'Per desiderio di farsi onore': Singers and the Adaptation of Arias in Italian drammi per musica *of the Early Eighteenth-Century Italy*

ANNE DESLER
University of Edinburgh
Email: a.desler@ed.ac.uk

Open Access. © 2021 Anne Desler, published by Sciendo. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 3.0 License.

sciendo

Musicology Today • Vol. 18 • 2021
DOI: 10.2478/muso-2021-0006

'Per desiderio di farsi onore': Singers and the Adaptation of Arias in Italian drammi per musica *of the Early Eighteenth-Century Italy*

ABSTRACT

Within the aesthetic framework of the work concept and author-centred approach to music history, the practice of aria substitution in the eighteenth-century Italian *dramma per musica* has frequently been viewed as hostile interference with the composer's authorial intention and attributed to singers' vanity, laziness and ignorance. However, the substitution of both the texts and musical settings of arias constituted the default production practice in a period in which scores were not conceptualised as fixed texts but functioned as performance materials for specific productions. Moreover, the practice of aria substitution was deeply rooted in the socio-cultural context of opera production and the arts consumption practices of the social elite. A manifestation of period preoccupation with displaying and gauging rank and status, it was crucial to singers' professional success.

Analysing the reasons for the substitution of three specific arias in revivals of settings by both Hasse and Vinci of Metastasio's *Artaserse* in 1730 and 1731, this paper accounts for typical scenarios for this practice in opera production. Rather than focusing predominantly on the arias' musical parameters, it also evaluates their dramatic features, scope for stage action and potential for engaging period audiences. Brief consideration is also given to two unusual *drammi per musica* of 1734 featuring an exceptionally high number of *arie di tempesta.*

Keywords: dramma per musica, substitute aria, Farinelli, Nicolini, opera patronage

In his famous *Opinioni de' cantori antichi, e moderni, o sieno osservazioni sopra il canto figurato,* Pierfrancesco Tosi states: 'Chi canta per desiderio di farsi onore già canta bene, e canterà meglio col tempo; E chi non pensa, che al guadagno impara la miglior lezione per essere un povero ignorante'.[1] The influence of nineteenth- and twentieth-century aesthetics might lead the modern reader to assume that Tosi exhorted singers to strive for honour and excellence for the sake of art; however, his primary concern was singers' professional success. His remark forms part of his advice on a matter that he considered crucial to singers' careers, i.e., how to establish a 'worthy character' on the stage of 'the great theatre of the world'.[2] After more than twenty years' experience as a musician-diplomat, Tosi had acute insight into the complex early modern framework of socio-cultural and economic hierarchies, honour culture and the gift economy in which singers, typically from the lower middle class, had to adapt their conduct to the expectations of the nobility.[3] By the early eighteenth century, operatic singing had emerged as a profession; sought-after singers were no longer bound in servitude to individual patrons but increasingly independent agents in a burgeoning marketplace.[4] Nevertheless, the 'old obsequious language' that singers continued to use in communication with the aristocracy,[5] was more than mere form. In a context in which aristocrats largely controlled court and public theatres, facilitated engagements as well as travel, played an important role in spreading singers' fame and determined performances' success or failure, gaining and maintaining the goodwill of the aristocracy remained essential to successful singing careers.

The 'desiderio di farsi onore', i.e., to maintain or increase the status, reputation, wealth and influence of their family was a top priority for the social elite, too. High status had to be affirmed and communicated continually by means of what anthropologists have termed 'conspicuous consumption'.[6] The nobility were under obligation to display the *magnificenza* appropriate to their rank through their consumption practices, be it their palazzi, carriages, furniture, clothes, servants, food or

1 Bologna, della Volpe, 1723, p. 94. 'One, who sings with a Desire of gaining Honour and Credit, cannot sing ill, and in time will sing better; and one, who thinks on nothing but Gain, is in the ready way to remain ignorant.' Tosi, *Observations on the Florid Song; Or, Sentiments On the Ancient and Modern Singers*, trans. J. E. Galliard, London, Wilcox, 1743, p. 148. I have preserved original spellings (including the use of accents) and capitalisation in all period quotations from both prose and poetic texts with the exception of aria titles in the main text, which I have modernised. The modernised versions of Metastasian aria texts follow the critical edition by A. L. Bellina (volumes 1 and 2, Venice: Marsilio, 2002 and 2003, respectively), which is based on the Hérissant edition of Metastasio's *drammi* (Paris, 1780–82), wherever possible.

2 Tosi, *Opinioni*, p. 89. 'Nel gran Teatro del Mondo, Chi non rappresenta un degno Personaggio non fà altra figura, che di vile comparsa.' (He who does not enact a worthy character in the great theatre of the world makes no other impression than that of a lowly extra.) All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

3 See, e.g., M. Feldman, *The Castrato. Reflections on Natures and Kinds,* Oakland, CA, University of California Press, 2015.

4 J. Rosselli, 'From Princely Service to the Open Market: Singers of Italian Opera and Their Patrons, 1600–1850', *Cambridge Opera Journal,* vol. 1 no. 1, March 1989, pp. 1–32, and *Singers of Italian Opera. The History of a Profession,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, chapters 1–4.

5 Rosselli, 'Princely Service', p. 14.

6 Historian Peter Burke outlines the history of the term in sociology and anthropology in 'Conspicuous consumption in seventeenth-century Italy' in *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy. Essays on Perception and Communication*, pp. 132–49, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 132–34.

whatever else could be paid for, including art patronage.[7] Patronising opera, whether by subscribing to productions, supporting individual practitioners in various ways (e.g., offering them employment or honorary titles), accepting dedications, renting theatre boxes or buying libretti and attending performances, was an act of conspicuous consumption that contributed to the enactment of status. Others means of communicating rank and regulating precedence included the use of language and physical space as well as other social conventions.

