

The catalogue of Mauro Giuliani contains a group of compositions inspired by popular folk music. The borrowed melodies come from three sources: *British*, with *Country Dances* from Scotland and Ireland; *Austrian* with *Waltzes*, *Landlers*, traditional airs and *Italian* with the *canzoni a ballo* (dance songs) such as the *Monferrina*, the *Tarantella*, as well as *Roman* and *Neapolitan folk songs*. These melodies date back to Giuliani's years in Vienna, Rome and Naples - cities that were a turning point in his career and in his approach to traditional oral sources - which corresponded to the general tendency of the period. Towards the end of the 18th century, the *Volkslied* - folk song - became a source of inspiration for composers who borrowed melodies for their own creations and it gave rise to the romantic concept of a last primordial unity between nature and culture, which could be recaptured through the folk repertoire. Between the two musical extremes - classical and folk - there was continuous interaction and *melodrama* acted as mediator. Serious musicians and popular music were brought closer together thanks to the *arie celebri* (famous airs) sung spontaneously in the streets and through the players in the theatre orchestras of the period, who were mostly from the people. The guitar too had a linking function, more so than other instruments. It was both a classical instrument used in concert halls and one of the most representative instruments for folk expression.

Country Dances come from the Celtic areas of Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Giuliani draws on this repertoire for two of his composition styles. In the 12 *Scozzesi* op.33, *Ecozzaise* n.13 from op.24b, 6 *Ecozzaises* op.58, folk melodies are not used directly, but the theme is created afresh, following the form and structure of the folk *Ecozzaise*. Another way of dealing with the melody is when it is taken directly from the *canzoni a ballo* and used in its entirety or with several rhythmical variations. Folk melodies, fresh and spontaneous, with their ability to arouse immediate emotional responses, became the inspiration for long and complex *Variations*, rich with inventiveness. Now we come to the pieces on this CD: *Six National Scottish Airs* w.n. and *Six National Irish Airs* op.125, published by Ricordi in 1834 and 1823. These are pieces of considerable artistic worth which should take their place amongst Giuliani's most noted works. The themes are mainly *Reel* (nos.1,2,4) popular dance which is performed "in line": the couples take the floor one after the other, the women facing the men. The *Reel* can be *veloce* or *moderato*, with two themes repeated more than once and it is accompanied by the drone of bagpipes or by a violin. The choreography consists of low steps to a regular beat (for example: two steps are in 2/2, three steps in 3/2) with a balanced rhythm of the movements where each step towards the centre corresponds to one towards the outer edge, from right to left, from top to bottom. Through his *Variations* in major and minor keys (themes 1 and 7) Giuliani recalls the two strains in English folk dancing: one slow and static, the other lively. The dancers react quickly to the change in the rhythm of the melody and their slow movements suddenly become a kaleidoscope of leaps and twirls.

The *Scottish dance song* was given new life by Robert Burns, the rustic poet (1759-1796) who re-wrote the words to many traditional folk songs, often adding chords and harmony. Recognition of this repertoire continued in the hands of the Irishman Thomas Moore (1779-1852) a ballad singer who was well-known in London in the early 19th century. He published several collections in which he made changes to the English text and often augmented the seventh in pure modal melodies, or even eliminated parts of the original. All this contributed towards the disappearance of the authentic folk repertoire where there was a close link between the Gaelic language and the music.

This type of prevarication on the authentic folk music only came to an end in 1911 when Cecil

