



2 CDs

JOHANN SIMON MAYR

SAFFO

Andrea Lauren Brown · Markus Schäfer

Jaewon Yun · Marie Sande Papenmeyer · Katharina Ruckgaber · Daniel Preis

Members of the Bavarian State Opera Chorus
Simon Mayr Chorus · Concerto de Bassus

Franz Hauk

WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING

Johann Simon
MAYR
(1763-1845)
Saffo
ossia I riti d’Apollo Leucadio

Dramma per musica in due atti
Libretto by Antonio Simeone Sografi (1759-1818)

Saffo (Sappho) Andrea Lauren Brown, Soprano
Faone (Phaon) Jaewon Yun, Soprano
Alceo (Alcaeus) Markus Schäfer, Tenor
Amfizione (The Pythia) Marie Sande Papenmeyer, Mezzo-soprano
Laodamia Katharina Ruckgaber, Soprano
Euricleo (Euricles) Daniel Preis, Tenor

Followers of Saffo • Poets of Mytilene, following Alcaeus
Huntsmen following Faone • Priests, with the Pythian Priestess

Members of the Bavarian State Opera Chorus
Simon Mayr Chorus • Concerto de Bassus
Theona Gubba-Chkeidze, Concertmaster

Franz Hauk, Harpsichord and Conductor

CD 1		60:56	19	Coro di Cacciatori: Serena il tuo pensier (<i>Coro</i>)	2:03
1	Sinfonia Atto Primo	5:27	20	Recitativo: Amici, al vostro affetto grato io son (<i>Faone, Saffo</i>)	2:17
2	Coro e Recitativo: Ecco la Pizia (<i>Coro, Saffo, Alceo, Faone</i>)	4:24	21	Recitativo: Ah sì per lei l'Eliso istesso (<i>Faone, Saffo</i>)	2:32
3	Recitativo: Venerato Ministro, in me tu vedi (<i>Faone, Amfizione</i>)	0:53	22	Aria: Sfidar in sol per lei (<i>Faone</i>)	4:33
4	Aria: Queste esanimi e candide belve (<i>Faone</i>)	1:42	23	Recitativo: Ecco l'oracol mio (<i>Alceo, Saffo</i>)	1:10
5	Recitativo: Alceo di Mitilene s'offre agli sguardi (<i>Alceo, Amfizione</i>)	1:12	24	Recitativo: Ch'il pronunziò? (<i>Alceo, Saffo, Faone, Coro</i>)	1:21
6	Aria: Lasciai del campo gli orridi bellici (<i>Alceo</i>)	2:00	25	Finale: Amor crudel deh non mi togliere (<i>Faone, Saffo, Alceo, Coro</i>)	6:56
7	Recitativo: Venga di Lesbo la teoria (<i>Amfizione</i>)	0:10	CD 2		60:28
8	Entrata di Saffo	1:10	Atto Secondo		
9	Recitativo: Alfine premere m'è concesso (<i>Saffo, Amfizione</i>)	2:28	1	Coro: Sciogli gli accenti tuoi (<i>Coro</i>)	2:24
10	Recitativo: Ah dicesti abbastanza (<i>Saffo</i>)	0:53	2	Recitativo: Vati, stranier, teori (<i>Laodamia, Euricleo, Faone, Alceo</i>)	0:46
11	Aria: L'onda del mar, che al vento (<i>Saffo</i>)	5:46	3	Recitativo: Nume del Ciel che sei (<i>Faone, Alceo</i>)	1:41
12	Recitativo: Andiam, offriamo, amici (<i>Amfizione</i>)	0:27	4	Duetto: Langue d'amor quest'alma (<i>Faone, Alceo</i>)	2:07
13	Aria: Dentro lo speco incognito (<i>Amfizione</i>)	2:01	5	Recitativo: E tu perchè non sciogli (<i>Laodamia, Euricleo</i>)	0:38
14	Recitativo: Non t'inoltrar, il passo arresta (<i>Alceo, Saffo</i>)	2:31	6	Duetto: Cessa di piangere per un ingrato (<i>Laodamia, Euricleo</i>)	2:20
15	Recitativo: Ebben: t'appagherò (<i>Alceo, Saffo</i>)	0:55	7	Recitativo: Così piacesse al Nume (<i>Saffo</i>)	0:38
16	Recitativo: Ah, s'egli fosse giunto (<i>Saffo, Alceo</i>)	1:47	8	Recitativo: Piacesse a te svelar quando (<i>Saffo</i>)	1:29
17	Aria: Torni la pace al cor (<i>Alceo</i>)	4:56	9	Aria: Soave, dolce, cara è la morte (<i>Saffo</i>)	2:51
18	Recitativo: O mie compagne udiste (<i>Saffo</i>)	1:21			

