

Luka Sorgo – a Nobleman and Composer from Dubrovnik

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The education of young noblemen in the Republic of Dubrovnik (Ragusa) during the second half of the 18th century was organized within the Jesuit College until 1773, when their order was dissolved and their school taken over by the Piarists. The *Ratio studiorum* included the acquaintance with the general foundations of natural sciences, philosophy, culture and arts, including music. This type of education was obligatory and, from 1779 onwards, young aristocrats could not become members of the *Consilio major* – at the age of 18 – without completing it. Their further training was completed by private teachers in Dubrovnik or at foreign, mostly Italian, universities in Naples, Rome, Bologna or Padua. They visited more distant centers only sporadically as, for example, Luka's nephew Toma (Tommaso) Bassegli, who studied in Switzerland, organized and supported by the Italian Abbot Alberto Fortis. It was also quite common for young students to obtain a fine general cultural overview not only in order to take part in learned discussions, but also to promote the culture of their Republic during foreign missions on diplomatic and business trips throughout the continent. Even though the primary education of noblewomen of Dubrovnik was entirely and exclusively oriented towards private lectures – later, some of them were sent to Italy as well – many of them made their names as intellectuals, poets and musicians, on equal terms with their male compatriots of the same status.

The educational path of Luka Sorgo (or, Luka Sorkočević, as his name is to be found in contemporary lexica,¹ 1734-1789), following his

1 For example in BUJIĆ, 2001, p. 747.

initiation into the ruling structures of the Republic of Dubrovnik, at first consisted of private lessons in music, which he continued when he went to the university in Rome. Thus, this article focuses on the presentation of his musical achievements and intends to answer questions concerning the cultural transfer of patterns related to the music migrations and musical encounters of a noble musician from Dubrovnik with the renowned musicians from abroad of his time.

1. Music encounters with Italian teachers

Dubrovnik was a center that imported culture: composers, performers, teachers and even entire groups (touring theater companies)² mostly went there during the 18th century, although some local musicians were active there, too, and some went to seek supplementary music study in Italy. Music education books (tutors for composition, playing instruments and singing)³ and music material for private and public performances⁴ were also imported from Italian publishers or obtained as manuscript copies. Music was in demand as a part of sacred and secular representation, as well as for the entertainment of the numerous local nobility and bourgeoisie.⁵ It seems that a number of Luka's teachers among the Jesuits had also been of Italian origin.⁶ Following the termination of this school,

- 2 The Dubrovnik Republic officials never allowed the existence of a permanent opera company in the town. It was easier to control the touring troupes from the Venetian Republic, Papal State or Neapolitan Kingdom.
- 3 For example, *L'Armonico pratico al cimbalo* by Francesco Gasparini (second edition, 1715) was still in use in Dubrovnik at the end of the 18th century.
- 4 Several hundreds of symphonies, chamber music and church pieces, mostly by Italian, German and French as well as by some local authors, are kept in the Franciscan monastery music archives and in the local cathedral archives today.
- 5 The theater code was quite strict. The offices of the Republic issued orders about the reserved places for the higher and lower nobility (the so-called "salamanchesi" and "sorbonesi"), as well as for the citizens ("antunini" and "lazzarini"). An intended theater reform at the end of the 18th century by the Italian undertaker and impresario Antonio Brambilla included plans to designate seats for the Jewish audience as well.
- 6 For example, VANINO (1987, pp. 68f) mentions public academies, as well as names by some *magistri* as Aloisio Valsisi from Livorno (in 1741), Carlo Menghini (in 1754), Morcelli, or just *Magister Pietro* etc.

his father engaged Giuseppe Antonio Valente/Valenti, active since 1749 as *maestro di cappella* in the Dubrovnik cathedral, probably originating from Naples, to give private lessons to Luka, the most promising musical talent of the family. It is possible that his older sister Kata, his younger brother Miho and his sister Marija joined this programme as well, at least for a while. This private education started in 1754, as noted in Luka's music booklet *Lezioni di contrapunto date del Sig. Giuseppe Ant.o Valenti M.ro di Capella al sig.r Luca Ant.o di Sorgo* preserved in the Dubrovnik Franciscan monastery (according to RISM sigla: HR-Dsmb, 78/2020). Although the studies written there start with the simplest practices, they progress very rapidly, so that it is possible that Luka had previously had another teacher and that Valente only briefly revised and checked his skills. Namely, the first among Luka's symphony-overtures was dated as early as in July of the same year (HR-Dsmb, 77/1995), soon followed by two others (HR-Dsmb, 9/220 and 77/1994). According to his rare preserved compositions, Valente was musically well-trained, but of modest invention.

