

Scipione impasticciato:

*Performing, Researching
and Reviving London operas
from 1730–1731*

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ABSTRACT

The study discusses practical and aesthetic aspects of the pasticcio principle, which characterised London's Italian operas of 1730–31 and still concern revivals, source research, and editions today. Twentieth-century revivals of Handel's opera *Scipione* pose the question of how to evaluate the original version of 1726 vs its pasticcio-like revival of 1730. Details of the 1730–31 season under Handel, concerning for example the status of the vocal soloists, reveal a multiplicity of agencies (singers, composer, impresario, librettist, patrons/audiences) which influenced the artistic outcomes. Handel's decision-making role for the entire season as the company's music director is re-asserted, although the proposal of John H. Roberts (2016) that another musician composed the recitatives for the pasticcios *Ormida* and *Venceslao* will be accepted. This musician, however, may have been the tenor Annibale Pio Fabri rather than the concert-master Pietro Castrucci, suggested by Roberts. The aesthetic question that concerns us today is the dichotomy between a unified author-work-concept and a discursive pasticcio principle, of which the former is observed in critical editions, the latter in (post-) modern stage productions. It is suggested that a similar contrast already characterised eighteenth-century theatrical practice and aesthetics, although fluctuations between the two principles and, generally, multi-agency in creating theatrical works were negotiated with considerable freedom.

Keywords: Handel, *Scipione*, *Ormida*, *Venceslao*, multi-agency

Pasticcio procedures in opera belong to a larger field of artistic practices, used in music, literature, and the fine arts for centuries. The concept borders on, or overlaps with, procedures in the arts known as 'collage', 'capriccio', 'montage', 'parody', 'intertextuality', 'metatextuality', and others, and is hardly reducible to a specific musical or theatrical genre.¹

In order to focus on particular operatic conventions, however, it seems reasonable to distinguish between three types:

- the multi-composer pasticcio, consisting of items created for different earlier occasions by several authors;
- the multi-composer pasticcio in which each item was prepared expressly for the same event by a different

author (as in the 24-composer *Arione*, Milan, 1694, the 3-composer *Muzio Scevola*, London, 1721, or the 13-composer *Messa per Rossini*, Milan, 1869);

- the single-composer pasticcio.

George Frederic Handel's opera *Scipione* in its revived version of 1730 may serve as an example of how the pasticcio principle can transcend traditional musicological questions of attribution and authenticity. We know in this case exactly where the diverse ingredients came from, and more or less why and how they were chosen, but we do not have sufficient knowledge of what their general effect or artistic status was meant to be, nor in fact what we should make of the result today. Pasticcio research on Italian opera can and should expand into matters of aesthetic judgement and cultural analysis. This research could also inform editing, performance practice, and criticism of today.

A candid and amusing testimony on one of the modern performances of Handel's *Scipione* comes from the music librarian and editor Clifford Bartlett.² He had to prepare the score and text of the opera for the Handel Festival at the Badisches Landestheater, Karlsruhe, in 1992, negotiating to that end with the conductor, Roy Goodman, and the stage director, Daniel Benoin. Assembling and interpreting the sources of this complicated work, borrowing microfilms, travelling, transcribing, and adapting was laborious enough; but then the producer let it be known that 'the only way he could conceive of the opera was to set it in a hotel in Riyadh', where US General H. Norman Schwarzkopf figured as Scipione and the events were those of the recent Gulf War (1990). Thus the part of Scipione had to be a tenor rather than a counter-tenor. Clifford and Goodman decided, in some haste, to perform the 1730 version of the opera, where Scipione is a tenor; in this version more than a third of the music was imported from other works by Handel (the third variety of pasticcio mentioned above).³ Thus the original version of 1726 became in 1730 an *opera impasticciata* (an opera turned into a pasticcio), a form of supposedly inferior status. Handel authority Winton Dean considered it in 1967 as in many respects 'a botched piece of work', also observing that the

¹ G. zur Nieden and B. Over, 'Introduction', in B. Over and G. zur Nieden (eds), *Operatic Pasticcios in 18th-Century Europe: Contexts, Materials and Aesthetics*, Bielefeld, transcript, 2021, pp. 9–25. For inter- and metatextuality, see T. Betzwieser, 'The World of Pasticcio. Reflections on Pre-existing Text and Music', in Over and zur Nieden, *Operatic Pasticcios*, pp. 27–43 at 34–35. For the culinary metaphor inherent in the term and the parallel with 'capriccio', see R. Strohm, 'Italian Pasticcio Opera, 1700–1750: Practices and Repertoires', in Over and zur Nieden, *Operatic Pasticcios*, pp. 45–67 at 45–48.

² C. Bartlett, 'Scipio engulfed: Notes from an editor's diary', *Leading Notes: Journal of the National Early Music Association*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1992, pp. 6–7.