Sharp (1859-1924) founded the *English Folk Dance Society*, a group devoted to scientific musical research, similar to Bartók's group in Hungary. Systematically and using live tape recordings, the group discovered the archaic melodies built up on the modal pentatonic scale (a constant feature of the Ionian mode as well as the Aeolian and others) as a common denominator beyond the regional differences. The ornaments, which occurred sporadically and were improvised to make the song more graceful, have been closely studied by experts. It is interesting to note the presence of the *Scotch-snap* (in the piece *Coming through the Rye*) a rhythmic pattern which is characteristic of the *Strathspey*, dance similar to the *Reel* but with a slower course. The dancer leaps into the air during the first rhythmical beat and lands after it. In this way, the musical stress moves upwards. *The Blue Bells of Scotland* is a moving piece in the form of a *rondo*, with the *refrain* sung by two voices in unison, taken from the chorus and the *couplet* sung by a soloist, repeated by a chorus of women's voices only. The title refers to the colour and the shape of the wild hyacinth. The song is often performed by people singers accompanied by bells and a mouth organ. The following piece, *The Old Country Bumpkin*, refers to a *Jig*, the popular *Rinceamor* (round) danced in a circle, deriving from a more ancient form of *Reel*, the *Three-handed Reel*. Music, poetry and dance, composed by an anonymous author, were united as an integral part of community life in Scotland and Ireland to accompany ceremonies, feasts and celebrations, even ritual practices. The identity of the dance song was confirmed by its practical use. Ireland, even more than Scotland, has a vast repertoire of folk music which is a strong form of expression, rich in emotion and sentiment. A characteristic is the movement of the leading note, as in *Eveleen's Bower* and *Miss Bailly* from op.125, dedicated to his pupil Guglielmo Kenny. A recurring dance in Irish music is the *Hornpipe*, again similar to the *Reel* but with a double accentuation on the beat, more extended phrases and a section performed by a soloist, while in another section the dancers move round in a circle, usually tapping their feet on the ground. The internal layout of Irish folk music, unique amongst the Celtic communities, is the reference to the sonata form in the regularity of the phrases (4, 8 or 16 beats) and the smoothness of the melody. This is well illustrated in *The Last Rose of Summer*, widely known for its restrained and moving melody. Over time, the theme has undergone many shifts in the variants as the song continually changed. Occasionally, they were fixed temporarily by being written down on *loose sheets*, the only ephemeral record that folk music has. The layout of the melodic phrases in piece no.7 follows the formal scheme of the first movement of a sonata AABA and the section B can be seen as a second theme with the functional aspects of the characters involved. *Robin Adair* is very popular in Ireland and Scotland and represents itself a type of *Celtic folk song*. It can be included in the category *round* of the *Country Dance*. The treatment of the theme is particular: the new phrase repeats part or all of the initial beats; there is no sense of conclusion and the theme "flows" directly into a new section or into a repeat of the melody itself, giving rise to a model known as a *circular melody*. The words, dating from around 1750 and revised by Moore, were originally written by a noble woman, Caroline Keppel, for her doctor and lover *Robin Adair*. The following piece *My lodging is on the cold ground* is amongst the oldest in the collection and is popular as a *ballata*. The presence of wide intervals in the music indicate a leap by the dancer as opposed to the usual low step. Each time the same musical theme comes round, the next couple of dancers takes the floor. *Garyowen* can be found in middle 19th century collections with the subtitle *We may roam thro' this world*. The rhythm of the structure and the shape of the melody built up on small intervals, suggest that the dance can be identified as a *Jig* or a *double Jig*. The time 6/8 is also here completed at the end of the phrase, with the introductory notes in the next section.

A sign of the general fashion of the times when Giuliani produced his variations on *canzoni a ballo*, is the fact that Beethoven was commissioned in 1810 to rework Scottish, Irish

and Welsh folk songs. This was the first occasion on which he came into contact with music outside the tonal system and his aim was not to "normalise" archaic songs but rather to accentuate their extraneous character by means of harmonisation. In a letter to his publisher, he wrote: "There are an infinite number of harmonies, but only one is suitable for the type and character of the melody". His task was therefore to approach these examples of folk music in detail and without prejudice, adding his own highly original touch and presenting them to the general public in their entirety and in a fully recognisable form. The *Country Dances* illustrate a Viennese musical tradition where, alongside noted classical works, there existed a repertoire of "consumer music" such a dance music for social occasions and military music. These were themes that could be heard in the streets, sung by ordinary people, and more serious composers would enjoy themselves by inventing variations on them. Those composed by Beethoven, Schubert and Giuliani, were good for light listening by the middle and upper classes in their amateur and professional gatherings. Contemporary and earlier anthologies of folk music circulated in these surroundings, anthologies that had been given back to the general public by serious musicians in the form that was most usual in Vienna between 1800 and 1820: *Themes with Variations*.

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