

## 11. L'ELISIR D'AMORE BY GAETANO DONIZETTI. MUSICAL AND DRAMATURGICAL ANALYSIS

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**Abstract:** *Through this study we aim to analyze the musical and dramaturgical aspects of Gaetano Donizetti's creation. Through this lyric work, representative of the romantic creation of Italian opera in the 19th century, we have a reference representation from a musicological perspective.*

**Key words:** *dramaturgy, lyrical work, musicological analysis*

### 1. Introduction

We intend to make a brief analysis of the entire musical and dramaturgical material of this opera. An extensive *Prelude* (51 measures) opens the work with the robust chords of the complete orchestra, particularly notable for the theme of *Larghetto (D Major)*, subject to ornamental variations of flute and oboe, which really acquire solo roles. The *Prelude* ends as usual with a suspended cadence that connects it directly to the *Introduction*. The two initial scenes of the libretto form a single musical painting, very well-structured inside.

The entire *Introduction* – which contains the choir of the villagers, the cavatina of Nemorino, the cavatina of Adina, the cavatina of Belcore and *the stretta* of the end of act I, begins and ends in *F Major* – it gives us a picture of village life, a situation originally static, but which will unlock with the appearance of Dulcamara. In this small picture of the village, the farmers led by Giannetta are on a break for rest after a hard day's work, wilted by the heat of summer, relaxing while intoning a pastoral song, a song with a compound, square rhythm with a dancing character.



E.g. 1 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore - Introdurre* (ms. 41-45)

A short musical interlude, a more graceful motif (*cantabile*) is felt in the correspondence with the last stanza (*Ma d'amor la vampa ardente*<sup>70</sup>), which adequately brings the theme of ardent love, the basic theme of the opera. With Nemorino's cavatina also begins “the parade” of the main characters of the opera, the first being the very young lover who sings his aria (*osservando Adina che legge*<sup>71</sup>) as if he were hypnotized. Donizetti suddenly realizes the transition from the externalized joy of the choir of the villagers to the inner suffering and love feelings of Nemorino for Adina. It is important to emphasize this rupture because Nemorino, during the deployment of the action of the opera, will stay away from these manifestations of collective joy, of celebration, focusing only on dreams, on his love suffering for Adina and on his need to express them through singing.

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<sup>70</sup> But the burning flame of love (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>71</sup> Observing Adina, reading (t. a. C. G. M.)

## 2. Act I

In the cavatina *Quanto e bella, quanto e cara* Nemorino reveals his secret: sincere and innocent love for Adina – rendered by a sweet melody, extremely balanced in the use of passage notes, in a standard form, **AABA**, after a short section (B - the second stanza) in which the self-ridicules recognizing his faults (and thus creates a comic moment) and reveals his extreme sincerity. In the *cavatina* written in *Andantino*, 3/4, Adina *ridendo*<sup>72</sup> (unlike Nemorino) is amused by the history of Tristan (indirectly makes fun of poor Nemorino), while presenting herself in the light of this story (after all, she does not have many feelings to express publicly). The area is structured in two parallel stanzas, of ten lines each, which have almost the same music (only the tone of the *E Major* the first stanza changes in *A Major* in the second stanza), and the narrative tone is given by the technique of speaking as follows: the orchestra exhibits the main melody, while the voice performs the story on a delicate song, made up of recurrent rhythmic modules.



E.g. 2 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore, Della crudele Isotta* (ms. 5-8)

The refrain *Elisir di sì perfetta*<sup>73</sup> is stated first by Adina and then taken over by the choir, this aspect being especially important because it reveals the voluble nature, the histrionic character of the protagonist, who can easily change the tone of the speech, at her sole discretion (unlike Nemorino). In this respect, the transition from pathetic (with the end on C#) to the glow of the refrain *Elisir di sì perfetta* through a brilliant leap of registry is remarkably achieved.



