

# **Artaserse (Rome, 1721), Nicola Porpora's First Pasticcio\***

ANETA MARKUSZEWSKA

When *Artaserse*, a “drama per musica” (as it was called on the title page of the libretto), opened the season at the Teatro d’Alibert in Rome in January 1721, its composer Nicola Porpora was known in Naples as the author of four operas which had been performed there: *Agrippina* (1708), *Flavio Anicio Olibrio* (1711), *Basilio, re d’Oriente* (1713) and *Faramondo* (1719).<sup>1</sup> He was not completely unknown to the Roman audience because in 1718, together with Domenico Scarlatti, he had composed an opera entitled *Berenice, regina d’Egitto*, which was performed at the Teatro Capranica.<sup>2</sup> Apart from his operas, Porpora also composed occasional pieces, of which *Angelica*, a serenata written in 1720 to a libretto by Metastasio, remains the best known. The piece, also known under its alternative title *Orlando*, is mostly remembered today because its performance constituted the debut for Porpora’s most famous pupil, Carlo Broschi (Farinelli).<sup>3</sup>

Besides *Artaserse*, in 1721 Porpora also composed an opera entitled *Eumene*, which premiered at the Teatro d’Alibert as its second opera of the season. The piece was very well received by the Roman audience, as the following passage from the *Gazzetta di Napoli* attests:

“New operas and comedies premiered on the stages of our public theaters. A drama entitled *Grigilla* [*sic* = *Griselda*], which is shown at the Capranica won great praise from the audience, both by virtue of the *virtuosi* [i.e. the singers], conducted by *mae-*

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1 SARTORI, 1990-1994.

2 WALKER, 1951, pp. 34f.; BOYD, 1986, pp. 78-80; ROSTIROLLA, 2010, pp. 151-215; FABRIS, 2018, p. 224.

3 PORPORA, 2002.

*stro di cappella* Signore Alessandro Scarlatti, set designs by Bibiena and sumptuous costumes; but even better is *Eumene*, shown at the theater of Count d'Alibert, and composed by *maestro di cappella* Nicolò Porpora of Naples, a court musician of His Highness Prince d'Armestat [*sic*], where the principal part is sung by Nicolò Grimaldi, a virtuoso singer who mostly works in Naples. The appearance of the cavalry and the naval battle, which were both shown on the stage, were received with great satisfaction.<sup>24</sup>

As mentioned, the first work performed during the 1721 carnival season in the Teatro d'Alibert was *Artaserse*, a pasticcio attributed to Porpora, which is the focus of this article.<sup>5</sup> While discussing the pasticcio *Artaserse*, it should be stressed that records of Teatro d'Alibert for the years 1720 and 1721 do not survive and that there are no other documents from the period that would mention Porpora by name as the arranger of *Artaserse*. Although a situation where one composer would write two operas for the same season was not common, there is a precedent for it, also in the Teatro d'Alibert, where in 1720 Francesco Gasparini was commissioned to compose two operas for the same carnival, *Amore e maestà* and *Faramondo*.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, in the 1730 carnival season (a decade after the premiere of *Artaserse*), Leonardo Vinci was also responsible for *Alessandro nell'Indie* and *Artaserse* at the same theater.<sup>7</sup> Still, the usual practice would be for the two operas of the season to be set to music by two different composers. Additionally, while *Artaserse* featured arias by Porpora and Sarro, we also have to take into consideration the puzzling fact that the collection of arias from this pasticcio which survives in the collections of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris (F-Pn) lists Antonio Lotti as the composer.<sup>8</sup> I will return to the riddle of *Artaserse*'s authorship later in the article.

The goal of the article is to offer an overview of *Artaserse*, a work that so far has not received a lot of scholarly attention. I am also going to argue that Porpora's work in Rome in 1721 paved the way for other Neapolitan composers such as Domenico Sarro and Leonardo Vinci, whose music also began to appear on Roman stages and in other

4 "Sono andate in Scena in questi pubblici Teatri le nuove Opere in Musica, e le Comedie, rapportando applauso il Drama intitolato, Grigilla [*sic* = *Griselda*], che si rappresenta nella Sala di Capranica sì per la Compagnia de' Virtuosi, sotto la direzione del Maestro di Cappella Sig. Cavaliere Alessandro Scarlatti, come ancora per le nuove Scene dipinte dal Bibiena, e per li ricchi abiti; maggiore però è quello dell'*Eumene*, che si recita nel Teatro del Conte d'Alibert, composto in Musica dal Maestro di Cappella Nicolò Porpora Napolitano, Virtuoso di S. A. il Principe d'Armestat, in cui la principal parte viene sostenuta dal Cavaliere Nicolò Grimaldi virtuoso cantante parimente Napolitano, e riescono di gran soddisfazione le comparse d'un Esercito di Cavalleria, e del combattimento d'un'Armata Navale". GRIFFIN, 1993, p. 95.

5 FRANCHI, 1997, p. 175; MARKSTROM/ROBINSON.

6 SARTORI, 1990-1994.

7 IBID.

8 F-Pn, D.12720.

operatic centers following Porpora's success.<sup>9</sup> More specifically, the fashion for the Neapolitan style began with the production of Porpora's *Artaserse* and his already mentioned, highly regarded opera *Eumene*. In this article, I am going to analyze the surviving arias by Porpora which appear in *Artaserse* in order to demonstrate what the features of the Neapolitan style in 1721 were.<sup>10</sup> It is important to remember that the beginning of the 1720s marks an important transition in terms of musical styles, namely a shift from Baroque to galant style. The Neapolitan composers were harbingers of the new style, so it is all the more important to study the works coming from this interesting, transitional period in the history of opera. In my article, I will also offer some information on the singers who first performed the pasticcio, analyzing their input with regard to the notion of 'mobility', which seems to be a crucial concept for the understanding of the pasticcio.

