

VA PENSIERO, SULL'ALI DORATE: THE SERASSI FAMILY AND THE PATRIOTIC ITALIAN ORGAN OF THE RISORGIMENTO

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Introduction

1 The topic¹

Italian unification was achieved through different means: political, military, social, cultural and, not least, musical. As far as this last aspect is concerned, as well as the strong contribution made by Italian melodrama (plays and operas), organs deserve great attention because thanks to their contact with people, they could convey social aspirations, including the patriotic. Those made by the Serassis from Bergamo towered above the others; they were a model not only for mechanical structure and their modern and continual innovations, but for their charming timbres, which easily engaged the listener. With these organs it was possible to imitate orchestras and military bands, whose repertoire, most of all the martial and very rich with patriotic themes, was often taken from famous melodramas. The Serassis made a bigger contribution than other builders, creating and making known this kind of organ, from north to south, from the Trentino to Sicily. Their 'model', inspiring adaptations of *Risorgimento* operas, was greatly imitated, because on the one hand it preserved tradition and on the other it created a new way of thinking, a new tendency. In this, it became a point of reference for the modern organ, since it was rich in tone-colours, new mechanisms and improvements, which made of it a versatile, easy to use and long-lasting instrument.

2 Reference to Giuseppe Verdi

The title of this essay evokes Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) who, two hundred years after his birth, remains the most important musician of the Italian Risorgimento, author of immortal melodramas extolling independence and Italian unification, the

most patriotic of Italian composers. In the opera *Nabucco* (1842), Verdi establishes a parallel between the ancient story of the Hebrew subjugated to Babylonian rule and Italian history of his time. The famous chorus of the *Va Pensiero sull'ali dorate* ('Fly, thought, on wings of gold') became a symbol of the motivation for freedom and national unification. Other famous motifs were inexhaustible sources of inspiration for the organists and still transmit the common patriotic ideal in those churches with popular attendance. As is well known, the acronym VIVA V.E.R.D.I., written on walls and on organs, stands for *Viva Vittorio Emanuele Re d'Italia* ('Long Live Victor Emmanuel King of Italy').

Patriotic and popular emotions were also raised by the works of other contemporary composers, such as *Norma* by Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835) and *Belisario* by Gaetano Donizetti (1796-1848). Organs, even those found in small village churches, suit these patriotic aims, thanks to their strong, martial and *persuasive* sounds, which in their way matched orchestras great or small. Organ-builders and players shared a sense of purpose as never before in the history of the Italian organ: to hold a dialogue with the people and to become an interpreter of social reality.

3 Risorgimento: a political, cultural and social movement

By *Risorgimento* we mean that period of Italian history during which the nation brought together into one state (the Kingdom of Italy) the previous eight states: the Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont (which promoted unification), the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia (then an Austrian province exercising patronage over the entire peninsula), the Duchy of Modena and Reggio, the Duchy of Parma and Piacenza, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, the Principality of Lucca, the Church (Papal) State, and the Kingdom of the two Sicilies. *Risorgimento* indicates not only a political-social movement, but also one that was cultural-musical, literary-pictorial, thus promoting unification.

The movement began in 1815 after the Congress of Vienna marking the end of Napoleon's campaigns, and it reached a high point in February 1871 with the annexation of the Papal State and the shift of the capital city from Florence to Rome. The long-awaited unification was reached after tragic events involving the country's population: revolutions, three wars (1848, 1859, 1866), imprisonments, shootings, hangings, exile. Many Italian patriots, among whom was Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872), took refuge in London, Paris and Zurich, from where ideals spread and patriotic actions were organized. General Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-1882) shared Mazzini's programme, while the institutional promoter was the Royal House of Savoy, with the sovereigns Carlo Alberto (1798-1849) and Vittorio Emanuele II (1820-1878). The twenties to the seventies saw the greatest development and diffusion of the organ of the Risorgimento, a period characterized by continuous revolutionary uprisings which, in the end, achieved the long-awaited effect: national unification, to which the Lombard organ-art of Serassi can be understood as contributing.

