

Truth and Laughter on the Seventeenth-Century Stage:
Women's Voices in Early Venetian Opera

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the musical and dramatic representation of female characters in two early Venetian operas: Cavalli's *Ormindo* (1644) and Cesti's *Oronthea* (1656). Venetian opera is viewed through the lens of three theories of Bakhtin: 1) “polyphonic” or multiple voices; 2) “becoming” as openness to growth and change; and 3) *serio-comic* genres opposing authority through parody and satire. I argue that a Bakhtinian perspective provides a nuanced understanding of Venetian female characters' "voices" as conveyed in both libretti and music, in their private thoughts and public words. Both drama and music play critical roles in portraying female characters torn by inner conflicts in these operas.

I argue that the strong yet flawed women who were the centrepieces of Venetian opera in its first two decades were characters with whom Venetian audience members could identify and played a role in keeping new possibilities for women alive in the *social imaginary*.

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Two faculty members merit my special gratitude for their substantial contribution to my approach to this project. Dr. James Deaville has encouraged my interest in Venetian opera since the idea took root in his undergraduate seminar on Music and Gender, and he has remained an understanding mentor over the years. Above all, I wish to thank Dr. Alexis Luko, who has been an unwavering support for my special interest in the role of women in early modern opera. She was an enthusiastic guide through an Honours paper on the topic of cross dressing in opera, followed by a directed reading course on gender in Renaissance drama which led to the formulation of my thesis topic. Her scholarly guidance has been superb, pointing out critical issues, calling my attention to problematic wording, and generally ensuring that I remained on topic. In addition, her understanding of the vicissitudes of writing a thesis and her continual encouragement provided me with personal support through thick and thin. Her comments have doubtless saved me from a number of scholarly gaffes, but any errors of fact or interpretation remain my own.

Finally, I am grateful for the support of my husband, who has proven a willing partner in discussions on my favourite topic: women in seventeenth-century opera.

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SOURCES:

The musical examples for Cavalli’s *Ormindo* (1644) come from three sources:

- 1) Bernard MacDonald’s “Cavalli’s *Ormindo*: Tonality and Sexuality in Seventeenth-Century Venice” (Exs. 3.1 and 3.2a).
- 2) Ellen Rosand’s *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Exs. 3.2b, 3.10 and 3.11).
- 3) Christopher Mossey’s ““Human After All’: Character and Self-Understanding in Operas by Giovanni Faustini and Francesco Cavalli, 1644-52” (remainder).

The musical examples for Cesti’s *Oron tea* all come from *Oron tea: Regina d’Egitto, Opera in Three Acts and a Prologue*, edited by William C. Holmes.

For complete references to the above works, see Bibliography.

PITCH NOTATION CONVENTION:

Where the octave is relevant, specific pitches are indicated in the text as follows:

CC DD EE FF GG AA BB C D E F G A B c d e f g a b c’ d’ e’ f’ g’ a’ b’ c’’ d’’ e’’ f’’ g’’ a’’ b’’ c’’’
 *

Middle C = *

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PROLOGUE

From its inception in 1637, Venetian opera featured the voices and stories of women.¹ Unlike the opera of Rome, where women were barred from the stage and female roles were sung by castrati, one of the main attractions of opera in Venice was the female voice. Women portrayed their own stories on the operatic stage during Carnival, the season of the “world turned upside down,” the only period when the restricted upper-class women of Venice could circulate in public.² In the complex cultural milieu of Venice, the opera stage became a primary locus of gender contestation and a space in which sexual tensions and challenges to prevailing cultural expectations for women featured prominently in operatic narratives.

Following long-standing theatrical tradition in Venice, the public opera stage was seen as a safe place from which to launch social critique: during Carnival, opera could challenge gender expectations through parody and satire, as long as critique was couched in the sexually risqué performance style that was *de rigueur* in the upside-down carnival atmosphere. In this privileged space women could be shown experimenting with new roles, and their voices could project conflicted feelings, torn between socially required decorum and private emotion and passion.