## The libretto and its migration

The libretto, written by Francesco Silvani and originally entitled *Il tradimento traditor di se stesso* was first performed at the Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo in Venice in 1711 with music by Antonio Lotti. Silvani belonged to the group of reformers of Italian opera alongside such poets as Apostolo Zeno, Pietro Pariati, Antonio Salvi or Girolamo Frigimelica Roberti. In the years 1691-1716 he worked as a librettist for various Venetian theaters, and his career reached its peak between 1708 and 1714 when he collaborated with the most prestigious Venetian theater, the San Giovanni Grisostomo. In contrast to the usual practice of the times, he seems to have had at least some interest in – and respect for – intellectual property rights in the modern sense. In his preface to *L'innocenza giustificata* (1698) he elaborated on the fact that he would only put his own name on a libretto if he was the sole author of the entire piece.<sup>11</sup> Conversely, he noted that if he collaborated on a libretto with another poet or if his work was subsequently changed by others, he would refuse to give his name to the printed version. Silvani's approach to authorship is especially interesting in the context of the usual practices regarding the writing of operas in the period, and in particular with respect to pasticcios. Incidentally, while Silvani had a penchant for long descriptive titles, in subsequent editions of his works they were often changed, and typically replaced with the name of the main character. This happened also to *Il tradimento traditor di se stesso*, whose subsequent productions tended to use the title *Artaserse*.

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9 The first opera by Vinci performed in the Teatro d'Alibert in Rome was *Farnace* (1724). In the same year, the Teatro della Pace produced Sarro's *Partenope*, which likewise marked the composer's debut in Rome. See FRANCHI, 1997.

10 The only surviving pieces by Porpora earlier than *Artaserse* are the complete score for *Agrippina* (1708, I-Nc, Rari 7.2.15) and the first and second act of *Flavio Anicio Olibrio* (1711, GB-Lbl, Add.14121). Both operas were written for Naples.

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Silvani's *Il tradimento traditor di se stesso* is set in the glamorous and sinister world of court intrigue. The main character, Artaserse, is the king of Persia. The opera opens with the celebration of his victory over his treacherous younger brother Ciro, who wanted to usurp the throne. Now Ciro is dead, but his widow Statira and her brother Oronte live at Artaserse's court. Both Statira and Oronte are the bywords for honesty, loyalty and true love. Other principal characters are Artaserse's favorite son Dario and another younger son called Ariarate. The cast also includes the beautiful maiden Aspasia, who used to be betrothed to Oronte. Artaserse initially wants to marry Aspasia himself, but then offers her to his son Dario. Dario is the villain of the story: rejected by Aspasia, who wants to remain faithful to Oronte, Dario tries to convince his younger brother Ariarate to murder their father. When Ariarate refuses, the evil Dario tells Artaserse that Ariarate had been plotting to kill him. His perfidious plots are thwarted thanks to the efforts of the noble Statira, Oronte and Aspasia, who manage to prove to Artaserse that his beloved son is in fact wicked. Confronted with the truth, Artaserse begs Ariarate for forgiveness and gives his consent to two marriages: now, Oronte can marry Aspasia and Ariarate Statira. In the Roman version the finale also includes a *deus ex machina* intervention which ensures a perfect happy ending – thanks to the last-minute intercession of the god Apollo, the villainous Dario is saved from execution.

After its premiere in Venice the opera was performed in Reggio in 1712 under the alternative title *La virtù trionfante dell'inganno*. It was subsequently reworked by Francesco Mancini, who composed new music for the prologue, *scene buffe* and selected arias.<sup>12</sup> This version was performed in Naples on 1 October 1713 with the new title *Artaserse* as part of the celebrations marking the birthday of Emperor Charles VI. The later Roman production kept the Neapolitan title. The opera was also performed in Verona in 1715<sup>13</sup> and three years later during the carnival at the Teatro della Fortuna in Fano with the presence of James III Stuart, pretender to the English throne, whose court at that time was based in Urbino.<sup>14</sup> From the surviving records that describe James's visits to the theater we know that he listened to two operas with great attention. One was *La*

12 *Artaserse re' di Persia. Drama per musica da rappresentarsi nel Real Palaggio, nel dì primo ottobre 1713. Giorno festivo per gli anni, che compie la Maestà Ces. e Catt. del nostro Invittissimo Imperadore Carlo VI. Dedicato a' Sua Eccellenza il Conte Wirrico di Daun, Vice-Rè, e Capitan Generale in questo Regno di Napoli, &c.*, Naples 1713; libretto: I-Nc, Rari 10.06.09/10, online: <http://corago.unibo.it/libretto/DRT0005473>, 14.04.2020.

13 *Il tradimento traditor di se stesso. Drama per musica da rappresentarsi in Verona il carnevale dell'anno 1715. Dedicato all'Illustrissimi Direttori della Conversatione de Nobili di Verona*, Verona [1715]; libretto, see: <http://corago.unibo.it/libretto/DRT0042815>, 14.04.2020.

14 CORP, 2009.

*costanza in trionfo*, and the other *Il tradimento traditor di se stesso*.<sup>15</sup> James III was so impressed with both operas that he ordered copies of selected arias.<sup>16</sup>

The next version of the opera was performed in 1720 in Teatro del Falcone in Genoa. The Italian libretto database *Corago* notes that the music for this version was composed by Antonio Lotti, even though the libretto does not carry the name of the composer.<sup>17</sup> This omission is just one of many questions connected to this production. In opera lore, it has always been associated with Lotti, but the scholarly sources on the composer's life also contain the information that he did not compose any more operas after his return from Dresden in 1719.<sup>18</sup> Thus, one or other piece of information has to be false: either Lotti composed at least one opera after his return from Saxony, or the traditional attribution of the 1720 production is wrong. However, it seems more probable that the 1711 score was used for various local productions of *Il tradimento traditor di se stesso*, and even if changes (such as replacing individual arias) were introduced to make the production suit the local tastes, Lotti was still considered to be its creator. The same question of attribution also pertains to the Roman pasticcio which premiered in the subsequent year and which is the focus of my article.

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15 *Relazione della venuta in Fano di S. M. Britannica, e Diario sella Sua Dimora*; cf. also BATTISTELLI, 1981, pp. 79-94.

