

Teatro Arciducale, Teatro di Corte, Teatro di Periferia Monza, Milan and the Transnational Opera House

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To the reader of a volume on nineteenth-century so-called ‘provincial’ theatres, the object of the present contribution might initially come across as not entirely self-explanatory in either focus or scope. First of all, the theatres considered in this paper form a case study that stretches far back into the last three decades of the eighteenth century; looking this far back into the past is necessary in order to establish narrative threads that will be needed when looking at the early decades of the nineteenth century. Secondly, the focal point of this paper, the theatres of Monza, might be rather hard to fit into labels or models of ‘province’ or ‘periphery’ as the relationship between Monza and what could/can be described as the centre, the court, the city or the capital city seems to be neither stable nor unproblematic; arguably, however, it is precisely in this instability and changing role in the regional and cultural geography that lies the particular interest of this largely forgotten yet very rich case study.

A good starting point to tell the story of Monza’s theatres is their first resurfacing from general oblivion (at least at the level of local society), represented by two articles published in the local *Rivista di Monza* in the 1930s (1934 and 1937, respectively).¹ Produced by two different compilers and rather different in scope and detail, these articles present striking similarities: both lamented the almost total oblivion that had befallen the local *teatro di corte* (court theatre), or Teatro Arciducale (Archducal Theatre), and they invoked the engagement of local institutions to save that endangered, precious piece of local heritage and re-establish its public usage. Though incorporating some major inaccuracies (for instance, the location of the original eighteenth-century theatre) and using a rather magniloquent or polemic rhetoric, these articles brought back to the general attention a venue that, despite its interesting role in issues of local identity, theatrical geography and circulation of repertoires, had been completely erased from collective practice and memory. The present paper will attempt to reconstruct some of the Monza theatres’ features and how they translated into their repertoires, and will offer some insight into the relevance and legacy of these theatres.

Though a proportionally small town very close (arguably too close) to the much bigger and more vibrant city of Milan, Monza boasted an illustrious history and a strong local pride. An ancient city of the Insubres (*Insubri*) and Lombards (*Lombardi*), in the eighteenth century the town still occupied a very important place

¹ P. L. C., Il “teatro arciducale” di Monza, in *Rivista di Monza* 2/4, April 1934, pp. 23–27; Franco Izzi, Il teatro di corte della Villa reale, in *Rivista di Monza* 5/11–12, November/December 1937, pp. 32f.

in the collective memory as safe-keeper of one of the most celebrated and symbolically powerful objects of both Christian and imperial Europe, the Iron Crown (*corona ferrea*) of Lombardy.² Highly treasured not only as the most luminous example of Carolingian gold smithery but also (and mainly) as a sacred Christian relic incorporating one of the nails of the Holy Cross, the Iron Crown had been used for centuries (since the time of Charlemagne) by the Holy Roman Emperors to assume the ceremonial title of King of Italy.³ Even well into the nineteenth century, the *corona ferrea* was used with a similar purpose (albeit in a mutated ceremonial context) by both Napoleon (1805) and Ferdinand I of Habsburg (1838).⁴ The presence of the crown, with the constant flux of pilgrims and prestigious visits aimed at its worship and ceremonial usage, gave Monza a worldwide fame and a centrality (albeit a symbolic one) that were often disproportional to its real position on the geographical and political map.⁵ While throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Milan slowly climbed the ladder of political and cultural importance by becoming the capital city of Italian, Spanish, French and then Habsburg provinces, Monza, thanks to its salubrious climate and lush greenery, was often chosen as the place to seek refuge from the city and its fast-paced and sociable life.⁶

Cultural life in Milan

In 1771, Milan had climbed a rather high step on the political and cultural ladder by becoming not only a Habsburg province (which it had been since the beginning of the century) but also the seat of an archducal court: one of the sons of Empress Maria Theresia and Francis I of Habsburg-Lorraine, Archduke Ferdinand Karl,

² Giulio Fontanini, *Dissertatio de corona ferrea Langobardorum*, Roma/Milano 1717, pp. 2f.; Lodovico A. Muratori, *De corona ferrea, qua Romanorum Imperatores in insubribus coronari solent. Commentarius*, Milano 1719, pp. 30ff.; and Wilfrid Bonser, The Cult of Relics in the Middle Ages, in *Folklore* 73/4, 1962, pp. 234–256, here p. 242.

³ Alberto Tenenti, The Silence of the Crown, in *The Iron Crown and Imperial Europe*, Vol. 1: *The Crown, the Kingdom and the Empire. A Thousand Years of History*, ed. by Gabriella Buccellati, Milano 1995, pp. 178–184.

⁴ [Anon.], *Progetto di cerimoniale per l'incoronazione di sua maestà l'imperatore Napoleone Re d'Italia*, Milano 1805, pp. 2f.; and [Anon.], *Cerimoniali per l'andata dall'I.R. palazzo alla metropolitana per l'incoronazione e ritorno, per l'incoronazione di S.M. Ferdinando I in Re del regno Lombardo-Veneto. Pel banchetto dell'incoronazione*, Milano 1838.

⁵ See, e.g., the abundance of articles dedicated to the Iron Crown in the *Rivista di Monza*, especially Andrea Fermini, La corona ferrea e l'arte dell'oreficeria, in *Rivista di Monza* 2/2, February 1934, pp. 7–10; Luigi Fossati, I cavalieri della corona ferrea. Dall'ordine austriaco della Corona di ferro all'ordine della Corona d'Italia, in *Rivista di Monza* 1/3, August 1933, pp. 3–8; Luigi Fossati, Cento anni or sono (Agosto 1838), in *Rivista di Monza* 6/7, July 1938, pp. 14–17; and Antonio Colombo, “Dio me l'ha data; guai a chi la toccherà”, in *Rivista di Monza* 6/8, August 1938, pp. 5–10; also the articles in foreign outlets, e.g. [Anon.], An Ancient Crown, in *The Saturday Evening Post* 55/14, 30 October 1875, p. 6.