E.g. 3 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore, Della crudele Isotta* (ms. 103-116)

The third character who appears on the stage is Sergeant Belcore, another future contender for Adina's hand. Preceded by a parade and a military march, he begins to sing demonstratively, while giving flowers to all the girls. As sincere, authentic, sweet, and fresh as Nemorino's cavatina was, at least as much is that of Belcore, affected, exaggerated, false and charged with *fioriture* which render very clear the bluster, his character. It is almost impossible not to notice the striking resemblance to the area of *Dandini* from *La Cenerentola* of Rossini (*Come un'ape ne' giorni d'aprile*<sup>74</sup>), which renders the same character typology.

Belcore's Cavatina is structured in two stanzas, although the musical arrangement is not as a stanza, but has a tripartite form (ABA'), with a middle section (B - in *Andantino*) open to the comments of Adina and of the choir, and a melodic (A' starting with *Non v'ha bella che resista*<sup>75</sup>) resume (*cede a Marte...*<sup>76</sup>).

<sup>72</sup> Laughing (it.)

<sup>73</sup> Elixir so perfect (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>74</sup> Like a bee on April days (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>75</sup> There is no beautiful woman who can resist (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>76</sup> Yields to Mars (t. a. C. G. M.)

The enlarged tripartite form of this area is opposite to the short tripartite form of Nemorino's Cavatina, as if Donizetti wanted to highlight the different status of the two rivals (the shy farmer versus the arrogant sergeant).

After a brief intervention in which Adina tells the sergeant that she has discovered a sensitive point (*Allegro*), Belcore attacks what should have been the *cabaletta* of his area, but which in fact, by the participation of the other characters - first Adina, who takes the song, turns into a *stretta*, that is, the concluding section of the entire introduction (aspect also confirmed by the librettist's indication - *Tutti*).

The cheerful and animated character of the song expresses very well Belcore's impatience, to which Adina responds by amplifying the song through an extension up to A2 in *forte*. Given the shyness of Nemorino and the inferiority manifested in front of the rival, he can't get involved into this amorous battle, in fact even falls into the secondary plane that triggers the famous *crescendo Rossinian*<sup>77</sup>, gradually involving all those present in the scene, including the choir, and Adina is the only one to take the original song thus asserting her authority in front of the arrogant sergeant, to which she must answer only in *crescendo*.

Left alone, Adina and Nemorino bring to life a very compact duet, which in no way solves any situation in fact, in which the young woman looks very open, attentive, and sincere: *Odimi. Tu sei buono*<sup>78</sup>, and then she becomes very strict - *ti parlo schietto*<sup>79</sup> just to not give the impression that she is interested in him or in his feelings. This duet is carried out in full in the measure 6/8 in Cantabile, although an *Adagio* (*Chiedi all'aura lusinghiera; Chiedi al rio perché gemente*<sup>80</sup>) and a *cabaletta* (*Per guarir di tal pazzia; Ah! te sola io vedo, io sento*<sup>81</sup>) are distinguished very clearly by the parallel stanzas that the two protagonists sing.

Adina and Nemorino sing the same songs, but it should be emphasized that the tenor lives in a world of reflection, repeating submissively the motives exposed by Adina and without any hope that he could impress her in any way. It is a subtle form of veneration, because by the song of Adina (a song which he does not know, formed by melisms) he is shown to be too conforming, this demonstrating Nemorino's inability to be himself in front of the young woman and strengthens his image as a loser. In short, Nemorino is an easy prey for Adina. It is worth noting that at the end of the *cabaletta*, the two do not sing in parallel, except for the last measure that indicates the signal of the distance between them, since parallel singing with overlapping voices is almost always in a love duet of the early 19th century, the sign of amorous ecstasy.

Dulcamara's Cavatina (*Allegro vivace*) accompanied by choir, has the role of totally changing the action on the stage. We are among people agitated by the announcement of the arrival of a new character, a *gran signore*<sup>82</sup> which represents a special attraction for the curious villagers, gathered to find out news. The triumphal entry of Dulcamara takes place in front of the enthusiastic manifestations and exclamations of the choir. The emphatic respect at the end of this choir (*giù i*

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<sup>77</sup> The successive repetition, going in *più forte* of a motif based on an elementary harmonic structure, in this case the tonic-subdominant-dominant.

