Unknown Senesino: Francesco Bernardi's Vocal Profile and Dramatic Portrayal, 1700-1740

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Abstract

Francesco Bernardi (known as *Senesino*: 1686-1759) is recognised as one of the most prominent singers of the eighteenth century. With performing credits throughout Europe, he was viewed as a contralto castrato of incredible technical accomplishment in voice and dramatic portrayal. Yet, even considering his fame, success, and frequent and prominent scandals, Senesino has remained little-researched today. The eighteen operas newly composed by George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) for him have been the primary reference sources which define current views of Senesino's voice.[1] For example, regarding the singer's vocal range, Winton Dean states the following based on Charles Burney's account of Senesino:

> 'His compass in Handel was narrow (*g* to *e″* at its widest, but the *g* appears very rarely, and many of his parts, especially in later years, do not go above *d″*) […] Quantz's statement that he had 'a low *mezzo-soprano* voice, which seldom went higher than *f″*' probably refers to his earliest years.'[2]

Dean's assessment is incomplete and provides an inaccurate sense of Senesino's actual vocal range, which, in fact, extended beyond his cited range to *g″*. The upper reaches of Senesino's voice were not only utilised in his 'earliest years' but throughout the entirety of his career. Operas such as *Giulio Cesare, Rodelinda*, and *Orlando* account for only a small portion of the 112 operatic works in which the singer is known to have performed during his forty years on stage.[3] This thesis expands perceptions of Senesino's vocal range and aspects of technical skill in vocal and dramatic portrayal to provide an informed sense of the singer from the time of his operatic début to his final years performing.

In Volume I elements of Senesino's career from 1700 to 1740 are assessed. Volume II comprises musical examples, aria transcriptions, a catalogue of all known operatic performances in which Senesino sang, and dramatic considerations that further contextualise the singer's talents. To identify clearly his abilities and experience, Chapter 1 introduces primary source accounts of Senesino's voice, dramatic portrayal, personal style of performance, rhetorical delivery, skill with ornamentation (including his famed *messa di voce*), and personality. The crafting of fame was also an important aspect of any eighteenth-century singer's success. Senesino, like Farinelli and many other castrati of his time, was active in shaping the type, content, and musical and dramatic qualities of his roles. Only recently have aspects of singer involvement in role development been truly considered; this thesis is one of the first to bring focus on to Senesino in this regard.

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[1] The 18 operas Handel newly composed for Senesino include *Radamisto* (second version) of 1720, *Muzio Scevola* of 1721(Handel composed a single act), *Floridante* of 1721, *Ottone* of 1723, *Flavio* of 1723, *Giulio Cesare* of 1724, *Tamerlano* of 1724, *Rodelinda* of 1725, *Scipione* of 1726, *Alessandro* of 1726, *Admeto* of 1727, *Riccardo Primo* of 1727, *Siroe* of 1728, *Tolomeo* of 1728, *Poro* of 1731, *Ezio* of 1732, *Sosarme* of 1732, and *Orlando* of 1733.

[2] Winton Dean, 'Senesino,' *GMO*, accessed 24 August 2017. See also Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Provinces,* 2nd edn, 2 vols (London: T. Becket and Co., 1775), II, 175-76.

[3] See Appendix I: Senesino's Operatic Repertoire, 1700-1740.

Three periods in Senesino's operatic career are defined in this thesis and aspects of the singer's changing voice, relationship with colleagues and composers, and dramatic portrayal are considered. Senesino built his reputation in Italian and German early-career performances from 1700 to 1719: Chapter 2 assesses Giovanni Maria Ruggieri's 1707 opera *Armida abbandonata* illustrating how the singer was already viewed favourably in comparison to his established colleagues Nicolini and Maria Anna Garberini Bentì (*la Romanina*). Senesino performed predominantly in London from 1720 to 1733 and upon his arrival there, he faced unfavourable public perception and endeavoured to change his off-stage reputation through the characters he portrayed on stage, particularly in the operas of Giovanni Bononcini (1670-1747). In Chapter 3 specific aspects of Senesino's intervention to shape his vocal and dramatic portrayals are delineated in relation to Bononcini's 1722 opera *La Griselda*. Senesino's late career from 1733 to 1740 is addressed in Chapter 4 and elements of vocal deterioration, competition, resentment, and the singer's over-zealous intervention to secure work are assessed in relation to *Eumene*, by Giovanni Antonio Giaj (1690-1764). While the primary focus of this thesis is Senesino himself, biographical information and an evaluation of compositional style for Giovanni Maria Ruggieri, Giovanni Bononcini, and Giovanni Antonio Giaj are also detailed.

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Abbreviations

LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES, AND COLLECTIONS

Libraries and archives are identified with the *sigla* system of the *Répertoire international des sources musical* (*RISM*).

A-Wn	Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Musiksammlung
B-Bc	Brussels, Conservatoire Royal, Bibliothèque, Koninklijk Conservatorium, Bibliotheek
D-B	Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung
D-Bs	Berlin, Stadtbibliothek, Musikbibliothek
D-Dl	Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek-Staats-und Universitäts-Bibliothek, Musikabteilung
D-Kdma	Kassel, Deutsches Musikgeschichtliches Archiv
D-Mbs	Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek
D-HVs	Hanover, Stadtbibliothek, Musikbibliothek
F-Pn	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France
GB-Cfm	Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Dept of Manuscripts and Printed Books
GB-Lam	London, Royal Academy of Music, Library
GB-Lbl	London, British Library
GB-Lbm	London, British Museum
GB-Lcm	London, Royal College of Music, Library
GB-Lfom	London, Foundling Museum: Gerald Coke, private collection
GB-Lv	London, Victoria and Albert Museum, Theatre Museum
GB-Lwi	London, Warburg Institute
GB-Ob	Oxford, Bodleian Library
GB-WMl	Warminster, Longleat House Old Library
I-Bc	Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale
I-Mb	Milan, Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense
I-Rvat	Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
I.T.ma	Turin, Museo Civico di Arte Antica a Palazzo Madama
I-Tn	Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, sezione Musicale
I-Vcg	Venice, Casa di Goldoni, Biblioteca
I-Vgc	Venice, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Istituto per le Lettere, il Teatro ed il Melodramma, Biblioteca
I-Vnm	Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana
PL-Wn	Warsaw, Biblioteka Narodowa
US-AUS	Austin, University of Texas at Austin, The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center
US-BEm	Berkeley, University of California at Berkeley, Music Library
US-CAward	Cambridge (MA), John Milton Ward, private collection [on loan
US-CA	Cambridge (MA), Harvard University, Harvard College Library]
US-Cu	Chicago, University, Joseph Regenstein Library, Music Collection
US-Fay	Farmington (CT), Yale University, Lewis Walpole Library
US-SFsc	San Francisco, San Francisco State University, Frank V. de Bellis Collection
US-ST.u	Stanford, California, Stanford University Department of Music, Harry R. Lange Historical Collection of Instruments
US-Wc	Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Music Division

DICTIONARIES, CATALOGUES, AND ONLINE SOURCES

BDA	Philip H. Highfill, Jr., et al., *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers, and other Stage Personnel in London 1600-1800*, 16 vols (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973).
DBI	*Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*. www.treccani.it/biografie/
GMO	*Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, www.oxfordmusiconline.com
OCM	*The Oxford Companion to Music. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press, www.oxfordmusiconline.com
RISM	*Répertoire International des Sources Musicales*. www.rism.info
Sartori	Claudio Sartori, *I libretti Italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800*, 6 vols (Cuneo, Italy: Bertola e Locatelli Musica, 1990-94).

Editorial Policy

Translations

All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated. I have consulted John Florio's *Queen Anna's New World of Words, or Dictionairie of the Italian and English tongues* of 1611 to clarify the meaning of words no longer in common parlance.[4]

Editorial Practices for Text

Varied typographical methods not in use today were employed by eighteenth-century authors to enhance meaning and more accurately convey the nature of the spoken word, these include varied fonts, capitalization, italicisation, and punctuation. To recapitulate the spirit of the eighteenth century, where possible, these typographical elements have been maintained when referencing original sources. Historical spellings have also generally been retained. Errors in spelling relating to proper names, or, where they might obscure the understanding of the quotation, have been altered and marked afterward with the indication '[sic]'. When proper names are inconsistently spelled (i.e. Berselli, Berscelli) the commonly accepted form of the name from the entry in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* has been utilised unless otherwise noted. When aria texts are cited, they remain as in the original source, again, unless the meaning is obscured, in which case they have been updated to the modern equivalent and the change indicated. The same is true for notated word accents, unless specifically indicated, they remain as in the original source. In most cases the libretto, a printed document, is more legible than a hand-written musical source. Consequently, when there is a discrepancy between a libretto and manuscript source, the libretto is generally the document utilised for textual citations in both written texts and musical transcriptions. The first syllable of each line of poetic verse has been capitalised for clarity. For matters of punctuation, the indications in the musical manuscript, rather than the libretto, have been used to more accurately preserve the composer's musical and dramatic intent.

Musical Transcriptions

I have engraved all musical transcriptions contained in this study. In creating these transcriptions, every effort has been made to render a clear, readable, and performable transcription of the manuscript source in modern notation. Editorial changes or inclusions have been made only when necessary to facilitate ease of understanding. The aim has been to preserve the original notation, remarks, and intent of the composer; this edition strives to resemble, as closely as possible, the source in content and appearance.

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[4] John Florio, *Queen Anna's New World of Words, or Dictionairie of the Italian and English tongues,* (London: Melch Bradwood, for Edw. Blount and William Ba[v]ret, 1611).

Treatment of Accidentals

All accidentals appear as written in the manuscript score with any suggested corrections to manuscript errors or courtesy accidentals appearing in parentheses before the note or above the pitch. Unless otherwise noted, the current practice of an accidental, once stated, remaining in duration throughout the bar has also been adopted.

Doubling of Parts

When doubling of a part is indicated in the manuscript score, for example, when the viola part is instructed *col basso* and no pitches are notated for a period of measures in the source, in keeping with current practice the pitches have been added for ease of performance and study. An editorial remark (i.e. *[col basso]*) has been placed in square brackets corresponding with the location of the comment in the original manuscript score.

Clefs

Archaic clefs in the source, when not standard in modern transcriptions, have been updated to the treble clef.

Musical Repetition

Musical and textual repetitions contained within a phrase in the manuscript, when noted with a symbol in the source, have been written-out in the transcription, in keeping with current practice.

Stem Direction

When stems are beamed in different directions in the manuscript source, they have been updated for uniformity (either all up or all down).

Orthography

Archaic spelling has been updated when crucial for comprehension of the text, unless otherwise noted. Some of the most common updates include the letters *u* to the modern *v*, and *f* to *s*.

Text Underlay and Word Division in Musical Sources

When the source does not provide a clear indication of underlay and textual division, note beams have been the deciding factor in the accompanying transcriptions to determine the intent of the composer.

Capitalisation and Punctuation

When discrepancies exist between the manuscript and the libretto, or either source is unclear, capitalisation has been utilized at the start of each sentence and at the beginning of each line of poetry. When necessary, the source deemed closest to the text has taken precedence. For example, when a non-native speaker has prepared the printing plates to an Italian opera libretto published in England which includes obvious errors, the musical manuscript would take precedence. Should this not provide necessary clarity, punctuation has been updated to best match the meaning of the words. Repeated words or phrases are preceded by a comma.

Dynamic Markings

When a dynamic marking is indicated in one instrumental part, but intended for all players, a marking has been added to the other parts for clarity. For example, when a *forte* is indicated for the Violin I and Basso continuo parts, the marking has been added to all additional parts as well.

All Other Material

Elements such as key signatures, time signatures, phrasing marks, slurs, ornamentation, and figured bass symbols remain as in the original source, unless otherwise noted.

Definitions

Coloratura[5]- (Italian, 'colouring') Florid figuration or ornamentation, particularly in vocal music. Also, defined as diminution: 'when an interval is altered through several shorter notes, so that, instead of one long note, a number of shorter ones rush to the next note through all kinds of progressions by step or leap' (Bernhard, *Tractatus compositionis*, *c*. 1657).

Fioritura - (Italian, 'flowering') A term for a virtuosic grouping of notes, particularly in vocal music, originating with the Italian term 'to flower'.[6] This florid embellishment could be notated by a composer or improvised by a singer in performance.

Martellando – (Italian, 'hammered') The terms *martellando* and *martellato* are interchangeable. In string playing and vocal music, the term applies to the practice of repeating a strongly accented note in fast succession, often on the same pitch.[7]

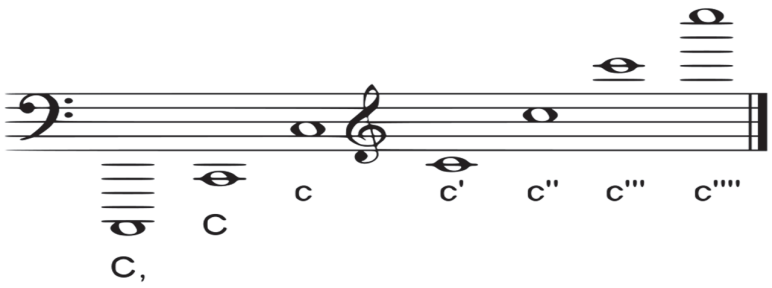
[5] Owen Jander and Ellen T. Harris, 'Coloratura,' *GMO*, accessed 30 November 2017.
[6] The word *fiora* upon which the term is based can be found in Florio, *Queen Anna's New World of Words*, 189.
[7] David Milsom, 'martellando', *OCM*, accessed 23 January 2017.

Messa di voce - (Italian for 'placing of the voice') The singing or playing of a long note so that it begins quietly, swells to full volume, and then diminishes to the original quiet tone. The *messa di voce* is one of the most important techniques of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italian singing style.[8]

Tessitura - (Italian for 'texture') A term used to describe the part of a vocal (or less often instrumental) compass in which a piece of music lies – whether high or low, etc. The tessitura of a piece is not decided by the extremes of its range, but rather by which part of the range is most utilised.[9]

Pitch Notation

Note names and range appear in the written text according to the Helmholtz system of pitch notation, as follows:



Abbreviations[10]

b(b). = bar(s)
b = *basso*
bc = *basso continuo*, continuo
bn = bassoon, *fagotto*
hpd = *cembalo*, harpsichord
hn = horn, *corno da caccia*
fl = *flauto*, flute
m(m). = measure(s)
ob = oboe
p(p). = page(s)
tpt = trumpet
va = viola
vdg = viola da gamba
vc = violoncello
Vn = violin, *violino*
vle = *violone*

[8] Ellen T. Harris, 'Messa di voce,' *GMO*, accessed 29 November 2017.
[9] Owen Jander, 'Tessitura,' *GMO*, accessed 29 November 2017.
[10] Abbreviations are congruous with those listed in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

CHAPTER 1

Defining Senesino: voice, image, dramatic portrayal, reputation

As a biography for Senesino is yet to be written, a view of the singer is given here to provide a necessary underpinning to the comprehensive arc of his performing career examined throughout this thesis. Details of Senesino's vocal range and quality, intonation, coloratura, and rhetorical skill are all explored, as well as his facility with ornamentation and his idiosyncratic performance practices. Elements of dramatic portrayal for which Senesino was highly lauded are also evaluated and a sense of the singer's personal character and physical stature are discussed to substantiate inferences about the singer's voice and performing drawn in later chapters.

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One of the most noted singers of the eighteenth century, the alto castrato Santi Francesco Bernardi was born in Siena into a working-class family on 31 October 1686. In homage to his hometown, Bernardi became recognised as *Senesino*. Surprisingly little is known of the singer's early life; his date of birth was only verified in 2006 and many other aspects of his upbringing remain ambiguous.[1] Senesino's father, Giuseppe di Domenico Bernardi, was a barber described as 'un povero uomo' with large and swollen legs and feet resulting in the ascribed moniker, *il Pedacci*.[2] By the age of nine Senesino was a member of the local cathedral choir and showing signs of exceptional promise in music, he underwent castration surgery at the relatively late age of thirteen.[3] Senesino first performed on stage in 1700 as the page Plautillo in Bononcini's *Cammilla*,

[1] Regarding Senesino's date of birth see an account from a distant relative of the singer in Elisabetta Avanzati, 'The Unpublished Senesino', *The Baroque Composers: Handel*, ed. David Vickers (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 305-309.

[2] Antonio Mazzeo, *Ulteriori notizie su Francesco Bernardi detto il 'Senesino'* (Siena: Edizioni Cantagalli Siena, 1995), 5: 'perchè avea le gambe gonfiate, era nominato il Pedacci'. The term *il Pedacci* is difficult to translate but certainly references the word *pedàle*, meaning 'foot' or 'root'. Beyond obvious connotations to a person's foot the word also has connections to the root of a tree. *Pedacci* is likely also related to the Italian word *Pedaggiere* meaning 'a foot-man or a lacquey'. Together these words suggest that Senesino's father not only had feet that where like tree stumps but that he was also of a servant class. See Florio, *Queen Anna's New World of Words*, 363.

[3] Avanzati, 'The Unpublished Senesino', 305. See also Colleen Reardon, 'Siena Cathedral and its Castrati', *Sleuthing the Muse: Essays in Honor of William F. Prizer*, ed. Kristin K. Forney and Jeremy L. Smith (New York: Pendragon, 2012), 202, where the 17 November 1699 agreement for castration made between Senesino's father and the rectors of the Siena cathedral is provided in full. While being castrated at age thirteen may be considered late when compared with early eighteenth-century practices in other Italian cities, it was not uncommon for Siena where boys were commonly castrated at 12 or 13, and some as late as age 15. See Reardon, 'Siena Cathedral and its Castrati', 204. For more on the castration procedure and historical context see Piotr Scholz, *Eunuchs and Castrati: A Cultural History*, trans. John A. Broadwin and Shelley L. Frisch (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001), and Wendy Heller, 'Varieties of Masculinity: Trajectories of the Castrato from the Seventeenth Century', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 23/3 (2005), 307-321.

a part that was written specifically for him.[4] His next documented performance was in 1706 Venetian presentations of an unknown opera, followed shortly in 1707 by the role of Rinaldo in *Armida abbandonata* by Giovanni Maria Ruggieri ([1665]-1724) which appears to be his first *primo uomo* role.[5] After ten years of prolific and advantageous Italian engagements, including periods of employment in Naples and for the prominent Ruspoli family in Rome, Senesino was invited by the composer Antonio Lotti (1667-1740) to perform with a company of Italian opera singers in Dresden from 1 September 1717.[6] Senesino's enormous salary of 7000 thaler and the use of a personal carriage are sure signs of the singer's fame at that time.[7]

It was in Dresden in 1719 that George Frideric Handel first heard Senesino in Lotti's opera *Teofane*. On orders from the Directors of the Royal Academy of Music, Handel engaged the singer to perform in London beginning in the following season and 'for as many Years as may be.'[8] This initiated Senesino's most recognised and lauded period of performing, as well as his long and tumultuous relationship with Handel. Senesino sang in Royal Academy of Music productions from December 1720 to May 1728, including thirteen by Handel, eight by Giovanni Bononcini (1670-1747), and seven by Attilio Ariosti (1666-1729). However, after many profitable years for its *primo uomo*, the company went bankrupt.[9] Senesino returned to Italy in 1728 where he purchased a large residence in Siena and continued to sing in his native country.[10] In 1729 he performed in Venice and Turin in the operas of Andrea Stefano Fiorè (1686-1732), Geminiano Giacomelli (1692-1740), and Giuseppe Maria Orlandini (1676-1760).

In 1730 Senesino returned to London to perform with the recently reorganized Royal Academy of Music for three further seasons. He sang there with continued notoriety in newly composed operas by Handel as well as many revivals and *pasticci* that included the music of Bononcini, Leonardo Vinci (1690-1730), Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), and Ariosti. In a January 1733 letter, John West, Baron De La Warr, stated that 'There is a Spirit got up against the

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[4] See Colleen Reardon, *A Sociable Moment: Opera and Festive Culture in Baroque Siena* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 216-18, and Reardon, 'Siena Cathedral and its Castrati', 207. The new part was probably not composed by Bononcini, but rather Senesino's first teacher, the head of the Siena Cathedral choir, Giuseppe Fabbrini. Unfortunately, music for the performance is not extant.

[5] A magistrate's small claims registry led Melania Bucciarelli to determine Senesino's Venetian début was in 1706, rather than 1707, as previously thought. See Bucciarelli, 'Farò il possibile', 54.

[6] Ursula Kirkendale, *Antonio Caldara: life and Venetian-Roman oratorios*, ed. and English trans. Warren Kirkendale (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2007), 439. Winton Dean, 'Senesino,' *GMO*, accessed 3 December 2016.

[7] John Rosselli, *Singers of Italian opera: The History of a Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 132. Rosselli notes the sum of 7,000 thaler as being equivalent to 'well over £1,000' at the time which, according to The National Archives Historical currency converter would have had a spending worth in 2005 of £84,750.00 (https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/default0.asp).

[8] Letter, Thomas Holles on behalf of the Royal Academy of Music, 14 May 1719: 'That Mr. Hendel engage Senezino [*sic*] as soon as possible to Serve the Said Company and for as many Years as may be.'; cited in Donald Burrows, *Handel*, Master Musicians Series, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 133.

[9] Senesino had likely begun singing with the Royal Academy of Music for the high salary of 1500 guineas per season, not including the income he would have made from benefit concerts. See Donald Burrows, Helen Coffey, John Greenacombe, and Anthony Hicks, ed., *George Frideric Handel: Volume 1, 1609–1725: Collected Documents* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), s.v. '15 September 1718'.

[10] Dean, 'Senesino', *GMO*.

Dominion of Mr. Handel'.[11] Tensions rose to a breaking point between the composer and Senesino, who Handel had previously termed a 'damned fool'.[12] As a result, a new opera company was founded which was largely instigated and directed by Senesino, the so-called Opera of the Nobility.[13] The operas of Nicolà Porpora (1686-1768), Johann Adolph Hasse (1699-1783), and Francesco Maria Veracini (1690-1768) formed the core of the Company's repertoire from the autumn of 1734 to May 1736.[14]

In 1736, 'tiring of the incessant rivalries of the London stage' and feeling his years, Senesino returned to Italy.[15] For his three final seasons performing on the stage Senesino received mixed critical reception in Rimini, Turin, Florence, and Naples. During this period the singer resented comparison with any other castrati except the famed Farinelli or Carestini.[16] He retired to his home in Siena, which was well appointed with possessions he acquired during his time in England. Senesino died on 27 November 1758 after several years of increasing paranoia marked by difficult interactions with his heirs over their living expenses and inheritance.[17]

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Senesino's career flourished in London; according to John Gay in 1723 the singer was so highly regarded that just three seasons after his arrival he was 'daily voted to be the greatest man that ever lived'.[18] Senesino and the soprano Francesca Cuzzoni were known as 'two Voices that were once the Delight of our Nobility. And the Envy of all Europe'.[19] The sheer number of accolades Senesino received inspires the question what, specifically, can be said of this singer's

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[11] The letter from John West to Charles, Duke of Richmond, is translated and cited in Thomas McGeary, *The Politics of Opera in Handel's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 157-158.
[12] Letter, Paolo Antonio Rolli to Giuseppe Riva, 18 October 1720; in English: Streatfeild, 'Handel, Rolli, and Italian Opera', 436.
[13] See Melania Bucciarelli, 'Senesino's Negotiations with the Royal Academy of Music: Further Insight into the Riva-Bernardi Correspondence and the Role of Singers in the Practice of Eighteenth-Century Opera', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 27/3 (2015), 189-213; 201.
[14] Senesino left the Opera of the Nobility and returned to Italy before the company was finally dissolved in 1737.
[15] William C. Holmes, *Opera Observed: Views of a Florentine Impresario in the early 18th Century* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 131. Holmes provides a comprehensive depiction of Senesino's final years on the stage in Italy, from 1736 to 1740, giving insight into three particularly useful aspects of the singer's life and career: the harsh critical reception Senesino received during this time and his performing in a '*stile antico*'; Senesino's unsuccessful intervention at the end of his career in efforts to secure future work for himself; and mention of how Senesino lost favour with the King of Naples in 1739. The chapter entitled 'Senesino Returns, Naples and Regio, and the end of a glorious career (1739-1740)' is particularly relevant as it mentions specific works related to Senesino, including: *Achille in Sciro* of 1736 by Antonio Caldara, *Temistocle* of 1737 by [Caldara] and [G. M. Orlandini], *Arianna* of 1739 by G. M. Orlandini, *Arsace* of 1739 by G. M. Orlandini, and *Il Trionfo di Camilla* of 1740 by Porpora.
[16] Letter, Luca Casimiro degl'Albizzi, 30 June 1739, Albizzi Archive, A. 771, cited in Holmes, *Opera Observed*, 230, note 18: 'Egli malvolontieri si adatta alla partirà di musici giovani, solamente a quella di Farinello o Carestini.'
[17] Avanzati, 'The Unpublished Senesino', 305-309. Avanzati provides glimpses into Senesino's time off the stage, showing intimate and humanising aspects of this singer not previously recognised. For example, the mention of a book of herbal health remedies compiled by Senesino in 1722 for his individual use suggests his attention to personal wellbeing.
[18] Letter, John Gay to Dean Swift, London, 3 February 1723, cited in John Gay, *Life and Letters of John Gay (1685-1732): Author of the Beggar's Opera*, ed. Lewis Melville (London: Daniel O'connor, 1921), 58.
[19] *Read's Weekly Journal*, or, *British Gazetteer*, n. 431, 23 June 1733.

capabilities that led to such elevated praise? Furthermore, what standards of vocal and dramatic mastery determined these accolades? Senesino's vocal and dramatic performing capabilities, as well as his personality and physical appearance, can be assessed by examining eighteenth-century sources. While certainly subjective, perhaps the most dependable accounts are those of audience members who heard and saw Senesino perform (Appendix II, Table 1). Many of these descriptions have been previously referenced, however they have not been examined in such a way as to provide a detailed impression of Senesino's abilities throughout the duration of his forty-year career. Second-hand accounts of the singer's skill, taken in tandem with assessments of published scores and manuscripts from later in the eighteenth century, add further detail in ascertaining Senesino's performing capabilities. These include the accounts of Charles Burney, John Hawkins, and treatises on the art of singing by Pier Francesco Tosi and Giambattista Mancini which frame the benchmark standard of style and skill for eighteenth-century vocalists.[20]

In addition to being a renowned teacher of singing, Tosi was also an admired soprano castrato who travelled extensively in Europe from 1701 to 1723 and performed in England, Austria, and throughout Italy. Tosi's treatise reflects his broad range of experience and cultural understanding subsequently popularising it throughout Europe. In the treatise, he addresses primary elements of singing mastery, including: facility throughout the voice; uniting vocal registers; elegant posture and deportment; the importance of internalised rhythmic pulse; sustaining notes and smoothly producing a *messa di voce*; proper execution and use of appoggiaturas, trills, ornamentation, and cadenzas; declamation of recitatives to ensure the text is imbued with drama; and building self-confidence and a noble bearing while performing.

The castrato Mancini held the post of singing master to the Imperial Court of Vienna from 1757. Like Tosi, his treatise advises on the acquisition of technical mastery with skills including the *messa di voce*, trills, blending of registers, the agility of the voice, ornamentation, and cadenzas. Indicative of contemporary performance practices, the views of Tosi and Mancini vary on some elements. For example, Tosi believed ornamentation to be superfluous in many cases, causing obstruction to word comprehension, while Mancini, a proponent of what Tosi might call the modern style of singing, advocates more strongly for it.

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[20] Charles Burney, *General History of Music from the earliest ages to the present* (London: author, 1789); Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*, second edition (London: T. Becket and Co., 1773); Sir John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music* (London: T. Payne and Son, 1776). Pier Francesco Tosi, *Opinioni de' cantori antiche e moderni, o sieno Osservazioni sopra il canto figurato* (Bologna: L. della Volpe, 1723); Mr. [John Ernest] Galliard, trans., *Observations on the Florid Song; or Sentiments on the Ancient and Modern Singers* (London: J. Wilcox, 1743); Giambattista Mancini, *Pensieri, e Reflessioni Pratiche sopra il Canto Figurato* (Vienna: Ghelen, 1774); Pietro Buzzi, trans., *Practical Reflections on the Figurative Art of Singing* (Boston: Gorham Press, 1913). The lasting influence of Tosi and Mancini and their approach to teaching the Italian style of singing can be seen in the structure and topics discussed in much later treatises, such as Mattilda Marchesi, *Bel Canto: A Theoretical & Practical Vocal Method* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1900). For example, Marchesi's practical method opens with an address to the reader that presents basic elements considered necessary for proper singing, such as: respiration, manoeuvring register changes in the voice, style, and posture, and in the exercises contained in the book she addresses execution of legato, arpeggios, scales, triplets, and other vocal gestures.

Every castrato voice possessed distinctive range and vocal characteristics. Hawkins knew that 'Senesino had a very fine even-toned voice, but of rather a narrow compass; some called it a mezzo soprano, others a contralto.'[21] Burney provided further detail:

> Quantz calls it a low mezzosoprano voice, which seldom went higher than F; but as this account was drawn up, in the younger part of Senesino's life, before he went to England, it is natural to imagine, that his voice may afterwards have lost some of its high notes; for in all the airs which Handel made for him he is strictly confined to the limits of a true contralto.[22]

Burney, and subsequent twentieth-century accounts influenced by his observation, such as Winton Dean's, assume that Handel's compositions for Senesino are depictive of *all* compositions for the singer from 1720 onward. Dean declares: 'Quantz's statement that he had 'a low mezzo-soprano voice, which seldom went higher than *f″* probably refers to his earliest years.'[23] As later chapters in this thesis reveal, an assessment of music beyond Handel's is necessary to comprehend the inclusive vocal range of this singer. Ursula Kirkendale has asserted that in contrast to the contralto voice which Quantz identified in 1719, Senesino was viewed as a soprano in his earliest years, as Dean also suggests.[24] It is unsurprising that the young Senesino's voice was higher, a shift from soprano to contralto can be observed with many castrati as they aged, including Antonio Bernachi, Giovanni Manzuoli, and Giovanni Carestini.[25] Inconsistent voice-part labelling in the eighteenth century confuses the matter as many terms seem to have been used interchangeably and descriptions that bear little coherence today were assigned, such as 'falsetto' for the higher part of the soprano vocal range.[26] One example of these varying assignments applied to Senesino is Hawkins's observation that the singer was called by some 'a mezzo soprano, [and] others a contralto'.[27] The rubric 'soprano' on printed broadsides is alone not enough to validate Kirkendale's claim, as scores well into the 1730s continue to generically identify Senesino as soprano. This label, particularly in printed editions, functions as a catch-all for any voice above tenor. However, differing from Dean's assessment that Senesino's voice was likely higher only in his earliest years, in several instances during the early 1720s Bononcini composed for Senesino's voice to *f″* and on one occasion to *g″*, and Geminiano Giacomelli included several *f″* pitches in

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[21] Hawkins, *A General History*, V, 307.
[22] Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany*, II, 175-176.
[23] Dean, 'Senesino', *GMO*.
[24] Quantz, *Lebenslauf,* I, 213: 'Senesino hatte eine durchdringende, helle, egale und angenehme tiefe Sopranstimme, (mezzo Soprano) eine reine Intonation…'; in English: Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany*, II, 175-176: 'Senesino had a powerful, clear, equal, and sweet contralto voice with a perfect intonation…'. See Kirkendale, *Antonio Caldara*, 102.
[25] Regarding Bernachi's and Carestini's voice see *GMO*, for comment on Manzuoli's vocal change due to possible calcification in the larynx see Martha Feldman, *The Castrato, Reflections on Natures and Kinds* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 89.
[26] Mancini, *Pensieri, e Reflessioni*, 43-46. See also Feldman, *The Castrato*, 89-90.
[27] Hawkins, *A General History*, V, 307.

music for the singer as late as 1736.[28] Senesino's commonly utilised tessitura later in his career also remained relatively high, from *d′* to *d″* with a strength in the lower half of the octave.[29]

Mancini identified two different qualities for which a castrato voice could be admired. Either a voice was wide in range and exceedingly sonorous, or it had a smaller range but was pure of tone, even, and possessed an appealing colour.[30] Johann Joachim Quantz (1697-1773) considered Senesino to belong to the latter of these categories. Referencing two operas performed in Dresden in which Senesino sang the *primo uomo* roles, Quantz stated 'Senesino had a powerful, clear, equal, and sweet contralto voice'.[31] Mrs. Pendarves also describes Senesino's voice as 'sweet' when comparing it to that of the castrato Antonio Bernacchi and Anthony Ashley Cooper, 4th Earl of Shaftesbury, mentions its 'mellowness' in comparison to Domenico Annibali's voice.[32] In these instances it is not extreme range that was most engaging, but the quality of voice.

The timbre of castrato voices was described in the eighteenth century as 'natural', 'true' (*sincere*), displaying an uncommon brilliance and strength, and, on occasion, it was even felt to be unearthly.[33] This quality of voice was due both to physiology and training. Castration led to several developmental physiological peculiarities, one being an abnormally large thoracic cavity, allowing for exceptional capacity of breath and lung expansion.[34] This, coupled with the arresting of laryngeal growth, produced a great amount of pressure on comparatively small vocal folds creating a distinct and anomalous characteristic sound.[35] Further, castrati are not known to have

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[28] This challenge to the assessment of Senesino's upper range is not without complication that will be further discussed in later chapters. Primarily, Bononcini's notated *g′* pitch for Senesino which may have resulted from transposition by the publisher to better match the range of the flute accompaniment in his 1723 edition of *La Griselda*. See Chapter 3 of this thesis. Walsh's edition is now the main surviving source for *La Griselda*.

[29] See pp. 104-105 of this thesis for further discussion of Senesino's vocal tessitura in *Eumene*.

[30] Giovanni Battista Mancini, *Réflexions pratiques sur le chant figure* (Paris: Chez du Pont, 1777), 50-51: 'en effet, il est des voix vives, dont les sons sont forts, impétueux et faciles; il en est d'autres qui sont douces et flexibles; d'autres qui sont en même-temps fortes, sonores et d'une assez grande étendue: nous en admirons quelques unes de belles et d'agréables, qui rendent un son plein, accompli, harmonieux et gracieux'; in English: Buzzi, *Practical Reflections*, 57. The original 1774 treatise by Mancini was printed in a 3rd edition (Milan, 1777) and some annotations were made including this referenced quotation and several musical examples. Buzzi's English translation is taken from the 3rd Italian edition. Mancini's treatise was so well received it was also translated into French in 1777 based on the 3rd Italian edition published in Milan, where the original quotation addressing the pleasure different types of voices can bring, not just those that are high and low, as Buzzi has interpreted it, can be found.

[31] The two operas were both by Antonio Lotti, *Gl'odj delusi dal Sangue* of 1718 and *Teofane* of 1719. In addition to the 1719 Dresden performances, Quantz also heard Senesino again in London in 1727 in the operas *Admeto* by G.F. Handel and *Astianatte* by Bononcini. He felt Handel's *Admeto* 'had magnificent music' (hatte eine prächtige musik), the soloists Faustina, Cuzzoni, and Senesino were 'of the first rank' (vom ersten Range), and the orchestra 'under Handel's conducting, made an extremely good effect' (Alle zusammen machten, unter Händels Direction, eine überaus gute Wirtung). Quantz, *Lebenslauf*, I, 239-240, 242. Quantz, *Lebenslauf,* I, 213: 'Senesino hatte eine durchdringende, helle, egale und angenehme tiefe Sopranstimme, (mezzo Soprano) eine reine Intonation…' Quantz's statements regarding Senesino are recounted in English translation in Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany*, II, 175-176.

[32] Hall, ed., *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville,* I, 184; letter from the 4th Earl of Shaftesbury to James Harris, 18 January 1737.

[33] John Rosselli, 'Castrato,' *GMO*, accessed 26 December 2016.

[34] See Roger Freitas, 'The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque Body of the Castrato', *Journal of Musicology*, 20/2 (2003), 196-249; 219, and John S. Jenkins, 'The Lost Voice: A History of the Castrato', *Journal of Pediatric Endocrinology & Metabolism*, 13 (2000), 1503-1508.

[35] For more on physiology and its connection to the characteristic sound of the castrato voice see Martha Feldman, *The Castrato*, 105.

experienced a disruption to their training resulting from puberty. The naturally occurring pubescent shift of the voice as the physical body alters for a tenor or bass singer would have resulted in necessary vocal retraining, or at the very least, recentering. As the castrati did not experience this, their training was uninterrupted and could continue more efficiently than that of their lower-voiced counterparts.

Tosi believed good intonation was of primary importance for any singer, stating 'one that sings out of Tune loses all his other Perfections.'[36] His was certainly a commonly-held belief and Senesino himself felt intonation to be of great importance. Senesino, showing his characteristic whit, chided his fellow singers in a 1740 production of Porpora's *Camilla* in Naples saying 'the singers are inferior, especially the women, who compete to see who sings most out of tune'.[37] A conventional test of a singer's ability to sing in tune was the unison aria with instrumental doubling of the vocal line. Primarily exploited to reinforce weaker voices and help focus vocal intonation, instrumental doubling developed into a contemporary stylistic preference. However, Tosi did not support the practice describing singing in unison with instruments as the 'Invention of Ignorance to hide from the Vulgar the Insufficiency and Inability of many Men and Women Singers'.[38] He believed a voice must be liberated from the 'Mortification to resign its Place to the Violins'.[39] Regardless, eighteenth-century unison arias are abundant and were often composed for highly accomplished singers. This type of aria might alternately be viewed as a test of technical ability proving skill with intonation, especially when the vocal line requires jagged leaps, large intervals, and coloratura unison passages. Some examples of this aria type relating to Senesino are 'Dell'onda i fieri mori' from Handel's *Ottone* (1723); 'Perdonate o cari amori' from Attilio Ariosti's *Il Coriolano* (1723); 'Già lo stringo, già la braccio' from Handel's *Orlando* (1733); and 'Non so frenar il pianto' by Giacomelli from *Il Demetrio* (1736).[40]

Noted by Hawkins to be 'wonderfully flexible', Senesino's coloratura singing was a particular technical strength.[41] The term coloratura applies specifically to vocal music and can be described as the diminution of one longer tone into many shorter ones that move progressively by varied steps or leaps.[42] Burney recounted Quantz's sentiment that Senesino 'sung allegros with great fire, and mark'd rapid divisions, from the chest, in an articulate and pleasing manner'.[43] The term 'mark'd' elicits Tosi's thoughts on coloratura singing: 'the Notes that constitute the Division

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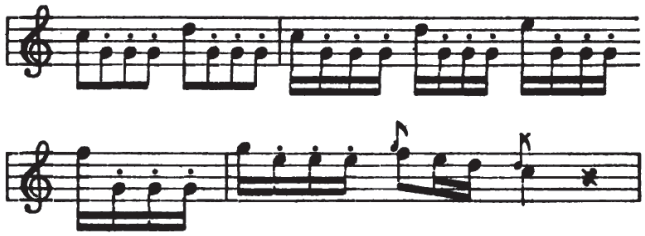
[36] Tosi, *Opinioni de' cantori*, 11 : 'ogni Cantante, che stuona perde immediatamente tutte le più belle prerogative, che avesse', in English: Galliard, *Observations on the Florid Song*, 19.
[37] Letter, Senesino in Naples to Luca Casimiro degli Albizzi in Florence, 26 January 1740: 'la compagna perché è assai debole particolarmente nelle donne che fanno a gara a chi stona più'; in English: Holmes, *Opera Observed*, 146.
[38] Galliard, *Observations*, 115-16.
[39] *Ibid*.
[40] See volume II of this thesis for a transcription of Gicaomelli's 'Non so frenar il pianto'.
[41] Hawkins, *A General History*, V, 307.
[42] Owen Jander and Ellen T. Harris, 'Coloratura,' *GMO*, accessed November 30 2016.
[43] Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany*, II, 175-176. Burney translated Quantz's original sentiment: 'Das Allegro sang er mit vielem Feuer, und wußte er die laufenden Passagien, mit der Brust, in einer ziemlichen Geschwindigkeit, auf eine angenehme Art heraus zu stoßen.' found in Quantz, *Lebenslauf*, I, 213.

be all articulate in equal Proportion, and moderately distinct, that they be not too much join'd, nor too much mark'd'.[44] He seems to suggest that the notes be slightly separated and also part of a *legato* vocal line. The necessity for clear separation of pitches can be observed in Senesino's showpiece aria 'Agitato da fiere tempeste' from *Riccardo Primo* of 1727 which Burney noted was composed 'in a grand style of bravura, and must have had a great effect when accompanied by a good orchestra, and thundered by such a voice'.[45] He states 'there is one passage which Farinelli, Baverese, Monticelli, and other singers of later times, frequently introduced in their songs of execution as an extraordinary feat' followed by the illustration shown in Musical Example 1.

Musical Example 1: Repeated note coloratura pattern by Handel for Senesino in the aria 'Agitato da fiere tempeste', *Riccardo Primo* (1727), as cited in Burney, *General History of Music*, IV, 327.

Burney implied that Handel created this pattern of difficult execution for Senesino and that it was later included in compositions for other virtuoso singers. While Handel did utilise this pattern with Senesino's ability in mind, it existed in works for the singer as early as 1707.[46] Bononcini also employed it in compositions for Senesino as did Nicolà Porpora with 'Nume, che Reggi' in Act I scene 6 of *Arianna in Nasso* of 1733.[47] Burney's *fioritura* example, which is mentioned as 'an extraordinary feat', appears to be conflated with the *sgagateata* (also known as the *martellato*). This ornament consists of the repeated execution of the same tone very rapidly by means of glottal articulation.[48] Quantz credits the soprano Faustina Bordoni as the originator of this ornament, stating 'she was doubtless the first who introduced, with success, a swift repetition of the same tone.'[49] Mancini illustrated this ornament, which is shown below in Musical Example 2, in his *Pensieri, e Reflessioni Pratiche sopra il Canto Figurato*.[50]

[44] Galliard, *Observations on the Florid Song*, 52.
[45] Burney, *General History*, IV, 327.
[46] See volume II, p. 88-89 of this thesis for the transcription of the aria 'Nel cuor non hò che sdegno', from Ruggieri's *Armida abbandonata* which contains this pattern. The appearance of this pattern in some of these works was first brought to my attention at the 'Handel and his eighteenth-century performers' conference of the Handel Institute (London, November 2015) by Harry Diack Johnstone.
[47] See volume II, pp. 109-11 of this thesis for the transcription of Bononcini's aria 'Sì, gia sento' which includes a similar repeated noted pattern.
[48] See David Milsom, 'martellando', *OCM*, accessed 23 January 2017.
[49] Quantz cited in English translation in Burney, *General History*, IV, 319.
[50] Buzzi, *Practical Reflections*, 155.



Musical Example 2: The *martellato* as illustrated in Giambattista Mancini's *Pensieri, e Reflessioni Pratiche sopra il Canto Figurato* of 1774 reproduced from Pietro Buzzi, trans., *Practical Reflections on the Figurative Art of Singing* (Boston: Gorham Press, 1913), 155.

This example clearly shows the separate repetitions of the same pitch which comprise the ornament. Mancini further describes the technial proficieny required in its performance:

> This is very difficult to render perfectly, it requires an extraordinarily agile voice, and great assiduity and perseverance to master it. Before undertaking this style, one must have gained perfect breath control, in order that one may break the tone and retake it without effort. The intonation must be perfect, that every hammered note will be distinct and perfectly pitched. […] if they exceed the rules of art, the 'Cantabile' would resemble the cackling of a hen, when she shows the joy of having laid an egg.[51]

Mancini appears to have been familiar with the colloquial term for the ornament which onomatopoetically references the clucking of a chicken, *sgagateata*.[52] His chronology for the height of the martellato's execution differs from that of Quantz; Mancini states that Faustina was one of the last to successfully perform the ornament, not the first.[53] Regardless of Burney's accuracy in attributing the ornament to Senesino, many similar elements of vocal technique are shared between the ornament he illustrates and the martellato defined by Quantz and Mancini. The requisite agility, breath control, and perfect intonation signal a highly-accomplished performer with an extraordinary command of the voice.

Rhetorical delivery and elocution were also well-developed and admired skills of Senesino's, particularly in accompanied recitatives but also arias and *secco* recitatives. Hawkins stated that 'in the pronunciation of recitative [he] had not his fellow in Europe', while Burney felt

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[51] Mancini, *Pensieri, e Reflessioni*, 192-193: 'Questo genere di agilità è difficilissimo ad eseguirsi a perfezzione, poiché per ben riuscirvi fà d'uopo avere una voce agilissima, un genio particolare per applicarvisi, ed uno studio indefesso. Sopra ogni cosà, prima d'intraprendere questo studio, egli è necessario d'avere l'arte di perfettamente reggere il fiato, di poterlo distaccare, e ripigliare senza fatica; bisogna possedere una purgatissima intonazione, [...] poiché se eccedono nella caricatura, rendono la Cantilena somigliante al canto d'una Chioccia, che strepita, ed assorda, lieta di aver fatto un Uovo.'; in English: Buzzi, *Practical Reflections*, 155-156.

[52] This term and the execution of this vocal ornament are examined in Johann Friedrich Agricola, *Anleitung zur Singkunst* (Berlin: George Ludewig Winter, 1757), 124. Further thoughts are offered by Julianne Baird, trans. and ed., *Introduction to the Art of Singing by Johann Friedrich Agricola*, Cambridge Musical Texts and Monographs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 22.

[53] Faustina's vocal ability, with specific reference to her execution of the *martellato*, as well as Burney and Mancini's differing chronology for the height of the ornament's execution among eighteenth-century singers is discussed in further detail in Suzanne Aspden, *The Rival Sirens: Performance and Identity on Handel's Operatic Stage*, Cambridge Studies in Opera (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 30-31.

'his manner of singing was masterly, and his elocution unrivalled'.[54] Having examined the score to Handel's *Rodelinda* of 1725, Burney offered specific details:

> There is a solemn and beautiful symphony to introduce a fine accompanied recitative, *Pompe vane di morte*, which Senesino pronounced, according to tradition, with uncommon energy and expression, previous to a beautiful and always favourite air, *Dove sei amato bene*.[55]

Burney's opinion mirrors that of Tosi who, signifying the importance of textual delivery and enunciation, dedicates an entire chapter in his *Opinioni de' cantori antiche e moderni* of 1723 to the rules of properly singing recitative.[56] Tosi felt that the words were 'adapted to move the most violent Passions of the Soul, [and they] oblige the Master to give the Scholar such a lively impression of them, that he may seem to be affected with them himself'.[57] He goes so far as to state that expression 'is the Soul of vocal Performance, and without which it is impossible to sing well'.[58] In this way, with the 'uncommon energy and expression' mentioned by Burney, Senesino demonstrated masterful textual delivery by eighteenth-century standards. Rhetoric, or 'the science of speaking well and wisely', applied not only to speech but also to music in the eighteenth century.[59] In 1739, Johann Mattheson listed a rubric for musical composition based on the use of rhetoric in his *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*.[60] Patterns of speech and syntax such as metaphor, the rising intonation of a question, the ascending leap of an exclamation, repetition, imitation, the treatment of dissonance, and the use of silence were all given corresponding musical figures. Technical training associated with the vocal delivery of these features in opera was an eighteenth-century priority, as was clear and correct on-stage enunciation.[61] Senesino was held as an exemplar with his masterful delivery of text which moved the listener to an idealised emotional state in service of the affections.