16 I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Edward Corp, the noted expert on the history of the Stuarts in exile, for sharing with me his copy of the list of the arias copied for James III, held in the collections of Windsor Castle. The list tells us that James ordered as many as 14 arias to be copied from *Il tradimento*. Their titles are: "Aprimi il cielo" (Statira), "Asciuga sù quegli occhi" (Ariarate), "Mia virtù, ti vuol più forte" (Statira), "Padre, se reo foss'io" (Ariarate), "Se certo esser poss'io" (Oronte), "Parto sì Idolo mio" (Ariarate), "Statira addio non sò" (Ariarate), "Vorresti disamar, mio cor quel volto" (Statira), "Non morrai volto adorato" (Statira), "Vado a morire" (Ariarate), "Qual Alcide anch'io vorrei" (Guerriero-Statira), "Tu sospiri? Di perche?" (Aspasia), "Se foste sì pietose" (Ariarate), "Vivi bersaglio eterno" (Statira).

17 *Il tradimento traditor di se stesso. Drama per musica da rappresentarsi in Genova nel Teatro del Falcone nella primavera di quest'anno 1720. Dedicato all'Illustrissima Signora Maria Imperiale Lercara*, Genoa [1720]; libretto, online: <http://corago.unibo.it/libretto/DRT0042817>, 14.04.2020.

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## The libretto of *Artaserse* (1721) and its relation to previous librettos

Act,Scene	Role	Incipit, 1721	1711	1713	1718	1720
I,2	Dario	Vengo mio vago Amor				
I,4	Artaserse	Alla vendetta ingrata				
I,5	Statira	Mia virtù ti vuol più forte	+	+	+	
I,12	Oronte	Posso morir, ma vivere				
I,14	Oronte	Empia morirò	+	+	+	+
I,15	Aspasia	Non parli più d'amor	+	+	+	
I,18	Statira	Comincio a consolarmi				
I,20	Artaserse	È gran pena aver nel petto				
I,20	Dario	Nave son, che fra due venti				
II,2	Ariarate	Più limpida, e più bella				
II,5	Oronte	Sichè il perfido atterrato				
II,6	Statira	Vorresti disamar mio cor quel volto	+	+	+	
II,8	Artaserse	Il mio sangue non difende	+		+	+
II,9	Aspasia	Spera sì, non dubitar				
II,10	Dario	Placida aurette				
II,11	Oronte	Unisci in tanto (aria con eco)				
II,12	Codomano	Legge a'Amor tiranna				
II,14	Aspasia	Scende il fulmine dall'arco				
II,15	Dario	Voglio straggi				
II,16	Statira	Non morrai mi dice il core				
III,3	Ariarate	Vado a morire	+	+	+	
III,4	Artaserse	Già sento nel mio petto				
III,5	Dario	Vanne, ò Bella, al tuo Diletto	+	+		
III,6	Aspasia	Armatevi di vezzi	+	+	+	+
III,7	Oronte	Con lali del mio Amore [?]				
III,7	Aspasia, Oronte	Tù vuoi, ch'io parta	+	+	+	
III,8	Codomano	Dal valor del braccio invito				
III,9	Artaserse	Alla vendetta				
III,9	Statira	Resta crudele a piangere	+	+		
III,9	Aspasia	Tu sospiri di perchè?	+	+	+	
III,10	Dario	Sempre sarò crudele				
III,11	Apollo	Alme liete				

The table above demonstrates that the arias which most often migrated between productions were the following nine:

1. “Mia virtù ti vuol più forte” (Statira)
2. “Empia, morirò” (Oronte)
3. “Non parli più d'amor” (Aspasia)
4. “Vorresti disamar mio cor quel volto” (Statira)

5. "Il mio sangue non difende" (*Artaserse*)
6. "Vado a morire" (*Ariarate*)
7. "Vanne, ò Bella, al tuo Diletto" (*Dario*)
8. "Armatevi di vezzi" (*Aspasia*)
9. "Tu sospiri di perché?" (*Aspasia*)

Other frequently migrating pieces from the opera include the duet "Tu vuoi ch'io parta" (*Aspasia, Oronte*), and the choirs "Al suo Dio la Persia umile", and "Chiaro viva al par del Sole" (the initial choir), as well as the final piece "Sovra gl'odii di già spenti", sung by all the principal characters (see Appendix).

The Roman pasticcio also includes arias originating in other operas: in my opinion the aria "Al valor del braccio mio" comes from the Neapolitan pasticcio of Handel's *Rinaldo* (1718), created by Leonardo Leo (the aria in question is Leo's own composition). The first two lines of the aria and the rhyming structure of the whole piece make it very probable that the Roman pasticcio included Leo's Neapolitan score for the aria.

***Rinaldo, Naples 1718***

Al valor del braccio mio  
L'empia soglia al suol cadrà;  
E dell'ombre il cieco Dio  
Spaventato, dispierato,  
Dall'Inferno fuggirà.  
Al valor &

***Artaserse, Rome 1721***

Dal valor del braccio invito  
Quella fera al suol cadrà;  
Se l'Eroe veggiam trafitto  
Sù l'arena,  
Ogni cor ne sentirà.  
Dal &

Two other arias, "Nave son, che fra due venti" and "Vengo mio vago amor" also originate in the same Neapolitan pasticcio of *Rinaldo*. Another aria, "Placida aurette", comes from another production from Naples: the opera *Ginevra, principessa di Scozia* (1720) with a libretto by Antonio Salvi and music by Domenico Sarro.

Thus, the libretto of *Artaserse* incorporates pieces coming from at least three different sources: Salvi's libretto of *Il tradimento traditor di se stesso* prepared for the Roman production by an anonymous adaptor, the pasticcio of *Rinaldo* and the opera *Ginevra*. The latter two sources come from Naples, which points to the fact that Neapolitan opera was beginning to gain a foothold in Rome.

