



COMBATTIMENTO 400

CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI meets ABD-UL QADIR MARAGHÎ

The *Combattimento 400* project reformulates the drama of Clorinda and Tancredi and its symbolism in a way that runs counter to the cancel culture, exploring the refined identity world of the Muslim heroine Clorinda, and opening up to the fascination of the exotic empires of the East and their music.

This year we celebrate the 400th anniversary of the first performance of Claudio Monteverdi's *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*, which took place during the Venetian carnival of 1624 in the Palazzo Mocenigo, in the presence of all the refined Venetian aristocracy. As we learn from Monteverdi's own words, the aristocracy '*restò mossa dall'affetto di compassione in maniera, che quasi fu per gettar lacrime; et ne died applauso per essere stato canto di genere non più visto né udito*' (was moved by compassion so that they almost shed tears; and applauded it for having been sung in a genre no longer seen or heard)

The message conveyed by *Combattimento 400*, like an Escher painting, overturns the historical perspectives of Tasso's poem and shows us that the 'revolving door' of the Mediterranean sea converges in shared codes, traditional wisdom, and universal poetry. A dialogue at the boundaries of modality, between Eastern Maqam and Renaissance Modi.

Stories such as 'Schaikh San'an' and the 'Christian Maiden' by the Persian poet Aṭṭār of Nishapur, or works by the great musicians of the Ottoman-Turkish and Persian cultures, including the pre-eminent figure of Abd-ul Qadir Maraghî (in reference to Jerusalem under the Turkish Seljuk Empire), or Sultan Walad son of the poet Gialal al-Din Rumi, and Buhurizade Mustafa Itri, complete the historical fresco of Monteverdi's *Combattimento*, concretising by extension the representational realism that he required.

There are many phenomenological and historical connections, which subliminally and specularly pervade the interweaving of the Eastern Mediterranean, from Levantine Venice to the Ottoman Sublime Porte.

No one can fail to perceive symbols of memory, for instance in the ritual war dance of Tancredi and Clorinda '*e vansi incontro a passi tardi e lenti*', like that surreal Gagliarda danced on the ship's deck by the supreme commander Don Giovanni of Austria one minute before the battle with the Turkish fleet at Lepanto in 1571.

This Tasso Monteverdi masterpiece unleashes the tragedy of useless but inevitable pain, of blind action, of sadly topical identity distortion, of paradoxical death, of impossible love.

After all, Tancredi and Clorinda show us that Jean Paul Sartre's circular aphorism '*hell is other people*' would seem structurally paradoxical, as both presence and absence create abysses of suffering. An enigma that in another great human creation, the *Baghavat Gita*, grips Arjuna in the famous and unsettling dialogue with Krishna about the meaning of war.

In the inafferable question, the modern man's inability to analyse is suspended, and as Nishapur's Aṭṭār recites *'These secrets will be heard by the ear of the heart and soul, not by that of the flesh, which is of water and mud'*.

The topos of the Love & Death antinomy is thus transformed into a song that poets and musicians of all times and civilisations have raised against human barbarity.

Nishapur's Aṭṭār and Torquato Tasso, Claudio Monteverdi and Abd-UI Qadir Maraghî, all remind us, despite thousands of years of misunderstanding, that beauty is a gateway to the heart, to what is human and universal in its own right.

Edited by **Giordano Antonelli**