³ Bartlett, 'Scipio engulfed', p. 6.

composer aimed to re-design Scipione as an older man, rather than a young lover.⁴ In 1987, Dean judged that the version ‘was so comprehensively rehashed as to qualify for a young pasticcio’.⁵ In his opinion, only the original of 1726 was worthy of a modern revival. The version conducted by Charles Farncombe at Sadler’s Wells, 1979, however, mixed the 1726 and 1730 versions, taking the pasticcio procedure to the next, higher level, whereas the Karlsruhe performance version adhered to the 1730 version as closely as possible.⁶

The task of putting together a musical drama seems to have had its constant features over the centuries: shared agency between authors, performers, editors, institutions, and patrons;⁷ a mixture of both short-term and longer-term objectives; short-timing and precipitous planning; publicity, spin-offs, rival productions – and so forth. Present-day opera-staging practices, both of newly created works and those of the past, may still reflect such traditions as they are somehow inevitable. We should enquire in what ways they nevertheless differ in concept from the tradition, and how we can contextualise and understand the procedures of the past in comparison with today. Let me first present the case of the 1730 *Scipione* in its historical context.⁸

THE HAYMARKET SEASON OF 1730–1731

In 1729–1733, Italian operas at London’s King’s Theatre in the Haymarket were managed by the impresario John James Heidegger with Handel as music director.⁹ Apart

from royal subsidies and patronal influences, no other agents were responsible for the productions of this so-called ‘second Academy’ – whereas the first Royal Academy of Music, 1720–1728, had been directed by shareholding patrons.¹⁰ Handel’s opera *Scipione* of 1726, on a libretto by Paolo Rolli, was revived as the opening production of the 1730–1731 season. The first performance on 3 November 1730 was followed by others on 7, 10, 14, 17 and 21 November. The London *Opera Register* reports the attendance of ‘the King, Queen &c. there each night’ and comments on the cast: ‘Senesino being return’d charm’d much: the rest as last year.’¹¹ In the preceding season, Handel had engaged Antonio Bernacchi as his primo uomo, thereby offending supporters of Francesco Bernardi detto Senesino, who had enacted the main heroic role of Lucejo in 1726. Handel yielded to this fan pressure by re-engaging Senesino in 1730, which makes the choice of *Scipione* as season-opener significant. Senesino’s favourite arias of 1726 were all revived and could now be enjoyed as a restoration of times past. The only substitution made for him was the duet ‘D’ogni crudel martir’, sung with Anna Maria Strada, which he himself had performed with Francesca Cuzzoni in *Rodelinda*. The other soloists had already served in 1729–1730, except for the bass Giovanni Commanno. These singers would not ordinarily have required new arias for self-presentation, which were usually granted to newcomers, apart from the necessary adaptations for three new vocal ranges. Nevertheless, the tenor Annibale Pio Fabri as Scipione was given two newly-composed items, while also singing one aria retained from the 1726 version and two inserted ones from other Handel operas. For Antonia Merighi, Francesca Bertolli, Strada, and Commanno Handel inserted another nine arias, plus the duet and the final coro, all drawn from his earlier operas. The overall result was that two numbers were newly composed, one came from *Alessandro*, one from *Flavio*, two from *Riccardo Primo*, two from *Rodelinda*, one from *Lotario*, and four from Handel’s Act III of *Muzio Scevola* (1721).

The texts of these substitutes had mostly been written by Paolo Rolli in their original contexts and needed only minor adaptations here or none at all. Did the librettist have something to do with their choices – was he influencing the aria selection? One particular earlier opera was prioritised as a source: Handel’s Act III of *Muzio*

⁴ W. Dean, ‘Handel’s *Scipione*’, *The Musical Times*, vol. 108, 1967, pp. 902–904.

⁵ W. Dean and J.M. Knapp, *Handel’s Operas 1704–1726*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987, p. 618.

⁶ I attended the Karlsruhe performance and found it musically convincing and theatrically entertaining.

⁷ R. Strohm, ‘Wer entscheidet? Möglichkeiten der Zusammenarbeit an Pasticcio-Opern’, in D. Brandenburg and T. Seedorf (eds), ‘Per ben vestir la virtuosa’. *Die Oper des 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhunderts im Spannungsfeld zwischen Komponisten und Sängern*, Schliengen, Argus, 2011, pp. 62–79.

⁸ See also Strohm, ‘Preface’ to Handel, *Scipione* (forthcoming), section ‘The 1730 revival’.

⁹ A letter by Paolo Rolli (25 January 1729) mentions Lord Bingley as being ‘in charge of the plan’, see D. Burrows et al. (eds), *George Frideric Handel: Collected Documents*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, vol. II (1725–1734), 2013, pp. 268–269; W. Dean, *Handel’s Operas, 1726–1741*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 2006, pp. 125–128. Bingley’s involvement can at present not be substantiated.

¹⁰ E. Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music (1719–1728): The Institution and its Directors*, New York, Garland, 1989.

¹¹ Burrows et al., *George Frideric Handel*, p. 385.