Competition for status and precedence was not exclusive to the nobility. The middle and lower classes pursued the same aims within the limitations of their possibilities, enacting codes of behaviour appropriate to their standing within the social hierarchy.[8] Tosi's use of the above-cited phrase 'gran Teatro del Mondo' was neither fortuitous nor a singer's histrionic gesture. In early modern Italy's 'theatre culture',[9] all members of society were continuously engaged in decoding markers of rank, gauging their own in relationship to other people's and adapting their conduct accordingly, desirous to act their role on the grand stage of society to their best advantage and obtain a better one if possible.[10] In this context, singers' competiveness was not mere vanity but an obligation. 'Chi non aspira ad occupare il primo luogo già comincia a cedere il secondo, e a poco a poco si contenta dell'ultimo,'[11] admonishes Tosi, referring to constant pursuit of both musical excellence and professional status. Singers had to try to gain honour and make the most of their roles because both their poetic and musical parameters – number, type, distribution and duration of their arias, singing styles, vocal difficulty and so forth – clearly articulated their position in the cast hierarchy. The latter determined not only singers' market value and, thus, their leverage in negotiations for future roles, but also the prestige accruing to the patrons who were associated with them, often made visible through singers' honorary titles in printed libretti. In sum, singers' professional advancement served the dual purpose of personal betterment and fulfilment of their obligations towards their patrons.

At this point, it is worth recalling that the default *modus operandi* in *dramma per musica* production was collaborative and flexible. The production team, i.e., impresarios, patrons, poets, composers, singers, stage designers and engineers, costume makers and others, worked together in varying constellations with varying degrees of influence to create new poetic, musical and visual 'texts' or adapt pre-existing ones to new casts, venues and occasions. Even setting aside sets and costumes, the *dramma per musica* operated on a spectrum – at the one end, an entirely new libretto and musical setting; at the other end, a patchwork of poetic and musical materials combined into a single production. Operas that contained adapted poetry or music, or indeed, most often both, made up the mainstream in terms of the overall number of productions. Even in entirely new *drammi per musica*, both the poetic and musical texts were created collaboratively.

The conceptualisation of *dramma per musica* scores according to the principles of the work concept that continues to be widespread in musicology, i.e., as inviolable fixed texts that represent a single author's artistic intentions, runs contrary to their primary period function as negotiable performance materials. *Dramma per musica* scores essentially represent specific performances by specific individuals. It was accepted that, if the singers changed, the performance materials had to be adapted, and not only with regard to the technical parameters of their vocal abilities and the dramatic role types in which they specialised. Similar to a duke, who ranked highest at his own court but below the king or queen at a royal court, a singer might be *prima donna* in Vicenza but *seconda donna* in Venice, and adaptations had to account for such changes in cast hierarchy, too.

As a result, period singers' approach to their roles differed diametrically from that of modern singers. The latter hardly ever sing roles that are written specifically for them, leave alone in a collaborative manner, and their interpretation is severely limited by the conductor's and director's respective artistic visions as well as the notion that performers' main duty is to uncover and realise the composers' intentions. Echoed by many

7 Burke, 'Conspicuous consumption'.

8 In some Italian city states, non-nobles could accede to chivalric orders and, thus gain noble status, based on aristocratic sponsorship and sufficient wealth to finance a noble lifestyle, as was the case with the Order of St. Stephen in Florence. F. Angiolini, 'La nobiltà "imperfetta": cavalieri e commende di S. Stefano nella Toscana moderna', *Quaderni storici, Nuova Serie*, vol. 26, no. 78, issue 3, December 1991, pp. 875–877.

9 Burke, *Historical Anthropology*, p. 235.

10 On precedence and art patronage, see, e.g., A. and J. Zedler (eds), *Prinzen auf Reisen. Die Italienreise von Kurprinz Karl Albrecht 1715/16 im politisch-kulturellen Kontext*, Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, Böhlau, 2017.

11 Tosi, *Opinioni*, p. 56. 'Whoever does not aspire to the first Rank, begins already to give up the second, and by little and little will rest contented with the lowest.' Tosi, *Observations*, trans. Galliard, p. 88.

historical performance practice experts, Reinhard Strohm problematized this approach already in the 1980s, postulating that in modern performances of *drammi per musica,* 'the performer has to become the creator' as 'what was clearly fixed and predetermined about any production in those days had so little to do with the score and so much to do with the presentation of the drama by a single, individual singer that a revival of an opera seria today should really concentrate less on what Handel or Hasse wrote than on what Senesino or Farinelli did with the chief role',[12] and more recently, scholars of performance studies such as Nicholas Cook raised similar criticism regarding the performance of the music of later centuries, too.[13] However, the author- and work-centred approach remains firmly entrenched in the performance culture of European Art Music, including the historically informed performance of early music.[14] Thus, for modern singers, the key to success resides in adaptability and the willingness, or even desire, to subordinate their personal disposition and ideas to pre-existing musical and dramatic texts and interpretations.

Whilst eighteenth-century opera singers, too, sang pre-existing music as part of their training and professional practice, they routinely sang new music and were expected to participate in the creation or adaptation of their roles. The ubiquitous metaphor of the tailor-made garment may have become threadbare, but it was so ubiquitous because it fitted so well. In this context, the threshold for a role to be identified as suitable for a singer was far higher than in the modern work-centred context, particularly as vocal production was far less standardised in the early modern era. These circumstances cultivated a fundamentally different attitude and skill set in eighteenth-century singers. For them, the key to success resided in developing unique, recognisable profiles, acute awareness of their vocal and dramatic strengths and weaknesses, the ability to evaluate both the musical and dramatic potential of roles and the social skills required to negotiate the realisation of this potential in the production process.