There are no precise indications of how long these lessons lasted. After a dispute with Luka's father in 1757, which ended in the court of justice, Valente was banned from Dubrovnik and left permanently for Italy in 1761. However, it seems that already in 1756, Luka was probably sent to Rome for studies that included not only university education but also becoming acquainted with "cultural education" *in situ*. Luka continued with his duties in the offices of the Dubrovnik Republic in 1763, so it seems that the six- or seven-year period included the stay in Rome and his educational journey. During his sojourn there, he also took music lessons from the well-known opera composer Rinaldo di Capua.⁷

According to a few dozen compositions by Giuseppe Antonio Valente preserved in Dubrovnik and abroad (Italy, Great Britain), this composer was a skilful musician who could provide Luka with solid basic knowledge in the art of composing. Nevertheless, the Roman episode supplied him with new musical experiences – visiting the theater, hearing representative church music as well as good musical training. Rinaldo di Capua was known to contemporaries in and outside of Italy. Charles Burney met him in Rome in 1770 and described him as an excellent Neapolitan composer, intelligent and sensible in conversation who had,

7 The notice in his second booklet with exercises is entitled „Roma a 20 Giugno. Seguitano Fugi fatti sotto la scola del Sig. Rinaldo di Capua“ (HR-Dsmb, 78/2021, p. 25).

at that time, already fallen somewhat out of fashion, but was still achieving some success with his theater works.⁸ However, there is not much preserved from his œuvre. It is said, that his son (allegedly Marcello di Capua/Marcello Bernardini) sold or destroyed his legacy. Rinaldo's most important works are the *opera seria Vologeso, re de' Parti* (1739) and the *opera buffa La libertà nociva* (1740). Burney referred to Rinaldo's music as passionate and to an aria from *Vologeso* as "a specimen of the perfection to which dramatic music was brought in Italy".⁹ Furthermore, his surviving arias range "from farcical caricature to lyrical and sentimental expression"¹⁰ and the text is clearly articulated, while the ensembles are skilfully composed: "The score reveals Rinaldo's favourite setting – three parts, generally for strings: the first violin doubles the vocal line, sometimes varying it; the second violin either doubles the first or follows it at a 3rd or 6th (it is rarely independent); the bass, doubled by the viola (which rarely has an independent part), provides an accompaniment, often in fast repeated notes."¹¹

These qualifications of Rinaldo's style are quoted here because it was Luka Sorgo who applied a similar style in his eleven preserved symphonies and two separately found movements.¹² The only date marked on the material in the Franciscan monastery in Dubrovnik is 1754 on the first three, all preserved as autograph scores (as well as another symphony without a date, and the two separate movements) and the first two among them still bearing the title "overtura". The formal scheme follows contemporary works in their three movements pattern (fast-slow-fast), already emancipated from the opera overture type, sometimes shifting away from the Baroque binary forms, and with foretelling of the contrasting motives or, in the vocabulary of Heinrich Christoph Koch, the "cantabler Satz".¹³ The first theme (or, rather, a thematic group) usually starts with broken chords. The setting of the composition is distinctively

8 BURNEY, 1974, p. 154.

9 HOGARTH, 1838, p. 374; GALLICO, 2001, p. 426.

10 GALLICO, 2001, p. 426.

11 IBID., p. 425.

12 They are all in HR-Dsmb: the already mentioned two overtures (77/1995, 9/220), two *sinfonie* (77/1994, 77/1993) and two movements (77/1994) in scores, and seven of them preserved in parts (77/1991, 9/221, 77/1988, 77/1990, 77/1987, 77/1989 and 77/1992).

13 KOCH, 1793, vol. III, p. 333.

individual: phrases sometimes cover one or two, three or even four bars, searching for a new balance between the melody, (simple) progression of the harmony (to the dominant, and the return through subdominant keys), rhythm and transparent instrumentation, generally following the pattern of his, especially Roman, teachers. The last seven symphonies seem to be of later origin, possibly created during Luka's stay in Rome; they have been preserved in parts, copied by a professional copyist, and are ready to be played.