¹ *Andromeda*, a theatrical work in which comedy, drama and music were combined, was performed at the new Teatro San’Cassiano in Venice during the Carnival season of 1637, produced by a theatrical troupe from Rome led by Benedetto Ferrari with music by Virgilio Mazzocchi and Marco Marazzoli. They returned the following year with another opera, and by 1639, operas by native Venetians were being produced. By 1641 there were four theatres producing operas, a number that doubled over the succeeding decades. Opera was big business in Venice, feeding the hunger of both Venetians and visitors from across Europe who flocked to the island city to hear and see opera, the most eagerly anticipated of the many pleasures of Venetian Carnival. See Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Creation of a Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 67-81.

² The “world turned upside down” was a theme that appeared frequently in popular culture. (See Chapter One for discussion.)

THESIS TOPIC

Seventeenth-century Venetian opera is best understood as a *serio-comic* genre whose freedom in the portrayal of women was prepared by Italian Renaissance *commedia erudita* (learned comedy) and improvised *commedia dell'arte*. This thesis deals with the many different voices of women and the vital role comedy played in Venetian opera in allowing them to express both conflicted emotions and changing social attitudes. Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of polyphonic voices as the representation of multiple voices in works of literature, as well as his utopic vision of laughter as a tool for unmasking falsehood and revealing truth, are central to my study of the social functions of comedy enacted by female characters in early Venetian opera.

In this thesis I argue that composers and librettists created female characters that reflected the real lives of Venetian women of the time -- their goals, desires, challenges, and their tightly controlled societal roles.³ Audacious on-stage behaviour and passionate portrayal of emotional highs and lows rendered these female protagonists larger than life. Music touches auditors in a way that often exceeds the effect of spoken words, and the voice seems to have a unique ability to express fine shades of emotion; thus, the voices of these performing women could become powerful vehicles for expressing both tragic sentiments and comic predicaments. I suggest that these voices could both challenge and inspire spectators with their musical testimony, paradoxically assuming the role of intimate "truth tellers" voicing conflicted feelings, yet also exposing their stories and feelings on the open stage.

³ The question may be posed, how can we be sure of what women want, given that the librettists and composers we know of were men? The lively intellectual debates in print in contemporary Venice on the position and rights of women reveal that members of Venetian society had a good understanding of the issues (see Chapter Two).

Comedy was integral to the performances of these women, for it is by becoming comic that these characters reveal their vulnerabilities and invite a compassionate response from their listeners. The laughter of spectators at these characters was more than a simple response to humour; rather, it signalled the connection that spectators felt to the women on stage. I suggest that comedy in these operas is not simply used for contrast with serious scenes, nor is it merely entertainment, but rather it has an organic function in the creation of characters who exhibit a changing panoply of human emotions. For example, I find humour as well as pain surfacing in moments of self-recognition in these operas.

Yet by the same token, “tragic” or serious, moments are also important, for they create the pathos which is the other side of the music drama that was *serio-comic* Venetian opera. By entering into the dramatic stories of on-stage characters, spectators could find themselves deeply touched by the emotions they witnessed. Placing characters in confrontational situations allowed emotions to emerge that revealed the truth underlying a given situation, forcing a character to confront her attitudes and behaviours. Thus, both the comic and the tragic contribute to character development over the course of these operas.

This thesis uses a Bakhtinian lens to analyze the alternating comic and tragic (serious) voices and behaviours of women in Venetian opera, employing three central concepts put forward by Bakhtin: 1) the “polyphonic” or multiple voices of individuals and in society; 2) the notion of “becoming” as openness to change and growth; and 3) *carnavalesque*, or *serio-comic* literature, defined as those genres combatting authority through parody and satire.

By adopting a Bakhtinian perspective, this thesis contends that, during the incredibly fecund decade of Venetian opera development from the mid-1640s to the mid-1650s, by alternating serious laments with comedy, the multiple or “polyphonic” voices of female

operatic protagonists permitted them to represent themselves in unusually emotional complexity, exceeding the bounds of purely “tragic” or simply “comic” characters. During this early period of opera development, before the da capo aria became the norm, composers had considerable freedom to respond to dramatic cues in composing musical settings (see Chapter Two for discussion). In this study I argue that, as a result, the women of early Venetian opera were portrayed as exceptionally rich characters who far exceed men in their depiction as complex and evolving individuals. The music these women sing represents their shifting emotions with great subtlety, rendering their pain and their joy poignant as they undergo significant transformations. As they gain new insights into their real identities and desires, the alternation of tragic and comic voices allows these women to connect with the audience in a visceral way.