The work- and composer-centred approach to music has focused musicologists' attention on the aesthetic implications of singers' aria substitutions, i.e., their impact on the dramatic and musical texts. However, in the eighteenth century, the performative and contextual dimensions were no less important in shaping all participants' experience of *dramma per musica* productions and, thus, no less valid as a basis for musical and dramatic decision-making. This is not to say that the integrity of poetic or musical texts did not matter, though this is not the focus of my paper. Nor is it to say that it did not matter whether poetic or musical texts were old or new. The libretto of the 1731 *Farnace* production in Bologna, for example, draws attention to the new musical setting, stating that 'la Musica è tutta nuova produzione del Signor Giovanni Porta'.[15] However, the reason was not concern with the integrity or work status of Porta's setting of Antonio Maria Lucchini's veteran *dramma* but the prestige derived from staging a bespoke new musical setting, which was more resource-intensive and costly than reviving an old one, as well as the professional status of the practitioners involved. This increased the prestige of the theatre and, thereby, its owners, the Malvezzi family, and that of their relative, Count Sicinio Pepoli, who not only played a prominent role in its management but was also the main patron of Carlo Broschi Farinelli and Vittoria Tesi, who featured among the superlative cast.

Farnace	Antonio Bernacchi
Tamiri	Francesca Cuzzoni
Berenice	Vittoria Tesi
Merione	Carlo Broschi Farinello
Selinda	Giacoma Ferrari
Gilade	Pellegrino Tomij
Arbante	Alessandro Veroni

Figure 1. *Farnace*, Bologna 1731, Cast List

The Teatro Malvezzi is a useful example as its productions of the late 1720s and early 1730s were exercises in ostentation, affirming its status as Bologna's most exclusive theatre whose productions rivalled even those at the Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo, the main star provider and most illustrious theatre in Venice.[16]

12 R. Strohm, 'Towards an understanding of the opera seria', *Essays on Handel and Italian Opera,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 98.

13 See, e.g., N. Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2013.

14 I previously discussed this issue in my PhD thesis, '"Il novello Orfeo": Farinelli – Vocal Profile, Aesthetics, Rhetoric', University of Glasgow, 2014, pp. 145–150.

15 'All music is newly composed by Signor Giovanni Porta.' All libretti cited are listed in the References section. Unless stated otherwise, digital reproductions are accessible via www.corago.unibo.it.

16 E. Selfridge-Field, *A New Chronology of Venetian Opera and Related Genres, 1660–1760,* Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2007, p. 350 and *Song and Season: Science, Culture and Theatrical Time in Early Modern Venice,* Stanford, CA,

How could singers gain honour in this framework? As a comprehensive answer would far exceed the scope of a conference paper, I will provide a few examples illustrating some common reasons for aria substitutions in early eighteenth-century *drammi per musica* – and a rather unusual one.[17] In doing so, I will seek to emulate the simple, pragmatic approach that seems to have been widespread among period singers. It is not my aim to engage with either musical settings or aria texts at the sophisticated, critical level of modern scholarship on the *dramma per musica*, and I therefore beg the patience of the reader and the numerous excellent musicologists and literary scholars who have contributed to the field if I do not refer to theoretical and analytical writings in this context. Whilst the level of singers' insight into the literary and musical parameters of their roles (beyond their experiential realisation on stage) undoubtedly varied, the hands-on approach even of leading intellectuals such as Zeno and Metastasio in letters about specific opera productions to leading practitioners such as Hasse, Farinelli and Vincenzo Grimani suggests that within the production process, a pragmatic approach predominated.[18]

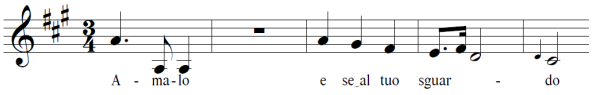
SCENARIO 1

In the summer of 1730, Nicola Grimaldi 'Nicolino' repeated the role of Artabano in the Bologna revival of Hasse's setting of *Artaserse,* which had premiered in Venice in February. Why did he replace 'Amalo e se al tuo sguardo' (II.4) with a new aria, 'Io son padre, e tu sei figlia', an aria whose text is a paraphrase of the original, although he had created his role only half a year earlier? By 1730, the 57-year-old singer had hardly any voice left but was still in high demand because he was considered the greatest actor in Italy,[19] and the new aria text was better suited for capitalising on Grimaldi's acting.

Io son Padre, e tu sei Figlia:	I am the father, you are the daughter,
La virtù te lo consiglia,	your virtue should tell you so,
Vo', che l'ami, e dei tacer.	I want you to love him, and you must be silent.
E se a ciò contrasta il core,	And if your heart rebels against this,
Tu lo sdegno, ed il furore	you will have to fear
Di tuo Padre hai da temer.	your father's disdain and anger.

Figure 2. Substitute aria text for Artabano (Grimaldi), *Artaserse*, II.4, Bologna 1730

The *sdrucciolo* rhythm of the first word of the old text, 'amalo' (love him), is perfect for a declamatory opening in the musical setting and was set accordingly by Hasse.[20]



Musical Example 1. 'Amalo e se al tuo sguardo', aria for Artabano (Grimaldi) in Hasse, *Artaserse*, II.4, Venice 1730, opening of vocal line, bars 13-17

However, the antithesis in the first line of the new text generates more physical movement, requiring two contrasting indicative gestures, one with which Artabano indicates himself and another directed at his daughter. The B section of the new text specifies Artabano's passions, 'sdegno, e furore' (disdain and anger), rather than only implying them. To be sure, Grimaldi could act any text. However, then as now, performers' success required not only display of their skill but also the audience's ability to recognise and appreciate it. Just as specific musical devices make it easy for an audience to gauge the extent of a singer's vocal capacity – such as wide leaps illustrating a wide range – a text that explicitly names passions and contains highly recognizable rhetorical devices facilitates the audience's evaluation of the appropriateness of the stage action, and, thus, appreciation of the actor's skill.

Stanford University Press, 2007, pp. 162–170. See also Raffaele Mellace's paper 'Hasse's *Siroe*, Thirty Years After: A Veritable Work in Progress' in this journal issue, which deals with one of these productions.

17 Whilst all revivals mentioned in the ensuing pages qualify as *pasticci* in modern musicological terms, I will use the genre designation assigned to them in their printed libretti, i.e., *dramma per musica*. The term *pasticcio* and its implications have been discussed elsewhere in the context of the Pasticcio research project, e.g., in Berthold Over's paper 'The Art of Cooking a Pasticcio: Musical Recipes and Ingredients for Pasticcio Operas' in this issue.

