

Antonio Capuzzi (1755-1818)

Concerto per il Violone " a uso di Sigr. Kavalier Marcantonio Moncenigo"

Edited by Peter McCarthy from the British Library manuscript Add. MS 17834, with many thanks to Malachy Robinson for corrections and suggestions.

Antonio Capuzzi was born near Brescia. He was a violinist as well as a composer, active as both in Venice after 1780, settling in Bergamo from 1805. During 1796 he visited London, producing a popular ballet *La Villageoise Enlevée* (published the following year). All his operas are lost, save for a single aria, as well as his ballets (except *La Villageoise Enlevée* & *Clothilde, Duchessa di Salerno*). Other instrumental compositions survive, including 4 violin concertos, a *sinfonia concertante* (2 violins, horn and viola), 18 string quartets & 6 string quintets.

The part set for the violone concerto consists of violino primo obbligato, violino secondo obbligato, viole, basso obbligato, violone obbligato, oboe primo, oboe secondo, corno primo & corno secondo. There is no score. The parts labelled obbligato are those regarded by the composer or copyist as essential if viola, oboes or horns are not available. Full orchestration would be the ideal.

The violone obbligato part is continuous from the start, incorporating the basso obbligato in tutti sections. A performance from this part set does not require a second violone [double bass] to play the basso obbligato part; the solo instrument [violone obbligato] performs this role during the orchestral interpolations, the solos then not obscured by second instrument sounding in the same register. There is nothing whatsoever to suggest that the solo sections should be played an octave higher (at sounding pitch).

Despite its folklore associations with Domenico Dragonetti, there is no evidence that he either knew or played this concerto. Fiona M. Palmer makes no mention of it in her excellent study "*Domenico Dragonetti in England (1794-1846)*" OUP 1997 ISBN 0-19-816591-9

Joëlle Morton has written a first class resumé of the available facts, essential reading for anyone interested in this concerto, "Details about the Capuzzi concerto, and its Relationship (or lack thereof) to Dragonetti" August 23rd 2012 <http://greatbassviol.com/pubs/capuzzi.pdf>

Malachy Robinson worked on Dragonetti's own manuscripts during postgraduate research and is certain that the Capuzzi concerto parts are not in Dragonetti's hand. The parts were presented to the British Library by Vincent Novello (1849 cf. J. Morton) and are separate from the collection of Dragonetti's own compositions preserved at the British Library

Articulations, though inconsistent, are preserved here just as written in the manuscript. Alterations are left to the discretion of the performer.

My view is that it was written for a 4 string contrabasso, employing the full range (except for natural harmonics) as most would have understood it at this time - E1 to B3.

Achille Gouffé (1804-74) uses exactly the same range (but also natural harmonics) in his *Concertino* opus 10; Berlioz (1844) gives the upper limit of the range as A3. That was sufficient for Rossini in his *Duetto per Violoncello e Contrebasso* (1824) though in his opera *Otello* (first performed 1816) a passage for "I soli Contrabassi a 4 Corde", commencing on E1, rises to B3 (written as Cb).

Joëlle Morton makes a good case for it to have been written for Viennese third/fourth tuning: F1 A2 D2 F#2 A2. Ignaz Jeitteles notes an alternative for the bottom string of E1 [*Aesthetisches Lexicon*, Vienna 1837].

A concerto by Giovanni Batista Cimador (1761-1805) specifying *Contrabasso a tre corde*, is in the same folio as the Capuzzi concerto. Significantly he writes as high as E4, as did Dragonetti himself. Cimador moved to London in 1791, subsequently settling in Bath. This is definitely a work that Dragonetti knew; it shares material with one of his own compositions.

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