

## Giacomo Puccini – Quartetto in D” per archi

Raluca TONESCU (IRIMIA)<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *Giacomo Puccini’s works for a string quartet are: three minutes, the Crisantemi elegy and the String Quartet in D Major, which is the only complete piece we have. This work has four parts and was composed between 1881 and 1883, when Puccini was studying at Milan Conservatory. This quartet was first published in its complete version by the Italian publishing house Casa Ricordi.*

*All four parts of the Quartet were discovered in different places, either as manuscripts or as transcriptions for other chamber works made by his younger brother, Michele Puccini. The fact that all these parts were put together in one piece has been subject of thorough research, of which Dieter Schickling is the most important. In his volume about Puccini, The works of Giacomo Puccini. A complete catalogue, he describes all the composer’s manuscripts in detail.*

Key-words: *Giacomo Puccini, quartetto in D.*

### 1. Introduction

String Quartet's history indicates the first signs of the occurrence of the Quartet as genre in the compositions of Giuseppe Tartini and Alessandro Scarlatti, as sonatas a quarto from their creations, VII-VIII century (Bughici 1978, 88). If Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) is for the Symphony and for piano sonatas a guide on the way of completion, for the String Quartet he is the creator. The structure of the beginning Quartets is five parts: allegro-adagio-allegro-minuet- minuet- allegro finale, and after only a few years, starting with op. 3 Quartets, Haydn has completed the 4 parts structure becoming the classical cycle in this genre.

Although Haydn represents the beginnings and the foundations of Classicism, his works begin in the spirit of baroque thinking, underlie the Viennese thinking,

---

<sup>1</sup> Transilvania University of Brasov, raluca.tonescu@unitbv.ro

stating at the end of the life romantic criteria that only Beethoven has mastered and then surrendered it to the next stage of Music's history, Romance.

Around the same time of Classicism, Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805) has composed over 90 Quartets, which do not follow exactly the classical structure imposed by Haydn.

For these reasons, in Italy one cannot talk about tradition in the field of Chamber music. A few Quartets of Mozart inspiration as per Rossini's six sonatas a quattro (1804), 19 Quartets in classical divertimento in Donizetti's case (1817-1836), then the three string Quartets of Ferdinando Giorgetti (1851-1856), Giovanni Pacini six string Quartets, (1858-1865) and Antonio Bazzini five string Quartets (1864-1892)–(The New Grove Dictionary/String quartet/4) directed towards the Viennese Classicism and the compositions of Mendelssohn, which are not making quite a career in Chamber creations of the time, they however succeeded to convince the composers dominating the Italian Opera stage in the adventitious approach or not of this genre.

## 2. Objectives

The first dedicated work that what will come into the musical literature for the string Quartets is the only Quartet composed by Giuseppe Verdi in 1873 in *mi* minor, soon after the completion of *Aida*. It is an escape from his Opera's creation, considering that the next composition will be the Requiem. He does give a special attention to the first audition taking place in a private setting in the company of a few friends. "It's hard to say whether the Quartet were successful or not." All I know makes me admit that [...] is a Quartet (Constantinescu 2009,104). The public premiere, after the work was published by Ricordi, was held in Milano 1876.

Giacomo Puccini will listen the premiere of *Aida* Opera, and Verdi becomes an example to be followed in the works that he would have written. Puccini's style is considered by some musicologists of the time as being superficial, shallow, but although attracted to Verdi's style of treating voices, Wagner will have strong influences on composition thinking of Puccini by approaching the orchestral writing, adapting certain instrumental and timbre combinations at different dramatic moments.

In turn, the Giacomo Puccini also offers to music's history a dedicated work within the Chamber bands repertoire. *Crisantemi* is the elegy composed in 1890 which did not remain a simple manuscript, but it is very commonly found in both the string Quartet repertoire (original), and in that of the chamber orchestras

(transcription). Puccini's compositions also include the 3 *Minuetti*, also published by Ricordi at that time.

*The new Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* indicates the fact that Puccini also composed a String Quartet, but described as unpublished (5) Puccini, Giacomo. Works/instrumental). What leads to this claim is that Puccini had not left any manuscript to retrieve a complete String Quartet in four parts, as the Quartets of the 19th century were structured and as Verdi has offered it as an example. The four parts of the Quartet were found in different places, but never put together into a score describing a Quartet; never until the year 2001, when also the publishing house Ricordi published the premiere of QUARTETTO IN RE PER ARCHI.