⁶ Carlo Capra, Milano al tempo di Giuseppe Parini, in *La Milano del Giovine Signore*, ed. by Fernando Mazzocca/Alessandro Morandotti, Milano 1999, pp. 16–20.

married the princess Maria Beatrice of Este, daughter of the previous governor of Austrian Lombardy the Duke of Modena, and, after a memorable programme of wedding celebrations, took residency in Milan.⁷ The presence of a court in a city that had not had one for centuries (since the time of the Sforza) was bound to have a strong impact not only on the city's relationship to the Austrian monarchy but also on its society and cultural and social geography.⁸ Furthermore, Archduke Ferdinand was a particularly avid theatre patron and supporter, to the point of being reprimanded by his mother because he dedicated more time to theatre than he did to political science, hunting and military training.⁹ His wife Maria Beatrice was an incredibly refined woman, educated in Milan by the Doctors of the Ambrosiana and in music by local artists specifically employed by Maria Theresia, including Giovanni Battista Sammartini.¹⁰ From the very beginning of their mandate, the couple dedicated an incredible amount of attention to supporting the city's main opera house, the Regio Teatro Ducale, not only attending performances and social events with their family but also striving to provide a varied and prestigious operatic offering.¹¹ After the Ducale burnt to the ground in 1776, Ferdinand even fought tirelessly with his mother to not just rebuild the old theatre but to erect two new ones, one of which, La Scala, was larger and technically more advanced than any other Italian theatre of the time.¹²

In addition to the strenuous support of his capital's cultural and theatrical venues, Ferdinand's court needed to create its own representational spaces in which to host cultural and social events central to the new organisation of power. In a fashion very similar to many European courts, these were established by the Vienna court in a main residence in the very city centre and a countryside one to act as both *maison de plaisance* (a pleasure villa) and new cultural and social pole. A *casa di campagna* (countryside residence) was also needed to align the court's social calendar with that of the Milanese aristocrats, who used to spend the

⁷ Giuseppe Parini, *Descrizione delle feste celebrate in Milano per le nozze delle LL.AA.RR. l'Arciduca Ferdinando d'Austria e l'Arciduchessa Maria Beatrice d'Este fatta per ordine della R. Corte l'anno delle medesime nozze 1771*, Milano 1825; and Giuseppe Barigazzi, *La Scala racconta. Nuova edizione riveduta e ampliata*, ed. by Silvia Barigazzi, Milano 2014, pp. 22f.

⁸ Elena Riva, La corte dell'arciduca Ferdinando Asburgo Lorena, governatore di Milano (1771–1796), in *Il teatro a Milano nel Settecento*, Vol. 1: *I contesti*, ed. by Annamaria Cascetta/Giovanna Zanlonghi, Milano 2008, pp. 71–96, here pp. 73–76; and Carlo Mozzarelli, La Villa, la corte e Milano capitale, in *La Villa reale di Monza*, ed. by Francesco De Giacomo, Cinisello Balsamo 1999, pp. 10–43, here pp. 12f.

⁹ Adam Wandruszka, *The House of Habsburg. Six Hundred Years of a European Dynasty*, Westport, CT 1975, p. 151.

¹⁰ Giambattista Corniani, *I secoli della letteratura italiana dopo il suo risorgimento*, Torino 1854, p. 359; Adriano Bassi, *La musica in Lombardia nel 1700*, Sala Bolognese 1992, pp. 56f.; and Francesca Basciagli, *Opera comica e opéra-comique al Teatro Arciduciale di Monza (1778–1795)*, Lucca 2002, pp. 36f.

¹¹ Kathleen Hansell, *Opera and Ballet at the Regio Ducal Teatro of Milan, 1771–1776. A Musical and Social History*, Ann Arbor 1980, pp. 130–132.

¹² [Anon.], *Notizie storiche e descrizione dell'I. R. Teatro della Scala*, Milano 1856, pp. 5–7.

majority of the summer and part of the autumn away from the city.¹³ The main residence was kept in the traditional Palazzo Ducale (located right next to the cathedral), which was appositely refurbished and expanded by Giuseppe Piermarini (future architect of La Scala), redecorated to match the Archduke's rank and renamed Palazzo Reale (Royal Palace), a name it still bears today.¹⁴

Monza as the court summer residence

As for the pleasure or summer residence, Monza represented the perfect choice: it was located on the road to Vienna and linked by immemorial custom to the figure of the Holy Roman Emperor (a title still associated with the House of Habsburg), and it enjoyed a salubrious climate and lush greenery. The surrounding countryside also hosted the summer villas of the most important Milanese aristocrats of the time: the Archduke's residence would have thus been surrounded by his subjects' in a powerful physical representation of the court system.¹⁵ Ferdinand thus tasked Piermarini to design for him a palace for Monza, a palace that imitated in character and scope Schönbrunn or even Versailles, at the same time applying the neoclassical principles of functionality and simplicity that the architect had already used in many Milanese buildings as well as his recent experience with Luigi Vanvitelli at the Reggia (Royal Palace) of Caserta.¹⁶ The result, the magnificent Villa Reale, was already deemed disproportionate to the Archduke's effective power by some of his contemporaries (including his brother, HRE Joseph II) and can be read as an expression of Ferdinand's known desire to elevate his role from a mere representative of the imperial authority to a more independent monarch with his own court, capital and subjects.¹⁷

The Villa Reale and its beautiful and vast park (in 1806, when its boundary walls were erected, the biggest of its kind, and still Europe's third biggest walled park)¹⁸ quickly became an important presence in the leisure and cultural life of both the town and the nearby city. While the villa's very design (without boundary walls or a monumental gate) already presented it as a semi-public space, the park was frequently opened not only to the aristocracy, who carried out their popular strolls and carriage parades on its purposely built avenues before enjoying various forms of courtly-like entertainment, but also to the general public, for

¹³ Lucio Franchini, L'architettura, in *La Villa reale di Monza*, pp. 46–105, here pp. 46f.

¹⁴ Giuliana Ricci, La città rinnovata e gli edifici pubblici, in *La Milano del Giovin Signore*, pp. 192–195 here pp. 193f.

¹⁵ Elena Riva, L'arciduca e il viceré. Spigolature di vita nella villa reale di Monza, in *La villa, i giardini e il parco di Monza nel fondo disegni delle Residenze reali lombarde*, ed. by Marina Rosa, Milano 2009, pp. 29–35, here p. 30.

¹⁶ Giuseppe Marimonti, *Memorie storiche della città di Monza*, Monza 1841, p. 146; and Mozzairelli, *La Villa, la corte e Milano capitale*, p. 18.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 14f.; and Riva, *L'arciduca e il viceré*, pp. 30f.