10	Recitativo: Eppur mi fa pietà quell'infelice (<i>Laodamia, Euricleo</i>)	0:52	20	Aria: La dolce speranza disgombri il duol (<i>Amfizione</i>)	1:39
11	Recitativo: Odi il funesto grido (<i>Laodamia, Euricleo</i>)	0:51	21	Recitativo: E quel pianto, quel duolo (<i>Saffo</i>)	2:35
12	Coro: Palpitante... agitata... tremante (<i>Coro, Saffo, Faone, Alceo, Amfizione</i>)	4:01	22	Aria: Pallida morte, vieni: guidami (<i>Saffo</i>)	4:45
13	Recitativo: Saffo, e che ti spaventa? (<i>Saffo, Alceo, Amfizione, Laodamia, Faone</i>)	2:14	23	Recitativo: Andiam, miei fidi (<i>Amfizione, Laodamia, Euricleo</i>)	0:55
14	Recitativo: Quanti, crudeli, siete contro di me? (<i>Alceo</i>)	1:59	24	Recitativo: Ciascun mi fugge (<i>Faone</i>)	3:19
15	Aria: Tacito e mesto in volto (<i>Alceo</i>)	5:05	25	Coro: Dormi, riposa bell'alma amorosa (<i>Coro, Faone</i>)	1:25
16	Recitativo: T'arresti ancor! (<i>Saffo, Faone</i>)	0:53	26	Recitativo: Vuoi ch'io la salvi!... oh, Dio (<i>Faone, Alceo</i>)	3:29
17	Aria: Rispetta i giorni tuoi (<i>Faone</i>)	0:48	27	Aria: Dille... ma no... vorrei... (<i>Faone, Coro</i>)	5:12
18	Cavatina: Nato son già alle lagrime (<i>Faone</i>)	1:33	28	Recitativo: Tutto svanì. Per questa volta invano (<i>Amfizione, Euricleo, Laodamia</i>)	0:38
19	Recitativo: Saffo, non ti smarrir (<i>Amfizione</i>)	0:40	29	Coro: Vivi leggiadra e bella (<i>Coro, Saffo, Alceo, Faone</i>)	2:42

Johann Simon Mayr (1763-1845)

Born in the Bavarian town of Mendorf, near Ingolstadt, in 1763, Simon Mayr was the son of a schoolteacher and showed some early ability as a musician. He was a pupil at the Jesuit College in Ingolstadt, before entering the university to study theology, while continuing to demonstrate great versatility as a musician. His musical training, however, only began in earnest in 1787, when a patron, noticing his talent, took him to Italy. There, from 1789, he studied with Carlo Lenzi, master of the music at Bergamo Cathedral. There followed, through the generosity of another patron, a period of study with Bertoni in Venice. His early commissioned compositions were largely in the form of sacred oratorios, but in 1794 his opera *Saffo* was staged in Venice. His turning to opera owed much to the encouragement he received from Piccinni and Peter von Winter, and other operas followed

for Venice and then for La Scala, Milan, and for other Italian theatres, with an increasingly large number of performances abroad. In 1802 he followed Lenzi as *maestro di cappella* at the cathedral of Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo, becoming director of the cathedral choir school three years later. Mayr held these positions until his death in 1845. As a teacher he won the particular respect of his pupil Gaetano Donizetti. He did much to promote the knowledge of the Viennese classical composers, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, in Italy. His own style reflects something of this, but essentially in an Italian context. He was, needless to say, immensely prolific as a composer, with nearly seventy operas to his credit between 1794 and 1824, and some six hundred sacred works.

Keith Anderson

Saffo

Saffo – Johann Simon Mayr's first opera seria success at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice

In 1787 Johann Simon Mayr left his native Bavaria and, with the financial backing of Baron Thomas de Bassus and his son Dominikus, made his way first to Poschiavo, then to Bergamo. There he sought out Carlo Lenzi, then *maestro di cappella* at the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, as his teacher. In 1788 a grant enabled him to move on to Venice, where he studied composition with Ferdinando Bertoni, who introduced him to the important institutions and people in the city.

Operatic performances were an integral part of Italian cultural life. After the largest and most important Venetian opera house, San Benedetto, burned down in 1774 and the management association and owners of the land failed to come to an agreement about rebuilding it, the management decided to build a theatre of its own. There were already six opera houses at that time and the authorities initially refused to build another, but then ended up doing so nevertheless, so if the new opera house was to succeed, not just musically, but also economically, its programming had to set it apart from its competitors.

This it did. Its name already departed from the norm. Whereas, until then, it had been usual to name an opera house after its owner or the neighbouring "parocchia", the new house was named after a mythical creature, whose choice could not have been more apt: Gran Teatro La Fenice. Like the mythical bird, the phoenix, it arose from the ashes and would, in the future, do so again. It wooed its audience with numerous premières and the most important singers of the day. Thus between 1792, when La Fenice opened, and 1814, the year of the Vienna Congress, for example, it staged 52 premières. According to legend, Mayr played violin in the orchestra at La Fenice for a time.

After just two years, the Teatro La Fenice was one of the most famous opera houses in Europe. Mayr had the good fortune to have his first opera scheduled for Carnival. This period was the most important in the operatic year. Theatre-goers attended performances wearing costumes and masks. This obviously made going to the theatre more attractive, drove up audience numbers and made a significant contribution to an establishment's profits.

Mayr's *opera seria Saffo* was first heard on 18th February

1794 at the Teatro La Fenice. It was repeated on 19th and 26th February of that same year. *Saffo* was Mayr's first opera, and its success helped him progress as an operatic composer. The performance was given to a full house, and the audience response was enthusiastic. The report in *Il Nuovo Postiglione. Novelle del Mondo*, for example, speaks of a "grandiose spectacle and sustained applause".