<sup>78</sup> Listen to me. You are good (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>79</sup> I'm talking straight to you (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>80</sup> Ask the river why it groans (t. a. C. G. M.)

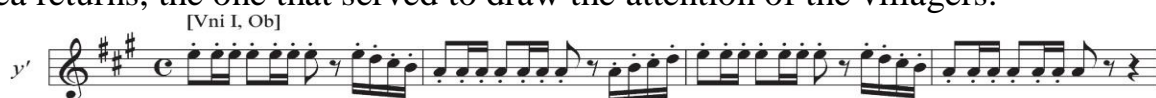
<sup>81</sup> To cure this madness; Ah! Only you I see, only you I feel (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>82</sup> Listen, listen (t. a. C. G. M.)

*berretti*<sup>83</sup>) is the concrete sign of the docility of this mass gathering of losers, a delicious “prey” for a crook like Dulcamara.

The arrival of the charlatan Dulcamara (the last character of the opera) has the effect of the pivotal moment of the action of the opera - breaking the initial impasse (the impossible romance between Adina and Nemorino). Dulcamara's (extremely long) declamation, rarely interrupted by the reactions of the choir, sounds like a series of apparently unrelated rhetorical columns, and apparently deploys freely, however, in reality it has a very well calculated structure, made with the intention of impressing the audience, an oratorical essay tested and repeated by the charlatan who knows how many times in his travels.

The general discourse also follows a rhetorical curve perfectly modeled on the classical model of oratory. In essence, after a debut *captatio benevolentiae*<sup>84</sup> (sections **a-b**) follows the narrative (sections **c-e**), that is, the story of the miraculous effects of the elixir, marked very well by the orchestral motive and properly interspersed by a riot coming from the *matrone, donzelle e giovani galanti*<sup>85</sup>. Next is the most delicate part sections **f-g**), which presents the main argument for the purchase of a bottle of elixir: the disclosure of the price of the elixir, and currently we also note the change in the poetic meter. Dulcamara skillfully masks the shameless lie (*vi regalo uno scudo*<sup>86</sup>) by the technique of a very good orator, that is, by placing his declamation on orchestral motifs that have the role of highlighting the true occult beliefs. In section **f** we find even a hypnotic effect built on an ascending and then descending line, and in section **g** the motif from the debut of the area returns, the one that served to draw the attention of the villagers.



E.g. 4 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore, Udite, udite* (ms. 105-108)

Finally, we also have the epilogue or the final indulging in words (**h**), which takes the form of a true *cabaletta*, Dulcamara ordering an assistant of his to sing the reason for arriving in the square (*tromba!*) as a crowning of success and work he has done to convince the villagers to buy his “elixir”, the whole ensemble fascinatingly repeating the glamorous melody.

The duet *Dottore! perdonate*<sup>87</sup> between Nemorino and Dulcamara reveals the weakness of the naive Nemorino, about whom we already know that he is *un giovane semplice*<sup>88</sup> and *idiota*, we also know the side of his noble feeling, but now, at the mercy of the charlatan “doctor” he is ridiculed, and the comedy is thus guaranteed. The duet has a clear tripartite form, which corresponds to the three stages of cheating: the sale of the “elixir” - better said of the Bordeaux wine (*Voglio dire... lo stupendo elisir*<sup>89</sup>), the philosophical explanations on how to use it (*Ehi!... dottore... un momentino...*<sup>90</sup>) and Dulcamara's insistent recommendation to keep it

<sup>83</sup> Hats off (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>84</sup> To earn goodwill (lat.)

<sup>85</sup> Matrons, maidens and gallant young fellows (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>86</sup> I'll give you a shield

<sup>87</sup> Doctor, excuse me (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>88</sup> A mere youth (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>89</sup> I mean... the wonderful elixir. (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>90</sup> Hey... doctor... a moment (t. a. C. G. M.)

secret so the authorities don't find out (*Giovinotto! ehi! ehi!*<sup>91</sup>). Each of these stages contain both recitative dialogues (*Moderato* with the same motif in the orchestra, but transposed into various tonalities (*G Major, D Major, C Major*), and a lyrical section.