RELATION TO EXISTING SCHOLARSHIP

Venetian opera has long held a fascination for scholars. Its academic study extends as far back as the final decades of the nineteenth-century when documentary work by Taddeo Weil and Henri Prunières laid the groundwork for subsequent studies.⁴ Modern engagement with the genre of opera that developed in Venice can be said to have begun in earnest in the 1950s with the important work of Nino Pirrotta and Wolfgang Osthoff, who began their contributions to clarifying the origin and distinctive musical characteristics of Venetian opera.⁵ They were joined by scholars Anna Amalia Abert, Simon Worsthorne, Jane Glover, Carl Schmidt and William C. Holmes, who explored a variety of topics in depth.⁶

⁴ Taddeo Weil, *I codici musicali contariniani del secolo XVII nella R. Biblioteca di San Marco n Venezia*. Venice, 1888. Reprint. (Bologna: Farni, 1969) and *I teatri musicali veneziani nel seicento: Catalogo delle opere in musica rappresentate nel secolo XVIII in Venezia (1701-1800)* Venice, 1897).

⁵ Nino Pirrotta, “Commedia dell’arte and Opera,” *The Musical Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (1955): 305-24, and Wolfgang Osthoff, “Maske und Musik,” *Castrum peregrini* 65 (1964): 10-49.

⁶ Simon Towneley Worsthorne, *Seventeenth-Century Venetian Opera*, rev. ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); and Jane Glover, “The Teatro Sant’Apollinaire and the Development of Seventeenth-

The 1970s and 1980s saw the first endeavours of three scholars who were to become significant contributors to research into Venetian opera: Ellen Rosand, Beth Glixon, and Lorenzo Bianconi. Rosand's PhD dissertation on the arias of Cavalli's early operas and Glixon's dissertation on recitative in Venetian opera defined key musical forms that would prove enduringly useful in opera studies. As well, Lorenzo Bianconi and Thomas Walker, interested in examining the social basis of opera, mapped the different ways in which opera developed in Italian courts and republics, thus placing Venetian opera into the social context of patrons, singers, and audiences.⁷

In 1991 Ellen Rosand published her seminal *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Creation of a Genre*, instigating a veritable avalanche of studies in all aspects of Venetian opera. This work has remained the "Bible" of Venetian opera studies to the many scholars who have profited from Rosand's encyclopedic knowledge and deep understanding of this unique genre. In this same period Beth Glixon and Jonathan Glixon began their long-term study of the process by which Venetian opera developed into a viable commercial enterprise, painstakingly uncovering the complex web of interpersonal and business connections between the opera impresario, librettist, composer, and *prima donna*, each with

Century Venetian Opera," PhD diss., Oxford University, 1975 and her monograph *Cavalli* (London: Batsford, 1978); Carl Brandon Schmidt, "The Operas of Antonio Cesti," PhD diss., Harvard University Press, 1973. ProQuest (0278819); William C. Holmes, "Orontea: A Study of Change and Development in the Libretto and the Music of Mid-Seventeenth-Century Italian Opera," PhD diss., University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1971. ProQuest (7117587) and Holmes, trans., *Orontea: Regina d'Egitto*, libretto by Giacinto Andrea Cicognini (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968). For a comprehensive summary of the scholarship on Venetian opera before 1991, see Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, 5-6.

⁷ Ellen Rosand, "Aria in the Early Operas of Francesco Cavalli," Ph. D diss., New York University, 1971 ProQuest (7203120); Beth L. Glixon, "Recitative in Seventeenth-Century Venetian Opera: Its Dramatic Function and Musical Language," Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1985. ProQuest (8520360); Lorenzo Bianconi and Thomas Walker, "Dalla 'Finta pazza' alla 'Veramonda': Storie di Febiarmonici" [From the 'Finta pazza' to 'Veramonda': The History of the Febiarmonici]. *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 10 (1975): 379-454. and "Production, Consumption and Political Function of Seventeenth-Century Opera," *Early Music History* 4 (1984): 209-96..