4 The Risorgimento appears in churches

The ideal of Risorgimento appeared also in a figurative way inside churches: by means of the priests' sermons and by the music played on the organ. The 1819 Serassi organ Opus 378 in the church of Alzano Maggiore (Bergamo) shows Saint Cecilia, patroness of musicians, represented as a lady dressed with the colours of the revolutionary French flag, in line with the motto *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. Sermons spoke about the patriotic feeling for unification, most of all after 1846 and the election of the so called liberal Pope Pio IX (1792-1878), a supporter of unification. A significant document in this political climate was the confidential circular of 22 January 1848 addressed by the Austrian government to all the Lombard Provincial Delegations, in which the government wrote of clergy 'instilling in their parishioners' feelings of aversion towards the government' and recommended maximum caution.

But the organ too was contributing to popular feeling through its martial music, conveying important social messages and shared patriotic feelings.

5 Political censorship

Censorship of the press and opinions was very wide-spread, as is suggested by newspapers and by the Serassis' commercial correspondence. In fifty-six newspapers from 1816 to 1860 there is not a single article about organs as 'patriotic' instruments, thanks to the omnipresent political control exercised by those anxious to avoid reference to them other than as church property used for the worship of God.

Whereas police could intervene in theatres to ban some opera representations, they could not do the same in churches because the organ enjoyed the privileges of a holy location. As far as Serassis' correspondence is concerned, in the builder's various *Carteggi* ('Exchange of letters') in parish archives we didn't find any letter talking about the themes of Risorgimento. The Boards of Trustees, ministers of public law, had a veto over the *Imperial Delegation for Worship* (the governmental authority authorizing extraordinary expenses for religious bodies), so master organ-builders disapproved by the Austrian government would have had no more work.

But there was a different reality. 1859 Antonio Sangalli from Bergamo, an organ-builder trained by the Serassis, wrote on the sides of the organ-case in Ponte dell'Olio (Piacenza) 'better to die in one's prime, than to languish under tyrants, that is to say under the Austrian yoke'. In 1860 Angelo Amati from Pavia marked on the organ's upper-board in the church of Sabbioneta (Cremona), the following words: *Viva V. E. R. d'Italia e la tanto sospirata libertà* ('Long Live Victor Emmanuel King of Italy and the long desired freedom').

6 The organ becomes an interpreter of famous operas

The organ is able to imitate the melodrama thanks to the effective intensity of its melody and to a strong 'orchestration' achieved through the numerous sound resources. including those imitating orchestra and military band. Various

commemorative concerts in the Verdi bicentenary year 2013 have recently revived some of the most famous pieces played on organ:

S. MERCADANTE (1795-1870): Chorus *Chi per la patria muor* ('Who dies for the fatherland') from the opera *Caritea regina di Spagna, ossia La morte di Don Alfonso re di Portogallo* (Caritea, Queen of Spain, or, The Death of Don Alfonso, King of Portugal), 1826

G. GABETTI (1796-1862): *Fanfara e Marcia Reale d'ordinanza* ('Fanfare and Royal March of Ordinance': anthem of the Kingdom of Italy), 1831

G. GONELLA (1804-1854): *Hymnu Sardu Nazionali* (national anthem, Kingdom of Sardinia), 1843

G. ROSSINI (1792-1868): *Inno nazionale* (national anthem, original for male chorus and piano, texts by Francesco Ilari), 1847

M. NOVARO (1818-1885): *Il canto della guerra* ('The song of the war'), 1848

A. OLIVIERI (1830-1867): *Inno di Garibaldi* (Anthem for Garibaldi, *All'armi [...] — Va' fuori d'Italia* ('To arms! [...] — Get out of Italy'), 1858

G. VERDI (1813-1901): *Sinfonia e Va pensier'* (Symphony and 'Fly, thought', from the opera *Nabucodonosor*), (1842

Prelude and chorus *Si ridesti il Leon di Castiglia* ('Let the Lion of Castille reawaken', from the opera *Ernani*, part III, scene 4), 1844

Choruses *Patria oppressa!* ('Oppressed fatherland!') and *La patria tradita* ('Betrayed fatherland', from the opera *Macbeth*), 1847

Cara patria, già madre e reina ('Dear homeland, at once mother and queen', from the opera *Attil*), 1847

Inno popolare, Suoni la tromb ('Hymn of the people, Let the trumpet play', text by Goffredo Mameli), 1848