Table 1. Insertions in *Scipione* 1730 (all by Handel)

I.2 Lusinghe più care (Armira) < <i>Alessandro</i>
I.4 Tra speranze (Scipione) < <i>Rodelinda</i>
II.1 Non m'inganna (Ernando) < <i>Lotario</i>
II.2 Dimmi crudele amore (Scipione) < <i>Muzio Scevola</i>
II.3 Di notte il Pellegrino (Berenice) < <i>Riccardo Primo</i>
II.4 Con un vezzo, con un riso (Armira) < <i>Flavio</i>
III.1 Con lei volate (Lelio) < <i>Muzio Scevola</i>
III.4 Tutta brillante i rai (Berenice) < <i>Riccardo Primo</i>
III.6 Pregi son d'un alma (Scipione) <i>newly composed</i>
III.7 Se vuoi in amor (Armira) < <i>Muzio Scevola</i>
III.9 Dopo il nemico (Scipione) <i>newly composed</i>
III.9 D'ogni crudel martir (Berenice, Lucejo) < <i>Rodelinda</i>
III.9 Sì, sarà più dolce amore (Coro) < <i>Muzio Scevola</i>

ANTONIA MERIGHI
ANNIBAL PIO FABRI
GIOVANNI COMMANO
ANNIBAL PIO FABRI
ANNA MARIA STRADA
ANTONIA MERIGHI
FRANCESCA BERTOLLI
ANNA MARIA STRADA
ANNIBALE PIO FABRI
ANTONIA MERIGHI
ANNIBALE PIO FABRI
ANNA MARIA STRADA,
FRANCESCO BERNARDI detto SENESINO
(TUTTI)

Scevola, on a text by Rolli (1721), which was itself a multi-author pasticcio (of the second variety mentioned above). Some audience members will have recognised a common theme of the two opera plots: Roman republican virtue. Prioritising one particular older work as musical 'quarry' for a new production was a procedure also favoured by Antonio Vivaldi, who for a new pasticcio often drew upon only one or two of his own earlier works. This at least spared him the confusion of having a dozen scores lying around the room when creating the new one and when allowing the *virtuosi* to select what to sing.

The soloists of *Scipione* 1730 had different relationships with composer, impresario and librettist. Some of them were young, some older but new to London, some established and powerful such as Senesino, the only soloist to have performed any of the arias before. Strada, who had arrived in 1729, sang six arias and two *accompagnati* from Francesca Cuzzoni's original role of Berenice, plus two arias from Rolli's *Riccardo Primo*: one composed for Cuzzoni and one for Faustina Bordoni. Strada was appreciated at the time for her ability to perform the music of both her famous predecessors.¹² For Merighi, Handel designed a surprising season-opener with the brilliant Bordoni aria 'Lusinghe più care' from *Alessandro*, which she sang here, transposed down, in a newly-written scene as her first aria of the opera. After this spectacular entrée, the contralto sang the original, uncut Armira aria a few scenes later. The arias borrowed for her from *Flavio* and *Muzio Scevola* – which she cannot have selected without Handel's cooperation – must have helped to sharpen her particular stage persona in the *Scipione* production. Merighi comes over as a self-willed

virtuosa who got her own way, whereas the actual prima donna, Anna Maria Strada, is described as a good learner who depended on the maestro's guidance.

After the *Scipione* spectacles, the schedule continued with repeat performances of the pasticcio *Ormisda*, premiered on 4 April 1730. This was followed on 12 December by a revival of *Partenope* with new insertions (see Table 2).

There were musical links between the operas *Scipione* and *Partenope* (especially for those spectators who could remember both in their original versions).¹³ The other productions of the season, too, are evidence of a coordinated plan. The multi-composer pasticcio *Ormisda*, Handel's first production of this genre, was derived from an opera score (or draft) that had been ousted in favour of *Scipione* in March 1726. At that time, the pasticcio *Venceslao* (libretto by the same author as *Ormisda*, Apostolo Zeno) had also been proposed for performance in London but was not taken up.¹⁴ Now both these pasticcio operas were being offered. Thus in addition to the Senesino fans, opera patrons whose expectations had been disappointed in 1726 could now be satisfied. Handel's impresario Heidegger, an admirer of Zeno, probably belonged to this segment of the audience. These and other patrons will have appreciated Handel's *Poro*, a setting of a new and famous drama by Pietro Metastasio (*Alessandro nell'Indie*). Towards the end of the season,

¹³ See Strohm, 'Preface', section 'Borrowings and re-uses'.

¹⁴ J.H. Roberts, 'Vinci, Porpora, and the Royal Academy of Music', *Il Saggiatore musicale*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2016, pp. 243–276 at 261; J.H. Roberts, 'The London Pasticci of 1730–1731: Singers, Composers, and Impresarios', *Händel-Jahrbuch*, vol. 62, 2016, pp. 173–192 at 175; Strohm, 'Preface', section 'The season of *Scipione*'.

¹² J. Zsovár, *Anna Maria Strada: Prima Donna of G. F. Handel*, Berlin, etc., Peter Lang, 2020, pp. 105–107 and 127–150.