***Artaserse – the music***

The score of Lotti's *Il tradimento traditor di se stesso* does not survive, but *Grove Music Online* records that individual arias are held in Berlin (D-B) and Wiesentheid (D-WD).<sup>19</sup> In the Wiesentheid collection, there are six arias and a duet from *Il tradimento* (1711), but only two of these pieces – the aria "Non parli piu d'amor" and the duet "Tu vuoi

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ch'io parta?" are also found in the Roman pasticcio. However, the arias which are listed in *Grove Music Online* and *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* as held in Berlin are no longer in that collection and should be considered lost.<sup>20</sup>

The Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris holds six arias and one duet titled *L'Artaserse / Del Lotti / Opera Prima / D'Alibert 1721*:<sup>21</sup>

1. "È gran pena haver nel petto", missing from the 1711, 1713 and 1718 versions (Artaserse)
2. "Vorresti disamar", included in the 1711, 1713, 1718 versions (Statira)
3. "Il mio sangue non difende", included in the 1711 version, missing in the 1713, 1718 versions (Artaserse)
4. "Già sento nel mio petto", missing in the 1711, 1713, 1718 versions (Artaserse)
5. "Nave son, che fra due venti", missing in the 1711, 1713, 1718 versions (text incipit in the pasticcio version of George Frideric Handel's *Rinaldo* performed under Leonardo Leo in Naples in 1718) (Dario)
6. "Vengo mio vago amor", missing in the 1711, 1713, 1718 (I,2) versions (text incipit in the pasticcio version of George Frideric Handel's *Rinaldo* performed under Leonardo Leo in Naples in 1718) (Dario)
7. Duet "Tu vuoi ch'io parta?" included in the 1711, 1713, 1718 versions (Aspasia and Oronte)

As many as four arias (numbers 1, 4, 5, 6) on the above list are pieces whose texts do not feature in any previous versions of *Il tradimento*. This suggests three possible scenarios: (1) they were either new pieces by Lotti, (2) they were adapted from other, later works by him or (3) they were newly written by other composer(s). I have managed to track two arias (nos. 5 and 6), which had previously appeared in the Neapolitan version of Handel's *Rinaldo* already mentioned.<sup>22</sup> Both were sung in Naples (1718) and in Rome (1721) by the same singer, Giovanni Battista Minelli.

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20 MÜCKE, 2004, col. 505. I established this during my research visit to the Berlin Staatsbibliothek and additionally confirmed that the arias are no longer in the collection in the course of correspondence with the librarians following my visit. When I made inquiries at the Staatsbibliothek as to the possible fate of the arias, the staff directed me to the Jagiellonian University Library in Krakow, but when I contacted the Polish library, the staff also replied that they do not have the arias in their holdings. They should therefore be considered as lost some time during or after the Second World War.

21 F-Pn, D.12720.

22 <https://opac.rism.info/search?id=806930334&View=rism>. The score of Handel's pasticcio *Rinaldo* which was created and performed in Naples in 1718 by Leonardo Leo is held in Longleat House Old Library in Warminster, in the UK (GB-WMI), Music Manuscript 4. The 2018 revival performance was produced by the Italian musicologist Giovanni Andrea Sechi. In March 2019 the pasticcio was published in CD format by Dynamic, catalogue number CDS7831.03.

Giovanni Andrea Sechi, who was responsible for the 2018 revival of the Neapolitan version of *Rinaldo*, suggested that Lotti's arias, which survive in the Paris collection, were in fact written by another composer and that the attribution is merely a copyist's error.<sup>23</sup> A plausible explanation is that the copyist attributed the arias to Lotti out of habit, because of the conventional association of this title with Lotti. Regrettably, it is impossible to settle this question conclusively. The puzzle of attribution is made more complicated by the fact that the Wiesentheid collection holds arias from the Venetian production of the opera in 1711.<sup>24</sup> In that collection, only one aria, "Non parli più d'amor", and to put it more precisely, only the text of part A (since the text of B section is slightly changed), matches the text of the Roman pasticcio. A characteristic feature of Lotti's version are multiple text repetitions in part A of the arias with slight changes, which makes this version palpably different from the other arias in the Paris collection. Moreover, it should be noted that Lotti's arias from the Wiesentheid collection are less demanding vocally than the arias from the Roman pasticcio.

The duet "Tu vuoi ch'io parta?" is, however, the same in both the Venetian version of 1711 and the Roman pasticcio of 1721. Minor differences between the two versions involve shortenings of the initial and middle ritornellos, and modification of one and a half bars in part B. These wide-ranging similarities seem to prove that it is indeed Lotti's version of the duet (Examples 1a and 1b). However, since the arias in the Berlin collection must now be considered lost and are unavailable for researchers, the question of authorship of other arias described in the French collection as being by Lotti is impossible to settle definitely.

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23 The suggestion was made during the discussion after the author's paper during the 18<sup>th</sup> Biennial International Baroque Conference in Cremona 2018.

24 D-WD, entry 894. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr Frohmut Dangel-Hofmann for making it possible for me to work on Lotti's arias held in the collections of the Schönborn family in Wiesentheid.

Example 1a: Duet “Tu vuoi ch’io parta?” by Antonio Lotti from *Il tradimento traditor di se stesso* (Venice 1711).

Violino I

Violino II

Viola

Aspasia

Oronte

Bc.

7 8 9 10 11 12 13

Tú vuoi ch'io par - ta

14 15 16 17 18 19 20

con tan - to di do - lor \_\_\_\_\_ di do - lor

Si Si con tan - to il nos - tro a - mor \_\_\_\_\_ il nos - tro a -

21 22 23

mor

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for the opera Artaserse. It contains two systems of music. The first system covers measures 14 to 20. It features a vocal line with lyrics in Italian: "con tan - to di do - lor \_\_\_\_\_ di do - lor" and "Si Si con tan - to il nos - tro a - mor \_\_\_\_\_ il nos - tro a -". The lyrics are written in a stylized font with hyphens and blank spaces. The vocal line is accompanied by a basso continuo line. The second system covers measures 21 to 23. It features a vocal line with the lyric "mor" and a basso continuo line. The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a key signature of one flat, and various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines.

Example 1b: Duet “Tu vuoi ch’io parta?” by Antonio Lotti in *Artaserse* (Rome 1721).