Giovanni Ricordi was a violinist, leader of a small Theatre Orchestra of Milan, called Fiando. In parallel, he copies scores and undertakes as copyist at a time to the Carcano Theatre in 1804, and in 1807 at the Lentasio Theatre. After he specialized at the publishing house Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig, he returned to Milan and in 1808 marks the beginning of the work of the renowned Ricordi publishing house, along with Felice Festa. The publishing house was Ricordi's family affair, handed down from father to son (Giovanni, Giulio, Tito). (The new Grove Dictionary. Ricordi/history).

Taking into account that Giovanni Ricordi and his son Tito were contemporary with Puccini and thinking to their close friendship, I deem to believe that the purpose of the publishing house was printing this single string quartet of Giacomo Puccini.

Why are there doubts regarding the authenticity of this Quartet? Because Puccini's manuscripts were very hard to decipher. The copyist of Ricordi publishing house at that time has earned the right to be raised a statue, as the hardest task has been attributed to him by far, to edit the works of Puccini.

There are several supporting acts about the fact that Puccini was working on this String Quartet in *re major* between 1881 and 1883, years in which he studied at the Conservatory of Milan. In one of Puccini's letters addressed to his mother on March 11, 1881, he tells that he needed to write a String Quartet for the class with Bazzini (Marchetti 1973,27). Antonio Bazzini, violinist, composer and teacher, has in its list of compositions five string quartets and he finds appropriate for the composition technique of his student Puccini, to start with creating a Quartet.

The compositions that could be a source of inspiration for Puccini in terms of the period of creation, are the Quartets written by Grieg (1877-1878), Borodin (1874-1881), Dvorak (1881) and Glazunov (1882) and last but not least Verdi (1872) considering the fact that the entire creation of Verdi has inspired Puccini to write most of his masterpieces.

Table 1

*String Quartets written in the same period with Puccini's*

COMPOSER	PART I	PART II	PART III	PART IV
G. Verdi ( <i>E minor</i> )	Allegro ( <i>E minor</i> )	Andantino ( <i>do major</i> )	Prestissimo <i>E minor</i> )	Scherzo-Fuga ( <i>E major</i> )
E. Grieg ( <i>sol minor</i> )	Allegro molto ed adagio ( <i>sol minor</i> )	Romanze- andantino. ( <i>B flat major</i> )	Intermezzo. Allegro molto marcato-Piu vivace. Scherzando ( <i>sol major</i> )	Finale. Lento- Presto of saltarello ( <i>sol major</i> )
A. Borodin ( <i>A major</i> )	Moderato Allegro ( <i>A major</i> )	Andante con moto ( <i>F sharp minor</i> )	Scherzo Prestissimo ( <i>F major</i> )	Andante-Allegro risoluto ( <i>A major</i> )
A. Dvorak ( <i>F major</i> )	Allegro ma non troppo ( <i>F major</i> )	Lento ( <i>D minor</i> )	Molto vivace ( <i>F major</i> )	Final. Vivace ma non tropo ( <i>F major</i> )
A. Glazunov ( <i>D major</i> )	Andante moderato ( <i>D major</i> )	Vivace ( <i>A major</i> )	Andante ( <i>do sharp minor</i> )	Moderato ( <i>D major</i> )
G. Puccini ( <i>D major</i> )	Allegro moderato ( <i>D major</i> )	Adagio ( <i>A major</i> )	Scherzo. Allegro vivo ( <i>A minor</i> )	Allegro vivo ( <i>D major</i> )

These quartets chosen as being the closest to the timing of the composition of *Puccini's D major*, have in common firstly the construction of a classical Quartet form structured in four parts. Comparing the Quartet's parties in terms of tempo indications, there are some metronome units distance between ones to the others (excepting the Glazunov's *D major* that reverses part II with part III).

The first movements have Allegro, Moderato indication, or shades there of (ma non tropo or molto), or combinations thereof Allegro-Moderato or Moderato-Allegro. The secondary parts are slow parts which start from Lento, Andante indication to Andantino. The Scherzo is what characterizes the four out of the six examples shown above from the part number III. This term refers not only to the form but also to the character that must be printed to the movement, a playful character, joking, thought and executed in 1 even though it is written mostly in

ternary rhythm. The end of these works is characterized by the fastest tempo indication, keeping here the exhilarating and capricious atmosphere of the scherzo, but the tempo is faster. In the last part of the Verdi's Quartet the composer notes the spirit of the scherzo he wants assigned to running (like the final running in the *opera buffa Falstaff*). Even if scherzo is not noted at the fourth scherzo in the edited score of Puccini's Quartet, the manuscript shows that it was the intention of the composer (Schickling 2003, 56).