Table 2. Operas produced at the King's Theatre, Haymarket, 1730–31

3 November: revival of Handel's <i>Scipione</i> (first given in 1726)
24 November: revival of the pasticcio <i>Ormisdà</i> (first given on 4 April 1730)
12 December: revival of Handel's <i>Partenope</i> (first given on 24 Jan. 1730)
12 January 1731: premiere of the pasticcio <i>Venceslao</i>
2 February 1731: premiere of Handel's <i>Poro</i>
6 April 1731: revival of Handel's <i>Rinaldo</i> (first given in 1711)
4 May 1731: revival of Handel's <i>Rodelinda</i> (first given in 1725).

apparently dwindling audiences contributed to Handel's decision to revive *Rinaldo*, his first London opera, in a thoroughly re-worked version. Winton Dean and John M. Knapp, in discussing this second *opera impasticciata* of 1730–31, observe a 'seeming vandalism with which Handel could treat his works in revival', but then assert: 'It is pointless to charge him with irresponsibility when he was in fact creating that familiar grotesque of Baroque opera, a pasticcio'.¹⁵ Handel's radical approach to his 20-year-old opera had contingent artistic and impresarial reasons, one of which may in fact have been the experience of the *Scipione* revival, but I do not believe that in either work the author pursued an aesthetic of the 'grotesque' as his conscious aim: rather, the pasticcio was a licence rooted in general practice, convenient (and hopefully pleasing) at this particular moment in time.

Berta Joncus has recently interpreted the entire season of 1730–31 in terms of a rivalry between Senesino and Handel.¹⁶ Their influences operated on different levels, however. The castrato was prominent in the eyes and ears of patrons and audiences; he could often insist on singing certain arias or duets, and may have proposed a particular opera in which he had a good part – *Rinaldo* was of this kind.¹⁷ Handel, however, as the music director of the company and the conductor of the premieres, had to take decisions about all the seven productions of the season. He had to plan, together with the impresario, the disposition of works and performers over the entire season. He consulted, at least in outline, the poet about the textual form and content of each individual production, whether he was also its composer or not. Only the music director (*maestro*

di capella) could competently decide, for example, how to balance the musical and dramatic shares of all the soloists in the productions throughout the season. The agency of the *maestro di capella* was an operative framework, possibly of interest to few people in the audience, whereas the aesthetic and performative foreground might be entirely dominated by other agents, above all by the singers. The patronage system, from the royal family down, constituted an operative framework on another level, and so did the financial control exerted by the impresario.

Let us not forget the perspective of those who, unlike modern audiences, saw Italian opera as a means to promote the works of Italian poets. As mentioned, decisions about arias and duets in *Scipione* 1730 and the pasticcio operas of this season may have been influenced, or even presided over, by the librettist – not unreasonably so, because he had to adapt the texts to the new drama into which they were to be inserted. In 1714, the poet Pier Jacopo Martello had described the pasticcio process from the perspective of the librettist, to whom the singers apply for admission of their own older arias.¹⁸ We learn from such testimonies that the singers' influence on the musical fabric was much limited by practicalities, for example physical access to the score. Sometimes the impresario or *maestro di capella* invited performers to choose from a score he himself owned, rather than providing their own pieces, which they may have known by heart but of which they may not have owned a full score.¹⁹ New pieces had to be adapted, re-written, re-texted and copied into partbooks. These insertions could not be carried out by individual soloists alone; suitable locations in the drama had to be found for them, in order to minimise recitative alterations and avoid chain reactions through the dramatic text and *sceneggiatura* (the division of the action into scenes, a term used by Antonio Salvi, for example) – not to mention the fact that proposed insertions were often contested by other soloists.

THE PASTICCIO ORMISDA AND VENCESLAO

We could re-write the history of every pasticcio and in fact every opera from the five different perspectives

¹⁵ See the detailed description in Dean and Knapp, *Handel's Operas*, pp. 186–191.

¹⁶ B. Joncus, 'The Handel-Senesino Rivalry', *Handel Institute Newsletter*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2021, pp. 1–3.

¹⁷ See M. Bucciarelli, 'From Rinaldo to Orlando: or Senesino's Path to Madness', in D. Vickers (ed.), *Handel*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2010; first published in D. Colas and A. Di Profio (eds), *D'une scène à l'autre. L'opéra italien en Europe*, Mardaga, Wavre, 2009, pp. 135–155.

¹⁸ See Strohm, 'Italian Pasticcio Opera', p. 48, and Strohm, 'Wer entscheidet?'.

¹⁹ On the influence of impresarios on aria placement see Roberts, 'The London Pasticci', p. 176, quoting Owen Swiny's letter of 15 March 1726, who claims that he has decided where certain arias were to be placed ('In the place of this song I have put...').

of librettist, composer, performer, impresario and patron (or audience) – in which case important alternatives of aesthetics and practicality would come to the fore.