¹⁸ Giovanni A. Mezzotti, *Passeggiata nel Real parco di Monza pei viaggiatori della strada ferrata da Milano a Monza*, Milano 1841, pp. 7f.; and the images in Franchini, *L'architettura*, p. 53.

instance during religious holidays or civic festivities.¹⁹ The sharing of the space and the offering of entertainment and leisure can be seen as nurturing strong links between the governing authority, the local community and the elite of the nearby city: in fact, Ferdinand's choice of Monza for his villa made him very popular among the locals, who not only enthusiastically attended the events he organised but also praised him for having brought back some of the town's long-lost prominence and fame.²⁰ A network of wider and better roads was also built to link the Villa Reale to the centre of Monza and the Archduke's two residences, reducing the travel time between Milan and Monza and nurturing a strong relationship between the ruling authority and the town that would continue in the following century.²¹ The strengthening of the Milan-to-Monza axis also impacted the urban geography of the whole province, creating a gradually more and more densely populated area that would play a pivotal role in the development of local trade and industry.²²

Theatres for Monza

In order to satisfy the representational and entertainment needs of a high-rank summer palace, as well as the interests of the Archduke, the Villa Reale included spaces that could be used for leisure, performances and spectacles as well as the reception of important visitors.²³ The park, for instance, featured not only idyllic gardens and promenades enriched with all sorts of local and rare plants but also avenues, caves and rotundas where lavish performances were staged at both day and night using devices such as mirrors, smoke and water, often choreographed to music.²⁴ It was, however, the express wish of both Ferdinand and his wife that Monza host not only a detached residence but also a detached opera house, ideally linked to La Scala but also representing a more independent and experimental venue. Thus, between 1777 and 1778, in parallel with both the Villa Reale (1777–1780) and the Milanese Scala and Cannobiana theatres (opened in 1778 and 1779, respectively), a theatre was built, christened the “Teatro Arciducal” (Archducal Theatre). Designed by Piermarini and entirely funded by the governor, this

¹⁹ Mozzarelli, *La Villa, la corte e Milano capitale*, p. 18; P. L. C., *Il “teatro arciducal” di Monza*, p. 23; and Bascialli, *Opera comica e opéra-comique*, pp. 20–23.

²⁰ Marimonti, *Memorie storiche della città di Monza*, pp. 145f.

²¹ Mozzarelli, *La Villa, la corte e Milano capitale*, p. 20.

²² [Anon.], *La cessione della Villa Reale ai Comuni di Milano e Monza*, in *Rivista di Monza* 2/11, November 1934, pp. 5–7.

²³ Franchini, *L'architettura*, p. 26.

²⁴ Luigi Gualtieri, *Grande illustrazione del Lombardo-Veneto*, ed. by Cesare Cantù, Vol. 1, Milano 1857, pp. 539f.; Marimonti, *Memorie storiche della città di Monza*, pp. 146f.; Mario Rivoire, *Vicende dei giardini reali*, in *Rivista di Monza* 1/3, September 1933, pp. 13f.; and Bascialli, *Opera comica e opéra-comique*, pp. 32f.

theatre was inaugurated in 1778.²⁵ Rather than on the grounds of the Villa Reale, the Teatro Arciducale was erected on the market square, thus strengthening even further the links between the archducal couple and the town.²⁶ Archival sources also seem to imply that a much smaller space with generic theatrical features was allocated within the villa for the court's private use only and for Ferdinand to fully apply his impresario skills, but the current state of research does not allow any definitive confirmation.²⁷ The Teatro Arciducale was Monza's first stable theatre, and it added yet another point on Lombardy's theatrical map, arguably one of the most crowded of its time.²⁸ What is sure is that the theatre had a rather polyvalent role, not only providing entertainment for both the local and the Milanese elites but also functioning as a court venue by hosting private or semi-private events for the archdukes and their guests, such as *feste da ballo*, *accademie* and *cantate*.²⁹ Until late 1795, when the fight against the revolutionary threat and the war against France had significantly eroded the court's finances and cultural capability, the Monza theatre hosted small-scale yet regular opera seasons, usually centred around the so-called *villeggiatura*, the long periods of time the aristocracy spent in their countryside villas in the warmer months.³⁰ In the case of Monza, this timescale worked perfectly: not only would the Villa Reale become the main cultural pole within the network of aristocratic residences that populated the nearby countryside, but the operatic season would also unfold on either side of the town's main religious holiday, the feast of its patron saint John the Baptist on 24 June.³¹

The Teatro Arciducale remained full property of the governor only in its very early days. Already in its opening season of Autumn 1778, following a system akin to that in force in Milan, 48 out of 68 boxes were sold to both local and Milanese

²⁵ For the theatres' inaugurations, see Mattia Verazi, *Europa riconosciuta. Dramma per musica da rappresentarsi nel Nuovo Regio Ducal Teatro di Milano nella solenne occasione del suo primo aprimento nel mese d'Agosto dell'anno 1778*, Milano 1778; Giovanni G. Boccherini, *La fiera di Venezia. Commedia per musica da rappresentarsi in Milano nel Nuovo Teatro alla Canobiana per la solenne occasione della sua prima apertura in agosto dell'anno 1779*, Milano 1779; and Giovanni Bertati, *Il curioso indiscreto. Dramma giocoso per musica da rappresentarsi nel nuovo teatro di Monza in occasione del suo primo aprimento l'Autunno dell'anno 1778*, Milano 1778; see also P. L. C., Il "teatro arciducale" di Monza, p. 23; and Zaccaria Lucchini/Giuseppe Riva, *Guida di Monza e circondario. Storica, artistica, descrittiva, commerciale. Con nuovissima pianta di Monza a colori, pianta di seregno e carta geografica del circondario in zincotipia. Riccamente illustrata*, Milano 1897, p. 104.

²⁶ Marimonti, *Memorie storiche della città di Monza*, p. 148; Bassi, *La musica in Lombardia nel 1700*, p. 132; and P. L. C., Il "teatro arciducale" di Monza, p. 24.

²⁷ Bascialli, *Opera comica e opéra-comique*, pp. 34f.; Barigazzi, *La Scala racconta*, p. 11; Franchini, *L'architettura*, p. 78; and [Anon.], *Il teatrino nella Villa Reale di Monza*, Monza 1975.

²⁸ Arthur Young, *Travels in France and Italy During the Years 1787, 1788 and 1789*, ed. by Thomas Okey, London 1915, p. 242; and [Anon.], *Monza a teatro. I luoghi dello spettacolo* [exhibition catalogue, Monza, November 1985], Monza 1985, p. 17.

²⁹ Bascialli, *Opera comica e opéra-comique*, pp. 22–24.

³⁰ Mozzarelli, *La Villa, la corte e Milano capitale*, pp. 17f.; and Mariangela Donà, *La musica a Milano nel Settecento durante la dominazione austriaca*, Milano s. a., pp. 22f.