Remarkably little commentary survives relating to Senesino's delivery of improvised embellishments in *da capo* arias and cadenzas. However, while not indicative of all the actual pitches he would have extemporaneously sung in performance, the notated melodic lines contained in extant scores do offer some insight into Senesino's abilities. In 'Quel torrente' from *Giulio Cesare* and 'A dispetto' from *Tamerlano*, Handel composed vocal lines exhibiting scales, leaps, and long phrases of coloratura, and Ariosti's revered prison scene, 'Voi d'un figlio tanto misero' from *Il Coriolano*, contains extraordinarily difficult leaping passagework throughout the whole

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[54] Hawkins, *A General History*, V, 307. Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany*, II, 175-176.
[55] Burney, *General History*, IV, 299.
[56] Galliard, *Observations on the Florid Song*, 66-78.
[57] 'allo sfogo delle passioni più violenti dell'animo, impegnano l'Istruttore di far imparare al suo Allievo quel vivo interesse, sarà pur troppo facile, che non abbia bisogno di questa lezione'. Tosi, *Opinioni de' cantori*, 42; in English: Galliard, *Observations on the Florid Song*, 67.
[58] 'espressione… che è l'anima del Canto, e senza la quale non è possibile di cantar bene', Tosi, *Opinioni de' cantori antiche e moderni*, 44; in English: Galliard, *Observations on the Florid Song*, 71.
[59] *Retórica* in Italian, defined in Florio, *Queen Anna's New World of Words*, 431. Timothy Jones, 'rhetoric', *OCM*, accessed 2 December 2016.
[60] Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg: Christian Herold, 1739).
[61] Jones, 'rhetoric', *OCM.*

range.[62] Further arias illustrate that the singer could perform additional elements of demanding technical execution such as trills, appoggiaturas, *messa di voci*, and tricky syncopations, but they provide no indication of how Senesino might have applied these skills in *da capo* aria ornamentation. Moreover, Senesino is not known to have left a written record of embellishments to his favourite airs, as several of his colleagues had done including the soprano Faustina Bordoni (1697-1781) and the castrato Farinelli (1705-1782).[63]

We cannot be sure whether Senesino's use of ornamentation was judicious or lavish in performance. The few sources that comment on the singer's practices suggest he was moderate in his use of embellishments and, when incorporated, they enhanced the lyrical sense of the music by touching on subtle emotions and masterfully conveying text. Regarding Senesino's style of ornamentation in slower arias, Quantz felt 'he never loaded adagios with too many ornaments, yet he delivered the original and essential notes, with the utmost refinement'.[64] There is no known commentary on the singer's ornamentation practices in faster arias. Tosi probably would have approved of Senesino's apparent restraint; he railed against the 'Modern' style which disproportionately placed emphasis on ornamentation and elaborate cadenzas showing empty virtuosity and the pursuit of 'vain popular Applause'.[65] In a particularly negative tone he states:

> Perhaps you think that these Overflowings of your Throat are what procure you Riches and Praises? Undeceive yourselves, and thank the great Number of Theatres, the Scarcity of excellent Performers, and the Stupidity of your auditors […] For your own Sakes undeceive the World, and employ the rare Talent you are endowed with on Things that are worthy of you.[66]

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[62] Regarding the excellence of Ariosti's 'prison scene' see Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Génération Harmonique* (Paris: Chez Prault fils, 1737), 154, which states that the opening accompagnato, 'Spirate, o iniqui marmi', was a refined example of what he deems the 'enharmonic genre', and Hawkins, *A General History*, 291-292, where it is mentioned that the scene is 'wrought up to the highest degree of perfection that music is capable of'.

[63] Ornamentation for Faustina Bordoni can be found in the following arias: 'Sciolta dal lido' from Giuseppe Vignati's opera *Ambleto* (1719, Milan; MS: US-Wc, 1500.S28G5) and 'Digli ch'io son fedele' for the title character in Hasse's *Cleofide* (1731, Dresden; MS: D-Dl, 2477-F-10). See also George J. Buelow, 'A lesson in operatic performance practice by Madame Faustina Bordoni', *A Musical Offering: Essays in Honor of Martin Bernstein*, ed. Edward H. Clinkscale (New York: Pendragon Press, 1977), 79-96. For examples of Farinelli's ornamentation see A-Wn Mus.Hs.19111 which offers six arias in the singer's own hand with examples of his flourishes and cadenzas. Most notably, the collection contains the aria 'Son qual nave', famously performed by Farinelli in the 1734 pasticcio *Artaserse* for London's Opera of the Nobility, with ornaments he penned when revisiting the aria in 1753. Several further examples of ornamentation survive in instrumental transcriptions of arias, and while they are largely not idiomatic for the voice, they do inform about ornamentation practices of the time. Belonging to this category are arias from Handel's *Amadigi* and William Babell's harpsichord arrangements of arias from Handel's *Rinaldo*, *Il pastor fido*, and *Teseo*. Additionally, examples survive of Frederick the Great's embellishments for arias performed on the flute which are also exceedingly elaborate and not well suited to the voice.

[64] 'Das Adagio überhäufte er eben nicht zu viel mit willkührlichen Auszierungen: Dagegen brachte er die wesentlichen Manieren mit der größten Feinigkeit heraus'. Quantz, *Lebenslauf*, I, 213; in English: Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany*, II, 175-176.

[65] Tosi, *Opinioni de' cantori*, 64: 'rubati al popolare applauso'; in English: Galliard, *Observations on the Florid Song*, 130.

[66] Tosi, *Opinioni de' cantori*, 83, 84: 'Credete forsè, che il flusso della vostra gorga sia quello che vi produca richezze, e lodi? Disingannatevi, e ringraziate l'abbondanza de' Teatri, la penuria d'ottimi Soggetti, e la stupidità di chi v'ascolta. Cosa risponderebbono? Nol so. Veniamo ancora a conti più stretti […] A vostro

These comments are directed to less-experienced singers who he implores to develop their skill rather than seek approval from a naïve audience. Quantz's mention of Senesino's spare yet refined ornamentation in adagios implies that the castrato embodied the artistically mature attributes Tosi espoused.

A manuscript in Handel's hand outlines ornaments for Senesino's character in the *Larghetto* aria 'Sventurato, godi o core abbandonato' from the 1721 opera *Floridante*.[67] The aria demonstrates Handel's preference for turns, refined scales, and a modest extension of the vocal range in the upper compass, from an *e♭″* in the notated manuscript to an embellishment reaching *f″*, rather than the wide leaps and shows of florid virtuosity that were heard in Italy at the time (Appendix III, Ex. 1). Specific accounts of Senesino's preferences when realising cadenzas do not survive. Revealing a singer's practices in cadenza realisation around 1731 that may give insight into Senesino's choices, Johnstone has discussed examples composed by Handel that were most likely for an inexperienced English tenor rather than the Italian singers who were Handel's usual collaborators.[68] Contained in the Act I scene 3 aria 'Vil trofeo d'un alma imbelle' from *Poro*, these cadenzas remain remarkable for their introduction of new melodic material, large leaps, and unexpected or tonally-divergent pitches.[69]

In reference to Senesino's ability to trill, little was said directly; one statement of Quantz's survives noting in 1719 that the singer had 'an excellent shake'.[70] The trill (or shake) is an embellishment consisting of the alternation of the main notated pitch with one tone or semitone above it.[71] Tosi stated that 'Nature imparts the *Shake* but to few'. He felt that to be a great singer, the mastery of this technical skill was of immense importance.[72]

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vantaggio disingannatene il Mondo, ed impiegate in cose degne di voi quel belissimo tallento, che Dio vi diede'; in English: Galliard, *Observations on the Florid Song*, 131, 132.

[67] GB-Lbl, R.M.18.c.2. The aria is further examined in Terence Best, 'An Example of Handel Embellishment,' *The Musical Times*, 110/1519 (1969), 897-1003; 933. While these embellishments were written by Handel, it is not likely that they were ever performed by Senesino. The score is a keyboard reduction of the original string instrumentation, and as such could have been presented in performance for solo harpsichord. None-the-less, the aria provides a useful sense of the ornamentation Handel would have considered stylish. Accounting for Senesino and Handel's ten-year collaboration, this surviving source indicates how Senesino may have ornamented an aria's *da capo* section (presuming the singer heeded the composer's suggestions). Additional sources that offer insight into Handel's practices with ornamentation, as well as embellishment on the music of Handel by others, include: Winton Dean, 'The recovery of Handel's operas', *Music in Eighteenth-Century England: Essays in Memory of Charles Cudworth*, ed. Christopher Hogwood and Richard Luckett, 103-114 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 111; John Spitzer, 'Improvised Ornamentation in a Handel arias with Obbligato Wind Accompaniment', *Early Music*, 16/4 (1988), 514-522; Patrick J. Rogers, 'A Neglected Source of Ornamentation and Continuo Realization in a Handel aria', *Early Music*, 18/1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 83-89; Winton Dean, 'Vocal Embellishments in a Handel Aria', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Music: A Tribute to Karl Geiringer*, ed. Howard Chandler Robbins Landon (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 71.

[68] Johnstone, 'Flourish for Handel', 620.

[69] See GB-Ob, Ms. Don.c.69, the MS containing these cadenzas from *Poro*.

[70] '*schönen Trillo*'. Quantz, *Lebenslauf,* I, 213. Quantz heard Senesino in Lotti's opera *Teofane*, performed at Dresden in 1719; in English: Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany*, II, 175-176. Burney recounted Quantz perception of Senesino.

[71] 'Trill,' *GMO*, accessed 26 December 2016.

[72] See Galliard, *Observations on the Florid Song*, 41 and 42.

There are no known accounts referencing Senesino's execution of the *messa di voce*, however, attesting to his skill with this ornament Handel and other composers often included it in compositions for Senesino. An Italian phrase for 'placing of the voice', the *messa di voce* was a conspicuous ornament in Italian singing throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It comprised of singing a long note initiated quietly that grows to full volume and seamlessly diminishes back to quiet.[73] Two examples of Handelian arias composed for Senesino requiring a skilfully executed *messa di voce* are 'Aure deh per pietà' from *Giulio Cesare* (1724) and 'Dove sei, amato bene?' from *Rodelinda* (1725). The opening of Leonardo Vinci's 'Parto, e mi sento', sung by Senesino in the pasticcio *Jan Venceslao* which was arranged by Handel and presented in London in 1731, is another instance when the ornament was employed.[74]

Senesino's idiosyncratic performance style would have been the combination of his training, personality, temperament, and technical ability.[75] Stylistic choices and expressive details, meant to transport an audience to a desired psychological state, were critical to the successful realisation of musical affect in the eighteenth century.[76] Burney noted the 'grand' and 'majestic voice and style of Senesino' stating as well that 'there was often dignity and spirit' in his way of performing.[77] However, perhaps most telling in respect to Senesino's style of performing is the Earl of Egmont's eyewitness account. Enamoured with the singer in the 1734 Opera of the Nobility performances of *Artaserse*, he writes:

> The *Opera* I meant of *Artaxerxes*, which was originally composed in *Italy*. For my own part, I had been a great admirer of it; particularly there was one Song of *Senesino's* at the close of the second Act ['Pallido il sole'], which had charmed me beyond any thing of the kind I had ever heard. It was a very passionate Song, admirably well set, and *Senesino*,

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[73] Ellen T. Harris, 'Messa di voce,' *GMO*, accessed 26 December 26 2016.

[74] The aria 'Parto, e mi sento' had originally been sung by Bernacchi in earlier presentations of the pasticcio in London. The music was first composed with Bernacchi's voice in mind and is originally from Leonardo Vinci's opera *Medo* which was presented in Parma in 1728 with the text 'Taci, o di morte'. Handel included the aria in the pasticcio *Jan Venceslao* which was offered at the Haymarket Theatre in London from 12 to 23 January 1731; the text of the work was likely revised by Rossi after the original by A. Zeno and other music was composed by L. Vinci, J. A. Hasse, A. Lotti, G. M. Orlandini, G. M. Capelli, G. Giacomelli, Giovanni Porta, and N. Porpora; for further information, see Reinhard Strohm, *Essays on Handel & Italian Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 177.

[75] Robert Pascall, 'Style,' *GMO*, accessed 26 December 2016.

[76] The concept of 'affect' in relation to music dates in printed material to as early as 1600 when Emilio de' Cavalieri stated in the *A Lettori* of his treatise, *Rappresentatione di Anima e di Corpo* (Rome: Nicolò Mutij, 1600): 'il cantante habbia bella voce, bene intuonata, e che la porti salda, che canti con affetto, piano, e forte, senza passagi, & in particolare, che esprima bene le parole, che siano [*sic*] intese, & le accompagni con gesti, & motivi non solamente di mani, ma di passi ancora, che sono aiuti molto efficaci à muovere l'affetto'. ('Let the singer have a beautiful voice with good intonation, and be well supported, and let him sing with expression, soft and loud, and without passage work; and in particular he should understand the words well, so that they may be understood, and accompany them with gestures and movements, not only of the hands but of other gestures that are efficacious aids in moving the affections.') In English: Carol MacClintock, *Readings in the History of Music in Performance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 183. See also: George J. Buelow, 'Affects, theory of the,' *GMO*, accessed December 26, 2016; Colette A. Henshaw, 'Gesture and affekt in the performance of Baroque vocal music', PhD diss. (University of York, 2000); and Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Voß, 1752), which deals specifically with stylistic characteristics and presentation of the musical affects in Chapter 11, traits of musical affect in a*llegro* music in Chapter 12, and the qualities of musical affect in *adagio* movements in Chapter 14.

[77] Burney, *General History*, IV, 355, 398, and 446.

> whose manner was always excellent, did in this particular instance, seem, as we say, even to *excel himself*; performing it with such a singular Justness, Grace, and Propriety, as made the Entertainment of it quite of the *rational* kind. *Senesino*, (said I) was always a great Favourite of mine; besides the pleasure he gives me in *Singing*, I can never help looking upon him with some Esteem, as imagining him to be a Man of *excellent Sense*. There is always something so peculiarly *just* and *affecting* in his *manner* of Singing, even tho' the *Matter* of his Songs be never so *trifling* in itself, as gives one a strong Presumption in his favour on *this* behalf. He has an art of raising, even these *Trifles* into some degree of *Sense* and *Significancy*, by an uncommon *Happiness* in his *Execution* of them.[78]

The singer seems to have wielded a near-magical power over the Earl who conceded he was a great favourite and that Senesino possessed an ability to elevate anything he sang to a level of transcendence.

While Senesino was recognized as a fine actor, he did not feel that he excelled in every type of role. In a 21 June 1739 letter, he seems dissatisfied with the role of Ulisse which was selected for him in Antonio Caldara's opera *Achille in Sciro* with planned 1740 performances in Reggio Emilia. Senesino thought the role to be 'very dangerous' and a part for an 'authoritarian and a wily man.'[79] Feeling incompatible for the part he stated: 'I believe it does not fit my abilities, that it requires actions on stage with different passions.'[80] However, Senesino did on occasion sing such 'wily' characters demonstrating his acting range and talent. One example was Artabano in the 1734 pasticcio *Artaserse* for the Opera of the Nobility, though, this role was an anomaly and the depiction of such a ruthless character was not Senesino's preference. In 1755 Roger Pickering noted the propriety of Senesino's approach to acting in *Artaserse* and the tremendous effect it had on the audience by contrasting the singer to Farinelli, whom he felt was less accomplished and embodied 'tuneful, see-saw Clumsiness':

> At the *same* Time, on the *same* Stage, and in the *same* OPERAS, shone forth in full Excellence of *Theatrical Expression,* the *graceful,* the *correct*, the *varied* Deportment of SENESINO. FARINELLI had stole the *Ears,* but SENESINO won the *Eyes* of the House; that Part of it, I mean, who were not *Music-mad*. Thrice, in a short Interval of Time, have I seen this masterly Actor, in the Opera of ARTAXERXES: And eighteen Years have not obliterated the full Remembrance of that great but natural Manner of his Deportment in a Scene, which called for the Exertion of almost *every Passion*.[81]

This radiant account of Senesino's expert performance as the tyrant Artabano prompts the question, what might Pickering have thought of Senesino in the valiant characters to which he felt more aligned? Quantz asserted Senesino's fitness for heroic portrayals: 'his countenance was well suited for the stage, and naturally his actions: He was better suited to the role of a hero than that of a

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[78] Perceval, ed., *Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont*, II, 235.
[79] 'molto pericoloso'; 'satrapo e lesto uomo'.
[80] 'che a mio credere non è nulla per la mia abilità, che richiede un movimento in scena con differenti passioni', cited in Holmes, *Opera Observed*, 135-36. Caldara's *Achille in Sciro* had first been performed in Vienna premiering on 12 February 1736. The Reggio Emilia performances never came to fruition as the theatre was destroyed by fire before the opera season opened.
[81] Pickering, *Reflections*, 65-66.

lover.'[82] Giuseppe Riva commented in 1725 that 'Senesino takes the principal male character and his part must be heroic'.[83] As Pickering further attests, Senesino was also noted for surprising dramatic variation from night to night:

> Confin'd, as he was, to the Measures of *Recitative* and *Song,* SENESINO went thro' the Struggles of Nature agitated to excess, with surprising *Execution*; and, (which I hope will save me from the Charge of impertinent Digression) a *Variety* of *Expression*, each of the three Nights I saw him in that Character.[84]

The account proves that Senesino's improvisation was not confined to extemporaneous musical ornamentation, but it was also applied to his dramatic portrayal.

Given Senesino's skill in elocution and his noted proficiency for acting, it is no surprise he was highly reputed for his performances of accompanied recitative. Nearly always employed to depict a desperate moment of isolation and unresolved conflict, the successful execution of this type of music requires a fervent command of rhetorical delivery. Burney stated 'Senesino was extremely admired and applauded in many scenes of recitative' and he elaborated with specific detail concerning Handel's *Giulio Cesare*:[85]

> [the] accompanied recitatives [are] superior to those of any that I have seen in [Handel's] other operas, or in any operas by contemporary composers; these are the celebrated *Alma del gran Pompeo*, and *Dall' ondoso periglio*, which are printed, and in which Senesino gained so much reputation as an actor, as well as singer.[86]

By 1720, when Senesino reached London, his dramatic portrayal was lauded as one of his most admirable skills, yet, earlier in his career accounts were less uniform. In 1715 the impresario Count Francesco Zambeccari's opinion of the singer's performance in Naples was so venomous and derogatory that a personal vendetta seems to have been at play, especially considering other favourable accounts from the time. His comments regarding Senesino's dramatic portrayal, delivery of recitative, and perceived lack of skill with ornamentation are particularly negative:

> Senesino continues to comport himself badly enough; he stands like a statue, and when occasionally he does make a gesture, he makes one directly the opposite of what is wanted. He expresses the recitatives in the worst possible way […] and of the arias, when he is in voice he sings them well. But last evening in the best air, wishing to do ornamentation, he was ahead by two bars.[87]

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[82] 'Seine Gestalt war für das Theater sehr vortheilhaft, und die Action natürlich. Die Rolle eines Helden kleidete ihn besser, als die von einem Liebhaber', Quantz, *Lebenslauf*, I, 213; in English: Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany*, II, 175-176.
[83] See Riva's comments, in English translation, in Streatfeild, 'Handel, Rolli, and Italian Opera', 433.
[84] Pickering, *Reflections*, 65-66.
[85] Burney, *General History*, 1789, IV, 463.
[86] *Ibid*., 295.
[87] 'Il Senesino seguita a portarsi assai male; sta come una statua, e se qualche volta gestice, fa tutto il contrario di quello [che] deve fare. Li recitativi malissimamente li esprime […] e delle arie, quando sta in voce le canta bene. Però iera sera nella migliori aria, volendo fare une mutazione, si trovò fuori di tempo due battute'. Zambeccari, agent of the Viceroy of Naples since 1708, wrote of Senesino's performance in the opera *Eumene* (L. Leo and F. Gasparini), Naples, 1715; cited in Lodovico Frati, 'Un impresario teatrale del

Zambeccari was likely reacting reflexively to a style of acting that was more focused on drama, as was common in Venice, than comedy, which was preferred in Naples, yet there may be truth in Zambeccari's acerbic comments.[88] A maturing dramatic depth seems supported by a shift in critical reception regarding Senesino's acting skill from 1720 onward, when he was highly praised.[89] A clear difference was perceived in the singer's dramatic presentations between the years 1715, when the Count made his comment implying Senesino's instincts for acting were counterintuitive, and 1719, when Johann Friedrich Agricola remarked:

> The acting of Senesino, during the time of his stay in Dresden in the years 1718 and 1719, was reputed to have become even better after he had repeatedly observed the presentations of the incomparable troupe of French actors who performed frequently at the time in Dresden.[90]

Luigi Riccoboni (1676-1753) had the following to say of Senesino's acting which he may have witnessed in London in 1728:

> *Francis Bernardi*, known by the name *Senesino*, an excellent musician who never suffered himself to be carried away by the taste of the new music. But what is very extraordinary in *Italy*, and over all the world, he joined to the charms of his voice, the merit of *action*, and the player was as accomplished as the musician.[91]

As the head of the acting troupe Comédie-Italienne in Paris from 1716 to 1731, Riccoboni was a reputable authority on eighteenth-century dramatic portrayal. In 1760 the Handel biographer John Mainwaring makes a similar reference to Handel's *Radamisto* of 1720, the first opera in which Senesino performed on the London stage: 'It may be thought, that the great excellence of Senesino, both as to voice and action, might have a considerable share in the wonderful impressions made upon the audience.'[92] Hawkins noted that 'he was a graceful actor'.[93] Charles de Brosses was delighted with both his voice and acting in 1739 and Mancini found that 'Senesino and Giovanni Carestini distinguished themselves by their originality in singing and excellent acting'.[94] While lacking specificity, these descriptions do provide a sense of Senesino's mastery in performance.

Settecento e la sua biblioteca', *Rivista musicale Italiana*, 18/1 (1911), 64-84; 74. English translation adapted from Heriot, *The Castrati in Opera*, 91.

[88] See Melania Bucciarelli, 'From Rinaldo to Orlando, or Senesino's path to madness', *The Baroque Composers: Handel*, ed. David Vickers (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 311-323; 318.

[89] *Ibid*.

[90] Baird, *Introduction to the Art of Singing*, 221.

[91] '*François Bernardi* dit le *Senesino*, excellent Musicien, & qui ne s'est jamais laissé entraîner parle goût de la nouvelle Musique. Mais ce qui ne se voit presque plus en Italie, & ce qui est fort rare par-tout ailleurs, c'est qu'il joint à la beauté de la voix, le mérite de la déclamation, & que l'Acteur ne cède en rien au Musicien'. Riccoboni, *Réflexions historiques*, 39; in English: Luigi Riccoboni, *Declamation; or, an Essay on the art of speaking in public: with an historical and critical account of the Theatres in Europe*, anonymous translator (London: R. Dodley, 1790), 80. See also Bucciarelli, 'From Rinaldo to Orlando', 318, where it is stated Senesino 'was aware that, in order to be truly successful on the London stage, he had to display extraordinary qualities both as a singer and as an actor'.

[92] John Mainwaring, *Memoirs of the life of the late George Frederic Handel* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1760), 100.

[93] Hawkins, *A General History*, V, 307.

[94] de Brosses, *Lettres familière*, I, 257. 'Si distinsero per l'original canto, ed ottima comica il *Senesino*, e Giovanni *Carestini*'; Mancini, *Pensieri, e Reflessioni*, 18; in English: Buzzi, *Practical Reflections*, 34.

Accounts of Senesino's character are wide-ranging and must be read with the spirit of the time in mind. For example, Paolo Antonio Rolli reported 'I am delighted to find this famous artist a man well-mannered, well-read, extremely kind and endowed with the noblest sentiments', while Handel called him a 'damned fool' from the outset of their working relationship in 1720.[95] Similarly vivid accounts survive in relation to Handel and other singers, even so, this seems particularly biting.[96] Senesino's egotism and temper led to clashes throughout his career, and while popular and revered by the public for his performing abilities, he was equally infamous for his arrogance. Senesino's questionable actions put him in the precarious position of being 'publicly and violently caned' by Lord Peterborough after he insulted his fellow singer, Anastasia Robinson.[97] Dean notes 'his private character by all accounts was [...] marred by touchiness, insolence, and an excess of professional vanity'.[98] Already in 1715, Zambeccari provides indication that vanity was firmly in place early in Senesino's career. He comments that the singer did not respect anyone and that almost all of Naples considered the singer a 'conceited eunuch'.[99] Zambeccari's derogatory view might partially be explained by Feldman's hypothesis that the transgressive nature of castrati onstage portended an extravagant reputation off stage.[100]

There were reports of Senesino's unruly behaviour during 1719 rehearsals in Dresden of *Flavio Crispo* by Johan David Heinichen (1683-1729). Senesino, citing an 'offense against the

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[95] 'Mi consolo infinitamente di trovar questo celebre virtuoso si ben costumato, amatore delle lettere, gentilissimo e d'onorati sentimento', letter from Rolli to Riva, London, 23 September 1720, now at I-MOe Autografoteca Campori; see Burrows, *George Frideric Handel: Collected Documents*, 512 (upon which the English translation given is based); Bucciarelli, 'Farò il possibile', 60-62; and Streatfeild, 'Handel, Rolli, and Italian Opera', 435. Regarding the 'damned fool' comment see: letter, Rolli to Riva, 18 October 1720; in English: Streatfeild, 'Handel, Rolli, and Italian Opera', 436.

[96] According to accounts of his biographer, John Mainwaring, Handel was perceived by many of his singers as being contrary, possessing a harsh demeanour, and occasionally displaying a violent temper. For example, if Mainwaring is to be believed, the soprano Cuzzoni, in 1723 refusing to sing the aria 'Falsa immagine' in rehearsals of Handel's *Ottone*, received the composer's authoritarian reprimand. He recounts the incident that followed, in Handel's words: 'Oh! Madame, I know well that you are a devil, but I will show you that I am Beelzebub, the chief of the devils' and he threatened to throw her out the window. ('Oh! Madame, je sais bien que vous êtes une veritable Diablesse, mais je vous ferai savoir, moi, que je suis Belzebub, le Chef des Diables.'). Mainwaring, *Memoirs*, 110n.-111n.. Another sign of strained relations between Handel and his musicians is the exodus of all the Italian singers he employed, except Ana Maria Strada del Po, to join the newly founded Opera of the Nobility in 1733. A final example can be found in Handel's noted encounter with the English tenor Alexander Gordon during rehearsals of the opera *Flavio* in 1723. When Gordon complained about Handel's style of accompanying on the harpsichord and threatened to jump onto the instrument, Handel stated that he felt more people would come to see that than to hear the tenor sing. See Winton Dean, 'Gordon, Alexander,' *GMO*, accessed 28 December 2016.

[97] Burney, *General History*, IV, 297, note 'm'.

[98] Dean, 'Senesino', *GMO*.

[99] Heriot, *The Castrati in Opera*, 91.

[100] Martha Feldman, 'Strange Births and Surprising Kin, The Castrato's Tale', *Italy's eighteenth century: gender and culture in the age of the grand tour*, ed. Paula Findlen, Wendy Wassyng Roworth, and Catherine M. Sama (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 176-202. Feldman remarks that 'castrati were absorbed into an ancient comic tradition that cast selected stage and social actors as feathered creatures, often sexually exaggerated, deviant, inefficient, or transgressive'. Martha Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*, *Transforming Myths in Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), further draws the parallel that because castrati portrayed mythological kings on stage, they were viewed as sovereigns by society off stage as well and this contributed to their astonishing status, the many myths surrounding them, their fame, and their wealth.

text' made by the composer, tore a score to pieces and threw it at the feet of the Kappelmeister.[101] This seems to be Senesino at his most hot-headed and ill-tempered, yet there is more to be considered in connection with Heinichen's opera which, in the end, was never completed or performed. Perhaps Senesino's noted tantrum was pre-meditated. By the time *Flavio Crispo* was being rehearsed, Senesino certainly knew of a possible more desirable London engagement in 1720. Handel recounted to the Earl of Burlington in July of 1719:

> I am waiting for the engagements of Sinesino [*sic*], Berselli and Guizzardi to be concluded and for these gentlemen (who are, I may add, favourably disposed) to sign contracts with me for Great Britain. Everything will be decided in a few days' time.[102]

This letter was written months before Handel heard Senesino in Antonio Lotti's *Teofane*, which was premiered on 13 September 1719. After performances of *Teofane* finished, rehearsals for Heinichen's *Flavio Crispo* began. It is unlikely Senesino's outburst alone was the catalyst that caused the Italian opera in Dresden to be dissolved by order of the King, as is often cited.[103] It is likely that other financial matters were at play and Senesino's incident provided a convenient pretext. In contrast to the many accounts that advance an uncomplimentary view of Senesino's personal character, the singer considerately offered gifts to his friends illustrating that, despite other traits, he could be generous.[104]

Portraiture of Senesino depicts a valiant bearing and illustrates a lithe and gallant physical figure in poses that while graceful, also deomonstrate a commanding sense of strength. In Handel's *Radamisto* of 1720, Mainwaring asserted 'To the ladies especially, the merits of SENESINO would be much more obvious, than those of HANDEL.'[105] Perhaps a misogynistic comment on the superior ability of men to appreciate the complicated nature of Handel's music, it may also be understood as a reference to Senesino's favourable stature. While Senesino was noted for his 'porcine features' and portly offstage physical appearance, on stage his charisma and

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[101] 'Schuld gaben, daß er wider die Worte einen Fehler begangen hätte'. Quantz, *Lebenslauf*, I, 214, Quantz recounts the full circumstances surrounding Senesino tearing Heinichen's score to pieces: 'Nach dem Benlager componirte Heinichen noch eine Oper, welche nach der Zurückkunst des Königs aus Pohlen aufgeführet warden solte. Den der Probe aber, die auf dem töniglichen Schlosse, in Gegenwart des Musikdirectors Baron von Mortar, gehalten wurde, machten die benden Sänger, Senesino und Berselli einen unge ungeschliffenen Virtuosenstreich. Sie zankten sich mit dem Capellmeister Heinichen über eine Arie, wo sie ihm, einem Manne von Gelehrsamkeit, der sieben Jahre sich ich in Wälschland aufgehalten hatte, Schuld gaben, daß er wider die Worte einen Fehler begangen hätte. Senesino, welcher seine Ubsichten schön nach England gerichtet haben mochte, zerriß die Rolle des Berselli, und warf sie dem Cappelmeister vor die Füße. Dieses wurde nach Pohlen an dem König berichtet.'; Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany*, I, 176, states the following: '[Quantz] informs us, that this famous opera, at Dresden, was broke up by a quarrel between Heinechen, the King of Poland's chapelmaster, and Senesino, who this same year, 1719, went to England, for the first time.'

[102] 'Je suis icy à attendre que les engagements de Sinesino [*sic*], Berseilli, et Guizzardi, soyent finis, et que ces Messiers d'ailleurs bien disposes, s'engagent avec moy pour la Grande Bretagne. Tout sera decide en quelques jours'. Letter, Handel in Dresden to the Earl of Burlington, 26/15 July 1719; GB-Lfom, accession n. 4614 (typewritten transcription of the original manuscript, *c.* 1960); in English: Deutsch, *Handel*, 93-94.

[103] George J. Buelow, 'Heinichen, Johann David,' *GMO*, accessed 28 December 2016. The castrato Berselli also sided with Senesino in the dispute.

[104] Avanzati, 'The Unpublished Senesino', 305 and 309, note 9.

[105] Mainwaring, *Memoirs*, 100.

bearing inspired praise.[106] John Vanderbank's 1725 portrait of Senesino in a scene identified as preceding the famed lament 'Dove Sei, amato bene?' in Act 1 scene 6 of Handel's *Rodelinda* is seen in Figure 1 and provides a primary example.

Figure 1: John Vanderbank, portrait of Senesino in a 'Hungarian' costume representing the character Bertardio in Handel's *Rodelinda* (1725), 1725 or 1726 (Collection of James Carleton Harris the 7th Earl of Malmesbury, Greywell Hill House, Hampshire).

Even accounting for their mocking intent, several caricatures likewise portray Senesino's effectiveness in heroic roles. Senesino is often represented in command, doling out orders, solving a problem, or embracing the *prima donna* while demanding attention as the most authoritative

[106] Dean, 'Senesino', *GMO*. Senesino is described as 'old' and 'fat' in the anonymously published *The Happy Courtezan: Or, the Prude demolish'd. An Epistle from the Celebrated Mrs. C- P-, to the Angelick Signior Far-n-li* (London: uncredited, 1735), 4.

figure in the scene.[107] Figure 2, from *Admeto* of 1727 humourously exemplifies this commanding presence on stage as the character Alceste (Faustina Bordoni) swoons into the arms of the heroic Admeto (Senesino).

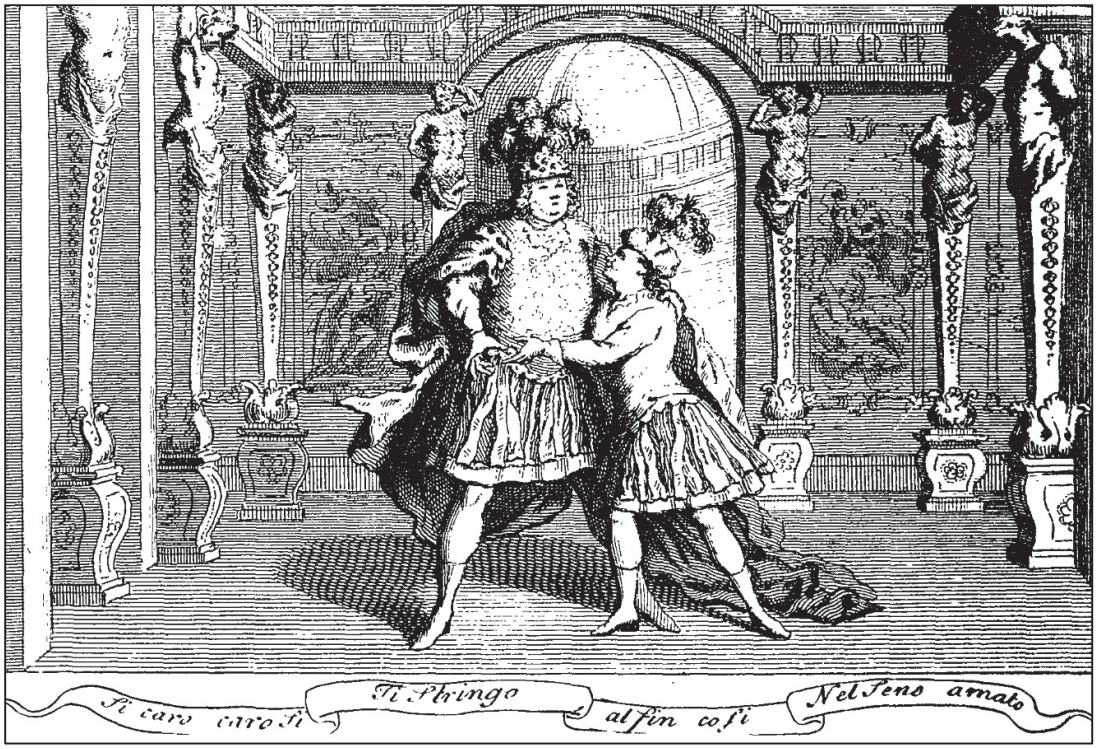

Figure 2: Anonymous engraving of Francesco Bernardi (Senesino) and Faustina Bordoni depicting the final scene of *Admeto* by Handel (London, 1727) from *An Epistle from S-r S-O to S-a F-A* (London: J. Robert, 1727).

In London Senesino was often compared to the alto castrato Nicola Grimaldi (*Nicolini*: bap. 1673-1732), and occasionally even mistaken altogether for the older singer. *The Opera Register* from 19 November 1720 offers evidence of the confusion: 'in the Winter [of 1720] Do [Durastanti] & Sigr Senesino, a famous Eunuch came, his singing likewise much admired, he supplyed [*sic*] Sigr Nicolini's absence & is in person & action very like him'.[108] If the sketches are to be believed, Senesino and Nicolini shared a similarly broad stature with a rotund overweight appearance making them the favourite butt of many caricaturists' jocular depictions. The sketches in Figure 3 of Anton Maria Zanetti (1679–1767), while obviously exaggerated, show this resemblance clearly.[109]

[107] See Patricia Howard, 'Perceptions of the castrati in eighteenth-century London', in *Handel and the Castrati*: *the story behind the 18th century superstar singers,* exhibition catalogue, ed. Nicholas Clapton (London: Handel House Museum, 2006) which discusses the varied representation of castrati (from ridicule to sex symbol status), their physical appearance as tall and barrel-chested, their desirability for being refined and not 'rough' and 'bearded', as well as the popular conception of their increased sexual stamina.
[108] Burrows, et.al, *George Frideric Handel*, I, 520; the original document can be found at GB-Lbl Add. MS 11258, fo.27v.
[109] Feldman suggests that the placement of singers within Zanetti's collection of caricatures warrants special consideration (Feldman, *The Castrato*, part I, 'The Man Who Pretended to Be Who He Was', Figure 4). Supporting her claim, Feldman suggests that the famous Farinelli is placed in the centre of a page with

Figure 3: Caricatures by Anton Maria Zanetti: upper image: Faustina with Senesino; Lower image: Nicolini with Lucia Facchinelli (*la Becheretta*), possibly 1727, contained in *Album Amicorum* (Giorgio Cini Foundation, Venice).

In addition to stature, the two castrati shared similarities of voice in range, exceptional agility, and breath control.[110] Nicolini was one of the first prominent Italian castrati to perform in England, from 1708 to 1717, and he remained memorable to Londoners at Senesino's arrival in 1720.[111] It was perhaps this previous familiarity and equivalence in voice and physique that led a London journal to incorrectly report on 31 December 1720 that Nicolini (in fact, Senesino) had

friends and colleagues presented around him, in smaller images, thereby showing the singer as the centre of his social world. In the case of Nicolini and Senesino, the two stocky castrati were not only placed on the same page, but are also sketched in similar poses and costumes, further enhancing their similarities; it seems Zanetti was bringing attention to their shared likeness.

[110] The two roles Handel composed for Nicolini lie from *a* to *f″* which is also largely the range he utilised for Senesino's voice. Winton Dean, 'Nicolini,' *GMO*, accessed 28 December 2016.

[111] *Ibid*. Nicolini performed in the works of Alessandro Scarlatti (*Pirro e Demetrio*, 1708), Bononcini (*Camilla*, 1709; *Etearco*, 1711), Francesco Mancini (*Idaspe fedele*, 1710), Handel (*Rinaldo*, 1711; *Amadigi*, 1717), Francesco Gasparini (*Antioco*, 1711; *Ambleto*, 1712) and in the pasticcio *Ercole* (1712) and his performances helped to secure the favour of Italian opera as the reigning entertainment with the London public for the decades that followed.

performed in the second version of Handel's *Radamisto*: 'Signior Nicoleni [*sic*], the famous Italian Eunuch, is newly arriv'd here from Venice, and Sang last Wednesday Night at the New Opera with great Applause.'[112] The confusion was short lived; misattributions and comparisons of the two singers in letters and advertisements ceased after Senesino's first year in England when he had established his own fame.

While caricatures and portraits do provide a sense of Senesino, perhaps most indicative of the singer's physical appearance (though certainly meant to be flattering) is the life-like bust by Louis François Roubiliac (1695/1702–1762) from 1735 seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Louis François Roubiliac (1695/1702–1762), Bust of Francesco Bernardi, *c.* 1735, purchase, Irwin Untermyer Gift, by exchange, 2016 (US.NY.mma, 2016.47).

Soft features and a prominent plump chin validate the 1740 ridicule of Horace Walpole (1717-1797) who states: 'we thought it a fat old woman; but it spoke to us in a shrill little pipe, and

[112] From *Applebee's 'Original Weekly Journal'*, 31 December 1720.

proved itself to be Senesino'.[113] Pursed lips hint at a kept secret, which, given the bust's 1735 commission date may allude to the singer's clever formation of the Opera of the Nobility under the nose of Handel, while heavy eyes show the effects of his years in conflict with 'The Alpine Faun'.[114] A slight curl in his short coif draws resemblance to one of antiquity's greatest heroes, Julius Caesar, whom Senesino had portrayed on the stage to great acclaim in 1724, 1725, and 1732. The porcine nose, which became his recognisable trademark in paintings and prints by Hogarth, Thomas Hudson (1701-1779), and Joseph Goupy (1689–1769), is also clearly on display.[115]

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Skilled performance of rhetoric, the *messa di voce*, trill, and intensely dramatic stage persona combined with precise intonation, agile coloratura, heroic bearing, and spontaneity to elevate Senesino's reputation throughout Europe and made him indispensable to the Royal Academy of Music. With a sweet and powerful voice that delighted audiences in Dresden, London, and throughout Italy, primary sources affirm that Senesino was praised as grand, majestic, and transcendent. The singer's vanity and continuing desire to master his vocal and dramatic portrayal had led him to achieve immense notoriety. While his physical off-stage appearance inspired mockery and he possessed a bristly and unpredictable demeanor, the singer's on-stage magnetism did win him favour. Certainly, a performer of exceptional talent, Senesino was also a polarising personality with an obstreperous disposition which caused intrigue and increased his celebrity, securing enduring fame.

[113] Horace Walpole, *The Letters of Horace Walpole, 4th Earl of Oxford,* ed. Mrs. Paget Toynbee (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), I, 147. Walpole likely encountered Senesino in passing on a road outside of Naples in 1740.
[114] A moniker for Handel devised by Paolo Antonio Rolli.
[115] See William Hogarth, Marriage A-la-Mode: 4, *The Toilette*, *c.* 1743, NG,116; Francesco Bernardi ('Senesino'), Alexander van Aken, after Thomas Hudson, mezzotint, published 1735, NPG, D14301; 'Senesino', Elisha Kirkall, after Joseph Goupy, mezzotint, 1727, NPG, D31719.

CHAPTER 2

Senesino in Italy and Dresden, 1707-1719

Although Senesino had sung in sacred works from 1695, and in opera as early as 1700, the year 1707 marked the first time he is known to have undertaken a *primo uomo* role in Venetian performances of Giovanni Maria Ruggieri's *Armida abbandonata*.[1] He sang the part of the crusading hero Rinaldo and for some performances he may have simultaneously presented the part of the imprisoned prince Tancredi.[2] Ruggieri's work provides an exceptional opportunity to assess Senesino's ability in his earliest years of operatic singing as it is the first opera composed for him for which a score survives. The assessment of *Armida abbandonata* and other early-career operas reshapes currently held conceptions of Senesino's skill in performance as well as his vocal range, tessitura, and dramatic portrayal. Did Senesino always sing heroic roles? Did he possess a soprano vocal range in his early career, rather than the 'sweet contralto voice' for which he was later celebrated?[3] Most significantly, what were Senesino's actual vocal and dramatic abilities in his early career? An awareness of the under-researched composer Ruggieri is essential to answering these questions as is recognition of Senesino's many roles from 1707 to 1719. In this formative period, patterns of character and voice were established that remained with Senesino throughout his career.

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Biographical accounts of the composer Ruggieri provide compelling evidence that he was a man of dubious character who, in 1696, owned several properties and was perhaps even an embezzler.[4] He likely resided in Venice and, prior to 1695, was employed in an administrative

[1] Regarding sacred performances in 1695 see Mazzeo, 'Ulteriori', 5-6. In 1700 Senesino sang the part of the page Plautillo in Sienese presentations of Bononcini's *Cammilla*, see Colleen Reardon, *A Sociable Moment: Opera and Festive Culture in Baroque Siena* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 216-18; and Colleen Reardon, 'Siena Cathedral and its Castrati', *Sleuthing the Muse: Essays in Honor of William F. Prizer*, ed. Kristin K. Forney and Jeremy L. Smith (New York: Pendragon, 2012), 204-207. A magistrate's small claims registry has led Bucciarelli to determine Senesino's Venetian début was in 1706, rather than 1707, as previously thought, however further research is needed to determine what type of role he performed in this currently unknown opera. See Bucciarelli, 'Farò il possibile', 54.

[2] The libretto I-Vgc, Rolandi, ROL 4255 lists Senesino as performing both Rinaldo and Tancredi in the *Attori*. Various libretti alternately assign either the role of Rinaldo or Tancredi to Senesino; in this instance, both these roles are shown as allocated to him in the same performance.

[3] Quantz, *Lebenslauf,* I, 213: 'Senesino hatte eine durchdringende, helle, egale und angenehme tiefe Sopranstimme, (mezzo Soprano) eine reine Intonation…'; in English: Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany*, II, 175-176.

[4] See Jasmin Melissa Cameron, 'In search of Giovanni Maria Ruggieri: Recent archival research', *Studi Vivaldiani*, 11 (Pisa and Rome: Fabrizio Serra Editore, 2011), 13-32; Jasmin Melissa Cameron, ed., 'Canatas, op. 5 by Giovanni Maria Ruggieri', *Recent researches in the music of the Baroque Era* (Middleton: A-R Editions, 2012), vii-xii; Jasmin Melissa Cameron, ed., 'Two Settings of the Gloria by Giovanni Maria Ruggieri', *Recent researches in the music of the Baroque Era* (Middleton: A-R Editions, 2008), vii-xvii; regarding Ruggieri's real estate see Michael Talbot, *The sacred vocal music of Antonio Vivaldi* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1995), 136-137; and Piero Weiss, 'Ruggieri, Giovanni Maria', *GMO*, accessed 2 February

capacity by the prominent Contarini family. Ruggieri's music was mainly presented in and around Venice and while it is known that he flourished as a composer between 1689 and 1712, his exact date of birth in Verona remains uncertain. *La Clotilde* was offered at the Teatro San Cassiano in 1696 after which Ruggieri began working exclusively as a composer.[5] The published libretto to this opera described Ruggieri as 'distinguished among *dilettanti*' composing beautiful music that 'enamours the ear of its listener' and equals that of the most celebrated professors of the art form.[6] His music influenced Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) whose famous *Gloria* settings RV 588 and 589 borrow material directly from Ruggieri's own *Gloria* in D Major RV Anh. 23.[7] Ruggieri is perhaps most remembered for two volumes of *Suonate da chiesa*, Op.3 and Op. 4 published in 1693 and 1697 respectively, however, he was also a prolific composer of opera with twelve works to his credit in that genre (listed in Appendix II, Table 2). Aside from brief mention of *Elisa*, regarded as the first *opera buffa* presented in Venice in 1711, there has been little previous enquiry into Ruggieri's operas. Piero Weiss's account that Ruggieri may have been active as a composer in 1720 is clearly inaccurate; he died on 27 May 1714.[8] The frequent references in secondary sources which label Ruggieri as *Maestro di capella* in Pesaro in 1715 are also inaccurate.[9]

Manuscripts of Ruggieri's *Armida abbandonata* survive only in short score though it is likely this would have been enhanced with at least strings and perhaps other instrumental parts, although those have not survived. Something of the composer's style can be gleaned from his contemporary sacred works indicating he was capable of composing for large and varied ensembles, often utilising unexpected instrumental combinations to accentuate drama. For example, in the 'Domine Deus, rex coelestis' movement of the composer's *Gloria* for double chorus RVAnh.23, each *coro* is comprised of a vocal contingent of two sopranos and one bass accompanied by only two violas and basso continuo.[10] In the 'Domine Fili unigenite' movement, a solo alto voice is accompanied with alternating melodic statements in pairs of violins and oboes (Appendix III, Ex. 2). Trumpets and *cornetti* appear in Ruggieri's scared works and may also have been utilised in his operas. In the *Gloria*, and other works of this type, Ruggieri juxtaposes slow, sombre, and introspective passages with surprisingly florid fugal declamations in both the vocal and string parts. His instrumental sonatas also display a striking comprehension of structure, compositional technique, and counterpoint that seem to disprove his 'dilettante' status.[11]

2017. It is Cameron who brings to light facts regarding embezzlement though reference is unfortunately not given to the cited source making it impossible to determine the accuracy of her comments.

[5] Weiss, 'Ruggieri', *GMO*.

[6] Libretto: Giambattista Neri, *La Clotilde* (Venice: Nicolini, 1696), 13: '…la vaghissima Musica del Signor Gio: Maria Ruggeri, che distinto frà Dilettanti viene à pareggiarsi à più celebri Professori di si bell'Arte. Già son certo che la dolce armonia delle sue Note t'innamorerà l'orecchio…'

[7] See Cameron, 'Two Settings of the Gloria', vii-xvii, and Talbot, *The sacred vocal music of Antonio Vivaldi*, 136-137.

[8] See Weiss, 'Ruggieri', *GMO*. Regarding Ruggieri's date of death see Cameron, 'Cantatas, op. 5', vii.

[9] One place this citation appears is Willi Apel, *Italian violin music of the seventeenth century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 264.

[10] See Michael Talbot, liner notes to *Vivaldi: Scared Works-10*, The King's Consort, Hyperion, CDA66849, CD, 2003.