E.g. 5 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Duet Nemorino - Dulcamara (ms. 1-3)

The first two parts are written exactly in the mirror (including the common lyrical section - *Obbligato, ah sì, obbligato!*<sup>92</sup>, in *Allegro vivace, G Major*), while the third part ends with the traditional *cabaletta* (*Va', mortale avventurato*<sup>93</sup>, in *Allegro vivace*). The tonal deployment of the duet is somewhat static (in the lyrical section everything revolves around the tonality of *G Major*), as well as the metric, which shows Nemorino's stupidity if there is no development in the dialogues. Lost in his dream of love, Nemorino is completely dominated by the charlatan Dulcamara. In the first two lyrical sections (*Obbligato, ah sì, obbligato!*) he expresses his joy by a long, arched phrase, while Dulcamara sneaks cunningly, mockingly between the folds of the song.



E.g. 6 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Duet Nemorino - Dulcamara (ms. 50-57)

In *cabaletta* (*Va', mortale avventurato*) the scenario is repeated, hardly varying, with Dulcamara starting the attack with a very fast spelling (like a real *buff* bass), while Nemorino answers with a broad melodic phrase, inside which the charlatan inserts his sarcastic comments. We will find this kind of polarity in the duet of Nemorino and Belcore, to emphasize the distance, the maximum incompatibility between the characters and the difference in the perception of the feelings of love (the sentimental love of Nemorino versus the bodily love of Dulcamara and Belcore).

In the score of the opera, the scenes 7 - 10 of the libretto constitute a single musical number (the end of act I) but which is very well articulated. We're distinguishing a duet (Adina - Nemorino), a trio (Adina - Nemorino - Belcore) and the actual ending that starts at scene 10 (*Adina, credimi, te ne scongiuro*<sup>94</sup>) and ends with a *stretta* (*Fra lieti concerti, gioconda brigata*<sup>95</sup>). The duet Adina - Nemorino (*Caro elisir! sei mio!*<sup>96</sup>, in *Allegro, 2/4, Lab Major*) presents a new confrontation between the two protagonists.

The situation has now changed thanks to the elixir, and Nemorino is now

<sup>91</sup> Young man! Hey! Hey! (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>92</sup> I'm grateful, yes, grateful (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>93</sup> Go away, young adventurer (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>94</sup> Adina, believe me, I beg you! (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>95</sup> Happy meetings with the joyful brigade (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>96</sup> Dear elixir! You're mine! (t. a. C. G. M.)

acting with more daring, convinced that Adina will give in to his feelings. He starts whistle a tune happily, which surprises and at the same time annoys Adina, her nervous laughter being a sign of the incipient psychological war between the two, which will continue until the end of the opera. In *Larghetto cantabile* (in *F Major*) the first effect of this psychological war is felt from the passage built on a quarrel that is constantly accumulating, led by a strong, powerful tone.



E.g. 7 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Duet Adina -Nemorino (ms. 29-33)

Here Nemorino is no longer that brat, and this aspect is obvious by the fact that he is the one who first attacks the musical replica, openly provoking Adina. This attitude, which apparently puts him in strong opposition to Adina, favours him for the moment, because the girl likes fighting and challenging in love.

At the end of the dispute in this duet, we notice that there are long passages with parallel songs, as if there were an understanding between the two heroes. After the close dialogue in *Allegro*, curiously, the *cabaletta* picks up the text from *Adagio*, but brings a new, more lively music, where the replies are closer between the partners. This time Nemorino is also the one who attacks the song first, but now Adina replies after the first phrase, but the boy defies her naughtily and the duet continues to the end without a real winner.