The Serassis

The Serassis, one of the most famous dynasties of organ-builders in Italy and Europe, devoted themselves to organ-building for six generations, from 1720 to 1895. The long series of events that marked their life seems not to have disturbed their exceptional activity. Family laws emphasized the authority of senior members, a hierarchic relationship among the other members, a strength coming from sharing the same aims, and family solidarity. Their life was founded on cultural activity (music, literature, mathematics, physics, mechanics), industriousness, and religiousness (the family had five priests, four of whom lived at the same time, and a cloistered nun). Their work was based upon Vitruvius's principle according to which artworks should have three qualities: *comoditas*, *firmitas*, *delectatio*, durable, precious and perfect. They were characterized by a good-natured intellectual curiosity and great creativity, interested only in patient, meticulous and non-stopping work, even when they became wealthy and well-known. Their deserved success is illustrated by a great number of organs (almost a thousand), by praise and esteem everywhere, by complaisant examinations made by famous organists, by the favours of princes and the encouragement of emperors and popes, by important legal recognitions and the precious gifts received, and by the many literary compositions dedicated to them (more than a hundred).

The Serassi organ, although in continuous evolution, maintains the typical characteristics of the traditional Italian instrument: it starts from the organ of the late Renaissance, i.e. the harmonic pyramid of the *Principale* (Diapason) family, which forms the timbre of the *Ripieno* (chorus), and on this are added essential colour stops,

Flutes (mainly 4', 2 2/3' and 2') and *Voce umana* (undulating Diapason-scaled flue stop). It continues with the rich timbres of the baroque organ, particularly with reeds and mechanical devices sufficient to recreate an orchestra, and arrives at the instrument of the Romanticism-Risorgimento — full and strong sonorities, epic and martial, sweet and charming.

7.1 The origins and Giuseppe *il vecchio*

The Serassi or Sarazzi family came from Como (State of Milan). The founder of the family was Giuseppe (1693-1760), known as *il vecchio* ('the old', 'senior'). It is not known why he moved to Bergamo (State in the Venetian Republic), where he was present in 1720. Giuseppe distinguished himself for his improvement of windchests and for the attention he paid to the pipes. He took as inspiration the Antegnatis, active around 1475 and 1650, whose works were a model for sound and execution. A player of wind instruments and an organist, he was naturally clever and skilful in the field of mechanics. Three of his sons were musicians too, and two of them — Andrea Luigi (1725-1799) and Giambattista (1727-1808) — continued their father's activities. Among his children was Pier Antonio (1721-1791), one of the most learned people of the century, author of fundamental works on Torquato Tasso (1544-1595) and key figure in the fortune of the family business, the *Fabbrica d'Organi Serassi*.

7.2 Andrea Luigi

The *Fabbrica d'Organi* became famous thanks to Andrea Luigi. Apparently a fragile and shy person, he was in fact determined, practical and scrupulous. Because of his talents, he was honoured by princes, cardinals, bishops and other important people,. Left a widower when still young, he too became a priest. In order to better devote himself to work, he obtained exemption from saying the daily Office, thanks to the good word of his brother, the abbot Pier Antonio, who lived in Rome. His aim, as he used to say, was that everything should be done with 'an incomparable perfection', and he was ready to renounce money if the quality of a work could not be guaranteed.

His industriousness and creativity led him to replace the traditional short reed pipes (*Tromboncini*) with reeds of different structure, full length, and better able to imitate orchestral instruments like bassoon, serpent, bass clarions, clarinet, oboe, bagpipes, trumpets, violoncello, cor anglais, bass, bombardas, trombones etc. Andrea Luigi was helped by his priest brother Giambattista, who supervised the work and erected the organs in the churches. He was an expert in the art of organ improvisation, which he developed so as to emphasize the good qualities of his organs.

7.3 Giuseppe II

Andrea's son Giuseppe II (1750-1817) is the genius of the Serassis; he became so famous that he was considered the greatest organ-master of his time, since his clever inventions brought the Italian organ to the highest level. As a learned historian, he was the first organ-builder to write about Italian organ art, dealing with various problems of the topic and using documents of a kind not published earlier by Graziadio Antegnati. *Sugli organi. Lettere* ('About organs. Letters') appeared in Bergamo in 1816, eight years after a description of his new organ in Como, *Descrizioni ed osservazioni*. Over this period the Serassi family were also active in textile production, not directly connected with organs but important for the firm's many instruments. Thanks to loom mechanisms, it was possible to put into practice ideas never before applied. For example: the mechanism of the *Third Hand*, or mechanical octave coupler providing two sounds from a single key; or the *Union of the Keyboards*, a manual coupler operated by a pedal linking the keyboards without the player moving hands away.

