

# THE ROMANTIC CASTRATO

The Ornamented  
Songs and Arias of  
Giambattista Velluti



Robert Crowe, male soprano  
Joachim Enders, piano  
Iris Rath, flute

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS



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# THE ROMANTIC CASTRATO

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## GIUSEPPE NICOLINI

(1762–1842)

### *Carlo Magno*

***Sinfonia, scena e aria: 'Ecco, o Numi – Ah quando cesserà'*** **7:08**

① *Sinfonia –* 1:30

② *Scena: 'Ecco, o Numi' –* 2:27

③ *Aria: 'Ah quando cesserà'* 3:11

## GIOACCHINO ROSSINI

(1792–1868)

### *Ciro in Babilonia*

④ *Cavatina: 'T'abbraccio, ti stringo'* **3:36**

## JOHN FANE, LORD BURGHERSH

(1784–1859)

### *L'Amor timido*

***Sinfonia, recitativo e aria: 'Che vuoi mio cor? – T'intendo mio cor'*** **6:05**

⑤ *Sinfonia –* 0:41

⑥ *Recitativo: 'Che vuoi mio cor?'* 1:26

⑦ *Aria: 'T'intendo mio cor'* 3:58

## LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN\*

(1770–1827)

⑧ ***Tema con sei variazioni sopra l'aria della Molinara 'Nel cor più non mi sento',  
WoO 70 (c. 1795)*** **5:04**

## GIOVANNI BATTISTA VELLUTI

(1780–1861)

***Otto Variazioni sul' Tema 'Nel cor più non mi sento'*** **17:15**

⑨ *Theme: 'Nel cor più non mi sento'* 1:49

⑩ *Variazione 1* 1:41

⑪ *Variazione 2* 1:51

12	Variazione 3	1:08
13	Variazione 4	1:40
14	Variazione 5	2:28
15	Variazione 6	2:28
16	Variazione 7	1:53
17	Variazione 8	2:17

# **BURGHERSH**

## ***L'Amor timido***

18	Arietta: 'Placido zeffiretto'	7:30
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# **FRANCESCO MORLACCHI**

(1784–1841)

## ***Tebaldo e Isolina***

	<b><i>Sinfonia, scena e romanza: 'Notte tremenda – Caro suono lusinghier'</i></b>	11:53
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19	<i>Sinfonia</i>	1:33
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20	<i>Scena: 'Notte tremenda'</i>	6:47
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21	<i>Romanza: 'Caro suono lusinghier'</i>	3:33
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# **JOHANN BAPTIST CRAMER**

(1771–1858)

22	<b><i>Air Venetien, arrangé en Rondo brillant pour le Piano Forte</i></b>	6:22
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# **THOMAS WELSH**

(1780–1848)

23	<b><i>'Ah can I think of days gone by?'</i></b>	3:28
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**Robert Crowe, male soprano** 2–4 6–7 9–18 20–21 23

Iris Rath, flute 21

TT 68:38

**Joachim Enders, piano**

ALL EXCEPT \* FIRST RECORDINGS

# THE ROMANTIC CASTRATO

Robert Crowe

The soprano castrato Giovanni Battista Velluti was born in Pausula, in east-central Italy, on 28 January 1780 and baptised Giovanni Battista Alexander Secundus Stracciavelluti. Having dropped the extra middle names and abbreviated his original last name, the young castrato made his operatic debut in 1798, performed almost constantly for the next 35 years, and took his final public bow in 1833. He died on his estate near Venice on 22 January 1861. He was famous as an ornamenteer and his ‘manner’, or ‘graces’, were imitated not only by the most prominent *prime donne* of the day, but using his many published song and aria treatments, by amateur singers all over Europe. Though frequently seen, even at the height of his career, as a man out of time and place, a relic of the departed eighteenth century, of its style and of its tastes, his ornamentation was just as often considered startling, different and daring. During his final decade of performing, he was widely recognised as the last of his kind ever likely to tread the operatic boards. In the highly sentimental ‘Ah can I think of days gone by?’ [23], composed for him by Thomas Welsh, and premiered by Velluti in 1829, in his last London season, he self-consciously bade farewell not only to his career but to his era.<sup>1</sup>

In Velluti’s later career, his style of ornamentation, as opposed to his vocal abilities, increasingly became the focus of critical attention. In 1818 the young Giacomo Meyerbeer heard Velluti sing, in private, at least some of the singer’s eight variations on the aria ‘Nel cor più non mi sento’ [9]–[17] from Giovanni Paisiello’s 1788 opera *La molinara*. Meyerbeer was impressed by their artistic and musical qualities,

<sup>1</sup> The information in this essay is largely taken from the far longer and more detailed introduction to my critical edition of the collected songs and arias of G. B. Velluti, *Songs and Arias Ornamented by Giovanni Battista Velluti, the Last Operatic Castrato*, A-R Editions, Middleton (Wisconsin), 2020.