E.g. 8 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Duet Adina -Nemorino (ms. 131-139)

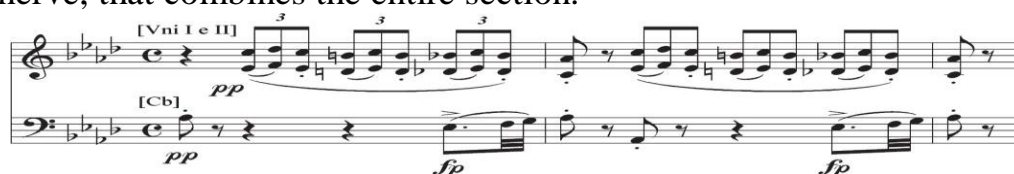
Now, after having overcome his shyness, Nemorino is playing as equal with Adina, until Belcore (*Meno mosso*) appears and the trio - which has a compact, bipartite structure - begins. The conjuncture seems to be favorable for Adina, very skilled at taking the opportunity to make Nemorino jealous - which is based on the short-term effect of the elixir and amuses copiously of this new situation. In *stretta* of *Più allegro* (in *F Major*) Adina and Belcore feel slightly embarrassed, while Nemorino is very confident and in a continuous amusement attacks the arrogant sergeant who now expresses his clumsiness with short phrases, then Adina intervenes with slightly larger phrases. And it is interesting to note that for a short time the voices of Adina and Nemorino unite in parallel singing (e.g. 12).



E.g. 9 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Duet Adina -Nemorino (ms. 26-30)

Belcore repeats the same phrase a little later, and this small clue perfectly shows the nature of the relations between the characters: Adina promised her hand to Belcore, but in reality, she suffers after Nemorino. There comes a new favorable turn for Adina (in the quartet at the end of the first act, *Meno allegro*) with the announcement that the garrison must leave the next day, and the daring Belcore

proposes the girl to get married right away. Adina accepts immediately, with the thought of subduing poor Nemorino to a new torture. The excitement and precipitation of these events are excellently rendered by a frantic orchestral motif, full of nerve, that combines the entire section.



E.g. 10 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Duet Adina -Nemorino (ms. 3-5)

This new situation leads Nemorino to despair, the cheerful, funny attitude disappears in an instant realizing that he has missed the opportunity to use the alleged effects of the elixir, is completely disarmed, he has no more cards to play and is sure that he has lost Adina's love for ever. Before the *Larghetto*, the indication in the score is *a piacere quasi piangente*<sup>97</sup> when Nemorino desperately begs Adina to wait another day before making the decision, but Belcore intervenes menacingly with a *declamato* culminating on the *F3*, as a challenge addressed to the rival. Adina's intervention is pacifying, but she completely repeats Nemorino's song, the music (not the text) being the one that proves that she is on Nemorino's side. It is important to note how the acute *Ab* of Adina sneaks into the tenor's voice (a distance of a decima), while Belcore continues the series of insults addressed to Nemorino.

E.g. 11 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Duet Adina -Nemorino (ms. 38-40)

The choir - a collective character - comments on the stage situation, and from this complex of voices and instruments it is very easy to recognize the song with one voice of Adina - Nemorino, which reinforces the fact that, despite the appearances, the two have common feelings. Despite Nemorino's public pleading, Adina is decided to teach him a lesson and plays her part to the end (*Allegro*, in *Eb Major*): the orchestra takes the frantic motive of the attack *tempo* giving a new impetus to the deployment of events, and Belcore invites everyone to the banquet, which unleashes a huge explosion of joy on the part of the crowd.

Nemorino, alone against all, is suffocated by the general jubilation and sings with one voice with Adina, Giannetta and Belcore a song built on the repetition of a rhythmic section of *stretta*, doubled by the flute, clarinet, trumpet and strings orchestra, and the choir syllabically accompanies the whole scene. The act comes to an end following the *crescendo Rossinian* mechanism, which suffocates Nemorino even more, with his desperate cries for help detaching from the scene (*Dottore! dottore! soccorso! pietà!*<sup>98</sup>).

### 3. Act 2

In the opening of the second act, we have a wide scenic image (corresponding to the first scene of the libretto), in a tripartite form: **A** - the celebration choir, **B** -

<sup>97</sup> Almost crying (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>98</sup> Doctor! doctor! Help me! Have mercy! (t. a. C. G. M.)

recitative and barcarole (Adina - Dulcamara), **A** - the resumption of the choir. The picture consists mainly of scene music, that is, an accessible music genre, to be played easily also in the spoken theater, an impeccable achievement of theater in theater, of which, obviously, the least theatrical character, Nemorino, is absent.