The London audience, including foreign guests, will have remembered a different historical panorama of the Haymarket operas from that which an author-centred perspective can offer us today.²⁰ But even within the latter, much remains to be done. It is the achievement of John H. Roberts to have greatly improved our ‘composer perspective’ in his recent study of the two pasticcios of this London season.²¹ He demonstrated that the recitatives of *Ormisda* and *Venceslao* cannot have been composed by Handel, adducing a number of persuasive stylistic observations.²² The word- and verse-accents, for example, are placed much more often on weak beats of the C-measure than Handel used to do; word-accents are awkwardly placed also in a few other contexts. In both manuscript scores the main copyist, John Christopher Smith Sr, usually writes the bass figure ‘4’ before ‘3’ in the cadential suspension of recitatives, a figure routinely omitted in Handel’s autographs and Smith’s copies from them: thus in this case the model for Smith’s copy was written by someone other than Handel. In addition,

20 C. Lanfossi, ‘The Book of Pasticcios: Listening to *Ormisda*’s Material Texts’, in Over and zur Nieden, *Operatic Pasticcios*, pp. 447–463, describes the circulation of opera fragments, especially printed favourite songs, as a quasi-secondary pasticcio practice from the perspective of audiences. This idea seems promising to me, but the secondary market has long interested Handel scholarship. The author charges (pp. 456–457) that the Walsh print of an additional song from *Ormisda*, reported in W.C. Smith, *Handel: a Descriptive Catalogue of the Early Editions*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1970 (p. 42: ‘È quella la bella’) has not been noticed by Handel scholars, and that they have overlooked the identity of ‘Sì sì, lasciatemi’ in *Ormisda* with ‘Amor, deh lasciami’ in *Elpidia* (which is acknowledged already in Strohm, ‘Handel’s Pasticci’, pp. 200 and 202). He writes that in 1726 *Ormisda* was ‘dropped due to the late arrival of Faustina Bordoni in London’. The description of musical *Ormisda* sources available in London is incomplete, lacking, for example, twelve aria manuscript copies in B-Bc associated with 1730 (see note 32 below). I am hoping to return to the intertextual connections of *Elpidia* in a different study.

21 Roberts, ‘The London pasticci’.

22 Roberts, pp. 180–187. I am not entirely convinced that an enharmonic change in *Ormisda*, III.10, would be unjustifiable (p. 184). It is only a notational device here and may pass as a metaphoric figure for the word ‘rimproveri’. That Orlandini’s recitatives of 1722 could not have been utilised because of drastic text cuts in 1730 (p. 181) is not a forgone conclusion, considering the countless text compressions and adjustments for the second version made to the original recitatives in the performance score of *Ormisda* itself.

Roberts has for the first time identified composers and sources for instrumental items and choruses in the two operas. These identifications, and the stylistic scrutiny of the recitatives, had long been overdue.²³

Nevertheless, Roberts may not have found the final answer to the question of what Handel had to do with these two works. Autograph annotations by Handel are hard to detect in the performing scores of *Ormisda* and *Venceslao*, but they are there. Hans Dieter Clausen identified Handel’s hand in pencil annotations in *Ormisda*; these are inked over by the copyist and concern recitative cuts.²⁴ Roberts detected ‘minor emendations in his hand’ in the performance scores of both operas, exemplifying these with one in scene II.15 of *Venceslao* (D-Hs M A/1061).²⁵ The parody text of ‘Parto, e mi sento’ in *Venceslao* (II.10) was pencilled by Handel into the performance score, and then inked over by the copyist.²⁶ These emendations go further than confirming that Handel conducted the performances, because they concern recitative adaptations and an aria text. The performing scores were copied mainly by Handel’s amanuensis, John Christopher Smith Sr (who had to be paid by Heidegger, with Handel’s consent), and they were kept together with the performing scores of Handel’s own works. But most importantly, in the impresarial system of these years at the King’s Theatre, there was no other authority for the commissioning of pasticcio operas and their construction out of arias and other pieces than the company’s music director, Handel. Heidegger and the librettist (Giacomo Rossi?) were not qualified. Musical decisions about the individual scores may have been

23 My own analyses of Handel’s pasticcios have so far been confined to the arias and their texts, a limitation I discussed with Professor Roberts and others.

24 H.D. Clausen, *Händels Direktionspartituren* (‘Handexemplare’), Hamburg, Wagner, 1972 (Hamburger Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft 7), p. 184. The direction ‘Un Tono Basso’ for the aria ‘Passagier che in selva oscura’ in GB-Lbl Add. 31551, fol. 132r, may also be an inked-over pencil annotation by Handel.

25 Roberts, ‘The London Pasticci’, pp. 174 and 190 (with music ex. 11). Lanfossi, ‘The Book of Pasticcios’, p. 448, misquotes Roberts as having claimed ‘that there is no trace of Handel’s intervention in the conducting and harpsichord scores’.