The singers for the first performance were Marianna Vinci (Saffo) and Matteo Babini (Alceo). The role of Faone was sung by the castrato Girolamo Crescentini, who was enjoying huge success in Venice at that time. Mayr remained faithful to the practice that had been customary for *opera seria* of composing the male lead for a male soprano. Nowadays, these so-called "trouser rôles" are mostly sung by female sopranos.

The early years of Teatro La Fenice had a decisive influence on Mayr; he composed seven *opere serie* in just eight years (1794-1801). Just a year after the première of *Saffo*, he received his second commission for La Fenice and composed *Lodoiska*.

In his oratorios *Jacob a fugians* (1791) [Naxos 8.573237] and *Sisara* (1793) and his cantata *Femio* (1791), Mayr had already tried out the prescribed forms of contemporary opera which, around 1800, consisted in alternating arias, *secco* and accompanied recitative and instrumental numbers. Mayr, however, varies this scheme in an attempt to achieve dramatic coherence. While an *opera seria* is generally divided into three acts, *Saffo* occupies two. Identifying Mayr's stylistic traits as an opera composer vis-à-vis those of his competitors is somewhat problematical, because relatively little of the enormous output of new operas has hitherto been made accessible, but it does seem as though the up-and-coming young composer set out to surprise his audience and win them over with carefully planned and striking musical solutions in his first opera.

The four-part *Sinfonia (Adagio maestoso – Allegro – Andantino – Allegro)* already follows neither the Italian nor the French pattern and displays contrapuntal combinations that may have been inspired by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's '*Prague*' *Symphony, K 504*, or the overture to *The Magic Flute*.

The opera's accompanied recitatives are worked out in detail, mostly with string accompaniment, occasionally supported by woodwind, the *Affekt* (emotion) being carefully

brought out in each instance. This is also true of numbers such as Saffo's opening aria, where the character's inner agitation is mirrored in the image of a turbulent ocean. Among Mayr's theoretical writings is a treatise on instrumentation, produced in his later years, which would merit rediscovery. It shows how much thought he devoted to the musical realisation of text and the targeted use of precisely the woodwind instruments.

Other delicate "registrations" worthy of note include the wind band-style accompaniment of the recitative *Nume del ciel* (CD 2, [3]) and the supportive accompanying string figures of the ensuing duet *Langue d'amor* (CD 2, [4]), and Saffo's aria *Soave, dolce*, (CD 2, [9]) where a pair of oboes give expression and colour to the heroine's amorous

Synopsis

CD 1

Act One

Saffo (Sappho), Alceo (Alcaeus), Faone (Phaon) and the Chorus of Priests assemble in front of the temple in the Greek city of Leucadia. The Pythia, or High Priestess, alias Amfizione, is to pronounce an oracle inspired by Apollo ([2]). Faone, a huntsman from Lesbos, sacrifices game he has shot, hoping for relief from the torments of his love ([3]-[4]). Alceo is the leader of the group of Greek poets ([5]). He presents himself as an worshipper of Cupid and Venus ([6]), but is secretly in love with Saffo. Announced by the Pythia ([7]), Saffo enters to an instrumental introduction ([8]). She laments her sufferings and her lovesick longing. The Pythia, or priestess, seeks to comfort her ([9]). For a moment, Saffo appears to be comforted ([10]), though she compares her torment to an ocean wave whipped up by the wind until it towers aloft before breaking ([11]). The Pythia suddenly shows a different side of herself: She is hoping for a fresh victim ([12]-[13]). Alceo meets Saffo and confesses his love to her; he wishes to save her from the disaster that threatens ([14]-[16]). *Torni la pace al cor* (May peace return to your heart, [17]). He reports that Faone is in Leucadia visiting the temple. This only increases Saffo's feeling of disquiet ([18]). Faone's friends strike up a chorus in an attempt to cheer up their melancholy associate ([19]). But Faone is filled with pain as he recalls his dead wife, Cirene ([20]). Saffo and Faone meet by chance. Faone once left Saffo and bestowed his affections on Cirene. Saffo still clearly loves Faone; he, of course, is not interested ([21]). He curses his fate

torment. There are also striking sound effects in the male chorus *Dormi, riposa* (CD 2, [25]), which is set into a recitative in several sections and gives vivid expression to the vision Faone sees in his dream. Finally, it is worth mentioning the effective construction of the finale to Act One, *Amar crudel* (CD 1, [25]), where the chorus provides the momentum.

Perhaps Johann Simon Mayr's musical achievement was not least to combine innovations from the so-called "Viennese School" of Classicism with the Italian ideal of *bel canto*, aided by his particular sensitivity to formal proportion and dramatic development.

Marion Enghart

Translation: Sue Baxter

and dreams of finding Cirene in Hades ([22]). For Saffo, Faone's rejection is like an oracle: she contemplates her own death, planning to jump off the cliff into the sea ([23]). The priests urge Saffo, Faone and Alceo to submit to the Pythia's guidance ([24]-[25]).