their own links to noble Venetian patrons.⁸

A new generation of feminist scholars in the late 1980s and early 1990s, led by Susan McClary and Suzanne Cusick, made significant contributions to understanding the ways gender affected the portrayal of operatic subjects. Each of these scholars independently demonstrated that the very notions of “masculine” and “feminine” in the representation of operatic characters had their origins in the dramatic and musical works pioneered by Claudio Monteverdi in the seventeenth-century.⁹ Of particular interest to this thesis is the recent work of Wendy Heller, who examined the flamboyant heroines of Venetian opera. Her thorough research on the literary sources, Venetian intellectual debates, and the position of women in Venice brought a new understanding of how the heroines of Venetian opera evolved as dramatic characters.¹⁰ Particularly relevant to the study of women in opera is the field of gender studies, where scholars established that early modern notions of sexuality and the body provoked some cultural anxiety about the possibility of mutability of gender during the seventeenth-century.¹¹

Complementing historical gender research is the discipline of Venetian studies, a subgenre of history essential for understanding the seventeenth century anxieties and

⁸ Beth L. Glixon and Jonathan E. Glixon. “Marco Faustini and Venetian Opera Production in the 1650s: Recent Archival Discoveries,” *Journal of Musicology* 10, no. 1 (1992): 48-73, and their *Inventing the Business of Opera: The Impresario and his World in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁹ Susan McClary, “Constructions of Gender in Monteverdi’s Dramatic Music,” in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1991), 35-52; Suzanne Cusick, “On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex,” in *Audible Traces: Gender and Sexuality in music scholarship*, ed. Elaine Barking and L. Hamessley (Zürich, SW: Carciofoli, 1991), 37-55.

¹⁰ Wendy Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women’s Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, Berkeley: University of California Press 2003, and “Chastity, Heroism and Allure: Women in the Opera of Seventeenth-Century Venice.” PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1995. ProQuest (9532701).

¹¹ See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1990; and Katherine Park, “The Rediscovery of the Clitoris,” in *The Body in Parts*, ed. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio, 179-93 (New York: Routledge, 1997).

concerns specific to Venice.¹² Venetian issues such as marriage limitation, rising dowry costs, and the changing social roles for men under new economic conditions which no longer required merchant adventurers, helped drive operatic plots and surface as motivations for characters.

My study also incorporates concepts and perspectives from the fields of both Italian Renaissance learned comedy (*commedia erudita*) and *commedia dell'arte*. Laura Giannetti's 2009 study of the social functions served by the cross-dressing prevalent in Italian Renaissance comedy has proven particularly useful. Her notion of *social and cultural scripting*, which grew out of close reading of characters' onstage behaviours, reveals social practices and cultural tensions underlying the gendered roles and expectations of the period. Giannetti conceives of these practices as part of the *social imaginary*, embedded in the imagination of the educated circles of Renaissance Italy, since the same plot lines, stock characters, and themes recur in over three hundred plays written and printed over the period 1525-1650.¹³ The very same tensions are found in the theatrical conventions built into Venetian opera.

Research in *commedia dell'arte* studies has likewise contributed perspectives important to my thesis. Work by Rosalind Kerr has demonstrated that comedies written for *commedia dell'arte* troupes in the 1620s can be usefully compared to early opera librettos for the pungent social satire and transgressive sexual behaviours found in both the scenarios

¹² Scholars working in Venetian studies include Stanley Chojnacki, "Patrician Women in Early Renaissance Venice," Chap. 5 in *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice*, 115-31 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); James C. Davis, *The Decline of the Venetian Nobility as a Ruling Class* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1962); and Guido Ruggiero, *The Boundaries of Eros: Sex, Crime, and Sexuality in Renaissance Venice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

¹³ Laura Giannetti, *Lelia's Kiss: Imagining Gender, Sex and Marriage in Italian Renaissance Comedy* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 3-23. On the *social imaginary*, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

for improvisation and the published works that survive.¹⁴ In the last decade, scholars in theatre studies in Europe have also contributed significantly to understanding the dramaturgy of early opera. Hendrik Schulze has investigated opera librettists' adaptations of stories and characters from mythological sources, with particular attention to the ambivalent hero figure, while Barbara Maranini has studied structuring principles in G. A. Cicognini's libretto for *Giasone*.¹⁵