*This portrait of Velluti from the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel is one of the least well-known of the singer. Both artist and date are unknown, although it may be assumed to date from the early 1820s, based upon Velluti's apparent age. It is probably a self-conscious imitation of the highly romantic portraits of George Gordon, Lord Byron, which appeared at the height of the poet's fame, before his death in 1824: there are others like it that feature prominent artists, writers and musicians from across Europe during the late 1810s and early 1820s.*

but feared the frequent chromatic alterations in the vocal line were too difficult to sing in tune, and could never be successful in concert.<sup>2</sup> This recording in all probability also represents the first performances of variations 2 [11], 4 [13], 6 [15], 7 [16] and 8 [17]. Though Velluti frequently performed at least some variations during the period he spent in London (1825–29), there are no mentions of exactly how many he sang. The variations sung by his contemporaries usually numbered only two or three, plus the theme. Had Velluti performed only the theme and variations 1, 3 and 5 (possibly followed by the theme, lightly ornamented), it would not have excited any curiosity: his theme and variations were never published, and so no audience member would have known how many of them there actually were. In Velluti's manuscript score, used for this recording and held, like much of his personal musical library, in the Fondo Velluti in Belluno, in the eastern Dolomites, about 100km north of Venice, there are copious corrections and additional ornaments in pencil (over the original ink) for the aforementioned three variations, including ornaments over the theme itself. The other five variations have no pencil markings, and the pages themselves are somewhat less worn. It may well be that Velluti wrote them only as a demonstration of what he could do as an ornamenteer/composer, but may have considered them to be only *theoretically* singable.

During the second half of his career, Velluti published ornamentation for nearly two dozen arias, almost all arranged, either by him or at his behest, for piano or harp accompaniment. Although much of this repertoire comes originally from operas, in these more intimate versions it can no longer be considered to be truly operatic. Velluti's later, private performing career, singing this repertoire at musical parties in the homes of the rich and powerful, as well as the merely famous and influential – friends like Constanza Mozart, the Duke of Wellington and Mary Shelley – was at least as important as his public one. He used these evenings in part to cement relationships with people who could, and frequently did, shield him from popular or press disapproval, enabling

<sup>2</sup> Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, Vol. 1, ed. Heinz Becker and Gudrun Becker, Verlag Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin, 1959, p. 348.

his career to continue in the face of, at times, vociferous opposition.<sup>3</sup> Shortly after his arrival in London in May 1825 (he was the first castrato to appear in London for over a quarter of a century), apropos of a musical party at the London home of the Duke of Devonshire, *The Times* thundered against the ‘exhibition of this unhappy creature, whom we must not call a man, and whose very appearance must present the complex idea of parental avarice, deliberate cruelty, and unnatural taste.’<sup>4</sup> He also used these songs and arias in his teaching, and some of the published versions contain directions like: ‘for the instruction of those amateurs desirous of acquiring [Velluti’s] style of singing.’<sup>5</sup> The version of ‘T’abbraccio, ti stringo’ (c. 1827) [4], from Gioacchino Rossini’s 1812 *Ciro in Babilonia*, was, for a while, in the collection of Henrietta Sala, one of Velluti’s star London pupils, although it eventually found its way into Velluti’s own library.

At some point during or before 1822, probably in Florence, Velluti cultivated a friendship with John Fane, Lord Burghersh (at that time the ambassador plenipotentiary to the Grand Duchy of Florence; later he would become the eleventh Earl of Westmorland), a keen amateur composer and the founder of the Royal Academy of Music. Over the next several years, Velluti published treatments of Burghersh’s songs and arias, among them those for most of the cantata *Lamor timido* [5]–[7] [18]. The mid-eighteenth-century text by Pietro Metastasio perhaps could be seen as underscoring the anachronism of a castrato performing in the 1820s, but this text was Burghersh’s choice, not Velluti’s. The singer, unlike his conservative, aristocratic patron, seems always to have been a modernist in taste, repertoire and outlook. He drastically altered and updated Burghersh’s pleasant but forgettable music into little gems of Romanticism.

Perhaps the best proof of the regard that composers had for Velluti’s creativity is revealed by a perusal of three versions of the famous *scena e aria* ‘Notte tremenda – Caro suono’ [20]–[21] from Francesco Morlacchi’s *Tebaldo e Isolina*. Examination of the original 1822 manuscript (held at the Museo internazionale e biblioteca della musica

<sup>3</sup> Robert Crowe, *Giambattista in London, 1825–1829: Literary Constructions of the Last Operatic Castrato*, PhD dissertation, Boston University, 2017, pp. 46–52 and 112–30.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, 10 May 1825.

<sup>5</sup> John Fane, Lord Burghersh, *Lamor timido*, Grua & Ricordi, London, c. 1825.

di Bologna) and Velluti's published ornamentation of 1822–24 provides evidence of the extensive incorporation of these ornaments into Morlacchi's final version of 1825. This last version of *Tebaldo* was completed for a production in Dresden in which the castrato took no part. The version used in this recording takes the *sinfonia* [19] from Morlacchi's 1825 piano-vocal edition, prepared by Heinrich Marschner. The *recitativo* 'Notte tremenda' is taken from Velluti's piano-vocal version published in London in late 1825, shortly before the opera itself was presented at the King's Theatre in February 1826. (Velluti had taken over as musical director of the King's Theatre in autumn 1825. His tenure would last less than a year, and be marked by constant conflict.) Velluti had already sung this aria many times during the 1825 London season, but in private concerts. The aria, or *romanza*, 'Caro suono lusinghier' is the final known version. It was published in 1847 by the vocal pedagogue and researcher Manuel García  *fils*, long after Velluti had retired not only from public singing but from private singing as well (in approximately 1838). It represents the strangest, quirkiest, most individualistic and most extreme aspect of Velluti's ornamental art, ranging from *trilli* of an almost seventeenth-century nature, via strange pulsations, grace-notes from deep in the chest register, bell-like crescendos and decrescendos, to sweeping downward runs of well over two octaves, from high soprano down into baritone depths.