CD 2

Act Two

Inside the temple. Led in by a processional chorus ([1]), Saffo, Alceo and Faone make their prayers to Apollo, asking that he hear them, grant their wishes ([2]-[3]) and mediate in their unhappiness. Laodamia and Euricleo try to console Saffo ([5]-[6]) and ([11]) out of compassion ([10]). But they are only fleetingly successful ([7]). Saffo, of course, is envisaging death: *Soave, dolce, cara è la morte quando ella è termine d'un rio dolor* (Death is sweet and pleasant when it puts an end to terrible pain, [8]-[9]). The Pythia appears before the assembled people, makes a brief, enigmatic utterance, and quickly withdraws ([12]). Her appearance is interpreted differently by the various protagonists, each of them seeing it as confirmation of their own view of things ([13]). Alceo is tormented by his ardent love for Saffo, but would be prepared to renounce her in favour of Faone ([13]-[14]). *Ah tutti voi volete tutti stracciarmi il cor* (Ah, all of you wish to tear my heart in pieces, he declaims in his aria ([15]). Saffo then threatens Faone with her demise: *Ma ingrato, trema, lo stesso Apollo, egli medesimo sia il Nume ancor della vendetta mia* (But tremble, ungrateful man, Apollo himself will be the god of my revenge, [16]). But he is wrapped up in the shadows of the past ([17]-[18]). The Pythia endeavours to lend support to Saffo's dark thoughts ([19]-[20]) and ([23]) and to

prepare her death ([23]), while Saffo seems reconciled to her fate ([23]) and, in a state of apparent delusion, takes leave of the world in a touching song: *Pallida morte, vieni* (Come, pale death, [22]). Faone, too, succumbs to a depression that is close to death ([24]), standing alone and dreaming about his dead wife Cirene: *Dormi, riposa* (Sleep, take your rest, [25]). Furies seem to encircle him, Cirene appears and asks him to take pity

on Saffo ([26]). Faone awakens, torn between various emotions ([27]). Meanwhile Saffo climbs the Leucadian cliffs, intending to plunge into the deep, but Faone resolves to save her ([28]). The final chorus of rejoicing proclaims the lovers' union ([29]).

Franz Hauk

Translation: Sue Baxter



Andrea Lauren Brown

Born in Wilmington/Delaware, the soprano Andrea Lauren Brown holds a Master of Music degree in Voice Pedagogy and Performance from Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey, and a Bachelor of Music degree from West Chester University, in Pennsylvania, where she graduated *summa cum laude*. She was a prize-winner at the International Summer Academy of the Mozarteum University of Salzburg in 2002 and won second place at the 2003 ARD International Music Competition in Munich. She has sung in many of the most important theatres and festivals of Europe, performing both opera and concert repertoire in at least twenty different countries, in collaboration with leading conductors, and in 2006 took the principal rôle of Pamina in Bernhard Lang's opera *I Hate Mozart*. With a repertoire ranging from the baroque to the contemporary, she has a number of successful recordings to her credit, including Thomas Larcher's *Ixxu*, Thomas Hengelbrock's *Dixit Dominus* of Handel and the *Symphonie Sacrae* of Schütz. www.andrea-brown.de.



Photo: Werner Kohneltisch

Markus Schäfer

The tenor Markus Schäfer studied singing and church music in Karlsruhe and Düsseldorf with Armand McLane. He was a prize-winner in Berlin and Milan and made his début at the Zurich Opera Studio, followed by engagements at the Hamburg State Opera and the Düsseldorf Oper am Rhein. His subsequent career has brought appearances in major theatres and concert halls in Europe and America, collaborating with distinguished conductors and a number of award-winning recordings. He teaches singing at the Hanover Music and Theatre Hochschule. www.tenor-markus-schaefer.de



Jaewon Yun

Born in Seoul (South Korea), Jaewon Yun graduated in singing at the Seoul National University. Since 2012 she has studied at the Munich Music and Theatre Hochschule under Frieder Lang. Her rôles have included Hänsel (*Hänsel und Gretel*), Flora Bervoix (*La Traviata*), and the première of Ujong Choe's *Francisca* at the Sejong Culture Centre. Her awards include first prize at the Hoseo University Music Competition, third prize in the 2010 CBS Music Competition as well as a Cheryl Studer Scholarship from the Berlin Summer University of the Arts. In March 2013 she sang the part of Adelasia in Simon Mayr's opera *Adelasia ed Aleramo* under Andreas Spering, in the production by Tilman Knabe.



Marie-Sande Papenmeyer

The mezzo-soprano Marie-Sande Papenmeyer had her initial vocal training at the Carl Maria von Weber Musikhochschule in Dresden. Since 2010 she has continued under Peter Anton Ling at the Hanover Musikhochschule and in the *Lieder* class of Jan Philip Schulze. She has also worked under Cheryl Studer, Christian Immeler, Juliane Banse and Olaf Bär. In 2009 she won the Stadt Perleberg Prize in the Lotte Lehmann Week. She has sung in a number of operatic productions and concerts. Since 2012 she has been a member of the Hanover Young Opera Ensemble.