Most important for my study are several concepts of Mikhail Bakhtin. Through his influential work spanning the domains of style, semiotics, literary and cultural history, Bakhtin contributed to the breaking down of academic disciplinary boundaries. The publication of his *Rabelais and his World* in English in 1968 influenced a new generation studying popular culture, catapulting the concepts of *carnival* and the *carnavalesque* into aesthetic and cultural prominence.¹⁶

Scholars of theatre and of Venetian culture have found Bakhtin's ideas on carnival to be particularly relevant, although not all have agreed with his view of carnival as a regenerative, utopian force.¹⁷ In particular, Natalie Zemon Davis, a social historian who has

¹⁴ Rosalind Kerr, *The Actress as Androgyne in the Commedia dell'arte Scenarios of Flaminio Scala*, PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1993 ProQuest (NN02922) and "Tra(ns)vesting Gender and Genre in Flaminio Scala's *Il finto marito*," in *Queer Italia: Same Sex Desire in Italian Literature and Film*, ed. Gary P. Cestaro, 105-16 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). See also Jon R. Snyder, ed. and trans. "Introduction," to *Love in the Mirror ((Amor nello specchio))* by Giovan Battista Andreini (orig. pub. 1622) (Toronto, ON: Iter Inc., 2009), 1-36.

¹⁵ Hendrik Schulze, *Odyseus in Venedig: Sujetwahl und Rollenkonzeption in der venezianischen Oper des 17. Jahrhunderts* [Choice of Subject and Conception of Roles in 17th Century Venetian Opera] (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004; Barbara Maranini, "Il comico nel tragico: Un'indagine sui drammi per musica di Giacinto Andrea Cicognini" [The Comic in the Tragic: A Thesis on the Operas of Giacinto Andrea Cicognini], Università degli Studi di Pavia, Corso di Laurea in Musicologia, 2001.

¹⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky, foreword Krystyna Pomorska and prologue Michael Holquist (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

¹⁷ For a wide-ranging discussion and evaluation of Bakhtin's notion of carnival in critical theory, see Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986); for a positive view of Bakhtin's applicability to theatre, see Michael Bristol, "Carnival and the Institutions of Theatre in Elizabethan England," *English Literary History* 50 (1983): 637-54.

studied European medieval and renaissance popular culture in depth, considers Bakhtin's theories to be too universalizing.¹⁸ In his 1981 book *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, historian Edward Muir evaluates the significance of carnival in Venice, where authorities encouraged the periodic hierarchical role reversals of carnival but policed its excesses. Muir concludes that, in Venice, carnival served a dual function: by allowing a periodic letting off of steam, it kept tensions between authorities and populace in balance, while ultimately supporting the status quo and contributing to the contemporary mythology of Venice as "the Serene Republic."¹⁹

The response of opera scholars to Bakhtin's theories has been muted. In her *Emblems of Eloquence* (2003) Heller only briefly discusses what she terms the "carnivalization" of Venetian opera.²⁰ Martha Feldman's important volume on *opera seria* (2007) also makes reference to Bakhtin and laughter in relation to the eighteenth-century.²¹ I believe that Bakhtin remains a potent source of ideas for scholarly discussion of opera.

RELEVANCE OF STUDY

While Bakhtin's notions of *carnival* and the *carnavalesque* continue to be applied in the fields of popular culture, political science and literature, I am unaware of any studies that apply his unique view of multiple voices, laughter, and social critique to early opera.²² Comedy too has recently become a topic of some interest in opera studies, yet the authors

¹⁸ Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Reasons of Misrule," Chap. 4 in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975), 97-123.

¹⁹ Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 156-71.

²⁰ Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence*, 7-8.

²¹ Martha Feldman *Opera and Sovereignty: Transforming Myths in Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 176-77.

²² In Bakhtin's conclusion to his essay "Discourse on the Novel," he remarks on the importance of what he terms the "re-accentuation" of images "during their translation from literature into other art forms—into drama, opera, painting;" *The Dialogic Imagination, Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist; trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 443.

of three doctoral dissertations from the past decade have grappled with the question of the genre of early Venetian opera without coming to firm conclusions.²³ I believe that Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the *serio-comic* genre of literature holds the most promise for explaining the nature of seventeenth-century Venetian opera. My study proposes that adopting a Bakhtinian lens can lead to a more nuanced understanding of the interplay of serious and comic aspects in Venetian opera.