In 1838, though he no longer performed in public, and apparently only rarely in private, Velluti sang for Adolphe Nourrit, the famed (and doomed – he would commit suicide only a few months later) tenor of the old, falsetto school of singing that was rapidly falling out of vogue. Nourrit praised Velluti for, among other things, being the founder of the modern school of the *prima donna*: '[Rosamunda] Pisoni, [Giuditta] Pasta [...] and [...] [Fanny] Tacchinardi. He is certainly the master teacher of all the great female singers of this era; it is a tree that has produced all those beautiful fruits'.<sup>6</sup> Those three singers created the title roles in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Anna Bolena*, *La Sonnambula* and *Norma*, as well as in many other operas. Their artistry

<sup>6</sup> Louis Marie Quicherat, *Adolphe Nourrit: sa vie, son talent, son caractère, sa correspondance*, Vol. 3, Librairie de L. Hachette et Cie, Paris, 1867, pp. 109–13.



could be considered to have ‘defined’ the late *bel canto* style. As Velluti was widely seen by his admiring contemporaries as the creator of this style of singing, including his ornamentation, imitated to varying degrees by almost all of the leading *prime donne* of the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the repertoire in this recording probably could serve as a useful source for ornamentation in the operas of Bellini, Donizetti, perhaps even early Verdi.

Audiences apparently perceived Velluti – when he was at his best – as a kind of otherworldly being, one whose childhood trauma, always somehow audible to a Romantic audience, enabled him to embody a kind of universality, a shared pain that brought all of his audience to him. After his Munich performances in 1819 of the *scena e aria* ‘Ecco, o Numi – Ah quando cesserà’ [2]–[3] in Giuseppe Nicolini’s *Carlo Magno*, the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* wrote: ‘The singer, with his tones of woe and joy, is the representation of pure humanity in its inner pain, the deep sorrow and struggle with fate; in that, indeed our passions make us all like one another’.<sup>7</sup>

### **Notes on Ornamentation, Performance, Vocal Registers, Style and Tempi**

For modern audiences, probably one of the most remarkable aspects of this music is the conspicuous, conscious exploitation of the registers of the voice. In the early nineteenth century, both for the few remaining castrati and for leading female singers, there was an emerging three-register concept of the singing voice: chest voice, mixed voice and head voice or falsetto (the last two terms were used interchangeably until the mid-nineteenth century). Although singers strove to hide the points where these registers met, the different qualities of the registers themselves were not disguised: chest voice sounded like chest voice, head voice (a term used interchangeably with falsetto or ‘falsette’) sounded like head voice, etc. The middle or mixed register was actually not, in this conception, a true, independent register, but was rather a range of about a fifth where either the head voice or chest voice could be used, depending upon the

<sup>7</sup> *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, April 1819, Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, p. 317.

desired effect.<sup>8</sup> *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* (quoting an anonymous English translation of Stendhal's 1823 *La vie de Rossini*) described the use by the soprano Giuditta Pasta, Velluti's colleague and rival, of her middle register:

In the twinkling of an eye, she heightens or alters the colouring of a phrase of melody, by introducing her falsette, even in the middle of the scale, or by using alternately notes of the falsette and of the chest voice. She employs this expedient with the same facility of blending in the middle as in the highest notes of the chest voice.<sup>9</sup>

Although Velluti was generally acknowledged as one of the most accomplished singers of his time, his register changes were, especially as he aged, absolutely audible. Describing his voice for its readers, *The London Magazine* wrote, shortly after his arrival in London:

The same remark [referring to these three registers] has been applied to Madame Pasta's voice, and, indeed, it belongs to the manner of forming the tone, which is understood to be according to the principles of the great Roman [euphemism for castrato] school. The lower notes come distinctly from the chest in the manner as nearly as can be described of producing a bass voice – the middle notes constitute *la voix mixte*, or that kind which blends the chest and head voice according to the cast of sentiment, or the volume necessary to be employed. The higher are those of the head voice, or *voce di testa*, as the Italians call it. Strange to say, these registers are more easily apprehensible in Velluti's execution than consists either with the gratification of the ear, or with that finish which such an artist would be imagined to have striven to accomplish.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> 'On the Progress of Music from the Commencement of the Present Century', Part 4, *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, Vol. 2, July–December 1833, Allen and Ticknor, Boston, pp. 461–62: 'When the voice is trained to three registers, many notes of the middle portion are formed by the commixture of the head and chest voice, in a manner so artful, that the singer can at pleasure swell the tone to the full power of the natural, or attenuate it to the softest sounds of the falsette – or thus use either quality. [...] It is achieved by strengthening (through exercise) the lowest notes of the falsette; and, on the contrary, by weakening the highest of the natural voice. the singer becomes able to take the same three or four notes in either, and also in both mixed. This is what the French term *la voix mixte*'.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 417.