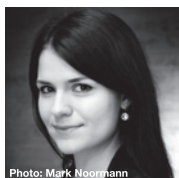


Photo: Mark Noormann

Katharina Ruckgaber

The soprano Katharina Ruckgaber was born in Munich, completing her studies in 2014 at the Music and Theatre Hochschule there and at the Bavarian August Everding Theatre Academy. She studied singing with Andreas Schmidt and Helmut Deutsch and in 2014 made her Frankfurt Opera debut as Euridice in Telemann's *Orpheus* and at the Munich Gärtnerplatz in the leading female rôle in the première of Wilfried Hiller's *Der Flaschengeist*. In 2015 she made her debut at the Berlin Konzerthaus Berlin as Fennimore in Weill's *Der Silbersee*. She has been awarded a number of scholarships, and since 2014 has been a member of the Frankfurt Opera Studio. www.katharinaruckgaber.com



Daniel Preis

The tenor Daniel Preis hails from Donaueschingen in the Schwarzwald-Baar-Kreis. After school, he studied German and History, changing to vocal studies at the Institute for Music at Osnabrück. In autumn 2013 he joined the Hanover Music, Theatre and Media Hochschule, studying under Markus Schäfer. Daniel Preis has appeared in various productions and concerts.



Photo: Kathrin Eberhardt

Franz Hauk

Born in Neuburg an der Donau in 1955, Franz Hauk studied church and school music, with piano and organ, at the Munich Musikhochschule and in Salzburg. In 1988 he took his doctorate with a thesis on church music in Munich at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Since 1982 he has served as organist at Ingolstadt Minster, and since 1995 also as choirmaster. He has given concerts in Europe and the United States and made a number of recordings. Since October 2002 he has taught in the historical performance and church music department of the Munich Music and Theatre Hochschule, while winning a reputation for his research and the performances he has directed. He founded the Simon Mayr Choir in 2003, and in 2013 was awarded the German Order of Merit.



Bavarian State Opera Chorus

The Bavarian State Opera Chorus has a long and distinguished history and appears in a wide repertoire, sharing with the Bavarian State Orchestra and Bavarian State Ballet a repertoire of some 350 opera and ballet performances annually at the Munich National Theatre, the Prince Regent Theatre and the Old Residence Theatre. Sören Eckhoff has been director since 2010, with Stellario Fagone as his deputy.



Simon Mayr Chorus • Concerto de Bassus

The Simon Mayr Chorus was established by Franz Hauk in 2003. The repertoire of the choir includes works from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Special emphasis is laid on authentic historical performance and on the promotion of music by Simon Mayr at the highest cultural level. Members of the choir are vocal students from the Munich Hochschule für Music und Theater and singers selected from Ingolstadt and the region. The chorus and the ensemble, newly re-named Concerto de Bassus, with players drawn from leading German orchestras, have recorded a number of works by Simon Mayr for Naxos.

Johann Simon Mayr (1763-1845)

Simon Mayr wurde am 14. Juni 1763 als Sohn eines Schulmeisters im niederbayerischen Mendorf bei Kelheim geboren. Schon früh zeigte er musikalisches Talent. Mayr war Schüler am Jesuitenkolleg in Ingolstadt, bevor er an der Universität Theologie studierte. Dabei zeigte er weiterhin beachtliche Vielseitigkeit als Musiker. Seine ernsthafte musikalische Ausbildung begann gleichwohl erst 1787, als ein Gönner, der sein Talent erkannt hatte, ihn mit nach Italien nahm. Dort studierte er von 1789 an bei Carlo Lenzi, dem musikalischen Leiter der Kathedrale zu Bergamo. Ein anderer Gönner ermöglichte ihm eine Zeit bei F. Bertoni in Venedig. Mayrs frühe Kompositionsaufträge waren hauptsächlich geistliche Oratorien, doch 1794 wurde in Venedig seine Oper Saffo aufgeführt. Seine Hinwendung zur Oper hatte viel mit der Ermutigung zu tun, die ihm Niccolò Piccinni (1728–1800) und Peter von Winter (1754–1825) zuteil werden ließen.

Weitere Opern folgten: für Venedig und dann die Mailänder Scala wie auch für andere italienische Theater. Auch die Zahl der Aufführungen im Ausland nahm zu. 1802 trat Mayr die Nachfolge Lenzis als maestro di capella an der Kathedrale S. Maria Maggiore in Bergamo an. Drei Jahre später wurde er Direktor der Chorschule an der Kathedrale; diese Position behielt er bis zu seinem Tod 1845. Als Lehrer gewann er großes Ansehen, besonders bei seinem in Bergamo geborenen Schüler Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848). Mayr tat viel, um die Komponisten der Wiener Klassik in Italien bekannt zu machen. Sein eigener Stil spiegelt das ganz im italienischen Kontext wider. Er war als Komponist von fast 70 Opern zwischen 1794 und 1824 und über 600 geistlichen Werken außerordentlich fruchtbar.