While it is understood that Venetian opera inherited certain plot structures and stock characters from *commedia dell'arte*, no recent work has focused on the significant impact of this theatrical form on the representation of female characters.²⁴ As well, because historical musicology and *commedia dell'arte* studies have until recently been independent disciplines, much that is relevant to the overlap of theatrical and operatic genres has not been appreciated. Finally, despite the fact that Italian Renaissance learned comedy (*commedia erudita*) contributes important models of representation of women, its influence has been largely ignored in discussion of Venetian opera in the English language scholarly press.²⁵

²³ The three dissertations are Maria Anne Purciello's "And Dionysus Laughed": Opera, Comedy and Carnival in Seventeenth-Century Venice and Rome, PhD diss., Princeton University, 2005. ProQuest (3180067); Kristen Aviva Nelson Kane's *Francesco Cavalli's Elena (1659): A Study and Edition* DMA diss., Cornell University, 2010. ProQuest (3396219); and Reba Alaina Wissner's *Of Gods, Myths and Mortals: Francesco Cavalli's L'Elena (1659)* PhD diss., Princeton University, 2012. ProQuest (3509143). Purciello opens the discussion of whether "comedy" can be used to describe Venetian opera in the early decades of development, but she does not come down firmly on one side or the other. Kane and Wissner both deal with Cavalli's *Elena*, which they consider to be the first "real" comedy, discounting Cesti's *Oronte* as not yet a pure comedy. I agree with much of their discussion but disagree with their conclusion that it is impossible to assign a label to early opera. I consider the term "serio-comic" to best capture the dual character of the sort of comedy that early Venetian librettists and composers concocted.

²⁴ Pirrotta was the first to posit a close relationship between *commedia dell'arte* and opera ((1955). Beth Glixon's PhD dissertation on the role of recitative in seventeenth-century Venetian opera touched on the influence of *commedia* only tangentially; it also was written prior to the burgeoning of the field of gender and music (Rutgers, 1985).

²⁵ An exception is the 2007 article by Alexandra Collier which explores the lament tradition in *commedia grave* and early opera; "Ladies and Courtesans in Late Sixteenth-Century *Commedia Grave*: Vernacular Antecedents of Early Opera's *Prime Donn*," *Italian Studies* 63, no.1 (2007): 27-44. The lack of communi-

OVERVIEW OF THESIS

The central focus of this thesis is a close reading of the librettos and scores of two important operas that span the period of most rapid change in development of opera in Venice. Faustini and Cavalli's *Ormindo* (1644) and Cicognini and Cesti's *Oronthea* (libretto 1649, music 1656) represent two of the most popular librettists and composers of this era. These operas have been selected to demonstrate the changes in both dramaturgy and musical representation that took place in this compressed period.

<u>OPERA</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>LIBRETTIST</u>	<u>COMPOSER</u>
• <i>Ormindo</i>	1644	Giovanni Faustini	Francesco Cavalli
• <i>Oronthea</i> - libretto - music	1649 1656	Giacinto Andrea Cicognini	Antonio Cesti

As well, Cicognini and Cavalli's *Giasone* (1649) serves as a useful reference point throughout the thesis since it is often cited as an example of the perfect balance between dramatic and musical elements at mid-century.²⁶

The thesis is divided into two parts, each containing two chapters. Part I lays out the context and status of Venetian opera as a serio-comic genre and presents the theoretical lenses used for analysis in this study. Chapter One is devoted to the theoretical perspectives relevant to this study, including important concepts from Mikhail Bakhtin and certain literary techniques adapted from those cited by Bakhtin to analyze the rhetorical strategies used by the women found in these operas. Chapter Two introduces the concerns of librettists and composers in early modern Venice as they sought to create a new form of *dramma per musica*. The chapter begins with a brief introduction to the Aristotelian poetics

cation between academics in Italian studies and those in historical musicology has been decried; more interdisciplinary studies are suggested, especially those involving librettos as well as music; see Kathleen Mitchell, "Recent Work on Italian Opera Studies," *Italian Studies* 65, no.1 (2010): 141-42.