<sup>10</sup> 'The Music of the Month', *The London Magazine* for 1825, Hunt and Clark, London, pp. 269–70.

No longer able (or willing?) to disguise the transitions from head voice to chest voice, and back again, Velluti instead began in the 1820s to develop ways of using their sonic differences in his manner of ornamentation. For words with ‘dark’ meanings, like ‘morte’ (‘death’) or ‘dolore’ (‘sorrow’), or for those relating to the body – especially to the chest – like ‘petto’ (‘chest’), ‘cuore’ or ‘core’ (‘heart’), ‘seno’ (‘breast’), etc., Velluti frequently changed their original pitches, lowering and removing them from the indeterminate middle, and placing them clearly in the chest voice. There is a particularly striking example of this practice in Morlacchi’s *romanza* [21], upon the text ‘a sweetness descends over my heart’, where the voice also descends, starting from a high G (g’), in an extended staccato run down to a low E flat (e♭), well over two octaves, landing upon the word ‘cor’ (‘heart’). Velluti was particularly attentive to the individual and specific meanings of words, and attempted to suit his ornaments to them, rather than simply varying the melodic line with an eye to the general *affect* of the aria, as had been standard practice by singers since the seventeenth century. One of his favourite words seems to have been ‘palpitare’, which was frequently ornamented (in this recording on at least four separate occasions [3] [7]), with extremely rapid grace-notes, departing from what is today believed to be ‘bel canto’ technique – a constant, unvarying *legato* connecting round, beautiful tones – to demonstrate graphically the leaping heart, in its excitement skipping a beat, causing a temporary sensation of breathlessness. Velluti used a similar, broken, gasping affect to illustrate the frequently occurring ‘sospirare’ (‘to sigh’).

Velluti was famously cavalier when it came to adhering to a specific tempo. He speeded up and slowed down at will at any point within the music to give dramatic illustration to a word, a phrase or a moment of affect. This practice bears little if any resemblance to the kind of spectacular cadenza, bristling with high notes, that is familiar to most modern audiences of Baroque music, occurring solely in the penultimate sung bar of the *da capo* aria, followed by a short trill and a decisive final tone. Velluti’s cadenzas can happen at any point within the music, though they generally occur upon words of particular importance. Indeed, he was aware of the difficulty orchestras had in following him, and in the middle of an opera, when he came to one of his more musically adventuresome passages, he would apparently drop out of character and conduct the

orchestra from the stage! (He also conducted fellow singers and the opera chorus, if he felt it necessary.) These abrupt, freely sung passages are as faithfully reproduced as possible in this recording, wherever they are notated. Critical response was mixed. ‘With regard to time, he does not strictly confine himself to that marked by the composer; and he shews great earnestness in communicating to the orchestra the particular time in which he wishes his accompaniments to be performed.’<sup>11</sup> Sometimes, especially as the singer aged and his voice began to fail, critics were scathing:

What taste indeed can be expected from a man who sings so miserably out of tune, that it is difficult for the band to accompany him, – who defies all time, – hurrying or relaxing without ever regarding the effect intended, and dwelling upon a set of tedious flourishes with a sameness perfectly wearisome?<sup>12</sup>

Along with an extremely flexible approach to tempo, and an unhurried style, Velluti sang with a precise, frequent (though not constant) *portamento di voce* – the extreme *legato* practised throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>13</sup> In the use of the *portamento*, he seems to have been more sparing than his contemporaries, but the extent of its employment would still probably shock modern audiences. Velluti composed his ornaments very much for his own voice, although he also taught them to his female pupils and published them as widely as he could – both probably chiefly for financial reasons. As the 1820s wore on, his ornamentation was increasingly constructed in order to accommodate or to avoid vocal frailties and failures. Richard Edgcumbe, Earl of Mount Edgcumbe, writing about Velluti’s London debut in 1825, in Meyerbeer’s *Il crociato in Egitto* (sadly, no ornamented arias for Velluti appear to survive from this opera), discussed his tailoring ornaments to hide vocal faults:

This singer is no longer young, and his voice is in decay. It seems to have had considerable compass, but has failed (which is extraordinary) in its middle tones, many of which are

<sup>11</sup> *The Parthenon*, Black, Young, and Young, London, 1826, p. 78.

<sup>12</sup> *The Examiner*, John Hunt, London, 1826, p. 148.

