

“TAVOLETTE”

Günther Möller

in: “SUOR ANGELICA”

from: “IL TRITTICO”

by: Giacomo Puccini

STAGE MUSIC (INTERNO) (OFFSTAGE BAND):

“TAVOLETTE”: bars 2 and 3 after rehearsal figure 65

In his opera “SUOR ANGELICA” Puccini uses the so-called “**tavolette**”.
“Tavolette” (plural) means “little boards” in the Italian language.

Since Puccini uses this term as a matter of course without explaining it further in the score, it can be assumed that at the time of the first performance in 1918, at least in Italian monasteries, the above mentioned little boards were known and common in use.

A stage direction in the score at rehearsal figure 65
(one measure before the “tavolette” is used) explains the scene.

An analogous translation is:

“The signal of the tavolette can be heard from the rear right...”

In the German translation of the libretto it is written:

“Aus dem Hintergrund hört man das Zeichen der Holzklapper...”

“Form the background the signal of the wooden clapper can be heard...”

Offstage Band Score of the “tavolette”: appendix 1

It is probably a wooden “signal” instrument whose origin may lie in a “Semanterium”, which originated in the ancient Greek Orthodox Church and was used for religious rites. (appendix 2)

A similar instrument, although much smaller, is perhaps still used today to summon the nuns in some monasteries to certain liturgical processes.

In the Cistercian abbey of Oberschönenfeld near Augsburg, a wooden staff about 15 cm long, is tapped on a bench in the choir stalls to signal the nuns to begin with their prayers.

This ritual custom comes closest to the scene in the opera.

Ottorino Respighi prescribes the aforementioned "tavolette" in the last movement ("La Befana") of "FESTE ROMANE".

These are notated in the score at two different pitch levels (appendix 3) and can be played on two different sized wooden boards with hammers. (appendix 4)

To achieve a dynamically less massive sound, two so-called "slapstick" whips (appendix 5) of different sizes could also be used, each of which can be played with one hand – in contrast to the normal orchestra whip.

The term "tavolette" also refers to a small board with a handle.

A small wooden hammer strikes the board with a spinning motion (appendix 6). Such a "matraca" is known in Spain and Italy, where it is used for religious festivities such as Easter. It is a rather simple instrument, whose sole purpose is just to make noise.

However, this hand clapper can not be used to play the stage music in Giacomo Puccini's Opera "SUOR ANGELICA".

Puccini's opera "SUOR ANGELICA" requires a wooden clapper instrument with a high, thin tone which can be played rhythmically and dynamically controlled with two hands. (see appendix 1)

Günther Möller

SOURCES

- appendix 1 IMSLP
- appendix 2 “ANTIQUE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AND THEIR PLAYERS”
152 Plates from
Bonanni’s 18th-Century “GABINETTO ARMONICO”
- appendix 3 “Percusize Me !”
David Valdés percussion
- appendix 4 unknown
- appendix 5 Kolberg Percussion
- appendix 6 “Percusize Me !”
David Valdés percussion

SUOR ANGELICA

GUIDA { TROMBE, PIATTI
e TAVOLETTE (INFERNO)

G. PUCCINI

TACET sino al N° 64

MODERATO CON MOTO

1 La 64 grazia è discesa dal cielo, già
tutta, già tutta m'ac - cende. 7 1 1 Lo - diamo la Vergine
poco allarg. a tempo

Santa! 65 1 TAVOLETTE
poco allarg. a tempo

TACET sino al N° 79 alle parole di Suor Angelica:

TRE TROMBE in FA
sostenendo

79 O Madonna, Ma - donna, salvami, salvami; Per a - mor di mio figlio!
ANDANTE SOSTENUTO CON SORDINA pp

Ho smar - - rita la ra - gione Non mi fare mo -
rire in danna - zione! 80 Dammi un segno di grazia,
mf

dammi un segno di grazia, Ma - donna! Ma - donna! Salvami! Salvami!

81 *ANDANTE APPENA MOSSO*

TROMBE

PIATTI
pp

82

Musical notation for measures 82-83. Measure 82 features a piano (pp) dynamic and a first ending bracket. Measure 83 features a first ending bracket.

VIA SORDINA *allarg.*

Musical notation for measures 83-84. Measure 83 features a piano (p) dynamic, a first ending bracket, and a crescendo (cres.) marking. Measure 84 features a fortissimo (ff) dynamic and a first ending bracket.

83 MENO

CON SORDINE

Musical notation for measures 83-84. Measure 83 features a piano (pp) dynamic, a first ending bracket, and a ritardando (rit.) marking. Measure 84 features a piano (pp) dynamic and a first ending bracket.

84

CON SORDINE

Musical notation for measures 84-85. Measure 84 features a piano (p) dynamic, a first ending bracket, and a rallentando (rall.) marking. Measure 85 features a piano (p) dynamic and a first ending bracket.

Musical notation for measures 85-86. Measure 85 features a piano (p) dynamic and a first ending bracket. Measure 86 features a piano (p) dynamic and a first ending bracket.

