

A Wonderful Adventure

In these hard times, where Covid spreads, the mind of a musician is full of thoughts, but more than all others there are doubts on when will musical activities restart; it's like riding a bicycle, if you don't use it for a certain amount of time, who knows why, you pick the bicycle and inflate the wheels and with the excuse you do a little test ride.

You don't understand what the future holds for you, the uncertainty of the pandemic return, and you don't have a scope. So, you put the bike back and wait for better times.

You think of times gone by and happy moments that left their mark on your heart and mind.

So begins this account of an adventure that began in 2013 and culminated six years later.

The marching band S. Cecilia (CBSC) has had a slow but steady growth.

Each group experiences its own reality in its own way, some achieve their goals earlier, others later, as in life.

I will not dwell much on the first four years of CBSC because it was the 2018/2019 period that marked the technical/artistic turning point of this group.

In 2013, on the advice of myself, the CBSC began to think about participating in a band competition. A kind of competition with the aim of a judgment, by a qualified jury, to know the degree of preparation of each participating group and form a sort of ranking.

By secret ballot, each CBSC musician submits a judgement on this initiative, and the majority of voters cast a positive vote.

The International Band Competition of Bertiole in the province of Udine will be chosen, also on the advice of some friends of other groups who had already participated in that event.

The main plan for our participation was to divide the competition into two consecutive editions, in order to see if there was any improvement between the first and second edition.

This competition was to be held every two years (2014 and 2016), so we had time to make the improvements recommended by the jury.

This had been decided with the presidency in order to understand if the band was following a path of growth and therefore the right way.

And so it was; the jury's evaluation in the two editions went from 80.05 cents to 84.75 cents and third prize in the category.

The path was right and we had also understood the mechanism of the competitions, what was being assessed and the aspects we needed to work on more.

But, there is always a "but". If the artistic direction was right, something else wasn't and something negative had happened. Rehearsals had been heavy, repetitive and monotonous and created a state of general distress that led the presidency to decide a halt to participation in further editions.

In 2017 our regional association AMBAC organised, after many years, the "IV Concorso delle bande Venete in Tregnago" (VR).

The CBSC decided to stay put and, still worried about the state of suffering, did not register. The presidency, however, feels the obligation to respond positively to the call of their association and decides to confirm our presence at the next edition in 2019.

In 2018, the announcement for the Fifth Venetian Band Competition in Lonigo (VI) 2019 is published.

The presidency respects the promise and decides to call an assembly of the whole band to propose our participation.

But first we have to think about not making the same mistakes as last time and decide to meet first with myself to find a strategy to arrive at the contest prepared but as serene as possible.

Although each group experiences such things differently, I had already thought of various solutions, but there was one that if it worked would definitely be a positive experience.

I asked for help from the section leaders who, for our group, are all qualified musicians or, at any rate, very well prepared. I asked them to help me with the difficult task of getting together with their section to study the parts.

At this point, with the help of the section leaders, I had prepared my project for the competition and presented it to the presidency. It consisted of a first part, about a month, in which each musician would learn his part in section with his section leader, taking care of the intervals, the intonation, and discovering the potential of his instrument; a second part in which, in larger sections, we would work on the understanding between sections, the phrasing of the part segments studied, with the help of myself; a third part for the whole group in which we would work on phrasing, balance, intonation and the beauty of the sound. All in a spirit of serenity and positivity.

The project was accepted and the band was willing to try this new adventure.

They liked this method of study so much that many suggested applying it to every concert, so that even those who do not have an immediate reading of the part arrive at the ensemble rehearsal confident of playing actively without any fear.

The goal was achieved and we had achieved the desired results on every front.

We were excited once again but also serene about the good work we had done.

...A spectator at the competition said that the band transmitted serenity, pleasure and musical taste...

The pieces performed were very interesting; one was obligatory by the artistic commission and the same for each participant in that category, the other chosen by us respecting the level of difficulty imposed.

...The pieces in competitions must be original for bands...

We chose a piece written by the Belgian composer m° Jan Van der Roost, whom I knew personally and with whom I did a Master's degree in conducting in 2015.

As well as the band itself liking this piece, the jury of the competition also liked it so much that they congratulated us on our choice in terms of the complexity of the composition.

Both pieces did not require any particular instrumentation, but in both cases the composers had in mind some optional parts given to an instrument that we did not have: the oboe.