Another invention, created in 1781, Op. 193 and 194 (Bergamo, Collegiate church of S. Alessandro in Colonna), unique in the whole world and still operating, is the underground tunnel connection of two great organs 33 meters apart, through mechanical suspension. For this achievement in 1784 the Senate of the Serenissima Republic of Venice presented the Serassis with a decree called *Terminazione*, as a reward: tax exemption for 15 years. A proof of European esteem for Giuseppe II is

the long Memorial dedicated to him by the periodical *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* of Leipzig (No. 31, July 1817), after his death on 19 February.

7.4 The Serassi Brothers senior

Giuseppe II's sons who sustained organ-building activities were Andrea (1776-1843), Carlo (1777-1849), Alessandro (1781-1870), Giuseppe III (1784-1849), Giacomo (1790-1877) and Ferdinando (1792-1832); they formed the *Fratelli Serassi senior* (the Serassi Brothers senior), confirming and keeping alive their father's fame. The company, from 1818 to 1849, created about three hundred and fifteen organs, and its workshops are celebrated in the whole country as being without compare. The Brothers were called 'builders and inventors of sublime organs of a new kind'.

The improvements and inventions concern above all the tonal part. The organ achieved fame not only for the richness of its timbres, but also for its power, majesty, sweetness, cohesion, reliability, efficiency and easiness of use, all sufficiently so to become the model for the modern organ. Very important moments are the three visits to the workshops by members of the Austrian Royal House (1825, 1827, 1834); in 1825 it was the turn of the Empress Caroline Augusta of Bavaria, and after her the Emperors Francis I (1804-1835) and Ferdinand I (1835-1848). In 1846 the Serassi family became the proud holder of the *Imperial Eagle* with the title of *Imperiale Regia Fabbrica Nazionale Privilegiata* (a 'National Privileged Imperial Royal Firm') thanks to the Austrian government of the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia.

7.5 The Serassi Brothers junior

After the death of Carlo and Giuseppe III, Giacomo remained as the manager of the firm, helped by his three nephews, the sons of Alessandro: Giuseppe IV (1823-1895) Carlo II (1828-1878) and Vittorio (1829-1903), forming the *Fratelli Serassi junior* (Serassi Brothers junior). Agent and manager from 1849 to 1870 was Giambattista Castelli (1813-1885), who codified the model of the Serassi organ from a theoretic point of view, 'reaching such a perfection and richness in devices offering a greater

number of different and pleasant harmonic effects'. In 1862 he published for the Royal Conservatory of Milan the organ method *Norme generali sul modo di trattare l'organo moderno con esempi musicali del noto maestro organista Vincenzo Petrali* (General rules on the way of treating the modern organ, with musical examples by the famous organist Vincenzo Petrali). By then, the Serassi organ had become the Italian nineteenth-century organ *par excellence*. In 1863 the great instrument of the San Lorenzo Royal Basilica was built in Florence (Op. 680), with three keyboards of seventy keys each, a *Rückpositiv* and sixty-four stops. Thanks to this superb work, still well preserved, King Victor Emmanuel II invested Mr. Giacomo as a 'Knight of the Order of Saints Maurizio and Lazzaro'. This makes it possible for the company's workshop to bear the Royal Coat of Arms as proud holder of the title of *Regia Fabbrica Nazionale Privilegiata d'Organi* ('National Privileged Royal Maker of Organs'). In 1868 the *Catalogo* of Serassi organs counted a total of seven hundred and four instruments.