[11] This is an assertion put forth by Weiss in 'Giovanni Maria Ruggieri', *GMO*.

Much of Ruggieri's vocal music, whether sacred or secular, employs short form *da capo* arias which alternate with recitative. The vocal cantatas confirm that the composer possessed a formidable command of rhetoric which was used to enhance dramatic affect. In the aria 'Col crine incateni', from the cantata 'Chi mai ti fè sì bella' (dated 1700), Ruggieri employs a five-bar melismatic pattern to set the word *penar* to music with frenetic turns of direction (Appendix III, Ex. 3).[12] Three iterations of the same coloratura motif inject a quality of repetition adding interpretative depth to the meaning of the word. In conjunction with the unusually extreme key of B major, uneasily lilting 3/8 time signature, and repeating chromatic patterns in the basso continuo the anguish of the text (*penar*) is skilfully depicted.[13] This type of innovation shows just how Ruggieri's music captivated the ear of its listener.

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Torquato Tasso's epic poem, *La Gerusalemme liberata*, upon which the libretto for Ruggieri's *Armida abbandonata* is based, dramatises the first Christian crusade. The Armida legend endured as a frequent source of dramatic inspiration throughout the eighteenth century. Several operatic composers active in this period set the story to music, including: *Rinaldo* of 1711 by George Frideric Handel, *Armida al campo d'Egitto* of 1718 by Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), *Armida* of 1761 by Tommaso Traetta (1727-1779), and *Armida e Rinaldo* of 1786 by Giuseppe Sarti (1729-1802). Ruggieri's version of *Armida abbandonata* is focused on love, setting it apart from the more common heroically-themed works presented in Venice in the early eighteenth century.[14] Replete with magic and enchantment, the plot tracks the war hero Rinaldo, portrayed in Ruggieri's opera by Senesino, as he is entranced by the sorceress Armida.

Armida abbandonata survives in two musical sources, and, while both are in short score, they appear to have been created for different purposes. The manuscript volume entitled *75 Arias by Gasparini, Ruggieri and Caldara* has been the primary source for transcriptions in this thesis.[15] The folio pages contain legible handwritten script and the underlay of text is orderly in relation to correlating musical notes (Appendix III, Ex. 4). It is most likely in the hand of a copyist and the consideration given to the musical layout and corresponding text suggests that the manuscript may have been commissioned by a patron. The score's untarnished condition implies it was not put to

[12] MS: D-Bsb, Mus.ms. 30074. The date 1700 is not definitive.
[13] B Major is described as possessing '*eine widerwärtige, harte, ger unangenehme, auch dabey desperate Eigenschafft an sich zu haben scheinet*' (an obnoxious, harsh, even nasty, also desperate self-possession) in Johann Mattheson, *Das neu-eröffnete Orchestre*, ed. Reinhard Keiser (Hamburg: Schiller, 1713), 251-252. The key is 'Stark, gefärbt, wilde Leidenschaften ankündigend, aus den gellsten Farben zusammen gesetzt. Zorn, Wuth, Eifersucht, Raserey, Verzweiflung, und jeder Jast des Herzens Leigt in seinem Gebiethe' (Strongly coloured, announcing wild passions, composed from the most glaring colours. Anger, rage, jealousy, fury, despair and every burden of the heart lies in its sphere) according to Christian Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Aesthetik der Tonkunst* (written 1784/85, published Vienna: Degen, 1806), 378-379. 'B Major was only used in very extreme situations' states Heiner Ruland, *Expanding Tonal Awareness: Musical Exploration of the Evolution of Consciousness Guided by the Monochord*, trans. John Logan (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1992), 31.
[14] For details of other operas from this period in Venice, see Selfridge-Field, *A New Chronology*, 278-279.
[15] MS: GB-Lbl, R.M.23.f.5.

practical use. Nearly all of the arias and duets in *Armida abbandonata* are contained in the volume; only five selections are absent including three arias that are not relevant to Senesino, and two duets ('Questo zeffiro, che spira' from Act I scene 8 and 'Dove sei mia bella Armida?' from Act II scene 2) that were composed for his voice.[16] The manuscript is now part of the British Royal Music Library and it seems possible the Polish princess Theresa Kunegunda Sobieska (1676-1730), pictured in Figure 5, may have commissioned it.

Figure 5: Cosmas Damian Assam, portrait of Theresa Kunegunda Sobieska in exile in Venice, 1714 (A-Wn, Port 42070 01).

The exiled Princess settled in Venice from 1704 to 1715. A fluent Italian speaker and an ardent lover of music, she attended the 1707 Venetian performances of the other two operas represented in this volume: Caldara's *Selvaggio eroe* and Gasparini's *L'Amor generoso*.[17] Sobieska may also

[16] The three arias in *Armida abbandonata* that are not extant in GB-Lbl R.M.23.f.5 include: 'Cotanto belle Voi siete stele' (Act I scene 6) for the character Rambaldo, 'Spietato, ò Dio, perche Cotanta crudeltà?' (Act II scene 10) for the character Fantasma, and 'Con orribile sembiante' (Act III scene 1) for the character Rambaldo. See volume II: Musical Transcriptions which contains the mentioned duets. The Santini archive source (D-MÜ-s, HS188) has supplied the missing scores for the transcriptions contained in volume II.
[17] For a further account see Selfridge-Field, *A New Chronology*, 280-281.

have seen Ruggieri's *Armida abbandonata* and had selections from these three operas copied for her personal library.

The second manuscript source bears the inscription *Arie di Venezia nel ann' 1708*.[18] Unlike the other source, this music does appear to have been used in performance, perhaps by a continuo player. The date '1708' may refer to the year the works were copied rather than performed, as all three operas in the collection were presented in the 1707-1708 *carnevale* season. As a concordant source (due to the illegibility of many folios: Appendix III, Ex. 5), it has been used to clarify ambiguities in *75 Arias by Gasparini, Ruggieri and Caldara* and to provide the two duets that are missing in the primary source. *Arie di Venezia nel ann' 1708* includes selections not represented in any version of the libretto that share compositional similarities with *Armida abbandonata* suggesting they were composed by Ruggieri. These selections include 'Ma se un volto lusinghiera' a high-voice duet possibly for Rinaldo and Armida, and the soprano arias 'Sei stanco ò caro ben' and 'Io non sò amar così' which may have been added for later performances in the 1707 season.[19]

Armida abbandonata was premiered at Venice's Teatro San Angelo on 10 November 1707. Located next to the Grand Canal, the venue was established in 1676 and by the time of Senesino's 1707 performances the theatre had a reputation for being small and unfashionable.[20] Later in the century it acquired more standing as the primary theatre where the plays of Carlo Goldoni (1707-1793) and operas of Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) and Baldassare Galuppi (1706-1785) were performed.[21] Represented in Table 1, Senesino performed amongst a cast that included a favourite of Metastasio's, Maria Anna Garberini Bentì (*la Romanina*, [1686]-1734), who was renowned for her dramatic abilities, and a female performer, Lucia Bonetti (*fl.* 1688-1719), who achieved notable success singing in male roles.

[18] MS: D-MÜ-s, HS188.
[19] The libretto (D-Mbs, Deutsches Historisches Institut, Rar. Libr. Ven. 421/427#423) also lists two arias in the final scene of Act III that are not found in either musical manuscript: 'Pupille, almen poteste' for the character Rinaldo; and 'Mi tormenta, mi curccia, m'affanna' for Armida.
[20] Michael Talbot, 'Vivaldi, Antonio,' *GMO*, accessed 1 January 2017.
[21] *Ibid*. Vivaldi was also the impresario of the Teatro San Angelo from 1713 presenting his own works as well as those of F. Gasparini and others.

Table 1: *Attori* in Ruggieri's *Armida abbandonata*, 1707[22]

Character name	Role and character description in libretto	Performer name	Voice type
Armida	Principessa Reale di Damasco Mega.	La Signora Maria Anna Garberini Bentì detta la Romanina.	soprano
Rinaldo	Principe del camp di Gofredo sotto Gerusalemme, fatto prigioniero da Armida, è di lei amante.	Il Signor Francesco Bernardi detto Sanesino.[23]	mezzo soprano castrato
Tancredi	Principe pure del campo di Gofredo innamorato di Clorinda.	Il Signor Gioseppe Berti.	alto castrato
Erminia	Principessa Reale di Antiochia Amante di Tancredi.	La Signora Maria Cerè.	soprano
Ubaldo	Cavallero spedito da Gofredo per ritrovare Rinaldo, e richiamarlo al campo.[24]	La Signora Lucia Bonetti	soprano
Rambaldo	Cavalieri di Quascognà ribellato da Gofredo per seguire Armida di cui è Amante lusingato con finta corrispondenza.[25]	Il Signor Andrea Colago.	bass
Filomaco	Uomo Faggio, e professore della Magia natural.	Il medesimo. (The same.) [Il Signor Andrea Colago.]	bass

The *prima donna* Maria Anna Garberini Bentì most likely made her stage début in Rome in 1703, quickly rising to become a singer of note. She appeared in Siena for *carnevale* in 1704, Naples in 1706, and Florence in 1707.[26] Senesino would have recognised her from two previous productions in Siena which also included his brother, Giovan Carlo. The first, *La Caduta dei decemviri*, with music by Alessandro Scarlatti, opened on 30 December 1703 and received six performances before closing on 17 January 1704.[27] In the second, Bentì portrayed the ingénue in six performances of Tomasso Albinoni's 1704 opera *Griselda* between 20 January and 5 February.[28] A published sonnet referencing her 'admirable representation of the part of Costanza' in *Griselda* was distributed before performances to favourably influence audience opinion of the singer.[29] In a caricature shown in Figure 6, Pier Leonne Ghezzi hints at Bentì's somewhat

[22] Libretto: D-Mbs, Deutsches Historisches Institut, Rar. Libr. Ven. 421/427#423.
[23] Note the spelling of the name 'Sanesino' in the *Attori* listing which was common for the singer until 1713 when, in the libretto to *Irene Augusta* by Antonio Lotti, it appears as the more commonly recognised 'Senesino' for the first time.
[24] 'Knight sent by Gofredo to find Rinaldo, and himself called to the field'.
[25] 'Knight of Biscay who rebelled from Gofredo to follow Armida and lovingly flattered her with false correspondence'.
[26] See Arnaldo Bonaventura, 'Benti Bulgarelli', *DBI*, accessed 1 March 2016. The 1703 date of début lacks sources that can be validated. See also Dennis Libby, 'Benti, Maria Anna,' *GMO*, accessed 1 January 2017.
[27] See Reardon, *A Sociable Moment*, 248.
[28] *Ibid*., 285.
[29] 'Al vivo incanto delle Scene la signora Anna Maria Garberini Benti virtuosissima cantatrice che nel dramma della Griselda rappresenta mirabilmente la parte di Costanza alludendosi allo sbarco, che fà ne' lidi della Sicilia'. (Siena: Bonetti in the Stamperia del pubblico), 1704, available at I-Sc, Lxxxix A 3 [42].

masculine facial features while depicting her in an upright posture exhibiting dominance over the musical score she holds in her right hand.[30]

Figure 6: Pier Leonne Ghezzi, Marianna Bentì Bulgarelli (La Romanina), Rome, July 1728 (Pier Leonne Ghezzi, *Il Nuovo Mondo*, I-Rvat, v. V, f. 144, Vaticana Ottob.lat. 3116).

[30] *Ibid*., Libby comments that Bentì 'was not beautiful'.

In Figure 7 Anton Maria Zanetti offers a contrasting view by presenting a tall, thin, refined figure with delicate facial features and a demure pose accentuated by a fan carried in her left hand.

Figure 7: Anton[io] Maria Zanetti, 'La Romanina'
(I-Vgc, Istituto per le Lettere, il Teatro ed il Melodramma, Biblioteca).

Though Bentì lacked beauty and her vocal range was only from approximately *c′* to *a″*, she was a captivating performer.[31] Mancini reflects on Bentì's success:

> Why did Maria Bentì Burgarelli, alias La Romanina, become so famous? Because she was a very correct actress. She was so perfect in her comedy that she inspired the sublime Metastasio to write "Didone" for her.[32]

Recalling Bentì in a letter to the Duke of Mantua, Francesco Ferdinando Galvani reveals the success of Ruggieri's *Armida abbandonata* in Venice as well as Bentì's celebrity by stating the opera 'has more acclaim than those at the other theatres [because] the previously mentioned 'Romanina' has a stage presence superior even to that of the famous Margheritina Salicola of Saxony.'[33] The soprano became a prominent presence in Senesino's musical world; the two sang together throughout Italy in five other operas from 1707 to 1717 including Giuseppe Boniventi's 1708 *Armida al campo* in Venice, Tomaso Albinoni's 1708 *Astarto* in Venice, Giovanni Maria Orlandini's 1712 *Teuzzone* in Ferrara, Gasparini's 1712 *La Fede tradita e vendicata* in Bologna, and an anonymous 1717 version of *Dorinda in Arcadia* in Livorno.[34]

Lucia Bonetti portrayed the male knight Ubaldo in Ruggieri's *Armida abbandonata*. Bonetti is first mentioned in 1688 when she sang in works by Carlo Pallavicino ([1630]-1688) and Giovanni Legrenzi (1626-1690) in Bologna.[35] She sang throughout Italy, in Reggio Emilia, Modena, Ferrara, Parma, Milan, Naples, Casale, Udine, Venezia, Verona, Genoa, and Pesaro, suggesting she was a performer of successful standing even though audience accounts of her performing do not survive.[36] Little is known of the other three singers in the cast of Ruggieri's opera. Maria Cerè and Andrea Colago, Erminia and Rambaldo/Filomaco respectively in Ruggieri's cast, did not sing in any other opera for which information survives. Gioseppe Berti, who sang Tancredi, is only further recognised in connection to Boniventi's *Armida al campo* which followed Ruggieri's opera in the same 1707-1708 season at the Teatro San Angelo. He must have been an experienced singer as he is recognised as a virtuoso performer at the Mantuan court in the libretto to Boniventi's work.[37]

Ruggieri's 1707 *Armida abbandonata* entrusts Senesino with a *primo uomo* role. It seems he was believable as a hero from the outset of his career, entirely bypassing the common practice

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[31] *Ibid*.
[32] Mancini, *Pensieri, e Reflessioni*, 161: 'Perchè si rese celebre la Marianna Benti Burgarelli detta *la Romanina*, se non perchè era ottima Attrice, ed era la comica sua così isquisita, che meritò per sino, che l'immortale *Abate Metastasio* scrivesse appostatamente per lei quella grand' Opera, la famosa Didone'; in English: Buzzi, *Practical Reflections*, 177.
[33] See Selfridge-Field, *A New Chronology*, 278-279; while there is no specific entry for the person of 'Margheritina Salicola of Saxony', she is mentioned briefly in the *GMO* entry for her less-famous sister, Angiola Salicola: 'little is known of the career of her sister Margherita, except that she was at the Mantuan court in 1685, was heard by the Elector of Saxony in Venice and went to Dresden, enjoying a successful career in German theatres and appearing in Vienna in 1693'. See Paola Besutti, 'Salicola, Angiola,' *GMO,* accessed 16 February 2017.
[34] The music of other composers may also have been included in Orlandini's *Teuzzone*.
[35] Paola Besutti, 'Bonetti, Lucia,' *GMO*, accessed 1 January 2017.
[36] *Ibid*.
[37] Francesco Silvani, *Armida al campo*, music by Giuseppe Boniventi, 1707, Venice. The libretto can be found at I-Vcg, Libretti S. Angelo 115, Lib. 2713 and I-Vnm, Dramm. 3526. 003, among other places.

for young castrati at the time of performing female roles.[38] One possible reason for this is the singer's late age of castration, at thirteen, rather than the more standard eight to ten years of age.[39] The result of a delayed procedure would have meant the singer was more mature, both vocally and physically, making him better suited to the *primo uomo* parts early on than many other castrati.[40] Senesino is also consistently represented in caricature and portraits as tall; perhaps his height and large physical build precluded believability as female characters.

The roles performed by Senesino in the first twelve years of his career, as seen in Table 2, suggest that his voice and temperament were suited to heroic parts.

Table 2: Roles performed by Senesino from 1700-1719[41]

Year	Opera	Senesino's role	Libretto description of character
1700	*Cammilla, Regina de' Vosci*	Plautillo	A page
1707	*Armida abbandonata*	Rinaldo	Prince of the camp of Gofredo
1708	*Il Falso Tiberino*	Ascanio	Prince of Volsci, lover of Albina
1708	*Astarto*	Nino	Principal in authority of the kingdom[42]
1708	*Armida al campo*	Rinaldo	Prince of the Army of Goffredo
1708	*Igene, regina di Sparta*	Milciade	Prince of Corinth
1708	*Engelberta*	Lodovico	The Emperor
1709	*L'Odio e l'Amore* (*Ciro*)	Ciro	[King of Persia]
1709	*L'Inimico generoso*	Teodosio	Son of Arcadia
1709	*Engelberta*	Lodovico	The Emperor
1710	*Il Trionfo di Camilla*	Turno	[King of Rutoli]
1711	*La Pace generoso*	Arminio	[German Prince]
1711	*Teodosio il giovane*	[Teodosio]	Emperor of Constantinople
1711	*Eumene*	Eumene	[Successor of Alexander the Great]
1712	*Teuzzone*	Teuzzone	[Son of Troncone, Chinese Emperor]
1712	*La Fede tradita e vendicata*	Vitige	Royal Prince of Dania
1712	*Faramondo*	Faramondo	[King of the Franks]
1712	*La Virtù trionfante*	Oronte	[Prince of Thrace, Arab King]
1713	*Il Trionfo di Camilla*	Turno	[King of Rutoli]

[38] The practice of castrati performing as female characters was common until 1798 in the Papal States, particularly in Rome. Many of Italy's most famed eighteenth-century singing castrati performed in this fashion, including: Carlo Broschi (*Farinelli*; 1705-1782), Gaetano Majorano (*Cafarelli*; 1710-1783), Luigi Marchesi (1754-1829), Gaspare Pacchierotti (1740-1821), and Venanzio Rauzzini (1746-1810). Some castrati, such as Andrea Martini (1761-1819), who seems to have sung exclusively in Rome, performed entirely in this way. However, the more common custom for castrati was to embark on a career by performing non-leading female roles and eventually, when greater maturity and experience was obtained, advance to singing heroic male roles. See Rosselli, 'Castrato,' *GMO*.

[39] See Patrick Barbier, *The World of the Castrati* (London: Souvenir Press, 1998), 12: 'The operation was never performed before the age of seven and rarely after twelve'. About Senesino's age of castration see Avanzati, 'The Unpublished Senesino', 5. Reardon notes that in Siena it was common for boys to be castrated later, around age twelve, and in some cases as late as fifteen. See Reardon, 'Siena Cathedral and its Castrati', 205.

[40] See M. Hatzinger, D. Vöge, M. Stastny, F. Moll, and M. Sohn, 'Castrati Singers: All for Fame', *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 9/9 (2012), 2233-37, which states that the timing of the operation greatly affected later development, including physical appearance and libido.

[41] When a libretto is unavailable for a specific opera, the character description has been devised from other libretto versions of the same drama.

[42] The libretto, D-Mbs, Deutsches Historisches Institute, Rar.Libr.Ven.428/432#431, states: 'Grande del Regno'.

Year	Opera	Senesino's role	Libretto description of character
1713	*Irene Augusta*	Costantino	Emperor
1714	*Semiramide*	Nino	King of Assiria
1714	*Marsia deluso*	Cilenio	Shepherd of Tessaglia
1714	*Polidoro*	Polidoro	Brother of Iliona, mistook as Deifilo
1714	*Furio Camilla*	Furio Camilla	[Capitan of the Romans]
1714	*Il Trionfo della costanza*	Alindo	Armenian Prince
1715	*Il Tartaro nella Cina*	Vanlieo	Prince; General of Chinese armies
1715	*Amore e maestà (Arsace)*	Arsace	The General [of Statira]
1715	*Eumene*	Eumene	A successor of Alexander the Great
1715	*I Veri amici*	Evergete	[Believed to be Lagide][43]
1715	*Il Duello d'amore*	Rodrigo	[King of Spain]
1716	*Carlo, re d'Alemagna*	Lotario	[Emperor]
1716	*Merope*	Epitide	[Son of Merope]
1716	*Dafne in alloro*	Apollo	Under the name of Fileno the hunter
1716	*Ciro*	Ciro	[King of Persia]
1716	*La Virtù trionfante de l'odio e de l'amore*	Genio Austriaco/Artaserse	[Austrian Genius / King of Persia]
1717	*Dorinda in Arcadia*	Silvio	[Shepherd]
1717	*La Conquista del vello d'oro*	Giasone	Prince; Head of the Argonauts
1717	*Giove in Argo*	Arete/Giove	A shepherd recognized as Giove
1718	*Ascanio* (*Gli odi delusi dal sangue*)	Ascanio	[King of Lazio]
1719	*Teofane*	Ottone	King of Germany

Only six out of these 40 roles from the years 1700-1719 attract attention as incongruous: the page, Plautillo (1700, *Cammilla*); the shepherd, Cilenio (1714, *Marsia Deluso*); the military General, Arsace (1715, *Amore e maestà*); the allegorically abstract Austrian Genius (1717, *La Virtù trionfante de l'odio e de l'amore*); and the shepherd and hunter Silvio (1717, *Dorinda in Arcadia*). Aside from these few exceptions, Senesino portrayed princes, kings, Greek gods, and emperors. Whilst much previous research suggests castrati performed primarily in heroic roles, there were in fact several male character types on the eighteenth-century stage including tyrants, military generals, and lovers.[44] Considering the 40 roles Senesino sang before 1720, it is clear he considered himself the Hero or Sovereign and avoided the Coward / Traitor portrayals. It is later evident that Senesino's valorous and heroic self-perception persisted off the stage as well.

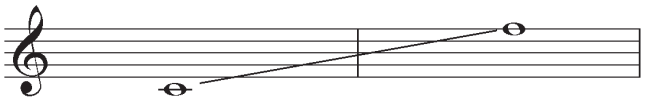
The large number of six arias and two duets for Senesino in *Armida abbandonata*, seen in Table 3, demonstrate the young singer's stamina.

[43] Lagide is the son of Amasi, the 'tyrant of Egypt', and in the opera he is believed to be Evergete.
[44] Sibylle Unser, *Der Kastrat und seine Männlichkeit, Gesangskastraten im 17. Und 18. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Diplomica Verlag GmbH, 2009), 13-19. Unser explores eighteenth-century male archetypes in stage portrayal concluding that the prevailing character types are the Coward / Traitor, Hero, and Sovereign.

Table 3: Selections for Senesino in Ruggieri's *Armida abbandonata*

Type of work and position in the opera	Title of piece	Time signature	Key signature
ACT I			
Scene 7: Aria	'Frà un tormento, che diletta'	C	D Minor
Scene 8: Duet (with Armida)	'Questo zeffiro, che spira'	C	G Major
Scene 10: Aria	'Bel labbro di rubin, hai detto'	3/8	G Major
ACT II			
Scene 2: Duet (with Armida)	'Dove sei mia bella Armida?'	C	D Major
Scene 2: Aria	'Sciolta è già la vostra rete'	6/8	F Major
Scene 5: Aria	'Entro à vortici di sangue'	3/8	B♭ Major
ACT III			
Scene 4: Aria	'Nel cuor non hò che sdegno'	C	F Major
Scene 5: Aria	'Pupille, almen poteste'[45]	-----	unknown[46]

The notated vocal range for Senesino in these selections generally lies within the staff lines of the soprano clef, from *c′* to *f″* as seen in Musical Example 3 whilst the tessitura lies between *a′* and *f″*, shown in Musical Example 4.



Musical Example 3: Senesino's notated vocal range from *c′* to *f″* as Rinaldo in *Armida abbandonata*.

Musical Example 4: Senesino's notated tessitura from *a′* to *f″* as Rinaldo in *Armida abbandonata*.

Any discussion of vocal range in the eighteenth century must include comment on the tuning pitch of instruments in the opera orchestra, as this varied with geographic location. At the time both

[45] The aria 'Pupille, almen poteste' is contained in the libretto (D-Mbs, Rar. Libr. Ven. 421/427#423) but it is not present in either musical manuscript (D-MÜ-s, HS188 or GB-Lbl, R.M.23.f.5). Indicated as having been performed by Senesino's character, Rinaldo, the aria was placed in Act III scene 5 with the following text:

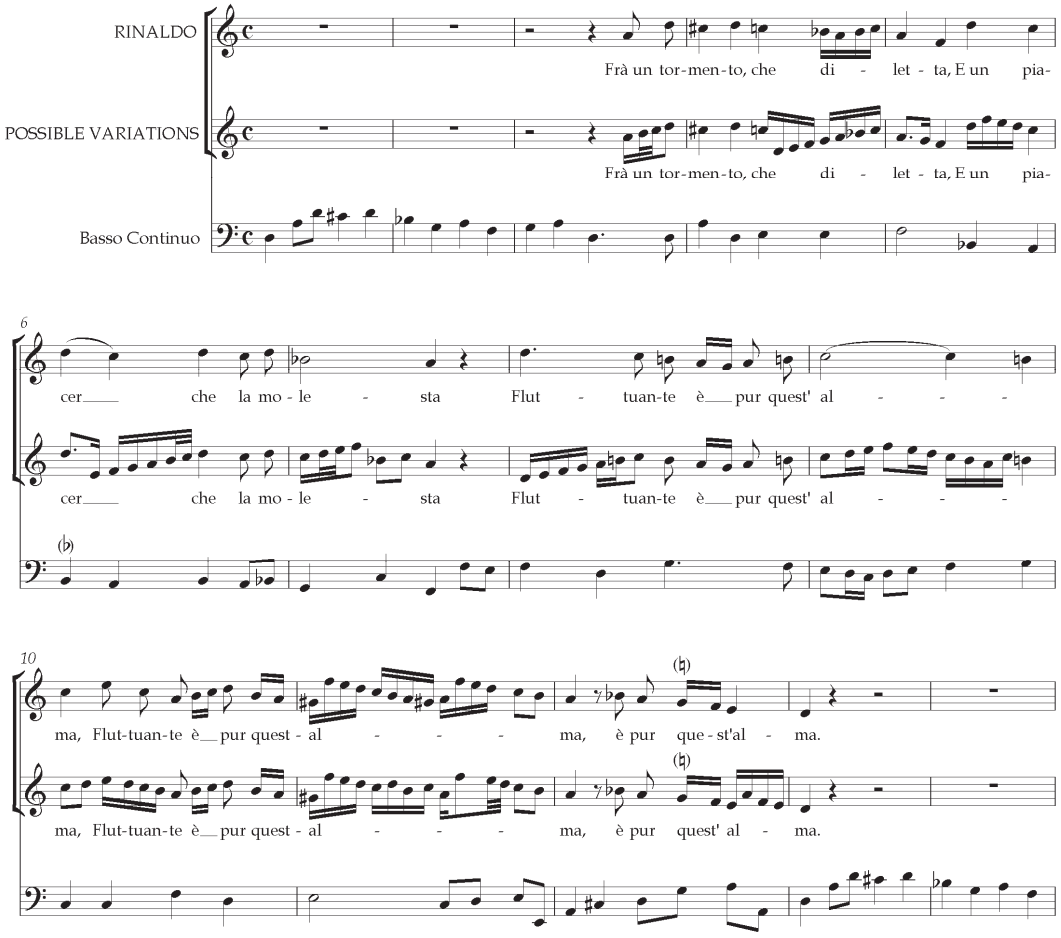
Pupille, almen poteste	Eyes, if at least you could
Veder il mio dolor,	See my pain
E naufragar nel pianto	And shipwreck in the tears
Di chi vi fugge il cor;	Of the one who flees your heart;
Voi forse plachereste	You perhaps would calm
Dell'anima il furor,	The rage of the soul,
Ché vi vedreste accanto	Because you would see near you
Il mio pietoso amor.	My merciful love.
Pupille, etc.	Eyes, etc.

To convey the proper meaning, the text of this aria may be best translated as: 'Eyes, if at least you could / See my pain / And drown in the tears / Of the one who steals your heart; / You perhaps would calm / The fury of your soul / Because you would see near you / My merciful love.'

[46] It is not possible to determine the time signature or key of this aria as no musical manuscript survives.

Venice and London, the two primary operatic capitals discussed in this thesis, utilised A=413 as a tuning pitch.[47]

In *Armida abbandonata*, the first aria sung by Senesino, 'Fra un tormento, che diletta', exhibits a soprano-like tessitura and a range from *d′* to *f″*, with many iterations of the *f″* pitch, and an ease with scalar passagework coloratura (Appendix III, Ex. 6). By adding flourishes in the *da capo* reiteration of this aria's "A" section, Senesino would have further demonstrated the 'wonderfully flexible' voice and the 'marked rapid divisions' for which he was later lauded.[48] In Musical Example 5, I have realised one possible example of divisions Senesino could have employed within Ruggieri's opera.[49]



Musical Example 5: G. M. Ruggieri, *Armida abbandonata*, Venice. 1707, 'Fra un tormento, che diletta', Act I scene 7, possible ornamentation.

This ornamentation carefully avoids obstructing textual meaning and given the continuous bass-line movement in the final beat of bar 12, a cadenza is not utilised. Pollarolo's 'Vincerà, l'aspro

[47] Bruce Haynes, *A History of Performing Pitch: The Story of "A"* (London: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 161.
[48] Hawkins, *General History*, V, 307. Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany*, II, 175-176.
[49] See Tosi, *Opinioni de' cantori*, 58-88.

mio Fato', from Act II of the 1714 Venetian opera *Semiramide* is another aria that suggests ease at the top of Senesino's vocal compass (Appendix III, Ex. 7).[50]

In 1713, the opening-scene aria 'Di questa cieca notte' of the Venetian opera *Irene Augusta* by Antonio Lotti (1667-1740) includes several leaps to *f″* for Senesino's voice (Appendix III, Ex. 8). However, in *Teofane* of 1719, Lotti wrote music that depicts a slight lowering in tessitura for Senesino while still touching on *f″*. By this time his voice began to venture below the staff as Lotti's aria 'Cervo altier poi che prostrò' (Appendix III, Ex. 9) illustrates. Senesino would also have demonstrated skill with accurately singing interval leaps in the relatively disjunctive melodic line and scalar coloratura passagework. Burney, while surprised to see a soprano clef for Senesino's part in *Muzio Scevola* of 1721, reiterated Handel's preference of range when composing for Senesino's voice:

> It is remarkable that this first man's part of Muzio, is wholly written in the soprano clef, though Senesino's voice was always regarded in England as a contralto. It does not appear, however, that he goes higher than D in this part, or lower than C.[51]

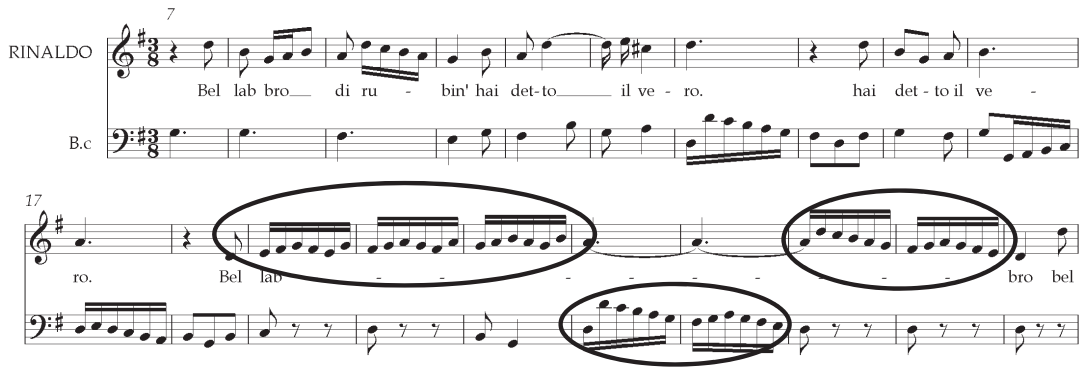
These arias by Ruggieri, Pollarolo, and Lotti, as well as others from Pollarolo's 1714 Venetian opera *Marsia deluso* and Alessandro Scarlatti's 1716 Neapolitan opera *Carlo Re d'Alemagna* delineate a range that is collectively at least two tones higher than what Handel preferred for the singer throughout the 1720s and early 1730s in London.[52]

In *Armida abbandonata*, Senesino's aria 'Bel labbro di rubin, hai detto il vero' also exemplifies ease with singing coloratura. Enthralled with Armida, Rinaldo speaks of the 'beautiful eyes' and 'ruby lips' of his beloved:

Bel labbro di rubin, hai detto il vero.	Beautiful lips of ruby, you have spoken the truth.
Ardo per que' begli occhi,	I burn for these beautiful eyes,
Nè sia, che accenda, ò scocchi,	Nor could be that it burns or clicks,
Ò foco amore, ò stral più lusinghiero.	Either fiery love, or arrow more flattering[53]
Bel labbro, etc.	Beautiful lips, etc.

[50] *Semiramide* was composed to a libretto by Francesco Silvani and presented during *carnevale* 1714 at the Teatro S. G. Grisostomo in Venice.
[51] Burney, *General History*, V, 276.
[52] *Marsia deluso* was composed to a libretto by Agostino Piovene and presented during *carnevale* 1714 at the Teatro Grimani de S.S. Gio. e Paolo in Venice. Depictive arias for Senesino include 'Alma bella' from Act II scene 5 and 'La Rondinella' from Act III scene 4. Alessandro Scarlatti's *Carlo Re d'Alemagna* was composed to a libretto by Francesco Silvani and was premiered on 26 January 1716 in Naples at the Teatro di San Bartolomeo. Senesino sang the role of Lotario amongst a cast that included Margherita Durastanti, Agata Landi, and Pietro Casati. A representative high-tessitura aria for Senesino is 'Del ciel sul giri'. There is no surviving libretto and the arias are extant only in an unlabelled collection of excerpts, so it is not possible to determine the placement of the aria 'Del ciel sul giri' within Scarlatti's opera. However, the aria is listed as No. 1 in *Arie Dell'Opera Intitolata Carlo in Alemagna* (A-Wn, SA.68.C.19/1-2 Mus), suggesting it may have come early in the opera. Due to illegibility on the title page of the collection, the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek has incorrectly identified the manuscript as composed in the year 1726.
[53] To convey the proper meaning, the text of this aria may be best translated as: 'Beautiful lips of ruby, you have spoken the truth. / I burn for these beautiful eyes, / Nor could it be that either the fire of love / Or a more flattering arrow would burn or would be shot'.

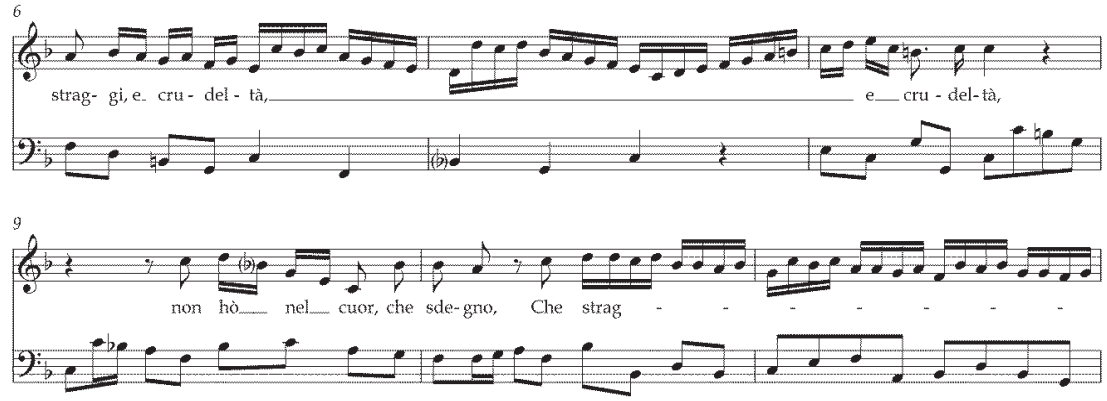
Rinaldo's vocal line effectively portrays an enamoured state with shifting coloratura patterns, in alternation with the basso continuo, to emphasise the words 'lip', 'fire of love', and 'flattering' seen in Musical Example 6.[54]



Musical Example 6: G. M. Ruggieri, *Armida abbandonata,* Venice, 1707, 'Bel labbro di rubini hai', Act I scene 10, bb. 1-33, dialoguing coloratura passages depicting Rinaldo's soprano-like tessitura (GB-Lbl, R.M.23.f.5).

Rinaldo calls to a distant Armida (in bars 19-21) and is met with a response in the basso continuo (in bars 22-23) which he exactly mimicks a bar later showing, in his calls to her, his desire to be in unison with his beloved.

With its long scalar passages, octave leaps, and up-tempo arpeggios depicted in Musical Example 7 the aria 'Nel cuor non hò che sdegno' from Act III of *Armida abbandonata* provides a further sense of vocal range and coloratura demands for Senesino in the opera.



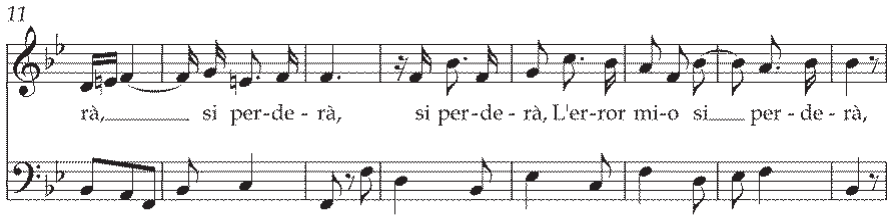
Musical Example 7: G. M. Ruggieri, *Armida abbandonata*, Venice, 1707, the aria 'Nel cuor non hò che sdegno', Act III scene 4, bb. 6-11, scalar coloratura passages for the character Rinaldo (GB-Lbl, R.M.23.f.5).

This coloratura patterning also includes repeated pitches in fast succession (in bars 10 and 11) which are reminiscent of the 'extraordinary feat' of difficult execution which Burney later connected to Senesino.[55] Similar examples depicting Senesino's early-career mastery of coloratura

[54] 'labbro', 'foco amore', and 'lusinghiero' respectively.
[55] See Chapter 1, Defining Senesino, p. 8.

include the 1714 arias 'Vendetta mi grida' from Lotti's *Polidoro* and 'Se amor mi tradisce' from Pollarolo's *Semiramide*.

A different skill was demanded of Senesino in the Act I aria 'Entro à vortici di sangue' in *Armida abbandonata*, rhetorically focused textual delivery in strong rhythmic patterns. The music is set in a low tessitura more aligned to the natural patterns and inflections of speech than the virtuosic higher range. The lilting 3/8 time signature distorts the ictus and allots for an unsteady listless feeling which is further emphasised by numerous syncopations, seen in Musical Example 8.



Musical Example 8: G. M. Ruggieri, *Armida abbandonata*, Venice, 1707, 'Entro à vortici di sangue', Act III scene 5, bb. 11-18, synchopations in the vocal line and a speech-like tessitura (GB-Lbl, R.M.23.f.5).

Rinaldo delivers his most emphatic and dramatically impassioned music as he speaks of a 'vortex of blood' and 'profane loves':

Entro à vortici di sangue	Within vortexes of blood
L'error mio si perderà;	My error will be lost;
E de miei profani amori	And of my profane loves
Sotto all'ombra de'gl'allori	Under the shadow of the laurels
La memoria perirà.	The memory will perish.
Entro, etc.	Within, etc.

Ruggieri accentuates the naturally occurring strength of the consonants in the prosody, particularly the 'v' of '*vortici*' and the 's' of '*sangue*', by placing them on strong beats to heighten the force of the dramatic sentiment (Appendix III, Ex. 10).

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In seventeenth-century Venetian opera the practice of a single singer assuming multiple roles in the same performance was common.[56] This custom dates to the beginning of public operatic performance in the city in 1637 and highlighted the skill and virtuosity of rapid shifts in opposing character type, costumes, and even vocal range and style.[57] The practice of assigning one performer two roles could also illuminate or heighten allegorical meaning. Magnus Tessing Schneider offers the example of the characters Mercurio and Perseo which were performed by the same castrato singer, Annibale Graselli, in Bendetto Ferrari's *L'Andromeda* of 1637.[58] Mercurio,

[56] See Magnus Tessing Schneider, 'Seeing the Empress Again on Doubling in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 24/3 (Cambridge, 2012), 249-291.
[57] *Ibid*., 254-259.
[58] *Ibid*., 255-257.

appearing early in the opera, portrays divine qualities while flying across the stage on a mission ordained by the goddess Giunone to order Andromeda's death. Later, the singer Graselli portrays Perseo. Descending from heaven, this time on the winged Pegasus, Perseo rescues Andromeda from Mercurio's fatal decree and marries her. Taken individually, these two characters are dramatically incomplete, yet, seen collectively they provide a satisfying theatrical arc that communicates allegorical nuance.

Surviving libretti establish *Armida abbandonata* as Ruggieri's most performed work. Seven related copies of the libretto by Francesco Silvani ([1660]; d 1728-1744) reflect the changes made to the opera in multiple revivals from 1707 to 1711.[59] For the purposes of this chapter, three of these versions are considered in detail which reveal the possibility that Senesino sang two roles in the same performance. One source libretto (Lib. A) lists the character of Rinaldo as having been performed by Senesino, which is his commonly accepted role allocation.[60] Figure 8 appears to depict the first printing of the libretto, used for the earliest presentations of the opera, as there are no identified alterations or additions.

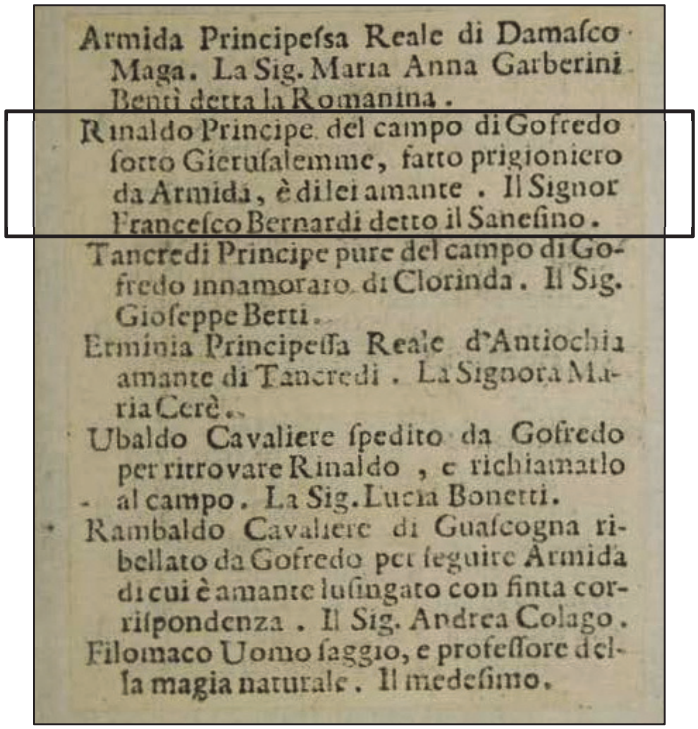
Armida Principeſsa Reale di Damaſco Maga. La Sig. Maria Anna Garberini Benti detta la Romanina.
Rinaldo Principe del campo di Gofredo ſotto Gieruſalemme, fatto prigioniero da Armida, è di lei amante. Il Signor Franceſco Bernardi detto il Saneſino.
Tancredi Principe pure del campo di Gofredo innamorato di Clorinda. Il Sig. Gioſeppe Betti.
Erminia Principeſſa Reale d'Antiochia amante di Tancredi. La Signora Maria Cerè.
Ubaldo Cavaliere ſpedito da Gofredo per ritrovare Rinaldo, e richiamarlo al campo. La Sig. Lucia Bonetti.
Rambaldo Cavaliere di Guaſcogna ribellato da Gofredo per ſeguire Armida di cui è amante luſingato con finta corriſpondenza. Il Sig. Andrea Colago.
Filomaco Uomo ſaggio, e profeſſore della magia naturale. Il medeſimo.

Figure 8: Francesco Silvani, *Armida abbandonata*, music by G. M. Ruggieri, 1707, Venice, Libr., *Attori* list which ascribes the part of Rinaldo to Senesino (Lib. A: D-Mbs, Deutsches Historisches Institut, Rar. Libr. Ven. 421/427#423).

[59] While the opera was presented on five verified occasions, from 1707 to 1711, it was not presented in the same format. Some versions of the libretto vary only in a reordering of scenes or allotting for the misprinting of scene numbers in the initial 1707 source where Act I scene 8, and Act III scene 6 were mistakenly omitted and assigned the successive scene number. Others, such as the 1710 version from Verona, add entirely new arias and duets and eliminate large portions of recitative, presumably to achieve a more pleasing dramatic pace. The 1711 version from Mantua also adds four arias not seen in any other representation; one for Erminia and three for the character Armida. The minor character of Fantasma appears briefly in Act II scene 10 of the initial 1707 source and is so slight it is not credited in the list of *Attori*. It been removed in all subsequent versions.

[60] Lib. A: D-Mbs, Deutsches Historisches Institut, Rar. Libr. Ven. 421/427#423.

Also printed in 1707 there is a second version of the libretto (Lib. B) displaying the title page imprint '*ristampata con nuova Aggiunta*'. This libretto offers the same cast as Lib. A but several aria substitutions and the removal of entire scenes likely necessitated that the libretto be reissued.[61] These alterations (found in Appendix II, Table 3) largely affected Act II; every scene in the act was modified and the aria 'Non puo uscir da quel bel viso' was added for Senesino's character Rinaldo and for which music is not known to survive.

A third version of the libretto (Lib. C) shown in Figure 9, also 'ristampa', resembles Lib. B in content and structure yet in which both the roles of Rinaldo and Tancredi are assigned to Senesino.[62]

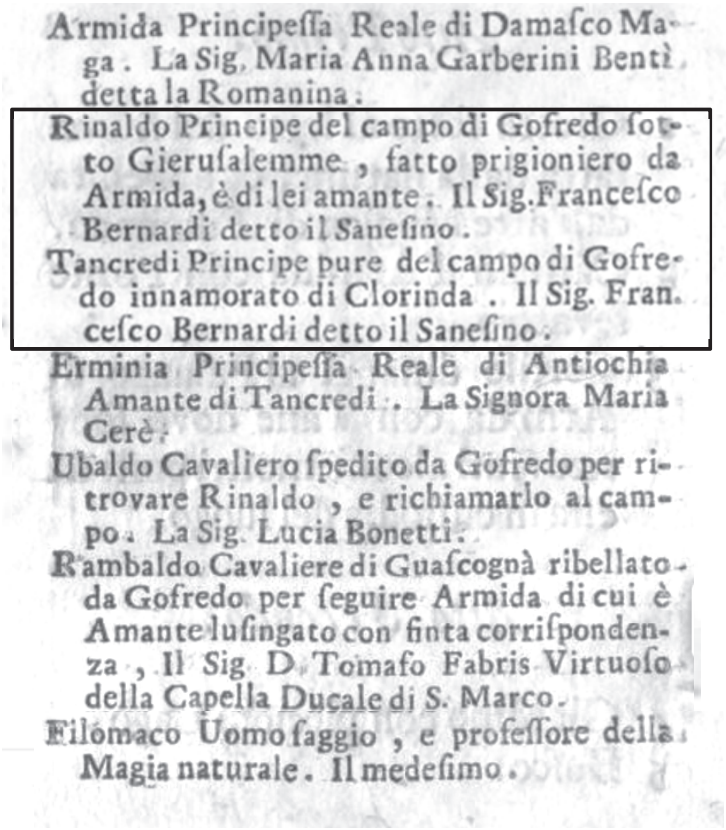
Armida Principeſſa Reale di Damaſco Maga. La Sig. Maria Anna Garberini Bentì detta la Romanina.
Rinaldo Principe del campo di Gofredo ſotto Gieruſalemme, fatto prigioniero da Armida, è di lei amante. Il Sig. Franceſco Bernardi detto il Saneſino.
Tancredi Principe pure del campo di Gofredo innamorato di Clorinda. Il Sig. Franceſco Bernardi detto il Saneſino.
Erminia Principeſſa Reale di Antiochia Amante di Tancredi. La Signora Maria Cerè.
Ubaldo Cavaliero ſpedito da Gofredo per ritrovare Rinaldo, e richiamarlo al campo. La Sig. Lucia Bonetti.
Rambaldo Cavaliere di Guaſcognà ribellato da Gofredo per ſeguire Armida di cui è Amante luſingato con finta corriſpondenza, Il Sig. D. Tomaſo Fabris Virtuoſo della Capella Ducale di S. Marco.
Filomaco Uomo ſaggio, e profeſſore della Magia naturale. Il medeſimo.