Listening to them and analysing them in my head I realised that, although I was not obliged, I wanted that sound and I would have wanted the oboe in the ensemble even if I had to pay an oboist myself.

I say that because the finances of the CBSC were tight and I was told to spend as little or as little as possible.

The oboist should not be a professional but a student of the conservatory, used to playing with bands and who knew this world well, and therefore willing to do more rehearsals and a few concerts to understand our way of playing and to blend the sound.

I was lucky in my choice because I found a humble guy, very prepared and serious, who was already playing with a band in our province.

I would say that his support created the sound I wanted and therefore allowed us to make the difference I was hoping for.

On the day of the competition, the whole band took the bus, loading all the polished and tuned instruments, the percussion instruments not present at the competition, but above all, they left with the hope and conviction that the work done over the last few years could bring good results.

As far as I was concerned, any result we achieved was a goal achieved, thinking of the teamwork well done, the commitment of each individual musician, the enthusiasm that shone through at the last rehearsal but above all for the union that had formed.

For this event, a number of friends had joined the group to help us make up for any shortcomings in the ensemble: a young and talented percussionist and an excellent saxophonist and dear friend.

The rules of the competition stipulated a maximum of four external players, regardless of whether they were principals or orchestral professors, and ours were all young people, or almost all, conservatory students but no professionals because we didn't want to distort the group and our sound.

I advise everyone to watch our video on YOUTUBE by searching for [Banda Musicale di Povegliano Veronese](#), so you can see us at work and hear our performance.

The undersigned did not travel with the band; I went to Lonigo equipped with a car the day before and spent the night there in order to attend the rehearsals of the groups registered on Saturday. All the groups in our category were very close-knit and certainly of a good standard. We were expecting a good competition.

In order to amortise the expenses of this competition (bus, scores...) we had made ourselves available to the organisation to perform in the central square in Lonigo at the end of our competition performance. I think the CBSC presidency is used to working with small budgets and took this opportunity.

Our moment had finally arrived, we entered the stage and at the start of the jury we started the warm-up song, which had a maximum time of 3 minutes. The intonation was perfect.

...The intonation is done after a warm-up, as in sports before entering the field, and the competition requires that it be done in a soundproof room while the group performs first. The G. Verdi

municipal theatre in Lonigo, however, does not have such a large room but many small ones. I instructed the section leaders to do the warm-up and the intonation with their section.

I think it was the most successful intonation ever, and for that I will never cease to thank all the section leaders...

At the end of our performance, as soon as we left the stage, I remember congratulating everyone on a great performance.

The moment between the performance and the award ceremony is always interminable. Other groups have to perform, different categories and different songs, but we had something to do. Yes, we had to 'earn our bread' and therefore we had to prepare the instruments for the parade in the square in Lonigo, percussion instruments for the parade, lecterns for the instruments, harnesses and booklets.

I can't tell you the spirit in which we performed; freed from the burden of the competition, satisfied with how we had played and ready to do what we did best: our figurative parades.

We almost didn't care that it was raining because we were free to play as we wished, without the limitations imposed by the wicked conductor (I'm a little less wicked in parades).

We started with the figurative parade that has distinguished us for many years and continued with pieces from the modern and rhythmic repertoire, only to realise that there was another band playing nearby, under a gallery and protected from the bad weather, with a group of majorettes. So we joined in and, alternating, played together.

For the final award ceremony, the band leader and one representative from each group had to stay, while the rest of the band was free to choose whether to stay or go home. The CBSC decided to go back because it was Sunday and because the next day many people were going back to school, the factory, the shop or the office.

So I stayed and also the acting president Emanuele Scarsi stayed.

I remember that among the groups waiting for the verdict were friends from the Sona band, from which the oboist who played with us also came. I call them friends because over the years I've had the good fortune to play with them and get to know many of their musicians and more. In fact, one of their directors has conducted the CBSC on a few occasions when I was absent. One of their managers and friends asked me to join them for a pizza and to this day I thank them for a wonderful dinner together.

It was time to leave the pizzeria and head back to the theatre for the final verdict.

The good Emanuele was very tense and although I was too, I felt calm because we had certainly made a good impression.

When the eighth band was announced, we knew that at least we hadn't come last. At this point my companion Emanuele kept repeating that it would have been nice to come at least fourth. This was true, since at least four of the groups participating in our category had done very well.

But this was not the case because Emanuele gave his first cheer when they announced the fourth group and it was not yet us. "Third then," he said in a low, already slightly whitish voice.