³¹ Fabrizio Bugani, *Gli Austria-Este e il Teatro Arciducale di Monza (1778–1795). Luogo di svago o di sperimentazione?*, in *Quaderni estensi* 2, 2010, pp. 51–74, here p. 60.

aristocrats together with the management rights for services such as refreshments and gambling; united in a *Società dei proprietari palchettisti*, they financially contributed in proportion to the space they owned to the theatre's construction, maintenance and expansion.³² Between 1779 and 1780, thanks to the financial contribution of these *palchettisti* (who included notable Milanese families such as the Durini, Isimbardi and Greppi), as well as with the constant support of the governors, the theatre could in fact be expanded with the construction of *camerini* [literally “small chambers”, i.e. private rooms adjacent the boxes where *palchettisti* could keep refreshments, servants and commodities], a dancing salon and much more advanced stage machinery.³³ The audience that crowded the theatre for the various performances and soirees was then an interesting mixture of the local aristocracy and high bourgeoisie, proudly celebrating their cultural and social refinement and investment, and of Milanese patrons wishing to participate in the inner circle of power and, at the same time, proudly representing the cast around which that local specificity had been modelled.

Monza's repertoire: networks and experimentalism

In terms of theatrical repertoires, the Teatro Arciducale constitutes a very interesting yet chronically understudied case revealing encounters, investments and collaborations that articulated the constant tension between court and society, capital (whether Milan or Vienna) and peripheries, and the Italian provinces and European cultural networks. A notable example is the performance of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Lorenzo da Ponte's *Le nozze di Figaro*, which took place in the autumn of 1787, making the Monza production not only its Italian premiere but the first Italian performance of any mature Mozart work during the composer's lifetime; *Figaro*, for instance, would reach La Scala only in 1815, after the Habsburg Restoration.³⁴ The 1787 Monza production remains significant despite the fact that the original opera had undergone several changes, the main one being that only Acts I and II were performed to Mozart's music, while the Neapolitan Angelo Tarchi (who had been active in La Scala since early 1783) supplied new music for Acts III and IV.³⁵ The plot also included some cuts, most notably the role of Barbarina, who was still mentioned by other characters (e.g. by Cherubino

³² [Anon.], *Monza a teatro*, p. 18; P. L. C., Il “teatro arciducale” di Monza, p. 24; and Marimonti, *Memorie storiche della città di Monza*, p. 148.

³³ Bascialli, *Opera comica e opéra-comique*, pp. 28f.

³⁴ Lorenzo Da Ponte, *Le nozze di Figaro. Dramma semiserio per musica in due atti da rappresentarsi nel Regio Teatro alla Scala nella primavera dell'anno 1815*, Milano 1815.

³⁵ Lorenzo Da Ponte, *Le nozze di Figaro. Commedia per musica da rappresentarsi nel Teatro di Monza l'autunno dell'anno 1787 dedicata alle LL. AA. RR. il serenissimo arciduca Ferdinando Principe Reale d'Ungheria, e Boemia, Arciducato d'Austria, Duca di Borgogna, e di Lorena ec., Cesareo Reale Lugo Tenente, Governatore, e Capitano Generale nella Lombardia Austriaca e la serenissima arciduchessa Maria Ricciarda Beatrice d'Este*, Milano 1787 [digital copy: <https://cloud.sbn.it/opac/LO1/dettaglio/documento/LO1E055996>], p. [IV].

in Act I, scene 5 and by the Count in Act I, scene 7)³⁶ but whose absence caused the disappearance of whole numbers (e.g. her aria “L’ho perduta, me meschina” at the beginning of Act IV) as well as the amendment or rearrangement of several scenes in the sections reset by Tarchi (e.g. Act III, scene 9).³⁷

Despite the low respect given to Mozart’s and Da Ponte’s work, this performance offers an insight into the role Monza came to play in the network for opera circulation that existed across all the Habsburg-ruled provinces. On the one hand, the original creative team surely did not play a role in this enterprise; on the other hand, *Figaro* had not gained enough success to justify its international circulation so soon after the Viennese premiere (Burgtheater, May 1786). It is then possible that HRE Joseph II directly recommended the opera to his younger brothers Ferdinand in Lombardy and Peter Leopold (future HRE Leopold II) in Tuscany: *Figaro*, this time with no tampering, was in fact performed at Florence’s Teatro della Pergola shortly after (in the spring of 1788), and both libretti document the support and presence of the archducal governors and their families.³⁸ The preface of the Monza libretto, signed by the representatives of the society of the *palchettisti*, also acknowledged the important role played by the archducal couple in supporting the performance, including commissioning the rewriting of the music in the last two acts to make the original work a better fit for the local taste and occasion.³⁹ On a smaller-scale stage like Monza’s and in *villeggiatura* seasons such as spring, summer and autumn, local audiences sought shorter and simpler works more similar to traditional opera buffa; the suppression of Barbarina’s role and the subsequent shortening of several scenes and simplification of the plot (indeed, rather dense and complex for a comic work) would then fit better the general expectations. Besides, even in Florence, where the work was performed in its original form, the audience could not cope with it being performed in one, long soiree; the Florentine libretto in fact reveals that *Figaro* was performed over two evenings, two acts in each.⁴⁰

Another larger-scale cultural project highly representative of the Austrian-Lombard governors’ desire to elevate their theatre(s) to the level of European operatic centres, and of the role the Habsburg courts played in facilitating the transnational circulation and adaptation of repertoires, was the frequent performance at Monza’s Teatro Arciduciale of opéras comiques in Italian translation curated by the celebrated intellectual, playwright and *homme de théâtre* Giuseppe

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 8–10 and 15f.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 60f. and 67f. See also Ian Woodfield, “Che soave zeffiretto” and the Structure of Act 3 of *Le nozze di Figaro*, in *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 143/1, 2018, pp. 89–136, here pp. 106f.; and Michael Raeburn/Christopher Raeburn, Mozart Manuscripts in Florence, in *Music and Letters* 40/4, 1959, pp. 334–340, here pp. 335–337.

³⁸ Lorenzo Da Ponte, *Le nozze di Figaro o sia La folle giornata. Dramma giocoso per musica da rappresentarsi nel Regio Teatro di via della Pergola la primavera del 1788 sotto la protez. dell’A.R. di Pietro Leopoldo Arciduca d’Austria, Principe Reale d’Ungheria e di Boemia, Gran-Duca di Toscana ec. ec.*, Firenze 1788.

³⁹ Da Ponte, *Le nozze di Figaro* (1787), pp. [ii]f.

⁴⁰ Da Ponte, *Le nozze di Figaro* (1788), p. 3.