2. Music encounters with famous composers and musicians of his time

After completing his studies in Rome, Luka Sorgo most probably continued his education by traveling to some Italian towns, taking care of family business as well. After his return to Dubrovnik in 1763, he continued with his official duties for the Republic. These various administrative tasks lasted from a few months to a year or more. He was active as councillor, senator, lawyer, supervisor of institutions, representative, judge, and so on.¹⁴ Amongst others, he was named envoy to the court of France in 1765, but declined the appointment. Another diplomatic mission offered to him was in Vienna. The Dubrovnik Republic did not have a permanent envoy there, but only the trustworthy advocate Sebastiano d' Ayala, a Jesuit from Sicily, who promoted Dubrovnik's interests for almost 30 years. It was only at crucial junctures that the Republic sent its own reliable officer. Such a moment occurred after the death of Empress Maria Theresa in November 1780, and Luka Sorgo obtained that appointment in January 1781.¹⁵ He travelled to Rijeka (Fiume) by ship and then by coach to Vienna, probably in August of the same year. His diary with notes on his contacts and activities has been preserved, covering the period from the beginning of September to the end of January 1782.¹⁶ Although Sorgo's Viennese diary primarily concentrated on the descrip-

14 For the list of his duties, see KATALINIĆ, 2014, pp. 31-35.

15 Cf. *Libro Officiali Pubblici o Specchio del Maggior Consiglio*, preserved in the Historical Archives in Dubrovnik, DAD, ser. 21.1 (Specchio, 1700-1799), p. 311.

16 The diary, entitled *Memoriae* – written in Italian – is preserved in the Historical Archives in Dubrovnik, but the initial pages are missing (HR-Dha, 21-2/145).

tion of his political and diplomatic contacts, it also provided plenty of information about his encounters with people from the cultural/musical sphere.¹⁷ He went to the opera and declared himself to be an admirer of Christoph Willibald Gluck on several occasions, whom he visited in Vienna a few months after serious health problems. Sorgo praised Gluck's compositions, above all his revolutionary changes in music which he used to express great passions with the simplest means. He was acquainted with Gluck's opera performances in Paris and of the "querelle" they had caused there. He probably also brought to Dubrovnik some copies of Gluck's works, partially preserved in the archives of the Franciscan monastery in Dubrovnik.¹⁸ The librettist Pietro Metastasio was one of the court employees who helped Sorgo to establish contact with important people.¹⁹ The old poet was well known and highly esteemed also in Dubrovnik. In his Viennese house, Luka also met Marianne von Martínez, Metastasio's pupil and protégée, and heard her performing her own new cantata.²⁰

Joseph Haydn visited Luka, brought with him his newly composed six quartets,²¹ and complained about the Emperor Joseph II, who did not like him at all. Haydn's music was already known in Dubrovnik through some manuscript copies coming from Italy. A series of his works has been preserved in the private collection of the Gozze family, close friends and relatives of the Sorgos.²²

Luka attended private and public academies where he could hear and meet amateur and professional musicians. He was invited to court feasts and balls of various types. On a chamber gathering (his diary entry on

17 On that topic, see KATALINIĆ, 2004, pp. 187-196.

18 For example, there is the aria "Che farò senza Euridice" from Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, copied for Luka's daughter Marina (HR-Dsmb, 61/1692) as well as the entire opera (61/1693).

19 Metastasio reported on Sorgo's activities and the good impressions he made in Vienna in his letter to Abbé Rugiero Boscovich, a friend of Luka Sorgo, on 18 August 1781, published in: METASTASIO, vol. 3, pp. 277-279.