The musical score is arranged in a system with six staves. The top three staves are for Violino I, Violino II, and Viola. The bottom three staves are for Aspasia (soprano), Oronte (tenor), and Bc. (bass). The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 6/8. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 6. The second system contains measures 7 through 13. Measures 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 are marked with a double bar line and a repeat sign (§). The vocal lines for Aspasia and Oronte have lyrics written below them. The lyrics are: "Tù vuoi ch'io par - ta in pre - da del do - lor" (measures 7-12) and "Si" (measure 13).

14 15 16 17 18 19

del do - lor

Si sieu - ra del mi - o a - mor del mio a - mor

Despite the fact that Lotti's work was very highly appreciated by his contemporaries and by subsequent generations of audiences and music scholars, his opera output is unduly neglected and so far has not been comprehensively studied.<sup>25</sup> This is undoubtedly partly due to the fact that a large part of his operatic *œuvre* is now lost: out of 24 operas only eight survive in their entirety,<sup>26</sup> and most of them date from a later period of his career, including as many as three composed during his stay in Dresden (1717-1719). Lotti's sojourn abroad brought about significant changes in his style, changes related to the fact that in Saxony he had a highly talented group of court musicians and singers at his disposal.<sup>27</sup> One more obstacle that prevents researchers from a comprehensive study of Lotti's operas is the fact that his surviving output is now very much dispersed, with individual arias held in many different collections around the globe.

The prevailing opinion on Lotti's theatrical style today is encapsulated in his entry in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, which contains an assessment that he devoted much more attention to the voice and the vocal line than to the instrumentation which as a result was often basic, or even schematic and uninventive.<sup>28</sup> An overview of his commissions for Venice (for which theaters he worked most often), reveals that Lotti mostly used string instruments and basso continuo, and occasionally also pairs of oboes

25 BYRAM-WIGFIELD, 2016, pp. 21-38 and especially pp. 36f.

26 *Achille placato* (1707), *Polidoro* (1714), *Foca superbo* (1715), *Costantino* (1716), *Alessandro Severo* (1717), *Giove in Argo* (1717), *Ascanio, ovvero Gli odi delusi* (1718), *Teofane* (1719). BYRAM-WIGFIELD, 2016, p. 52.

27 ŻÓRAWSKA-WITKOWSKA, 2012.

28 STEFFAN, 2006.

and trumpets. However, my analysis of the material held in Wiesentheid, which contains arias from *Il tradimento traditor di se stesso* suggests that the prevailing opinion concerning Lotti's work might be an oversimplification. The arias from Wiesentheid demonstrate a significantly larger diversity of instruments, including two flutes ("Zeffiretti che scherzate"), an oboe, a bassoon and a violetta ("Non parli più d'amor"). We can also see evidence of Lotti's play with the timbres of the instruments thanks to his use of *violini sordini* ("Zeffiretti che scherzate") and to using instruments in rotation: e.g. the oboe whose part is taken over by the first violin after six bars and the bassoon, whose part is taken over by the violetta in the same manner. Lotti also made use of the concerto technique ("Se soli soli sguardi"), where the oboe part uses characteristic triple rhythms juxtaposed to the *tutti* part. The composer also used dance motifs, e.g. the *siciliana* ("De vostri sguardi"). Finally, "Povero cor tradito" shows his masterful interpretation of the text of the aria, as the instrumental part uses dotted rhythms and falling intervals which highlight the character's despair.

The ritornellos from the Wiesentheid arias are of varying lengths, but all of them are important, because they contain individual motifs which were used in the subsequent development of the arias. There are still many arias where the beginning of the vocal part marks the silence of all (or most) of the instruments with the exception of basso continuo ("Non parli più d'amor", "Zeffiretti che scherzate"). However, in some arias the instruments accompany the singer throughout the aria ("Povero cor tradito"), even though the instrumental part might still be very basic. There are also arias that are practically devoid of coloratura ("Non parli più d'amor") and arias in which coloraturas stretch to eight bars ("Asciuga su quegli occhi"). On the whole, the activity of the instruments is still quite limited and the vocal parts lack the virtuoso quality which we will find in Lotti's more mature Dresden output. Still, the arias contain some charming and inventive fragments, especially when it comes to highlighting and showcasing the meaning of the lyrics by the instrumental part.<sup>29</sup>

In Lotti's later operas, the instrumental parts are more elaborate, and the motifs contained in the ritornellos become increasingly varied. Lotti is also more and more comfortable in his use of the orchestra, even though he still resorts to some conventional usages, such as motifs that are reprised sequentially through the development of an aria. His technical demands on the singers also increase – a process that can be traced in his two 1715 operas (*Foca superbo* and *Alessandro Severo*).<sup>30</sup>

My analyses show that Lotti's arias held in the Paris collection differ significantly from those written for Venice and Dresden. They seem simpler. In terms of instrumentation, independent parts for violins I and II appear rarely, mostly replaced by violins in unison, and the activity of the middle voices is limited. A good example of that situation is the aria "Già sento nel mio petto," in which violins I and II play in unison, and violas play in unison with the bass. Due to this decision, what we hear in the aria are two instrumental parts and a vocal part. This aria is also an example of the use of a slow harmonic

29 See for example the arias "Povero cor tradito" or "Zeffiretti che scherzate".

30 *Foca superbo*, D-DI, Mus.2159-F-1; *Alessandro Severo*, D-DI, Mus.2159-F-2.

rhythm. One of the arias (“Vengo mio vago Amor”) belongs to the type of *senza basso* – interestingly, despite Lotti’s Venetian roots, I could not find other arias of this kind in the composer’s surviving operas. Those arias are characterized by more sustained Baroque melodiousness, whereas the arias from the pasticcio tend to be more focused on individual motifs and rely on their reprises. They are also less elaborate and less demanding, both with regard to vocal and instrumental parts. Since regrettably we do not have a large corpus of Lotti’s arias, and since the surviving material from the Roman pasticcio is incomplete, it is a fair conjecture that apart from the duet, the remaining arias from *Artaserse* might not have been the work of Lotti but of other composers active in Rome or Naples around 1721.