7.6 Financial difficulty and close-down

In 1870 the talented foreman Giacomo Locatelli (who was awarded a golden medal by the Ministry for Agriculture, Industry and Commerce after building the organ of San Lorenzo, Florence), together with the best workers and the manager Castelli, brought business relations with the Serassi Brothers to an end and founded the *Giacomo Locatelli* company. In 1871 the *Fratelli Serassi* then experienced financial difficulties and underwent a bankruptcy process. Despite this painful division, the firm did not close down but continued with success, especially in Sicily. In 1881 the *Regia Fabbrica Nazionale Privilegiata d'Organi* was now under the direction of the twenty-six year old Ferdinando II Serassi (1855-1894) and Casimiro Allieri (1848-1900), who had been foreman. The workshops were not only in Bergamo but also in Modica, Eastern Sicily. Ferdinando II died in 1894 at the age of thirty-nine; with his death the activity came to an end. In 1895 Vittorio Serassi, the only representative of

the family, allowed Giacomo Locatelli junior through a notary-witnessed deed to obtain the title of ‘Successor to the former Fratelli Serassi company’.

The Serassi organ in Lombardy

8 The first half of the nineteenth century

We can find an organ in almost every village: from those isolated among the mountains to those on the plain. For example in the province of Bergamo there were about five hundred organs,² which were the most popular musical phenomenon in nineteenth-century history. By attending church, people including those who could not read or write were fascinated by and attracted to the organ, because they felt the instrument transmitted not only harmony, melody, orchestration and style, but also conveyed a social message. If on the one hand the middle class could attend theatrical and musical performances whose cultural message was politically if symbolically active in favour of Italian unification, on the other hand people from the villages could listen to the organ as an interpreter of a common patriotic feeling, though only through traditional musical-liturgical forms. Basically the organ interprets three ideals: *political*, inciting patriotism; *social*, invoking certain political ideas; *military*, expressing ardor for military campaigns to fight the foreigner.

9 Military band

The military band, combining wind instruments (woodwinds and basses) and percussion, had a great influence on the organ, enough to affect its character. In Lombardy it arrived in 1796 along with Napoleonic troops, while in Bergamo it appeared the following year. There was a garrison band, an element of popular attraction, and during the century civic bands, the so-called philharmonics, experienced a great expansion. For example, in the city of Bergamo alone, with a population of 25,000, there were no less than eight of them, with instrumentalists drawn from the populace. Bands also appeared in the opera. For instance in 1804

Giovanni Simone Mayr, for the inauguration of the theatre of Piacenza, used the military band in the opera *Zamori, ossia L'eroe dell'Indie*.

In connection with organs, the word *band* has three different meanings:

- the percussion stop, known as 'Band' or 'Turkish Band' (*Banda Turca*) formed by Bass Drum, Sistrum, Smyrna Cymbal and Snare Drum;
- a way of playing, 'similar to a military band'
- a combination of various reed and flue stops in order to imitate the coming and going of a military band. (Soldiers can be heard from a distance, coming closer, walking under the window, and then going away till they disappear).

These three ways of interpreting the word suggest how the popular musical phenomenon of 'philharmonics' had not only a great influence on organ art itself, but it also on particular musical communications.

10 The organ is enriched with many tone-colours

The nineteenth century art of organ-building, particularly in Lombardy, on one hand reinforces the structure and power of the classical sound-architecture of the timbre of the *Ripieno*, on the other is enriched with numerous colours, aimed at imitating the social taste of the opera:

- with reed stops, made of metal or wood, of various lengths, with narrow teardrop-shaped pipes or with cylindrical or conical or inverted pyramid resonators. Many were already found in baroque organs, such as bass Clarone 4', bass Clarinetto 2', treble Clarinetto 8' or 16', bass Corno di bassetto 8', treble Oboe 8', treble Serpente 8' or 16', bass Arpone 8', Tromba militare 16', bass Violoncello 4', treble Violoncello 8' or 16', treble Corno inglese 16', bass Fagotto 8', treble Tromba 8' or 16', treble Voci corali 16', treble Cornamusa 16',

Pedal Bombarda 12' (from F) or 16', Pedal Trombone 8', Fisarmonica (free reed) etc.

