

---

## **Pio Lewis Frederick Cianchettini (1799-1851) of Cheltenham**

by Richard Barton (Copyright)

Glancing through copies of "The Cheltenham Looker-On" in the Cheltenham Public Library recently, I came upon a sad little notice entitled "The Late Pio Cianchettini" in an edition dated 19<sup>th</sup> July 1851. The article which recorded the death of the distinguished musician included an appeal for financial help for his eight-year-old orphan son who had been left unprovided for and wholly destitute. A group of his father's friends and admirers were anxious to place the boy in a musical academy where his future education and maintenance might be provided for. Sixty pounds were quickly subscribed and donations published a fortnight later included £5 from the Caffieri Family, £2-10-0d from the Catholic clergy of Cheltenham and £2 from Mr G. A. Williams, a Roman Catholic who had served as High Bailiff of the town a few years earlier. What became of the boy is not known.

His father Pio Cianchettini, was born in London on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1799, the son of Francesco Cianchettini, the head of a London musical publishing company. His mother, Katerina Dusikova, was a Bohemian singer, pianist and harpist who was born in Caslav in 1769. Her father, Jan Dussek (1738-1818) was a musician and also her brothers, Jan Ladislav Dussek (1760-1812) and Franz Benedikt Dussek (1766-after 1816). Katerina was a successful teacher and performer and composed two concertos and some solo piano works before her death in London in 1833. Her husband, in association with Sperati, had the English rights for his brother-in-law, JL Dussek's, works from 1807 until 1811. Francesco Cianchettini died in Cheltenham in the same year as his wife and was laid to rest in the Catholic cemetery at Broadway, aged sixty-seven years.

Pio Cianchettini performed in public a sonata of his own composition at the Opera House, London, at the age of five years. When he was six he toured Germany, Holland and France with his father, and the extraordinary talents of this infant prodigy earned him the appellation "Mozart Britannicus" among the musical world. On his return to London, he continued his studies, and at the age of eight years spoke French, German, English and Italian fluently. By the age of ten he had started to compose various instrumental pieces including a grand concerto which he executed himself at a concert in London in 1809, receiving the greatest of applause.

The young musician attended Angelica Catalani, when she first toured England, and he acted as both composer and conductor of her concerts. He was later re-engaged by this celebrated singer and actress on her return visit to England in 1822. Cianchettini also composed and published a Benedictus, a cantata to Milton's "Paradise Lost", sixty Italian catches and other vocal and piano music. A critic wrote in 1835, "Were we to call at a music shop, and see a new publication with Pio Cianchettini, on the title page, we should purchase it, with the full assurance that it was worth the price paid."

Whilst Cianchettini enjoyed early success, in later life he suffered with vicissitudes, finishing his life as a Cheltenham music teacher. I have been unable to find when he first visited Cheltenham, but he is regularly referred to in "The Cheltenham Looker-On" from 1835. Not only do we find his own advertisements but there are references to his performances, assessments of his compositions besides announcements in the personal columns.

In June 1839 "Tom Crochet", in his "Music Review" for "The Cheltenham Looker-On", considers "Oh! Tell me not the lovely flower", written by W Kent and composed by Pio Cianchettini. He remarks, "if the talented composer wrote it with a view of showing his knowledge of the mazes of the mystic science, he has succeeded; but if, on the other hand, he expected it to become popular and much asked for, he has certainly overshot his mark. Melody is like beauty – most beautiful when least adorned, and the beauty of this lovely flower is surrounded with prickly thorns that it cannot be approached without much trouble, and some danger of putting the finger in a wrong place". Cianchettini's cavatina and rondo, "If Every Joy on Earth" was described by "Tom Crochet" as more ambitious than the first work and requiring such a performer as the composer himself to accompany it well on the piano forte.

In April 1841, another work entitled "Beati Immaculate in Via" was described by "Tom Crochet" as a composition calculated to enhance the fame of the author for it is of the classical order that will bear the scrutiny of the theoretical eye. "The organ accompaniment is written in a masterly manner and cannot fail of being highly effective when well performed". A further cavatina and rondo, "Se Mai Turbo Il Tuo Riposa", received a similar compliment.

"The Cheltenham Looker-On" reveals that Cianchettini's professional endeavour seems to have been in competition with two other musicians, Mr L.B. Sapio and Mr Uglow. In 1835 Pio Cianchettini's "Concert of Vocal and Instrumental Music" at the Rotunda took place a fortnight after Mr Sapio's "Benefit Concert" at the same location, whilst a fortnight after the Cianchettini concert Mr Uglow arranged his "Grand Oratorio" at St James' Church. Interestingly at the Cianchettini concert Mr Uglow played the violin whilst Mr Sapio sang. At Mr Sapio's concert Pio Cianchettini played the grand piano and conducted. Mr Sapio sang a ballad, "I love but thee", composed by Cianchettini, and Mr Uglow was the leader of the orchestra.

The account of the Cianchettini concert in the "Cheltenham Looker-On" was less than enthusiastic bemoaning the lack of light popular pieces, which was blamed for the small audience. The concert's considerable length seems to have also proved too much for those who did attend. However, Cianchettini performed with all his wonted fire and brilliancy of execution, Dussek's "The Plough Boy" as well as a divertimento of his own composition. The critic remarked, "his gliding off into some beautiful cadencies gave evidence of the genuine professor". In 1839 "Mr P Cianchettini presided at the piano, and bore the whole scheme triumphantly through" at Mademoiselle Parigiani and Mr Sapio's concert. An account of Sedlatzek's Concert at the Rotunda reveals that the conductor, Mr Pio Cianchettini "as usual

delighted his audience, and accompanied in the strict and legitimate sense of the word, the several artists as they respectively appealed to him for support”.