<sup>13</sup> *London Magazine for 1825*, loc. cit., p. 270: ‘The artificial formation of his tone is masterly. His *portamento* is exact; no taint of nose, mouth, or throat is discoverable in its production.’

harsh and grating to the ear. Some of his upper notes are still exquisitely sweet, and he dwells on, swells, and diminishes them with delightful effect. His lower notes too are full and mellow, and he displays considerable art in descending from the one to the other by passages ingeniously contrived to avoid those which he knows to be defective.<sup>14</sup>

An anonymous critic for *The New Monthly Magazine* wrote about the difficulty other singers had in making Velluti's highly idiosyncratic and personal ornamentation their own:

Perhaps his ornaments were too much for himself and too little for general application, since it cannot be concealed that his ingenuity was tasked to cover his own declining means by those substitutes. The truth of this observation may be confirmed by the fact that, that no singer ever did, or ever could, give to his passages his particular expression; yet it was impossible, so singular was their construction, not to perceive from whence they were borrowed.<sup>15</sup>

Direct and explicit justification for the use of a primarily falsetto voice to recreate Velluti's art comes from *The Dorset County Chronicle* in July 1825. 'The voice of Signor Velluti is not easy satisfactorily to describe. It is not a boy's voice, nor a woman's voice. [...] What approaches nearest to it in tone is a high falsetto voice of a man, without much richness, but with compass, power, and flexibility.'<sup>16</sup> The adult male falsetto was, in the 1820s, considered a near-approximation of, if not a perfect simile for, the castrato voice. Audience members (presumably most, if not all, male) at Velluti's London debut mocked him with whooping, falsetto imitations of his singing. In 1828–29, an anonymous, falsetto male soprano with the all-male singing group 'The Bohemian Brothers' was named by the London press the 'Bohemian Velluti'. He was heard as a younger, better version of the castrato, though all accounts clearly identify him as a non-castrated adult male.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Richard Edgcumbe, Lord Mount Edgcumbe (Second Earl of Mount Edgcumbe), *Musical Reminiscences chiefly respecting the Italian Opera in England from the year 1773 to the present time* (1828), 3rd edn., George Clarke, London, 1828, p. 155.

<sup>15</sup> *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, 1834, p. 22.

<sup>16</sup> *The Dorset County Chronicle*, 7 July 1825.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Crowe, "He was unable to set aside the effeminate, and so was forgotten": Masculinity, Its Fears, and the Uses of Falsetto in the Early Nineteenth Century', *19th Century Music*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Summer 2019), pp. 32–35.



*Signor Velluti and the Female Choristers. of the Kings Theatre.*

'Signor Velluti and the Female Choristers of the King's Theatre': this cartoon, published in 1826, is an imagined confrontation between Velluti (wearing his costume for *Il crociato in Egitto*) and women choristers during his short, disastrous tenure as the music director of the King's Theatre. A wage dispute led to a court battle, which Velluti lost. The choristers' remarks are almost all puns (underlined for emphasis: 'He is no man', 'stone', 'cut him', 'perfect in our parts', etc.) referring to Velluti's castrated state, and are typical of the rough, mocking humour employed against him by much of the London press. The surely pseudonymous artist: Dick Doublestone.

## Notes on the Piano Music and Instrument

Private musical evenings from Velluti's London period rarely featured only one genre or, indeed, just one or two performers. Songs, arias and vocal ensembles were interspersed with instrumental music, especially brilliant solo works for the pianoforte. The two pieces for solo piano on this recording are both related directly to the vocal repertoire. Beethoven's six variations on Paisiello's 'Nel cor più non mi sento' [8], composed in around 1795, are among the first treatments of what would become one of the most frequently used subjects for the theme-and-variation in the nineteenth century. Velluti's 'Nel cor' variations are probably the most extensive and extravagant of these that exist for the voice, though the famed soprano Angelica Catalani, as well as the Catalani-impersonator, falsetto soprano Karl Blumenfeld, both performed theirs widely.<sup>18</sup> Vocal variations to Paisiello's theme were joined by many instrumental versions, and the simple aria enjoyed a long period of popularity, capped by Nicolò Paganini's seven variations on it, composed in 1827.

The second work for solo piano, 'Air Venetien' [22], is a through-composed set of variations (subtitled 'Rondo Brillant') on the arietta 'Non giova il sospir' by the Mannheim-born, London-based pianist, composer and music-publisher Johann (John) Baptist Cramer.<sup>19</sup> Cramer and Velluti were acquaintances, and Cramer was a frequent publisher of Velluti's ornamented treatments. They almost certainly performed privately together, although documentation survives only for performances with Velluti and Cramer's brother, Franz.

The piano we have used in this recording is an 1893 Bechstein grand, fully restored in 2000 (and lightly restored and re-voiced for this recording), in the possession of the Evangelische Petrusgemeinde of Darmstadt. Though fortepiano copies on models from the late eighteenth century are common, there are comparatively few playable

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23–30.

<sup>19</sup> The original song, a setting of a text by Metastasio, is attributed to both Gaetano Donizetti and Nicola Vaccaj. However, the earliest known exemplar appears to be in Donizetti's manuscript *Tre Canzonette* from c. 1823: cf. Mary Ann Smart and Julian Budden, 'Donizetti, (Domenico) Gaetano (Maria)', *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Roote, accessed 3 December 2019 @ [www.oxfordmusiconline.com](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com). It was published at least twice in London, though apparently without Donizetti's name appended to it, in the 1820s.

pianofortes surviving from around 1830, and even fewer copies modelled upon them. We therefore chose to use a later, though still historic, instrument, rather than an earlier one with its inappropriately light sound and narrow range.