Another common element of the Quartets mentioned above, is the harmonic but not very distant relationship between the four movements. As regards to Verdi between part I and II, the relationship is subdominant to the major comparative obscurity (E *minor* – E *major*); Part I and part III have the same tonality, and between the first and last part, the tonalities are homonym (E *minor* – E *major*). Grieg used the comparative obscurity of major tonality for part II (sol *minor-B flat major*), for part III and part IV the homonym tonality. In Borodin's Quartet, part II is in comparative obscurity minor tonality (A *major-F sharp minor*), part III on homonym tonality of part II and the last part returns to the original tone. Dvorak keeps in the first, the third and the fourth part *F major* and only in the slow part he brings the minor relative.

In Puccini's D major, as well as Verdi, it can be noticed the using of the main stages tonalities: dominant respectively subdominant and their homonyms. Puccini therefore uses A *major* (the dominant of D major) in the second part, the homonym dominance (a *minor*) in part III and the original D *major* in the final.

*The Musical Institute Luigi Boccherini* from Lucca holds a set of hand written scores, of the first parts “Quartet 1st movement ” (Schickling 2003, 50.1). This part along with the last one, represents the certainty that the Quartet existed even though Puccini has never presented it as a whole. The last part was found also in the form of manuscript and is another proof of the fact that the only complete work written for String Quartet is in D *major*. It is located in *the Puccini Museum from Celle*, near Lucca, in the form of transcription for four hands piano, carried out by the younger brother of Puccini, Michele who titled it "the last part of the Quartet in D".

Among his composition attempts during the period of the three years spent at the Conservatory of Milan, one may find three runnings and two other songs, all composed for String Quartet. The runnings are the proof of the themes that might have been carried out towards of Chamber music, noticing corrections from place to place, most likely made by his mentors; and the other two pieces represent an *adagio* into A *major* and a *scherzo* in A *minor*, which over time have proven to be an integral part of the Quartet, the two missing pieces of the puzzle called *String Quartet in d major*.

From the materials found in various archives, Dieter Schickling identifies and compares the sections that make up a work in four parts: Allegro moderato, Adagio, Scherzo, Allegro vivo.

For the allegro moderato, the *Institute Luigi Boccherini* keeps two scores of violin I. There is a score written and signed by Puccini and another score written by the hand of Michele Puccini. For violin II there are also two scores with different writings of unknown copyists, one of scores, however, is discontinued at the second page. In the complete fiddle of the viola, it is recognized the handwriting of Michele, signing at the beginning with his brother's name, and the cello has the score written by the hand of an unknown copyist. The first beat of the Quartet is given to the viola saying the glowing *D major* through an ascending arpeggio varied rhythmically in a bright *f*. In Puccini's manuscript, the last eighth of the beat has a dot above. This is unjustified because there is the sign of legato of the note A, over the beat bar, of the same note A. What follows in the musical discourse there are accents noted on the weak measure parts followed by accent and during the hard measure, which will transform the point on this weak side of measure, also in an accent. The intervention of the second violin is denoted with *mf*, and only a measure difference from the violin I entrance is denoted *p*, drawing a decrescendo during two measures carried out by the successive entries of instruments in ascending order (Viola, violin II, violin I). Although the dynamic indication of *mf* was observed only in the incomplete version of the second violin score, the argument for preserving thereof in the printed version, I believe it comes with the wish of differentiation through dynamic contrast of the reason which returns in *f* at all instruments. In terms of artistic works, an assertion of a String Quartet in *D major*, cheerful tonality and sometimes quite warlike ([http://synesthesia.prometheus.kai.ru/affect\\_e.htm](http://synesthesia.prometheus.kai.ru/affect_e.htm)), in a determined and upbeat style that will retire over the one of the measures to a tint of *f* at a tint of *p*, is not a wishful process. Reversing the dynamics of these two motives, the first one in *f* and the second in *f* with decrescendo, would certainly entail the beginning of a brilliant work such as yellow solar ([http://synesthesia.prometheus.kai.ru/affect\\_e.htm](http://synesthesia.prometheus.kai.ru/affect_e.htm)), providing a good opportunity for the Chamber's bands to detect the technical processes available to them. Exposing the premium theme is conducted over the course of 23 measures, during which Puccini will transcribe us to the Baroque music through an harmonic process of delayed resolutions which the performers may use *non vibrato*, coming thus towards the Baroque moment.