In May 1835 Cianchettini seems to have been working from 64 High Street, Cheltenham, but a few weeks later he was advertising singing and piano lessons at 428 High Street. In June 1839 another advertisement reveals that he had returned from his birthplace (London) and was continuing lessons at 428 High Street. Later notices include his move from 406 High Street to 5 Great Norwood Street in 1843, his move from 8 Great Norwood Street to 17 Gratton Terrace in 1847, and his move to Northwick Terrace in October 1849. In the 1851 census he was living at Northwick Terrace with his mother-in-law, Mildred Everill, an annuitant, and his little boy, Francis. Cianchettini is, himself, described as a “Professor of Music”.

Cianchettini married Emma Athanasia, the third daughter of the late Thomas Everill of Worcester, on 21 June 1841 at Cheltenham Parish Church. Sadly, his young bride died on 10 April 1849 aged 28 years, leaving their son, Francis Pio Thomas. He had been baptised at the Catholic Chapel, Cheltenham on 21 September 1842, the day after his birth. Local newspapers record the death of Pio’s sister, Madame Campanile who died in Rome in 1841, six months after he had dedicated “Beati Immaculate In Via” to the memory of another sister, Clelia Veronica Cianchettini.

Cianchettini and his colleagues Uglow and Sapio were probably not resident in Cheltenham throughout the year, but worked in the town for the season. This may well explain the constant change in their addresses. The obituary for Cianchettini, in “The Cheltenham Examiner” stated that he had “been resident in Cheltenham for several years past, pursuing the occupation of an instructor and composer, and moreover his attainments having obtained him a wide-spread popularity”. Mr Sapio was at 61 Regent Street and 3 Nelson Cottages in 1835, and at 64 High Street in the following year. In May 1839 “The Cheltenham Looker-On” included a notice respectfully informing the nobility and gentry that having returned to Cheltenham he had resumed teaching Italian and Sacred styles of singing, at 1 Sherborne Terrace, and later in the year at 8 Warwick Place. Mr Uglow was living at 29 Gyde Terrace in 1835.

Other references to Cianchettini, Uglow and Sapio appear in articles relating to the Roman Catholic Chapel. These commence with the installation of the new organ. “The Cheltenham Looker-On” for 29<sup>th</sup> December 1838 includes the following: “The new organ, just built by Bevington and Son for the Catholic Chapel in Somerset Place was heard for the first time, and to great advantage on Christmas Day, when young Bevington gave two voluntaries in his best style, and, we may also say in the true style of the organ. Parts of Mozart first mass were sung (Miss Sullivan and Mr Sapio the principal performers), as also the favourite hymn, Adeste fidelis, and a new anthem by Pio Cianchettini, which was remarkably successful. Miss Sullivan sings like a good musician, and with proper expression; and as for our friend Sapio, as we have before hinted, he is quite in his meridian in sacred music, good as he is in every other style, never was he heard to better advantage than in Pio Cianchettini’s anthem”.

“The Journal” added that the organ was “beautifully toned” and “the selection of sacred music was judicious”.

Again in May 1839 the “Cheltenham Free Press” reports the following service at the Catholic Chapel:

“We understand that Messrs Sapio and Uglow have proffered their invaluable assistance in the choir of the RC Chapel on Sunday next. Pio Cianchettini will preside at the organ, the splendid Benedictus of his composition will be sung by the above celebrated vocalists and Miss Sullivan. The chorus will be assisted by several distinguished amateurs.”

In the same newspaper in October of that year we read that on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> “there will be a grand selection of Sacred Music at the Catholic Chapel when the choir will be greatly augmented”.

On Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July 1840 a fine selection of sacred music was again performed. “Kyrie Eleison was very well sung by the choir. O Salutaris Hostia was sung by Miss Sullivan, in a very superior manner, Cianchettini presiding at the organ.... The attendance was very numerous, and several strangers were present”. (Free Press)

It is evident from these references that Pio Cianchettini was organist at the chapel, at least on special occasions.

Pio Cianchettini died on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1851 at his residence, 10 Northwick Terrace, having suffered with diarrhoea for about two years. “The Cheltenham Looker-On” recorded that “the celebrated composer and pianist had resided for a great many years in Cheltenham, and was well and extensively known throughout its musical circles, from which, however, his declining health, and pecuniary embarrassments, had caused him of very much to withdraw himself. He was generally respected by all of his professional brethren, to whom he was ever ready to extend a friendly and open hand. Many of the most accomplished musicians in the private circles of Cheltenham have been Mr Cianchettini’s pupils, and owe their proficiency and skill to his careful teaching. Of the many public professors who have been his pupils, we believe Miss Le Grice is the only one now resident in Cheltenham”.

I have yet to discover where Pio and Emma Cianchettini are buried or what became of their small son. The trustees of his subscription fund were Messrs Hale and Son, Music sellers, Mr GA Williams, Librarian, and Mr Hector Caffieri, Wine Merchant.

## Bibliography

The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians

The Cheltenham Looker-On 1835-1851

The Cheltenham Free Press

The Cheltenham Examiner

The Cheltenham Journal

The author would like to thank Mr Roger Beecham for his help in the compiling of this article.

Richard Barton (1993)