Figure 9: Francesco Silvani, *Armida abbandonata*, music by G. M. Ruggieri, 1707, Venice, Libr., *Attori* list. Senesino is presented as singing both Rinaldo and Tancredi (Lib. C: I-Vcg, Collection: Libretti S. Angelo 115, LIB 2715).

Additionally, the roles of Rambaldo and Filomaco are both attributed to the singer Tomaso Fabris rather than Andrea Colago who is listed in Lib. A and Lib. B. No evidence exists to explain Gioseppe Berti's absence in Lib. C. It is clear that *Armida abbandonata* was an opera in flux with multiple changes being made to content and cast during performance. Nevertheless, the alterations

[61] Lib. B: I-Mb, Corniani Algarotti, Racc. Dram. 757; 'reprinted with new additions'.
[62] Lib. C: I-Vcg, Libretti S. Angelo 115, LIB 2715.

made to the music, scene order, and cast seem not to have affected the opera's reception; it was recognised as having more acclaim than the other Venetian operas that season.[63]

While it is intriguing to conjecture that the young Senesino may have assumed both the roles of Rinaldo and Tancredi to brazenly demonstrate his technical skill and stamina to the Venetian audience, it is unlikely he performed both parts. Confirming that the allocation of both roles to Senesino in Lib. C represents a simple error on the part of the publisher, the preference in later representations of Ruggieri's *Armida abbandonata* was to have two separate singers perform the roles.[64] Ruggieri was certainly familiar with the Venetian custom of double-role assignments for the same singer. In *Armida abbandonata*, the bass Andrea Colago sang the role of the knight Rambaldo and the contrasting part of Filomaco, a 'wise man, and professor of natural magic'. This is in keeping with the recommendation from *Il Corago*, the theatre manual from approximately 1630, which states that a singer portraying two roles should make them as 'dissimilar as possible'.[65] There are also vocal traits and inherent musical and dramatic attributes for the characters of Rinaldo and Tancredi to be considered. These characters, who confront many of the same trials resulting from their amorous entanglements with Armida, do not effectively demonstrate the requisite diversity of character recommended in *Il Corago* for one singer to successfully portray two roles. The music for the two characters, while somewhat varied and likely within Senesino's technical capacity, is not contrasting enough to show true virtuosity on the part of a single performer assuming both roles. The coloratura patterns composed for Tancredi are more demanding than those conceived for Rinaldo, as demonstrated in the Act III aria 'Ti bacio ò mio brando' (Appendix III, Ex. 11), however the execution of such a passage would certainly have been within Senesino's technical grasp by the time of his 1720 London arrival. While the role of Tancredi does necessitate a vocal tessitura that is lower than Rinaldo's by about a third, from *e′* to *b′*, this lower part of Senesino's voice may also have been secure as early as 1707, particularly considering his advanced age and level of training at that time. Indications in music written for Senesino by peer composers help to answer the question, at what point did the singer begin to utilise the lower spectrum of his vocal range? Carlo Francesco Pollarolo's 1714 Venetian opera *Semiramide* requires repeated *b* pitches in the aria 'Con la face' (Appendix III, Ex. 12).[66] Several

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[63] See Selfridge-Field, *A New Chronology*, 278-279; Francesco Ferdinando Galvani recounted the success of *Armida abbandonata* in a letter to the Duke of Mantua.

[64] Two additional libretti for Ruggieri's *Armida abbandonata* survive that list performers. For 1710 performances in Udine, the libretto (I-Mb, Corniani Algarotti, Racc. Dram. 1322) assigns Rinaldo to Giuseppe Argenti and Tancredi to Filippo Piccoli; for Padua in 1716 the libretto (I-Fn, MAGL.21.8.204) attributes the role of Rinaldo to Silvestro Prittoni and Tancredi to Giuseppe Pederzoli. The following libretti attest to additional performances of *Armida abbandonata*, but do not list singers: 1710, Verona (I-Mb, Corniani Algarotti, Racc. Dram. 1207); 1711, Mantua (US-Wc, ML48. A5 v. 3, n. 6, 60); 1715, Pesaro (I-PESo, no ref. number). At first glance, another libretto seems to provide evidence of a surprisingly late 1747 revival of the work in Cesena (I-Mb, Corniani Algarotti, Racc. Dram. 1318), however, the attribution to Ruggieri is inaccurate.

[65] See Paolo Fabbri and Angelo Pompilio, ed., *Il Corago e vero Alcune osservazioni per metter bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche* (Florence: Olschki, 1983), 67. For further information on *Il Corago*, see Lorenzo Bianconi, Giorgio Pestelli and Kate Singleton, *Opera on Stage: History of Italian Opera, Part 2*, 2nd edn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 128-130.

[66] MS: D-Dl, 84, Mus.1-F-30.

varied segments of intricate coloratura are used to musically paint the word *barbaro* while giving a glimpse of Senesino's strength with singing below the staff for dramatic affect.

Ruggieri's *Armida abbandonata* was associated with another similar opera presented the following season, *Armida al campo* by Giuseppe Boniventi ([1670-1673]-1727) which was premiered on 26 January 1708.[67] Senesino performed as Rinaldo in both Boniventi and Ruggieri's *Armida*-themed operas and whilst the music to Boniventi's opera does not survive, the libretto provides insight into Senesino's voice and technical ability. He performed the remarkably high number of nine *da capo* arias and one duet; moreover, there are three solo scenes consisting of extended recitatives followed by an aria. No other singer in the opera, including the *prima donna*, was allocated a similar number of solo scenes; an assured sign of Senesino's accomplished skill at this early point in his career.

The list of *Attori* for Boniventi's *Armida al campo* confirms that three other singers were also cast in both operas which together constituted the 1707-1708 Teatro San Angelo season (Appendix II, Table 4): Maria Anna Garberini Bentì (la Romanina), Lucia Bonetti, and Gioseppe Berti. Bentì and Berti both sang the same roles they had in Ruggieri's opera, Armida and Tancredi respectively, and Lucia Bonetti performed the male role of Argante. Gioseppe Berti, who sang Tancredi in Ruggieri's opera took the same role in Boniventi's work. Italian theatres often hired the same singers for several productions in a given season so it is not unusual that the cast of Ruggieri and Boniventi's operas shared performers. What is noteworthy is the presentation of two operas on the same theme offered in the 1707-1708 season at the Teatro San Angelo. Melania Bucciarelli correctly suggests that Boniventi's *Armida al campo* is a sequel to Ruggieri's opera, noting that the drama of Boniventi's work begins where Ruggieri's had ended.[68] As both operas originate from Torquata Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, these musical works may have been presented together to build awareness of and bring recognition to this author.

Later in 1708, as part of the '*fiera di Maggio*' in Vicenza, Senesino first performed with the older and more experienced alto castrato Nicolo Grimaldi (*Nicolini*: bap. 1673-1732). The opera *Igene regina di Sparta* by C. F. Pollarolo facilitated their meeting with Senesino singing the *secondo uomo* part, Milciade, to Nicolini's *primo uomo* role of Arbante. The sopranos Santa Stella and Maria Anna Garberini Bentì also travelled from Venice to nearby Vicenza to sing in the production. Performing the roles of Corinthian and Theban princes, Senesino and Nicolini are both torn between love and military duty. The similar role allocations cast the two castrati as near equals which is somewhat surprising, given their differences in age and experience. Nicolini made his début in 1685 in *La Stellidaura vendicante* by Francesco Provenzale (c. 1624-1704) and, by 1708, he was an acclaimed star with performance credits in Rome, Bologna, Parma, Genoa, Reggio

[67] Boniventi was also known as Boneventi, Bonaventi, Beneventi, and Bouneventi. See Selfridge-Field, *A New Chronology*, 283. The 1708 date of performance is confirmed by a report in the *Gazzetta di Napoli* on 14 January of that year.
[68] Melania Bucciarelli and Berta Joncus, ed., 'Venice and the East', *Music as Social and Cultural Practice: Essays in Honour of Reinhard Strohm* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2007), 241-246.

nell'Emilia, and Rovigo. It was later in 1708 that Nicolini travelled to London where his lauded performances helped to establish Italian opera as the reigning entertainment there for several subsequent decades. By contrast, Senesino had only previously sung in Venice and Siena. Musical structures for the roles of Milciade and Arbante are similar. Nicolini was allotted eight arias and a duet with four of the arias being contained in solo scenes, while Senesino sang the comparable number of seven arias and a duet with three solo scenes.[69] Act II opens with the stage direction that a nightingale is singing in the garden while Senesino performs the aria 'Dolce augel tù qui cantando':

Dolce augel tù qui cantando	Sweet bird you that sing
Spieghi il volo un libertà	Open your wings in flight towards freedom
Mà il mio Core sospirando	But my sighing heart
Prigionier trà lacci stà.	Remains imprisoned between snares.

Certainly, this scene had the potential to move the audience to sympathy and allowed Senesino not only ample opportunity to display his mastery of vocal and dramatic virtuosity, but also, perhaps, even to win the greatest part of the audience's affection.

One of Nicolini's solo moments opened Act III with a contrasting languid aria, which kept the scales in balance by providing equal opportunity for virtuoso display, particularly of the acting ability that had become his hallmark.[70] In this elaborate scene, Nicolini appears in a small boat on a lake between two royal dwellings, each housing a sleeping woman who loves him, and surrounded by moonlight, he sings while accompanying himself on a lute ('*con sonoro stramento*'). In the aria 'Chi non sà che pena sia' Nicolini contemplates his anguished soul and the trouble brought to him by Cupid. In the dramatic structure, the scene provides a mirror to Senesino's bird song opening in Act II. The younger prince, Milciade, desires love but does not have it while the older prince, Arbante, is challenged by an abundance of it. To close scene 7 in Act II Senesino (as Milciade) is left alone in the same garden that had held such promise for him opening the act with a bird song aria, now, however, the character contemplates the farce that love has made him endure with the aria 'In amore per farsi intendere'. Scene 8 immediately follows with an innovative break in convention that heightens allegorical connections between the two princes: Nicolini (as Arbante) forgoes the expected recitative and initiates scene 8 by singing the aria 'In qual mai Barbara scola', as if to continue and melodically elaborate upon the sentiments of Milciade. In the aria, Arbante challenges Cupid for having given him two fires of love in a single soul, for placing

[69] In *Igene regina di Sparta* Senesino performed the following: Act I scene 3, solo scene, 'Arde Igene di sdegno…Delle mie crude pene'; Act I scene 10, solo scene, 'Sè giovar in amor…Poverò amante cor'; Act II scene 1, 'Dolce augel tù qui cantando'; Act II scene 1, duet, 'Ama sì'; Act II scene 7, solo scene, Crudel, tù non m'intendi?..In amore per farsi intendere'; Act II scene 9, 'Di struggi, e di Ruine'; Act III scene 4, 'Riniego Cupido'; Act III scene 11, 'Vittori, vittoria'.

[70] One account of Nicolini's acting ability can be found in Burney, *General History*, IV, 207-208, which contains Sir Richard Steele's attestation that Nicolini 'sets off the character he bears in an opera by his action, as much as he does the words of it by his voice', referencing his dramatic portrayal in Scarlatti's *Pirro e Demetrio* which was offered in London in 1708.

two wounds in one heart.[71] In the recitative that follows Arbante continues to contemplate the beauty of the two women who show him affection but he affirms that Igene is the 'idol of his heart'.[72] By controlling his fate, Arbante demonstrates dominance over the younger and less-experienced Milciade who is subjected to Cupid's caprice. In juxtaposing these two scenes, a more complete commentary on love is offered and aspects of the two princes reflect the qualities of age and experience of the singers by whom the roles were performed. Nicolini, in representing the elder character Arbante, makes choices that mould his experience and shape his own destiny while asserting dominance over Senesino who personified the younger character Milciade.

In the 1708-1709 *carnevale* season Senesino returned to Venice and began to perform *secondo uomo* roles at the larger and more prominent Teatro San Cassiano. In the first opera of three for the season, *Astarto* by Tommaso Albinoni (1671-1751), he sang five arias as the character Nino and three of those are contained in solo scenes with preceding recitatives.[73] Also in the cast of experienced singers for *Astarto* was the familiar face of Maria Anna Garberini [Bentì] (la Romanina) as well as Santa Stella, the famed soprano and wife of the composer Antonio Lotti, with whom he would sing on eight subsequent occasions from 1708-1719. The second opera of the 1708-1709 San Cassiano season was *Il Falso Tiberino* by Pollarolo (*c*. 1653-1723).[74] Senesino sang the role of Ascanio and Domenico Cecchi (known as *Cortona*) sang the *primo uomo* role of Tirreno. Senesino was allocated five arias, of which, two were contained in solo scenes and none had the pride-of-place associated with opening or closing an act.[75] Receiving its premiere just two weeks after *Il Falso Tiberino* had opened was the final opera in the season, *Engelberta*, with music by Albinoni (Acts I-III) and Francesco Gasparini (1661-1727: Acts IV-V).[76] Senesino sang the *primo uomo* role of the Emperor Lodovico; though the character prominently features in the drama, Senesino sang a modest four arias and only one is contained in a solo scene.[77]

By 1712, when Senesino sang the title role of a Chinese emperor in the pasticcio *Teuzzone* in Ferrara, he was allotted seven arias, two of which are contained in solo scenes.[78] From this time

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[71] The full Italian text of Nicolini's aria is: 'In qual mai Barbara scola / Imparasti, ò crudo Amor, / Dar due inferno à un alma sola, / Far due piaghe in un sol Cor?'

[72] The full Italian text of Nicolini's recitative is: 'Due Bellezze in un punto / M'assaliscono l'alma; Oronta, e Igene. / Ambedue sono belle, / Mà l'adorata Igene / Hà l'sol negl' ochi, e Oronta hà sol due stelle. / A misi dunque Igene, e Igene sia / L'idolo del mio Cor l'anima mia.'

[73] Libretto: D-Mbs, Rom, Deutsches Historisches Institut, Rar. Libr. Ven. 428/432#431. In *Astarto* Senesino performed the following: Act I scene 4, 'Care labra, amati rai'; Act I scene 16, solo scene, 'Sì, quell' bel core intendo…Benchè tarda, è sempre un bene'; Act II scene 13, solo scene, 'Io son perduto…Era meglio disperarmi'; Act III scene 10, 'Questo duol tu vedi in me'; Act III scene 13, solo scene, 'Di ubbidir, di soffrire…Questo è tempo di soffrir'.

[74] Libretto: D-Mbs, Rom, Deutsches Historisches Institut, Rar. Libr. Ven. 433/436#435.

[75] In *Il Falso Tiberino* Senesino performed the following: Act I scene 4, 'A beltà, che cerca un trono'; Act I scene 11, solo scene, 'Vien la dolce speranza…A la bella il sen ferì'; Act II scene 2, 'Datti pace'; Act II scene 10, 'Delirando, ancor voi siete'; Act III scene 6, solo scene, 'Albina il senno…E forte men crudele'; Act III scene 11, 'duet with Albina, 'Io so, non è'.

[76] Libretto: D-Mbs, Rom, Deutsches Historisches Institut, Rar. Libr. Ven. 437/442#437.

[77] In *Engelberta* Senesino performed the following: Act I scene 2 'Selvagge amenita'; Act II scene 4 'Non ti vo, no, senza speme'; Act III scene 3, solo scene, 'O perfida Engelberta…Ardea felice amante'; Act III scene 9, 'Pronto il core mai non niega'.

[78] *Teuzzone* included the music of G.M. Orlandini and others and Senesino sang the following: Act I scene 7, 'Combatutta navicella'; Act I scene 8, 'Salma del Genitor'; Act II scene 1, solo scene (with guards on stage),

onward a greater number of arias, usually seven or eight, became standard for the singer with a clear departure from *secondo uomo* roles and Senesino invariably featured prominently within any opera he performed.

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Senesino's reputation was on the rise from 1707 to 1719 largely due to his evident early proficiency with coloratura singing and his dramatic delivery of text. These skills also helped to establish him as a singer who was desired for London's Royal Academy of Music in 1720. Selections from Ruggieri's *Armida abbandonata*, which is the earliest surviving musical score for an opera in which Senesino sang, and neighbouring works provide a sense of the musical and dramatic facility Senesino possessed in 1707 by displaying his skill in executing florid passagework and rhetorically-focused music.

This chapter has shown that a recognition of Senesino's early career is necessary to reposition the limited perceptions of the singer's range and ability throughout the whole of his career. An assessment of this period has also established patterns of vocality, dramatic ability, and casting that defined Senesino in later life yet can be identified as early as 1707. Music from this period in Senesino's career, including *Armida abbandonata* by Ruggieri, *Marsia deluso* and *Semiramide* by Pollarolo, *Carlo Re d'Alemagna* by Scarlatti, and others give credence to Kirkendale's assertion that Senesino was viewed as a soprano early in his career.[79] In these operas from 1707 to 1719 Senesino's voice rarely descended below the staff, as it so commonly did from 1720 onward. However, given eighteenth-century vocal training practices, which often produced singers with extremely wide vocal ranges spanning at least two octaves, it appears that Senesino had cultivated the lower part of his voice as early as 1714.[80] Unfortunately, musical evidence does not survive from 1707 to 1713, so it is not possible to determine when Senesino's voice took on the full low range for which he was to be so acclaimed in London. Regardless of the label – contralto, mezzo-soprano, or soprano – these examples show with certainty that Senesino's tessitura was higher before 1719 than after.

The operas discussed in this chapter illustrate that Senesino's early career was marked with demonstrable vocal stamina. He often sang seven or eight arias in an evening and he performed *primo uomo* roles with a relatively large number of arias and solo scenes when compared to fellow cast mates. In the 1707-1708 Venetian performances at the Teatro San Angelo, Senesino had been

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'Ho vinto, fidi, ho vinto…Per te guereggio, ò bella'; Act II scene 2, 'Cercherò fiamma amora'; Act II scene 11, 'Se ben mi vuoi tradito'; Act III scene 6, solo scene, 'Sorte nemica! Io gemme… Qual nocchiero abbandonato'; Scene 9, 'Questo amplesso alla mia sposa'

[79] Kirkendale, *Antonio Caldara*, 102.

[80] For a methodology on training voices in the eighteenth century see volumes three and four of Leonardo Leo, Johann Adolf Hasse, Alessandro Scarlatti, et al., *Solfèges d'Italie*, 2nd edn (Paris: [Srs. Levesque & Bêche], 1778). Senesino's colleague Farinelli was certainly known for his wide range in the aria 'Son qual nave in ria procella' (Act III scene 4) from the 1725 Neapolitan opera *Zenobia in Palmira* by Leonardo Leo, the aria 'Qual guerriero in campo armato' (Act I scene 16) from the 1730 Venetian opera *Idaspe* by Riccardo Broschi, and many others. Carestini is another representative castrato singer who possessed a vocal compass of over two octaves, from *b* to *c‴*.

introduced as a hero in one of the world's operatic epicentres. What clearly emerges in these early operas is a skilful rise to fame with Senesino successively débuting in Italy's major operatic cities including Venice, Rome, and Naples between 1707 and 1715. Senesino's early vocal ability and calculated triumphs initiated a career trajectory that continued to bring distinction to the singer for the next 20 years.

CHAPTER 3

Senesino in London: crafting fame in the operas of Bononcini

Senesino was, for many reasons, received differently in the London operas of Bononcini and Handel. This chapter assesses elements of Bononcini's compositional style and his affiliation with the Arcadian Academy in Rome, Senesino's early familiarity with the composer, and the foundations that built Bononcini's fame before his arrival in London. Evaluating *Muzio Scevola* (1721), *La Griselda* (1722), and *Crispo* (1722) reveals facets of Senesino's interpretative skill, musical ability, vocal range, and tessitura that are all relevant to his interpretation of Bononcini's music. Further, alterations made to *La Griselda* (from Zeno's 1701 libretto) illustrate Senesino's involvement in enhancing his role with dramatic and musical adaptations in 1722. Lastly, an assessment of the casting in 1733 of revival performances of *La Griselda*, in which Senesino was the only performer to reprise his role, offers valued hindsight on the successful reception of 1722 performances.

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From an early age, Senesino was certainly familiar with the compositions of Giovanni Battista Bononcini and his brother, Antonio Maria. The young castrato made his operatic début at thirteen in a 1700 version of Giovanni's *Cammilla* in his hometown, Siena.[1] Senesino sang the added part of the page Plautillo and much of the role's music appears to have been newly created specifically for the singer by an unattributed composer.[2] Senesino was recast in the opera in 1710 for performances in Genoa when the work was titled *Il Trionfo di Camilla, regina de Volsci* and it included additional music by Pietro Giuseppe Sandoni (1685-[1748]). Senesino's awareness of Bononcini, who had recently been engaged to join the Royal Academy of Music, is shown in a 1720 letter from the singer to Giuseppe Riva:

> I may have great pleasure in hearing of the arrival of Signor Giovanni Bononcini, a great artist whom I much admire, as does the whole nation, and I would challenge anyone to admire him more than I do and have done in the past.[3]

Senesino speaks in familiar terms, suggesting that his acquaintance with Bononcini may have extended beyond the composer's music to the man himself. He also notes his respect for the

[1] See Reardon, *A Sociable Moment*, 216-217.
[2] *Ibid*, 218, n. 32. The composer was likely Giuseppe Fabbrini, Senesino's first teacher and the director of the Cathedral choir in Siena. See also Reardon, 'Siena Cathedral and its Castrati', 207.
[3] Letter from Senesino to Giuseppe Riva, Siena, 1 July 1720, held at I-MOe Autografoteca Campori: 'il gran piacere possa avere nel sentire la venuta del S[igno]r Gio[vanni] Bononcino da me tanto stimato virtuosis[si]mo [et] a Seconda di tutta la Nazione farne a Gara con chi si sia nell[']ammirarlo come hò fatto altre volte'. See Melania Bucciarelli, 'Farò il possibile', 58, and Bucciarelli, 'Senesino's Negotiations with the Royal Academy of Music', 212, where this letter is translated in its entirety.

composer. Senesino's praise is affirmed and elaborated by Francesco Gasparini (1661-1727) who paid compliment to Bononcini's innovative style of vocal cantata composition:

> Many various such motifs may be observed in the cantatas of many skilful composers; but particularly in those of Giovanni Bononcini, most worthy Virtuoso of His Imperial Majesty, in these you will see no little *Bizzaria,* beauty, harmony. It is full of art, and whimsical invention, that therefore is met with the just applause of the whole world in admiration of his most beautiful ingenuity.[4]

The admiration the composer enjoyed was not limited to his native country. Bononcini was deemed by Charles Burney to be 'a man of great abilities, and very high in reputation all over Europe' and most eighteenth-century sources praise Bononcini's music.[5] The British composer and arbiter of taste, Charles Avison (bap. 1709-1770), stated:

> the *Airs* of BONONCIN are natural, and the *accompanied Recitative* masterly, and finely imagined in their Progression to the *Tempo-Giusto*, or regular Movement. I don't know any Method of Accompanyment with the Voice, more delicate and affecting than this, in which, the *Italians,* especially the two great Masters here noted, are peculiarly happy.[6]

Bononcini's high esteem throughout Europe was owed in large part to familial circumstance. Giovanni Battista Bononcini was born in Modena into a musically talented family. His younger brother Antonio Maria (1677-1726) was a cellist and composer, and his father, Giovanni Maria Bononcini (1642-1678), was a violinist, composer, and the young Giovanni's first teacher. Following his father's example, in addition to composing, Giovanni was a fine cellist and singer.[7] The elder Giovanni was a prominent musical pedagogue and in 1673 he published the treatise *Musico Prattico* providing the essentials of music theory, composition, and counterpoint.[8] The work was well-received and reprinted in Venice (1678), Bologna (1688) Stuttgart in German translation (1701) and Paris (1724).[9] When the young Giovanni Battista's cantata and opera manuscripts reached European capitals, including Paris by 1705, the name *Bononcini* was already well known.

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[4] Francesco Gasparini, *L'armonco pratico al cimbalo* (Bologna: Giuseppe Antonio Silvani, 1708), 78: 'Molti, e varij di questi motivi potrai osservare nelle Cantata di molti Virtuosi professori; ma particolarmente in quelle del Sig. Giovanni Bononcini Degnissimo Virtuoso di Sua Maesta Cesarea, in cui scorgerai non meno delle Bizzaria, la vaghezza, l'Armonia. Lo studio artificioso, e la capricciose invenzione; che perciò con giustizia incontra applause di un Mondo intiero ammiratore del suo bellissimo Ingegno.'

[5] Charles Burney, *An Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster Abbey and the Pantheon* [...] *In Commemoration of Handel* (London: T. Payne, 1785), 17.

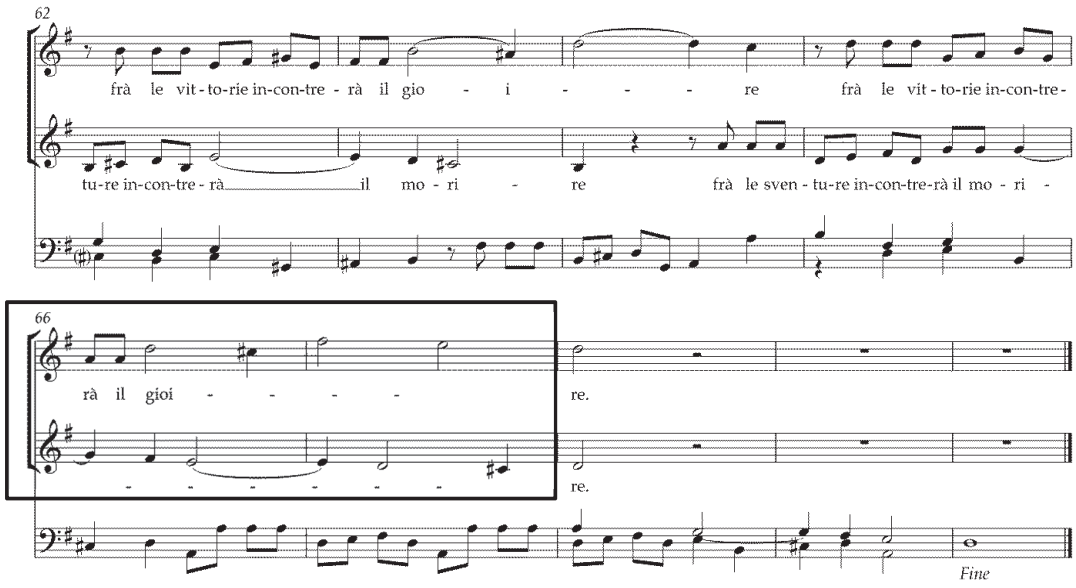
[6] Charles Avison, *An essay on musical expression* (London: C. Davis, 1753), 78; the 'two great Masters' mentioned are Bononcini and Giovanni Battista Pergolesi.

[7] Lawrence E. Bennett and Lowell Lindgren, 'Bononcini', *GMO*, accessed 21 January 2017; Anthony Ford, 'Giovanni Bononcini, 1670-1747', *The Musical Times*, 111/1529 (1970) 695-697 and 699.

[8] Giovanni Maria Bononcini, *Musico Prattico che brevemente dimostra il modo di giungere alla perfetta cognizione di tutte quelle cose, che concorrono alla composizione de i canti, e di ciò ch'all'arte del contrapunto si ricercar*, Op. 8, Bologna: Giacomo Monti, 1673 (available at US, ST.u, MT55 .B719 1673A).

[9] Giovanni Maria Bononcini, *Musico Prattico*, Venice: Sala, 1678 (available at D-Mbs, 4 Mus.th.200); G. M. Bononcini, *Musico Prattico* Bologna: Monti, 1688, 2nd edn (available at D-Mbs, 4 Mus.th. 201); G. M. Bononcini, *Musicus Pracitcus*, Stuttgart: Paul Treu, 1701 (available at D-Mbs, 4 Mus.th. 202); G. M. Bononcini, *Musico Prattico*, Paris: Chez d'Houry fils, 1724 (available at US.ST.u, M/F 1923:33).

Noted by Gasparini and Avison to be refined and inventive, Bononcini's operatic compositional style contains some hallmarks, including: octave transpositions on repeated material (particularly in the basso continuo) as a means of varying timbre, a pastoral sensibility, diverse use of instrumentation to vary sound colour, alternating solo and *tutti* passages to create a sense of contrast in dynamics and instrumental affect, and, perhaps above all else, a resolute focus on rhetoric. Bononcini often favoured a less diverse orchestration than his colleagues. A mid-eighteenth-century opera orchestra might have included up to forty players; this was the case with Hasse's Dresden ensemble in 1754.[10] Handel's own Royal Academy of Music ensemble in 1720 was usually comprised of no fewer than thirty-two instruments.[11] By contrast, Bononcini's operatic music is often composed for lesser instrumental forces, such as those required for trio sonata and cantata performance. As revealed by his operas and vocal cantatas, Bononcini was also adept at employing harmonic tension to portray dramatic intrigue. The overlapping fugal passages of the duet 'Se saetta un nero ciglio', seen in Musical Example 9, depict the victorious heart of a joyous lover in the final bars of his cantata *Sì fugga sì sprezzi*.[12]



Musical Example 9: G. Bononcini, cantata *Sì fugga sì sprezzi*, third movement (duet) 'Se saetta un nero ciglio', bb. 62-70, exhibiting complex fugal composition and suspensions bars 66-67. (GB-Lcm, MS81, 75v-85r).

With its *maestoso* sensibility and tension resulting from multiple intersecting suspensions (in bars 66-67), this duet is similar in conception to the final *Alleluia* from the tormented *Stabat Mater* of Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736).

Bononcini's orchestrations for the stage rarely incorporate instruments such as the horn and trumpet, and predominantly utilise only violins and basso continuo. The two violin parts often

[10] See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionaire de musique* (Paris: author, 1768), 354, which provides a diagram of instruments and their seating arrangement in Hasse's Dresden orchestra.
[11] Donald Burrows, 'Handel's London Theatre Orchestra', *Early Music*, 13/3 (1985), 349-357; 355.
[12] MS: GB-Lcm, MS81, 75v-85r.

appear in unison and, on many occasions, also double the vocal line. When a viola part is present, it generally doubles the basso continuo and does not exert its own voice in the instrumental texture. Some modern accounts, such as those of Winton Dean, tend not to appreciate these qualities of composition and orchestration which were readily recognised and praised in the eighteenth century. He states that 'the ideas, often pleasant in themselves, are seldom exploited to the full, whether in the musical sense or as a revelation of character. [Bononcini] strikes the mood of a piece but ignores its undercurrent.'[13] Particularly neglected has been a comprehensive valuation of the textual focus of Bononcini's compositional style and its correlation with interpretation and reception.

Bononcini's affiliation with the Arcadian Academy prompted judgements of his music as atmospheric, lulling, and aesthetically beautiful.[14] The purification of the operatic libretto, to embody Classical themes and straight-forward picturesque poetic verse while promoting text, was an ideal of the Academy exemplified in Bononcini's tuneful compositions. Sources of the period confirm that he gave careful attention to rhetoric and its musical representation. Angelini Bontempi's *Historia Musica* gives further insight into the training any student of music would have received around 1680, when Bononcini began his studies. The treatise specifically mentions one hour devoted to the study of literature every morning and another hour in the afternoon, a practice that had been common in the Roman conservatories since at least 1640.[15] Bononcini's resulting focus on words, language, and textual delivery are unsurprising and according to the accounts of his peers, this is an aspect of composition in which he excelled.

Given his noted attention to textual detail, it is no surprise that Bononcini was highly praised for his treatment of recitative. Unfortunately, few examples survive for the period of his association with the Royal Academy of Music.[16] Some recitatives can be found in manuscript from his earlier operas presented in Italy, such as *Camilla* of 1694; however, for his London years it was common that only the arias from Bononcini's operas were published. While it is challenging to assess Bononcini's *recitativo* style of composition for his London years, it is possible to gain a sense of his mastery in this idiom from his previous operas, commentary from colleagues, and the recitatives composed for cantatas from around the same time. These sources confirm Bononcini to have been a composer skilled at marrying words to music; giving care to the importance of the drama, he utilised the flow of the language to heighten the meaning of the words. In 1777

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[13] Winton Dean, review of 'BONONCINI Griselda, excerpts', recording by Sutherland, Elms, Sinclair, Elkins, Malas, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Bonynge, on DECCA, in The Musical Times, v. 109, n. 1507 (New Jersey: Musical Times Publications Ltd., 1968), 821.

[14] The Arcadian Academy was an association originated in Rome in 1690 supporting the reorganisation and 'purification' of Italian poetry with a focus directed toward the opera libretto. See Tim Carter, 'Arcadian Academy', *GMO*, accessed 21 January 2017.

[15] Angelini Bontempi, *Historia Musica* (Perugia: Pe'l Costantini, 1695), Parte prima, 170; the relevant passage, outlining the study of literature is: 'Le Scole di Roma, obligavano I Discepoli ad impegnare ogni giorno un'hora nel cantar cose difficili e malagevoli […] un'altra negli studij delle Lettere […] E tutti questi erano gl'impieghi della mattina. Dopo il mezzo […] un' altra negli studij delle Lettere.'

[16] Bononcini's *Farnace* (1723) is the only known opera from his London years that survives intact, including recitatives. The MS is contained in the collection of the Schönborn Castle Library in Wiesentheid, Germany (accessible at the D-Kdma Archiv, Kassel, in microform).

Giambattista Mancini, the Italian singing master at the Imperial Court of Vienna, bemoaned the fact that textual delivery was devalued by his contemporaries and cited Bononcini as a model from an earlier period for his skill in prosody.[17] Unfortunately, in London the intricacies of Bononcini's textually-focused style of composition fell largely upon ears that were deaf to the Italian language. Burney elaborated:

> The truth is, that Bononcini's peculiar merit in setting Italian words seems to have been out of reach of an English audience, and the Italians were alone competent to judge of it; who say, that his knowledge in singing and in their language was such as rendered his *cantilena*, or melody, more natural and elegant to vocal performers, and his recitatives more passionate, and expressive of nicer sensations and inflexions, to every hearer accustomed to the tones of Italian speech, than those of his rival [Handel].[18]

To appreciate Bononcini's music, it seems clear that one must also understand its Italian text, a view further elaborated in the play *The Conscious lovers*, which was premiered at the Haymarket theatre in 1722. The ingénue, Indiana, finds the Italian text in opera difficult to understand, stating that beyond being moved by the mood of the characters and the inclusive effect created: 'All the pleasure the best opera gives us is but a keen sensation. Methinks 'tis pity the mind cann't [*sic*] have a little more share in the entertainment. The music is certainly fine, but in my thoughts, there's none of your composers come up to old Shakspere [*sic*] and Otway'.[19] Further to this, nationalistic Britons voiced harsh criticism toward Italian opera. Their zealous lambasting view was well stated in 1726 by the satirist Henry Carey, who proclaimed: 'I hate this Singing in an unknown Tongue, it does our Reason and our Senses wrong'.[20] He continues by defaming the Italian castrato who 'Squeaks out a Treble, Shrill as Infants cries and may, for ought I know, be singing Mass'.[21] This type of reaction influenced the general reception of Bononcini's music; Burney, for example, exhibited a derogatory view of the opera. He declares there is little ingenuity of design and that it was 'likely to afford pleasure to the unlearned and greater part of an audience, than original and masterly composition, of which they knew nothing'.[22] He continues to extol the virtues of Handel's compositions over what is 'common', 'insipid', and 'flat'.[23] This criticism, which seems

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[17] 'Un altra parte conosce bensì la necessità di ben recitare, e della buona azione ma con colorati pretesti si scusa, ed accagiona i moderni scrittori, e dice, che è impossibile a declamarsi i recitativi, che il scrivono in quelli tempi, perchè interrompono, e sconvolgono il vero senso delle parole per le continue mosse, e per le circolazioni del Basso, e che so io. E quindi sospirano, ed invidiano con affettazione la felice forte di quegli Attor, ch' ebbero a recitare le Opere scritte da un Alessandro Scarlatti, da un Bononcino, da un Gasparini, e da altri tali famosì Uomini'. Mancini, *Pensieri, e Reflessioni*, 157-58; 'Many others do realize the necessity of good acting, but excuse themselves by saying that the fault lies with the modem composers who write recitatives in such a way that they interrupt and confuse the true sense of the dialogue by the constant change of movements in the bass accompaniment! So, they sigh in envy of those happy singing actors, who have had the good fortune to interpret the operas written by Allessandro Scarlatti, Bononcino, Domenico Sarro, Gasperini [*sic*], Francesco Mancini, Frederico Handel, Francesco Durante, and other famous men'. English trans.: Buzzi, *Practical Reflections*, 173.

[18] Burney, *Westminster Abbey and the Pantheon*, 17.

[19] Along with Shakespeare, Indiana refers to the dramatist Thomas Otway (1652-1685) who was active during the English Restoration period and was best known for his play *Venice Preserv'd* (1682).

[20] Henry Carey, *Faustina: Or the Roman Songstress, a Satyr, on the Luxury and Effeminacy of the Age* (London: author, 1726), 8.

[21] *Ibid*.

[22] Burney, *General History*, IV, 284-285.

[23] *Ibid*.

biased against Bononcini as a prominent member of the Italian Catholic faction in London, labels the composer's music as common and appealing only to the uneducated. Burney fell into the trap he himself later recognised: English audiences were not capable of fully accessing Bononcini's music because they could not appreciate the Italian language.

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Leaving Italy in 1720, Giovanni Bononcini relocated to London to assume a post as composer for the Royal Academy of Music and throughout the early 1720s his popularity rivalled that of Handel in England. Of the eight operas Bononcini composed in London, the three most successful were *Astarto* of 1720, *Griselda* of 1722, and *Crispo* of 1722, all of which included roles for Senesino.[24] In addition, Bononcini was awarded an annual stipend by Henrietta, Duchess of Marlborough, to present two weekly concerts of his own music from 1724 to 1731.[25] This patronage illustrates that even though the Hanoverian monarchy in England backed Handel, Bononcini had secured his own prominent supporters.[26]

The London operas of Bononcini have long been viewed as second-rate when compared to those of his competitor, George Frederic Handel. In John Byrom's 1725 epigram the two were infamously branded 'Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee' and have since been closely linked.[27] They are set in opposition to such an extent that any assessment of Bononcini's merit is largely obfuscated by comparison with Handel. A 1728 account in the *The Touchstone* compares Bononcini's *pastorale* style to Handel's 'Heroick':

> H[ande]l would furnish us with Airs expressive of the Rage of Tyrants, the Passions of Heroes, and the Distresses of Lovers in the Heroick Stile. B[ononci]ni sooth [*sic*] us with sighing Shepherds, bleating Flocks, chirping Birds, and purling Streams in the *Pastoral* […] H[ande]l would warm us in Frost or Snow, by rousing every Passion with Notes proper to the Subject: Whilst B[ononci]ni would fan us, in the *Dog-Days*, with an *Italian* Breeze, and lull us asleep with gentle Whispers.[28]

The inference that Bononcini's music was best suited to depictions of nature, as uttered from the sighing mouths of shepherds, too naively assumes that his compositions were lighter, more intimate, and simpler in construction than Handel's, which were capable of nobly 'rousing every Passion' with dramatic and musical complexity. This style of composition was not always

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[24] See Appendix II, Table 5: Giovanni Bononcini's operas presented by London's Royal Academies of Music from 19 November 1720-6 June 1727, pp. 38-39, which provides performance details for all of Bononcini's Royal Academy of Music operas.

[25] See Jacob Simon, ed., *Handel: A celebration of his life and times, 1685-1759* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1985), 116. After the 1724 opera season, concluding a period of instability for Bononcini, Anastasia Robinson secured a pension of £500 per year for him from the Duchess of Marlborough which allowed the composer to remain in London. See also Winton Dean, 'Robinson, Anastasia', *GMO*, accessed 21 January 2017.

[26] Burney, Charles, *An account of the musical performances in Westminster Abbey and the Pantheon* (London: T. Payne, 1785), 17.

[27] John Byrom, *Miscellaneous poems*, 2 v. (Manchester: J. Harrop, 1773), I, 343-44: 'Some say, compar'd to Bononcini, / That Mynheer Handel's but a Ninny; / Others aver, that he to Handel / Is scarcely fit to hold a Candle: / Strange all this Difference should be / 'Twixt Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee!'

[28] James Ralph, *The Touchstone*, from Essay I, 'Of Musick' (London: London and Westminster, 1728), 30.

favourably recognised. Bononcini's music has been labelled as 'tiresome' and 'repetitious' in an eighteenth-century account and, more recently, as 'lacking depth, dramatic and musical development, passion, and surprise' by Winton Dean.[29] Additional twentieth-century accounts are chiefly concerned with elements of biography, social context, and drama related to Bononcini and his operas.[30]

During the Royal Academy of Music's first two seasons from 1720 to 1722 Bononcini's operas were well received by the public, receiving a total of sixty-three performances (compared to Handel's twenty-eight), while his first London opera, *Astarto*, was given the remarkably high number of twenty-nine performances.[31] Bononcini's early ascendancy in England likely occurred for several reasons. By the time Bononcini had arrived in London, his tremendously successful opera, *il Trionfo di Camilla*, had already been presented there 64 times between 1706 and 1709.[32] One source states that Bononcini's music had made so deep an impression in England that 'till 1710, the managers found it necessary to introduce into every opera they exhibited more than an equal portion of Bononcini's airs.'[33]

Several of the composer's London operas in the 1720s (listed in Appendix II, Table 5) had already been refined through presentation in Italy. Versions of Bononcini's *Muzio Scevola* were presented in Rome in 1695, Florence in 1696, Naples in 1698, Turin in 1700, Genoa *circa* 1700, and Vienna in 1710. So, the theme was a familiar one for Bononcini when a new version of *Muzio*

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[29] Burney claimed, regarding Bononcini's 1721 opera *Astarto*, that motivic reiterations become 'more and more tiresome at each repetition'.

[30] Dean addresses connections between the opera *Camilla* and Handel's *Acis and Galatea* in Winton Dean, 'Handel and Bononcini: Another Link?', *The Musical Times*, 131/1770 (1990), 412-413. Thurston Dart describes an early encounter in which Bononcini supposedly devised a test of the young Handel's skill; the prodigy excelled causing friction between the two composers when they met again two decades later in London. See Thurston Dart, 'Bononcini Sets Handel a Test', *The Musical Times*, 112/1538 (1971), 324-325. Lowell Lindgren has examined bibliographic sources in dramatic works set by Giovanni and his brother Antonio Maria and he addresses the circumstances of Bononcini's unfortunate exodus from London in Lowell Lindgren, 'A bibliographic scrutiny of dramatic works set by Giovanni and his brother Antonio Maria Bononcini', PhD diss. (Harvard, 1972) and Lowell Lindgren, 'The Three Great Noises "Fatal to the Interests of Bononcini"', *The Musical Quarterly*, 61/4 (1975), 560-583. Dramatic considerations in Bononcini's London operas, particularly *Muzio Scevola* of 1721, are assessed by Anthony Ford in Anthony Ford, 'Music and Drama in the Operas of Giovanni Bononcini', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 101 (1974-1975), 107-120. Regarding Bononcini, see also Suzanne Aspden, 'Managing Passions: The Business of Opera in Eighteenth-Century London', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 128/1 (2003), 123-136; Suzanne Aspden, '"An Infinity of Factions": Opera in Eighteenth-Century Britain and the Undoing of Society', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 9/1 (1997), 1-19; Suzanne Aspden, 'Ariadne's Clew: Politics, Allegory, and Opera in London (1734)', *The Musical Quarterly*, 85/4 (2001), 735-770; Phillip Lord, 'The English-Italian Opera Companies 1732-3', *Music & Letters*, 45/3 (1964), 239-251.

[31] Performance dates for Bononcini and Handel's opera presented by the Royal Academy of Music from between 19 November 1720 and 9 June 1724 can be found in Appendix II, Table 11: Performance dates for Bononcini and Handel's operas presented by the Royal Academy of Music between 19 November 1720 and 9 June 1724, pp. 49-51. See also Christopher Hogwood, *Handel*, 2nd edn (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 82. An overview of the performances offered by the first Royal Academy of Music, between 2 April 1720 and 1 June 1728 by Friedrich Chrysander (1826-1901), the nineteenth-century music historian and Handel specialist, found that 487 performances were offered to the London public, of which: 245 were evenings of Handel's music, 108 Bononcini's, and 55 Attilio Ariosti's (with an additional 79 performances comprised of the music of other composers).

[32] Bennett and Lindgren, 'Bononcini', *GMO*.

[33] W. Strahan, et al., ed.s, *A New and General Biographical Dictionary*, 12 vols (London: author, 1784), VI, 228-229.

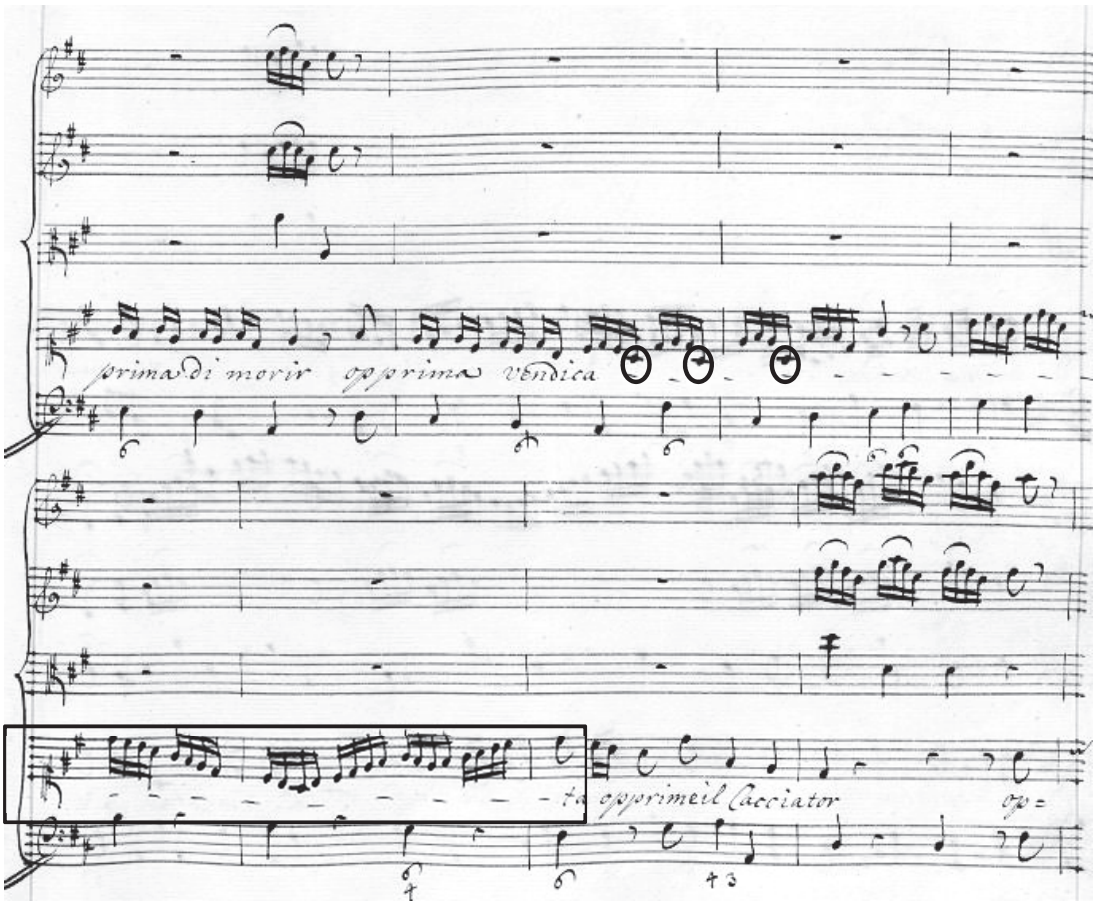
Scevola was premiered on 15 April 1721 in London, for which both Bononcini and Handel created music for Senesino's voice; Act II by the former and Act III the latter.[34] Each composer demanded different technical skills and vocal ranges of Senesino. Handel composed to an *e♭″* on one occasion amidst a coloratura passage in the *allegro* aria 'Spera che tra le care'. He took the voice to *d″* in two other instances.[35] In contrast Bononcini composed to *f″* for Senesino in two arias: 'Tormento fiero d'abbandonar' and 'Ei non sa se tornerà'. In the latter aria both *e♭″* and *f″* are approached by unprepared leaps up to a seventh demonstrating an ease with vocal onsets in the higher part of Senesino's voice (Appendix III, Ex. 13). In Muzio's *Presto* aria 'Tigre piagata', Bononcini included pitches to *e″* several times in coloratura scale patterns. This use of vocal bravura was a skilful depiction of the aria's textual meaning; in this climactic scene Muzio thrusts his hand into a flame, self-inflicting punishment for his soldierly negligence while declaring he can face death only if he has obtained revenge.[36] Bononcini musically matches the graphic image of man and beast's struggle with repeated *a* pitches at the lower extreme of Senesino's range, representing the earth to which the hunter repeatedly falls. This *a* pitch was used on occasion by Handel when conceiving music for Senesino though in an unaccented position, often to end a phrase.[37] Conversely, Bononcini makes delving down to the *a* pitch a musico-dramatic feature with its many iterations. A subsequent expansive scale from *d″* to *a*, demonstrated in Musical Example 10, further illustrates the metaphorical brawl in *fioritura* that pulls the hunter to the ground as the tiger's prey before climbing again to victorious heights.