A martial theme (*Allegretto*, 2/4) written in a bright *C Major* gathers all the participants to celebrate Adina's engagement with Belcore. Giannetta and Dulcamara join the choir, while the sergeant exposes the main theme to stand out with his pompous morals – *Per me l'amore e il vino; due numi ognor saranno / compensan d'ogni affanno / la donna ed il bicchier*<sup>99</sup> – which he repeats endlessly. Adina confines herself to intonate in a layout of four measures with a crying tone: *ci fosse Nemorino! me la vorrei goder*<sup>100</sup>, in this way practically showing her disinterest in the party and the fact that all this masquerade is just another attempt to arouse the jealousy of Nemorino, not a serious intention of marriage with Belcore. To entertain the people, present at the party (recitative and then *Andantino*, in *Bb Major*), Dulcamara, like a real experienced comedian, takes the word by inviting Adina to join him in a *barcaruola a due voci* exposing the underlying morality of the work - the true love that triumphs over interest, ridiculed, however, with a mocking tone and treated as a show for children

Except for Belcore standing on the edge, the spectators present (chorus) like it, are greatly amused by the spontaneous show and repeat the pleasant song that Adina and Dulcamara take from each other. Finally, the notary arrives, and Belcore, eager to sign the marriage contract as soon as possible, stops all this masquerade. After the grooms sign the act, the entire section of the opening of the act is resumed - including the intervention of Belcore (*Per me l'amore e il vino*) and that of Adina (*ci fosse Nemorino! me la vorrei goder*), thus ending the picture of the celebration of the wedding.

After a *secco* recitation between Nemorino and Dulcamara, the transition is made to the accompanied Nemorino - Belcore recitative (*Andante*, in *F Major*). In the initial section, the difference in rank and social position between the two (Nemorino is clearly in financial and character inferiority to the sergeant) is very clearly highlighted musically by the interpretation of the text: in the case of Nemorino it is very precipitated, while Belcore chants and widens on the orchestral support.

NEMORINO *quasi a piacere*  
 Ven-ti scu-di? Quan-do? a-des-so?

BELCORE  
 E ben so-nan-ti. Sul mo-men-to.

[Archi]  
*p* *tr* *p*

E.g. 12 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Scena e duetto Nemorino - Belcore* (ms. 35-40)

In the section *Larghetto* (*Db Major*) the roles are reversed and Nemorino now sings in *largo* expressing his feelings with a very cantabile song, (which culminates on the sound of *B3* - the most acute note the tenor sings), and Belcore mechanically repeats its cheap principles by a *veloce* spelling with a military character.

<sup>99</sup> For me love and wine / are two deities / compensate for every trouble / the woman and the glass (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>100</sup> I would have been happy if Nemorino had been present (t. a. C. G. M.)



NEMORINO *Da sé*



(Ai pe - ri - gli del - la guer - ra io so ben che e - spo - sto so - no;

E.g. 13 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore, Scena e duetto Nemorino - Belcore* (ms. 60-64)

BELCORE




Deltam-buro alsuonve-ra-ce, tra le fi-le e le ban - die-re, ag - gi - rar - si a - mor si pia - ce con le vi - spe vi - van - die - re, con le vi - spe vi - van - die - re;

E.g. 14 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore, Scena e duetto Nemorino - Belcore* (ms. 76-78)

This fragment can be resembled to a perfect dialogue between the deaf, in fact a non-dialogue that further emphasizes the polarity between the two characters: on the one hand Nemorino – simple, poor, silly, but with deep feelings, on the other hand Belcore – arrogant, narrow-minded, unable to look at the world and its sufferings from a different perspective than through his ruthless philosophy of barracks. The indication of *tempo - Moderato* (in *F Major*) from the *cabaletta*, brings back in a subtler way the polarity between the two heroes and we notice two different types of cantability: a rigid one, symmetrical and martial (that of Belcore) capitalized by the accompaniment on a dotted rhythm and the pathetic one (that of Nemorino), which is launched in broad phrases, starting from the *F minor* tonality.