### Notes and Bibliography for Sources

Most of the vocal music on this recording comes either from published scores dating from Velluti's London period or from manuscripts contained in that part of Velluti's personal music collection inherited by the singer's great-great-grand-nephew, the historian Federico Velluti, and donated by him to the Biblioteca civica di Belluno, which then created the Fondo Velluti. Two pieces lie outside these two categories: Thomas Welsh's 'Ah can I think of days gone by?' [23] and the *sinfonia* and *aria* (or *romanza*) sections of Francesco Morlacchi's *Sinfonia, scena e aria* 'Notte tremenda – Caro suono lusinghier' [19–21].

Velluti's ornaments for 'Ah can I think' are taken from a sketch in his own handwriting, written over a simple *basso continuo* line and in the key of E flat, almost certainly from early 1829. The piano accompaniment is taken from a late-1830s publication of the same song in F and attributed (with Velluti's ornaments included and essentially unchanged, but with no mention of his role in creating them) to Maria Caradori-Allen (who sang opposite Velluti in the 1825 London *Crociato*). The version here of 'Notte tremenda – Caro suono' takes what are arguably the best versions of each of the three sections: the *sinfonia* is from Morlacchi's heavily revised piano-vocal score of the 1825 Dresden version of *Tebaldo e Isolina*. Morlacchi considered it to be the definitive version. The *recitativo* 'Notte tremenda' comes from Velluti's 1825–26 London publication of his ornamentations. The *aria*, often simply called 'Morlacchi's Romanza', starting, however, with the final bars of *recitativo* ('Morir, ciel!'), comes from the second volume of the 1847/1850 *Traité complet de l'art du chant* by the long-lived Manuel García *fils* (1805–1906), perhaps the best-known voice-teacher of the second half of the nineteenth century and a long-time friend of Velluti. Although this final version is arranged for harp and flute, there is considerable evidence, including a scurrilous caricature of a private performance from 1825 with a fatuous, fawning Duke



of Wellington in the front row,<sup>20</sup> that Velluti also performed this aria with flute and pianoforte, the pianoforte presumably playing the harp part. Indeed, many of Velluti's London publications, including several on this recording, are explicitly designated 'Pianoforte o Arpa'. Beethoven's theme and variations were published numerous in Italy, Austria and Germany, and Cramer published his 'Air' with his own publishing house in 1830, the year after Velluti's final London season.

**Robert Crowe** has worked for over 25 years as a male soprano, was a 1995 National Winner of the Metropolitan Opera Competition and has sung over 80 leading roles in operas and dramatic oratorios in the United States and across Europe. He received his PhD in historical musicology from Boston University in 2017, writing on the life and times of Giovanni Battista Velluti, and his scholarly work can be found in *19th Century Music*, *The Complete Barbara Strozzi* with Cor Donato, and forthcoming in *Transpositions 9* (Switzerland). His solo recordings with the Bayerischer Rundfunk and Hänssler Profil, *The Virtuoso Soprano Motets of Giacomo Carissimi* (2008), was named in the Year's Best list of the magazine *Crescendo*, and in 2011 *Songs to Mary: The Marian Motets of Monteverdi, Grandi and Carissimi* garnered glowing reviews in Europe and North America, as did *The Complete Amen, Alleluia Arias of Georg Friderick Handel* with Toccata Classics in 2017. Since 2018 he has been the artistic director of the Festival für Alte Musik (FAMA) in Aalen, Germany. He, along with Joachim Enders, was awarded the prestigious Noah Greenberg Award by the American Musicological Society in November 2019 for this recording project.  
<http://robertcrowe.com>



Photograph: Carolina Forresati

<sup>20</sup> John Lewis Marks, 'An Italian Singer, cut out for English amusement, or, Signor Velluti displaying his Great Parts', Victoria and Albert Museum, H. Beard Print Collection. Museum Number s. 2568-2009.

**Joachim Enders**, born in Dieburg, Germany, studied at the Musikhochschule in Frankfurt am Main, and was awarded degrees in Music Pedagogy and Performance-Concert Pianist. He studied organ privately with Zsigmond Szathmáry. He was engaged at the Staatstheater Darmstadt from 1994 to 2018 as pianist and assistant conductor. Since 1999 he has been the organist and music director of the Evangelische Petrusgemeinde in Darmstadt, and conducts the Bessunger Kantorei. He produces and conducts a decades-long series of oratorios, cantatas and chamber-music concerts, especially with the violinist Ingo de Haas. In 2015 he was awarded the Music Prize of the city of Darmstadt. Since 2018 he has been the musical director of the Mozartchoir of Darmstadt. In 2020–21 he will perform all of Beethoven's piano sonatas.



Photograph: Carolina Forrester

**Iris Rath** studied flute at the Essener-Folkwang-Hochschule with Matthias Rütters. After graduating with honours, she stepped in as solo flautist for the Museum Orchestra of Frankfurt, later taking the position as solo piccolo player for the Philharmonic Orchestra of Dortmund. Since 1990 she has held the position of solo flautist in the State Orchestra of Darmstadt, playing occasionally with the Gewandhausorchester in Leipzig and with the Hessian Radio Orchestra.



Photograph: Carolina Forrester

## Texts and Translations

### NICOLINI

*Carlo Magno* 'Ecco o numi – Ah quando cesserà'

Text: Antonio Peracchi

#### [2] *Recitativo*

Ecco, o Numi, compiuto  
Il decreto fatal della mia sorte.  
Perchè tarda la morte  
I miei mali a finir?