Carpani.⁴¹ Between 1778 (the year of the theatre's very opening) and 1795 (the year prior to the Napoleonic conquest, when the war against revolutionary France had drained most of the court's funds), Monza saw the performances of several opéras comiques coming from the French capital, including André Grétry's *Richard Cœur-de-lion* (1787), Nicholas Dalayrac's *Nina, ou La folle par amour* (1788), and *Lodoiska* with music by both Rodolphe Kreutzer and Luigi Cherubini (1794). With the exception of *Lo spazzacamino principe* (1790), all librettos were French originals in Italian translation by Carpani, who left us detailed descriptions of the highly experimental process of musical and textual adaptation in his *note del traduttore* (translator's notes). Similarly, with the exception of *Richard Cœur-de-lion* in 1787 (when, being the first experiment with the genre and its sources, the Monza performers used the Parisian score and parts with just a few annotations), musical materials were prepared mainly according to the French editions but with changes and additions supplied by local musicians in order to adapt the original music to the translated text.⁴² Both the manuscript materials and printed editions are kept today in the Este musical collection at the Biblioteca Estense of Modena, where Ferdinand and his wife had to seek refuge in May 1796 after the Austrian army suffered the decisive defeat on the bridge of Lodi that opened the way to Milan to the French.

Interestingly, the process of importing and adapting Parisian works for the Monza stage changed over time in the direction of a growing 'Italianisation' of the musical material alongside Carpani's translation of the texts. While the genre-defining alternation between spoken dialogues (in lieu of secco recitatives) and closed sung numbers was retained, the musicians working for the Monza orchestra, many also employed in La Scala, introduced perceived 'Italian' or 'Neapolitan' traits such as the virtuosic expansion of cadential phrases, the more systemic use of repetition and subdivision and a stronger stress on the melodic line.⁴³ These changes mirrored the audience's predilection for and familiarity with Neapolitan-style opera buffa, which featured heavily not only in the Monza season (with important names such as Domenico Cimarosa, Giovanni Paisiello, Pasquale Anfossi and the aforementioned Tarchi) but also in the Milanese Scala and Cannobiana, where opera seria was traditionally performed only or mainly during the Carnival season (December–February).⁴⁴ These works would normally reach Monza within a

⁴¹ [Anon.], *Necrologia*, in *Biblioteca italiana* 10/37, 1825, p. 283; [Anon.], *Monza a teatro*, p. 18; and Bascialli, *Opera comica e opéra-comique*, pp. 41–43.

⁴² See, e.g., [Giuseppe Carpani], *Avvertimento del traduttore*, in Benoît J. Marsollier des Vivetières, *Nina ossia La Pazza per amore. Commedia d'un atto in prosa, ed in verso, e per musica, tradotta dal francese da rappresentarsi nel Teatro di Monza l'autunno dell'anno 1788*, transl. by Giuseppe Carpani, Milano 1788, pp. 7–9; and [Giuseppe Carpani], *Al pubblico colto e gentile. Il traduttore*, in Jean E. B. Dejaure, *Lodoiska. Commedia eroica in tre atti, frammischiata di canti e tolta dal francese da rappresentarsi nel Teatro di Monza l'autunno 1793*, transl. by Giuseppe Carpani, Milano 1793, pp. [III]f.

⁴³ Bascialli, *Opera comica e opéra-comique*, pp. 58–62.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 129–132; Hansell, *Opera and Ballet at the Regio ducal teatro of Milan*, p. 183; and Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*, London 1773, p. 82.

year from their (successful) premiere in other Italian centres (mainly Rome, Venice and Naples), either passing through Milan or (even more interestingly) bypassing it; with Naples also being co-ruled by a Habsburg archduchess (Maria Carolina, wife of the king of Naples Ferdinand IV of Bourbon), these patterns add another layer of understanding of the networks established at the time and in the current political setting for the circulation of operatic works, networks in which Monza seemingly played an important role.

Monza's experiments with opéra comique can thus be considered highly significant as a rather free platform not only for the circulation of the genre outside France but also for its blending with and impact on the Italian tradition of comic operas. A particularly notable experiment in this sense is the aforementioned *Lo spazzacamino principe*, which was prepared in 1790 starting from Alexandre L. B. Robineau's 1784 *comédie-proverbe Le Ramoneur prince* rather than from an existing opéra comique. The creative team, consisting of two very active and celebrated artists of the time (namely, the composer Tarchi and librettist Giuseppe Foppa) sought to blend the agility and comicality of the French prose (especially in the dialogues) with the musical dramaturgy, occasions, forms, structures and conventions typical of Italian opera buffa. The resulting work – featuring, for instance, two acts instead of a single one, more characters and more dramatic occasions leading to ensemble and choral numbers – was proudly described as “the first of its genre to ever appear in Italy”.⁴⁵ With cultural operations such as these, Monza has also been recognised as one of the vertices of a quadrilateral comprising three other Habsburg-ruled capitals, namely Vienna (Joseph II), Paris (Maria Antonia/Marie Antoinette) and Bonn (Maximilian Franz), that played a pivotal role in creating meaningful occasions and a transnational network for opéra comique's circulation, appreciation and adaptation.⁴⁶

The small and seemingly provincial theatre of Monza, so close to the much bigger and prestigious Milanese theatres, can thus be seen as constantly articulating the space and relation between the governor, the court and the society as well as – thanks to its semi-public, semi-private financial and management status – serving as a centre of much greater experimentation than expected. Its activity can also be considered as part of the transnational networks for cultural circulation that, thanks to the court's function as a cultural catalyst, connected Monza to foreign theatrical centres of prime importance such as Vienna and Paris. We are unfortunately left with just speculation on what (else) could have happened had the Napoleonic Wars not chased Ferdinand, his court and his most ardent political and cultural supporters (including Carpani) away from Lombardy to Modena or Venice and then back to Vienna.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ “[...] il primo di questo genere, che compaja in Italia.” [Giuseppe Foppa], *Altezze Reali*, in *Lo spazzacamino principe. Commedia in musica divisa in due atti, e tolta dal francese da rappresentarsi nel teatro di Monza l'autunno 1790*, Milano 1790, pp. [I]f., here p. [II].

⁴⁶ Bugani, *Gli Austria-Este e il Teatro Arciducale di Monza*, pp. 51–58.

⁴⁷ [Anon.], *Necrologia*, p. 283.