The second theme is presented by the violin II outranking with brief reviews of grave string of eighth notes and the violin I is presented identical and developed up to the rehearsal. The signs "forks" crescendo and decrescendo are encountered only in the original score of the violin I and the incomplete score of the violin II.

The second part, a short **adagio** of only 23 measures let the impression of an incomplete part. In the scores kept by the Institute Boccherini the handwriting of Puccini is recognized only as specified in expression indications and in tempo indication of the part.

The handwriting which copies the notes in double staves as for the piano, is unknown; this is a method of writing that Puccini uses often, even for the preparation of orchestral accompaniment of the works. Later in *Preludio Simfonico* (composed in 1882) one may encounter an excerpt from this **adagio**. It is hard to determine whether Puccini used the material of this second part for *Preludio Simfonico* or the fragment from *Preludio* was retrieved in the Quartet.

For his first opera *Le Villi*, Puccini needs a waltz and finds suitable for the opening scene, **the scherzo-ul** in this Quartet. Despite the fact that part III has the tripartite form composed: *scherzo, trio, scherzo da capo*, *Le Villi* lends only *the scherzo*-which adds to chorus (Bughici 1978, 299), and the *trio* is used 20 years later in *Madama Butterfly* opera-Act I. In the *trio* sketch the staves are denoted by numbers from 4 to 7, which suggests that while it was composed, Puccini had in mind also the orchestral version.

In *Puccini Museum from Celle*, near Lucca there is the manuscript named "*Giacomo Puccini/Scherzo for String Quartet (the last part of the Quartet in D major)/ reduction for four hands piano /Michele Puccini/Lucca, October-November 83.*" For the end of the 19th century, it is unusual that a final part to be structured as a scherzo, it is rather a characteristic feature of the VIII century. In this case, the term does not refer to formal structure, but suggests the capricious character and the cheering atmosphere of the ternary measure, designed and executed ternary in one, specific to scherzo as a definition. The notation of the scherzo given also to the final part, leads me to Verdi's Quartet, which proposes as the title of the last part, the assertion of both the form and spirit of *the scherzo-running*, a moment retrieved in his last work, *Falstaff*.

The images created by Puccini: the determined and capricious ones drawn by the perfect unison between the four instruments in the key of homonym (*D minor*), which this final debuts; there are images that suggests the joke (the translation of the Italian term *scherzo*), created by a simple hue change (from *f* to *p*), of phrasing bonds that must be carried out by the premium viola on harmonic support in the shape of a pedal of the violin II and the grave string; and pastoral images (measure 84-102) suddenly interrupted by grave string trill which will return the firm character in which this final debuts. Puccini, in the works to be composed, uses short songs that remain in the memory of listeners and uses leit-motifs to describe characters. If we listen to Puccini's works, we understand that they are gathered from short musical "stories" that succeed without interruption. It is the era

of the short epic genre, of the and of the story. The tempo of *allegro vivo* of part IV, helps the quick succession of these short pictures with different character.

Giuseppe Verdi and Giacomo Puccini are the last composers of the 19th century, beginning of the 20th century, which can boast both the opera creation as well as with the String Quartet.

### 3. Conclusions

In conclusion it can be noticed the similarities between Verdi's E minor and Puccini's D major, traits related to architectural musical structure, the harmonic relationship between the parties, character and the need to transform these works partly in times of the works much heard and appreciated today.

### 4. References

#### Article (web)

[http://synesthesia.prometheus.kai.ru/affect\\_e.htm](http://synesthesia.prometheus.kai.ru/affect_e.htm)

#### Book

Constantinescu, Grigore. 2009. *Giuseppe Verdi*. București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică.

Marchetti, Arnaldo (ed.) 1973. *Puccini com'era*. Milan: Edizioni Curci.

Schickling, Dieter. 2003. *The Works of Giacomo Puccini. The Complete Catalogue*. Original version Michigan University. Barenreiter. Translated by Michael Kaye.

#### Dictionary

Bughici, Dumitru. 1978. *Dictionary of musical forms and genres*. București: Editura Muzicală.

\*\*\* *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musician*

#### Scores

*Puccini, Giacomo*. 2001. *Quartetto in D per archi*. Milano: Casa Ricordi