Keith Anderson

Deutsche Fassung: Thomas Theise

Saffo

Saffo – Johann Simon Mayrs erster Erfolg einer Opera seria am Teatro La Fenice in Venedig

Gefördert von Baron Thomas de Bassus und dessen Sohn Dominikus verließ Johann Simon Mayr 1787 seine bayerische Heimat. Er wandte sich zunächst nach Poschiamo, dann nach Bergamo. Dort suchte er den Unterricht von Carlo Lenzi, dem damaligen Kapellmeister der Kirche Santa Maria Maggiore. Ein Stipendium ermöglichte 1788 ihm den Wechsel nach Venedig, wo Ferdinando Bertoni ihn in der Komposition unterwies und ihn mit den wichtigen Institutionen und Personen der Lagunenstadt vertraut machte.

Opernaufführungen waren in Italien fester Bestandteil des kulturellen Lebens. Nachdem das wichtigste und größte Opernhaus in Venedig, San Benedetto, 1774 abgebrannt war und sich die Betreibergesellschaft und die Grundstückseigentümer nicht auf einen gemeinsamen Wiederaufbau einigen konnten, beschloss die Betreibergesellschaft, ein eigenes Theater zu errichten. Da es bereits sechs Opernhäuser zu dieser Zeit gab und die Regierung sich zunächst weigerte, ein weiteres zu errichten, dies aber schließlich trotzdem tat, musste sich das neue Opernhaus in seiner programmatischen Ausrichtung deutlich von seinen Mitbewerbern unterscheiden, um erfolgreich zu sein; und das nicht nur musikalisch, sondern auch wirtschaftlich.

Und das tat es! Bereits bei der Namensgebung ging man neue Wege. War es bis dato üblich, das Opernhaus nach dem Besitzer oder der benachbarten „parocchia“ zu benennen, erhielt das neue Opernhaus den Namen eines Fabelwesens, der treffender nicht hätte gewählt werden können: Gran Teatro La Fenice. Wie der Fabelvogel Phönix ist es aus Asche entstanden und wird auch in seiner Zukunft wieder aus Asche neu entstehen. Mit zahlreichen Premieren und den bedeutenden Sängern der damaligen Zeit wurde gewonnen. So fanden beispielsweise zwischen 1792 – der Eröffnung des Fenice – bis 1814 – dem Jahr des Wiener Kongresses – 52 Aufführungen statt. Mayr soll im Orchester des Fenice zeitweise die Violine gespielt haben, erzählt eine Legende.

Bereits nach zwei Jahren zählte das Teatro La Fenice zu den berühmtesten Opernhäusern in Europa. Mayr hatte das Glück, dass seine erste Oper für die Karnevalszeit bestimmt war. Die Karnevalszeit war die wichtigste Spielzeit im Opernjahr. Das Publikum besuchte die Aufführungen maskiert. Das steigerte natürlich die Attraktivität des Theaterbesuchs, förderte den Publikumszulauf und trug somit wesentlich zur Rendite eines

Theaterbetriebs bei.

Mayrs Opera seria *Saffo* erklang erstmals am 18. Februar 1794 im Teatro La Fenice. Wiederholungen folgten am 19. und 26. Februar des Jahres. *Saffo* ist Mayrs Operndebüt. Der Erfolg dieses Werkes beförderte Mayrs Opernkariere. Die Aufführung fand vor vollem Haus statt, das Publikum reagierte begeistert. So berichtet z.B. *Il Nuovo Postiglione. Novelle del Mondo* von einem grandiosen Schauspiel und langanhaltendem Applaus.

Die Sänger der Uraufführung waren Marianna Vinci (Saffo) und Matteo Babini (Alceo). Die Rolle des Faone übernahm der Kastrat Girolamo Crescentini, der zur damaligen Zeit in Venedig große Triumphe feierte. Mayr blieb der bisherigen Gepflogenheit der Opera seria treu, die männliche Hauptrolle für einen Sopranisten zu komponieren. Heute werden diese sogenannten „Hosenrollen“ meistens von weiblichen Sopranistinnen gesungen.

Mayr prägte die Anfangszeit des Teatro La Fenice ganz entscheidend: Er komponierte sieben Opernserie im Zeitraum von nur acht Jahren (1794 – 1801). Ein Jahr nach der Uraufführung von *Saffo* erhielt er bereits seinen zweiten Opernauftrag am Fenice und komponierte die Oper *Lodoiska*.

Mit den Oratorien *Jacob a fugiens* (1791) [Naxos 8.573237] und *Sisara* (1793), auch mit der Kantate *Femio* (1791) hatte Mayr bereits den zeitgenössischen Formenkodex der Oper erprobt, der um 1800 aus dem Wechsel von Arie, Recitativo secco und accompagnato sowie Instrumentalstücken bestand. Mayr variiert dieses Schema allerdings im Sinne einer dramatischen Durchformung. Ist die Handlung einer Opera seria generell in drei Akte eingeteilt, so spielt *Saffo* in zwei Akten. Stilistische Indizien im Vergleich zu konkurrierenden Opernkomponisten herauszuarbeiten erscheint eher problematisch, weil das riesige Repertoire an neuen Opern heute erst in vergleichsweise wenigen Fällen erschlossen ist. Doch scheint es, als wenn der junge und aufstrebende Tonsetzer das Publikum in seinem Opern-Erstling mit sorgfältig geplanten, eindrucksvollen musikalischen Lösungen überraschen und für sich gewinnen wollte.