18 See, e.g., R. Savage, 'Getting by with a Little Help from my Twin: Farinelli with Metastasio at his Right Hand, 1747–1759', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2005, pp. 387–410 and 'Staging an Opera: Letters from the Cesarian Poet', *Early Music*, vol. 26, no. 4, 1998, pp. 583–595.

19 A. Conti, Letter of 29 September 1727, *Lettere da Venezia a Madame la Comtesse de Caylus, 1727–1729*, S. Mamy (ed.), Fondazione Cini, Venice, Florence, Olschki, 2003, p. 169.

20 *GB-Lram* Ms 72, fol. 85r, bar 13.

Moreover, both this new aria text, in which Artabano demands the filial obedience Semira owes to his rank in the family hierarchy and bluntly threatens her, as well as another text that Grimaldi inserted in I.3 further intensify the imperiousness and coldblooded ruthlessness of Artabano's character. This, in turn, heightens the drama when his prodigious self-command breaks down due to his fear for the life of his beloved son Arbace. The famous massive *recitativo stromentato* at the end of Act 2, an unusual madness scene, in which Artabano envisions the execution of his son, had already been added in Venice as a showcase for Grimaldi's virtuosic ability to enact the full gamut of passions with great vivacity.[21] Undoubtedly, Metastasio's original texts are of a higher literary standard; however, performed on the stage by Grimaldi, the substitute texts resulted in a more persuasive 'spectacular text' to utilise Giovanni Polin's term.[22]

In analysing aria substitutions, musicologists tend to focus on the vocal suitability of pre-existing arias for singers in subsequent productions. However, arias' dramatic suitability, both in terms of overall characterisation and potential for acting, was an important and common reason for replacing arias, either for increasing or decreasing the scope for action, a skill that was considered equally important as singing by period audiences. Excellent actors, such as Grimaldi and Vittoria Tesi (who made a similar substitution in the 1730 Bologna production of *Artaserse*) sought to enhance it; singers with no great inclination for acting, such as Farinelli and Francesca Cuzzoni, frequently sought to reduce it.

SCENARIO 2

Both dramaturgically and musically, *seconda donna* Semira's aria 'Non è ver che sia contento' serves to enable *chiaroscuro* within the scene group in the second set of Act III of *Artaserse*. It provides relief from the surrounding numbers in which the main protagonists find themselves in existential crises: anguished outbreaks by the villain Artabano and *prima donna* Mandane in Scenes III.4 and III.5, respectively, and the *dramma*'s last closed number, the *primo* couple's farewell duet in III.7.[23] Sententious in nature, Semira's aria text offers some opportunity for imitative text setting on the couplet-ending words 'lagrimar' (weep) and 'sospirar' (sigh) but has no strong passions and thus invites a simple *parlante* setting.

Non è ver, che sia contento	It is not true that, when you
Il veder nel suo tormento	feel anguish, it makes you happy
Più d'un ciglio lagrimar.	to see another person weep, too.
Che l'essempio [sic] del dolore	For the example of sorrow
È uno stimolo maggiore,	should be a higher stimulus to us
Che richiama a sospirar.	that should fill us with sympathy.

Figure 2. Metastasio's aria text for Semira, *Artaserse*, III.6, Rome, 1730

Both Vinci and Hasse obliged with suitable arias in their 1730 *Artaserse* settings for Rome and Venice, respectively, and the original Semiras, Giuseppe Appiano and Maria Maddalena Pieri, dutifully sang them.[24]

Making few demands on singers, arias such as 'Non è ver che sia contento' could easily have been retained in subsequent productions, if necessary in transposition.[25] Instead, they were replaced especially often. In the *Artaserse* revivals given in Lucca, Bologna and Turin in 1730, Milan and Ferrara in 1731 and Venice in 1734, only Teresa Pieri (Venice 1734) retained the aria her sister Maria Maddalena had sung four years earlier in the same city. All other singers substituted it with either virtuosic tempest arias or laments, i.e., substantial arias in the singing styles that were most suited to make an impression on the audience and less likely to be eclipsed by the surrounding numbers. Creating better opportunities to show off their vocal skill was not the singers' only reason for such replacements, however.

Whilst Metastasio, like other poets, had to tailor new *dramma per musica* roles to their singers, he had been striving for high literary quality from early in his career and knew that the success of his *drammi* and recent appointment as Imperial Court Poet would lead to the publication of literary collections of his works. This, too,

21 Conti, Letter of 29 September 1727, *Lettere*, p. 169.

22 See Polin, 'The Work Concept in 18th-Century Italian Opera: Some Issues and Thoughts' in this journal issue.

23 Artabano's aria concludes the scene group before the first set change (III.1–4).

24 Vinci and Hasse demonstrate the skill for text setting for which they are renowned. Vinci uses the time-honoured device of inserting rests into the word 'sospirar' to create a sighing effect (I-Vnm Mss.It.IV. 246, fols 41v–45r). Hasse uses rhetorical *pianoforte* contrasts to underpin Semira's thought process and moral insight (GB-Lram Ms 72, fols 168r–170r).

25 Appiano's aria has a range of a major tenth (d'-f" sharp) and two short melismas; Pieri's, with a range of an 11th (a-d"), is mostly syllabic. Both vocal parts rarely exceed an octave.

was a matter of 'farsi onore'. An aria text like Semira's, which comments on the action in moral and philosophical terms, works admirably printed in literary editions, earning Metastasio praise as 'decisivamente (nè sene [sic] sdegni il Petrarca) il primo poeta filosofo della sua nazione'[26] and making its way into collections of sayings and maxims drawn from his works.[27] In performance, though, sententious arias text works much less well, no matter how finely crafted their musical settings might be. As Tosi points out, echoed 50 years later by Mancini, nothing is more important in vocal performance than 'il cantare al cuore', or moving the listener emotionally.[28] Although *drammi per musica* utilise all three Aristotelian strategies of persuasion – ethos, pathos and logos – in different ways, pathos is the most effective strategy at the level of individual arias. However, sententious aria texts, which draw moral conclusions from the dramatic situation and explicate them for the audience's benefit, prioritise logos, appealing to the intellect instead of the heart. Lacking the strong passions underpinning virtuosic arias and laments, they not only limit singers' scope for engaging the audience emotionally through music but also through acting. Moreover, for singers, it is harder to connect and muster emotional commitment to a low-relief aria to which a significant part of the audience might have paid little attention after the opening night and which provides an anticlimactic end to their role.