26 R. Strohm, ‘Handel’s Pasticci’, in R. Strohm, *Essays on Handel and Italian Opera*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 164–211 at 176–177; R. Strohm, ‘Ormisda (HWV A³)’ and ‘Venceslao (A⁴)’, in A. Jacobshagen and P. Mücke (eds), *Händels Opern: Das Handbuch, Teilband II*, Laaber, Laaber-Verlag, 2009, pp. 368–381 at 379–380. Lanfossi, ‘The Book’, p. 448, ignores this information.

delegated to a subordinate musician, but the important question about who was to sing, how much and where, in both productions, and how this share of the task related to the singers' assignments across the entire season, including in Handel's own operas, can only have been the responsibility of the *maestro di capella* – as in fact it was in Italian opera productions elsewhere in Europe.

It is sometimes said that in pasticcios of the time *all* the arias were chosen by the singers, implying that composers were not needed to assemble the operas in question.²⁷ Still, in my studies of a few hundred Italian pasticcio operas of this period, I have not found a case where *all* the arias were chosen by the singers, or where it seemed that they would have agreed among themselves on the exact distribution of their tasks across an opera. On the contrary, libretto prefaces and other sources usually imply other authorities for the placement of arias, mostly the guiding influence of a *maestro di capella* – in consultation with the impresario and poet, if necessary.²⁸

Who arranged the scores of *Ormisda* and *Venceslao*? We should accept Roberts' conclusion that the musician commissioned to handle the recitatives in these two pasticcio operas was not Handel. Yet the choice of Pietro Castrucci as that person fails to convince. Castrucci was a violinist, not a vocal composer; he was the leader of the opera orchestra but is not known to have ever directed the textual and dramatic planning of a stage work. He could have provided the seven-bar sinfonia in *Venceslao* II.10, as Roberts proposes,²⁹ but then it is surprising that the main sinfonias for these operas are not by him. The recitatives are un-Handelian, yet almost nothing is musically wrong about them; not only their composition but equally their extensive adaptation for the revised production of

Ormisda in November 1730 required vocal-performative experience. Interestingly, Roberts reminds us that the tenor Annibale Pio Fabri, a favourite singer of the two seasons of 1729–1731, may have had access to some arias from the 1722 production of *Ormisda*, or that, alternatively, he 'could have penned them himself', being a respected composer of vocal music.³⁰

The provenance of the arias performed by Fabri in the two pasticcios, which has been harder to track down than that of Senesino's, Merighi's, and Strada's arias, can now be further clarified (see the 'also' sections in Table 3, below), and it demonstrates a particular profile.³¹

These arias performed by Fabri in the two pasticcios seem related to his career in more than one way. He had previously sung and perhaps premiered (or even composed) 'Se non sa qual vento', 'Speranze del mio cor', and 'Ecco l'alba'. He participated in the operas in which 'Nel seren' and 'Balonar con giusta legge' were first sung. Orlandini's 'Sì, sì, lasciatemi' was performed by him several times. 'Un lampo di speranza' seems a unique case of Handel allowing an aria by himself to be performed in a pasticcio opera by others – and this in the presence of Senesino, who had premiered the aria. In *Scipione*, Fabri was the only soloist to be assigned newly-composed Handel arias. As a vocalist qualified in opera composition, he is in my opinion a more likely candidate than Pietro Castrucci for creating and adapting the recitatives of *Ormisda* and *Venceslao*. This proposal naturally needs to be verified, for example through comparison with ascertained compositions by Fabri.

A REVIVALIST TWILIGHT

As critical editor of *Scipione* for the Hallische Händelausgabe (HHA),³² I have gladly followed its guidelines. I thus had to discriminate against the 1730 *impasticciato* version by placing it into an appendix and omitting the unchanged items, for which the user will have to revert to the main printed version of 1726. I accept, of course, the principle of the HHA that the first version of a work is usually preferred for publication (a rule only exceptionally set aside), but we should remember that our twentieth- and twenty-first-century editorial

27 See, for example, Joncus, 'The Handel-Senesino Rivalry', p. 2. Roberts, 'The London Pasticci', p. 191, suggests more cautiously that Handel 'would hardly have presided over the compilation of a work in which the arias were largely chosen by the singers and the recitatives were composed by a somewhat erratic subordinate. This would, however, have been an assignment Heidegger positively relished.' Heidegger, as his career shows, relished dealing with dramatic and poetic structures, but he did not, to my knowledge, ever assemble the music of an opera without the backing of a *maestro di capella*. For the period until 1717 and the input of musicians such as Nicolino Grimaldi and Handel, see L. Lindgren, 'Venice, Vivaldi, Vico and Opera in London, 1705–1717: Venetian Ingredients in English Pasticci', in A. Fanna and G. Morelli (eds), *Nuovi Studi Vivaldiani*, Florence, Olschki, 1988, vol. 2, pp. 633–666.