In the Paris collection there is one aria composed by Domenico Sarro:

“Placida aurette”, aria for Dario, text by Antonio Salvi, taken from Sarro’s opera *Ginevra, principessa di Scozia* (Naples 1720); a copy of the aria, transposed to A major, is also held in the Library of Congress, Washington (US-Wc, M1500.S28 G5).

The aria is in E-flat major and in duple meter. It was written for violins I and II unison, viola and basso continuo. The aria opens with an eight-bar ritornello, which contains a motif composed of two eighth notes and a quarter note with a slur. The motif uses the interval of a minor second. The motif, reprised multiple times and transformed sequentially, will become the foundation of the entire development of the aria (both the vocal and the instrumental parts.) The singer’s voice is doubled by the violin throughout almost all of part A, and it gains melodic independence in part B which is, however, devoid of coloraturas, but which are present in some fragments of part A. The musical motif suggests a certain level of insistence which corresponds to the text of the aria, talking about the uncertainty and danger of sea travel. The aria requires the singer to display considerable technical skill, but its composition is not very inventive.

There are also four arias by Porpora:

1. “Mia virtù ti vuo piu forte”; (Statira)
2. “Comincio a consolarmi”; (Statira)
3. “Non morrai mi dice il core”; (Statira)
4. “Vanne o bella al tuo Diletto”, (Dario)

Additionally, one aria, “Resta crudele a piangere” (Statira), which is missing from the Paris collection, has survived in the holdings of the Library of Congress in Washington.<sup>31</sup>

Summing up the overview of the surviving music from *Artaserse*: altogether 14 arias are preserved consisting of five by Porpora, one by Sarro, one by Leo (?), seven by Lotti (?) and one duet by Lotti. That makes 15 musical numbers in total, which constitutes almost half of all the arias in the opera (30 in total). While, of course, it is not the complete score, as I mentioned before, nonetheless the Roman *Artaserse* is well worthy of study

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31 US-Wc, M1500.S28 G5.

as it constitutes an interesting example of the coexistence of different styles presented in a single pasticcio. Arguably, pasticcio practice was well suited to such heterogeneity. We can also imagine that a pasticcio could have been used to test the public's taste. The question posed by the impresarios of the time was whether the public was ready to accept a new style exemplified by Porpora's and Sarro's arias.

## Porpora's music

In this section of the article I am going to focus on the surviving arias by Nicola Porpora. There are five arias in total, and four of them are sung by Statira (Giovanni Ossi). The fifth aria is sung by Dario (Giovanni Battista Minelli).

1. "Mia virtù ti vuo piu forte" (Statira)
2. "Comincio a consolarmi" (Statira)
3. "Non morrai mi dice il core" (Statira)
4. "Vanne o bella al tuo Diletto" (Dario)
5. "Resta crudele a piangere" (Statira)

The arias are relatively short, especially when we compare them to the arias that Porpora composed a mere two years later for *Adelaide* (1723). The arias from *Artaserse* are nonetheless markedly longer than the ones from his first opera, *Agrippina*. Most of them are about 40 bars long, and only "Vanne, o Bella, al tuo Diletto" composed for Minelli is 78 bars long. All arias are in *da capo* form, where part a2 is a little bit longer than a1, and part B is a little bit shorter than part A. Only the aria "Resta crudele a piangere" has the form of a1 rit. a2 rit. b1 rit. b2 *da capo*.

All the arias are in a fast tempo (*Allegro*) with an orchestra consisting of first and second violins playing *unisono*, violas and basso continuo. Only for "Resta crudele a piangere" there is no viola part. Four arias begin with an initial ritornello: in three of them the ritornello is four or five bars long, with the exception of "Vanne o bella al tuo Diletto", which opens with an eleven-bar ritornello. The only aria that does not contain the initial ritornello is "Resta crudele a piangere", where this artistic choice is justified by the demands of the action and by the strong emotions displayed by the character. This short, fast aria is practically syllabic. In it, Statira reacts in a highly emotional way to the unfolding events. She vehemently states that there should be no pity for Artaserse who as a father had favored his evil son over the kind and innocent one, and sentenced the latter to die. Statira's part is doubled by strings in unison. Following the model of arias *senza basso*, the bass is absent for long stretches of time, and only appears in the middle ritornellos and cadences. This is the most conservative and old-fashioned of all the arias.

In the arias the vocal part is emphasized, which is underscored by the fact that first and second violins play in unison and double the vocal line for long stretches of time. But it is also true that the instruments play an active role in the arias: the role of the violins in ritornellos is especially prominent in comparison to Porpora's *Agrippina* (Example

2) as in the aria “Mia virtù ti vuo più forte”. The key words in the arias are rendered as coloraturas of varying length and difficulty, which, however, are rarely longer than three bars.

*Example 2: Active part of violins in the ritornello of the aria “Mia virtù ti vuo più forte” by Nicola Porpora.*

**Allegro**

Violino I et II

Viola

Statira

Bc.

4

5

*tr*

Four out of five arias are in major keys and one is in minor key. In the minor-key aria the harmony is more sophisticated, and in the major-key arias it is simpler, even though the harmonic rhythm is still faster than in Porpora's later arias. In most arias, the bass line constitutes the harmonic foundation, though it does not engage in imitative, contrapuntal exchange with the violin. The aria “Comincio a consolarmi” has the richest texture as the voices are divided into two groups: first and second violin in unison with the voice, and violas together with basso continuo. Both groups use the same motif consisting of repeated notes, falling interval of a fifth and return to the initial sound (Example 3). In the latter part of the aria however, only two voices can be heard.

Example 3: The texture in the aria “Comincio a consolarmi” by Nicola Porpora.

**Allegro**

Violino I et II

Viola

Statira

Bc.

Co - min - cio à con - so - lar - mi nel

The catchy melodies of the arias consist of short phrases which are rhythmically differentiated. There is a tendency to create symmetrical phrases, as demonstrated for example in “Comincio a consolarmi,” which also makes use of appoggiaturas and syncopation. Incidentally, Porpora also made frequent use of syncopation in his other arias. In “Vanne o bella al tuo Diletto”, he also uses many triplets and appoggiaturas, and dancing rhythms (Example 4).

