Le Violette

The Violets

Adriano Morselli
English version by James P. Dunn

Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725)
Edited by John Glenn Paton

Allegretto, \( \frac{d}{4} = 72 - 88 \)

\[ mf \]

Note: Treble notes with upward stems are played by unison violins in the original. Treble notes with downward stems are part of the realization supplied by the editor.
Idiomatic translation: Dewy, fragrant, graceful violets, you stand there modestly,
Idiomatic translation: Dewy, fragrant, graceful violets, you stand there modestly,
half hidden among the leaves, and you rebuke my desires, which are too ambitious.
Le mie voglie,
My wishes,

Che son troppo ambiозi,
Your rebuke is too ardent glance.

do-se, O dorose,
Viola, I adore you,

Lette graziose,
Bashful, gently graceful,

54 26 Italian Songs and Arias
do-se, O-do-ro-se,

vio-let, I a-dore you,

Vi-o-

Ten-der

let-te, vi-o-let-te gra-zio-se,

vio-let, ten-der vio-let, I a-dore you,

Vi-o-let-te gra-zio-se,

Ten-der vio-let, I a-dore you!

se! you!
“Le Violette”

from Pirro e Demetrio
pir:ro e deme:trj o

Poetic idea

“Have you tiny violets been put here as a message for me? Am I aiming too high in loving such a wonderful person?” The person who sings this is a youth named Mario in the opera Pyrrhus and Demetrius. He is alone in a garden, thinking about his love for a woman who is nobly born.

Background

After his youthful successes in Rome, Scarlatti moved to Naples, which was under Spanish rule, and became the musical director to the Spanish viceroy. His appointment included directing the leading opera theater with a permanent company of nine singers and five instrumentalists. Pirro e Demetrio (1694) was among Scarlatti's most successful operas. It was performed in many cities, even in London, but the numerous performances brought the composer no additional payment.

The interweaving of the voice and violin parts in this aria is typical of Scarlatti's mature operas, some of which contain no continuo arias.

Sources

(1) Pirro e Demetrio, manuscript score of the opera in Biblioteca del Conservatorio di Musica San Pietro a Majella, Rari 7.1.11. (Microfilm courtesy of Prof. Karl Kroeger, Music Library, University of Colorado at Boulder.) Scored for voice (soprano clef, starting on a2), violins “tutti all’unisono”, and continuo. Key: A.

(2) Songs in the new opera call’d Pyrrhus and Demetrius (London: Walsh, 1709?). Copy in the Clark Library, University of California at Los Angeles. English text only. Violin part omitted. Voice and continuo parts exactly duplicate those in the Naples score, except for one interesting variation: m32 is altered to minor (c-naturals instead of c-sharps in A Major).

A libretto published for the London production in 1709, in which the role of Mario was sung by a woman, gives this singable translation:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Blushing violets,} \\
\text{Sweetly smelling,} \\
\end{align*}
\]

From your verdant fragrant dwelling,
You upbraid me
For aspiring
And admiring
Those above me,
Thou’ they love me;
And deride me

With too much Ambition swelling.

The familiar version, made by an anonymous editor, omits m4-m11 and omits or alters other passages. Having shortened the aria drastically, the editor lengthened it overall with a long repetition beginning with “Voi vi state vergognose.” This extension is furnished with ornaments, which are acceptable but are certainly not from Scarlatti.

mgd:zoasko\zep Mezzo as코 르 half hidden
fra le f3:r:te Fra le foglie, among the leaves
e zgridate E zgridate and you-rebuke
le mie v3:x:fe Le mie voglie, [the] my desires,
ke son tr3:pp:po ambitis\o\zep Che son troppo ambitio\zep which are too ambitious.