[34] MS: D-Bs, Handschrift Am.B 439b. Act I was composed by Filippo Amadei and included two arias for Senesino that are more in keeping with the range and technical characteristics of Handel's compositional style than Bononcini's. The first aria, 'Da Vostro Raggio', includes scalar passagework, leaps in the vocal line, and triplet coloratura in arpeggio patterns in the "B" section. The vocal line is also often doubled by the violins and the compass is *b* to *c″*. The second aria, 'Cedo, ma pur mi chiami', is a 3/8 *vivace* demonstrating challenging extended coloratura passagework (including mid-phrase interval leaps) and it takes the voice from *c* to *e♭″*.

[35] The *d″* appears in the *andante* aria 'Pupille sdegnose' and the duet 'Mà come a mar?'.

[36] The full text of the aria follows: *Tigre piagata / Non cura di perir, / Se vendicata, / Prima del suo morir / Apprime il Cacciator. / Un disperato / Valor se perirà; / Cadendo armato; / Co'l peso suo trarra / A terra il Vincitor.* (A wounded tiger / Does not mind its perishing, / If vindicated, / Prior to its death / By killing the huntsman. / A desperate man / [Is] Valorous if will perish / Falling armed; / With his weight he draws / To the ground the conqueror.)

[37] Examples of Handel's arias that utilise Senesino's low range in this way include: 'Dell'onda ai fieri moti' in Act I of *Ottone* (1723), 'A dispetto d'un volto ingrato' in Act III of *Tamerlano* (1725), and 'Vivi tiranno' from Act III of *Rodelinda* (1725).



Musical Example 10: G. Bononcini, *Muzio Scevola*, London, 1721, 'Tigre piagata', Act II scene 7, bb. 20-26, exhibiting repeated *a* pitches and a coloratura scale running between *d''* and *a* for Senesino depicting the battle between tiger and hunter (D-B, Am.B 439b, f. 165).

An early collaboration between Bononcini and Senesino in London, *Muzio Scevola* displays signs that Bononcini was less familiar with the singer's vocal range and skill than Handel at the time. Bononcini's first opera for London, *Astarto*, was premiered on 19 November 1720 and included Senesino, however, much of the music had already been performed in 1715 at the Teatro Capranica in Rome. Handel had composed *Radamisto* (1720, second version) for Senesino and heard him perform in the pasticcio *Arsace*, which had been arranged by Filippo Amadei (1665-1725) to the singer's specifications, by the time *Muzio Scevola* premiered in April 1721.[38] A naïve sense of Senesino's voice may have prompted Bononcini to utilise pitches in the upper extreme of the singer's range in *Muzio Scevola* and *La Griselda*; by *Astianatte* (1727) Bononcini's conception of Senesino's vocal range had changed.[39] 'Rendermi vuole la pace Amore', a common-time *affettuoso* closing Act I in *Astianatte* illustrates a range that does not ascend higher than *d''* and

[38] The pasticcio *Arsace* was premiered on 1 January 1721.
[39] Bononcini's arrival in London is confirmed by a letter dated 18 October 1720 from P. A. Rolli to Giuseppe Riva, cited in English trans. in Deutsch, *Handel*, 114-115.

only touches that pitch on one occasion (Appendix III, Ex. 14).[40] The preceding accompanied recitative, 'Figlio, figlio infelice', exemplifies an apparent influence Handel had on Bononcini's style of composition. Handel often exploited Senesino's strength in dramatic portrayal with accompanied recitatives including those in *Rodelinda* and *Giulio Cesare* of 1724. He even newly composed the accompanied recitative 'Vieni d'empietà' in *Radamisto* for Senesino's voice when the castrato took the title role from Margherita Durastanti. Handel's modification of *Radamisto* to include an accompanied recitative, a form of highly emotional musical exposition that often depicted a character's downtrodden state, may also have been motivated by the English taste for tragedy in the 1720s.[41] Perhaps due to Bononcini's lack of familiarity with Senesino's skill at portraying pathos, or, his ignorance of contemporary trends on the London stage, the composer's operas from 1720 to 1724 do not include accompanied recitatives for Senesino. It is likely that by 1727 Bononcini was more acquainted with British taste and heeding Handel's lead (or perhaps Senesino's urging) he incorporated a scene of this style in *Astianatte*.

La Griselda, which was Bononcini's fifth opera for the Royal Academy of Music and was newly composed for the 1721-1722 season also contributed to the early success of Bononcini and Senesino in London. This work is based on a tale from the *Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) and the pretext of the opera is offered in the libretto:[42]

> GUALTIERO, King of Sicily, being in Love with GRISELDA, a poor shepherdess, but of wonderful Beauty and Virtue, took her for his Wife. The People were highly displeas'd with this Marriage, and made an insurrection when GRISELDA was deliver'd of a Daughter; they being naturally proud, could not bear the Successors of the Crown should descend from so mean a Mother. But that first Mutiny was quell'd by GUALTIERO who conveyed away his Daughter, and then spreading about, that she had been lost at sea.

Griselda's ordeal and enduring patience became one of the eighteenth century's most popular operatic themes, set to music at least fifteen times before 1720 and used frequently thereafter. Representative versions include those of Tommaso Albinoni (1703, Florence), Antonio Maria Bononcini (1718, Milan), Giuseppe Maria Orlandini (1720, Venice), and Alessandro Scarlatti (1721, Rome), among others (listed in Appendix II, Table 6).[43] Giovanni Bononcini's version of *La Griselda*, with text by Paolo Antonio Rolli (1687-1765), was premiered at the King's Theatre in

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[40] It is also conceivable Senesino's vocal range lowered in the years following *La Griselda*, although, later manuscripts suggest this is not the case.

[41] See Hans Dieter Clausen, 'Handel's *Admeto* und Bononcini's *Astianatte*', *Göttinger Händel-Beiträge*, VI (1996), 143-170.

[42] The *Decameron* is comprised of 100 vignettes, many on the topic of love that ranges from the sensual to the tragic. It was first published around the year 1353 and *Griselda* is the last story in the collection. See Malcolm Boyd and Lowell Lindgren, 'Griselda (i),', *GMO*, accessed February 15, 2016.

[43] Prominent versions of *La Griselda* composed after Giovanni Bononcini's include those of Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), written in 1735 for the Teatro San Angelo in Venice with a revised libretto by Carlo Goldoni, and, later in the century, a 1798 version by Ferdinando Për (1771-1839) for Lucca. Vivaldi's opera contains the stunning and energetic coloratura showpiece 'Agitata da due venti' which he composed for his contralto protégée Anna Girò ([1710]-after 1747), who performed the role of Costanza (in Bononcini's version this character was renamed Almirena). Among these many versions of *La Griselda* the role of Gualtiero is cast largely as an alto castrato and the role of Griselda is most often an alto, which is in alignment with Bononcini's choices.

London on 22 February 1722.[44] The plot of Apostolo Zeno's original 1701 libretto upon which Rolli's was based was retained for the 1722 performances but the text was greatly modified.[45] The role of Corrado was eliminated and three characters were given new names: Ottone became Rambaldo (bass), Costanza became Almirena (soprano), and Roberto became Ernesto (soprano castrato). Burney remarked: '*Griselda*, another new opera, set by Bononcini, was brought on the stage. This drama […] seems to have been regarded as Bononcini's best theatrical production in this country'.[46] He also reported that 'being in possession of a complete score of the Music, I shall peruse it with attention, and endeavour to give my musical readers an idea of its merit', but no such assessment survives.[47] Additionally, *La Griselda* is one of only two operas by Bononcini for which John Walsh published the overture and all arias on behalf of the composer, the other being *Astarto*.[48] Selections from the opera also survive in manuscript copies and the most popular arias were further published in subsequent collections by Walsh and others; however, no extant source includes recitative. One London chronicle cited the upcoming production with anticipation on 14 February, a week before the premiere:

> There is a new *Opera* just come out of the Shell, and has been hatched in *London* by two *Italians*, a Fidler and a Songster; the pretty Creature is called *Grisselaa* [*sic*], and is lineally descended from the old Ballad of *Patient Grissel*; the Judicious who have seen it in the Nest, declare it to be the finest *Tramontane* Production that ever was beheld.[49]

Burney compared it unfavourably to Handel:

> It is manifest that Handel's bold and varied style, rich harmony, and ingenious contrivance, had made such an impression on the public, as to render it necessary for Bononcini, in setting this opera [*La Griselda*], to quit his ambling nag, and to mount his great horse, accoutred in all his trappings, and endeavour to move with unusual pomp and stateliness.[50]

Over a period of four months *La Griselda* received a notable sixteen performances and selections from the opera were probably also heard in the *Ridotto* advertised on 6 March 1722:

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[44] Deutsch, *Handel*, 166.
[45] The music was first set to Zeno's libretto by Antonio Pollarolo (Venice: Nicolini, 1701) for a production at the Teatro San Cassiano in Venice. It was also subsequently set by Antonio Bononcini (Milan: Marc Antonio Pandolofo Malatesta, 1718); Deutsch, *Handel*, 209, misattributed this 1718 *La Griselda* to Giovanni Bononcini, and not Antonio, 'One of the librettos, set by Bononcini before he came to London and altered for him by Rolli, was Apostolo Zeno's *Griselda*, produced in Milan in 1718 and in London in 1722.'
[46] Burney, *General History,* IV, 284.
[47] *Ibid.*
[48] Giovanni Bononcini, 'GRISELDA an OPERA *as it was Perform'd at the* KINGS THEATRE *for the* Royal Academy *Compos'd by M^r. Bononcini*.', overture and arias (London: John Walsh for the Author, 1722).
[49] *The Freeholder's Journal*, 14 February 1722, the entry was further labelled 'Button's Coffee-house', the opera mentioned was Bononcini's *La Griselda*; Rolli is referred to as a 'Fidler' in other sources as well, and the 'Songster' is Bononcini; the Italian word *Tramontana* means 'across the mountains' referring to the Northern Italian Alps and here specifying that the opera came from Italy, or, in this case, the Italians. Cited in Burrows, *George Frideric Handel: Volume 1*, 568.
[50] Burney, *General History*, IV, 284.

> At the King's Theatre . . . this present Tuesday . . . will be a RIDOTTO. To begin with an Entertainment of Musick, consisting of several Songs chosen out of the last new Opera's, and some new Cantato's [*sic*], composed by Signor Bononcini, performed by Signor Francisco [*sic*] Bernardi Senesino, Signor Benedetto Baldassari, Mrs. Anastasia Robinson, and Signora Salvai.[51]

According to Burney, the *Ridotti* were a special feature of the 1722 season and consisted of an evening event with two hours of music followed by a ball on the stage.[52] In fact, these events lasted from 1719-1725 and they were known at different times under varying names including 'masquerades', 'entertainments of musick', and *ridotti*, which references the gaming salons of Venice.[53]

The exact instrumental personnel for Bononcini's London operas, including *La Griselda*, is not known. Payment ledgers indicate the instrumentalists in Handel's operas for the Royal Academy of Music around the same time: 16 violins, two violas, three cellos, two double basses, four oboes, three bassoons, one trumpet, and a theorbo were employed in 1720.[54] The orchestra had evidently expanded in the two years that followed as horns, timpani, and at least one additional trumpet were required for *La Griselda* in 1722. Burney, who seems to have been consulting Walsh's published edition, mentioned with a sense of curiosity that in the overture Bononcini introduced trumpets and kettle-drums, and bassoons are further indicated in the basso continuo.[55] He also comments on the novelty of the overture as 'different from most others of the time, by being cast in a mould totally unlike that of Lulli. And upon the whole, this overture is one of the best instrumental compositions that I have seen of this author.'[56] Burney references the French overture style popularised by Lully in the 1650s which generally consists of a slow dotted-rhythm opening movement followed by a faster fugal section.[57] Bononcini's overture instead incorporates three movements: a cut time *Presto* incorporating trumpets and timpani that is filled with lively running passages in the violins and oboes, a ten bar *Adagio e piano* in 3/2 for the strings, and a rousing *allegro* in 3/4 with full instrumental forces.

In *La Griselda*, the role of Gualtiero is a Sicilian king who, besotted by conflict and goaded by his subjects, strives to prove Griselda's patience, commitment, and regal worth through a series of challenges. Versions of the opera by Antonio Pollarolo and Antonio Maria Bononcini in 1701

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[51] *The Daily Courant*, n. 6356, 6 March 1722.
[52] Burney, *General History*, IV, 647. In fact, these events lasted from 1719-1723 under varying names. See also See also Elizabeth Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music (1719-1728): The Institution and Its Directors* in *Outstanding Dissertations in Music from British Universities* (New York: Garland, 1989), 148-149, and 164, where the case is made that the Bishop of London endeavoured to prevent these performances from happening, necessitating a change of title to elude him. They were known at different times as 'masquerades', 'entertainments of musick', and *ridotti*, which references the gaming salons of Venice, and they are known to have continued until 1725.
[53] See Elizabeth Gibson, The Royal Academy of Music (1719-1728): The Institution and Its Directors in Outstanding Dissertations in Music from British Universities (New York: Garland, 1989), 148-149, and 164, where the case is made that the Bishop of London endeavoured to prevent these performances from happening, necessitating a change of title to elude him.
[54] From the Portland Papers, PwB 97 and 98, as cited in Burrows, 'Handel's London Theatre Orchestra', 355.
[55] Burney, *General History*, IV, 284.
[56] *Ibid.*
[57] George Gow Waterman and James R. Anthony, 'French overture', *GMO*, accessed August 23, 2017.

and 1718 allot Gualtiero only four arias, and of which, one is contained in a solo scene.[58] In 1722, Senesino performed seven arias and two duets, as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4 Works for Senesino in Bononcini's *La Griselda*[59]

Type and position of piece	Title of piece	Tempo marking	Scoring
ACT I			
Duet, I/2	'Al mio Nativo Prato'	Andante	[Vn.I]; [Vn. II]; Va.; Fag.; Vlne.; B.c.
Aria, I/2	'Affetto gioja'	Con spirito	[Vn.]; B.c. (*tutti*)
Aria, I/3	'Volgendo a me lo sguardo'	Con spirito	[Vn.]; B.c. (*soli* and *tutti*)
Aria, I/5	'Sì già sento'	Allegro assai	Vn.(*V. unisoni*); B.c. (*soli* and *tutti*)
ACT II			
Aria, II/3	'Le Fere a risvegliar'	-----	[Hn. I]; [Hn. II.]; Vn.I; Vn. II; B.c.[60]
Aria, II/8	'Dolce sogno'	Lento e piano sempre	[Vn.I]; [Vn. II]; B.c.
Duet, II/12	'Dell'offesa vendicarti'	-----	[Vn.I]; [Vn. II]; B.c.
ACT III			
Aria, III/3	'Son qual face'	Lento e pia.	[Vn.I]; [Vn. II]; B.c.
Aria, III/Ultima	'Sebben fu il Cor severo'	Vivace	[Vn.] (*Unisoni*); B.c.

Gualtiero's malleability is made clear in the opera's first two scenes when the military general Rambaldo successfully influenced the king to unseat his wife as queen. Rambaldo proclaims 'si chiede il suo ripudio' (your divorce is asked for [by your subjects]) and the general's own amorous desire for Griselda is later revealed as his clear motivation.[61] Upon Rambaldo's prompting, Gualtiero orders Griselda to relinquish her royal life and return to the woods once again becoming a shepherdess. In response, Griselda initiates the duet 'Al mio native prato' which she sings to the meadow (as her personified companion), displaying her humility: 'To my native meadow / I will say that you had been abandoned / For my king desired it.'[62] The basso continuo includes a rich complement of bassoon, viola da gamba, violoncello, and violone, suggesting

[58] In Zeno's *La Griselda*, Gualtiero sings the following: Act I scene 3, 'Vado amirare un volto'; Act II scene 13, 'Vorresti col tuo pianto'; Act III scene 4, solo scene, 'In te, Sposa, Griselda… Cara Sposa, col tuo bel core'; Act III scene 9, 'Non partir da chi t'adora'.
[59] Information in this table is based on Bononcini, 'Griselda an Opera *as it was Perform'd at the* Kings Theatre'.
[60] While it is not substantiated by reference in the Walsh printed edition of 1722 and may have only been a stylistic choice for the recorded performance, Winton Dean mentions the use of recorders, rather than horns, in the "B" section of this aria; see review of 'BONONCINI Griselda, excerpts', 821.
[61] Libretto: Rolli, *La Griselda* (London: T. Wood, 1721), 3. The 1722 libretto portrays rapid action set into motion immediately as the opera begins. In the 1701 Zeno libretto upon which Rolli based his version, these motivations from the character who is equivalent to Rambaldo, Ottone, are not made clear until scene 5.
[62] 'Al mio Nativo Prato / Dirò t'ò abbandonata / per voglia del mio Re.'

Griselda's robust connection to nature with its solid and supportive presence. Gualtiero's music in the duet demonstrates in his ineffectual consoling of Griselda that he is also an unwilling victim of circumstance.[63] Particularly evident in this duet is the legitimate union of the two characters as illustrated by their similitude of contralto vocal range.

Walsh's published edition is one extant source for 'Al mio Nativo Prato'. Another is an F major manuscript in 3/8 aria form for solo voice (rather than Walsh's D major 6/8 duet form).[64] This manuscript appears to have been transcribed for an intimate performance as the '*Viole, Violon, e fagotti*' of the opera-house orchestra indicated in Walsh's edition are omitted, leaving only two treble instruments and an unfigured bass line. The score also appears to have been copied in haste as it lacks dynamic and slur markings and the word 'Io' in the phrase 'dirò Io abbandonato' has been amended to 't'ho' multiple times. Further, the duet appears to have been transcribed for a single voice. These modifications might suggest that the selection was performed during one of the Duchess of Marlborough's many concerts for which Bononcini was obliged to provide music.[65]

By shortening the amount of text for London performances, eliminating some characters all together and simplifying others and their interactions, space was made for the remaining performers to take a more substantial place in the narrative. In Act I, what was 15 scenes in 1701 becomes five in 1722 (Appendix II, Table 7). The secondary pair of lovers is diminished, as is the importance of the covetous and malevolent general, Rambaldo. The overall essence of the drama is also modified when Corrado, the Puglian king who acted as a sovereignly foil to Gualtiero, is removed. Both monarchs, bound by the rules of royal governance, display the hardships of reigning in different ways: Gualtiero acts in the interest of his people, though it is contrary to his own will, while Corrado guides Costanza to embrace her role as Gualtiero's new queen, even though she loves another. In the 1701 version, symbols further emphasise the spoken and unspoken rules of law in this sovereign world, including the mantle, sceptre, and crown which Corrado presents to the nervous Costanza at the beginning of Act II. Rolli interprets the plot in a more *pastorale* fashion, intensifying the drama by bringing the focus out of the sovereign realm and into the psychological. He centres not on royal duty, but rather Griselda and Gualtiero's internal state of mind and interactions. For example, in 1722 Act I closes with a depiction of Griselda's plaintive desperation in the aria 'Dal mio petto ogni Pace smarrita' (From my breast all peace is lost) rather than with the immoral general, Rambaldo, and his jealous promise in 1701 to 'do what I can' to the beautiful tyrant Griselda who does not return his affections.[66] Based on all accounts of her personal character and her reputation amongst London society as an aggrieved

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[63] See volume II, pp. 98-99, for a full translation and musical transcription of 'Al mio nativo prato'.
[64] MS: GB-Lam, MS90.
[65] See Lowell Lindgren and Lawrence E. Bennett, 'Bononcini', *GMO*, accessed 3 May 2015. On 14 May 1724 Bononcini was offered a stipend of £500 a year for life from Henrietta Godolphin, Second Duchess of Marlborough, for which, according to a 1731 newspaper report, he directed performances of his own music at her private concerts. The performances were held twice weekly from 1724 to 1731 and the purpose of this stipend is given in Highfill, Jr., et al., s.v. 'Bononcini', *BDA*, II, 208. Giuseppe Riva hints in his correspondence that these concerts included operatic music, see Clausen, 'Handel's *Admeto*', 156.
[66] 'Farò quanto potrò'.

woman suffering adverse circumstances, this aria suited Robinson and influenced Burney and others to view the opera's title character and its *prima donna* as one in the same. Selections and concepts from Zeno's original libretto were also co-opted and ascribed to different remaining characters in 1722. This was the case with at least three of Senesino's seven arias: 'Volgendo a me lo sguardo', 'Dolce sogno', and 'Son qual face'.

In Zeno's 1701 version of the libretto, the aria 'Un sol de' tuoi sguardi', which Costanza directs toward her young lover, Roberto, is appropriated by Rolli in 1722 to become 'Volgendo a me lo sguardo' depicting Gualtiero's contrived excitement at seeing his new bride for the first time. This sentiment rings false; what was a sincere and amorous depiction in 1701 becomes misguided. Representing Gualtiero's consciously duplicitous nature, the aria depicts the second of Griselda's trials and its lulling quality adds to the character's inauthenticity as he proclaims his love to his bride to be, Almirena. Illustrating Bononcini's pastoral style when composing for Senesino's voice, the aria's ardent sentiment, declaring 'you will be my final faithful love', is diffused with an up-tempo *con spirito* indication and playful melodic tune.[67] These choices weaken the meaning of the text which might otherwise suggest an *andante* tempo and matching amorously lyrical melodic line. Gualtiero speaks of Almirena's enchanting glance and his 'dolce affetto' (sweet affection) toward her in melismatic flourishes that repeat the main motif first heard in the instrumental introduction (Appendix III, Ex. 15). While the tune is charming, Burney's claim (in addressing a similar passage in *Astarto*) that such repetitions are 'neither uncommon nor beautiful' and repeated nearly twenty times in a single aria growing 'more and more tiresome at each repetition' is apt regarding 'Volgendo a me lo sguardo'.[68] Considering the composer's Arcadian values, which placed emphasis on mood rather than harmonically complex depictions of drama, these repetitions are something other than a lack of innovation. The music supports the dramatic idea. Gualtiero is stunned at the sight of his long-lost daughter, Almirena, and this immobilisation is depicted with several re-initiations of the musical idea. These recurrent phrases were also invariably sung with appealing diversity by Senesino who was known for variation in performance of repeated material. Showing the importance Senesino placed on invention and spontaneity, the dramatist Roger Pickering praised the singer:

> Confin'd, as he was, to the Measures of *Recitative* and *Song,* SENESINO went thro' the Struggles of Nature agitated to excess, with surprising *Execution*; and… a *Variety* of *Expression*, each of the three Nights I saw him.[69]

Senesino's captivating performances would have given stimulating life to the repetitions in 'Volgendo a me lo sguardo' demonstrating the significance a talented singer brings to the

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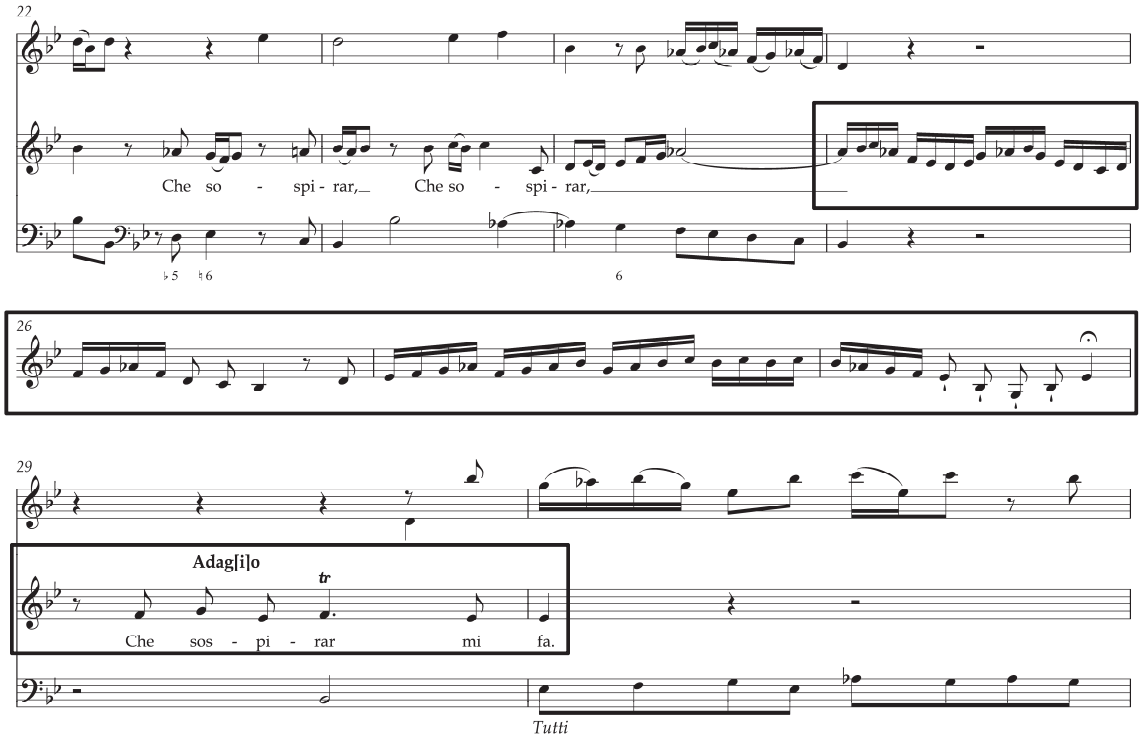
[67] The full text of the aria is: 'Volgendo a me lo Sguardo; / Vedrai qual dolce affetto / Per te si desta in petto, / Che sospirar mi fa. / La tua sembianza vaga / I miei desiri appaga: / Per te il mio fido Amore / L'ultimo anco sarà'. (Turning toward me the glance; / You'll see what sweet affection / For you it awakens in [my] breast, / That makes me sigh. / Your beautiful appearance / Gratifies my desires: / For you, my faithful love / Will be the final one.)

[68] Burney, *General History*, IV, 269. Burney spoke about an aria he titled 'Sapete'.

[69] Roger Pickering, *Reflections upon theatrical expression in tragedy* (London: W. Johnston, 1755), 65-66.

interpretation of Bononcini's work. In addition to the notated pitches, Senesino would have provided ornaments and cadenzas to further colour the portrayal of his character. One possible cadenza realisation can be seen in Musical Example 11 which depicts Gualtiero's duplicity with a delving range, unexpected staccato arpeggios that break the lyrical line and mimic the fragmented phrasing of Bononcini's original melody, and a wandering centre of pitch.



Musical Example 11: G. Bononcini, *La Griselda*, 'Volgendo a me lo sguardo', Act I scene 3, bb. 22-30, a possible cadenza depicting Gualtiero's duplicity.

Lacking a broad range of orchestral textures and varied instrumental timbre to reinforce drama, 'Volgendo a me lo sguardo' is more depictive in style and instrumentation of a chamber piece, perhaps an aria from a cantata rather than an opera. Bononcini was well-known for his widely-distributed publications of chamber works, it seems his familiarity with scoring for smaller musical forces resulted in music that was at times ill-suited to the operatic stage. However, the scoring in 'Volgendo a me lo sguardo' of basso continuo and a single treble instrument in duet with the vocal line portrays tender emotion and simplicity of character while creating an encompassing affect that is intimate and beguiling.

Plentiful manuscript scores and published editions (listed in Appendix II, Table 8) suggest that the aria's simplistic representation of beauty was 'likely to afford pleasure to the unlearned and greater part of an audience'.[70] In addition to appearing in Richard Neale's *A Pocket Companion for Gentlemen and Ladies* in 1724, 'Volgendo a me lo sguardo' is also found, with English translation

[70] Burney, *General History*, IV, 284.

by Richard Leveridge (1670-1758), in *Le Delizie dell Opere*.[71] Leveridge was known to London audiences as an operatic bass and composer of popular songs, including 'A Song in Praise of Old English Roast Beef', 'Drinking Excus'd', and 'A Coquet's Fate'.[72] It is clear that the intended audience for Walsh's anthology would have been more comfortable passing time at the Pleasure Gardens than the Opera. Leveridge's translation connects the text to an angry woman who must 'soften her disdain' and does not show the excitement, affection, and sighing portrayed in the original:[73]

> Cupid now relieve me,
> With frowns no longer grieve me,
> But with compassion move here,
> To soften her disdain.
>
> Hard fate I had to woo her
> Condemn'd thus to pursue her,
> Like Tantalus forever striving,
> But all in vain.

Putting translational accuracy of text aside, these widely distributed editions, many of which bear the inscription 'Sung by Sigr. Senesino', spread the name of the singer beyond the opera house and contributed to the rising fame that established him in 1723 to 'daily [be] voted the greatest man that ever lived'.[74]

Further plot manipulations in *La Griselda* become evident by examining Act II of Zeno's 1701 libretto. While Griselda sleeps in the distance an anguished Roberto professes his love to Costanza in the aria 'Lascia, s'io parto, almeno' and in their parting, he assures her of his enduring love.[75] The scene is quite changed in Rolli's 1722 version of *La Griselda* where the importance of this couple and the tension their young love provides to the plot is greatly reduced. Rolli appropriates this scene to Senesino's character who proclaims his love in hushed whispers over the sleeping Griselda in the aria 'Dolce sogno'. A poetic convention is used that provides a sense of distance and a romantic flourish whereby Gualtiero does not address Griselda directly, but instead, he sings to her anthropomorphised dream.[76] The *lento* tempo and *sempre piano* dynamic markings

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[71] [Richard Neale], ed., *A Pocket Companion for Gentlemen and Ladies Being a Collection of the finest Opera Songs & Airs, In English and Italian,* 2 vols (London: Cluer's Printing Office, 1724-1725), I, 150-152; Bononcini, Giovanni, Leonardo Leo, et., al., 'Le delizie dell'opere*. Being a Collection of all the Favourite Songs in Score',* 5 vols (London: J[ohn] Walsh, n.d.), I, 147-149.

[72] 'A Song in Praise of Old English Roast Beef' was a well-known tune with extant manuscript copies to be found at D-HVs, Kestner No. 136 (n. 36) and US-AUS, Finney 11; the other two songs listed can be found in Richard Leveridge, '*A Collection of* SONG, *with the Musick by* Mr. Leveridge', 2 vols (London: author, 1727), I, 12-13 and 18-19.

[73] Giovanni Bononcini, Leonardo Leo, et., al., *Le Delizie*, I, 147-149.

[74] Letter from John Gay to Dean Swift, London, 3 February 1723 in John Gay, *Life and Letters of John Gay (1685-1732): Author of the Beggar's Opera*, ed. Lewis Melville (London: Daniel O'connor, 1921), 58.

[75] The full text of Roberto's aria is: 'Lascia, s'io parto, almeno / Che teco resti il cor. / Dacche lo chiudi in seno, / Ei piu non cura il mio / Donde lo trasse Amor'.

[76] The full text of the aria is: 'Dolce Sogno deh la porta / Sol l'imagine del Vero, / La conforta, / Dille pur, che son fedel: / A' begli occhj della Mente / Fa veder che se quell Core / È innocente; / Il Cor mio non è

further show Bononcini's intent; to create a mood that is at once secretive, considerate, and amorous. Insistent that the aria remain soft, Bononcini included *piano* markings through-out and a *pianissimo* dynamic in the instrumental interlude ending the aria's "A" section. The vulnerability of the monarch is emphasised, and the tender mood reveals a moment of fidelity for Gualtiero who is otherwise duplicitous. Unable to directly express his heart's sentiment, for risk of unravelling his tactics to prove Griselda's worthiness, the poignancy of the emotion is magnified when considering its contrast to the king's previous appearance in the Act II scene 3 hunting aria 'Le Fere a risvegliar'.

The lilting 6/8 meter of 'Dolce sogno' has the quality of a lullaby while Bononcini skilfully depicts something of Gualtiero's anguish and longing to be with Griselda in the interrupted motifs of the vocal line. Often in rising patterns with a short accented final note at the end of each bar, these motifs create anticipation before the syncopated onset of the next phrase (Appendix III, Ex. 16). The intimate atmosphere of the aria is further accentuated by the sparse trio sonata orchestration of the introduction. The violins often play in thirds or echoing each other at unison pitch levels and the rising motif is later presented at the vocal entrance, in dueting third intervals with the first violin (Appendix III, Ex. 17). Lacking basso continuo, an ungrounded feeling is formed with a treble orchestration at the vocal entrance adding to the hesitant nature of the aria. Further colouring 'Dolce sogno', Bononcini set the aria in E major seeking to depict:

> A sadness, despairing even to the point of death […] which is most suited for the extremes of helpless and hopeless love, and under certain circumstances is so cutting, separating, sorrowful and penetrating that it can be compared with nothing but the fatal separation of body and soul.[77]

The aria's "A" and "B" sections employ the same shape, melodic phrasing, and instrumental allocations. In the "B" section, Bononcini exchanges parallel thirds between the violins for parallel sixths between the first violin part and the vocal line. This expanded interval and the tumultuous key of C# minor enhance the concern and pleading of the text, showcasing Senesino's acting skill in intense amorous and pathetic emotions. The playwright Richard Steele confirms the affect succeeded; deeply moved by the entire pastoral scene, he comments on Senesino's simple and touching delivery in the 1722 play *The Conscious Lovers*. Also popular with the public, there are many surviving manuscript and published sources for this aria (listed in Appendix II, Table 9).

The text and imagery of Senesino's aria 'Son qual face' harken to the scene direction for Act III scene 12 in the 1701 libretto: 'Luogo magnifico che si và illuminando per le Nozze' (a

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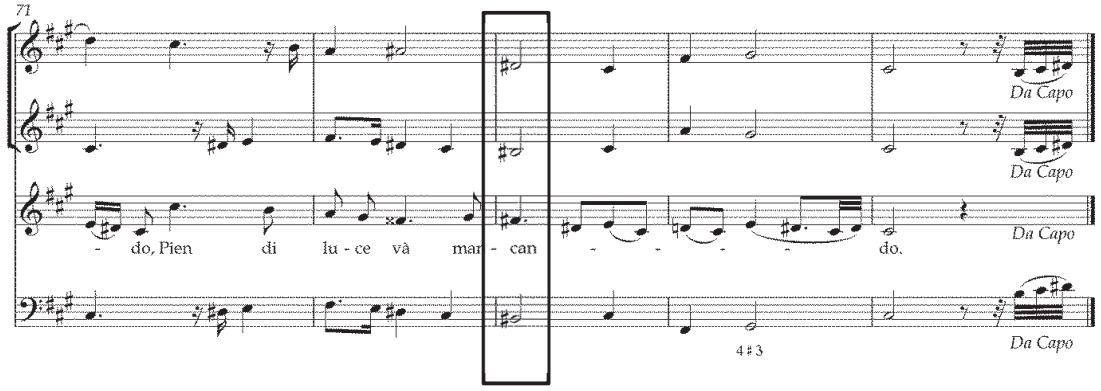
crudel'. (Sweet dream bring her / Only the image of truth, / Comfort her, / Tell her that I am faithful: / To the beautiful eyes of her mind / Make her see that if that heart / Is innocent; / My heart is not cruel.)

[77] 'E. Dur. drucket eine Verzweiflungs-volle oder gantz tödliche Traurigkeit unvergleichlich wol aus; ist vor extrem-verliebten Hülff- und Hoffnungslosen Sachen am bequemsten / und hat bey gewissen Umständen so was schneidendes / scheidendes / leidendes und durchdringendes / daß es mit nicht als einer fatalen Trennung Leibes und der Seelen verglichen werden mag'. Johann Mattheson, *Das neu-eröffnete Orchestre*, ed. Reinhard Keiser, (Hamburg: Schiller, 1713), 250. English translation adapted from Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, 2nd edn (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2002), 251.

magnificent room that has been illuminated for the wedding). Infused with triumph and the metaphor of burning flames, in the 1722 version Gualtiero comments on Almirena and Ernesto's happy union in the *maestoso* aria:

Son qual face che s'accende	I am that which is made to be alighted
E risplende non per se	And shines not for its own
Ma sì và così scemando:	But so it goes thus diminishing:
Ama il core il suo martir,	The heart loves its martyrdom,
Perchè almen nel suo finir	Because at least in its end
Pien di luce và mancando.	Full of light it goes absent.

Influenced by the aria's driving dotted rhythms and urgent demi-semiquaver flourishes (Appendix III, Ex. 18), Burney found 'Son qual face' to be the best air in *La Griselda* for its 'dignity, and a marked character of accompaniment'.[78] Contrasting the lively and energetic music of the instruments, the aria's tempo and dynamic indications are *lento e pia[no]* allowing Senesino to demonstrate the rhetorical delivery for which he was oft celebrated. Emphasising a flame metaphor, the word 'scemando' (waste away / diminish) is musically illustrated with a *piano* dynamic and a harmonic progression that eludes resolution for five bars over a sustained *B* pitch in the bass. This motif closes the "A" section with its self-extinguishing flame metaphor (Appendix III, Ex. 19). Similarly, the musical phrases accompanying the "B" section text 'mancando' (to be absent) descend, providing a musical sense of the word's meaning. An interrupted harmonic progression delays the expected tonic-key resolution for two bars with the insertion of a disorienting and unexpected *b* sharp diminished chord seen in Musical Example 12.



Musical Example 12: G. Bononcini, *La Griselda*, 'Son qual face', Act III scene 3, bb. 59-75, illustrating the corrected harmonic progression with a *b♯* diminished chord on the word 'mancando'.

Highly irregular in conception, these complex harmonies were incorrectly realised in Walsh's edition; a crucial *f* double sharp (in bar 72) and *f* sharp (on the downbeat of bar 73) were neglected causing an unintelligible tone cluster instead of the diminished chord the composer intended. This inaccurate realisation provides one example of the difficulty Bononcini encountered in properly communicating to the London public his vivid and occasionally unorthodox text painting which

[78] Burney, *General History*, IV, 285.

includes surprising harmonisations. It is unlikely that the amateur musician purchasing Walsh's edition could have corrected this confounded harmonic realisation. Collectively, typographical errors of this sort for which Walsh was infamous would have diminished Bononcini's music to the public. This is particularly relevant when considering that Charles Burney, the most cited music historian from the period, based his assessment of Bononcini's musical merit on these published editions.

Bononcini's innovative style of composition also prompted one of the first appearances of the *corno da caccia* as a prominent solo instrument on the operatic stage in England.[79] Senesino's Act II aria 'Le fere a risvegliar' is constructed on the familiar metaphor of the *cacciator* and represents one example of this novel horn orchestration. The two treble instruments accompanying the singer are in F major and, while not indicated as such by Walsh, the music is characteristic of the *corno da caccia* (Appendix III. Ex. 20). Burney provided further detail: 'Senesino's capital air in the second act, seems more calculated to introduce a symphony for French horns, than shew [*sic*] the abilities of this great singer; the passages are in themselves poor, and enriched by no other accompaniment than a violoncello.'[80] This criticism is understandable, the pairing of two *corni da caccia* and basso continuo is highly unusual. Perhaps to augment and bring balance to the orchestration in performance, the basso continuo included some or possibly all of the '*Viole, Violon: e fagotti*' ascribed to the Act I duet 'Al mio Nativo Prato'. Referring to the 1968 recording of the aria, Dean notes 'there is an interesting hunting piece for Gualtiero, with horns in the first part and recorders in the second'.[81] However, the inclusion of recorders is not supported by any known source in connection with the aria.

Throughout 'Le Fere a risvegliar' the instrumentation is imbalanced and sparse perhaps suggesting Gualtiero's lack of authenticity: Bononcini alerts the audience to the character's disturbing actions with a matching unsettling orchestration. A pattern emerges between Bononcini's musical contrivances and aspects of Gualtiero's character. The aria 'Volgendo a me lo sguardo', with its awkward string crossings for the violin, would have created uneasy tension in an otherwise lyrical aria. Another example is the Act I aria 'Sì già sento', which contains the highest pitch in any extant music for Senesino's voice, a notated *g″* (Appendix III, Ex. 21).[82] Handel seems never to have composed for Senesino's voice above *e″*. When compared to manuscripts by other composers, Senesino is still only known to have sung to *f″* with the single exception of Alessandro Scarlatti's *La gloria della Primavera*, which includes a notated *g″* but the part was not originally composed for Senesino's voice.[83] In 'Sì già sento', Gualtiero's internal conflict appears

[79] [Alessandra Rossi Lürig], 'Giovanni Bononcini, Biography', entry posted 25 October 2011, http://www.bononcini.org (accessed 26 June 2015).
[80] Burney, *General History*, IV, 285.
[81] Dean, review of 'BONONCINI Griselda, 821.
[82] Walsh's published edition is an unreliable source to validate an aria's key as he often transposed to make the music more suitable for flute and domestic music making purposes. However, the manuscript source Gb-Lam, MS 90 is in unison with Walsh and confirm 'Sì già sento' to be in F major.
[83] Scarlatti's *La Gloria della Primavera* was originally presented in Naples in 1716 at the Palazzo di Nicola Gaetano d'Aragona honouring the birth of Leopold, Archduke of Austria. It was likely offered to the London public on 28 March 1721 as an 'Entertainment of Musick' supplemental to the Royal Academy of Music's

to have motivated Bononcini's use of extreme range; equating love to seasonality, Gualtiero poetically shows his amorous feelings for his intended bride, Almirena:

Sì già sento l'ardor che m'accende	Yes, I already feel the passion that enflames me
Sol Contento portarmi nel sen.	Alone I am content to carry [it] in my breast.
Dopo un Verno di freddi rigori,	After a winter of harsh cold,
Vien per me la stagione de' fiori:	The season of the flowers has come to me:
Lieto è il Suolo, ed il Cielo è seren.	Happy is the earth, and heaven is serene.
Sì, etc.	Yes, etc.

Immediately preceding 'Sì già sento' Griselda makes a bold statement of her fidelity, 'Gualtiero aprimi'l petto, e lo vedrai' (Gualtiero, open my chest and you will see it [the love I bear for you]), which prompts and influences Gualtiero's response in the aria; with the use of extreme range, the audience is informed of Gualtiero's burden in challenging the worthiness of Griselda. Vocally and dramatically emphasising the poetry, a melismatic outburst on the word 'portarmi' (to carry) ends with the *g″* pitch reaching the upper limit of Senesino's range. This suggests that Bononcini was concerned with dramatic affect more than vocal quality, as this pitch would likely have sounded laboured in Senesino's voice. If the *g″* pitch was comfortable for Senesino, it would almost certainly have been notated by other composers for the singer on at least a few occasions throughout his long career.[84] 'Sì già sento' demonstrates further challenging musical elements for Senesino: scalar runs, repeated note coloratura patterning, and in the span of two bars, an expansive range of an octave and a sixth. The rhythmically and harmonically complex coloratura in the aria's "B" section on the word 'seren' (serene) would also have proven challenging (Appendix III, Ex. 22). The musical notes and text are misaligned, making this awkward phrase one of the most demanding in the opera. The word *seren* suggests fluid and consonant coloratura motifs, but Bononcini uncharacteristically does little to reflect the word's meaning in the music, perhaps disclosing that this happiness and serenity are fleeting.

Gualtiero's duality, as demonstrated by an incongruous joining of text and music, can also be found in the aria 'Affeto gioja'. Dean finds the aria to lack invention, stating: '[Gualtiero] galumphs through the words a couple of times as if repeating the weather forecast'.[85] In the preceding recitative, Gualtiero shows vulnerability and a lack of sovereignly fortitude with his declaration 'Non spero mai conforto' (I never expect any comfort). The text of the aria substantiates his misery:

season. See Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music (1719-1728)*, 149. In 1721 Senesino performed the role of 'Primavera' which was originally composed for Margherita Durastanti. The *g″* pitch appears in the opening aria for the character, 'Già fermò sù l'empia ruota'.

[84] While no source survives to confirm, is also possible that Senesino utilised this pitch regularly in his *da capo* ornamentation choices which would not have been notated.

[85] Winton Dean, 'BONONCINI Griselda, excerpts', 821.

Affetto gioja e riso	Affection joy and laughter
Il Volto finger,	The feigning visage,
Ma il core piangierà	But the heart has wept
Che in stille di dolor	That in drops of sorrow
Pietà discioglie.	Pity dissolves.
Oh quanto Mensognera	Oh as a dream without order
È la Virtù severa!	Virtue is severe!
Nasconda un fier Martir,	It conceals a fierce Martyr,
Ma non lo toglie.	But do not take it away.

'Affetto gioia' reveals that in pleasing his subjects, Gualtiero has become despondent. The cheerful *maestoso* piece in F major, with a tempo marking of *con spirito* and dotted rhythmic flourishes depicting the flames of love is musically at odds with the anguish represented in the aria's text. Triplet coloratura passages and incisive rhythmic delivery suggest Gualtiero's excitement to be free from Griselda while unison violins accompany the vocal part enhancing the aria's focus on rhetoric. Harmonic dissonance on the word 'pietà', further accentuated by an unprepared jagged leap to *f''*, adds to the depiction of Gualtiero's conflicted emotional state (Appendix III, Ex. 23). The word 'pietà' prompted musical dissonance that, with a sense of momentum created by a quickening harmonic pace, resolves to a consonant C major chord on the final syllable of the word 'discioglie' (dissolves). This demonstrates Bononcini's considered attention to textual detail in operatic composition.

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In *La Griselda*, Senesino sang among a distinguished cast, shown in Table 5.

Table 5: *Interlocutori* in Bononcini's *La Griselda*, 1722

Character name	Description of character in libretto	Name of performer	Voice type
Griselda	*Pastorella*	*Mrs.* Anastasia Robinson	alto
Almirena	*Principessa amata da* Ernesto	*La Signora* Madalena Salvai	soprano
Gualtiero	*Re di* Sicilia	*Il Signor* Francesco Bernardi, *detto* Senesino	alto castrato
Rambaldo	*Suo Generale*	*Il Signor* Giuseppe Boschi	bass
Ernesto	*Prencipe di Puglia*	*Il Signor* Bened. Baldassarri	soprano castrato

The soprano castrato Benedetto Baldassari (*fl.* 1708-25), who often depicted females on stage suggesting that his physical stature was small and his features delicate, portrayed the role of the affable Prince Ernesto in *La Griselda*.[86] While his date of birth is currently unknown, a mezzotint

[86] The singer's first name was also seen as Benedetti and his surname came in the variation Baldassarri; his possible date of death is 1739—as noted on the mezzotint which follows later in this chapter—and a

of the singer from 1724 seen in Figure 10 depicts a youthful gentleman of noble bearing in possession of a protruding nose of particular note.

Figure 10: Mezzotint of Benedetto Baldassari from 1724 (London) by George Vertue (1684-1756) depicting the singer's youthful features, based on a painting by Beluzzi (GB-Cfm, 2540720).