Political changes at the turn of the century

As opposed to the long and stable Habsburg rule, the *Campagne d'Italie* and Napoleonic conquest of 1796 led to a season of fast-paced, sometimes rather hysterical political and social change; from these years until the end of the following century, the destiny of the villa and theatre of Monza, like the rest of its cultural venues, would be indissolubly linked to the changes in Milan's political situation.⁴⁸ During the Jacobin republics of 1796–1799 and 1800–1802, the new, transient government invested the majority of energy and funds into the production of republican cultural outputs (e.g. festivals and large-scale public celebrations) and into the Milanese venues and occasions, seen as models to export to all the other Lombard towns.⁴⁹ Strongly associated with what was now the 'foreign' and 'tyrannical' authority of the Habsburgs and to the 'obsolete' power of the Church, Monza and its cultural venues faced oblivion and neglect, if not tragic spoliation; after some initial demonstrations of enthusiasm (mainly fuelled by a few local Jacobins) for the mutated political conditions, it quickly became clear that cultural and financial exploitation was among the conquerors' main purposes.⁵⁰ Following a pattern that became sadly very familiar in all regions occupied by the French, Monza's most prestigious cultural institutions, from the cathedral's chapter to the local archives and libraries, were robbed of precious objects, incunabula and codices, and only its status as a holy relic saved the Iron Crown from suffering the same fate.⁵¹ The Villa Reale was first sold to a French officer, who even contemplated its complete destruction, but it was saved thanks to its strategic position and extensive grounds, which were ideal for military manoeuvres and drills; rechristened the "Villa della Repubblica", it was converted into military barracks and subsequently suffered tragic vandalism and spoliations.⁵²

As for the Teatro Arciducale, because of its large size and practical position on the market square, it was deprived of as a performance venue and turned first into a military butcher's workshop and then into a warehouse. Inserted into the Cisalpine Republic's wider project of reformation of its theatrical venues and practices in a more 'democratic' direction, the theatre reopened its doors in January 1798, albeit no longer offering operatic performances. In fact, according to the most vehement republican patriots and dramaturgs, spoken theatre (both tragedies and comedies) had to be the primary vehicle for the citizens' moral education

⁴⁸ Franchini, *L'architettura*, pp. 66f.

⁴⁹ Alessandra Palidda, *Urban Spectacle in Republican Milan. Pubbliche feste at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge/London 2023, pp. 38–42.

⁵⁰ Giuseppe Riva, Un diario inedito degli avvenimenti monzesi dal 1796 al 1800, in *Rivista di Monza* 3/5, May 1935, p. 3.

⁵¹ Nino Del Bianco, *Il coraggio e la sorte. Gli italiani nell'età napoleonica dalle Cisalpine al Regno Italico*, Milano 1997, pp. 64–66; and Lucchini/Riva, *Guida di Monza e circondario*, p. 80.

⁵² Mozzarelli, *La Villa, la corte e Milano capitale*, p. 26; and Riva, *Un diario inedito degli avvenimenti monzesi*, pp. 4f.

rather than the corrupted aristocratic pastime that opera had become.⁵³ While opera and ballet performances (though with numerous changes in subject matter and musical style as well as in the performers' rights and behaviour) continued in the most prestigious and visible La Scala, other Milanese venues (especially La Cannobiana) saw an increase in performances of patriotic spoken theatre, as well as gatherings of political clubs and forms of popular entertainment such as *feste da ballo*.⁵⁴

Deprived of their role as the theatre's supporters and co-managers, Monza's *palchettisti*, in a very similar fashion to what was happening in Milan, were also dispossessed of their boxes, and the building itself had to undergo a 'republican purge' in that the coats of arms and other symbols of aristocracy were chiselled off its walls.⁵⁵ In this new 'national theatre', performances were mostly offered free of charge or for a very cheap price, leading to a much more varied audience than in the recent years: this comprised not only those aristocrats and high bourgeoisie who wanted to try and ride the wave of political change to acquire more power and privileges but also members of the lower bourgeoisie and some of the numerous soldiers stationed nearby.⁵⁶ In addition to participating in the republic-wide project of 'democratisation' of theatre, Monza became a part of the tireless, often extreme fight against 'anti-democratic' and 'anti-republican' elements and figures, which resulted, as many lamented, in constant disorder and disruption during the performances and even in denunciations and persecutions.⁵⁷ A case that made Monza's theatre quite famous was that of the denunciation presented to the local municipality by a so-called *prete spretato* (a defrocked priest), a familiar sight at the time (as well as later in the Risorgimento years), namely a member of the clergy who was trying to turn the current political change to his own favour by being almost overly patriotic.⁵⁸ The object of denunciation were two comedies given at the theatre, especially Carlo Goldoni's *Il matrimonio per concorso*, which supposedly contained many references to the aristocracy, e.g. titles and salutations as well as an Austrian soldier on stage. Despite the performers' numerous attempts

⁵³ See, e.g., Francesco S. Salfi, Teatro nazionale, in *Termometro politico della Lombardia* [1/10, 26 July 1796], ed. by Vittorio Criscuolo, Vol. 1, Roma 1989, pp. 161–165; the *Rapporto della Commissione sui Teatri*, June 1798, Library of the Conservatorio "Giuseppe Verdi" of Milan, Legato Somma, 2; and Giovanni Azzaroni, *La rivoluzione a teatro. Antinomie del teatro giacobino in Italia (1796–1805)*, Bologna 1985, pp. 9–15.

⁵⁴ Raffaello Barbiera, *Vite ardenti nel Teatro (1700–1900)*. *Da archivi e da memorie*, Milano 1931, pp. 37–39; and Pomeo Cambiasi, *La Scala 1778–1889. Note storiche e statistiche*, Milano 1889, pp. 23–27.

⁵⁵ Franchini, *L'architettura*, p. 66; [Anon.], *Il teatrino nella Villa Reale di Monza*; [Anon.], *Monza a teatro*, pp. 19f.; and Antonio Paglicci Brozzi, *Sul teatro giacobino ed antigiacobino in Italia, 1796–1805*, Milano 1897, pp. 179–184.

⁵⁶ Giuseppe Riva, Una commedia del Goldoni al teatro di Monza nel 1798 e una dimostrazione politica, in *Saggi critici e narrativi di storia monzese*, Monza 1910, pp. 264f.

⁵⁷ Paglicci Brozzi, *Sul teatro giacobino ed antigiacobino in Italia*, p. 115; and Egidio Bellorini, *Disordini in teatro a Milano al tempo delle Repubbliche Cisalpina e Italiana (1796–1805)*, in *Archivio storico lombardo* 34/8, 1907, pp. 126–131.

⁵⁸ Aurelio Saffi, *Ricordi e scritti*, Vol. 3: 1846–1849, Firenze 1898, pp. 141f.

to purge all these ‘immoral’ references from Goldoni’s text, to include as many revolutionary slogans as possible and to stress the original comic nature of the Austrian character, the performance caused such noise and disturbance that the commander-in-chief had to use the armed forces to reestablish order.⁵⁹

In the more temperate political climate that followed the proclamation of the Repubblica Italiana (1802), the links between the palace and the ruling power on the one hand and the local society on the other were renewed, albeit slowly. During the Italian Republic (1802–1805), the Villa Reale, newly christened as the “Palazzo Nazionale”, became the summer residence and main workspace of the vice-president Francesco Melzi d’Eril, who undertook significant (and much-needed) works of refurbishment and brought to Monza all sorts of important visitors, from diplomats to high-ranking officers, often organising lavish receptions and other social events.⁶⁰ As for the Teatro Arciducale, like other contemporary theatres, it was unfortunately destroyed by a fire in January 1802 and, despite a plan swiftly put together by the former *palchettisti*, was not rebuilt, leaving Monza without a stable theatrical venue.⁶¹ While Milan, capital of the Italian Republic as it had been of all Napoleonic states, saw its political status elevated and reflected in a more and more monumental layout, the town seemed confined – again – to a peripheral or provincial status.

