,
Deh! Cessino l' ire. O dolce, dolce mio cor,
O dolce, dolce mio cor!

Apollo :
Sempre t' adorerò

Dafne :
Sempre t' aborrirò.

Apollo :
Tu non mi fuggirai

Dafne :
Si che ti fuggirò

Apollo :
Ti seguirò : correrò, volerò, sui passi tuoi
più veloce del sole esser non puoi.

Aria (Apollo) :
Mie piante correte, mie braccia stringete,
L' ingrata beltà.

La tocco la cingo, La tocco la cingo
La prendo la stringo, la prendo la cingo ma,
Ma qual novità.
Che vidi, che mirai, Cieli! destino, che
sarai mai!
Dafne, dove sei tu? che non ti trovo,
qual miracolo,
Nuovo ti rapisce, ti cangia e ti nasconde?
Che non t' offenda mai del verno il
gelo ne il folgore
Dal cielo t' ochila sacra e gloriosa fronde.

Aria (Apollo) :
Cara pianta, co' miei pianti, il tuo verde
irrigherò
De' tuoi rami trionfanti sommi eroi,
sommi eroi coronerò.

122, Rue de Grenelle
PARIS-7°Les Remparts
MONACO

PRINTED IN FRANCE

ÉDITIONS DE L'OISEAU-LYRE

LOUISE B. M. DYER

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