Benedetti is listed as having died in England (though there is no date), presumably this is referencing the singer.

Anton Maria Zanetti's caricature of the singer, shown in Figure 11, also brings attention to Baldassari's protruding nose.

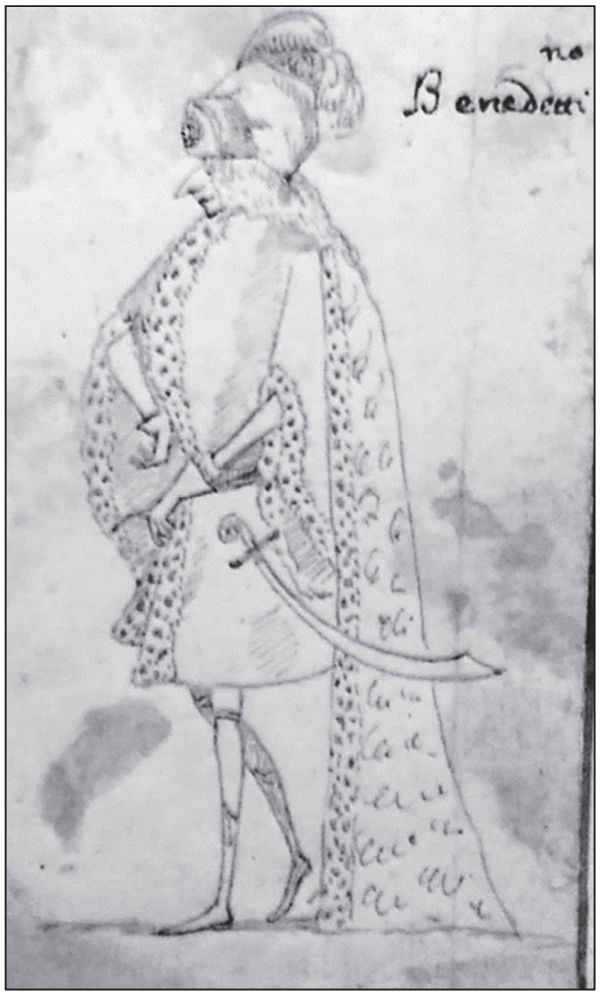

Figure 11: Caricature by Anton Maria Zanetti of Benedetto Baldassari bringing attention to his protruding nose (Cini Foundation, Venice).

In the two roles Handel composed for Baldassari the vocal compass lies from *e′* to *a″*, though in *La Griselda* a lower range from *b* to *g″* is exhibited. He was first engaged by Handel to perform in London at the Queen's Theatre in 1712 in revivals of works by Francesco Mancini (*Idaspe Fedele*), Francesco Gasparini (*Antioco*), and in the pasticcio *Ercole* of 1712.[87] Handel invited him to return to London to join the Royal Academy of Music in its first season, 1719 and Baldassari remained in the vicinity until at least 1725 when he is found singing in a series of sixteen successful concerts in Dublin.[88]

[87] Winton Dean, 'Baldassari, Benedetto', *GMO*, accessed 4 May 2015. Baldassari's youthful appearance in 1722 suggests that he was exceptionally juvenile when performing as Darius in *L' Idaspe fedele* in London ten years earlier.
[88] Highfill, et al., 'Baldassari', *BDA*, I, 235.

Winton Dean proposes that while Baldassari was talented enough to be performing on international stages, he was likely not seen as a top-tier soloist.[89] This is supported by examining *La Griselda* in which Baldassari is allocated four arias and a duet, a typical number of selections for a *secondo uomo* but far fewer than the seven arias and two duets apportioned to Senesino, the *primo uomo*.[90] While skill is required with singing intervals and short coloratura motifs in one aria, the majority of Baldassari's music is lyrical, generally marked *piano* as he is frequently secretly singing to Almirena, and, with the exception of the Act III duet, the vocal line is doubled by the violin part. In addition to the harmonic and melodic support, instrumental doubling provided to Baldassari's vocal line, further indications of the singer's youth in 1722 include a lack of heroic music with a *maestoso* quality, a vocal range which is never extended to virtuosic high or low extremes, and a lack of long legato phrases and extended coloratura passages.

Maria Maddalena Salvai (*fl.* 1716-1737), who, according to Winton Dean 'seems not to have been an exceptional singer', performed the role of the young and enticing Almirena in *La Griselda*. She possessed a high-tessitura soprano voice with a range from *e′* to *b♭″*.[91] While little is known of her, Salvai had been of interest to the Directors of the Royal Academy since 1719 and joined the company a year later after Senesino wrote to Giuseppe Riva in London early in 1720 noting her 'most beautiful voice'.[92] She sang in London for two seasons and it was initially proposed that she be paid £300 for the season, which would only have been exceeded by Anastasia Robinson and Margherita Durastanti who were each offered £500.[93] Senesino's letter suggests that she wanted 800 guineas for the first season and 1,500 for the next two, an excessively high fee which she seems not to have received.[94] The bass Giuseppe Maria Boschi (*fl.* 1698-1744) who most often portrayed tyrants and villainous characters performed the role of the military general Rambaldo in *La Griselda*. Another who joined the Royal Academy directly from performing in

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[89] Dean, 'Baldassari, Benedetto', *GMO*.

[90] Baldassari's arias include: Act I scene 3, 'Non deggio no sperare', a lyrical *andante* with leaps up to a 7th reaching *g″* in which Ernesto proclaims that without his beloved Almirena he will sigh and be tormented; Act II scene 1, 'Per la Gloria d'adorarvi', an *andante* which, with its simple but enchanting triple meter tune is perhaps the most well-known from *La Griselda* today; Act II scene 7, 'Che giova fuggire', with a delicate *andante e piano* tempo and dynamic indication this aria is sung to Ernesto's secret love, Almirena, and immediately precedes another tender moment Senesino, the aria 'Dolce sogno' for Senesino; Act III scene 1, 'Troppo è il dolore', a pulsing triple-meter *lento* aria in which Ernesto tries to console his beloved as she faces her difficult fate; and the Act III scene 3 duet, 'Quel timoroso cervo cacciato' which finally sees the young lovers united in a bucolic scene accompanied by dueting oboes.

[91] Winton Dean, 'Salvai, Maria Maddalena', *GMO*, accessed 4 May 2015.

[92] *Ibid*., Salvai had worked with Senesino in Dresden in 1719 as a part of Lotti's Italian opera troupe there.

[93] In addition to *La Griselda*, Salvai sang for the Royal Academy of Music in performances of Handel's *Radamisto* (1720) and *Floridante* (1721); the pasticcio *Arsace* (1721) with music by Orlandini and Amadei; *Crispo* (1722) by Bononcini; and *Muzio Scevola* (1721) with music by Handel, Bononcini, and Amadei. The original document citing Salvai's salary is held at Nottingham University Library, Portland MSS PwB 93[a]. It is entirely reproduced in Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, 'New Light on Handel and the Royal Academy of Music in 1720', *Theatre Journal*, 35 (1983), 149-67. See also Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music (1719-1728)*, 135-136, and Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, 'Opera Salaries in Eighteenth-Century London', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 46/1 (1993), 26-83; 32-33.

[94] When she finally joined the Royal Academy in 1720 Robinson received only £300, making her actual fee equivalent to Salvai's.

Dresden with Senesino, Boschi possessed a notably high baritone tessitura and a wide range from *G* to *g′* and he sang in all 32 Royal Academy operas from 1720-1728.[95]

The title role of the persecuted shepherdess was sung in 1722 by the English contralto Anastasia Robinson ([1692]-1755). Active from 1713, Robinson holds the distinction of being the singer with whom Handel most often collaborated.[96] Robinson was an instant favourite with English audiences and she reportedly 'attracted great crowds with spectators spilling onto the stage'.[97] Her voice was recognised for its 'charm and expressiveness' rather than its technical virtuosity and she was praised for her emotional depth and charisma in dramatic portrayal.[98] Matching her rich-toned voice, Robinson excelled at depicting emotionally anguished dramatic dispositions rather than depictions of anger, violence, or scorn. In Handel's *Giulio Cesare* of 1724 she sang the tragic role of Cornelia, whose husband's severed headed is delivered in the opera's third scene. Certainly, an intense leading couple would have been on display in *La Griselda* as Senesino was similarly lauded for his convincing character depictions.[99] The following accounts attest that Griselda seems to have been tailor-made to Robinson's temperament both on and off stage:

> Her general education had been pursued with the utmost care and attention to the improvement of her mind, as well as to ornamental and external accomplishments; and these advantages, seconded by her own disposition and amiable qualities, rendered her conduct strictly prudent and irreproachable. And what still entitled her to general favour, was a behaviour full of timidity and respect to her superiors, and an undissembled gentleness and affability to others, which, with a native cheerfulness that diffused itself to all around her, gained her at all times such a reception from the public, as seemed to ensure her success in whatever she should undertake.[100]

The advantageous status *La Griselda* achieved was due in part to its novelty of subject. All nine of the preceding Royal Academy of Music operas had heroic princes and kings as their leading characters; Griselda was the first to depict not only a woman, but a humble shepherdess, as in the title role.[101] Adding to the opera's success were Robinson's vocal and dramatic suitability to the role of Griselda. Her gentle arias were well crafted to match the opera's *pastorale* theme and the

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[95] Winton Dean, 'Boschi, Giuseppe Maria', *GMO*, accessed 30 March 2015. Before arriving in Dresden in 1717 Boschi was a frequent performer throughout Italy and in Vienna in the operas of Francesco Gasparini (1661-1727), Carlo Francesco Pollarolo (*c*. 1653-1723), Antonio Caldara (1670-1736), and Antonio Lotti (*c*.1667-1740).

[96] See Winton Dean, 'Robinson, Anastasia', *GMO*, accessed 18 August 2015. Robinson initially sang in the soprano range in operas including Handel's *Amadigi di Gaula* (1715) and a revival of his *Rinaldo* in 1715 though, due to illness, around 1718, her voice dropped to the contralto register. When the Royal Academy of Music was founded in 1720, she performed with the company for its first three productions, notably creating the part of Zenobia in Handel's *Radamisto* (1720, first version). Robinson then sang in all the operas from the spring of 1721 to the summer of 1724.

[97] Highfill, Jr., et al., s.v. 'Robinson, Anastasia', *BDA*.

[98] Dean, 'Robinson, Anastasia', *GMO*; Highfill, Jr., et al., s.v. 'Robinson, Anastasia', *BDA*.

[99] Regarding Senesino's dramatic portrayal see Riccoboni, *Réflexions historiques*, 39, and Bucciarelli, 'From Rinaldo to Orlando', 318.

[100] Burney, *General History*, IV, 245.

[101] See Lindgren, 'A Bibliographic Scrutiny', I, 265-266, and Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music (1719-1728)*, 157.

humble demeanour of the shepherdess. Burney also commented on her performances in *La Griselda* and alludes to her relations with Lord Peterborough:

> None of Mrs. Robinson's airs are remarkably captivating now; and yet, it is supposed, that by the performance of the part of Griselda, or Patient Grisel, in this opera, she completed her conquest over the stout heart of the Earl of Peterborough. Indeed, there seems to have been some remote similarity in the situations of that character, and the events of Mrs. Robinson's own life. Griselda, a country girl of mean birth, elevated for her beauty, to a throne; then degraded, and sent back to her original obscurity; and, for her virtues, afterwards restored to royalty, with superior splendor to that of her first exaltation. Mrs. Robinson, the daughter of an artist of no great eminence, elevated to a theatrical throne for her beauty and talents; then quitting her high dramatic state, and, in appearance, degrading herself to the humble character of mistress to a nobleman, who afterwards owned her for his wife, and invested her with all the honours, privileges, and splendor, of a peeress of Great Britain.[102]

Extolled in the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Pierre Roussel, and Ernst Brandes, the patience and loyalty generously offered by Griselda to Gualtiero were prised virtues for an eighteenth-century wife.[103] Arias such as 'Parto amabile ben mio', in Act I scene 2, illustrate that Griselda is willing to relinquish her place as queen, asking only to be kept in Gualtiero's heart.[104] Additionally, her subservience and devotion to Gualtiero demonstrate qualities which Robinson also expressed in her relationship with Lord Peterborough. Painted in 1723, the year after *La Griselda* was first performed in London, Figure 12 illustrates that portraits of Robinson appear to have been influenced by her portrayal of lamenting characters such as Griselda.

[102] Burney, *General History*, IV, 285.

[103] Jean-Jacque Rousseau states his theories on women and their place in eighteenth-century society in many of his publications, most depictive is *Émile, ou De l'éducation*, 5 vols ([Geneva]: Chez Jean Néaulme, 1762); Pierre Roussel, *Système physique et moral de la femme* (Paris: Chez Vincent, 1775); Ernst Brandes, *Ueber die Weiber* (Leipzig: Weidmann & Reich, 1787). For descriptions of feminine traits deemed respectable, particularly as they were represented on the stage, see Julie Mae Koser, 'Representations of armed women in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century German literature', PhD diss. (University of California, Berkeley, 2007), of relevance are pp. 189-191. While Koser's thesis is concerned largely with German theatrical literature, she addresses aspects of common thought relating to the feminine throughout the eighteenth century, not only in Germany, but also in France and England.

[104] The full text of Griselda's aria is: 'Parto amible ben mio: / Ma ricordati di me: / Lascia almen, se non poss'io; / Il cor mio restar con te'. (I leave amiably my beloved: / But remember me: / Leaving at least, if it is not possible that I [remain]; / [Let] my heart rest with you.)

Figure 12: Mrs. Anastasia Robinson, painted in 1723, published in 1727, original by John Vanderbank (1694-1739), engraved by John Faber the younger (GB-Lv, S.1957-2009, Harry Beard Collection).

In addition to representing feminine virtue, Robinson became an embodiment of British patriotism, propriety, and good taste lasting well into the nineteenth century. Burney stated that he found her behaviour, on all occasions, to be that of a gentlewoman with perfect propriety.[105] British nationalists such as Carey, who opposed the presence of Italian singers in London and the Italian opera in general found Robinson to be an exemplar of talent. The influence her stage portrayals had on perceptions of her private life and her lasting public reputation can be seen in Carey's comparison of Robinson to the Italian soprano Francesca Cuzzoni:

> Who, were the *English*, with united Rage,
> Themselves would justly hiss from off the Stage:
> With better Voice, and fifty times Her Skill,
> Poor R[obinso]N is always treated ill:
> But, such is the good Nature of the Town,
> 'Tis now the Mode to cry the *English* down.[106]

[105] Hall, *Correspondence of Mary Granville,* 72.
[106] Carey, *Faustina: Or the Roman Songstress,* 6.

The epigram continues in a tone infused with wounded pride as Carey renders an image of Cuzzoni as a trespassing Italian and he scolds his fellow unpatriotic Britons for preferring her to Robinson. These conflations between public perception and personal attributes, as magnified and personified on the stage, are similar to comments made by Burney regarding Senesino. He found there to be 'dignity and spirit in Senesino's style of performing', and he additionally felt:[107]

> Senesino had so noble a voice and a manner of singing, was so admirable an actor, and in such high favour with the public, that besides the real force and energy of his performance, there was an additional weight and importance given to whatever he sung, by the elevated situation in which he stood with the audience.[108]

These perceptions of Senesino as distinguished, clever, and vibrant show his ability to craft favourable off-stage reception with onstage dramatic portrayals.[109] Baldassari showed similar concern for his representation on the stage. In connection with *Radamisto* of 1720, he voiced his concerns to the Board of Directors for the Royal Academy of Music. It seems the low social class of the role he had been assigned by Handel, that of a Captain of the Guard, did not suit him as 'he had never acted any thing, in any other opera, below the character of a sovereign or, at least, a Prince of the Blood'.[110] His request was granted and his role was modified to become a Prince, Fraarte, who represented appropriate class and was a style of character with which he was more accustomed to portraying.

Senesino had worked carefully to fashion a favourable public persona which contradicted the gossip that had preceded his joining London's Royal Academy of Music in 1720. In 1715 he had been regarded as an arrogant 'conceited eunuch' with 'no respect for anyone'.[111] Concerned with his imminent reception and hoping to combat unfavourable perceptions of his off-stage personality, it seems Senesino realised he could manifest a more desirable public persona by constructing the roles he portrayed on stage to reflect dignified attributes of personal character. Having been engaged by the Royal Academy for his consummate musical ability and accompanying celebrity, Senesino seems to have wielded influence to alter libretti and enhance his characters' prestige in the London operas of Giovanni Bononcini. The adjustments were successful; the Earl of Egmont imagined Senesino 'to be a Man of *excellent Sense*' based on his stage persona.[112]

Robinson was also actively involved in modifying her roles and was consequently held in high regard. She exercised considerable influence over both Bononcini (whom she 'haunted') and

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[107] Burney, *General History*, IV, 398.
[108] Charles Burney, *Sketch of the Life of Handel* (London: Payne and Robinson, 1785), 23.
[109] For more on Senesino crafting fame see Bucciarelli, Farò il possibile', 53-87.
[110] The fictional write 'Musidorus' on Baldassari in *The Theatre*, 21 (8–12 March 1720) as cited in Deutsch, *Handel*, 101. See also Highfill, Jr., et al., s.v. 'Baldassari, Benedetto', *BDA*, I, 236 and Bucciarelli, 'Farò il possibile', 57.
[111] Lodovico Frati, 'Un impresario teatrale del Settecento e la sua biblioteca', *Rivista musicale Italiana*, 18/1 (1911), 64-84; 74. English translation adapted from Heriot, *The Castrati in Opera*, 91. See Quantz, *Lebenslauf*, I, 214.
[112] Perceval, ed., *Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont*, II, 235.

Handel.[113] In the duet 'Dell'offesa vendicarti' (Of the offense you are vindicated), which closes Act II, Gualtiero and Griselda demonstrate aspects of Senesino and Robinson's off-stage personas. The insensitive Gualtiero is agitated, represented by fast moving triplet coloratura, while Griselda, who is calm and steadfast, sings in lyrical legato phrases (Appendix III, Ex. 24). Bononcini composed the music for both characters in a similar vocal range, showing them in unison musically and dramatically as a couple. Robinson continued to shape her public persona in the portrayal of Griselda. A published 1722 stanza states that *Griselda* was a 'Lady Renowned for Patience and Submission, the most noble Feminine Virtues' before continuing to recount a squabble between Robinson and the librettist, Rolli:

> *Cast from her Kingdom, from her Lord exil'd,*
> Griselda *still was Lamb-like, mute and mild.*
> *But* Rolli*'s Verse provok'd the Saint to Roar,*
> *She rav'd, she madned, and her Pinners Tore.*
> *Till* Bononcini *smoooth'd the rugged Strains,*
> *And Sanctify'd the miserable Scenes.*
> *At each soft sound, again she felt her Thought,*
> *And all the Nonsence dy'd beaneath the Note.*
> *Appeas'd she cry'd, it is enough good Heaven!*
> *Let* Gualtier*, and let* Rolli *be forgiven.*[114]

According to the verse, Robinson was displeased with Rolli's text and she asked Bononcini to cleanse the 'miserable scenes'. Satisfied with the results of the intervention, she offers forgiveness to Rolli, just as Griselda had done in the closing scene of the opera to her wrongdoer, Gualtiero. This was not the only time Robinson had suggested modifications to her character. In 1723, when first presented with the music for Matilda in Handel's *Ottone*, she found it impractical to perform due in large part to the character's scornful disposition.[115] Viewing herself 'a Patient Grisell by Nature', referring to her success in Bononcini's *Griselda*, Robinson felt she was being asked to portray 'an abominable Scold'.[116] Handel granted Robinson's request before the opera was performed and modified the role to more closely align with the singer's identity. Similarly, in 1720 Senesino insisted to his friend Rolli that the opera *Amore e maestà*, which he had first sung in 1715, be revised to add more arias. Rolli indicated:

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[113] Highfill, Jr., et al., s.v. 'Robinson, Anastasia', *BDA*, XIII, 22. The word 'haunted' appears in a letter from Francis Atterbury, Dean of Westminster and Bishop of Rochester to Alexander Pope, likely written in the spring of 1722.
[114] *The Freeholder's Journal*, 14 March 1722. For further discussion on this passage and its relation to Robinson (both on and off stage) see Suzanne Aspden, *The Rival Sirens: Performance and Identity on Handel's Operatic Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 99.
[115] Dean, 'Robinson', *GMO*.
[116] Dean, 'Robinson', *GMO*. 'Grisell' is an alternate representation of the name Griselda.

> [the] opera cannot be performed as at Florence, because it would then have so much endless recitative and so few arias, that Senesino would have only four in all. I was therefore instructed to polish it up… I removed and added and changed as was necessary.[117]

Senesino endeavoured to influence his public reception in London with the choice and subsequent modification of *Arsace*, as *Amore e maestà* had been retitled for London, for these 1721 representations.[118] Upon his arrival in London in 1720, Senesino was working to craft a public persona against negative chatter that had preceded him.[119] Count Zambeccari, who deplored Senesino, found him in 1715 to be arrogant, stating he has 'no respect for anyone' and that all of Naples found him to be a 'conceited eunuch'.[120] Quantz also recounts the irascible Senesino's unacceptable behaviour in 1719 during rehearsals of Heinichen's *Flavio Crispo* in Dresden when, in a hot-headed rage, he tore a score to pieces throwing it at the feet of the Kappelmeister.[121] It appears Senesino realised he could manifest his desired public persona by considerately crafting his characters on stage. It is arguable he had a strong hand in the final representation of *La Griselda* in London, which varied greatly from previous depictions in Italy. Many of the finest elements of Zeno's 1701 libretto were reassigned to Senesino's character in 1722.

In *La Griselda,* the touching and gentle aria 'Dolce sogno' represented an opportunity for Senesino to craft a stage persona that could correct his off-stage eruptions. Ultimately, a pathos-filled scene was fashioned around this aria imbued with emotion Senesino could depict with distinction thereby adding depth, humanity, and nuance to the otherwise manipulative character of Gualtiero. As previously mentioned, this scene caught the attention of the playwright Richard Steele who instilled his ingénue in *The Conscious Lovers* with the transcendence he himself felt upon hearing the aria. Senesino had realised his desired effect and won favourable notoriety with the London public.[122] In the discourse between Indiana and her suitor, Steele also illustrates ties between *La Griselda* and Bononcini's *Crispo*, which were presented in the same season:

> *B. jun.* …pray tell me […] whether *Crispo* or *Griselda* is the more agreeable entertainment.
> *Ind.* With submission now I cannot be a proper judge of this question.
> *B. jun.* How so, madam?
> *Ind.* Because I find I have a partiality for one of them.
> *B. jun.* Pray which is that?
> *Ind.* I do not know—there's something in that rural cottage of Griselda, her forlorn condition, her poverty, her solitude, her resignation, her innocent slumbers, and that lulling

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[117] 'Sappiate che la Marga di concerto col nostro Senesino prospero l'opera d'Amore e Maestà: La qual' opera non può Farsi come a Firenze, perchè così saria d'innumerabile recitativo e di tante poche ariette; che IL Sen.^{no} n'avrebbe 4 sole in tutto. Ebbi ordine dunque d'acconciarla, e di concerto con amendue, tolsi ed aggiunsi e cangia il necessario'. Letter, Paolo Rolli to Giuseppe Riva, 8 October 1720. English trans. in Deutsch, *Handel*, 114-115, also Streatfeild, 'Handel, Rolli, and Italian Opera', 435.
[118] See Bucciarelli, 'Farò il possibile', 53-87.
[119] *Ibid*.
[120] Cited in Frati, 'Un impresario teatrale', 74. English translation adapted from Heriot, *The Castrati in Opera*, 91.
[121] Quantz, *Lebenslauf*, I, 214.
[122] Steele, *The Conscious Lovers*, 37-38.

> *dolce sogno* that's sung over her, it had an effect upon me that—In short, I never was so well deceiv'd at any of them.
> *B. jun.* Oh! now then I can account for the dispute: *Griselda*, it seems, is the distress of an injur'd, innocent woman, *Crispo* that only of a man in the same condition, therefore the men are mostly concern'd for Crispo, and, by a natural indulgence, both sexes for Griselda.[123]

Steele clearly shows the contrary public reception of these two operas influenced by the leading character's gender. Bononcini's *Crispo* and *La Griselda*, taken in tandem, present a sociologically significant statement offering a binary play on suffering and its gender-based reception. This discourse reveals that *La Griselda*, which appealed to the sympathetic nature of both men and women, gained a wider appreciation than *Crispo* to which only the men in the audience could relate. Interestingly, Steele draws comparison between the two operas by Bononcini, rather than contrasting the works of Bononcini and Handel who had so consistently and purposefully been painted as rivals in the public eye. While the thematic connections between *Crispo* and *La Griselda* have been discussed by Strohm and Lindgren, the relationship of the leading singers to their characters spanning both operas has not been addressed.[124] Closer consideration reveals that a seventeenth-century convention was at play whereby the same performer portrays drastically varied character types as a means of demonstrating musical and dramatic mastery. Both operas are pathos-inducing for the ample dejection heaped upon their title characters; however, the roles of subjugator and victim were reversed between Robinson and Senesino within the two works. In *Crispo*, which was premiered on 10 January 1722, Robinson portrayed the vile and cunning Roman Empress Fausta who falls deeply in love with her stepson Crispo, sung by Senesino.[125] Fausta blames Crispo for her own crime and he is sentenced to drink poison. Crispo dutifully obeys and is saved in the last moment through his brother's intervention. In *La Griselda* Senesino played the tyrant in the role of Gualtiero; Robinson, as the unfortunate shepherdess Griselda, portrayed the wounded character. Offered in the same season, sometimes on closely alternating dates (listed in Appendix II, Table 10), audience acknowledgement of this reversal of roles would have been inevitable. Additionally, these characters exemplify aspects of agency, privilege, and societal standing. The virtuous Crispo, as the step-son of the Empress, was powerless to bring about change just as the stoic heroine Griselda put herself at the mercy of King Gualtiero who maintained ultimate control of her destiny.

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[123] Richard Steele, *The Conscious Lovers* (London: J. Tonson, 1723), 37-38. The play first appeared on the stage of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane on 7 November 1722. This section of text had been removed (as the text referring to *La Griselda* was no longer relevant) for 1791 revival performances of the play.
[124] On the pairing of *Crispo* and *La Griselda* see Lindgren, 'A Bibliographic Scrutiny', I, 260–6, Reinhard Strohm, *Dramma Per Musica: Italian Opera Seria of the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 54-6, and Reinhard Strohm, 'Dramatic Dualities: Metastasio and the Tradition of the Opera Pair', *Early Music*, 26/4 (1998), 551-561; 556.
[125] Lowell Lindgren, 'Crispo', *GMO*, accessed 24 February 2017.

Early in the 1722-1723 season *Crispo* was offered again with a modified cast.[126] As it was presented without connection to *La Griselda*, and the thematic pairing withdrawn, Robinson shed her usual *prima donna* portrayal to sing the part more aligned with her personal demeanour, the young lover Olimpia. Margherita Durastanti, whom Rolli called an 'Elephant' and Burney noted to be 'masculine and course', sang the role of Fausta favourably magnifying Robinson's femininity by comparison.[127] The success of Senesino's efforts to win favourable public opinion in 1722 was upset by his inability to contain his emotions and respect his colleagues. A magnet for gossip and behind the scenes intrigue, Senesino found himself part of a scandal related to Anastasia Robinson as this (likely exaggerated) account attests:

> Early in 1714, Lord Peterborough married the *prima donna* of the time, Mistress Anastasia Robinson. He induced her to consent to a private marriage, at which Lady Oxford attended as friend and witness; but as he persisted in deferring the public announcement, Mrs Robinson long laboured under the reproach of an immoral connection. She continued on the stage until 1722, when an unpleasant incident caused her withdrawal from a profession with which she had never been in sympathy. Lord Peterborough always escorted her to and from the opera, and his public attentions not seldom exposed her to unpleasant misconstruction. At last, Senesino, an Italian singer, acted as if he believed her to be a woman of easy morality. Mrs Robinson hastened to complain of his insolence to Lord Peterborough, who, at the time, was in the theatre. He rushed upon the stage, seized the astonished singer, dragged him off, and compelled him on his knees to apologise to the offended lady. This public *esclandre* naturally produced a great sensation, and Mrs Robinson retired from the stage, of which for ten years she had been the acknowledged ornament.[128]

This incident was unlikely to have been the catalyst prompting Robinson's retirement from the stage, though Senesino's affront clearly fanned the flames of rumour surrounding her seemingly improper relations with Lord Peterborough. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762) appears to have been influenced by Robinson's portrayal of Griselda when she alluded to the scandal by recounting that the singer 'has engaged half the town in arms, from the nicety of her virtue, which was not able to bear the too near approach of Senesino in the opera'. The sixty-five-year-old Lord Peterborough humiliated the castrato. Lady Montagu's account continues in grandiose detail: 'Poor Senesino, like a vanquished giant, was forced to confess upon his knees that Anastasia was a nonpareil of virtue and beauty […] by the providence of Heaven, and the wise cares of his Majesty, no bloodshed ensued'.[129] This particular episode between Senesino and Robinson encapsulates

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[126] *Crispo* was offered in the 1722-1723 season on the following dates in 1722: November 17, 20, 24, 27, December 1, 29 and in 1723: January 2, 5, and 8.
[127] Rolli in a letter to Riva, 19 August 1719; Burney, *General History*, IV, 284.
[128] 1714 is a much earlier date than other sources ascribe to the marital union of Lord Peterborough and Anastasia Robinson; while it is difficult to say with certainty, owing to the private nature of the ceremony, other sources commonly agree on a date of 1722 or 1723.W. H. Davenport Adams, *Good Queen Anne; or, Men and manners, Life and Letters in the Augustan age* (London: Remington & Co, 1886), 338. This assessment places the date of the offense a year earlier than other accounts; it is possible it related to rehearsals of *La Griselda*, rather than *Farnace* of 1723.
[129] Lewis Melville, ed., *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, *Her Life and Letters (1689-1762)* (London: uncredited, 1925), Chapter XI: At Twickenham.

issues of Catholic verses Protestant, foreign verses English, and, for Henry Carey, natural verses unnatural. Carey crafts a 'scurrilously obscene' image of the impotent castrato Senesino as sexually inadequate and unable to function as a true man, thus, incapable of having offended Robinson with any sexual impropriety:[130]

> Wherein did I offend? Alas! I own
> There is a Crime in having nothing done; […]
> If in that Scene of Love I seem'd too rude,
> And *my* false Transports disoblig'd the Prude;
> If the warm Lover my Caresses show,
> Your Vengeance on the faulty Author throw.
> My Lips express'd what never touch'd my Heart,
> My Flames and Darts, are nothing all but Art,
> Love I may feign, but can't go thro' the Part.
> 'Tis but a Blaze which does to nothing turn,
> It Glow-worm like may shine but cannot burn […]
> But too, too late, I sigh for what we want;
> My Childhood robb'd me of the Means to please,
> My utmost Length of Love can only teaze…[131]

This incident between Robinson and Senesino endured, adding to their lasting reputation well into the nineteenth century when it was recounted in the 1886 novel *Mokawks*: 'Is not Mrs, Robinson the very pink and pattern of virtue; so chaste and cold a being that even the too tender wooing of Senesino in an opera—mere stage lovemaking—wound and offended her?'[132]

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Having been such a success in 1722, *La Griselda* was revived by Handel and Heidegger's second Royal Academy of Music eleven years later from 22 May to 9 June 1733 likely instigated by Senesino who was the only member of the previous cast to reprise his role. Bononcini had left London the year before, and this cast does not exhibit the nuanced character connections to musical and dramatic portrayal that marked the 1722 production.[133] Seen in Table 6, the ill-suited casting of *La Griselda* in 1733 which was the final opera presented by the company also draws focus to the second Royal Academy of Music's turmoil at that time.

[130] A description referring to the epistle in Aaron Hill, *The works of the late Aaron Hill, Esq*., 4 vol.s (London: uncredited, 1753), IV, 61.
[131] H.[enry] C.[arey], *Miscellanea, Nova et Curiosa: The New and Curious Miscellany* (Dublin: S Powell, 1749), 349-350.
[132] [Mary Elizabeth Braddon], *Mohawks. A novel*, 3 vols (London: J. & R. Maxwell, 1886), I, 257.
[133] Bononcini's final known performance in London was 24 June 1732 and he then went to Paris where, on 7 February and 2 April 1733, works of his were performed at the Concert Spirituel.

Table 6: *Interlocutori* in Bononcini's *La Griselda*, 1733

Character name	Description of character in libretto	Name of performer	Voice type
GRISELDA	*Pastorella*	*La Signora* Celeste	soubrette soprano
ALMIRENA	*Principessa amata da* ERNESTO	*La Signora* Bertolli	contralto
GUALTIERO	*Re di* Sicilia	*Il Signor* Francesco Bernardi, *detto* Senesino	alto castrato
RAMBALDO	*Suo Generale*	*Il Signor* Montagnana	bass
ERNESTO	*Prencipe di Puglia*	*Mr*. Montier	tenor

Among the mismatched and in one case inexperienced singers engaged for this production there are signs that Handel did not have firm artistic control of his company. Unsurprisingly, Senesino is the only singer to truly match the vocal and dramatic demands of his role in the 1733 performances. The down-trodden shepherdess Griselda was portrayed by Celeste Gismondi (?-1735), a soubrette soprano who was acclaimed in Naples for her performances in comedic *intermezzi*.[134] Her voice was clearly capable of virtuosic coloratura, as evidenced by the octave displacements and ornate flourishes required in 'Amor è qual vento' which she sang as the misguided Dorinda in Handel's *Orlando* of 1733. While Robinson was a contralto, noted to have a warm and rich voice that would have been aptly capable of aurally portraying Griselda's humility and piety, Celeste's soprano voice, described as 'brilliant', appears to have been the opposite.[135] Presumably, this comedic singer would have been more familiar with parodying serious sentiments than portraying them in heartfelt representation. Despite this she was found by some to be alluring. After hearing Celeste's London début in the pasticcio *Catone*, which opened the 1732-1733 season, Lord Hervey wrote:

> Celestina […] is not so pretty as she was, but sings better than she did. She seemed to take mightily, which I was glad of. I have a sort of friendship for her, without knowing why.[136]

Gismondi's vocal quality and dramatic portrayal seem so poorly matched to the traits of Griselda that it is difficult to comprehend how she was viewed favorably in the role. Perhaps the part had been modified or her voice had matured since earlier assessments. Hervey's comment that she 'sings better than she did' in 1729 and her portrayal of primary roles with the Opera of the Nobility

[134] After marrying an Englishman and moving to London, she was also billed by the surnames Resse and Hempson at different times. Franco Piperno, 'Gismondi, Celeste', *GMO*, accessed 24 June 2015. Gismondi performed the music of J. A. Hasse, L. Vinci, and D. Sarro from 1725 to 1732. For a table of Gismondi's known comedic roles from 1725-1733 see Reinhard Strohm, *Essays on Handel & Italian Opera*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, et al: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 268-269.
[135] Piperno, 'Gismondi, Celeste', *GMO*.
[136] Lord Hervey in a letter to his friend, Stephen Fox, on 4 November 1732, cited in Earle of Ilchester, ed., *Lord Hervey and His Friends 1726-38. Based on Letters from Holland House, Melbury, and Ickworth* (London: 1950), 145. Hervey refers to having previously seen Celeste in Naples during a trip with Fox from January to March 1729. See also Strohm, *Essays on Handel,* 249 and 205-06. Hervey incorrectly states that the opera performed for the opening of the 1732-1733 season was one by Handel, in fact, Handel had arranged the pasticcio *Catone*, comprised largely of music by Leonardo Leo and including works by A. Vivaldi, J. A. Hasse, N. Porpora, and L. Vinci.

in the 1733-1734 season seem to support this possibility. Putting vocal suitability aside, the deeper connections the audience apparently felt to the personal circumstance of Robinson in 1722, and how this intersected with her on-stage representation as Griselda, were certainly lacking in Gismondi's portrayal.

The enchanting youthful princess Almirena was played in 1733 by the Italian contralto Francesca Bertolli (?-1767). While renowned for her feminine beauty, she made a specialty of performing male characters.[137] The overtly feminine high-voiced Almirena seems to have been suited to this singer only in appearance, as the roles Handel composed for Bertolli show a limited vocal compass from *b*♭ to *e*″.[138] The role of Ernesto, originally performed by the soprano castrato Benedetto Baldassari, was assigned to Thomas Montier, a tenor and a relative novice who had made his stage début only one year earlier in a performance of Handel's *Acis and Galatea*.[139] Several arias and sections of recitative in *La Griselda* had to be removed to accommodate his lack of experience.[140]

Antonio Montagnana (*fl*. 1730–1750) sang the role of the conniving general Rambaldo which had been performed by Giuseppe Maria Boschi in 1722.[141] Montagnana joined the Royal Academy of Music in 1731 and sang in several revivals, as well as in *Ezio*, *Sosarme*, and *Orlando* which were all newly composed by Handel. From the 1733 cast, Montagnana's voice probably most closely resembled that of his predecessor as both were known for their extended high register, though Montagnana's 'angry rumbling' and 'roaring' bass low range was certainly celebrated as well.[142]

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[137] Hall, *Correspondence of Mary Granville*, I, 184. Mrs. Pendarves confirms that Bertolli's best asset was her beauty: '[she] has neither voice, ear, nor manner to recommend her; but she is a perfect beauty, quite a Cleopatra, that sort of complexion with regular features, fine teeth, and when she sings has a smile about her mouth which is extremely pretty, and I believe has practised to sing before a glass, for she has never any distortion in her face'. See also Winton Dean. 'Bertolli, Francesca', *GMO*, accessed 24 June 2015.

[138] Dean, 'Bertolli', *GMO*. Bertolli sang in at least fifteen of Handel's operas from 1729-1733 and afterwards she performed with the Opera of the Nobility. She sang in a total of twelve works for that company until 1736 when she returned to Handel's Royal Academy of Music for one final London season. Bertolli continued to sing in London in the works of Nicolà Porpora, F. M. Veracini, and G. Bononcini and, after leaving London in 1736 she sang in Italy until 1742 when she retired from the stage.

[139] *The Daily Post*, 2 May 1732; cited in William C. Smith, *Concerning Handel-His Life and Works* (Kent: Smith Press, 1948), 211-212. 'The Part of Acis by Mr. Mountier, being the first Time of his appearing in Character on any Stage'. The only other known performances Mountier participated in were two separate versions of the same popular English entertainment, *The Opera of Operas*—based on Fielding's *The Tragedy of Tragedies*—the first setting was by Thomas Augustine Arne (1710-1778) and was premiered on 31 May 1733 with at least six performances that season, and the second setting was by John Frederick Lampe (born Johann Friedrich Lampe; [1703]-1751) with performances on 7 and 9 November and 13 December 1733. See also Smith, *Concerning Handel*, 172, 174-175, and 178. Mountier is also mentioned in relation to a possible revival of Handel's *Ottone*, which was to be overseen by the composer sometime in or before 1733 but did not materialise. The cast would have included Senesino, Strada, Montagnana, Gismondi, Mountier, and Bertolli.

[140] Paolo Antonio Rolli, Libr., music by Giovanni Bononcini, *Griselda, an Opera as it was Performed at the King's Theatre for the Royal Academy* (London: T. Wood, 1733), at F-Pn, RES VS-594. Special thanks to Michael Burden who shared a copy of this source with me.

[141] Winton Dean. 'Montagnana, Antonio', *GMO*, accessed 24 June 2015.

[142] One place this 'angry rumbling' description of Montagnana's voice appears is in *The Craftsman* (7 April 1733) and Mrs. Pendarves mentions 'Montagnana, who roars as usual!' in a 27 November 1736 letter to her sister, Ann Granville, found in Hall, ed., *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville,* I, 578.

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Bononcini's *pastorale* and Handel's 'Heroick' compositions have been pitted against each other since the 1720s, with the former's music nearly always viewed as inferior. Bononcini, however, was famed at the time of his arrival in London for his thoughtful and inventive compositions, already known and admired throughout Europe. Granted, Bononcini was a different sort of dramatist than the 'British Orpheus', Handel, but he was no less skilled.[143] A lack of Italian language comprehension and convoluted translations into English did little to help Bononcini in London, at times diminishing favourable responses to his compositions. While little recognised as such, Bononcini was an innovator whose notable musical style and dramatic sensibility continue to warrant further consideration. An investigation of Bononcini's established reputation and his music, with its considered attention to textual detail and tuneful melodies with mass appeal, explains why he dominated Handel in the Royal Academy of Music's early years.

For Senesino, Bononcini utilised distinct compositional techniques and a broader vocal range than Handel in his compositions for the singer. Bononcini's music in *Muzio Scevola* and the highly successful *La Griselda* both clearly show a pronounced use of *voce di petto* and a high compass that exceeded Handel's by a third when composing for Senesino. Precise aspects of character were also cleverly depicted for Senesino. The inclusion of a *g″* in the aria 'Sì già sento' vocal portrays strained anguish, and in 'Dolce sogno', with its simple poetic truth and lyrical delivery, Bononcini composes poignancy. The report by Quantz that Senesino had 'a low *mezzo-soprano* voice, which seldom went higher than *f* '" seems generally to be accurate, however, Winton Dean supposes this 'probably refers to his earliest years'.[144] Bononcini's compositions for Senesino demonstrate that the relatively narrow vocal compass seen in Handel's music for the singer was likely more related to that composer's preference than Senesino's vocal limitation. The arias in *La Griselda* strongly suggest that the singer's voice was capable of more.

Crafting characters that elevated their public persona, Senesino and Robinson both appear to have intervened in the fashioning of the operas *Astarto*, *Muzio Scevola*, *La Griselda*, and *Crispo*. Senesino influenced alterations in *La Griselda* and persuaded Bononcini and the librettist, Rolli, to craft a tailor-made character. With her portrayal of Griselda, Robinson exemplified feminine virtue well into the nineteenth century. While less effective, Senesino endeavoured to fashion a similar venerated off-stage persona with his dignified onstage character representations in Bononcini's operas. Senesino and Robinson also showed versatility in their dramatic portrayals by swapping the valorous and iniquitous characters in the operas *La Griselda* and *Crispo*. Bononcini's operas *Astarto*, *L'Odio e l'Amore*, and *La Griselda* all illustrate that Senesino wielded influence in the shaping and quality of Royal Academy of Music operas from 1720 to 1723. While the singer's

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She further discusses Handel's company, comparing it to the Opera of the Nobility and giving her concise views on each company and their singers.

[143] 'British Orpheus' is a moniker Handel inherited from Henry Purcell. See Ellen T. Harris, *Handel as Orpheus: Voice and Desire in the Chamber Cantatas* (Cambridge and London: Harvard Univeristy Press, 2004), 32.

[144] Dean, 'Senesino,' *GMO*.

intensity of dramatic portrayal and musical skill gained him favour, his vanity and unpredictable temperament kept him from achieving a true synthesis of Senesino on stage and Senesino as public celebrity.

Senesino's twilight: 'They complain about all the imperfect things'[1]

In 1736 Senesino left London and returned to Italy. The Opera of the Nobility, which had been primarily led by Senesino, began to collapse and the singer had grown tired of his rivalry with Handel.[2] Senesino was now well advanced in his career, and while he maintained some vocal merits for which he had previously been lauded, including a particularly robust lower range, the music composed for him from 1736 to 1740 exhibits a clear sense of vocal decline. Signs of this perceived waning vocal prowess included a smaller demand for notes in the top of the vocal compass, diminished use of coloratura, and increased vocal and instrumental doubling. As many in the audience still remembered Senesino's earlier performances and skill, he received a harsh critical reception back in Italy.

Representative operas from this period in the singer's career include *Demetrio* (1736) by Geminiano Giacomelli offered in Turin, *Temistocle* (1737) and *Olimpiade* (1738) by Giuseppe Maria Orlandini presented in Florence, *Adriano in Siria* (1739) by Giovanni Alberto Ristori seen in Naples, and *Eumene* (1737) by Giovanni Antonio Giaj offered in Turin which serves as a case study in this chapter. Components relevant to Senesino's performance in *Eumene* are assessed here, including Giaj's previous experience with operatic composition and his role as head of music for the House of Savoy, Senesino's prior familiarity with the Eumene story and the town of Turin, and antecedent operatic versions of *Eumene* and variations in libretto, drama, and music that were made for 1737.

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Although Porpora's *Camilla* in 1740 was Senesino's final operatic performance in Italy, his return to his homeland to sing as the *primo uomo* in *Demetrio* by Geminiano Giacomelli ([1692]-

[1] The reference to Senesino and 'imperfect things' can be found in a letter from Senesino in Naples to Luca Casimiro Albizzi in Florence, 26 January 1740, Albizzi archive, A. 776. '…il giorno 20 del mese, con l'opera *Camilla*, che ha incontrato […] Infatti fa un bel spettacolo degno di vedere in quell Teatro vastissimo, benchè mal composto chè appena ci sentano Senesino. E ciò tira il popolo e soffresi ogn'altra cosa imperfetta, cominciando dalla mia persona'. The letter is transcribed in full in William C. Holmes, *Opera Observed: Views of a Florentine Impresario in the early 18th Century* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 233, 41n.. The English translation can be found on p. 146 of the same source: '…the opera *Camilla*, which opened on the twentieth of this month and has been successful. […] It is in fact a wonderful spectacle worthy of being seen in that vast theatre, even though it is so badly designed that one can hardly hear Senesino. This upsets the audience, and they complain about all the imperfect things, beginning with me personally'.

[2] Regarding the rivalry between The Opera of the Nobility (including Senesino) and The Royal Academy of Music (headed by Handel) see Xavier Cervantes and Thomas McGeary, 'Handel, Porpora and the 'Windy Bumm', *Early Music*, 24/4 (2001), 607-618. The function iconography played in portraying deeper meaning to a mass public is explored in relation to the feuding of these two opera companies. Goupy's rendering of Handel as an obese swine at the organ is discussed and there is an insinuation that Porpora's music sounded like sonorous flatulence.

1740) which premiered on 26 December 1736 likewise displayed signs of vocal decline.[3] A prolific composer of operas, Giacomelli was respected by his contemporaries;[4] nineteen of his operas were presented in various Italian cities, some were also seen internationally, including *Cesare in Egitto* in Graz in 1737.[5] While the majority of the music to *Demetrio* is lost, the libretto indicates that Senesino was expected to fulfil all the requisite elements of a *primo uomo* role; the opera contains six arias and a duet which require a wide range of musical and dramatic skill. The aria 'Scherza il nochier' is contrived upon the familiar captain-at-sea metaphor and required a majestic bearing from Senesino. 'Dal quo gentil sembiante' conveys amorous sentiment from Demetrio (in disguise as Alceste) to his hidden beloved. Senesino addresses his enemy with the revenge aria 'Altro da te non bramo' requiring a strong emotional and rhetorical delivery, and the text of 'Non so frenar il pianto', the one surviving aria for Senesino, is a compassion-inducing musical trope directed to Queen Cleonice:[6]

Non so frenar il pianto,	I am not able to refrain from weeping,
Cara, nel dirti addio.	Beloved, in saying goodbye to you.
Ma questo pianto mio	But this weeping of mine
Tutto non è dolor.	Is not all sorrow.
É meraviglia, è amore,	It is wonder, it is love,
É pentimento, è speme	It is repentance, it is hope.
Son mille affetti insieme	There are a thousand affections together
Tutti raccolti al cor.	All gathered at the heart.

The music Giacomelli composed to accompany this sentiment, with its bouncing lombard rhythms and arpeggios, accentuates the hope in the song's text over the weeping. Comparable to the earliest works in which Senesino performed, within this brief aria he sings an *f″* pitch three times and *e♭″* another five times (Appendix III, Ex. 25).