Why did Teresa Pieri not replace the piece? Perhaps she already knew her sister's aria or did not have a suitable substitute aria as, having sung only small roles in the preceding years, she had a small repertoire of arias from which to choose. Perhaps the owner and impresario of the Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo, the powerful aristocrat Michele Grimani, wanted her to sing it and, in her first appearance in this prestigious theatre, she felt she would gain more honour by acting an obliging role on the social stage.

SCENARIO 3

The cast of the revival of Vinci's 1730 Roman setting of *Artaserse* in Milan in the 1731 carnival season included both Giovanni Carestini and Gaetano Maiorana 'Caffarelli'. The twenty-year-old Caffarelli, Carestini's junior by nearly ten years, was already renowned but not yet sufficiently established at the top of the professional hierarchy to consistently take *primo uomo* roles. Hence, he sang the *secondo uomo* role Artaserse to Carestini's Arbace.[29] Whilst Carestini could shine in the role he had created in Rome, the arias for the Roman Artaserse, Raffaele Signorini, were not suited to display the full range of Caffarelli's abilities and enable him to demonstrate that he could match, or even outdo, Carestini. Singing Signorini's role without alterations was thus undesirable for Caffarelli, but also for the Milanese audience who were presumably curious about the talented young singer's progress since his previous engagement in the city two years earlier. Caffarelli did not draw on his previous roles for a more competitive piece. Instead, he inserted Farinelli's 'Son qual nave' in a highly provocative move.

Carlo Broschi Farinelli had already enjoyed international fame for some time before his triumphant success in the Venetian carnival seasons of 1729 and 1730 effectively made him the top singer in Italy, although some preferred Carestini, who was an excellent actor. The fierce rivalry and mutual loathing between Farinelli and Carestini was common knowledge. 'Son qual nave', a tempest aria Farinelli first sang in *Mitridate*, was one of the *arie di bravura* with which Farinelli had pushed the boundaries of vocal virtuosity in the 1730 carnival. Culminating in a continuous coloratura passage of seventeen-and-a-half bars, probably the longest in a *dramma per musica* aria so far and carefully constructed to leave the listener agape at the singer's virtuosity,[30] the aria had instantly become famous. Carestini's biggest hit of the 1730 season had also acquired rapid fame and was a tempest aria, too: 'Vo solcando un mar crudele', his *aria di bravura* in *Artaserse,* with which he naturally intended to impress the Milanese audience in 1731. By inserting Farinelli's 'Son qual nave', Caffarelli not only tried to beat Carestini at the game of singing up a storm. He also took

26 '[D]ecidedly (with no offence to Petrarch) the foremost poet-philosopher of his nation'. S. Arteaga, *Le rivoluzioni del teatro musical italiano dalla sua origine fino al presente*, Bologna, Trenti, 1783, vol. I, p. 357. Arteaga specifically mentions 'cent'altri punti di morale filosofia sparsi quà e là nei suoi drammi' (a hundred other points of moral philosophy scattered throughout his *drammi*).

27 'Non è ver che sia contento' is cited in full in a collection of *Sentenze, e massime* from Metastasio's *drammi* that was reprinted several times under slightly different titles, including in Venice (Zatta, 1796), Milano (Agnelli, 1817) and Livorno (Pozzolini, 1826).

28 Tosi, *Opinioni*, p. 100. Giambattista Mancini, *Pensieri, e riflessioni sopra il canto figurato*, Vienna: Ghelen, 1774, pp. 11, 94.

29 Both men sang five arias; however, Carestini additionally sang a duet with *prima donna* Vittoria Tesi as Mandane.

30 Desler, '"Il novello Orfeo"', pp. 196–97.

a clear stance as Carestini's rival and issued a challenge to Farinelli as well – signalling that he considered himself on a par with both.

Caffarelli's other substitute aria translates his bold stance into stage action. He evidently refused to sing 'Nuvoletta opposta al sole' (III.2), like Semira's 'Non è ver che sia contento', a sententious aria that had prompted a less-than-riveting *parlante* setting in Rome.[31] Combined with considerable recitative cuts, Caffarelli's substitute aria 'Fuggi dagli occhi miei' in III.1 affects a dramatic change in the relationship between Arbace and Artaserse, whom Metastasio had portrayed as affectionate friends.[32] The first section of the new aria text, which, due to its temporal performance dimension and musical impact dominates the scene, constitutes an imperious assertion of Artaserse's superior rank and power as Arbace's king and judge.

Fuggi dagli occhi miei,	Get out of my eyes,
Porta lontano il piè,	take yourself away;
Giudice, e giusto Rè,	as your judge and just king,
Punire, oh Dio! dovrei	I should punish – oh God!
La grande offesa.	your great offence.
Ma amico ancor ti sono	But I am still your friend
E sento solo in me	and feel that within me
D'amor, non di rigor	my heart beats with love alone,
L'anima accesa.	not with severity.

Figure 4. Substitute aria text for Artaserse (Caffarelli), *Artaserse*, II.4, Milan 1731

This was communicated forcefully through the musical setting, a re-texted version of Semiramide's declamatory rage aria in III.7 of *Semiramide riconosciuta* in which she repeatedly hurls the exclamation 'perfido ingannator' (perfidious traitor) at her former lover Scitalce.[33] It was surely no coincidence that the new aria offered Caffarelli excellent scope for stage action, enabling him to demonstrate mastery of the skill at which Carestini surpassed Farinelli.