Oh patria! Oh sposa!  
Quella mi lascia  
Nel periglio maggior;  
questa infedele,  
Sol per desio di regno,  
I giuramenti obbligo, ed io frattanto  
Oppresso dal dolor,  
mi struggo in pianto.

#### [3] *Aria*

Ah! quando cesserà  
Di palpar mi il cor,  
Se in Ciel non v'è pietà  
Del mio dolor?

#### Recitative

*See, ye Gods, accomplished is  
The deadly decree of my fate.  
Why does death hesitate  
to end my woes?*

#### *Oh fatherland! Oh wife!*

*The one leaves me  
In greatest danger;  
The other is unfaithful,  
Alone for love of power,  
Her oaths forgotten; and I am meanwhile  
Oppressed by misery,  
Consumed in tears.*

#### Aria

*Ah! When will it cease  
The palpitations of my heart,  
If in heaven there is no pity  
for my sorrow?*

**4 ROSSINI**

*Ciro in Babilonia*

'T'abbraccio, ti stringo'

Text: Francesco Aveni

T'abbraccio, ti stringo

Mio tenero figlio

Col pianto sul ciglio,

Coi baci d'amor.

Quel sangue che un giorno

Nel sen ti verasi,

Tu pur spargerai

Dal misero cor.

*I embrace you, I hold you*

*My sweet son*

*With tears in my eyes*

*With kisses of love.*

*That blood that one day*

*Into your breast poured*

*You will spill*

*From your poor heart.*

**BURGHESH**

*L'Amor timido*

Text: Pietro Metastasio

**6 Recitativo**

Che vuoi mio cor

chi desta in te

questi fin'ora

tumulti ignoti?

*Recitative*

*What do want, my heart  
who has awakened in you  
these heretofore  
unknown tumults?*

Ah lo so

mi rammento quel giorno

quel momento

ch'io vidi, incauto

in un leggiadro ciglio

*Ah, I know it*

*I remember that day  
that moment  
when I saw, unguarded  
in a graceful glance*

scintillar quella face  
ond'or m'accendo

Ah pur troppo lo so  
cor mio t'intendo.

[7] *Aria*

T'intendo, si mio cor  
con tanto palpitare  
so che ti vuoi lagnare  
che amante sei.

Ah taci il tuo dolor  
Ah soffri il tuo martir  
tacilo e non tradir  
gl'affetti miei  
Ah! t'intendo...

[9] **VELLUTI**

*Otto Variazione sul tema 'Nel cor più non mi sento'*

Text: Giuseppe Polomba

Nel cor più non mi sento  
Brillar la gioventù  
Cagion del mio tormento,  
L'anima mia, sei tu.  
Mi pizzichi, mi stuzzichi,  
mi pungichi e mi mastichi;  
Che cosa è questo ohimè?  
Pietà, pietà, pietà,  
L'amore è un certo che,  
Che delirar mi fa.

*sparkling in that flame  
that sets me on fire*

*Ah, too well I know  
my heart, I hear you.*

*Aria  
I hear you, yes, my heart  
with such palpitations  
how you wish to tell  
of how you are in love.*

*Ah, hush your sorrows  
Ah, suffer your martyrdom  
Hush them and don't betray  
My affections.  
Ah! I hear you...*

*In my heart I feel no more  
The brilliance of youth  
The reason for my torment,  
My soul, it is you.  
You prick me, you pinch me  
You poke me, you bite/chew me;  
What is this thing, alas?  
Have pity, pity, pity,  
Love is a certain thing that  
Makes me delirious.*

**18** **BURGHERSH**

*L'Amor timido*

'Placido Zeffiretto'

Text: Pietro Metastasio

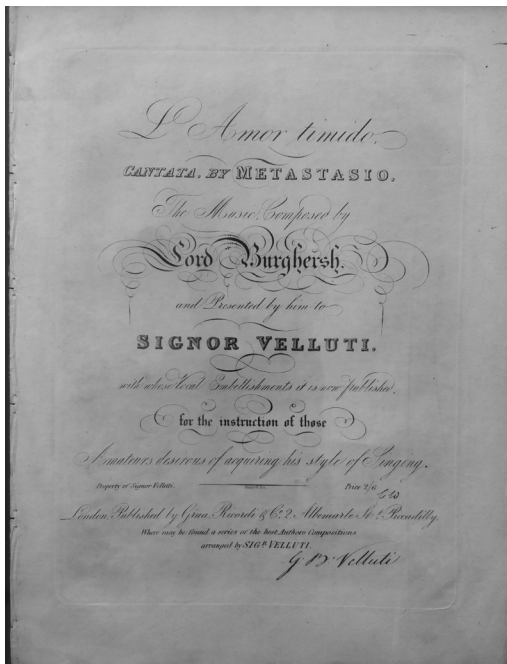
Placido zeffiretto  
se trovi il caro oggetto  
digli che sei sospiro  
ma non gli dir di chi  
Ah no, Ah no.

Limpido ruscelletto  
se mai t'incontri'in lei  
dille che pianto sei  
ma non gli dir qual ciglio  
crescer ti fe così.  
Dille che pianto sei  
se mai t'incontri in lei  
Placido...