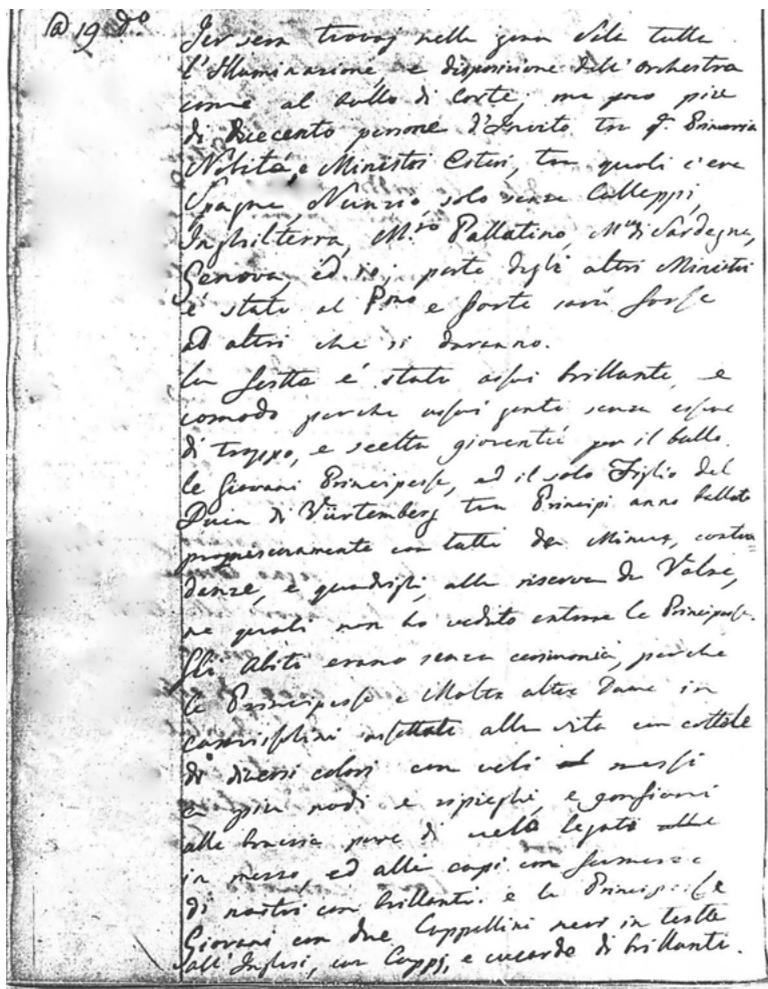
20 Cf. the diary entry for 14 October 1781.

21 They are the op. 33 quartets, also called *Russian*, dedicated to the Russian Prince Paul, who was on a "secret" visit to the Viennese court at the same time as Luka Sorgo, who also met him at the court.

22 There are twenty pieces by Joseph Haydn listed in the catalog of music materials in the possession of the Gozze family, partly preserved in the Dubrovnik Franciscan monastery: cf. KATALINIĆ, 2015.

18 December 1781) he testifies that the minuet was danced as well as the round dance and the quadrille, even the waltz, which was not danced by the princesses, only by nobles of the lower rank (see figure 1). In Vienna, Luka was not only able to communicate with well-known musicians and acquire music material, but also hear new and previously unknown compositions; he also had the opportunity to compare Viennese performances with those he knew from Italy.

Figure 1: A page from Sorgo's Viennese diary, describing the dances at the court



When and where Luka became acquainted with Julije/Giulio Bajamonti (1744-1800) is not known;²³ we only know that he met him through his brother Miho, probably during the late 1770s.²⁴ Bajamonti was a physician by profession but also had excellent training in music – first in his native Split, and later probably in Padua or Venice. Bajamonti also visited Italy very often after his graduation, and some of his compositions were written in Venice. His work, especially his vocal-instrumental oeuvre, was strongly influenced by the contemporary Venetian operatic style. As a polymath, he also dealt with medical, historical, ethnological and other issues and wrote essays, some of which were published in Italy. Beside inevitable discussions on music in his letters with Luka and (later) with Luka's son Antun/Antonio, Bajamonti borrowed literature from his friends from Dubrovnik as, for example, Rousseau's *Dictionnaire de musique* from Miho Sorgo, when working on his own music dictionary.²⁵ After Luka's death, Bajamonti supported his son Antun with suggestions and advice on his compositions.²⁶ Luka held in high esteem Bajamonti's "mixed style",²⁷ a combination of the style of the Venetian opera in his vocal music and early classicistic clear shapes in instrumental pieces. Therefore, he ordered suitable music for the funeral mass for the Dubrovnik scientist Ruđer Bošković/Ruggero Boscovich, who had died in 1787.²⁸

23 Bajamonti was in Dubrovnik for the first time in 1781 (cf. MILČETIĆ, 1912, p. 245).

24 Although the first of Miho's preserved letters to Bajamonti dates from 1778, they may have met earlier, during their studies in Italy: Bajamonti in Padua (where he graduated in medicine in 1773) and Miho Sorgo in Bologna. These letters are mostly preserved among Bajamonti's legacy in the Archaeological Museum in Split.