Seeking to acquire honour and rise in the profession by performing higher-ranking singers' arias was common practice. In the case of singers who did not make it to the top and whose careers unfolded predominantly in peripheral cities, it also brought famous singers' arias to provincial audiences who might not have heard them otherwise. Caffarelli's ostentation might seem distasteful within the aesthetic framework of the work concept in which performers are expected to serve the work rather than their own interest. However, period opera-goers who were themselves engaged in continuous competition for precedence typically enjoyed, and often actively supported, competition among singers.[34]

Conversely, Farinelli enjoyed other singers' performing his arias and listening to them,[35] presumably because he felt that no one could sing them as well as he could. His own aversion to performing other singers' arias indicates that he regarded himself as the top singer in Italy; a king would not have worn the handed-down waistcoat of a duke or count, either.

SCENARIO 4

As per the foreword to its printed libretto, the production of *Demetrio* in Vicenza in May 1734 was assembled in a hurry from arias the singers had sung in previous productions. It featured Farinelli and singers whom he had known for between three and ten years, including his two Neapolitan compatriots Filippo Giorgi and his wife Caterina. *Demetrio* was anomalous for Vicenza. Its cast was much better than usual, it was a *dramma per musica* rather than a pastoral opera and it was not dedicated to a government official but 'alle Dame' (to the Ladies). Two things were more unusual still: First, when Farinelli was involved in a production, he was normally the singer with the highest number of

31 I-Vnm Mss.It.IV. 246, fols 18v–21v.

32 In his revisions of *Artaserse* for Venice in 1730, Metastasio had already replaced this aria with 'Pensa che l'amor mio', in which Artaserse expresses his unwavering love and friendship for Arbace.

33 In absence of a score for the Milan production, it is unclear whether Caffarelli sang the setting by his former singing teacher Porpora (Venice 1729, *GB-Lram* Ms 82, fols 163r–166r) for Lucia Facchinelli or Vinci's for Giacinto Fontana (Rome 1729, *I–Nc* Rari 7.3.18, fols 179r–181v). Facchinelli's has a lower tessitura than Fontana's, but both were within Caffarelli's range. If it was Fontana's aria, the rivalry between Carestini and Caffarelli could have been heightened even further: Carestini's substitute aria in the next scene (III.3) was also by Vinci for Fontana, 'Sentirsi il petto accendere' from *Gismondo re di Polonia* (Rome 1727, I.10), the only other substitute aria that can be safely attributed to Vinci or that was sung by Fontana.

34 See, e.g., S. Aspden, *Rival Sirens: Performance and Identity on Handel's Operatic Stage*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

35 'Letter by Farinelli to Count Sicinio Pepoli of 26 September 1731, *I-Bas*, Carteggio Pepoli, Busta 54. See also Carlo Vitali's critical edition of Farinelli's letters, *La solitudine amica. Lettere al Conte Sicinio Pepoli*, Palermo, Sellerio, 2000, pp. 89–90.

substitute aria texts. However, in this case, he was the only singer who sang any of the original Metastasian aria texts at all, two in number. Second, one third of the eighteen arias were *arie di tempesta*, three sung by Farinelli, two by *secondo uomo* Francesco Bilancioni and one by *seconda donna* Caterina Giorgi.

Table 1. Tempest Arias in *Demetrio*, Vicenza 1734

Act I	Act II	Act III
I.4 Alceste/Demetrio: 'Scherza il Nocchier talora' (Farinelli)		III.4 Alceste /Demetrio 'Son qual nave, che aggitata' [sic] (Farinelli)
I.5 Olinto: 'Da più venti combattuta' (Francesco Bilancioni)	I.7 Olinto: 'Vede il Nocchier la sponda' (Francesco Bilancioni)	
I.9 Alceste/Demetrio 'Navigante che sol spera' (Farinelli)		III.10 Barsene: 'Se troppo crede al ciglio' (Caterina Giorgi)

Why this sky-high number of tempest arias? *Demetrio* was staged very shortly after Farinelli had finally signed a contract to sing in London after repeatedly refusing to accept London engagements for at least five years.[36] Planning to depart in September, Farinelli may have thought that *Demetrio* would be his last ever opera production on Italian soil, for he intended to retire from the stage with the money he was going to earn in London.[37] Tempest arias were appropriate because of the sentiments of hope and fear they explore, their use in momentous situations and Farinelli's impending journey across the English Channel.

The unusual features of *Demetrio* suggest that it was intended to mark Farinelli's departure for England, perhaps even his farewell to the Italian stage. The first set of Act III, a portico of the royal palace facing the seashore, provides a fitting backdrop for the plot of scenes 1 to 5, which revolves almost entirely around the impending departure on a sea journey of Farinelli's character, Alceste (= Demetrio). Farinelli's use of two original Metastasian aria texts, one (a tempest aria) for his first and the other for his last aria in *Demetrio*, might have been symbolic references to the beginning and end of his Italian operatic career and friendship with Metastasio.[38] The 1720 *serenata Angelica e Medoro* had been the first stepping-stone towards an operatic career for both men. Farinelli's inserted *arie di tempesta* stemmed from highly successful productions, 'Navigante che sol spera' from the 1728 *Medo* in Parma and 'Son qual nave' from the earlier-mentioned 1730 *Mitridate* in Venice, and celebrated his virtuosity, the skill for which he was most famous. Perhaps Farinelli feared not only the English climate but also travelling by sea. In any event, the experience of a stormy channel crossing may have spurred him to new heights of expression in his next performance of 'Son qual nave' at his London debut a few months later.[39]

In the end, Farinelli sang in one final Italian *dramma per musica* production after *Demetrio*. *L'innocenza giustificata* in Florence in late summer was loosely based on Francesco Silvani's 1712 libretto *L'innocenza difesa* and mostly assembled from substitute arias, retaining little, if any, of Giuseppe Orlandini's 1712 music. A revival of a summer production by the same title from Fano in 1731, it seems to have been put on quickly, too, and was apparently another farewell production: This time, thirty-eight per cent (eight of the twenty-one closed numbers) utilised sea tempest metaphors. In addition to closing Acts I and II with two of these (one of them 'Scherza il nocchier talora' from *Demetrio*), Farinelli sang two more tempest arias, one each in Acts II and III, and participated in the probably brand-new trio 'Da rea tempesta', the opera's last closed number (III.8).