This short description of Porpora’s arias demonstrates that the most innovative, new and vocally demanding aria is “Vanne o bella al tu Diletto” written for Giovanni Battista Minelli (more on this singer below) whom the composer knew from different Neapolitan productions. Giovanni Ossi, who sung the important part of Statira was already well-known to the Roman audience. Being a student of Francesco Gasparini and a virtuoso of aristocratic Roman patrons, he was among the most important singers in the cast of *Artaserse*. Analysis of Ossi’s arias show, however, that his vocal abilities were lower than those of Minelli, not to mention Nicolini. It is puzzling that most of the arias dedicated to this singer (four out of five) have survived from the Roman pasticcio.

Example 4: Triplets, appoggiaturas and dancing rhythms in "Vanne o bella" by Nicola Porpora

Allegro

The musical score is arranged in four systems, each with four staves. The top staff is Violino I et II (treble clef), the second is Viola (alto clef), the third is Dario (bass clef), and the fourth is Bc. (bass clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Allegro'. Measure numbers 1 through 11 are indicated at the beginning of their respective staves. Measure 1 features a triplet in the violin and a single note in the viola. Measure 2 has a triplet in the violin and a single note in the viola. Measure 3 has a triplet in the violin and a single note in the viola. Measure 4 has a triplet in the violin and a single note in the viola. Measure 5 has a triplet in the violin and a single note in the viola. Measure 6 has a triplet in the violin and a single note in the viola. Measure 7 has a triplet in the violin and a single note in the viola. Measure 8 has a triplet in the violin and a single note in the viola. Measure 9 has a triplet in the violin and a single note in the viola. Measure 10 has a triplet in the violin and a single note in the viola. Measure 11 has a triplet in the violin and a single note in the viola. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-7 and 6-7. An appoggiatura is shown in measure 1. A trill is shown in measure 1. A slur is shown in measure 9. A sharp sign is shown in measure 8. A flat sign is shown in measure 10. A natural sign is shown in measure 11.

## The singers

According to the custom of the time, the Roman *Artaserse* was performed by an all-male cast:

Role	Singer	No. of arias
Artaserse	Annibale Pio Fabbri	5
Dario	Giovanni Battista Minelli	6
Ariarate	Baldassar Lauretti	2
Statira	Giovanni Ossi	5
Aspasia	Domenico Tollini	5
Oronte	Nicola Grimaldi	4
Codomano	Tommaso Ferrarini	2

In the *intermezzi Serpilla e Bacocco* composed by Giuseppe Maria Orlandini, Giuseppe Galletti sang the role of Serpilla and Domenico Manzi the role of Bacocco.<sup>32</sup>

The Roman cast consisted of talented and highly regarded singers, who in all probability also contributed creatively to the pasticcio. One of them was Nicola Grimaldi, better known under his stage name Nicolini, who sang Oronte both in the Neapolitan production of *Artaserse* in 1713 and in the Roman pasticcio of 1721.<sup>33</sup> It seems reasonable to assume that the aria “Empio morrò”, which he performed on both occasions was in fact the same piece. Another significant singer from the perspective of the history of the migration of arias could be Domenico Manzi, a bass singer who performed for James III in Fano in 1718 and then again sang the part of the same comic character (Bacocco) in 1721. My research points to the fact that another singer, who often performed in the same productions with Grimaldi, also played a crucial role in the creation of the Roman *Artaserse*. It was Giovanni Battista Minelli (1689-1762), already mentioned above.<sup>34</sup> This Bologna-born singer debuted in Rome in 1711 in *Anagilda*, an opera performed in a private theater that belonged to Prince Francesco Maria Ruspoli.<sup>35</sup>

In 1718 Minelli sang in Naples in *Rinaldo*, the already mentioned pasticcio put together by Leo, in which Nicolini also appeared. Minelli sang the part of Argante, and, among other arias, performed two arias that later found their way into the Roman *Artaserse*: “Nave son, che fra due venti” and “Vengo mio vago amor”. In 1720 Minelli performed in Naples in Sarro’s opera *Ginevra, regina di Scozia*. Evidence suggests that

32 Orlandini’s involvement in the *intermezzi* suggests that the composer, who was originally from Bologna but had already been active in Rome for a long time, could also have been involved in composing the arias for the pasticcio. Cf. FRANCHI, 1997.

33 DESLER, 2015, pp. 61-82.

34 SECHI, 2010.

35 IBID.; KIRKENDALE, 2007, pp. 74n and 440.

from his part in that opera, Minelli brought to *Artaserse* the aria “Placida aurette”.<sup>36</sup> The examples that I have just discussed demonstrate the crucial role that singers had in the migration of arias and the shape of pasticcios in which they sang.

In the subsequent years Minelli managed to build up a successful career, performing on all the most important opera stages in Italy. One of the places where he worked was naturally Rome where, according to the surviving (though sadly incomplete) financial records of the Teatro d’Alibert, his salary increased from one opera season to the next. Thus in 1727, for example, for singing the title roles in Vinci’s *Gismondo, re di Polonia* and in Porpora’s *Siroe*, he received 800 scudi.<sup>37</sup> In the same year, only Giacinto Fontana (Farfallino) could command a comparable fee.<sup>38</sup> Minelli also received a similarly high salary in the following year.<sup>39</sup>

Four out of six arias performed by Minelli have survived, which makes it possible to provide an overview of his vocal capability in the early 1720s. These arias are:

1. “Vengo mio vago Amor”
2. “Nave son che fra due venti”
3. “Placida aurette”
4. “Vanne, o bella, al tuo Diletto”

In the Teatro d’Alibert papers the singer is described as a “musico contralto”.<sup>40</sup> His vocal range in the four arias covers *g-e*. Minelli’s part often coincides with that of the first violin, and is characterized by coloraturas of varying length: from three bars (“Vanne, o bella al tuo Diletto”) to as many as ten (“Vengo mio vago Amor”, see Examples 5a and 5b). Minelli seems to have been a versatile performer, whose part includes coloraturas consisting of scale passages (e.g. “Placida aurette”), and leaps (“Nave son” and “Placida aurette”, see Examples 6a and 6b). The surviving arias also testify to Minelli’s ease in portraying varying emotions. The part of Dario, even though he is definitely the villain of the piece, still required the singer to portray a range of diverse emotions such as love, desire for vengeance, anger, jealousy, or struggle against the forces of nature.