BELCORE



Qua la ma - no, gio - vi - not - to, del - l'ac - qui - sto mi con - so - lo;

E.g. 15 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore, Scena e duetto Nemorino - Belcore* (ms. 127-131)

NEMORINO



Ah! non sai chi m'ha ri - dot - to

E.g. 16 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore, Scena e duetto Nemorino - Belcore* (ms. 155-158)

The fact that in the part of the *cabaletta* Belcore has the privilege of repeating the melody (the goal of the *cabaletta* in a duet is almost always the expression of a similarity of affective attitudes or reactions whose musical correlation is the melodic parallelism) gives us the impression that he defeated Nemorino (the tenor has no possibility to repeat his outbreak in minor), but the attempt to have him as a subordinate fails him. Even if the two voices unite in the final cadences, this is not enough to arouse the impression of complicity between them, and it is very clear that Belcore wants to dominate completely Nemorino by forcing him to obedience, but this attempt fails because the characters are irreconcilable.

The scene changes and we meet again Giannetta, seconded by the choir of girls (*Moderato*, in *E Major*), whom she calls to reveal a great secret. The initial doubt of the girls (*Saria possibile?*<sup>101</sup>) is rendered by *parlato* technique, on a *pizzicato* motif entrusted to the orchestra that thus supports the whispers of the cheerful group. *Or Nemorino è milionario*<sup>102</sup> is the last verse that the group of girls repeats on the same song and that Donizetti ruthlessly takes advantage of to expose the gossiping humanity, the human hypocrisy.

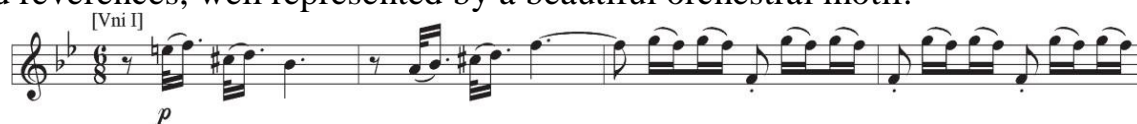
While Giannetta asks the girls to “talk” (sing) slowly and keep the secret, from the musical point of view, the composer makes a quick transition from *pianissimo* to *forte*, with the obvious intention of a contrast full of sarcasm, which will amplify at the end of the number, when the choir and orchestra join in a *fortissimo* on the text *Non deve dirsi, non si dirà*<sup>103</sup>. In the quartet Adina, Giannetta, Nemorino,

<sup>101</sup> Is that possible? (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>102</sup> So Nemorino is a millionaire (t. a. C. G. M.)

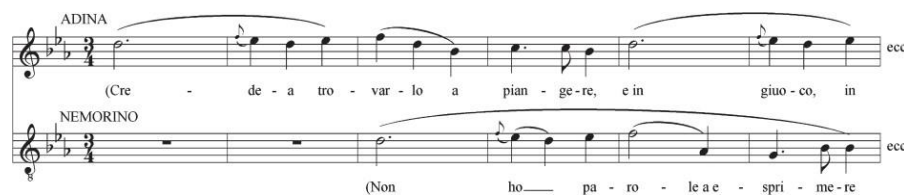
<sup>103</sup> It doesn't have to be said, it won't be said (t. a. C. G. M.)

Dulcamara (*Larghetto*, 6/8), the tenor appears singing, certainly influenced by the effect of alcohol in the elixir. The song begins with *G minor*, modulates in *E minor*, returns to *G minor* at the end of the first period, then modulates in *B minor* in the second part, these being the symptoms of the doubtful lucidity of the young man in love. The group of girls and Giannetta compete to win him competing in curtsies and reverences, well represented by a beautiful orchestral motif.