*Peaceful little zephyr  
if you find the dear one  
tell her/him that you are a sigh  
but don't tell whose  
Ah no, Ah no.*

*Limpid little stream  
if ever you meet it  
tell it that you are tears  
but don't tell her which brow  
make thus your actions increase  
Tell her that you are crying  
if you ever meet her.  
Peaceful little...*

<sup>1</sup> The *recitativo* preceding this *arietta* was not ornamented. As Velluti transposed the second *arietta*, 'Placido zeffiretto', down a major third from the original, Burghersh's unaltered *recitativo*, not included in the Grua & Ricordi publication in any case, no longer has a workable key-relationship and so was not included in this recording.



This title page of *L'Amor timido*, published by Grua & Ricordi, London, c. 1825, bears one of the few known examples of Velluti's autograph on one of his ornamented arias. Specifically designed and marketed for the amateur singer, this score was one of the first in a series of nearly two dozen ornamented works published during Velluti's four-year stay in London.

## MORLACCHI

*Tebaldo e Isolina*

'Notte tremenda' – 'Caro suono lusinghier'

Text: Gaetano Rossi

### 20 *Recitativo*

Notte tremenda, orribil notte  
ah fossi tu l'estrema per me  
di morte in seno avrebber fine  
i miei tormenti almeno  
cessò il tumulto.  
avversa ognor la sorte  
i disegni tra di del Genitore  
i suoi fuggiro,  
e in mezzo tanto orrore  
di lui che avvene mai,  
in vano io ne cercai  
forse, si trovi, si salvi,  
si divida il suo destino  
e poi, senza Isolina,  
morir! Ciel, qual concento.

### *Aria*

Lo conosco, lo sento nel mio cor,  
È la mano d'isolina  
È il suon d'amore  
Ah! Si la prima volta ch'io l'intesi  
E che di lei m'accesi,  
Era un incanto  
Ma allor'era felice

### *Recitative*

*Tremendous night, horrible night  
Ah, you may have finished me  
in death, in my heart, would end  
my torments, at last  
The tumult will cease.  
arrayed against all fate  
betrayed the designs of my father  
from them I flee,  
and in the midst of such horror  
what with him will come to pass  
in vain I searched  
perhaps, to find it, to save it  
to share his destiny  
and then, without Isolina,  
die! Heavens, what concord.*

### *Aria*

*I know it, I feel it in my heart,  
It is the hand of Isolina [playing the harp]  
It is the sound of love  
Ah! Even the first time I heard it  
And the love it kindled in me  
It was an enchantment  
But it was happiness then*



Or tristo e solo  
Forse a me pensa  
E il suo dolor consola.

[21] Caro suono lusinghier  
Dolce ognor mi scendi al cor  
Tu richiami al mio pensier  
I piacer d'un casto amor  
Quel bel dì che ci rapì  
Di suo pura volontà  
Dove andò, mio ben, quel dì,  
Ah mai più ritornerà.

[23] **WELSH**  
'Ah can I think of days gone by?'  
Text: Unknown (Welsh?)

When pleasures bloom'd for me,  
And still suppress the painful sigh,  
Tho' torn from love and thee?  
Delusive hope that joys so sweet,  
Like dreams in infant years,  
Could ever from the mem'ry fleet  
Unmark'd by falling tears.

*Now, sad and alone  
Perhaps she thinks of me  
And consoles this pain.*

*Dear beguiling sound  
Descend with sweetness over my heart  
You call me back to my thoughts  
To the pleasures of a chaste love  
That beautiful day which ravished us  
With its undiluted will  
Where did it go, my love, that day,  
Ah, never to return.*

## Sources

- [1]–[3] MS in Fondo Velluti: I-BEc, FV.ms.59, c. 1810s  
[4] MS in Fondo Velluti: I-BEc, FV.ms.12, c. 1827  
[5]–[7] Grua & Ricordi, London, c. 1825  
[8] Lorenzi, Florence, c. late 1790s  
[9]–[17] MS in Fondo Velluti: I-BEc, FV.ms.1, c. 1815  
[18] Grua & Ricordi, London, c. 1825  
[19] Sinfonia: piano reduction by Heinrich Marschner, Dresden, 1825  
[20] Scena: Chappell & Co., London, 1825  
[21] Aria [Romanza]: Manuel Garcia (*fls*), Die Kunst des Gesangs, Vol. 2, Schott & Söhne, Mainz, c. 1850  
[22] Cramer, Addison & Beale, London, 1831  
[23] a) MS in Fondo Velluti: I-BEc, FV.ms.41, 1829  
b) Cramer, Addison & Beale, London, c. late 1830s

## Illustrations

- p. 5: portrait of Velluti courtesy of the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel  
p.14: 'Dick Doublestone', caricature: 'Signor Velluti and the Female Choristers of the King's Theatre', John Duncombe, London, 1826; from the private collection of David Glass and used with his gracious permission  
p. 23: title page of Burghersh's *L'Amor timido* in the collection of Robert Crowe

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*Il crociato in Egitto*, published in *The Parthenon* (London) in July 1825; artist unknown  
(original in the collection of Robert Crowe)

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