No, not even third.

There were two solutions: either we were second or they had forgotten to put us on the list. We were quite excited, as we had already come third in the past, but not second.

The two finalist bands both had names that began with: Corpo Bandistico. All we had to do was wait for the third word.

When they nominated the second place, we realised that, for the first time, the top step would be ours. I will always remember Emanuele's leap onto the chair in that magnificent theatre, with the room exploding at the achievement of a small band that had faced a not always easy path.

As a prize we had won promotion to the higher category, a voucher to spend in a well-known music shop but above all a wonderful *palio* to be kept until the next edition as a sign of supremacy in our category to be proudly displayed at each of our events. First out of eight bands in the Veneto region.

I don't know what happened on the bus when Emanuele sent the video announcing our victory, but I think the joy was so great that it involved the poor driver who was only doing his job that day.

Every time I think of the exultation of the good E.S. I remember all the moments of this WONDERFUL ADVENTURE.

Marco Vantini

Director of the S. Cecilia Band of Povegliano Veronese (CBSC)







POVEGLIANO Il maestro Marco Vantini ha puntato su un brano complesso ma alla portata dei suoi bandisti: «Singapura suite» di Jan Van der Roost

La banda musicale vince il premio regionale

L'assieme del nostro comune ha primeggiato su altre sette concorrenti nella terza categoria, ottenendo anche una promozione

di Fabrizio Sambur

(bzd) Grande successo del coro bandistico di Povegliano, primo premio nella terza categoria musicale. La competizione tenutasi lo scorso fine settimana, era organizzata da Anbac, Associazione Musicale Bande Assiemli Complessi, e si è svolta nel teatro comunale di Longo. I musicisti di Povegliano hanno primeggiato nella terza categoria grazie ad un'ottima performance, superando altre sette

La competizione si è tenuta lo scorso fine settimana al teatro comunale di Longo

compaghi concorrenti e ottenendo un lustigioso punteggio di 85,61. Tale risultato premiare automaticamente nel futuro concorso. La banda alla categoria superiore. Grande soddisfazione per il maestro Marco Vantini. «Abbiamo iniziato a prepararci dalla fine di gennaio, decidendo tutti fin dall'inizio che il concorso doveva essere un'opportunità per mettere alla prova, non occasione di tensione e stress. Abbiamo sperimentato un nuovo approccio: ho chiesto alle varie sezioni di ogni strumento di ritrovare separatamente una



VITTORIOSI Sopra l'esibizione della banda a Longo; a destra il maestro Vantini e sopra, da sinistra, Vantini, il direttore artistico del concorso e il segretario Scarsi

vola a settimana per studiare la partitura, mettendo tutto insieme solo in un secondo momento. È stato un fantastico lavoro di squadra. Il regolamento della gara, oltre alla suddivisione in categorie, prevedeva l'esecuzione di due brani composti specificamente per banda: uno d'obbligo uguale per tutti e uno invece lasciato alla libera scelta (entro

comunque un certo grado di difficoltà). La guida, composta da qualificati maestri e musicisti, ha assegnato il punteggio in base ad una decina di parametri come ad esempio intonazione, ritmica, interpretazione ma anche qualità del brano scelto. La prima commissione, comune a tutti, è stata «Faber Suite» di Michele Grassano, mentre per la secon-

da prova il maestro Vantini ha puntato sul brano «Singapura suite» del belga Jan Van der Roost, con cui lo stesso Vantini ha fatto un master. «La partitura di Van der Roost è ottima da un punto di vista tecnico, con annotazioni che permettono di capire bene il «colore» della musica. Per certi versi era perfetto per le caratteristiche del nostro assieme. Sono sod-

disfatto non solo per la vittoria ma anche per la «pagellina» dei giudici: di solito comprende anche annotazioni su cui migliorare, stavolta abbiamo trovato solo commenti positivi. Il primo premio guadagnato consiste nel Pello Ambac, che, un po' come il trofeo dell'America's cup, rimarrà a Povegliano fino alla prossima edizione, prevista nel 2021. Oltre a questo l'organizzazione ha elargito un buono da 1.000 euro per l'acquisto di materiale musicale presso un negoziante sponsor del concorso. Le attività del corpo bandistico non si fermano comunque qui: prossimo appuntamento sarà il concerto del 23 giugno a Madonna dell'Uva Secca, accompagnato da un'altra banda proveniente dall'Islanda.