Against all odds, Monza experienced a new wave of importance as a crucial pole in the political and cultural geography of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy, which was declared in 1805 and lasted until the Restoration of 1814. Napoleon’s growing personality cult and his artificial links to the French imperial and Italian royal lines were sanctioned in all provinces of his empire through carefully detailed rituals that repurposed strong local symbols: for his Parisian coronation as Emperor of the French in Notre Dame (December 1804), Napoleon recreated the crown of Charlemagne (the original lost in the revolutionary turmoil alongside many other French regalia), while for his proclamation as King of Italy in the cathedral of Milan (May 1805), he chose the Iron Crown.⁶² Back in the spotlight, Monza received the title of ‘imperial city’, saw its cathedral chapter re-installed and its Villa Reale become the summer residence of a new royal court, that of Napoleon’s stepson and Viceroy of Italy Eugène (or Eugenio) of Beauharnais and his wife, the princess Augusta Amalia of Bayern.⁶³ The couple was forced to deal with quite a

⁵⁹ Riva, *Una commedia del Goldoni*, pp. 272–274.

⁶⁰ Mozzarelli, *La Villa, la corte e Milano capitale*, pp. 27f.

⁶¹ Marimonti, *Memorie storiche della città di Monza*, p. 148; [Anon.], *Il “teatro arciducale” di Monza*, p. 25; and [Anon.], *Monza a teatro*, p. 24.

⁶² [Anon.], *Progetto di cerimoniale per l’incoronazione di sua maestà l’imperatore Napoleone Re d’Italia*, pp. 2f; [Anon.], *Documenti ufficiali relativi al nuovo Regno d’Italia e all’incoronazione di Napoleone Bonaparte primo imperatore de’ francesi e re d’Italia*, Vol. 1, Milano 1805, pp. 45–48; Alain Pillepich, *Napoleon I^{er} et la couronne de fer*, in *The Iron Crown and Imperial Europe*, pp. 22–207, and Emanuele Pigni, *Le due incoronazioni di Napoleone*, in *Aevum* 74/3, 2005, pp. 739–744.

⁶³ Elena Riva, *Eugenio di Beauharnais viceré del Regno d’Italia*, in *Il palazzo reale di Milano in età napoleonica (1796–1814)*, ed. by Giovanna D’Amia, Viterbo 2017, pp. 11–19.

complex cultural and social geography in Milan, with many venues such as the Palazzo Reale and Villa Belgiojoso-Bonaparte having to function as royal residences for Napoleon as well as their own; they found in the Villa Reale room and conditions for much-needed independence, leisure and self-representation. As a result, Eugenio, Augusta Amalia and their family spent extended periods of time in Monza, much more so than Ferdinand and Maria Beatrice.⁶⁴

In their appositely refurbished, lavish residence, the vice-royal couple entertained both the Milanese and local aristocracy as well as the lower social strata with a rich programme of events that made full use of the villa's public spaces and gardens. In order to establish a good relationship with their subjects and in line with the *ancien-régime* rule of *panem et circenses* (but also to establish an alternative to the recent republican celebrations), they organised, for instance, large-scale feasts, mostly synchronised to local civic and religious holidays, that merged popular entertainment with the distribution of food and goods and often included a musical component. At the same time, the construction of the boundary walls (started in 1806) created a divide between public and private space in terms of both courtly life and entertainment/performance.⁶⁵

A new theatre for Monza

As already mentioned, the Teatro Arciducale on Monza's market square had burnt down in 1802, which meant the *coppia vicereale* was left with a rather limited choice of performance spaces in their preferred residence. As the Habsburg-Este governors, both Eugenio and Augusta Amalia were refined musicians as well as enthusiastic hosts and pleasure-seekers. Augusta Amalia, for instance, brought up at the vibrant court of Maximilian I of Bavaria, became quickly known for her lavish soirees and receptions at the Mirabellino, her favourite pavilion in the Villa Reale's park, which during the Kingdom even came to be known as "Villa Augusta".⁶⁶ While the previous Teatro Arciducale was rebuilt by its former *palchettisti* as a public theatre known as the "Teatro Sociale" and no longer linked to the ruling authority, it was probably following Augusta Amalia's desire to rejuvenate Monza's cultural life and make it less 'provincial' and more international that in 1807 the then royal architect Luigi Canonica was entrusted to build a *teatrino di corte*, a little court theatre, in the villa's north wing.⁶⁷ A sort of 'Milanese Haussmann' unrivalled in the use of neoclassicism in a Lombard context, Canonica had created

⁶⁴ Franchini, *L'architettura*, p. 66; and Giovanna D'Amia, *Da Palazzo Nazionale a Palazzo Reale tra ridefinizioni simboliche e trasformazioni edilizie*, in *Il palazzo reale di Milano in età napoleonica*, pp. 31–36.

⁶⁵ Mozzarelli, *La Villa, la corte e Milano capitale*, pp. 29f.

⁶⁶ Lucchini/Riva, *Guida di Monza e circondario*, p. 140; and Giovanni A. Mezzotti, *Passeggiata nel Real parco di Monza pei viaggiatori della strada ferrata da Milano a Monza*, Milano 1841, pp. 14f.