25 Cf. TOMIĆ FERIĆ, 2013.

26 On that topic, see the article TOMIĆ FERIĆ, 2014, pp. 230-255.

27 The combination of the elements of the Venetian opera, some layers of the baroque and early classical style is obvious in all Bajamonti's compositions, above all in his vocal pieces (cf. KOS, 2004).

28 Bajamonti composed a *Requiem* for Bošković, but it arrived too late to be used for that occasion. Therefore, it was probably performed at a private *academia* in the Dubrovnik house of the Sorgos.

3. Implementation of musical style and patterns

As a young man, Luka Sorgo traveled throughout the Italian lands, gathering his cultural and musical experiences. He regularly visited the theater,²⁹ accumulated music material,³⁰ and both his diary and his correspondence reveal his lasting preoccupation with music. For example, a letter by Giulio Bajamonti to Luka Sorgo in 1785 provides information on their playing together and studying Gluck's *Alceste* (see figure 2).³¹

However, the only date occurring in Luka's musical oeuvre – at least that of his 11 symphonies – is 1754, i.e. before his educational years in Rome. Still, one can be sure that his teacher Rinaldo not only asked him to compose “fughe a 2 e a 3” (as written on the title page of his second booklet of practices), but also some more complex works. Therefore, it is most likely that he was also active as a composer, at least during his stay in Rome until the early 1760s. Following his return to Dubrovnik, where he married in 1764 and became more deeply involved in the administration of the Republic (from 1763), there are no indications of his compositional activity whatsoever. And yet, seven of his symphonies have been preserved in parts, copied for a small ensemble. In the majority of them there are two parts copied for *violino primo*, two for *violino secondo*, sometimes two for *viola*, and in two symphonies even for *contrabasso*, i.e. *violoncello*. Usually, the oboe parts are written separately for the first and for the second, while both horns are notated together. All of them have titles, as in his first symphony (among those preserved in parts) in D: *Sinfonia | Con V.V., obue, corni da Caccia | Violetta, e Basso | Dell' Ill.*

29 In his diary he assessed some performances and performance styles, showing great experience in music.

30 There is not much left of his general and music library, because his son Antun sold his legacy at the beginning of the 19th century, before permanently moving to Paris. Still, a score of Pergolesi's *Stabat mater* (preserved at present in the Dubrovnik cathedral (HR-Dk, without shelf no.) and one manuscript – instrumental music by Baldassare Galuppi – preserved in the Franciscan Monastery (HR-Dsmb, 19/663) bear witness to his interests, much more evident in the list of music materials from the Gozze legacy, another noble and learned family, also related to the Sorgos. For the Gozze music material, see KATALINIĆ, 2015.

31 The letter is preserved in the Archaeological Museum in Split, and the score of the overture is preserved in Dubrovnik (HR-Dsmb, 62/1695).

Figure 2: Giulio Bajamonti's letter to Luka Sorgo with the notice of studying Gluck's *Alceste*

Regiatissimo Signor
 Abz

Da Safino 21 Aprile 1785

È fra le cose possibili ch'io abbia a trattarmi per qualche anno su questa isola, dove io sono venuto un mese fa con intenzione di starci appena qualche giorno. Quando il mio destino sia deciso, io lo farò noto a Lei, perchè sicuro io sono che non Le sarà indifferente il sapere ch'io mi sia avvicinato a questa parte: e io per tal ragione avrò tutto il diritto di preferir questo soggiorno alla mia patria. Intanto ho manifestato il mio desiderio di vedere un'altra volta l'*Alceste* del Sr. Gluck, che già ebbi il piacere di passare al cembalo in sua compagnia. Il Signor Alfier Matutinovich passando per costà può essere un cunto mezzo ond' Ella mi faccia giungere siccome la detta opera, che quanto prima se ne ritornerà egualmente siccome e cantata al suo e mio Signore, e sarà poi a suo tempo seguitata da varj altri libri che ancora mi corre debito di restituire, ma che ora non o' qui pronti. I miei complimenti alla degnissima Famiglia sua, e alle Signore di nostra conoscenza.

