

SIMROCK

Luigi Cherubini **Critical edition of works**

By Helen Geyer, Weimar–Jena (editor in chief)

This academic and critical edition of Cherubini's works includes the great composer's early Italian operas, as well as prominent works from his French period – operas, chamber and church music. The new edition has been made possible thanks to the new-found scholarly access to the numerous manuscripts that had once belonged to the Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin but are at present kept in the Biblioteka Jagellonska in Cracow. These manuscripts constitute an important basis for the edition, not only because they conserve and transmit the young composer's œuvre, which was believed to be lost after World War II, but also because they allow us to meticulously discern and follow the experimental course that Cherubini tracked from the 1780s onwards. With each composition, he offered a new, often unconventional, and truly remarkable contribution to the history of each genre. This originality is most marked in his outstanding operatic scores of that period, which very quickly brought him fame, commissions and finally his reknown and status in France.

In this connection, the works of the 1780 are of particular interest, having strongly influenced the style of his contemporaries. The new ground he broke with his experiments embraced ideas, forms and the realisation of his chosen subjects. It is not surprising that his colleagues such as Méhul, Lesueur, Spontini, Grétry, Beethoven, Donizetti and not least Carl Maria von Weber composed under his influence and aimed to emulate his achievements or compete with him. The great works of the 1790s, like *Lodoïska*, *Médée*, *Eliza*, etc., point ahead to the grand opera, merging the techniques of symphonic writing with audacious instrumentation and profound depth of characterisation, as well as pursuing the modern currents of 'romantic' sentiment which incorporated nature imagery and local colour into the work as a whole.

Whereas Cherubini's work from his French years is better passed down to us by the period print editions, this is not the case for the groundbreaking Italian operas. It was just these operas written by the young Cherubini which positively introduced technical innovations of composition. Here, Cherubini experimented with ensemble forms or with the treatment of individual and mass scenes, reflecting his great contemporaries and their works (as Galuppi's *Inimico delle Donne*, for example, in his opera *Le sposo di tre*). He also worked with topical, delicate subjects (e.g. in *Idalide*). As early as the beginning of the 1780s, one finds amazing extensions of the finales in his opera buffas. Other prominent characteristic features are the integration of ballets, unusual scene designs, and the application of harmonically, semantically and dramaturgically significant tone colours and signalling devices. Out of these phenomena, the basis for Cherubini's works of the 1790s and for 19th century opera up to the mature Verdi was founded.

Recent decades have seen a growing interest in Cherubini's life and works, in questions concerning his position in history and in other aspects. Thus, our editorial project of works of Luigi Cherubini is planned to provide to the public the Italian repertoire that was believed to be lost, as well as the French operas up to *Ali Baba*, and the sacred works, all in editions of an

academic and critical nature, each accompanied by an extensive survey. Under its different aspects, the series will prove itself to be an indispensable basis for performances and studies alike.

The following works are presently scheduled for publication:

Opera buffa

Lo sposo di tre, e marito di nessuna (1783)

La Finta Principessa (1785)

Koukourki (1793)

= Ali Baba (1833)

Opera seria

Adriano in Siria (1782)

Ifigenia in Aulide (1788)

Giulio Sabino (1786)

Mesenzio Re d' Etruria (1782)

Quinto Fabio (1779, 1783)

Idalide (1784)

Alessandro nell' Indie (1784)

French opera

Démophon (1788)

Lodoïska (1791)

Eliza, ou le voyage au Mont St. Bernard (1794)

Médée (1797)

Les deux Journées (1800)

Anacréon (1803)

Les Abencerages (1813)

Church music

Chamber music

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Anton J. Benjamin GmbH
Lützowufer 26, 10787 Berlin, Germany
Telefon: +49 (30) 25 00 13-0 / Fax: -99
musikverlag@boosey.com

www.boosey.com/cherubini