28 Strohm, 'Wer entscheidet?'.

29 Roberts, pp. 188–190.

30 Roberts, p. 177.

31 Where not indicated otherwise, identifications are based on textual concordances only.

32 G.F. Handel, *Scipione*, HWV 20 (HHA II/17), ed. by R. Strohm, Kassel, etc., Bärenreiter, forthcoming 2022.

Table 3. Arias sung by Annibale Pio Fabri in *Ormisda* and *Venceslao*

Ormisda

‘Se non sa qual vento il guida’. Sung by Fabri (Arsace) in *Rosmira*, Perugia, July 1725 (Roberts, p. 177). Also sung by Fabri (Santippo) in anon., *Marco Attilio Regolo*, Bologna 1724, II.12, and by Giuseppe Ristorini (Unulfo) in Passotti (?), *L’amor costante*, Florence, Teatro Cocomero, carnival 1725.

‘Se non pensi al dovere di figlio’. Provenance still unidentified.

‘Sì, sì, lasciatemi’. Sung by Giovanni Paita in Orlandini, *Lucio Papirio*, Bologna 1718; sung as ‘Amor, deh lasciami’ by Luigi Antinori in anon., *Elpidia*, London 1725 (music concordant), and as ‘Sì, sì, lasciatemi’ by Fabri (Arsace) in anon., *Rosmira*, Perugia, July 1725 (Roberts, p. 177). Also sung as ‘Sì, lusingatemi’ (music concordant) by Fabri (Alceste) in Leo et al., *Arianna e Teseo*, Naples 1721 and 1722.³³

‘Ti sento amor di padre’. Still unidentified: text in Zeno, *Alessandro Severo*, but music not concordant with Lotti 1717, Mancini 1718, nor Orlandini 1723.

‘Speranze del mio cor’ (replacement for ‘Ti sento amor di padre’): sung by Fabri in Giacomelli, *Zidiana*, Milan 1728.

‘Un lampo di speranza’ (another replacement for ‘Ti sento amor di padre’, see C. Timms, ‘Handelian and Other Librettos in Birmingham Central Library’, *Music & Letters*, vol. 62, no. 2, 1984, pp. 141–167 at 148): probably concordant with ‘Un lampo è la speranza’, sung by Senesino in Handel, *Admeto* 1727 (I.7) (Strohm, ‘Ormisda’, p. 374).

Venceslao

I.3 ‘Se tu vuoi dar leggi al mondo’. Zeno’s original text ‘Se vuoi dar legge al mondo’ is in G. M. Capelli, *Venceslao*, Parma 1724; but the added syllable ‘tu’ in 1731 (making the line an *ottonario* instead of *settenario*) suggests that this is a parody of a different aria.

I.9 ‘Ecco l’alba d’un giorno sereno’. Also sung by Fabri (Raimondo) in anon., *L’ingratitudine castigata*, Florence 1726 (I. 10).

II.3 ‘Nel seren di quel sembiante’. Not musically concordant with Capelli, *Venceslao*, Parma 1724. Probably sung by Antonio Barbieri in Act III of *Venceslao*, Venice 1722 (Roberts, p. 177), with music by Antonio Pollarolo (Strohm, ‘Ormisda’, p. 380). Also sung by Ristorini (Unulfo) in Passotti (?), *L’amor costante*, Florence 1725.³⁴

III.7 ‘Balonar con giusta legge’. Probably sung by Antonio Barbieri in Act V of *Venceslao*, Venice 1722 (Roberts, p. 177), with music by Capelli (Strohm, ‘Ormisda’, p. 380).

principles are based on the classicist tradition. To prefer first versions implies a) the notion of authenticity, by which later versions are suspected of lesser authenticity because of external influences on the author’s mind, and b) the ideal of originality, of the spontaneous creation ex novo, where the menu was always cooked best the first time round. These are principles against which the twentieth-century *Regietheater* and the post-modern aesthetics of action, exploration and discovery have long been campaigning.^{33,34}

33 R. Strohm, *Italianische Opernarien des frühen Settecento (1720–1730)*, Köln, Volk, 1976, vol. 2, p. 268. A manuscript of this aria belonging to the Naples performance (F-Pc X.111) erroneously ascribes the music to Leonardo Leo. The manuscript B-Bc 4448, which correctly ascribes the aria to Orlandini, is part of a group of twelve *Ormisda* arias from ca 1730: see Strohm, ‘Handel’s Pasticci’, p. 284 no. 28; Strohm, ‘Ormisda’, p. 375 no. 25.

34 The two textual concordances with *L’amor costante* (Salvi’s *Rodelinda*) at the Teatro del Cocomero, 1725, might not be fortuitous. Fabri was engaged at this theatre in the following season. Manuscript annotations in the libretto I-Mb Racc. dramm. 1154 ascribe the music to one ‘Passotti’ and pass drastic verdicts

Handel’s *Scipione*, just like other early operas, now occupies a revivalist twilight: We want to own the authentic, authorial and unified original, but on stage we want to see a pasticcio, whether of different authorial versions mixed together or in fact a mixture of authorial and non-authorial ingredients, cooked up by our opera director. The contrasting views of Handel specialists such as Winton Dean and Clifford Bartlett about modern *Scipione* revivals, mentioned above, illustrate the conflict.