Il suo affezionato
 Giulio Bajamonti

Sig. D. Luca d'Antonio | Sorgo. Therefore, the new “mixed” sound of the early classical orchestra, unlike his first four symphonies or overtures,³² has been established. Consequently, they seem to be more mature, and intended for performance. As a nobleman, he considered it inappropriate to participate in a public performance. On the other hand he could do so in a private circle, with musically trained members from other noble families (as, for example, with the previously mentioned Gozze family, although there are other marked family names as former owners on the sheet music), or supported by professional musicians. The other possibility is that the professionals, i.e. the members of the duke’s orchestra,³³ presented them in public at concerts or even in private at special occasions.³⁴

In the Franciscan monastery, where – beside the standard liturgical compositions – a significant amount of the music repertoire of the Dubrovnik Republic has been preserved, one can find various imported works by contemporary musicians, mostly from Italy and Austria, later also from France, with numerous symphonies among them.³⁵ Miho Demović, a researcher of the Dubrovnik musical history, has identified a list of names of musicians active there – members of the local orchestras, organists, music teachers, even composers – some from abroad, and a few locals. Still, beside their compositional output for the church (masses, simple motets and church songs), most of their secular compositions did not advance beyond short chamber works and dance music. There-

32 There the instruments vary, between only two of them (*violino* and *basso* in the second and the third one) and strings with only one wind instrument (oboe with strings in the first and flute with violin and basso in the fourth symphony), while the two orchestral movements are composed for strings and flutes or oboes (*a due*).

33 The members of the representative orchestra of the duke of the Republic merged with the orchestra of the cathedral during the mid-18th century. That ensemble performed at festive events in connection with the Republic and its duke, as well as for the church festivities. Its musicians were sufficiently trained to perform Sorgo’s symphonies as well.

34 For example, for birthdays and other family feasts or learned gatherings. On the other hand, more festive occasions, like marriages, required a more representative music programme.

35 There are names/authors of symphonies such as Ignace Pleyel, Johann Stamitz, Pasquale Anfossi, Giuseppe Sarti, etc.; a score of a symphony by Frederick the Great is also preserved there. Cf. also: KATALINIĆ, 1993; TUKSAR, 1997; TUKSAR, 1999.

fore, Luka was the only local musician during the 1760s and 1770s who composed symphonies and his son Antun was the only person whom he musically influenced in that aspect (setting), who – besides chamber music – also composed four symphonies at the end of the 18th and the very beginning of the 19th century. It seems that it was only during the 1810s and 1820s that there were some orchestral works composed by local composers (of Italian origin) such as Angiolo Maria Frezza from Rome or Tommaso Resti from Lecce, both active in Dubrovnik.³⁶

In mid-18th century Dubrovnik, when Luka Sorgo/Sorkočević, a local nobleman, was trained for his diplomatic service and in music – both, in his home town and abroad – the local audience could enjoy the musicians from the cathedral orchestra and the duke's orchestra playing imported music as well as some domestic creations in church, in the theater and in concerts, in public and privately.³⁷ Luka also composed for such occasions, thus participating in the implementation of the new early classical style and the symphony, as instructed by his Italian teachers in Dubrovnik and Rome. After focusing entirely on his public service activities for the Republic, especially after traveling to Italy and Vienna, he applied his experiences in the organization of music life and education in his role as superintendent of the home for girls (in 1785) or the public theater (1787). Although he probably no longer composed, he undoubtedly stayed in touch with music: attending music performances, playing in private and studying music as well as taking care of the music education of his children and supplying them with music material. In that aspect, he was a typical representative of his educated class which included poets, philosophers and other polymaths. During his Viennese mission, his contemporaries described him as a learned person with exquisite manners and a fine soul, who had well represented the interests of his small fatherland.

36 Cf. DEMOVIĆ, 1989, pp. 228f.

37 Only by the 1770s, the Senate had allowed that the hall in the city customs office (Dogana/Palazzo Sponza), besides the local theater building, might also serve for concert performances.

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