Following *Demetrio*, Senesino sang the *primo uomo* role in *Eumene* by Giovanni Antonio Giaj (1690-1764) which serves here as a representative case study of Senesino's final years on the stage. Largely disregarded by posterity, this prolific composer was held in high regard during his lifetime. Signifying a level of admiration from other musicians and suggesting that Giaj's works were widely studied and performed, the composer Johann Melchior Molter (1696-1765), Kapellmeister at the court of Eisenach, travelled to Venice in 1738 and copied in his own hand four arias by Giaj to bring back to Germany. Three of the arias were from the opera *Gianguir* (Venice, 1738) which had been presented at the Teatro Grimani di San Giovanni Grisostomo for *carnevale*

[3] In 1731 the Italian composer Antonio Caldara, then Kappelmeister for the imperial court in Vienna, was the first to set Metastasio's text to music for presentations of the opera at the Imperial Court Theatre in Vienna on 4 November to honour Emperor Charles VI of Austria's Saint day. Senesino had also sung in Turin on one previous occasion; during the *carnevale* season of 1730 he played the title role in *Siroe re di Persia* for Giaj's predecessor as *Maestro della capella reale*, Andrea Stefano Fiorè (1686-1732).
[4] Benedetto Marcello published a letter of recommendation written by Giacomelli in the preface to his *Estro poetico-armonico* (Venice, 1724).
[5] Gordana Lazarevich, 'Giacomelli, Geminiano', *GMO*, accessed January 24, 2016.
[6] Geminiano Giacomelli, *Demetrio*, 1736, Turin, MS, 'Non so frenar il pianto', at B-Bc, 5064.

with a cast that included the castrato Carlo Scalzi.[7] The French President Charles de Brosses knew of Giaj whom he calls a 'Frenchman' and referenced in the Francophile version of his name, Antoine Gay:

> I must not forget, in the catalog of composers I know, neither Jacomelli. nor Lampugnani that composed such touching airs, nor a Frenchman, named Antoine Gay, who has not succeeded ill in this country [Italy].[8]

Giaj's surname came in various manifestations, used interchangeably, including: Giaj, Giay, Giai, Giaii, and Giaij.[9] The basis of the name appears to be fifteenth-century French, when it was originally Jay, and it is likely that with expansion across the Alpine mountain range into Italy the name later became Italianised accounting for variations in spelling. Burney attested that this type of confusion was probable in Turin: 'The language here is half French and half Italian, but both corrupted. This cannot be applied to the music, which is pure Italian'.[10] In 1739, Charles Lewis, Baron of Pollnitz, also noted this confluence of French and Italian culture in Turin while providing a further sense of the quality of life there that Giaj would have experienced:

> There's an Air of Ease and Freedom in this City, which is not to be enjoy'd in all *Italy* besides; and the *Piedmontese* don't think themselves *Italians*; so that I am often ask'd, Whether I came Just from *Italy*? Or, Whether I am going to it? I could like to live in this City better than in any other. I think this Mixture of the *French* Manners with the *Italians* is perfectly agreeable and just. The People here live well.[11]

Although the surname travelled far and wide, existing sources suggest that Giaj remained primarily in Turin; it was where he was born and died, and held the position of *Maestro della Cappella Reale* for twenty-six years.[12] The city of Turin, the main residence for the prominent House of Savoy from 1562 until the unification of Italy in 1861, was consciously developed on an impressive scale from 1730 to 1773.[13] During the reign of Carlo Emanuele III (1701-1773) the arts, including music, flourished with the sovereign acting as Giaj's primary patron.[14] Remarkably little has been published about this prolific composer whose work, in addition to opera, spans several genres including sacred compositions (a requiem, masses, lamentations, motets, and several

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[7] Marie-Thérèse Bouquet and Gustavo Boyer, *Composizione sacre: Francesco Saverio Giay* (Milan: Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, 1979), XL-XLII.
[8] 'Je ne dois oublier, dans le catalogue des compositeurs que je connais, ni Jacomelli. ni Lampugnani qui a fait des airs si touchants, ni un François, nommé Antoine Gay, qui n'a pas mal réussi en ce pays-ci. J'en passe quantité d'autres sous silence'. de Brosses, *Lettres familière*, I, 257.
[9] Selected examples in sources libretti showing variations of the name include: Gaiy: *Gianguir*, 1738, Venice; *Fetonte sulle rive del Po*, 1750, Turin; Giaii: *Demetrio*, 1732, Rome; *Adriano in Siria*, 1740, Venice; Giaij: *Eumene*, 1737, Turin. For this study, I have chosen to use the spelling of the name as it appears in *DBI*.
[10] Gordana Lazarevich and Marie-Thérèse Bouquet-Boyer, 'Giay, Giovanni Antonio', *GMO*, accessed January 19, 2016. Burney, *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*, 63.
[11] Charles Lewis, *The Memoirs of Charles Lewis, Baron of Pollnitz*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London: Daniel Browne, 1739), II, 166.
[12] Raoul Meloncelli, *DBI,* 'GIAJ (Giaii, Giaij, Giay)', accessed 8 March 2016.
[13] Gordana Lazarevich and Marie-Thérèse Bouquet-Boyer, 'Giay, Giovanni Antonio', *GMO*, accessed January 19, 2016.
[14] Valerio Castronovo, *DBI*, 'CARLO EMANUELE III di Savoia, re di Sardegna', accessed 8 March 2016.

hymns), serenatas, vocal cantatas, and orchestral sinfonias.[15] Many of Giaj's operas (listed in Appendix II, Table 12) were presented during the *carnevale* season in Turin or to honour special occasions in the lives of his patrons, others were staged in Venice, Rome, and Milan.[16] Francesco Cognasso provides details of the cultural environment in Turin, including reference to the Nobile Societ' dei Cavalieri to which Giaj would have been accountable for aspects of casting and repertoire.[17] There are no known iconographical representations of the composer.

Giaj composed regularly as part of the Turinese musical establishment from 1715 when he collaborated on his first opera, *Il Trionfo d'Amore ossia la Fillide*, with the Head of Music for the Royal Chapel, Andrea Stefano Fiorè.[18] In short order Giaj assumed an important role in Turin's musical life; however it was only in 1738, upon the death of his predecessor Fiorè, that he received official recognition and the requisite title, Head of Music.[19] Along with his responsibilities at the chapel, Giaj was expected to compose operas and music for civic events and celebrations for the House of Savoy, whose prominent and wealthy opera theatre joined the composer with many of Italy's singing icons, including Senesino, who was the *primo uomo* in *Eumene* of 1737.

In the eighteenth century, operatic versions of *Eumene* were vehicles for the virtuosity of the well-known castrato singers Nicola Grimaldi (*Nicolini*; bap. 1673-1732), Gaetano Majorano (*Cafarelli*; 1710-1783), Giovanni Manzuoli (1720–1782), Giuseppe Aprile (1731-1813), and Gasparo Pacchiarotti (bap. 1740-1821). One such version, Tomasso Albinoni's 1723 score for Venice, allots the title character five arias, two *ariosi*, and an accompanied recitative (Appendix II, Table 13) providing ample opportunity for the *primo uomo* to show impressive musical and dramatic skill. The libretto for Giaj's *Eumene*, written by Apostolo Zeno in 1697, had first been set to music for Venetian performances by Marc'Antonio Ziani ([1653]-1715). While the Eumene story may be unfamiliar today, it was practically conventional to an eighteenth-century audience as several versions were set to music by well-known composers including Francesco Gasparini, Leonardo Leo, and Niccolò Jommelli (Appendix II, Table 14). A pasticcio arranged by Gioacchino Cocchi was even offered to the London public in 1765.

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[15] For short biographical entries on the composer see Lazarevich, 'Giovanni Antonio Giay', *GMO*; Sergio Balestracci, ed., *La Cappella regia di Torino nel secolo XVIII* (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1996), front matter, p. XX; Meloncelli, 'GIAJ', *DBI*.

[16] For further details regarding the location of manuscripts and libretti for Giaj's operatic works see Balestracci, *La Cappella regia*, LXVIII-LXXI.

[17] Reinhard Strohm, *Italienische Opernarien des Frühen Settecento* (Köln: Arno Volk Verlag Hans Gerig KG, 1976), 35-36; Francesco Cognasso, *Storia di Torino* (Florence: Giunti Gruppo Editoriale, 2002), 357-374; regarding the Nobile Societ' dei Cavalieri which was a council of about 40 Piedmontese noblemen who influenced cultural decisions and managed the theatres in Turin from 1727, see also Margaret Butler, 'Administration and Innovation at Turin's Teatro Regio: Producing '*Sofonisba*' (1764) and '*Oreste*' (1766)', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 14/3 (2002), 243-262; 244, and Marie-Thérèse Bouquet-Boyer, *Storia del Teatro Regio di Torino* (Turin: Cassa di Risparmio de Torino, 1976), 109-26.

[18] *Il Trionfo d'Amore ossia la Fillide* was an allegorically themed work celebrating the reopening of the opera theatre in Turin after the War of Spanish Succession.

[19] The official document authorizing Giaj's appointment as Head of Music for the Royal Chapel is contained in transcription as 'Document VII' in Marie-Thérèse Bouquet-Boyer, 'Musique et musiciens à Turin de 1648 à 1775', *Memoria dell'Accademia delle Scienze di Torino* (Turin: Accademia Delle Scienze, 1968), 170.

The dramatic tension in Zeno's libretto centres around a conflicting desire to reclaim the throne of Cappadocia after the death of Alexander the Great. Artemisia, daughter of the previous king (and rightful heir), endeavours to return to the throne presently usurped by her aunt, Laodicea. Eumene, who loves Artemisia, is captured by Laodicea following a failed attempt to overthrow her and, nobly displaying selfless compassion, he proposes to die to ensure Artemisia's freedom. His offer is denied. The plot is further complicated when Laodicea becomes enamoured with Eumene and proclaims that his refusal to love her will impel his execution. He rejects her and a battle ensues. Eumene is victorious and restores Artemesia to the throne illustrating that integrity and love conquer all challenges.[20]

Senesino first encountered the character of Eumene when he performed the title role in Francesco Gasparini's 1715 version of the opera for his Neapolitan début.[21] Initially presented in 1714 in Reggio Emilia with the famed soprano Margherita Durastanti singing the *primo uomo* part, Gasparini's *Eumene* was offered on 1 October 1715 in celebration of the Neapolitan King's birthday and additional virtuosic arias were composed by Leonardo Leo to emphasise the particularly talented cast.[22] In 1715, Senesino performed eight arias and one accompanied recitative; four of these were newly composed by Leo for this latter version. With its rapid and unexpected patterns of coloratura and plentiful scales, the aria 'Ai trionfali miei vaghi allori' opens the opera with a true feat of virtuosity and a flurry of vocal energy (Appendix III, Ex. 26).[23] Replacing the previous allegory on the harmony of love and soldierly ardour ('Marte, e Amore, miei Numi, che adoro'), in 1715 Leo instead offered an intimate sense of amorous triumph with accented notes on each syllable of the word *trionfali* (triumphant) and a musical emphasis on Eumene's 'beautiful' and 'sweet victory' in love.[24]

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[20] William R. Bowen, 'Eumene', *GMO*, accessed 3 May, 2015.

[21] Kirkendale, *Antonio Caldara*, 102, also cites possible performances of *Eumene* by Gasparini for Naples premiering on 1 October 1711. Kirkendale states that Senesino arrived on 23 September with two other guest singers, Durastante and Casati, leaving only one week to rehearse the work before performances commenced. As I have found no primary source that validates the 1711 performance dates, it is more likely referencing the 1715 presentations.

[22] The libretto for 1715, I-Vgc, ROL.0322.06, provides the following regarding Leo's modifications: 'tutte le arie e scene segnate col § dono del signor Leonardo Leo' (all the arias and scenes marked with § are by Mr. Leonardo Leo). In *Eumene* of 1715 Senesino sang the following: Act I scene 1, 'Ai trionfali'; Act I scene 5, 'In questo amplesso'; Act I scene 14, 'Quell'Armellino, pria di marcchiare'; Act II scene 4, 'Il core, ch'hò in petto'; Act II scene 9, 'Cara, se il duolo mio'; Act II scene 17, 'Lieta pace a questo Regno'; Act III scene 4, 'Per gloria del mio cor'; Act III scene 10, accompanied recitative, 'Opprimetemi pur, nemiche stelle'; Act III scene 13, 'Ingrato non mi dir'. The libretto (I-Vgc, ROL.0322.06) incorrectly labels Eumene as singing in the Act II scene 20 duet, 'Sentite io Donne'; the character is actually Rosinda, the maid of Laodicea, a part that was added for 1715.

[23] Regarding Senesino's 1715 performance in Naples see also Bucciarelli, *From Rinaldo to Orlando*, 318-322.

[24] Libretto: I-Bc, NBRACC.DRAM.3543. In 1714 Regio Emilia performances, the text was: 'Marte, Amore, miei Numi, che adoro, / Nove fiamme spiratemi al Cor: / Non riposi quest'Alma guerriera, / Mentre Spera / Il Trionfo d'in nobile ardour'. (Mars, Cupid, my Gods that I adore, / New flames are alive within my heart: / This warrior's soul does not repose, / As long as it hopes / Of triumph in noble ardour.). In 1715 the aria became: 'Ai trionfali miei vaghi allori / Di dolci amori / Sparga, ed intrecci le Rose Amor / E ne la mia dolce vittoria / Godrà la Gloria / Di bella Pace questo mio cor. (To the triumphs, my captivating laurels / Of sweet loves / Spread and entwine the Love Rose, / And in my sweet victory, / Enjoy the glory / Of beautiful peace this my heart.).

The Act II aria 'Il core, ch'hò in petto' is another that was newly composed for the young Senesino. Elegant Lombardic rhythmic syncopations on the ultimate syllable of words such as *clemenza* and *core* conjure a *deliziosa* quality in this lilting 3/8 *andante* aria. The playful quality of the tune is accentuated in the repetition of leaping intervals that immediately resolve in descending stepwise patterns (Appendix III, Ex. 27). Multiple shifts between *voce di petto* and *voce di testa* and a sparse accompaniment which exposed the vocal line allowed Senesino to display his virtuosity to maximum effect.

These 1715 modifications demonstrate that a calculated effort toward achieving fame existed for Senesino from his earliest performances. He sought to display his vocal prowess to maximum affect from the outset of his career. While initial accounts of his singing and musicianship are generally favourable, some technical work remained lacking in Senesino's dramatic portrayal. From this 1715 production of *Eumene* Senesino received the rather harsh judgement and reprobation of Count Zambeccari who noted the singer 'stands like a statue, and when occasionally he does make a gesture, he makes one directly the opposite of what is wanted'.[25] However, even the Count begrudgingly ceded musical praise to Senesino noting that in the arias 'when he is in voice he sings them well'.[26] This 1715 *Eumene* includes an early example of the rhetorical delivery in accompanied recitatives for which Senesino was later praised. In Act III scene 10 Eumene is alone and questioning the cruel fate that burdens him:[27]

Opprimetemi pur, nemiche stelle;	Oppressing me thus, enemy stars;
E tutto in me stancate	And everything within me is weary
L'odio Vostro, e'l livor.	Your hatred, and the malice.
Lacrime vili	The vile tears
Non m'usciran dal ciglio;	Will not go forth from my brow;
E non m'udrete	And not hearing me
Dividere in sospiri il core oppresso.	My oppressed heart is divided by sighing
Contro à fieri disastri	I have encountered cruel disasters
Sarò sempre lo stesso;	It will always be the same;
E sprezzerò il destino empio, e rubelle.	And I will despise wicked fate, and rebel.
Opprimetemi pur, nemiche stelle,	Oppressing me thus, enemy stars,
Mà la cara Artemisia…	But my beloved Artemisia…

Driving rhythmic arpeggiations and discomforting harmonies, including many diminished chords match the text's intense imagery and enhance its mood of questioning dejection (Appendix III, Ex. 28). In 1715, Senesino was already demonstrating the 'uncommon energy and expression' for which he was later praised by Burney in reference to his 1723 performances.[28] The young Senesino intended to make a bold impression on the Neapolitan public and set himself apart from

[25] Zambeccari's comments are cited in Frati, 'Un impresario teatrale', 74. English translation adapted from Heriot, *The Castrati in Opera*, 91.
[26] Heriot, *The Castrati in Opera*, 91.
[27] The scene, which is presented late in Act III and consists only of this accompanied recitative, was not altered from the 1714 version for the Naples performances in 1715; as other arias were replaced, and additions made to showcase Senesino's skills, it would appear this accompanied recitative was well suited to his voice.
[28] Burney, *General History*, IV, 299.

Margherita Durastanti by presenting the full range of his talent in the 1715 performances of *Eumene*. This triumphant accomplishment was not to be experienced again upon Senesino's return to the role of Eumene over two decades later.

As with most of Giaj's other operas, *Eumene*, which was presented for Turin's *carnevale* in 1737, was dedicated to his patron, Carlo Emanuele III. While the manuscript for this work was previously believed lost, and the music for Act III remains so, Acts I and II in the composer's own hand are held in the collection of the Royal College of Music in London.[29] For the 1737 performances Senesino presented the role of Eumene amongst a cast of well-known singers, shown in Table 7, who had all also been in Giacomelli's *Demetrio* immediately preceding Giaj's opera.[30]

Table 7: *Personaggi* for Giaj's *Eumene* of 1737

Character name	Description in libretto	Performer name	Voice type
Eumene	Uno de' Successori del Grande Alessandro, Amante d'Artmisia. (A successor to Alexander the Great, Lover of Artemsia.)	Signor Francesco Bernardi detto Senesino	alto castrato
Artemisia	Regina di Cappadocia per successione, Amante d'Eumene. (Queen in Succession of Cappadocia, Lover of Eumene.)	Signora Caterina Visconti	soprano
Laodicea	Regina di Cappadocia per Investitura, Amante segreta d'Eumene. (Queen of Cappadocia in vesture, Secret lover of Eumene.)	Signora Giovanna Guaetti Babbi.	soprano
Antigene	Capo degli Argiraspidi, Amante segreto d'Artemisia. (Head of the Silver Clad Guard, Secret lover of Artemisia.)	Signor Gregorio Babbi	tenor
Leonato	Principe de' Macedoni, Amante di Laodicea. (Prince of Macedonia, Lover of Laodicea).	Signor Giuseppe Appianino	castrato
Peuceste	Principe Macedone. (Prince of Macedonia.)	Signora Giacoma Ferraris Alberti	mezzo soprano
Aminta	Piccolo Figlio d'Eumene, e di Apameia sua Prima Moglie, Personaggio, che non parla. (Little son of Eumene, and of Apamia his first wife, non-speaking character.)	_____	_____

[29] Giovanni Antonio Giaj, *Eumene*, 1737, Turin, MS, GB-Lcm, MS 2100. The manuscript was formerly in the collection of the Concerts of Ancient Music, an important annual series in London from 1776 to 1848 dedicated to offering music that had been composed at least twenty years before it was performed. With royal patronage, some of the most accomplished musicians of the time performed in these concerts. Giaj's *Eumene* may have been given as one of the twelve annual concerts presented in London by the Concerts of Ancient Music. This seems feasible given the mission of the organization to elevated neglected masterworks. Further, the instrumental ensemble for the Concerts of Ancient Music, which in 1776 consisted of sixteen violins, five violas, four cellos, four oboes, four bassoons, two double basses, two trumpets, four horns, one trombone, and drum, would have been well matched to the requirements of the *Eumene* score. While it is tempting to imagine a nineteenth-century London performance of Giaj's opera, the manuscript may also have been solely a part of the substantial reference collection of the society.

[30] As referenced in the *personaggi* listing of the libretto at US-BEm, ML48 .C65 v. 8.

The soprano Caterina Visconti (*fl*. 1728-1754), who sang the role of Artemisia, is known to have begun performing in 1729 in Florence and she sang often in the years from 1734 to 1754 in Parma, Reggio Emilia, Florence, Naples, Turin, and Milan.[31] Confusingly, a Signora Visconti performed in London in 1741, 1743, and from 1753 to 1754. In 1754 she is listed in the cast for a revival of the famed *Artaserse* pasticcio that had been Farinelli's London début in 1734. This may have been Caterina Visconti, though as only the singer's surname is provided it is impossible to conclusively establish without further evidence. Having heard Signora Visconti in 1741 in a London performance of *Alessandro in Persia* by Francesco Vaneschi (*fl.* 1732-1760), Charles Burney commented on both her voice and appearance by stating that she possessed

> a shrill flexible voice, and [she] pleased more in rapid songs than in those that required high colouring and pathos. She was so fat that her age being the subject of conversation in a company where Lord Chesterfield was present a gentleman, who supposed her to be much younger than the rest, said that she was but two and twenty; his lordship, interrupting him, said 'you mean *stone*, Sir, not years.[32]

The military general Antigene was sung by the tenor Gregorio Babbi (1708-1768).[33] Active from 1729 to 1760, he was renowned for vocal strength and expansive range (*c* to *g*″) as well as his style of dramatic singing. Babbi's range was regarded to be as much as a fifth higher than most of his Italian tenor contemporaries. He performed in heroic repertoire by Hasse, Porpora, Albinoni, Jommelli, and others in many of Italy's most notable theatres, including those of Florence, Venice, Rome, and Naples. Burney described Babbi as 'dignified, splendid and a powerful performer' with the 'sweetest, most flexible, and most powerful voice of its kind, that his country could boast at the time'.[34] Babbi was ranked with the foremost virtuosos of his era (along with Senesino) by Charles de Brosses, who heard the tenor in his prime in 1741 and described him as 'la plus belle haute-taille qui se puisse, allant aussi haut que Jelyot, et fort bon acteur' (the most lovely high-tenor with a range as high as Jelyot [the French tenor] and a very good actor).[35] He is depicted in an engraving by Pietro Bettelini shown in Figure 13 amongst some of the most accomplished virtuoso singers of the eighteenth century.

[31] Colin Timms, 'Visconti, Caterina', *GMO*, accessed April 25, 2015.
[32] Burney, *General History*, IV, 446.
[33] Gloria Eive, 'Babbi', *GMO*, accessed April 25, 2015.
[34] Charles Burney, s.v. 'Gregorio Babbi', *Rees's Cyclopaedia* (London, 1819), cited in Eive, 'Babbi', *GMO*.
[35] de Brosses, *Lettres familière*, II, 240.

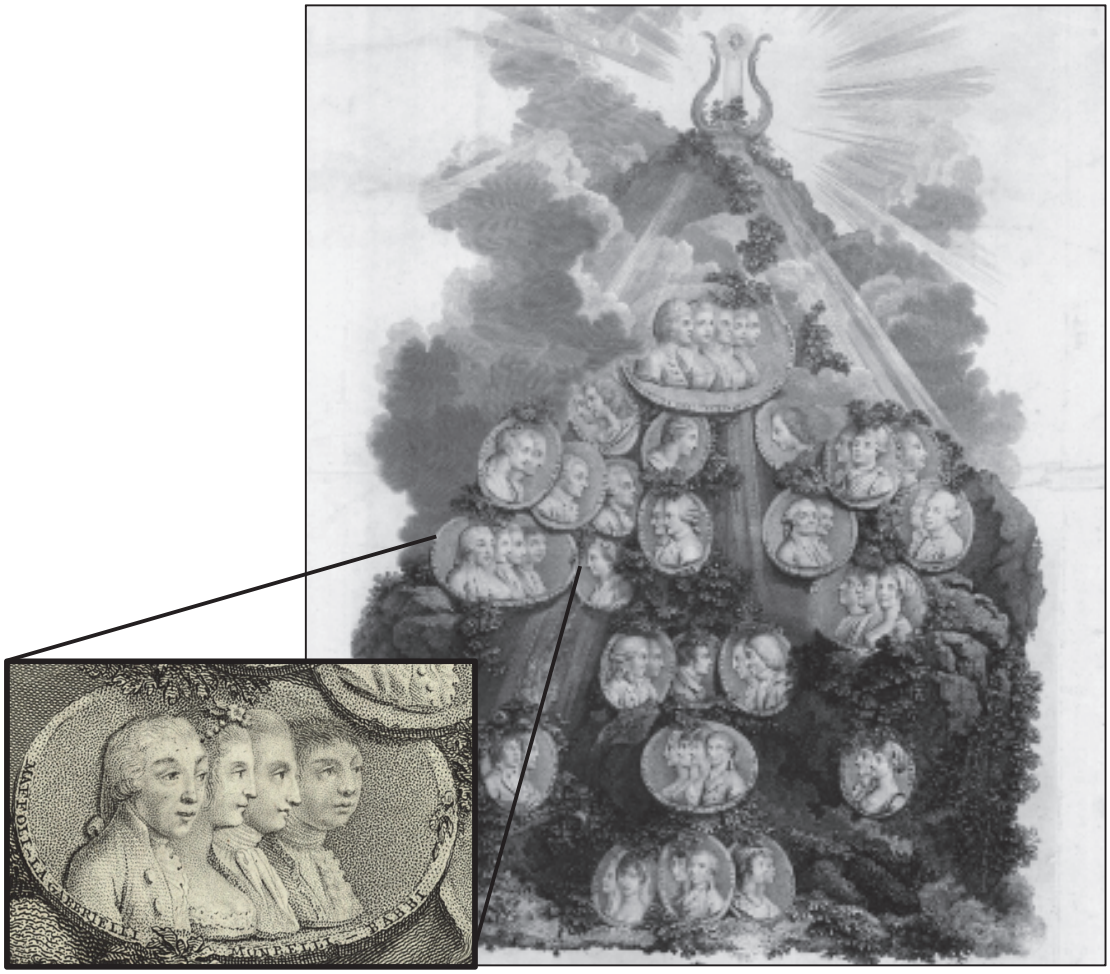


Figure 13: ***AL NOBIL UOMO IL SIG. CONTE CAV. PIETRO GHERARDI*****, Gregorio Babbi represented in an engraving of famed eighteenth-century singers, 1790-1829, by Pietro Bettelini, pub. Breitkopf & Härtel (PL-Wn).**

In *Eumene* the role of the Macedonian Prince, Leonato, was sung by the castrato Giuseppe Appiani (*Appianino*; 1712-[1742]). A student of the respected composer and teacher Nicolà Porpora, he débuted in Venetian performances of *Scipione il Giovane* of Luca Antonio Predieri (1688-1767) in 1731. An indication of Appiani's esteem, he received 3,400 Bolognese lire to perform in a pasticcio version of *Eumene* (1742; not related to Giaj's opera) that was presented at the Formigliari Teatro in Bologna, while Gregorio Babbi, who was young but already had a prominent reputation, was paid 1,980 for the same performances.[36] In 1742 Appiano had returned from performing in Vienna and was likely seen in Italy as an important rising international star singer due to a steadily building reputation since 1731.

Little is known of the other cast members. The soprano who portrayed the malevolent Queen Laodicea, Giovanna Guaetti Babbi, was Gregorio Babbi's first wife and sang in many operas with him in Northern Italy in the 1730s and 1740s.[37] Outside the 1736-1737 season in

[36] Heriot, *The Castrati*, 68.
[37] Eive, 'Babbi', *GMO*.

Turin, nothing appears to have been published on the final cast member, Giacoma Ferraris Alberti who sang the role of Peuceste.

The frontispiece to the libretto for Giaj's *Eumene* states 'Da rappresentarsi nel Regio Teatro di Torino'. At that time The Royal Theater in Turin was not the eventual decadent and giant Teatro Regio built to plans by the architect Filippo Juvarra which Burney noted was 'very large and elegant' and 'reckoned one of the finest in Europe'.[38] This new theatre, illustrated in Figure 14, whi was inaugurated in 1740 with performances of Francesco Feo's opera *Arsace* contained 1,500 seats, 139 boxes located on five tiers, and a grand gallery.

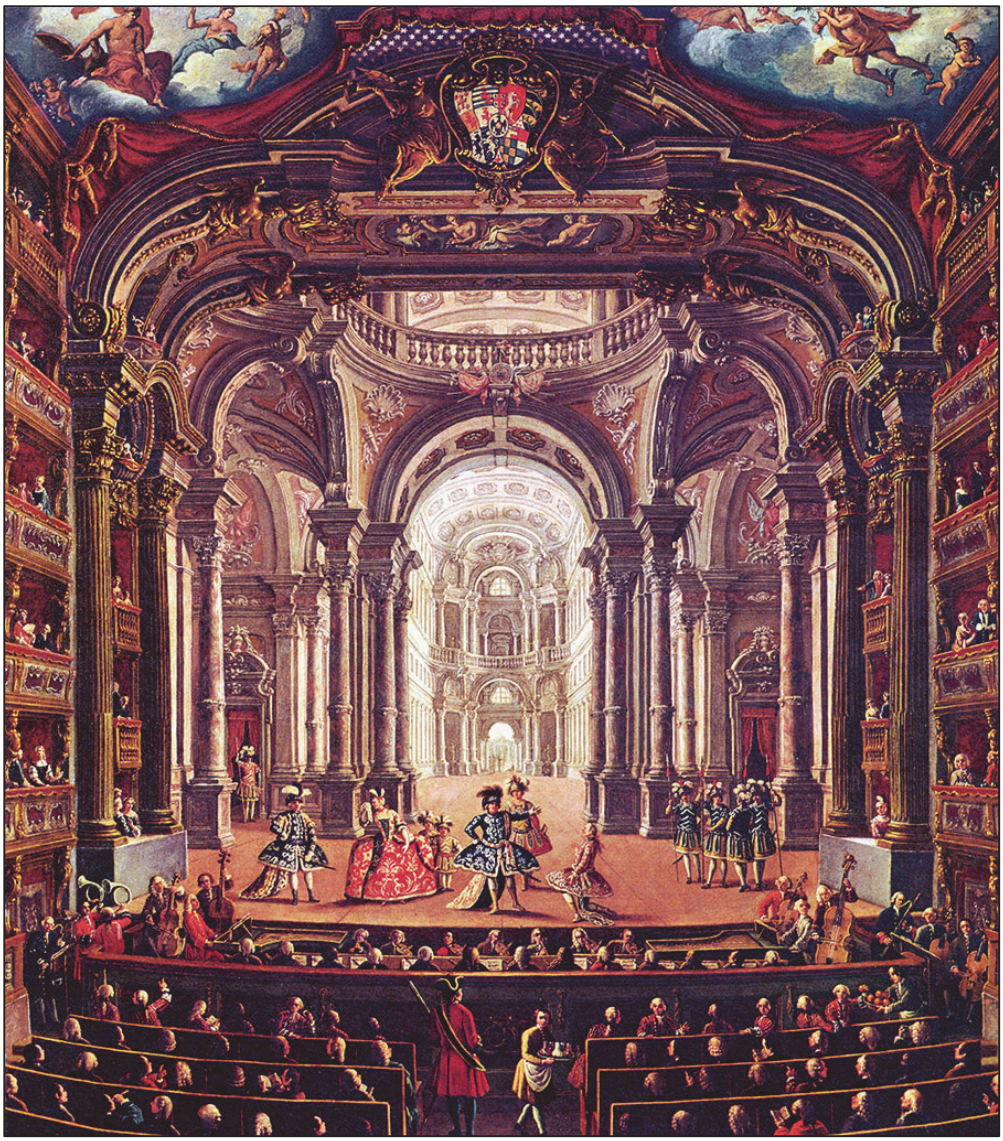


Figure 14: Pietro Domenico Olivero, 'Interno del Teatro Regio di Torino', 1740, a scene believed to be from the opera *Arsace* by Francesco Feo (I.T.ma, 534/D).

[38] Burney, *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*, 72-73.

Instead, the venue for Giaj's *Eumene* in 1737 was a separate royal theatre erected within the palace in Turin and referenced as the Teatro Carignano. While contrasting theatre-going in Italy and England, Burney mentioned a Teatro Carignano in 1771:

> the Italians themselves hold these performances in no very high estimation: they talk the whole time, and seldom attend to any thing but one or two favourite airs, during the whole piece (I shall have frequent occasion to mention the noise and inattention at the musical exhibitions in Italy; but music there is cheap and common, whereas in England it is a costly exotic, and more highly prized): the only two that were applauded were encored; and I observed, that the performer does not take it as such a great favour to be applauded here as in England; where, whenever a hand is moved, all illusion is destroyed by a bow or a curtsey from the performer, who is a king, a queen, or some great personage, usually going off the stage in distress, or during the emotions of some strong passion.[39]

Confusingly, different theatres in Turin often shared the same name as this Teatro Carignano was likewise not the original in which Giaj's *Eumene* was presented. The 'Carignano' theatre mentioned by Burney, which accommodated up to 720 in the audience and was built in 1752, was used largely for comedies and lighter entertainments.[40] This comment tells of the jovial atmosphere within the comedy theatre where frivolity and clangour in the audience would have been commonplace. On the contrary, as the original Teatro Carignano was erected within Turin's Royal Palace, it seems more likely that a respectful demeanour would have been exhibited by the audience at Giaj's *Eumene*. Iconography of the Teatro Carignano from 1722 seen in Figure 15 confirms this assumption of deference in the orderly arrangement and stiff posture of the spectators.

[39] *Ibid*., 68-69.
[40] *Ibid.*, 65.

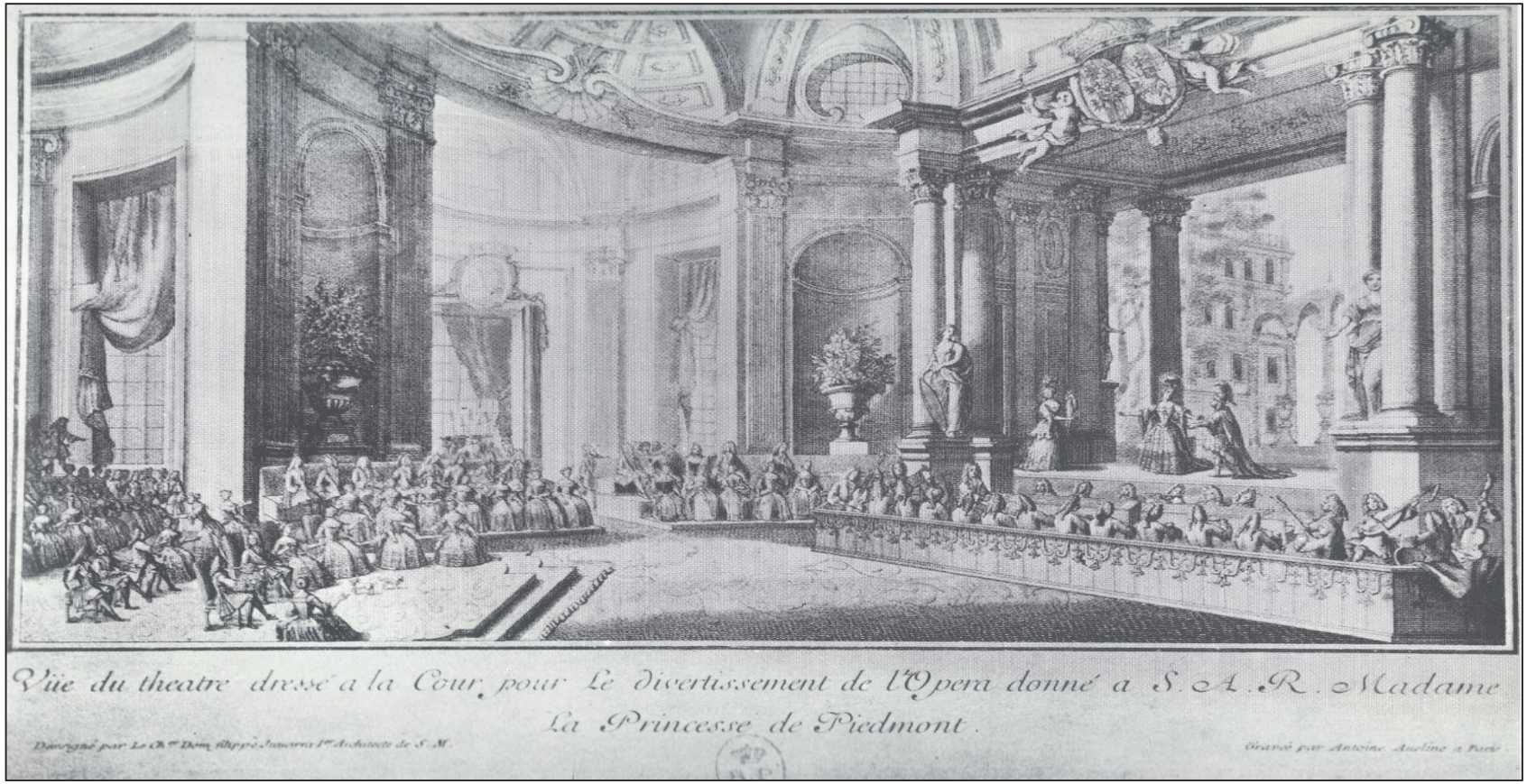


Figure 15: Interior of the Teatro Carignano, Filippo Juvarra, '*Vüe de theatre dressé a la Cour*', *Teatro eretto nel Palazzo Reale di Torino con scena del 'Ricimero'*, 1722, engraving by Antoine Aveline. The image was originally published as part of *Pläne und Ansichten*: *Piemont* and is listed there as 'Falz 55 B'; reproduced here from Ferrero, Viale, ed., *Filippo Juvarra scenografo e architetto teatrale* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1970), 173.

While set designs and costume renderings directly relating to *Eumene* have not yet been discovered, a sense of the lavishness of the production can be extrapolated from contextual sources. Alessandro Mauro (*fl.* [1709]-1748) designed scenery for the 1736-1737 season in Turin, producing work for both *Eumene* by Giaj and *Demetrio* of Giacomelli. Mauro was born into a family of famous Venetian designers and noted to be 'one of the most celebrated in all of Italy'.[41] His design for Antonio Lotti's *Teofane* shown in Figure 16, presented in Dresden in 1719 and including Senesino in the *primo uomo* role, depicts an opulence and grandeur imaginably like scenery exhibited at the wealthy Savoy court's production of Giaj's *Eumene*.[42]

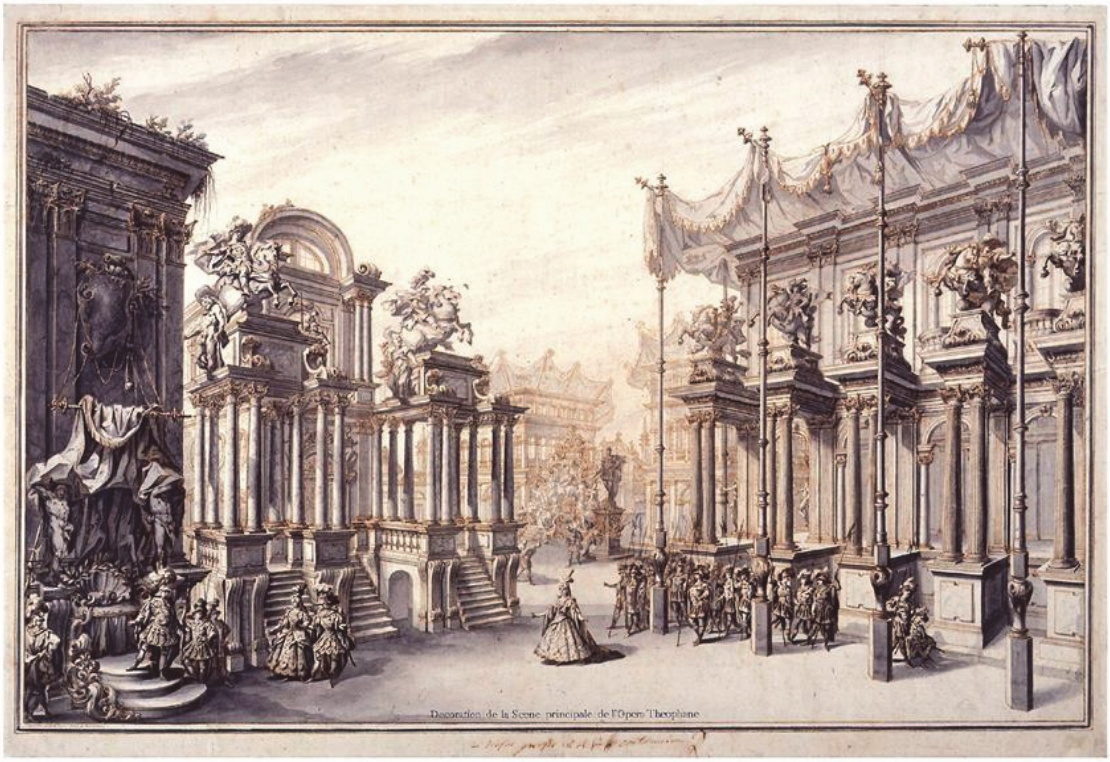


Figure 16: Alessandro Mauro, main scene design for *Teofane*, Dresden, 1719, before or in 1728 (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden C 1968-624).

The possible opulence of the set design for Giaj's *Eumene* was equalled by abundant music for Senesino. The surviving Act I and Act II manuscript contains four arias for the title character, as well as one arioso, one duet, and one accompanied recitative while the libretto for Act III suggests a further two arias and one accompanied recitative which can be seen in Table 8.[43]

[41] Manfred Boetzkes, 'Mauro (ii)', *GMO*, accessed February 12, 2016.

[42] However, *Teofane* was presented in celebration of the royal wedding of Friedrich August and Maria Josepha in Dresden and this decadent commemorative stage design was most likely more lavish than what was seen for a *carnevale*-season opera in Turin.

[43] See volume II of this thesis for complete transcriptions of Senesino's arias and arioso in Giaj's *Eumene*.

Table 8: Selections for Senesino in Giaj's *Eumene*

Act, Scene, and type of piece	Title of selection	Tempo	Instrumentation
ACT I			
Scene 1: Arioso	'Al rimbombo di tromba guerriera'	Allegro assai	Vn.I; Vn. II; Va.; B.c.; Tpt. I; Tpt. II; Hn. I; Hn. II.
Scene 3: Aria	'La calma di quest'alma'	Andante	Vn.I; Vn. II; Va.; B.c.
Scene 7: Aria	'Chiami a consiglio il core'	Andante	Vn.I; Vn. II; Va.; B.c.
ACT II			
Scene 5: Aria	'Ricordati, che offeso'	Allegro	Vn.I; Vn. II; Va.; B.c.
Scene 9: Accomp. Recit.	'Ove, o Duci, o Soldati'	-----	Vn.I; Vn. II; Va.; B.c.
Scene 9: Duetto	'Tu vuoi partir, ingrato!'	Larghetto	Vn.I; Vn. II; Va.; B.c.
Scene 15: Aria	'Fra l'orror d'atra foresta'	Allegro	Vn.I; Vn. II; Va.; B.c.; Hn. I; Hn. II.
ACT III			
Scene 4: Aria	'Dammi la morte, svenami'	-----	-----
Scene 9: (Accomp. Recit)	'Ombre orrende, larve funeste'	-----	-----
Scene 11: Aria	'Si, lo veggio, Io son ingrato'	-----	-----

The character of Eumene is described in the *Argomento* as one of the most famous Macedonian Captains.[44] Historical accounts, including that of Plutarch, describe him as a sympathetic and clever ruler who inspired his soldiers and imbued them with courage on the battle field by stimulating solidarity and fierce loyalty.[45] Such a majestic figure embodied by the (perhaps diminished) operatic voice and veteran countenance of Senesino required an appropriate entrance. Giaj provided such a showcase moment in the Act I scene 1 arioso 'Al rimbombo di tromba guerriera' with Eumene entering to rally his encamped followers, establishing the character's significance as a leader and ethos as a soldier:

Al rimbombo di tromba guerriera	At the rumbling of the war trumpet
Di valore s'accenda ogni schiera:	May valour alight every regiment:
Che sicura è per noi la vittoria,	Because secure is for us the victory,
Se la gloria c'invita a pugnar.	If glory invites us to fight.[46]

A tempo indication of *allegro assai* and rhythmically steady arpeggios in the violins add to a feeling of urgency and excitement while the 'bright' key of D major enhances the arioso's lively quality.[47] It begins with vibrant triple stop chords in the violin parts (Appendix III, Ex. 29) creating

[44] 'uno de' più famosi Capitani Mecadoni'
[45] For a further description of Eumene the historical figure, see Plutarch, 'Introduction to Eumenes', *The Age of Alexander* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2011), 365-393.
[46] To convey proper meaning, this text may be translated as 'At the rumbling of the war trumpet / May every regiment burn with valour: / Because victory is assured for us, / If glory invites us to fight'.
[47] Jacque Lacombe refers to D major as a 'bright' key in his treatise *Le spectacle des beaux arts* of 1758 as cited in Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics*, 239.

an atmosphere of strength for Eumene's entrance by depicting the rumbling (*rimbombo*) of the war trumpets. These compositional choices enhance the forceful, accented, declamatory text throughout. With a complement of strings, horns, and trumpets functioning as the *tromba guerriera* of the arioso's text, 'Al rimbombo' presents the densest orchestration in the opera. To articulate text and project over the sizeable orchestra of approximately 38 players Senesino's voice, even at 50 years of age, would have needed to remain adequately robust and acoustically present.[48] Yet, one indication demonstrating Senesino's lack of ability to project with age is revealed through the vocal line doubling at octave pitches by violins within his four surviving arias and single arioso. In 'Al rimbombo' the doubling appears in all instrumental parts and clearly serves a rhetorical purpose by reinforcing the strength of the textual sentiment (Appendix III, Ex. 30).

Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century instrumental doubling was employed with regularity as a stylistic feature in operatic arias. It was a technique used by Handel, who often included one aria for the *primo uomo* written in this style in his operas and Vivaldi also utilised it frequently.[49] Giaj was a proponent of this stylistic feature incorporating doubling in many instances and for all voice parts; for example, in *Adriano in Siria* of 1740 in the soprano aria 'Oh dio mancar mi sento'. However, the use of doubling in all four arias and the single arioso that survive for Senesino in *Eumene* strongly suggests that this convention was employed to reinforce the vocal line for the older singer. An inference that was affirmed in 1739 by Charles de Brosses who noted the Italians' comment regarding the 52-year old Senesino that 'the voice is a bit worn' (*la voix un peu oisée*).[50]

Beyond doubling, the score of *Eumene* further confirms a general weakened vocal ability of this once renowned singer; most indicatively, in the limited amount of coloratura for the character of Eumene. The vocal writing is in stark contrast to the long and florid runs in Handel's arias for Senesino from the 1720s, amongst which 'Vivi tiranno' from *Rodelinda* (1725) and 'Quel torrente' from *Giulio Cesare* (1724) are prominent examples. From Act I scene 3 of *Eumene* a challenging triplet coloratura phrase lasting one and a half measures can be observed in the aria 'La calma di quest'alma' (Appendix III, Ex. 31). With rapid arpeggios requiring strong rhythmic accuracy this passage is certainly demanding, though rather abbreviated and less complex than the fifty-eight notes in leaping patterns and scales contained in a single breath during the nine-bar phrase in 'Quel torrente' from *Giulio Cesare* (Appendix III, Ex. 32). Although the music is not extant, Eumene's Act III aria, 'Dammi la morte, svenami' (Give me death, cut open my veins), provides a further sense of Senesino's technical and dramatic skill during his final years on the stage. The severe

[48] Marie-Thérèse Bouquet(-Boyer), 'Storia del Teatro Regio di Torino' (Turin: Cassa di Risparmio de Torino, 1976), 167-180. Bouquet states that the opera orchestra in Turin numbered 38 players in 1740 and it was likely a similar size for *Eumene* three years earlier. Iconography shows that in 1722 the orchestra numbered 25 players in Turin (see Figure 15 on p. 96 of this chapter).
[49] Two examples of Handel's doubling practice for the *primo uomo* are 'Già lo stringo' from *Orlando* (1733) and 'Dell'onda ai fieri moti' from *Ottone* (1723). Vivaldi doubles the leading man's vocal line in 'Scorre il fiume' from *Ercole sul Termodonte* (1723) and on many other occasions.
[50] de Brosses, *Lettres familière*, I, 168.

imagery of the text suggests coloratura while portraying Eumene as a fiercely loyal lover, more inclined to commit a violent and horrific suicide than be torn from his beloved:

Dammi la morte, svenami,	Give me death, cut open my veins,
Desta il furor più barbaro,	Arouse the most barbaric fury,
Per lacerarmi il cor;	To tear open my own heart,
Perder è più dolor	It is more painful to lose
L'amato bene,	My beloved.
Sì, sì crudel preparami	Yes, yes cruel one, prepare for me
Lo strazio più terribile:	The most terrible torture:
Lasciando il mio tesor,	Leaving my treasure,
Provai pena maggior.	I felt greater pain.