36 In his letter of 8 May 1734 Farinelli apprises Sicinio Pepoli that he had signed a contract for London two days earlier. *I-Bas*, Carteggio Pepoli, Busta 154 and Farinelli, *Solitudine amica*, 130–31. Farinelli's London engagement has been discussed in detail by Thomas McGeary in 'Farinelli's Progress to Albion: The Recruitment and Reception of Opera's "Blazing Star"', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 28, no. 5 Farinelli, 2005, pp. 339–360.

37 Desler, 'Farinelli', p. 45.

38 'Scherza il nocchier talora' (I.4) and 'Se tutti i pensier miei' (III.9), Farinelli's first and last arias in the opera. According to the libretto, these as well as several other arias and the only duet were newly set to music by Francesco Araia.

39 In his letter of 30 November 1734 to Sicinio Pepoli, Farinelli writes: 'credevo non vedere quest'isola per il passaggio del mare così perverso accadutomi' ('the passage across the sea was so horrible that I thought I would not see this island'). *I-Bas*, Carteggio Pepoli, Busta 154 and Farinelli, *Solitudine amica*, 132.

Table 2. Tempest Arias in *L'innocenza giustificata*, Florence 1734

Act I	Act II	Act III
	II.1 Artabano: 'Nell'orribile procella' (Lorenzo Saletti)	III.3 Astiage: 'Benchè spiri a Ciel sereno' (Farinelli)
I.8 Feraspe: 'Vede orgogliosa l'onda' (Angiolo Amorevoli)	II.7 Astiage: 'Non fidi al Mar, che freme' (Farinelli)	III.4 Arbace: 'Fuggirò, ma non poss'io' (Giovanna Guaetta)
I.14 Astiage: 'Scherza il Nocchier talora' (Farinelli)	II.10 Astiage: 'Colle procelle in seno' (Farinelli)	III.8 Trio: Statira, Astiage, Feraspe: 'Da rea tempesta' (Vittoria Tesi, Farinelli, Angiolo Amorevoli)

Producing operas in honour of important occasions in the lives of royalty and the nobility was common practice. The exact circumstances of the production of *Demetrio* are unknown but the atypical dedication 'alle Dame' seems to indicate deviation from normal production practice in Vicenza. Perhaps it was organised and funded by some of his many admirers, or even Farinelli himself with help from his colleagues. In Florence, summer productions of *drammi per musica* dedicated to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Gian Gastone de' Medici, either at the Teatro della Pergola or del Cocomero, were neither regular nor unusual and sometimes featured famous singers who typically had more prestigious engagements during the carnival, including Farinelli and Grimaldi, who sang there in the 1728 *Arianna. L'innocenza giustificata* may have been staged to seize the opportunity to hear Farinelli once the news of his imminent departure had spread. In any event, producing operas to mark an event in a singer's life and career was highly exceptional and attested to Farinelli's extraordinary success at 'farsi onore'.

CONCLUSION

Historically, many musicologists have taken a dim view of the practice of aria substitution, criticising it as hostile interference with the artistic integrity of operatic texts and composers' authorial intentions and attributing it to the vanity, ignorance and laziness of singers. However, within the socio-cultural framework and production practice of the early eighteenth-century *dramma per musica,* singers' aria substitutions (as well as recitative changes, which I have not addressed in this paper) were regarded as necessary, normal responses to production reality, the proverbial *circostanze del teatro*. The circumstance that libretti and scores constitute the main surviving sources of opera productions has contributed to focusing musicologists' attention on the aesthetics of the musical text. However, in a context in which opera productions were primarily performance events, highly specific to the occasion, venue and participants involved, as well as fundamentally ephemeral, the focus was on the effectiveness of the live event with all its constituent elements and communicative subtexts and its impact on the live audience or, put bluntly, its entertainment value.

Already in the eighteenth-century, the taste of theorists and critics, in particular men of letters with a stake in the enactment of cultural capital, often diverged from that of the largely noble audience. Neither Antonio Conti nor Thomas Addison approved of Grimaldi's spectacular and vastly popular on-stage fights with animals or monsters.[40] However, for singers, the key to professional success consisted in gaining the favour of their patrons by meeting their expectations and preferences both on and off the stage. Both Grimaldi and Farinelli achieved the ultimate goal of the middle class, to be elevated to noble rank. Grimaldi was made a *Cavaliere della Croce di San Marco* in 1705, Farinelli a *Cavallero del Orden de Calatrava* in 1752. Caffarelli earned enough money to buy himself a dukedom. Making strategic choices in adapting their roles to win pre-eminence and 'farsi onore' paid off for them.

REFERENCES

Addison, T., *The Spectator*, No. 3, 6 March 1711.

Arteaga, S., *Le rivoluzioni del teatro musical italiano dalla sua origine fino al presente* (3 volumes), Bologna, Trenti, 1783.

Angiolini, F., 'La nobiltà "imperfetta": cavalieri e commende di S. Stefano nella Toscana moderna', *Quaderni storici, Nuova Serie,* vol. 26, no. 78, issue 3, December 1991, pp. 875–899.

Aspden, S., *Rival Sirens: Performance and Identity on Handel's Operatic Stage,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Broschi Farinelli, C., *La solitudine amica. Lettere al conte Sicinio Pepoli*, ed. C. Vitali, Palermo, Sellerio, 2000.

Burke, P., *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy. Essays on Perception and Communication,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987.

40 Conti, Letter of 29 September 1727, *Lettere*, 169; T. Addison, *The Spectator,* No. 3, 6 March 1711.

Cook, N., *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance,* New York, Oxford University Press, 2013.

Conti, A., *Lettere da Venezia a Madame la Comtesse de Caylus, 1727–1729*, S. Mamy (ed.), Fondazione Cini, Venice, Florence, Olschki, 2003.

Desler, Anne., '"Il novello Orfeo". Farinelli: Vocal Profile, Aesthetics, Rhetoric', PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2014.