- with flue stops, made of metal or wood, of various widths, lengths and shapes (cylindrical, flared or with a square section, open or closed, plus others) such as treble Flutta 8', treble Flauto traverso 8', Flute in duodecima 2 2/3', Flauto in ottava 4', treble Fluttone 8', treble Corno 16', treble Ottavino militare 2', bass Flagioletto 1/2' or 1', Sesquialtera 4/5', treble Cornet (4', 2 2/3', 2', 1 3/5'), treble Voce umana 8' (flue), bass Violetta 2', treble Violetta 8', treble Viola 8', bass Viola 4', treble Violino 8', bass Violone 8', Pedal Timpani or Timballo (Drum), Pedal Contrabasso 16', Pedal Rinforzi ai Contrabassi 8', Duodecima di Contrabassi 5 1/3', etc.
- with percussion stops made of leather like the Bass Drum (Tamburo), or an interleaved row of round bronze bells (Campanelli)
- with other effects produced by several flue pipes playing together in a dissonance (Timpano, Bufera and others).

11 The Serassi conception

The Serassi organ has all the above mentioned sound characteristics and is structured as it follows:

- on the basis of 8 or 16 feet
- one, two, rarely three keyboards; divided into bass and soprano, usually between b and c'
- spring chest
- extension to 72 notes, with the *controttava* (*ravalement*); the first octave often 'broken' (without C#, D#, F# and G#)
- small, sloping pedalboard with 17 pedals, in most cases short; only the first 12 notes have their own pipes
- air pressure from 38 to 55 millimetres water column

- low pipe-mouths
- opening of pipe-feet 'at full air'
- labium with subtle and thick engravings
- solemn, rich, clear and powerful *Ripieno*
- *Contrabasso* with a deep, wide, majestic sound
- strong registers, each made to blend with the others

The tonal aspect is built up of two parts:

- *Ripieno* (the chorus), with ranks in octave and fifths separated or doubled: Principale 16', Principale 8', VIII 4', XII 2 2/3', XV 2', XIX 1 1/3', XXII 1', XXVI 2/3', XXIX 1/2', XXXIII 1/3', XXXVI 1/4', XL 1/6', XLIII 1/8'. Expressed as 16.8.4.12.15.19.22.24.26.29.33.36.40.43
- *registri di concerto* (concerto or solo stops): stops of wider or narrower pipes, oscillating stops, reeds of different lengths, shapes and materials

This orchestra is completed by numerous accessories (*Tiratutti del Ripieno, Tiratutti preparabile, Third and Fourth hand, Jalousie or Expression*) aimed at creating a versatile and easy-to-use instrument.

12 G. S. Mayr's influence

In the creation of the Serassi organ of the Risorgimento, a very important rôle was played by the music of the opera-composer, teacher, expert on history, theorist and philanthropist Giovanni Simone Mayr (1763-1845), a Bavarian from Mendorf (Ingolstadt) who chose Bergamo to carry out his musician activity as a permanent resident. Mayr created a new musical way of thinking which also influenced the Serassi conception. He was a friend of the Serassis, to such an extent that in 1835 he wrote some 60 pages of an account about them. In theatres and churches the Serassis, who deeply admired him, often heard his works, which were distinguished by an

elaborate and copious orchestration, which influenced their ideas of organ-sound and the development of new and original sounds.

We can see the influence of this master in three aspects: structure, instruments and theory. For the structure, we can infer his influence in the great number of pipes, the use of more bodies of organ-sound, the extension of the keyboard, the enrichment of the pedalboard, and important technical findings aimed at making the organ more expressive, easy to use and provided with lots of performing possibilities. In actual instruments, we can infer Mayr's influence in the considerable presence of stops imitating brass (particularly horns) and woodwinds (particularly clarinets) — these are among his most characteristic sounds as 'father of the nineteenth century opera'; also in the greatness and majesty of the sound and the strong sense of melody. His influence on theory would include a perfect knowledge of the organ and technical questions, instruction in the art of the organ, help towards the construction of new organs, a great attention to detail in new organs, study of the great organ-masters of the past, and promoting the Serassi company.

13 The organ of the Risorgimento: Serassi

It needs to be underlined that the organ of the Risorgimento is a Lombardic phenomenon, suggesting loud, fascinating, martial, military sonorities, typical of the band. This kind of organ was not a sole prerogative of the Serassis but was made by others from Lombardy, such as the Bossis from the same country, the Biroldis from Varese, the Amatis from Pavia and Monza, the Montesantis from Mantova, the Lingiardis from Pavia, the Prestinaris and Carreras from Varese, and many others. The Veneto did not have the right tradition to make such a vehicle of Risorgimento music, nor Piedmont and the other Italian regions.