Words and phrases such as 'svenami' (to cut the veins of one's own throat), 'il furor più barbaro' (the most barbaric fury), and 'lacerarmi il cor' (to lacerate one's own heart) illustrate the character's selfless and brutal sense of devotion.

Additional role elements suggest that vocal demands were lessened for Senesino and secure dramatic delivery was stressed. Two accompanied recitatives are included in *Eumene* when customarily only a single scene of this type was incorporated for the leading character. The short accompanied recitative 'Ove, o Duci, o Soldati' in Act II scene 9 finds Eumene preparing to kill himself after he has been betrayed by his soldiers.

The libretto suggests a second accompanied recitative, 'Ombre orrende, larve funeste', appearing late in Act III in which Eumene, forsaken again, questions his destiny and fate's oppression. This scene allowed Senesino to display pathos-inducing dramatic skill, stifling tears while proclaiming eternal faithfulness to his beloved amidst fearful visions:

Ombre orrende,	Horrendous shades,
Larve funeste;	Funereal ghosts;
Laccj, e morte indarno sperate	Snares, and vain death you hope to
D'atterrire del cor la costanza.	Frighten the constancy from my heart.
Opprimetemi pur, nemiche stelle,	Go ahead, oppress me, enemy stars,
E tutto in me stancate	And all your hate and spite
L'odio vostro, e il livor. Lagrime vili	Will be worn down in me. Vile tears
Non m'usciran dal ciglio;	Will not flow from my brow;
E non m'udrete	And you will not hear me
Dividere in sospiri il core oppresso.	Split my heavy heart with sighs.
Contro a' fieri disastri	Against these fierce disasters
Sarò sempre lo stesso;	I will always be the same;
E sprezzerò il Destino empio, e rubelle.	And I will scorn wicked and rebellious Destiny.
Opprimetemi pur nemiche stelle.	Go ahead, oppress me enemy stars.
Ma la cara Artemisia…	But my beloved Artemisia…

This scene is in marked contrast to the first accompanied recitative in Act II, which, while still demonstrating that Eumene is betrayed at the hand of fate, illustrates a martial sensibility. The noteworthy presence of two accompanied recitatives and two threatened suicides attest to

Senesino's undiminished acting skill. Eumene's final aria 'Sì, lo veggio, io son ingrato' in scene 11 elaborates again the character's all-encompassing status as a faithful lover.[51]

While Eumene is a strong and heroic character, which was always Senesino's preference, the Act I aria 'Chiami a consiglio il core' provides subtle indications of the military leader's insecurities and humanity. Along with cadenzas, text painting plays an important role in disguising Senesino's weakened vocal abilities whilst still enhancing his characterisation. Several fermatas on sustained second-inversion tonic chords interrupt the music's forward momentum with considered cadenzas from Senesino. These moments allowed the singer to utilise elements of his technique that were still strong while infusing his own sense of character with his musical choices. In the A section of the aria these fermatas fall on the word 'deciderà' and cultivate a sense of indecision and hesitation that is counter to the word's resolute meaning (Appendix III, Ex. 33). In 'Chiami a consiglio il core' the poetic structure is built around a pattern of three lines containing seven syllables and a final line in the stanza of six syllables. This format appears in both the A and B sections and naturally brings attention to the final line with its shortened syllabic structure:

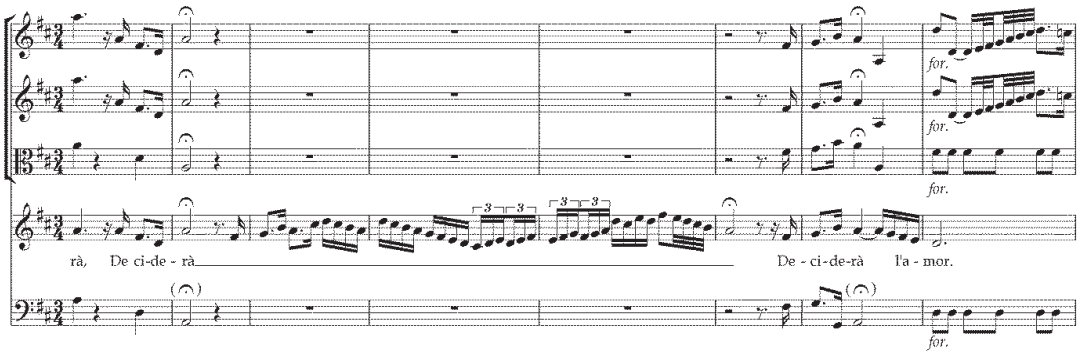
Chiami a consiglio il core	Call to counsel the heart
Sangue, ragione, onore;	Blood, reason, honour;
E a pro dell'innocenza	And to the benefit of innocence
Deciderà l'amor.	Love will decide.
Se libertade; e Impero	Although freedom and the kingdom
Le toglie il Ciel severo;	Are taken from her by cruel heaven;
È degna di clemenza,	She is worthy of clemency,
Non merita rigor.	Not deserving harshness.[52]
Chiami, etc.	Call, etc.

This symmetrical textual arrangement and constant repetition centralises the word 'deciderà' within the aria. Senesino's cadenzas could, of course, be realised in countless ways depending on his mood and whim. One possibility which I have conceived is given in Musical Example 13 utilising variations on dotted rhythmic and triplet passages seen in the primary thematic material and extending the range of the singer to an *f″* pitch.

[51] The full text of the aria:

Sì, lo veggio, io son ingrato	Yes, I see it, I am ungrateful [to the one]
Con chi meco è generosa;	Who is generous with me;
Ma pur deggio far così:	But even so I must act his way:
Così chiede l'amorosa,	So asks the loving,
Pura fede, c'ho giurato	Pure fidelity I have sworn
A quell ben, che m'invaghi.	To that beloved who inflames me.

[52] To convey proper meaning, this text may be translated as 'Let blood, reason, and honor / Call to counsel the heart / And in favour of innocence / Love will decide. / Though cruel heaven takes away from her / Freedom and kingdom / She is still worthy of clemency, / And does not deserve harshness.



Musical Example 13: G. A. Giaj, *Eumene*, Turin, 1737, 'Chiami a consiglio il core', Act I scene 7, bars 66-69, a possible cadenza to close the A section.

The steady *andante* tempo marking, strong dotted rhythmic patterns in a 3/4 time signature, and accentuation on the downbeat in every bar musically enhance Eumene's heroic bearing. The use of Senesino's low register also provides a sense of authority when utilised in short coloratura motifs and stabbing leaps illuminating the text on the words 'sangue' (blood), 'ragione' (reason), and 'onore' (honour) (Appendix III, Ex. 34).

Conspicuously placed at the close of Act II, the F major *allegro* aria 'Fra l'orror d'atra foresta' reveals Giaj's conception of a hunting tune with the incorporation of two horns.[53] This scene provided another opportunity for Senesino to demonstrate the preserved strength of his low range. Musically illustrating the depths of horror depicted in the text, the aria requires two sustained minim duration *a* pitches. The vocal line is again doubled (Appendix III, Ex. 35); in this instance the violins repeat demisemiquavers while the singer delivers sustained minim note values, adding psychological interest to the character Eumene. His lyrical vocal line represents a polished external presence, while the stronger beating of the violins indicates the character's true (but unspoken) intentions and heightened pulse while planning to enact his revenge. Another particularly effective moment at signifying Eumene's mental state arrives in a sudden shift from F major to F minor. The text 'Che in lei crede fede, e amor' (Who in faith and love believes) is presented in F major with a full orchestration, horns included, and a melismatic lyrical vocal delivery. Quite suddenly, the shift to F minor accompanies the words 'Alla morte talor guida un Pellegrino' (to death is guided a pilgrim) with a sparse orchestration comprised of pulsing semiquavers in the violins. Eighteenth-century sources describe the key of F major as representing

[53] It is common for the *primo uomo* to present an aria at the close of Act II in operas of this period highlighting one of three sentiments: elation and affirmation of his heroic bearing; fears or insecurity at what is to come; or, as with 'Fra l'orror', a plan to cleverly exact revenge on a villain. These possible types of Act II ending were calculated to draw the audience further into the story before its final resolution in Act III. 'Agitato da fiere tempeste,' from Handel's *Riccardo Primo* is a prime example of elation; 'Ah stigie larvae' (the 'mad scene'), from Handel's *Orlando*, 'Dite voi o giusto stelle', from Attilio Ariosti's *il Dario*, and 'Voi che udite', from Handel's *Agrippina* are all clear examples of fear and insecurity; and 'Va tacito e nascosto', from Handel's *Giulio Cesare* is an example of a hunting song, utilising horn, to foreshadow the revenge that the title character is planning to execute in Act III.

a ‘dead calm’, ‘loneliness’, ‘silence’, and ‘contemplation’ which aptly conveys Eumene’s tense phycological state as he delivers the words ‘orror’, ‘morte’, ‘traditor’, and ‘inganno’:[54]

Fra l’orror d’atra foresta	Amongst the horror of a dark forest
Scorta infida talor guida	Guided by a treacherous escort
Alla morte un Pellegrino,	To death a pilgrim,
Che in lei crede fede, e amor:	Who in his faith and love believes.[55]
A ferir la mano stende;	With a sword the hand extends,
Ma dal colpo già vicino	But from the strike already near,
Passaggero lo difende:	The voyager he defends:
E dal Ciel punito resta	And from heaven remains punished
Coll’inganno il traditor.	With deceit, the traitor.[56]
Fra, etc.	Amongst, etc.

Extreme interval leaps routinely accentuate violent text; in one case, the distance of a 7th immediately followed by a minor 9th exemplifies horror (*l’orror*) (Appendix III, Ex. 36). While cadenza realisation, textual delivery, a low and well-developed vocal range, and dramatic presentation all appear to have remained within Senesino’s grasp, the *messa di voce* is conspicuously omitted. Handel consistently applied this feat of virtuosity and control in arias for Senesino throughout the 1720s; in stark contrast and hinting at Senesino’s late-career vocal decay, Giaj’s *Eumene* eliminates the ornament entirely in Senesino’s music.[57]

Acknowledging the eighteenth-century performance practice of extemporaneous ornamentation, the notated pitches represent only a partial view of the notes Senesino actually sang in performance, never-the-less, the score offers a sense of Senesino’s range and tessitura in 1737. As seen in Musical Example 14, Senesino’s notated vocal range in *Eumene* was from *a* to *e″*, while Musical Example 15 illustrates his tessitura from *d′* to *d″*.

Musical Example 14: Senesino’s vocal range from *a* to *e″*, including extremes, in *Eumene*.

Musical Example 15: Senesino’s common vocal tessitura from *d′* to *d″* in *Eumene*.

[54] Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics*, 258-262.
[55] This text may be translated ‘A pilgrim, who in this faithless escort believes, goes to his death’.
[56] This text may be translated ‘[The unfaithful escort] outstretches his hand to wound with a sword; / But a passer-by defends [the innocent pilgrim] / From the blow already close: / And the traitor with his own deceit / Remains punished by heaven’.
[57] Two prominent examples of Handel’s incorporation of *messe di voci* for Senesino are ‘Dove sei, amato bene?’ from *Rodelinda* of 1725 and ‘Aure, deh per pietà’ from *Giulio Cesare* of 1724.

Within Senesino's *d′* to *d″* tessitura the frequency of pitch occurrences in the fifth from *d′* to *a′*, as illustrated in Musical Example 16, suggests that this condensed part of his tessitura had become most comfortable for the singer by 1737.

Musical Example 16: Senesino's strength in tessitura from *d′* to *a′* in *Eumene*.

Several lyrically delivered *a* pitches are called for throughout the score in the lower compass of Senesino's range, yet, a single short, detached *e″* pitch in the arioso 'Al rimbombo di tromba querriera' implies that the higher end of Senesino's range had weakened. Senesino's *d′* to *d″* tessitura in *Eumene* aligns closely with Handel's music for the singer in the 1720s and early 1730s, however, the music of other composers who worked with Senesino around the time of *Eumene* illustrates a broader range in voice and technical skill.

Giuseppe Maria Orlandini's opera *L'Olimpiade*, presented from 29 January to 17 February 1738 at the Teatro di via della Pergola in Florence, includes the surviving aria 'Se cerca, se dice' for Senesino.[58] With persistent question marks in the rhetorically focused delivery, the character Megacle ponders his isolation and the loss of his beloved. Several fermatas create moments of silence effectively depicting the character's pensive mood, while the multiple repetitions of the same sentence fragments in the vocal line establish the character's state of confusion (Appendix III, Ex. 37). The violins add a syncopated stabbing sense of punishment to nearly every one of Megacle's questions affecting an atmosphere of sharp disorientation that would have been well expressed by the interpretive skills of Senesino.

Composed by Giovanni Alberto Ristori ([1692]-1753), the *allegro spiritoso* aria 'È falso il dir che uccida' is unlike any other music written for Senesino. Commissioned for the 1739 Neapolitan performances of *Adriano in Siria*, a libretto for Ristori's opera has not been located. This aria, however, appears to have been added to Metastasio's original text and includes the fervent words 'uccida', 'doloro', and 'soffrir' indicating anguish and death. While the text suggests an intense and solemn musical setting, the aria is disarmingly jovial.[59] For Senesino, who principally performed in *opera seria*, this setting, which harkens to *opera buffa*, is out of character and seems incongruous with his noted strengths. The music's light-hearted tone might be explained by Ristori's previous experience; in 1717 he was appointed composer to a travelling company of Italian comedians resident at the Saxon court in Dresden.[60] Ristori also became the

[58] While the composer of the opera is unknown and believed to be either Antonio Caldara or Giuseppe Maria Orlandini, the manuscript for the aria 'Se cerca, se dice' (US-Fay, Quarto 532 MS 8), which was copied in the hand of Thomas Gray who travelled throughout Italy with Horace Walpole and likely saw the opera, carries the inscription 'Aria del S.r Orlandini, M:tro di Capella al Granduca'.
[59] Metastasio's libretto was first utilised by Antonio Caldara in 1733 for performances in Vienna.
[60] Sven Hansell and Wolfgang Hochstein., 'Ristori, Giovanni Alberto,' *GMO*, accessed February 11, 2016. Nepotism seems to have been at play as Giovanni's father managed the company.

director of the *cappella polacca* from the same year, which might account for the ill-suited polka quality of Senesino's aria with *corni da caccia* bouncing off the downbeat of several bars in syncopated patterns (Appendix III, Ex.38). This salmagundi music is embued with comedy and along with Domenico Sarro's recycled opera *La Partenope*, which was also presented in the 1739-1740 Naples season but was composed seventeen years earlier, it likely contributed to Senesino's unfavourable reception back in Naples. As with *Eumene*, instrumental doubling of the vocal line is prominently featured in these arias and others from Senesino's late career. Representative examples pointing to probable difficulties with vocal projection for Senesino include 'Osserva, in questo aspetto' from G. M. Orlandini *Temistocle*, presented in the 1737-1738 opera season in Florence (Volume II, p. 175-178), and 'Son sventurato' from Act III of Ristori's *Adriano in Siria* (Volume II, p. 179-184).

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Unfortunately for Senesino, Italian reception of his 1737 Eumene did not mirror the enduring favour and audience adulation that he had left behind in England. Popular favour for Senesino remained strong in London around the time of his return to Italy. Typically known for lambasting Italian opera singers in his published works, a song by Henry Carey recounting Senesino's fame appeared in *The Musical Entertainer* and *The British Musical Miscellany* of 1737 among other sources.[61] While it would be risky to accept this satire as truth, it does allude to Senesino's favoured status in London around 1737 with depictions of weeping women, bowing admirers, and bags full of gold coin labelled 'ready money'. Hinting at the exotic sexual intrigue that Senesino and other castrati presented in London, the song's narrator encounters a woman who weeps for her 'darling of fame […] neither for man nor for woman' but rather a 'Shadow of something, a Sex without Name'. The song 'The Ladies Lamentation for ye Loss of Senesino' seen in Figure 17, 'haunted the theatre bills for several years'.[62]

[61] *The Musical Entertainer*, ed. George Bickham Jr., 2 vols (London: Charles Corbett, [1737-39]), I, 38; *The* British Musical Miscellany: *or, the* Delightful Grove: *Being a Collection of Celebrated English, and Scotch Songs, By the best Masters*, 6 vols (London: J[ohn] Walsh, 1734-36), VI, 138.
[62] Dean, 'Senesino', *GMO*.

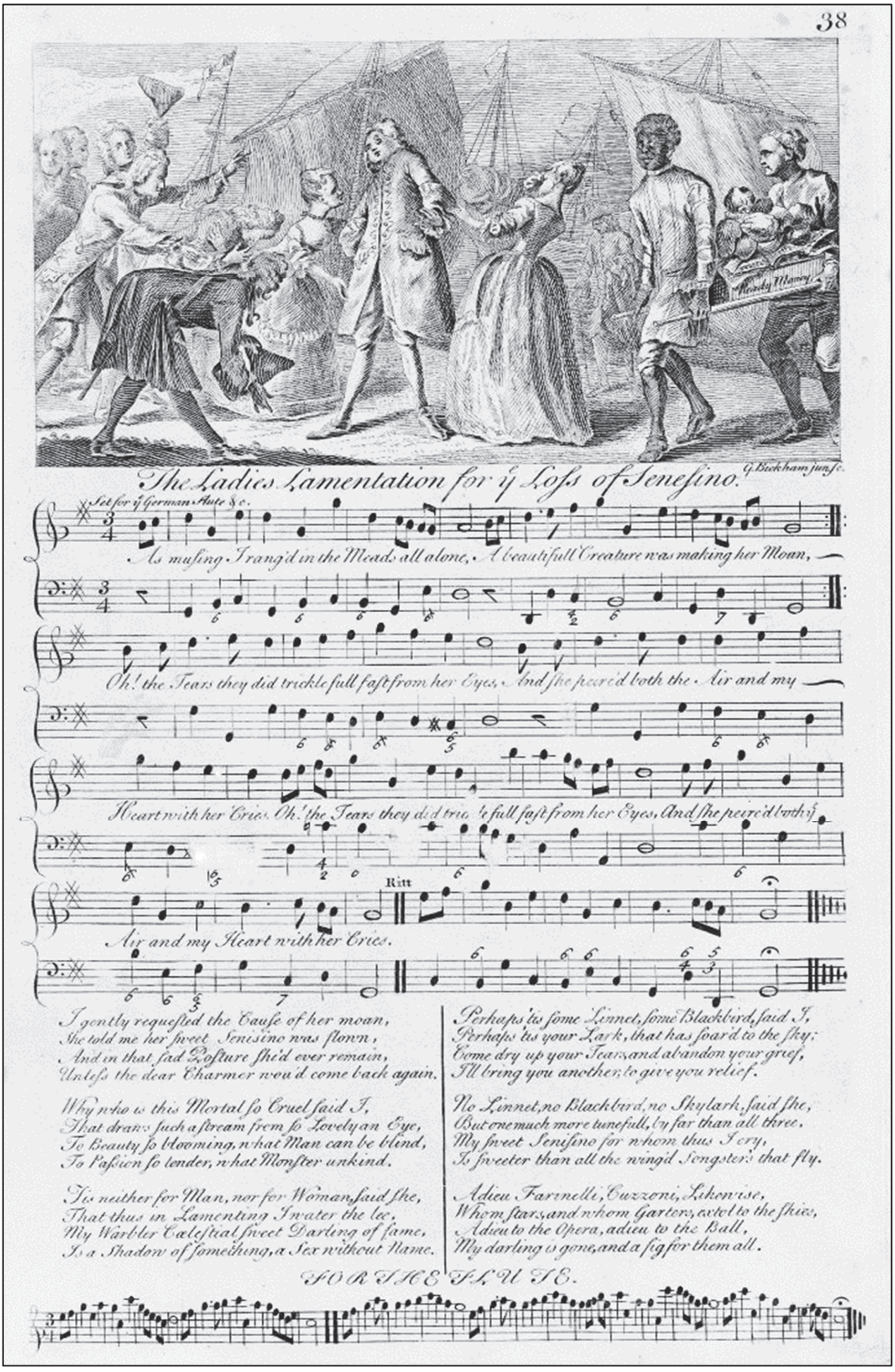

Figure 17: 'The Ladies Lamentation for Ye Loss of Senesino', originally printed in George Bickham's 'The Musical Entertainer', 1737, paper engraving, Gb-Lbm, Satires 2006, U.713.

Burney assured his readers that 'Several masters, and persons of judgment and probity' recalled that Senesino 'gave such exquisite pleasure and heart-felt satisfaction' as to leave an impression in London that was more profound than the castrati Gizziello, Carestini, or even Farinelli.[63] As a celebrity, the 1720s formed a sort of heyday for Senesino, the 1730s however proved much more tempestuous. After years of success abroad, to encounter such startling critical judgement upon his return to Italy seems to have confused and distressed the aging Senesino. In Italy, the *dramma per musica* genre had experienced swift stylistic changes that were apparently either unknown to or not adopted by the veteran singer. According to de Brosses, the style of composition had transformed most rapidly in Naples, where Senesino spent his final season singing on the stage from 1739 to 1740:

> it was performed perfectly. The celebrated Senesino was the primary role; I was delighted with the taste of his singing and his dramatic action. However, I found to my astonishment that the locals were not much satisfied. They complained that he sang a *stile antico*. I must tell you this, the taste in music changes here at least every ten years.[64]

Clearly, negative perceptions of Senesino were influenced by his out-moded performance style in the final years of his career.

In addition to the public's evolving musical preferences, the singer was advancing in years; in 1739 Senesino had refused an opportunity to sing in Madrid citing his age and possibly affirming a sense of the singer's own insecurity about his vocal ability.[65] Regarding the 1739-1740 season in Naples, de Brosses also stated:

> When the famous Senesino appeared in Naples last autumn, they exclaimed: 'What is this! Here is an actor we have seen before; he is going to sing in the old style,' his voice is a little worn.[66]

Similar to de Brosses' observation, Lord Hervey, who had greatly admired Senesino's performance in *Artaserse* one year before, heard Senesino in 1735 performances of *Adriano in Siria* by Francesco Maria Veracini (1690-1768) and felt that 'the least bad part is Senesino's, who like Echo reversed, has lost all his voice, and retains nothing of his former self but his flesh'.[67] Florentine

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[63] Charles Burney, *An account of the musical performances in Westminster Abbey and the Pantheon* (London: T. Payne, 1785), 23. Farinelli received his own 1739 variation on Senesino's song, entitled 'England's Lamentation for the Loss of Farinelli' published in various sources including *Calliope*, *or English Harmony, A Collection*, ed. Henry Roberts, 2 vols (London: Henry Roberts, 1739), I, 178.

[64] '[…] elle fut parfaitement exécutée. Le célèbre Senesino faisoit le premier rôle; je fus enchanté du goût de son chant et de son action théâtrale. Cependant je m'aperçus avec étonnement que les gens du pays n'en étoient guère satisfaits. Ils se plaignoient qu'il chantoit d'un *stile antico*. C'est qu'il faut vous dire que le goût de la musique change ici au moins tous les dix ans'. de Brosses, *Lettres familière*, I, 257. English trans.: Holmes, *Opera Observed*, 146.

[65] See Julie Ann Sadie, *Companion to Baroque Music* (Oakland: University of California Press; reprint edition, 1998), 89.

[66] 'Lorsque le célèbre Senesino parut à Naples l'automne dernier, on s'écria: 'Qu'est-ce que ceci! voilà un acteur que nous avons déjà vu; il va chanter d'un goût antique'. Il a la voix un peu usée'. De Brosses, *Lettres familière*, I, 237.

[67] Letter, Lord Hervey to Mrs. Charlotte Digby, St. James's, 25 November 1735; cited in Giles Fox-Strangways, Stephen Holland, 6th Earl of Ilchester, ed., *Lord Hervey and His Friends*

performances in 1737 of Caldara's *L'Olimpiade*, in which Senesino sang the role of Megacle, had not fared much better. Luc' Antonio degli Albizzi recounted 'if I were to give my opinion, Senesino's voice had also suffered,' while Prince Bartolomeo Corsini commented of the same opera that Senesino was amongst a cast of 'good dramatic singers' (*bravi attori e cantanti*) and

> [I] would be especially curious to hear Senesino and Cuzzoni once again before they become even older. I imagine that I would still enjoy them, especially since they are the two singers I have loved most.[68]

While Senesino's voice was perceptibly declining, on stage he was still a charismatic performer and an admired actor. Vocal shortcomings aside, he had cachet enough to ensure a large audience and advantageous returns at the box office. Referencing *L'Olimpiade* Corsini commented that 'thanks to the sum of Senesino's skills, [it] had the greatest success of any in recent times' and his performances drew 1500 people each night.[69]

It was presumed that Senesino's reputation would bolster otherwise lacklustre operatic offerings for the 1739-1740 opera season in Naples: 'The operas of the theatre of San Carlo in Naples will certainly be very weak this year, though they may be lifted up a little by Senesino'.[70] However, an account from 20 November 1739 stating that '[Senesino] has fellow [singers] that are little able to help hold up the opera' proves that he alone was not enough to rehabilitate the season.[71] With regard to these Neapolitan performances, de Brosses conceded that 'the best of what I heard I liked for the tastefulness of his singing', perhaps implying that it was style, and not necessarily quality of voice, that he found attractive.[72] Visiting Naples for a single opera season, the Frenchman de Brosses would have been less familiar with stylistic advances than others in the audience. Prince Corsini, a Florentine nobleman, commented 'I do not think Senesino is being accounted well in Naples, it seems that he sings in a very old-fashioned style'.[73]

1726-38. Based on Letters from Holland House, Melbury, and Ickworth (London: J. Murray, 1950), 238–239.

[68] 'e se io dovessi dire il mio sentimento, anco Senesino ha molto scapitato nella voce'. Albizzi archive, Palazzo Guicciardini, Florence, A. 741, cited in Holmes, *Opera Observed*, 133. 'con speciale curiosità di risentire Senesino e la Cuzzoni avanti fussero invecchiati maggiormente, mentre mi figure che ancora mi divertirebbero, tanto più che sono I due musici per I qualli ci ho avuto la maggior passione'. Holmes, *Opera Observed*, 238, 25n., referencing a 31 January 1738 letter from Prince Corsini in Palermo to Albizzi in Florence; A. 785 in the Albizzi archive. English trans.: Holmes¸*Opera Observed*, 157-158.

[69] 'mediante la somma abilità del Senesino ebbe il maggiore applause che mai a' nostril tempi sia seguìto'. *Ibid.*, 161.

[70] 'Saranno certamente assai deboli in questo anno le opere del teatro di S. Carlo in Napoli, se non le fiancheggia un poco Senesino'. Letter from Bartolomeo Corsini, viceroy of Sicily, to Luca Casimiro degli Albizzi, 14 August 1739, Albizzi archive, A. 785, cited in Holmes, *Opera Observed*, 145.

[71] 'Non credo che Senesino inconti molti in Napoli, parendo che canti assai all'antica, e poi ha compagni che poco possono reggere l'opera'. *Ibid*., Letter from Corsini to Albizzi, 20 November 1739, Albizzi archive, A. 785.

[72] 'Lorsque le célèbre Senesino parut à Naples l'automne dernier, on s'écria: 'Qu'est-ce que ceci! voilà un acteur que nous avons déjà vu; il va chanter d'un goût antique'. Il a la voix un peu usée; mais c'est à mon gré ce que j'ai ouï de mieux pour le goût du chant'. de Brosses, *Lettres familière*, I, 237.

[73] 'Non credo che Senesino inconti molti in Napoli, parendo che canti assai all'antica'. Letter from Corsini to Albizzi, 20 November 1739, Albizzi archive, A. 785, cited in Holmes, *Opera Observed*, 145.

In forming this negative opinion of Senesino, the Neapolitans were also likely influenced by the selection of operas in 1739-1740. The offerings were considered, in some instances, passé which equally displeased the King of Naples.[74] The season opened with Domenico Sarro's *La Partenope* on 4 November 1739. With a 1699 libretto by Stampiglia, Sarro's version of the opera had been presented in Rome seventeen years prior. Performing the *primo uomo* role of Arsace in faithful accordance to the score, Senesino would have been aligned with outmoded musical and dramatic tastes resulting in unfavourable critiques.

The theatre venue also bore some responsibility for resultant adverse judgements of Senesino who mentions the perceived difficulty in a letter. Six days after Nicolà Porpora's *Camilla* (the final opera of the season) had premiered on 20 January 1740 the singer wrote:

> the opera *Camilla*, which opened on the twentieth of this month and has been successful. […] [due to the] sets, which are truly beautiful, especially the final one in which real water gushes forth from a mountain and then forms a river. Following this is a fine battle, and then a chariot drawn by real horses and a cavalcade. It is in fact a wonderful spectacle worthy of being seen in that vast theatre, even though it is so badly designed that one can hardly hear Senesino. This upsets the audience, and they complain about all the imperfect things, beginning with me personally.[75]

Perhaps justifiably so, the audience had difficulty hearing Senesino's voice over the orchestra, noisy stage machinery, animal processions, and battling supernumeraries. This private account in a letter to Albizzi reveals that Senesino failed to meet the demands of vocal projection the new and cavernous Teatro San Carlo required. However, the San Carlo, described by Senesino as a '*Teatro vastissimo*' (theatre that is the most vast possible), was an architectural anomaly at that time and not representative of most Italian theatres. The acoustical inadequacy of the Teatro San Carlo, as Burney recounted, was well known:

> the magnitude of the building, and noise of the audience are such, that neither the voices or instruments can be heard distinctly. I was told, however, that on account of the King and Queen being present, the people were much less noisy than on common nights. […] not one of the present voices is sufficiently powerful for such a theatre, when so crowded and so noisy. […] As to the music, much of the *claire obscure* was lost, and nothing could be heard distinctly but those noisy and furious parts which were meant merely to give relief to the rest; the mezzotints and back-ground were generally lost, and indeed little was left but the bold and coarse strokes of the composer's pencil.[76]

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[74] Holmes, *Opera Observed*, 144.

[75] '…il giorno 20 del mese, con l'opera *Camilla*, che ha incontrato […] per le decorazioni che veramente sono bellissime e particolarmente l'ultima, nella quale scaturisce da qualche monte che si contiene nelle medesima scena, acqua viva che poi forma una Riviera. Ivi ci segue un bel combattimento, dipoi carro tirato da cavalli very e cavalcata similmente. Infatti fa un bel spettacolo degno di vedere in quell Teatro vastissimo, benchè mal composto chè appena ci sentano Senesino. E ciò tira il popolo e soffresi ogn'altra cosa imperfetta, cominciando dalla mia persona'. *Ibid*., 233, 41n.. Letter from Senesino in Naples to Albizzi in Florence, 26 January 1740, Albizzi archive, A. 776. Holmes, *Opera Observed*, 146.

[76] Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*, 2nd edn (London: T. Becket and Co., 1773), 339-340.

As one of the largest theatres in eighteenth-century Europe, with a capacity for over 3,000 spectators, the Teatro San Carlo was truly expansive and it remains so even by today's standards.[77] Burney provided a description that accounts for the theatre's lay-out and size:

> 'The theatre of S. Carlo is a noble and elegant structure: […] There are seven ranges of boxes, sufficient in size to contain ten or twelve persons in each, who lit in chairs, in the same manner as in a private house. In every range there are thirty boxes, except the three lowest ranges, which, by the king's box being taken out of them, are reduced to twenty-nine. In the pit there are fourteen or fifteen rows of seats, which are very roomy and commodious, with leather cushions and stuffed backs, each separated from the other by a broad rest for the elbow: in the middle of the pit there are thirty of these seats in a row'.

Senesino's skilled voice likely would have still projected in most other theatres which tended to be significantly smaller. The composer, violinist, and conductor Louis Spohr observed early in the nineteenth century that singers fared better in other venues stating 'one becomes more sensible of their merits when one hears them in a smaller place than the San Carlo theatre'.[78]

Testimony to his infamous vanity, even in the twilight of his forty-year career, Senesino viewed himself in league with the most celebrated performers of the day.[79] In 1739, perhaps due to increasingly unfavourable critiques, Senesino became sensitive to foreseeable comparisons with other singers. Luca Casimiro degl'Albizzi, who acted as the singer's agent, wrote 'he resents comparisons with younger singers, except for Farinelli and Carestini' and protracted negotiations over his fee for the 1739-1740 season, angering the King of Naples, show that his self-perception as one of opera's most sought-after celebrities had not waned.[80] Advanced in years, it is difficult to definitively establish whether Senesino remained capable of proficiently performing the varied and challenging arias composed for him throughout these final years on the stage. Primary sources, including Giaj's *Eumene* and Senesino's personally defined *primo uomo* status on par with Europe's most famed singers declare that, at the very least, in his mind he remained practically peerless.

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[77] Burney, *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*, 330.
[78] Louis Spohr, *Selbstbiographie*, 2 vols (Kassel: Trömner & Dietrich, 1860–1861), II, 20; in English: Louis Spohr, *Louis Spohr's Autobiography*, English translator unattributed (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1865), II, 19. Though Spohr's autobiography was penned in 1817 and the Teatro San Carlo was rebuilt in 1816 the theatre maintained the same unfavourable reputation for acoustics it had in the eighteenth century. Spohr also states that the La Scala theatre was 'immeasurably preferable in an acoustic point of view to the San Carlo Theatre'; Spohr, *Autobiography*, II, 43.
[79] 'Egli malvolontieri si adatta alla partirà di musici giovani, solamente a quella di Farinello o Carestini'. Letter from Albizzi to the impresario Lucchesini in Reggio, 30 June 1739, Albizzi archive, A. 771; English trans.: Holmes, *Opera Observed*, 138.
[80] See Holmes, *Opera Observed*, 140-143.

Conclusion

Senesino's lasting fame and influence have been clearly established, and his considered and persistent attempts to shape off-stage reception through onstage characterisations and musical performances were effective. A testament to Senesino's enduring legacy, the British military officer, intelligence agent, and author Alexander Jardine reflected on Senesino's sublime, straightforward, and memorable style of performing. Although it is unlikely that Jardine ever saw Senesino on stage, he recounted the singer's esteem in 1777:

> May not we hope that this great and good taste in music, at least, will continue so far to prevail in Italy as to keep itself alive, and form now and then a Senesino, or a Manzoli, to preserve in the world a sense of the true sublime and simple style of singing?[1]

In 1785, Burney also confirmed that Senesino's celebrity and favourable reputation had endured 48 years after his final performance in England:

> Senesino had so noble a voice and a manner of singing, was so admirable an actor, and in such high favour with the public, that besides the real force and energy of his performance, there was an additional weight and importance given to whatever he sung, by the elevated situation in which he stood with the audience. I have been acquainted with several masters, and persons of judgment and probity, who perfectly remembering his performance and its effects on themselves and the public, assured me, that none of the great singers, who have since visited this country, ever gave such exquisite pleasure and heart-felt satisfaction as Senesino…[2]

Recent research by Desler and Bucciarelli has demonstrated the extent to which singers exerted their prestige to influence elements of music and drama within the operas in which they performed.[3] Cajoled by the leading singers, librettists and composers reworked productions to maximize a star performer's public adulation. Bucciarelli has recently shown that Senesino influenced Handel in the crafting of the pasticcio *Arsace*, which was meant to be his London début, and the singer also prompted modifications to Bononcini's *Astarto*. This thesis adds to existing research on singer agency by confirming that Senesino's influence was not limited to the operas and pasticcios under Handel's purview. The singer interceded with Rolli and Bononcini (as Bucciarelli suggests with *Astarto*) as seen in the fashioning of *La Griselda*, and likely also in *Muzio Scevola*, and *Crispo*. To suit contemporary taste in London, and to maximise the dramatic and musical strengths of Senesino and his colleagues, the symbols of monarchy, power, and sovereignly dilemma were diminished or removed entirely to chiefly accentuate human emotion

[1] Alexander Jardine, *Letters from Barbary, France, Spain, Portugal, etc., by an English officer,* 2 vols (London: T. Cadell, 1788), I, 403.
[2] Charles Burney, *Sketch of the Life of Handel* (London: Payne and Robinson, 1785), 23.
[3] Anne Desler, 'The Little That I Have Done Is Already Gone and Forgotten: Farinelli and Burney Write Music History', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 27/3 (2015), 215-238; Melania Bucciarelli, 'Farò il possibile per vincer l'animo di M.r Handel': Senesino's arrival in London and *Arsace*'s rhetoric of passions', *Eighteenth-Century Music*, 14/1 (2017), 53-87.

and the tension experienced between characters. Modifications of this sort are certainly evident in the composition of *La Griselda*.[4]

Senesino's technical ability and voice were thoughtfully considered in *La Griselda*. The pitch *g″* seems to have been incorporated in the aria 'Sì gia sento' to enhance elements of inauthenticity in the character Gualtiero. Bucciarelli has concluded that high range and coloratura where often viewed as representing dishonest character traits for an eighteenth-century audience.[5] This is especially relevant when considering 'Sì gia sento' in comparison to the lyrical lower-range music found in the sincere and heart-felt aria 'Dolce sogno'.[6] Motivated by vanity, Senesino may have wished to display for the London public the higher notes he was capable of executing by incorporating this *g″* pitch in 'Sì gia sento'. Music composed for the singer by Bononcini, Giacomelli, Ruggieri, and Lotti demonstrates that his range comfortably extended to and included *f″* pitches on several occasions throughout his career. Such insights into Senesino and his vocal profile presented in this thesis have implications that extend to other eighteenth-century performers and patterns of vocality. For example, when comparing Handel's music to composers on the continent, and particularly in Italy, Handel consciously chose to limit the higher range of several singers. The soprano Francesca Cuzzoni sang from *c'* to *b‴* in roles by Handel such as Cleopatra and Rodelinda; however, Quantz noted that she was capable of singing to *c‴*.[7] The castrato Matteo Berselli utilised a vocal compass from *e′* to *b″* in Handel's music even though Quantz states his range to be a fifth higher, to *f‴*.[8] It is apparent that relying on Handel's music alone as an indicator of vocal range, technical skill, or dramatic ability is indicative only of that composer's preferences and not representative of a given singer's true abilities. Likely as a result of singer intervention, a broader span of technical skills can be seen in the works of a composer such as Bononcini.

This thesis is inevitably limited in that it can only evaluate surviving sources, including the composer's notational record, which do not entirely represent a performer's on-stage depictions and vocality. While this provides substantial information, one must be cognisant that when improvisation practises are accounted for these sources can only depict a portion of what a singer such as Senesino could achieve. Aspects of range, technical ability, coloratura patterning, and dramatic interpretation were more nuanced in performance than what is recorded on the notated page.

Senesino's involvement in determining elements of dramatic structure and musical composition for the London operas in which he sang comes as no surprise; he exhibited and honed his persuasiveness during his earlier performances in Italy and Germany. Senesino's skill at crafting his onstage persona was refined by the time he arrived in London. A 1708 performance opposite the accomplished star Nicolini, in *Igene regina di Sparta*, offered Senesino the

[4] Bucciarelli has demonstrated that character modifications are apparent in *Arsace* as well. Bucciarelli, 'Farò il possibile', 63-74.
[5] Bucciarelli, 'Farò il possibile', 83-84.
[6] A view which Bucciarelli also supports in 'Farò il possibile', 84.
[7] Winton Dean and Carlo Vitali, 'Cuzzoni, Francesca', *GMO*, accessed August 6, 2017.
[8] Winton Dean, 'Berselli, Matteo', *GMO*, accessed August 6, 2017.

opportunity to observe the expert shaping of a role which could elevate a singer's off-stage status. Further research into Senesino's relationship with Nicolini in the earliest years of his career will no doubt yield productive insight. These 1708 performances show parallels between the two singers that cast them in near-equal light; surely Nicolini, as the older and more established singer, would have had the authority to insist on the number and type of arias included in Pollarolo's opera. It appears he was compliant, with the composer, in bolstering Senesino's reputation. Perhaps Nicolini was an early mentor to Senesino, providing insight on aspects of dramatic portrayal, for which he was highly lauded, and the crafting of characters that maximise off-stage fame. Further still, Nicolini may also have offered Senesino guidance with vocal technique; this would be one possible explanation for similarities of voice between the two singers noted in 1720 when Senesino arrived in London. Regarding the Royal Academy of Music, more can also be said about Senesino's apparent expectation of a portion of the artistic control when he joined the institution.

After 1708, the level of difficulty and type of role Senesino performed demonstrates that he clearly viewed himself as a *primo uomo* of important standing. Intent on performing only large roles of dramatic substance, Senesino sought to unify perceptions of his on- and off-stage personas to influence audience reception. He achieved this synthesis in 1722 with *La Griselda* and he continued to give considered attention to shaping aspects of music and drama in his late career. Wishing to display a heroic bearing (which was always his preference) and the established traits of a *primo uomo*, Senesino's roles after his return to Italy in 1736 demonstrate virility coupled with sensitivity and self-sacrifice. *Eumene* reveals that while Senesino's voice had lowered and required the support of instrumental doubling, the dramatic skill he had carefully cultivated was, in some cases (as with Charles de Brosses in 1739) still able to incline an audience to his favour.

While the *Eumene* role suggests a declining upper vocal compass, his limited range is inconclusive because other operas from the period, including Giacomelli's *Demetrio*, demonstrate that Senesino was likely capable of managing his upper range in his late career. It is unsurprising that the fifty-year-old Senesino required fortification from the orchestra, or that his ability to sing coloratura was diminished. Yet, the many repeated *f″* pitches in Giacomelli's 'Non sò frenar il pianto' are rather unexpected. In addition to the stamina required to perform Senesino's many selections in *Demetrio*, 'Non sò frenar il pianto' indicates that he could still execute many of the obligatory technical challenges of a *primo uomo*.

Circumstances coalesced directly before the end of Senesino's career that hastened his exodus from the stage. Senesino was singing in the geographic epicentre of rapidly evolving stylistic tastes in *dramme per musica*, Naples, at a time when the veteran singer was most vulnerable to critique. His style of performing, likely more welcome in other Italian cities at the time, would have been particularly conspicuous as '*antico*' in Naples. He performed in the newly erected, cavernous, and acoustically inferior Teatro San Carlo where performers, even in their prime, had difficulty singing audibly over the orchestra. Senesino's fame was supposed to bolster to solvency the entire 1739-1740 operatic season in Naples. This prompted elevated expectations on the mature singer resulting in harsher than customary judgement. Further still, the singer's

arrogance led him to become overly assertive with the King of Naples in negotiations resulting in a rift between the two men, and the customary reception generally offered to singers of his status was denied to Senesino upon his arrival in Naples. All these circumstances converged to leave Senesino with few allies during his final years on the stage. Had he shown more prudence and self-control regarding the roles he sang in his late career, personal interactions, and greater discrimination concerning the venues in which he appeared, he may have experienced success for several more years.

While this thesis repositions previously limited perceptions of Senesino, further research is needed to understand aspects of the singer's personal character and ability. Volume II of this thesis offers modern transcriptions of arias for Senesino from the operas *Armida abbandonata* (1707), *La Griselda* (1722), and *Eumene* (1737), as well as many additional arias by Lotti, Pollarolo, Giacomelli, Orlandini, and Ristori. This is the first time these arias have been offered in a format which makes further study and performance possible. Analysis and transcription of many more arias from operas in which Senesino sang, including those of Tomasso Albinoni, Francesco Gasparini, Antonio Caldara, Andrea Stefano Fiorè, Domenico Sarro, and Nicola Porpora, among others, will only enhance our understanding of Senesino's vocal and performative abilities.[9] Additional archival sources, including further review of personal correspondence from the singer, will provide social and historical context for the information and musical transcriptions in this thesis.

Like Senesino, the composers addressed in this study had a lasting influence which has been largely unexplored. This thesis has contributed new information (and corrected some misinformation) regarding biographical details and the compositional styles of the composers Ruggieri, Bononcini, and Giaj. Ruggieri's impact on Vivaldi is evident in the music the latter composer borrowed and incorporated into his own compositions. The Italian writer Vincenzio Martinelli, who lived in London, illustrates Bononcini's lasting favour by remarking in 1758 that England had adopted a 'most refined taste, which is the basis of all the sublime and beautiful in every one of the arts, especially in music' due in large part to the influence of this composer.[10] Giaj's music, which could legitimately be labelled '*Turinese gallante*', had geographically far-reaching stylistic impact among his contemporaries. He was a musical influencer whose compositions was respected, distinct (due to his unconventional training and apparent outsider status), and influential upon important burgeoning proponents of mid-century Italian Classicism, such as Gaetano Pugnani. Giaj is a significant composer whose life and works are decidedly worth further investigation.

Recent research from Bucciarelli has suggested the preferential relationship Senesino enjoyed with Bononcini, allowing him to successfully influence on-stage musical and dramatic

[9] See Volume II, Appendix I: Senesino's Operatic Repertoire, 1700-1740 for specific titles of the operas by these composers in which Senesino sang.

[10] 'Bene intese questa verità Bononcini, e medesimamente Handel e Gemignani, a i quali deve l'Inghilterra lo avere adottato questo finissimo gusto, nel quale sta tutto il sublime e tutto il bello di qualunque Arte, ma della Musica massimamente'. Vincenzio Martinelli, *Lettere familiari e critiche* (London: Nourse, 1758), 371.

portrayals.[11] An assessment of Bononcini's *Muzio Scevola* and *La Griselda* has shed light on surprising elements of Senesino's technique, when compared to Handel's operas for the singer. Further assessment of Bononcini's London operas, for example, *Astianatte* of 1727 and *Farnace* of 1723, the latter of which contains the only surviving recitative composed by Bononcini in this period, will yield insights into this composer's style as well as Senesino's rhetorical and musical delivery.[12] Evaluation of these composers and their works must progress to provide a greater sense of context surrounding Senesino and his abilities. How did they write for voices in these and other operas, and how does this relate to their compositional style for Senesino? If, for example, musical traits in Senesino's roles vary greatly from the composer's usual practices with less-famous singers, this would certainly shed additional light on aspects of singer agency in role formation. Additionally, further biographical study, in particular of Senesino's early life which remains little-researched, will add depth to current understanding of his performing. How did Senesino adapt when he returned to sing as a member of the cathedral choir in Siena after his 1706 Venetian operatic début? It is also known that in Siena boys were castrated at a later age than in other parts of Italy, however, less understood is the biological connection this had to later-life vocal characteristics and range.[13] Did other young castrati from Siena develop into possessing a rich, low contralto voice, similar to Senesino?

After retiring from the stage, Senesino continued to wield power; no longer over the composers with whom he collaborated or aiming to influence public perception, but rather, in one of the institutions where his musical life had begun in 1707, the Accademia dei Rozzi of Siena. Senesino was named Arcirozzi in 1738, head of the organisation. The mature castrato requited the art form which had catapulted him from pauper to esteemed international celebrity by cultivating drama, dance, debate, and music within the next generation of Italian singers.[14] An aging eccentric, he continued to live out his life in public view, traveling about town with an African slave, a monkey, and a parrot, and dressed in opulent garments, including gold-embroidered tiger skins.[15] As a symbol of his status and most likely also his wealth at the time, at least three theatrical works were dedicated to Senesino in 1751.[16] Perhaps a narcissist until the end, life for the singer in his later years retained the mythical and heroic grandeur to which he had become so accustomed on the operatic stage.

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[11] Bucciarelli, 'Farò il possibile', 84.
[12] Regarding *Astianatte*, see Hans Dieter Clausen, 'Handel's *Admeto* und Bononcini's *Astianatte*', *Göttinger Händel-Beiträge*, VI (1996), 143-170.
[13] Reardon, 'Siena Cathedral and its Castrati', 205.
[14] Bucciarelli, 'From Rinaldo to Orlando', 315.
[15] Avanzati, 'The Unpublished Senesino', in Nicholas Clapton, ed., *Handel and the Castrati*: *the Story Behind the 18th Century Superstar Singers,* exhibition catalogue (London: Handel House Museum, 2006), 7.
[16] See Luigi Ferrari, *Le traduzioni italiane del teatro tragico francese nei secoli XVII e XVIII* (Paris: E. Champion, 1925), 120, 232, and 149. This source addresses specifically the tradition of French tragedy and its influence on Italian theatre. The plays dedicated to Senesino were *Hérode* by Augustin Nadal (1664-1740), *Saül* also by Nadal, and *I Maccabei* by various authors and arranged by Oresbio Agieo.

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