Nor is *Scipione* a unique case. About half of Handel’s operas ended up, during his lifetime, as semi-pasticci, and two revivals directed by him in the later 1730s (*Poro* and *Ariodante*) admitted music by other composers. Thus there is no conceptual difficulty about this erosion of the original unified forms which theatrical practice brought with it. When Winton Dean once described *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* as a work so perfectly designed that no part could be taken out without the entire organisation

on the singers; Ristorini, for example, is classified as ‘tenore non val niente’. Operas performed in Florence in 1725 were the first to receive the name of ‘pasticcio’ in the autobiography of Johann Joachim Quantz (1755).

breaking down, he consciously or subconsciously quoted M. Tullius Cicero's classical description of the literary *opus*. In my opinion, Handel would not have been prudent to design such a unity, as he knew that theatrical practice would sooner or later chip away at the score. But he would have had a choice between artistic unity and variety, as the tensions between the two aesthetic principles were part of public discourse at the time. In eighteenth-century theatre in general, there was a fluctuation and negotiation between the classicist ideals of authoriality and unity, and the proto-romantic practice of pasticcio, collage, and haphazardness. Neither practice should be singled out as the century's 'default option'. Modern editions and revivals seem to reiterate that same dialectic today.

Today's dispute between the two aesthetic principles, however, is not quite the same as it was then, because some fundamental concepts have shifted. Our modern work-and-author concept has been formed by a nineteenth- to twentieth-century development in the arts; the post-modern backlash against it in fact opposes a nineteenth-century 'author-episteme'. Nevertheless, eighteenth-century musical aesthetics did not lack work-and-author-consciousness, as many critical, biographical and theoretical witnesses tell us. Work-status in opera could refer to an entire drama or a single vocal number. For some theatre-goers, a work's substance might be the literary component only, whereas its musical presentation might be considered an accident of it. The status of the music depended on whether it was seen as part of the creation or the execution. Helmut Huckle's astute observation that the musical setting of an opera was then regarded more like its stage production ('Inszenierung') is today,³⁵ articulates a historical shift in *agency*: the composers did with the standard theatrical texts of their time more or less what producers and stage directors do with the standard musical scores today.

In the eighteenth century, pasticcio principles were not normative and equally distributed everywhere. Impresarios and civic audiences loved pasticcios, court opera directors did not. The Italians and Germans did, the French did not. Florence, Milan and the civic opera house in Vienna used the practice routinely; London, Venice and Hamburg followed both principles in different phases, in different theatres and under

different impresarios.³⁶ There were many types. Hasse and Orlandini created a few 'pasticcios from a single composer's works', whereas Vivaldi cultivated the 'pasticcio made up from arias by various composers'. Handel and Gluck practised both types at different times. The single-composer method usually made it difficult to re-use arias previously performed by the same singers. But successfully repeating an aria previously sung by a famous colleague was generally applauded.

To describe opera history from the singers' perspective would often mean a history not of the works they participated in, but of their voices, their musical preferences, patrons and enemies, and last but not least, their travels. That singers should have been eager contributors to work-like unity or consistency of character in particular works is less likely. Unity and character could be negotiated on a different level, however; Handel's and Senesino's *Giulio Cesare* of 1724 was not the stage person with the most consistent character but who could offer the most diverse menu of aria characters. In many opera venues, performers could show off their abilities more comprehensively by persuading the impresario to let them embody two or more contrasting characters in the operas of a single season. The seasonal contracts for musicians, poets, stage painters etc., required the impresario and *maestro di capella* to design an entire season in advance, whether as a unified or a pasticcio-like series, but certainly aiming at the maximum audience effect.

I suggest, therefore, that the London opera season of 1730–31, with both single-author and multi-author productions, was received, and should be seen today, not only as a group of works of greater or lesser authority, but also as a series of collaborative attempts to satisfy various aesthetic and social demands. The new shape which *Scipione* took was not meant to demonstrate a particular aesthetic status of a work, but to fulfil expectations of various constituencies, and have a theatrical impact. In that respect it had absolutely the same function as the pasticcio operas *Orminda* and *Venceslao*, despite the fact that it did not contain music by other composers, as they did. Perhaps the same could already be said of the original *Scipione* of 1726. But visions of unity and variety depended on, and could change with, the perspective of the various contributing agents. In the performing and editing practice of today, we have added the perspectives of stage producer and critical editor, but we have not yet been able to recreate that multiplicity of perspectives which eighteenth-century audiences apparently appreciated.

35 H. Huckle, 'Die beiden Fassungen der Oper *Didone abbandonata* von Domenico Sarri', in W. Gerstenberg, H. Heckman and H. Husmann (eds), *Bericht über den internationalen musikwissenschaftlichen Kongreß (Hamburg 1956)*, Kassel, etc., Bärenreiter, 1957, pp. 113–117.

36 For an overview, see Strohm, 'Italian Pasticcio Opera'.

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