The Serassi organ was an inspiration for pages that recount the most important facts of the Risorgimento, *Le sanguinose giornate di Marzo ossia La Rivoluzione di Milano* (1848, 18-22 March) by the friar Father Davide from Bergamo (1791-1863), written for a worthy Serassi organ commissioned by the friar, in the ducal Basilica of

Santa Maria di Campagna in Piacenza (1825-38). In both increasing the number of new and bright registers like the big reeds, the horns, the wonderful flutes, the delicate string registers, the powerful percussions, all this while based on the Italian classical pyramid of a now reinforced *Ripieno*, the Serassis have a double significance for the Italian organ: they were at the same time radical innovators and tradition-keepers.

14 Documents

Certain particulars allow us to give the Serassi organ the title of *risorgimentale*:

- pages concerning important political events, like the *Sanguinose giornate di Marzo ossia La Rivoluzione di Milano*, written by father Davide of Bergamo.
- the Serassi business correspondence with famous men of the Risorgimento such as Roberto Taparelli, Marquise d'Azeglio (Turin, 1790-1862), patriot and Italian politician; the philosopher Jesuit Luigi Taparelli (brother of Roberto, mentioned above, and of Massimo D'Azeglio, patriot and politician) whose letters are contained in the Serassi *Carteggio* (Nos. 702-706TaL, 707TrA in <http://www.bibliotecamai.org>).
- the letter from 1838 by the patriot Giuseppe Mazzini (exiled in London) in which, talking about the Serassi organ of San Filippo Neri (1816) in Genova, he explains to his mother: 'I challenge you to find one like this'.
- information according to which in 1848 some workers of the Serassi company enlisted voluntarily in the army of liberation; this caused delays in finishing certain work.
- Bergamo, the 'patriotic city' in which they live, was also active militarily.
- the statement of M. P. Hamel (1849) in the respected *Nouveau manuel complet du facteur d'orgues*, where the Serassis are mentioned as *les plus renommés de l'Italie* (pp. 482-83).

- the organ of the Royal Basilica of S. Lorenzo in Florence (1863, Op. 680), Italian capital city from 1865 to 1871: work contacted by the Italian government.

In addition, one might suggest that in listening to a Serassi organ we can sense a certain majesty and feel a patriotic ardour in the solo stop melodies and in the martial sounds from a powerful bass.

15 Contributions to a unified Italian organ

Despite Italy's still being politically divided, the Serassis gave a national identity to the making of organs. They put their instruments in all eight sovereign states despite administrative differences and great distances. (One notes that the internal combustion engine began to be used only in 1899.) It was the first time in the history of Italian organs that there was so broad a distribution of a single model, and no other organ company had such significance in these respects as the Serassis. In Sicily, for instance, the Serassi organ arrived fifteen years before Giuseppe Garibaldi's troops invaded (1860), bringing about the annexation to Italy. Serassi instruments, considered the most modern, were so much desired that from around 1840 the firm signed no more termed contracts. Nevertheless, there were admired artisans from the Serassi school who spread this model in Italy and Latin America.

Conclusions

Risorgimento means *rising for an ideal*, expressed in many ways along the path of Italian unification, a path including appropriate use of the organ. The Serassi organ originated at the end of the eighteenth century, under the domain of the Most Serene Republic of Venice, and became more wide-spread with the coming of Napoleon and the idea of a united State. It was awarded with an official title (1861) and took the royal coat of arms, thanks to the construction of the organ the Royal Basilica of S. Lorenzo in Florence, the then-capital city.

Notes

¹ As far as historical sources are concerned, we refer to the author's monumental work, *I Serassi, celeberrimi costruttori d'organi. Le vicende umane, patrimoniali e professionali* = Cultural association 'Giuseppe Serassi', collection of organ art I, 2012. Federico Lorenzani Guastalla (RE), Graphic project: Horizon Studio – Rivarolo Mantovano (MN), Print: Stilgraf – Viadana (MN). 4 voll., pp. 2209 + 32 plates. A special thanks to Dr Marco Brandazza.

² In 1816 the province of Bergamo had a surface of about 4000 km²; it was composed of 370 Communes with a total of about 300,000 people. The territory was for the most part mountainous, with altitude varying from 200 to 3000 metres .