Feldman, M., *The Castrato. Reflections on Natures and Kinds*, Oakland, CA, University of California Press, 2015.

Mancini, G., *Pensieri, e riflessioni sopra il canto figurato,* Vienna, Ghelen, 1774.

Mellace, R., 'Hasse's *Siroe,* Thirty Years After: A Veritable Work in Progress', *Musicology Today*, vol. 18, 2021, pp. 65–74.

McGeary, T., 'Farinelli's Progress to Albion: The Recruitment and Reception of Opera's "Blazing Star"', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* vol. 28, no. 5 Farinelli, 2005, pp. 339–360.

Metastasio, P., *Drammi per musica,* volumes 1 and 2, L.A. Bellina (ed.), Venice, Marsilio, 2002 and 2003.

Metastasio, P., *Sentenze e massime estratte delle opere del Signor Abate Pietro Metastasio,* Venice, Zatta, 1796.

Metastasio, P., *Sentenze e massime estratte delle opere di P. Metastasio,* Livorno, Pozzolini, 1826.

Metastasio, P., *Sentenze e massime del Signor Abate Pietro Metastasio poeta cesareo,* Milano, Agnelli, 1817.

Over, B., 'The Art of Cooking a Pasticcio: Musical Recipes and Ingredients for Pasticcio Operas', *Musicology Today*, vol. 18, 2021, pp. 20–34.

Polin, G., 'The Work Concept in Eighteenth-Century Italian Opera: Some Issues and Thoughts', *Musicology Today*, vol. 18, 2021, pp. 4–10.

Rosselli, J., 'From Princely Service to the Open Market: Singers of Italian Opera and Their Patrons, 1600–1850', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1, March 1989, pp. 1–32.

Rosselli, J., *Singers of Italian Opera. The History of a Profession*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Savage, R. 'Getting by with a Little Help from my Twin: Farinelli with Metastasio at his Right Hand, 1747–1759', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2005, pp. 387–410.

Savage, R. 'Staging an Opera: Letters from the Cesarian Poet', *Early Music*, vol. 26, no. 4, 1998, pp. 583–595.

Selfridge-Field, E., *A New Chronology of Venetian Opera and Related Genres, 1660–1760,* Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2007.

Selfridge-Field, E., *Song and Season: Science, Culture and Theatrical Time in Early Modern Venice*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2007.

Strohm, R., 'Towards an Understanding of the Opera Seria', in *Essays on Handel and Italian Opera*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 93–105.

Tosi, P., *Observations on the Florid Song; Or, Sentiments On the Ancient and Modern Singers*, trans. J. E. Galliard, London, Wilcox, 1743.

Tosi, P., *Opinioni de' cantori antichi, e moderni, o sieno osservazioni sopra il canto figurato,* Bologna, della Volpe, 1723.

Zedler, A. and J. Zedler (eds), *Prinzen auf Reisen. Die Italienreise von Kurprinz Karl Albrecht 1715/16 im politisch-kulturellen Kontext*, Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, Böhlau, 2017.

LIBRETTI

Most libretti are available on corago@uni.bo, mostly in multiple copies. Library sigla of the copies consulted have been given for the remaining libretti only.

Artaserse, Rome, Zempel e de Mey, 1730.

Artaserse, Venice, Buonarigo, 1730 (Dedication signed N.N.).

Artaserse, Venice, Buonarigo, 1730 (Dedication signed by Lalli). *I-Vmn* 1042 02 and 3558 003; *I-Vcg* S. Gio Grisostomo 151/6.

Artaserse, Bologna, Pisarri, 1730.

Artaserse, Lucca, Ciuffetti, 1730.

Artaserse, Turin, Valetta, 1730.

Artaserse, Bologna, della Volpe, 1731. (Performed in Ferrara)

Artaserse, Milan, Malatesta, 1731. *I-LDEsormani*

Artaserse, Venice, Rossetti, 1734.

Artaserse, London, Bennet, 1735.

Demetrio, Vicenza, s.n., 1734

Farnace, Bologna, Sassi, 1731.

L'innocenza giustificata, Bologna, Pisarri, 1731. (Performed in Fano)

L'innocenza giustificata, Florence, Pieri, 1734.

Semiramide riconosciuta, Rome, Zempel e de Mey, 1729.

Semiramide riconosciuta, Venice, Buonarigo, 1729.

MUSIC SCORES

Hasse, J. A., *Artaserse,* Venice 1730, *GB-Lram* Ms 72, Royal Academy of Music, London.

Porpora, N., *Semiramide riconosciuta,* Venice 1729, *GB-Lram* Ms 82, Royal Academy of Music, London.

Vinci, L., *Artaserse,* Rome 1730, *I-Vnm* Mss.It.IV.246, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice.
Vinci, L., *Semiramide riconosciuta,* Rome 1729, *I-Nc* Rari 7.3.18, Conservatorio San Pietro a Majella, Naples.

DOCUMENTS

Broschi Farinelli, C. Letters to Count Sicinio Pepolo. *I-Bas*, Carteggio Pepoli, Busta 154, Archivio di Stato, Bologna.

WEBSITE

Repertorio e archivio di libretti del melodramma italiano dal 1600 al 1900, 2003, corago.unibo.it.

Anne Desler holds a doctorate in Historical Performance Practice from the University of Southern California and a PhD in Musicology from the University of Glasgow. Before taking up her current position as a Lecturer in Music at the University of Edinburgh, she was a Lecturer in Music and Theatre at the University of Hull. A scholar-performer, Anne has sung with ensembles such as Europa Galante, Modo Antiquo and the Balthasar-Neumann-Ensemble and recorded the title role in Vivaldi's *Orlando furioso.*

Anne's research focuses on the Italian *dramma per musica* of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, especially its star singers, historiography, dramatic performance practice and cultural context. She has published articles and book chapters on Carlo Broschi Farinelli and Nicola Grimaldi and is currently writing a monograph on Grimaldi, entitled *Opera Performed: Nicola Grimaldi 'Nicolino' – Singer, Actor, Director, Promoter* funded by a Leverhulme Research Fellowship.