Bereits die vierteilig (Adagio maestoso – Allegro – Andantino – Allegro) angelegte einleitende Sinfonia folgt weder dem italienischen, noch dem französischen Typus und zeigt kontrapunktische Kombinationen, die vielleicht von Werken wie der *Prager Sinfonie* KV 504 oder der Ouvertüre zur *Zauberflöte* von Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart angeregt wurden.

Die Accompagnati der Oper sind ausführlich formuliert, meist

streicherbegleitet, bisweilen unterstützt von den Holzbläsern – der jeweilige Affekt wird sorgsam herausgearbeitet. Dies gilt auch für Nummern wie die Eingangsarie der Saffo, bei der die innere Erregung der Solistin gespiegelt wird im Bild des aufgewühlten Meeres. An theoretischen Schriften verfasste Mayr in späteren Jahren eine Instrumentationslehre, die einer Wiederentdeckung wert wäre und die zeigt, wie eingehend er sich mit der textlichen Umsetzung und dem gezielten Einsatz gerade der Holzbläser auseinandersetzt.

An delikaten „Registrierungen“ seien noch hervorgehoben das im Stile einer Harmoniemusik von Bläsern gestützte Rezitativ „Nume del ciel“ (CD 2, [3]) mit dem anschließenden Duett „Langue d’amor“ (CD 2, [4]), wo die Streicher mit begleitenden Figuren sekundieren, und die Arie der Saffo „Soave, dolce“ (CD

Inhalt der Oper

CD 1

Erster Akt

Im ersten Akt versammeln sich Saffo, Alceo, Faone und der Chor der Priester vor dem Tempel in der griechischen Stadt Leukas. Pythia alias Amfizione, die Oberpriesterin, soll ein Orakel des Apollo verkünden ([2]). Faone, ein Jäger aus Lesbos, opfert erlegtes Wild und erhofft sich die Linderung seiner Liebespein ([3]-[4]). Alceo leitet die Gruppe griechischer Poeten ([5]). Er zeigt sich als ein Verehrer von Amor und Venus ([6]), liebt indes heimlich Saffo. Angekündigt von Pythia ([7]) und instrumental eingeführt, tritt Saffo auf ([8]). Sie klagt über ihre Leiden und ihre Liebessehnsucht. Pythia, die Priesterin, sucht sie zu trösten ([9]). Saffo wirkt einen Moment beruhigt ([10]), freilich, sie vergleicht ihre Pein mit einer Meereswoge, die der Wind gegen den Himmel drückt und bricht ([11]). Pythia zeigt plötzlich ein anderes Gesicht: Sie hofft auf ein neues Opfer ([12]-[13]). Alceo begegnet Saffo, gesteht ihr seine Liebe und will sie vor drohendem Unheil retten ([14]-[16]): „Torni la pace al cor“ – „Möge der Frieden in das Herz zurückkehren.“ ([17]). Er meldet, dass Faone in Leukas sei und den Tempel besuche. Saffos innere Unruhe wird dadurch noch gesteigert ([18]). Faones Freunde stimmen ein Chorlied an, sie versuchen den Betrübten aufzuheitern ([19]). Doch Faone denkt schmerzzerfüllt an seine verstorbene Gattin Cirene ([20]). Saffo und Faone treffen zusammen. Faone hatte einst Saffo verlassen und sich Cirene zugewandt. Saffo zeigt gegenüber Faone noch immer Gefühle der Liebe,

2, [9]), bei der zwei Oboen das Liebesleid der Protagonistin ausdrucksvoll abtönen. Aparte Klangwirkungen zeigt auch der in ein mehrteiliges Rezitativ eingebaute Männerchor „Dormi, riposa“ (CD 2, [25]), der die Traumvision des Faone plastisch untermalt. Schließlich sei noch das wirkungsvoll aufgebaute, vom Chor befeuerte Finale zum ersten Akt „Amor crude!“ (CD 1, [25]) erwähnt.

Vielleicht besteht Johann Simon Mayrs musikgeschichtliches Verdienst nicht zuletzt darin, Errungenschaften der sogenannten „Wiener Klassik“ mit einem italienischen Belcanto-Ideal zu verbinden. Unterstützt wurde er dabei von einem besonderen Gespür für formale Proportionen und für dramatische Entwicklungen.

Marion Enghart

Faone freilich will davon nichts wissen ([21]). Er hadert mit seinem Schicksal und träumt davon, Cirene im Hades zu begegnen ([22]). Für Saffo ist Faones Ablehnung wie ein bereits ausgesprochenes Orakel: Sie sinnt nun auf den eigenen Tod und will sich vom Felsen ins Meer stürzen ([23]). Die Priester drängen Saffo, Faone und Alceo, sich dem Wahlspruch der Pythia zu unterwerfen ([24]-[25]).