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36 Considering that this aria has survived in multiple other sources, it must have been very popular in its time, cf. e.g. I-Rc, 2222, and also US-Wc, M1500.S28 G5.

37 I-Rasmom, CT 422, p. 57.

38 IBID.

39 I-Rasmom, CT 423, p. 56.

40 See for example I-Rasmom, CT 422, p. 46.

Example 5a: Coloraturas in Minelli's arias – a short one in “Vanne o bella”.

Dario

la cos - tan - - - - - za

Bc.

Example 5b: Coloraturas in Minelli's arias – a long one in “Vengo mio vago amor”.

Dario

mi con - ten - - - - - ta

Bc.

Example 6a: Scale passages in Minelli's coloraturas, aria "Placida aretta" by Domenico Sarro.

Dario

Bc.

21 22 23 24

- se non è ac - cor - to an - che il Noc - chier

25 26

Example 6b: Leaps in Minelli's coloraturas, aria "Placida aretta" by Domenico Sarro.

Dario

Bc.

Na - vi - cel - la la Na - vi - cel - la non

\* \* \*

Moving towards the conclusion, I would like to stress that there are still many questions regarding *Artaserse* that remain unanswered. The most important one (and also the most fundamental) is why the impresario of the Teatro d'Alibert decided to open the 1721 season with a pasticcio. Was it due only to economic considerations? Or was it a contingency measure taken in response to an emergency of some sort? Did the impresario commission a new opera which for some reason was not completed in time or could not be staged? Or perhaps the patron of the theater, James III Stuart, expressed his wish to listen again to Lotti's work which he had enjoyed earlier when he saw the production in Fano? James III's desire could also explain the stylistic diversity of *Artaserse*. We can assume that after his move to Rome James, who became an official patron of the Teatro d'Alibert<sup>41</sup> and was the dedicatee of the Roman version, could have asked for Silvani's libretto to be set to music again. It is also possible that some efforts were made to commission a new score from Lotti. Another important question involves the authorship of the pasticcio: who adapted Silvani's libretto for the Teatro d'Alibert?<sup>42</sup> So far, all these questions remain unanswered.

There are several reasons why *Artaserse* is an important work to study, in spite of the above-mentioned gaps in our knowledge, and in spite of its incomplete state of preservation. First of all, as I argued in the opening section of this article, *Artaserse* paved the way for other Neapolitan composers in Rome, and indirectly also in other Italian and European operatic centers. In other words, it is the forerunner of the fashion for the Neapolitan style, and the earliest example of the influence that the Neapolitan composers came to exert on Roman opera. It can also be treated as valuable material for the investigation of the role of singers in the transfer of arias and additionally, it makes it possible to study the vocal styles of singers who are now considered minor but were celebrated in their time, such as Giovanni Battista Minelli or Giovanni Ossi. Finally, it can be used to track the evolution of Porpora's style as a composer, and to study the beginnings of his stellar journey through the Italian opera centers: after the success of *Artaserse* and *Eumene*, Porpora's music was used in pasticcios staged in other operatic centers in Europe. It should also be noted that the 1721 *Artaserse* was not the last occasion when Porpora's used material from *Il tradimento traditor di se stesso*. 21 years later, in 1742, he was commissioned by the Venetian Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo to write an opera entitled *Statira*, based on the old libretto by Silvani. The 1742 work preserved many of the recitatives from the original 1711 version, and as many as eight arias. In terms of text, only one of the arias ("Vanne o bella al tu Diletto") exactly matches the text from the Roman pasticcio, and the style of the aria is markedly different.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the comparison of the 1721 and 1742 versions sheds interesting light on Porpora's development as a composer. Even though the opera landscape in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was very

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41 I-Rasmom, CT 441.

42 Later records of the Teatro d'Alibert also mention Giovanni Santonio, Giacomo Buonacorsi and Filippo Leerz as librettists. I-Rasmom, CT 441; CT 422.

43 D-DI, Mus.2417-F-3.

much dominated by Metastasio's librettos, Silvani's *Il tradimento traditor di se stesso* proved to be an inspiring and frequently adapted work.

## Appendix

Opera numbers and their sources

Act, Scene	Incipit, 1721	Composer	Source
I,2	Vengo mio vago Amor	A. Lotti?	F-Pn, D12720
I,5	Mia virtù ti vuò più forte	N. Porpora	F-Pn, D12720
I,15	Non parli più d'amor	A. Lotti	D-WD, entry 894
I,18	Comincio a consolarmi	N. Porpora	F-Pn, D12720
I,20	È gran pena aver nel petto	A. Lotti?	F-Pn, D12720
I,20	Nave son, che fra due venti	A. Lotti?	F-Pn, D12720
II,6	Vorresti disamar mio cor quel volto	A. Lotti?	F-Pn, D12720
II,8	Il mio sangue non difende	A. Lotti?	F-Pn, D12720
II,10	Placida aurette	D. Sarro	F-Pn, D12720
II,16	Non morrai mi dice il core	N. Porpora	F-Pn, D12720
III,4	Già sento nel mio petto	A. Lotti?	F-Pn, D12720
III,5	Vanne ò Bella, al tuo Diletto	N. Porpora	F-Pn, D12720
III,7	Tù vuoi, ch'io parta	A. Lotti?	F-Pn, D12720
III,8	Dal valor del braccio invitto	L. Leo?	GB-WMI, Music Man- uscript 4
III,9	Resta crudele a piangere	N. Porpora	US-Wc, M1500.S28 G5

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ID., *Statira*; score: D-DI, Mus.2417-F-3.

SARRO, DOMENICO, *Placida aurette*; score: I-Rc, 2222; US-Wc, M1500.S28 G5 (amongst others).

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