

Program notes

Describing a country like Italy through some of its best popular musical traditions and most colorful poetic inspirations: this is the ambitious and stimulating project of the chamber ensemble "I Bricconcello" in collaboration with the composer Giuliano Di Giuseppe. By circumscribing the project to two main geographical areas (Veneto and Campania) and to a historical period (Italian film music of the Thirties), three "suites" were born which can summarize the story of the Italian soul which emerges from the melodic expression of the song. Many other important regional traditions have, alas, been left out: the limitations of a concert show lasting just over an hour have forced this painful choice. It starts with the suite "Grottesca" which combines in a sometimes nostalgic, sometimes sarcastic way the story of an Italian historical cross-section that flows from the songs for films produced by our nation when, compressed within the cultural tensions due to the fascist dictatorship, it found leaks of fantasy in a light and optimistic world of dances and melodies, in the mold of contemporary American musical feature films. An era, among other things, full of magnificent voices from the opera house who for one day became actors-singers for great cinematic successes: Beniamino Gigli, Tito Schipa, Claudia Muzio, Gino Bechi and others. The poems and music of the winning duo Bixio-Cherubini enthrall the enthusiasm of a huge audience that grants a recording success that goes far beyond the ephemeral duration of a season. Great modern voices, such as Luciano Pavarotti or Mario Del Monaco, have kept these beautiful songs in their repertoire, transforming them into melodies that are still "popular" in the best sense of the word. The themes are very varied and well represent that era of important cultural and social transformations in the first part of the 20th century: emigration, work in the mines, the first youth protests, the transformation of the family, the nostalgia for lost values, the search for a fantasized modernity. The rapid alternations of dances, from tango to fox-trot, from waltz to beguine are the rhythmic structure on which the composer Di Giuseppe has inserted a fluid sequence of words and melodies that rest on a platform of voices and timbres of the trio instrumental that also enhance all the less "classic" aspects of their color palette. Among the ancient Italian musical civilizations (none more valid than another but certainly linked to the historical and political importance expressed by the city that represents them) Venice and Naples stand out in particular. Two poles of attraction of notable artistic energies since ancient times, the two cities are representative of quite different and contrasting folkloric musical and poetic elements. If Venice often yields to the melancholy of a twilight or nocturnal landscape, Naples always lights up with an all-Mediterranean warmth and luminosity. In the "Lagunaria" suite the slow Venetian gondolas, on which languid lovers recline barely visible in the lunar shadows, alternate with rapid bursts of festive dances for the arrival of spring or with sarcastic poetic bickering about the inexorable passage of time or with the pungent jokes against some beautiful bashful lady who scratches a lover's heart with a tiger's claws. The musical atmosphere is brought by the composer towards some very "contemporary" harmonic and rhythmic resolutions, already from the first musical episode, proposing the musical image of the city of Venice in a nuanced and indefinite framing, almost that of a dream full of long shadows and quick flashes of moonlight, where each quote dissolves into the next with sweetness. Inspired by a melody that engages two famous Neapolitan songs (O' sole mio and Torna a Surriento), deliberately left in the state of a vocalise, the sunny blue horizon of the third suite "Introduzione e Vesuviana" opens up and unfolds through a symphonic musical form, with instrumental interludes of a writing of refined counterpoint. Among all the Italian popular repertoire, the Neapolitan tradition retains the most striking international success phenomena: unlike the Venetian tradition which is much more firmly linked to the extemporaneous practice, the Neapolitan song has gained in the figure of the most famous Italian tenor of all times, Enrico Caruso, an element of planetary diffusion, for which some Neapolitan songs in the ear of many.