E.g. 17 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Quartetto* (ms. 22-25)

Adina and Dulcamara (*Allegro vivace*, 3/4, *Eb minor*) remain stupefied seeing Nemorino courted by all the girls in the village and now the quartet itself (with choir) begins, in which Donizetti overlaps the voices with great skill, without blocking or diminishing the development of the plot and of the musical discourse. The cantable phrases interpreted by Adina and Nemorino raise above all, but they do not sing simultaneously, as if the composer wanted to say that there is a closeness at this moment, a veiled attraction, but the total symbiosis between the two has not yet been created.



E.g. 18 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Quartetto* (ms. 64-69)

Nemorino does not notice the presence of Adina until she calls him and then there is a sudden change, an interruption of the musical discourse. The orchestra intones robust chords in dotted rhythm, interspersed with the exclamations of the tenor and of Dulcamara. Nemorino is willing to listen to Adina, but the moment of intimidation between them is disturbed by the group of girls who flock and pull (now) the rich Nemorino to go dancing. Before leaving the stage, Nemorino intones a rewarding *stretta* (*Allegro vivace*), a fast song immediately picked up by Adina (which extends the cadence to the acute Bb), for the voices to unify in the end, and despite the fast *tempo*, the romance begins to materialize.



E.g. 19 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore* - *Quartetto* (ms. 210-216)

After Adina's last reply, the chorus of girls takes Nemorino and restarts the mechanism of the *Rossinian crescendo* that interrupts for the moment the short romance and triggers the chaos in the scene. Adina tries to intervene in vain; she is almost swallowed by the crowd of women, and Nemorino is at their mercy for now. Left alone in the scene (Adina - Dulcamara recitative and duet), the two heroes to whom Donizetti entrusted with a lively duet, in which (in recitation) the young woman discovers the secret of the elixir and has the confirmation of Nemorino's unconditional love, a love she has never been able to conceive before this moment. In *Andantino* (*E Major*), Adina is outraged by all the news she finds and seeks relief

from Dulcamara, but the charlatan is not the right person for caresses.

His only interest is to sell his elixir to Adina, and we meet with a new dialogue of the deaf, in which the girl sings cantabile phrases, totally opposite to syllabic, quick and jerky phrases of “the doctor”. It is time for Adina to reveal, in addition to her feelings for Nemorino, her jealousy against the other women, especially as she is now competing with them. After this lyrical part, transition is made in *Poco piu (mosso)* to dialogue – a slight clash between the two heroes, on a main motif in the orchestra, agile and chic, which anticipates the song from *cabaletta (Una tenera occhiatina*<sup>104</sup>) with the same rhythmic module, with an optimistic content and with the same harmonic path.



E.g. 20 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Duetto Adina - Dulcamara* (ms. 92-96)

The charlatan's insistent attempts to sell the elixir to Adina clash with the girl's categorical refusal, which eventually interrupts the quarrel leading to a sudden modulation in *C Major (Io rispetto l'elisire, / ma per me ve n'ha un maggiore*<sup>105</sup>) and Dulcamara realizes that he has no chance to achieve his goal.

In *Cabaletta (Allegro, in E Major)* Dulcamara remains a mere spectator in front of Adina's flirtation, and we consider it necessary to mention the middle phrase of the song - the sudden transition from *f* to *p* that changes the reason, and the orchestration and vocal combination showing the volubility, the girl's seductive ability, which further displeases the charlatan.



E.g. 21 - Gaetano Donizetti, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Duetto Adina - Dulcamara* (ms. 106-110)

#### 4. Conclusions

The theatrical effect is excellent, but it obviously requires a perfect synergy between music and stage play, and Dulcamara proves a complete subordination to the unleashed girl. The affair Nemorino made did not change Adina's character at all, nor her possessive conception of love found in the text *che nemmeno Nemorino / non potrà da me fuggir*<sup>106</sup>, in other words, every man for himself.

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<sup>104</sup> A gentle look (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>105</sup> I respect the elixir, but there's something more important to me (t. a. C. G. M.)

<sup>106</sup> That not even Nemorino / Will be able to get rid of me (t. a. C. G. M.)

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