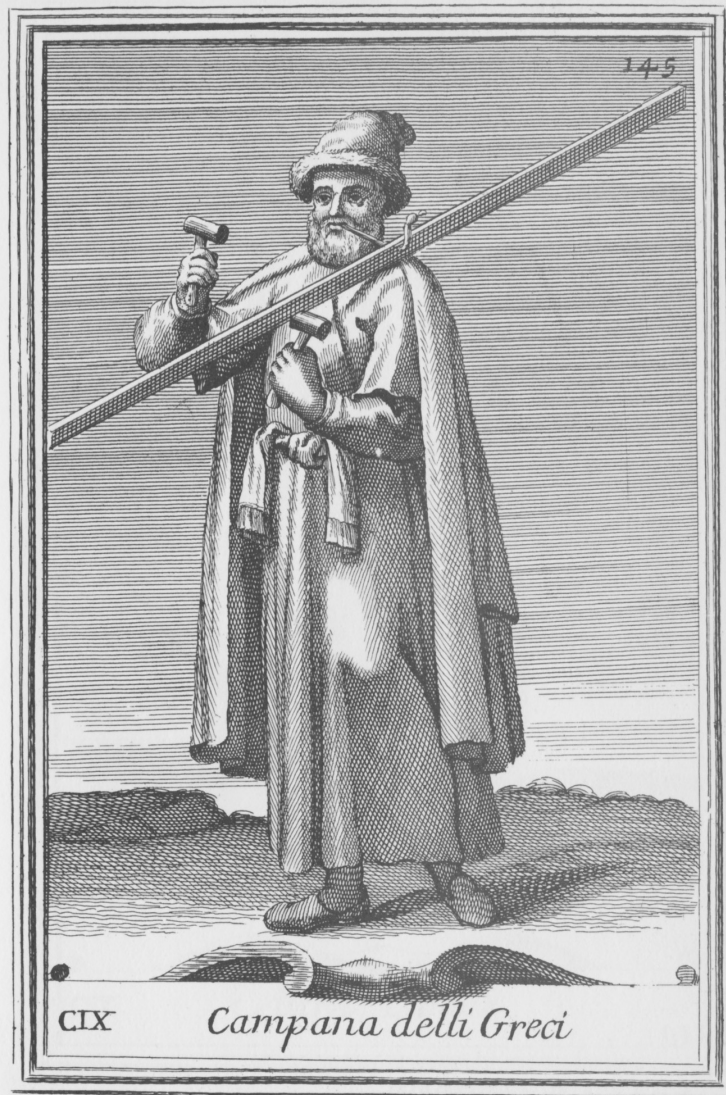
allargando

Lento

Musical notation for measures 86-87. Measure 86 features a piano (p) dynamic and a first ending bracket. Measure 87 features a pianissimo (pppp) dynamic and a first ending bracket.

109

Though bells were used in the Western Church from early times, they were not known in the Greek Church before the eleventh century. The Greek churches used the *SEMANTERION* ("sign giver") which is depicted here. It consisted of a wooden plank which was struck with two mallets in such a way as to give distinct musical sounds. This size was suspended by a string held between the teeth.



IV. LA BEFANA

TAVOLETTE
(grande e piccola)

Vivo 27

(Campanelli)

Cresc.

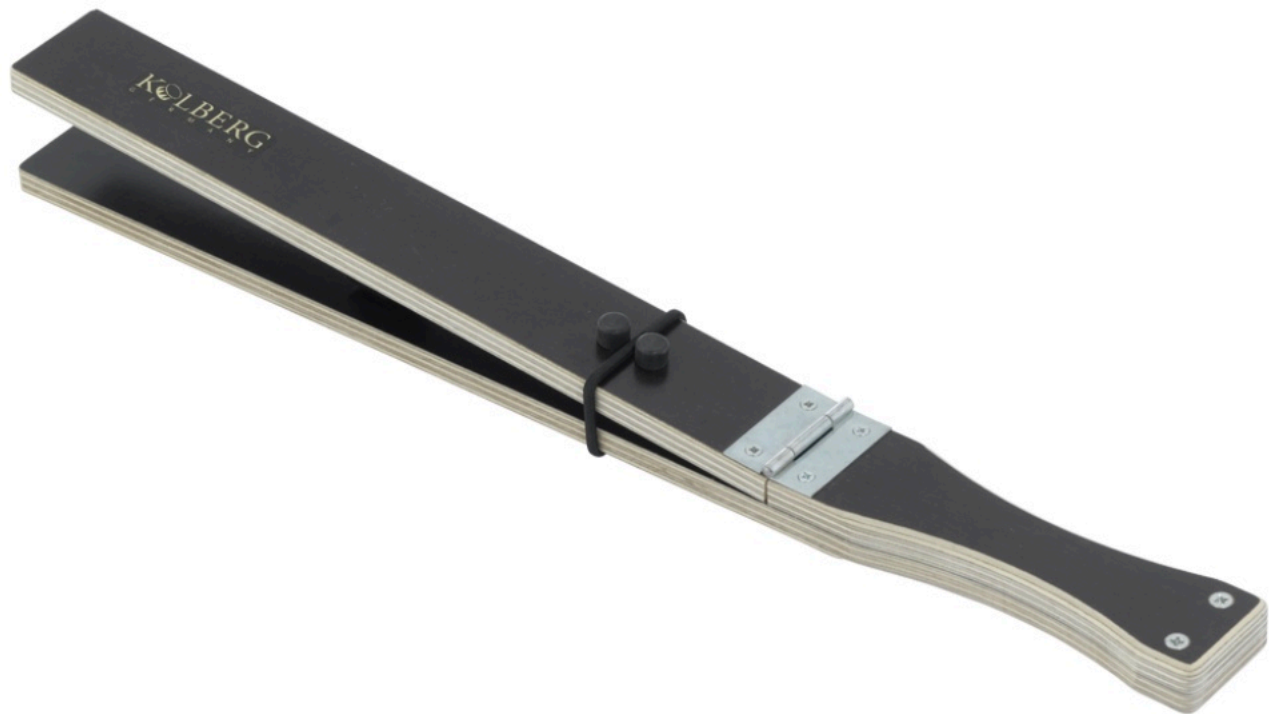
28

FINE

appendix 4



appendix 5



appendix 6