CD 2

Zweiter Akt

Der zweite Akt spielt im Inneren des Tempels. Eingeleitet vom Chor der Theorie ([1]) erheben Saffo, Alceo und Faone ihre Gebete zu Apollo, er möge sie erhören, ihre Wünsche erfüllen ([2]-[3]) und ihr Unglück schlichten ([4]). Laodamia und Euricleo spüren Mitleid ([10]) und versuchen Saffo zu trösten ([5]-[6], [11]). Dies gelingt nur einen Augenblick ([7]). Saffo freilich sieht ihren Tod vor Augen: „Soave, dolce, cara è la morte quando ella è termine d’un rio dolor.“ – „Lieblich, sanft, teuer ist der Tod, wenn er das Ende eines schrecklichen Schmerzes ist.“ ([8]-[9]). Die Pythia erscheint vor der Menge des versammelten Volkes. Sie spricht rätselhafte, knappe Worte und zieht sich rasch wieder zurück ([12]). Ihr Auftritt wird von den Anwesenden unterschiedlich gedeutet, jeder der Protagonisten sieht seine eigene Vision bestätigt ([13]). Alceo quält seine flammende Liebe zu Saffo, er wäre aber bereit, zugunsten von Faone zu entsagen ([13]-[14]). In seiner Arie deklamiert er: „Ah tutti voi volete tutti stracciarmi il cor“ – „Ach, ihr alle wollt mein Herz zerfetzen.“ ([15]). Saffo droht nun Faone mit ihrem Untergang: „Ma ingrato, tremi, lo stesso Apollo, egli medesimo sia il Nume ancor della

vendetta mia.“ – „Aber zittere, Undankbarer, Apollo selbst, er selber, soll auch der Gott meiner Rache sein.“ (16). Faone wiederum ist in die Schatten der Vergangenheit eingesponnen (17-18). Pythia sucht Saffo in ihren finsternen Gedanken zu unterstützen (19-20, 23) und dessen Abgang vorzubereiten (23), während sich Saffo in sein Schicksal zu fügen scheint (21) und selbst wie im Wahn mit einem anrührenden Gesang von der Welt Abschied nimmt: „Pallida morte, vieni“ – „Komm, blasser Tod“ (22). Auch Faone verfällt in todesnahe Depression (24), er steht allein und träumt von

seiner verstorbene Gattin Cirene: „Dormi, riposa“ – „Schlafe, erhole dich“ (25). Furien scheinen ihn zu umzingeln, Cirene tritt auf und bittet, mit Saffo Mitleid zu haben (26). Faone erwacht, hin- und hergerissen von seinen Gefühlen (27). Währenddessen steigt Saffo auf den Felsen von Leucas, um sich in die Tiefe zu stürzen. Doch Faone entschließt sich, Saffo zu retten (28). Der jubelnde Schlußchor verkündet das Zusammenfinden der beiden Liebenden (29).

Franz Hauk

Also available



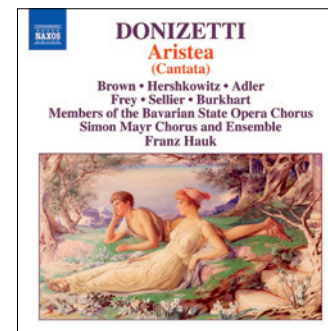
8.573065



8.573236



8.660198-99



8.573360

No one did more to combine in his operas the innovations of the Viennese classical composers, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, with the Italian ideal of *bel canto* than Johann Simon Mayr, the Bavarian composer who rose to fame in Italy. His opera *Saffo*, first performed in 1794, dates from his years in Venice. Not only was it his first opera but it was premièred at the Teatro La Fenice where it was enthusiastically received. It is full of surprising and striking elements, with a strong musical realisation of the text, supportive string and woodwind writing and vivid solo and choral effects. Set by the Rock of Leucas, from which unsuccessful lovers leap to their deaths, the opera deals with the poetess Sappho's unhappy love for Phaon, finally resolved in a happy ending.



Johann Simon
MAYR
(1763-1845)
Saffo

Playing Time
2:01:24



Dramma per musica in due atti • Libretto by Antonio Simeone Sografi

Saffo (Sappho) Andrea Lauren Brown, Soprano
Faone (Phaon) Jaewon Yun, Soprano
Alceo (Alcaeus) Markus Schäfer, Tenor
Amfizione (The Pythia) Marie Sande Papenmeyer, Mezzo-soprano
Laodamia Katharina Ruckgaber, Soprano
Euricleo (Euricles) Daniel Preis, Tenor

WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING

Members of the Bavarian State Opera Chorus

Simon Mayr Chorus • Concerto de Bassus

Theona Gubba-Chkeidze, Concertmaster

Franz Hauk, Harpsichord and Conductor



CD 1	1	Sinfonia	5:27	CD 2	1-29	Act Two	60:28
	2-25	Act One	55:29				

Recorded in the Kongregationssaal, Neuburg, Germany, 25th-31st August 2014

Producer, Engineer and Editor: Sebastian Riederer • Booklet notes: Marion Englhart, Keith Anderson and Franz Hauk
 Cover collage: Paolo Zeccara • Edition by Marion Englhart • Sponsors: Simon Mayr-Chor, Freunde der Musik am Münster,
 Bezirk Oberbayern, Gemeinnützige Wohnungsbau Gesellschaft Ingolstadt GmbH, Stadt Neuburg, Margarete Baronin de Bassus
 The libretto and English and German translations can be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti/660367.htm