⁶⁷ Franchini, *L'architettura*, pp. 78f.; and P. L. C., *Il "teatro arciducale" di Monza*, pp. 25f.

some of the main urban symbols of the Napoleonic capital such as the Foro Bonaparte and Arena Civica and knew the Villa Reale very well for having contributed to its renovation for Melzi d'Eril.⁶⁸ For practical reasons mainly linked to space, but arguably also in line with the mutated celebratory frame focusing more and more on the celebration of 'Italian' royalty, Canonica (who had also curated the building or refurbishment of other theatres, e.g. the Milanese Teatro Re) did not opt for a *teatro all'italiana*, with its stalls and tiers of boxes; instead, he merged some of its features, mainly the presence of a *palchettone* or *palco reale*, with the structure and proportions of sixteenth-century court theatres, especially those of the Teatro Gonzaga of Sabbioneta (1590).⁶⁹ The lavish painted curtain was decorated by another champion of art in Napoleonic Milan, the painter Andrea Appiani, who, among many other works, had supplied the frescoes in the renovated Palazzo Reale.⁷⁰

It is rather interesting how the court of Eugenio and Augusta Amalia, peripheral from so many angles, tried to adopt the spectacular frame of the glorious Renaissance courts as centres of political and cultural power. Their *teatro di corte*, entrusting all artistic choices to the court and their employees, *de facto* obliterated the synergy between the governing authority and local elites that was at the base of the *palchettisti* system in force in Monza's earlier theatres. With its private and semi-private spaces and enclosed theatre, the Villa Reale thus transitioned (or maybe went back) to quite a secluded and self-referential type of management, repertoire and audience. While much information detailing the musical life of the Monza court with its different figures and venues has been arguably lost or dispersed due to the chronic political instability that affected Lombardy since the turn of the nineteenth century, a consistent group of musical sources pertaining to the Napoleonic court have recently been identified within the library of the Conservatoire "Giuseppe Verdi" of Milan, where they were used for educational purposes. Through these sources, we can try to reconstruct, albeit still with many doubts, some of the main features of the repertoire performed in Monza in both the *teatrino* and the other performance spaces in the gardens and their pavilions.⁷¹

Most performances were in the format of instrumental and especially vocal *accademie* that brought to the royal couple and their selected guests excerpts from some of the most popular operas, both from the recent past and currently circulating throughout the Italian peninsula. Alongside celebrated names of the glorious Neapolitan school, already popular with both the royal couple and local audiences, one can see composers who had made their fortune by writing occasional music in the republican years (e.g. Vincenzo Federici) as well as many who had won their Italian success quite recently (e.g. Simon Mayr, Joseph Weigl and

⁶⁸ [Anon.], *Il teatrino nella Villa Reale di Monza*.

⁶⁹ See Canonica's original plans in Franchini, *L'architettura*, p. 85.

⁷⁰ [Anon.], *Monza a teatro*, pp. 29f.

⁷¹ Licia Sirch, *The Music Inventory of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy*, in *Fontes Artis Musicae* 68/2, 2021, pp. 67–157, here pp. 69f.

Marcos Portugal).⁷² The music for vocal *accademie* includes even a few cases of artists (the most notable being Franz Joseph Haydn) whose works would not reach Milan's theatres until after the Restoration.⁷³ The Monza court, even in its private dimension, seems to have played yet again the role of operatic catalyst and to have provided its (admittedly small) audience with an offering more rich and diverse than other more central or accessible venues.⁷⁴

In addition to the *accademie*, Monza's *teatrino* and other performance spaces became the most representative spaces of the Napoleonic court by offering more traditional celebratory works that harked back to *ancien-régime* models, for instance cantatas and dramatic *azioni teatrali* with music especially commissioned to celebrate dynastic events.⁷⁵ Some of the works performed in Monza, either for celebration or for entertainment, went even further by incorporating some elements of the Villa Reale into their setting, such as Bonifazio Asioli's *Azione teatrale campestre*, performed in 1808, where the idyllic atmosphere was with all probability linked to the villa's lush gardens.⁷⁶ Almost all musical forces were supplied by the newly instituted Cappella Reale, where many *professori d'orchestra* of La Scala were active, including some (e.g. Pietro Ray, Bonifazio Asioli and Alessandro Rolla) who would also become teachers at the soon-to-be-born Conservatorio di Milano (1808).⁷⁷ Thus, these years saw the formation of an interesting network that tightly connected the main Milanese venues for musical production and education with their counterparts at court.

Conclusions

After the Restoration (1814), the prestige of Monza as a cultural pole and of its Villa Reale as a musical venue declined sharply as Milan would never be the seat of a court anymore; despite being frequently used by the members of the Casa Savoia as a pleasure residence, the villa did not host regular or major musical events. In its first four decades of history, Monza and its theatre(s) can, however, be seen as

⁷² See, for instance, Vincenzo Federici/Luigi Romanelli, "Dille che l'aure", from *Castore e Polluce*, 1803, manuscript copy, I-Mc, Mus.Tr.ms.410; Simon Mayr, "Tu di quest'anima", from *Il fanatico per la musica*, 1798, manuscript copy, I-Mc, Mus.Tr.ms.662; and Joseph Weigl/Giovanni Bertati, "Ah che mai dissi", from *La principessa di Amalfi*, 1803, manuscript copy, I-Mc, Mus.Tr.ms.1363.

⁷³ Franz Joseph Haydn/Nunziato Porta, "Odio, furor, dispetto", from *Armida*, 1784, manuscript copy, I-Mc, Mus.Tr.ms.577.

⁷⁴ [Anon.], *Il teatrino nella Villa Reale di Monza*; and Alessandra Palidda, Musica per le accademie, in *Il fondo musicale del regno napoleonico d'Italia. Luoghi, protagonisti, repertori* [exhibition catalogue, Biblioteca del Conservatorio "G. Verdi" of Milan], ed. by Marta Crippa/Alessandra Palidda, Milano 2023, pp. 21–33, here pp. 24–32.

⁷⁵ Pietro Franceschini, *Il tempio d'Imeneo. Componimento drammatico intrecciato con danze da eseguirsi nel Teatro della Real Corte di Monza*, Milan 1813; and the score with music by Pietro Ray, manuscript copy, I-Mc, M.S.ms.225.1.

⁷⁶ Bonifazio Asioli, *Azione teatrale campestre per il teatrino di Monza*, manuscript copy, I-Mc, Mss.Mus.B 3004.

⁷⁷ Marta Crippa/Alessandra Palidda, Per concludere. Il Regno e il Conservatorio, in *Il fondo musicale del regno napoleonico d'Italia*, pp. 45–50, here pp. 45–49.

articulating important dynamics at the level of management, authority, audiences and repertoire and constitute a long-forgotten link in the chain of musical production, circulation and reception in a highly transitional and transnational context. Despite both constituting a seemingly provincial or peripheral pole and always maintaining a certain private, semi-private or secluded character, Monza's theatres have been major operatic catalysts, centres for experimentation across repertoires and outlets where patrons and artists could undertake musical and cultural projects of prime significance. As poles in rich transnational networks that included, but also sometimes bypassed, the nearby bigger cities, provincial theatres such as Monza's can also be seen as meaningful alternatives, or even as competitors, to the 'centres', and as such they must be acknowledged and evaluated. By problematising the relationship between the centre or capital and the province based on issues such as patronage, circulation and cultural initiative, Monza's theatres also offer an alternative, meaningful reading of issues at the core of cultural production at the turn of the nineteenth century, when concepts such as localism, nationalism (or the very concept of a nation), pride and political allegiance were being subjected to a radical recodification that would have major consequences for later events.