²⁶ Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, 4.

that influenced Venetian librettists and is followed by a discussion of the complementary roles of librettist and composer in creating these works.

Part II consists of case studies of two important operas that illustrate two different ways that libretto and music were employed by librettists and composers to represent female protagonists expressing the various sides of their multifaceted personalities in distinct “voices.” Chapter Three presents the world of Venice on stage in the fictional drama *Ormindo* in which we find an enterprising *innamorata* (female romantic lead) who has been abandoned by her lover and has set out to find him, a young queen poorly matched with her elderly husband, and a number of secondary characters familiar from *commedia dell’arte*. Chapter Four examines the opera *Oronthea*, with a libretto from 1649 by Giacinto Andrea Cicognini and music composed by Antonio Cesti in 1656. In this opera the dilemma of a female ruler torn between love and duty is explored in relation to seventeenth-century notions of *decorum* and court etiquette.

The final chapter sums up the insights gained from employing Bakhtin’s concept of multiple voices to examine the evolution of female characters through both drama and music. It also establishes the connection between issues and concerns of seventeenth-century audiences and opera, the mirror of Venetian society.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SERIO-COMIC AND THE POETICS OF BAKHTIN IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY VENETIAN OPERA

This chapter introduces the theoretical perspectives of Bakhtin adopted in the thesis. Following a brief summary to Bakhtin's life and influence, Section I, *The Serio-Comic Genre of Venetian Opera*, presents Bakhtin's concepts of *carnival* and the *carnivalization* of literature. Venetian opera demonstrates the characteristics Bakhtin ascribes to the *serio-comic* as an example of "carnivalized" literature with its own kind of laughter and Renaissance comic sensibility. Section II, *Bakhtin's Poetic Theory*, introduces the basic constructs that shape his overarching orientation to language and literature: the role of dialogue, the notions of unfinalizability and becoming, and the role of multiple voices in literature in combatting authority. Section III, *Analytical Techniques*, is an outline of the rhetorical strategies used in the thesis that are adapted from those used by Bakhtin, based on their usefulness in interpreting women's roles in early Venetian opera.

BAKHTIN'S LIFE AND INFLUENCE

Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) was a Russian philosopher, literary critic and semiotician who worked extensively on the philosophy of language, literary theory, and aesthetics, and also had a lasting influence on the fields of linguistics and speech act theory. His classical education provided him with an unusually wide-ranging grasp of European history and literature, yet Bakhtin's radical, often controversial ideas on carnival and language reveal the isolation in which he worked for much of his life. All of the topics Bakhtin treated in his wide-ranging writings – being and individual consciousness, language and communication, genre and form in literature – were deeply marked by his

personal experiences under a repressive Soviet political system.²⁷ An enduring theme that threads through all of Bakhtin's work is the importance of the individual voice in a social context in which authoritarian, official voices prevail. This is particularly pertinent to this thesis given the socio-cultural context of Venice, where, despite being a Republic in name, the powerful Council of Ten kept a firm hand on censorship, wielding power through tight control of every aspect of Venetian cultural life. Opera in particular had to walk a thin line between audacious theatre and political acceptability.²⁸

THE SERIO-COMIC GENRE OF VENETIAN OPERA

1. Carnival and the World Turned Upside Down

Opera in Venice was intimately connected to carnival, starting with the first opera performed in 1637. In seventeenth-century Venice the opera season corresponded to that of Carnival, which ran for six weeks between December 26 and the beginning of Lent in February. While carnival was celebrated in many European cities, the Carnival of Venice became famous for its libertine atmosphere and opulent performances of opera, the crowning glory of the season.

Carnival in Venice was a period of legalized licence in which the normal world of

²⁷ In Bakhtin's formative years he worked intensively with a small group of like-minded intellectuals (the "Bakhtin circle"), but for much of his scholarly life in Stalinist Russia Bakhtin worked in isolation. The political nature of some of his ideas earned him a sentence of hard labour in Siberia which was commuted to exile due to a degenerative bone disease that rendered him an invalid and eventually caused the amputation of his right leg. Bakhtin's most important works were not published until many years after they were written, and in several cases were revised extensively to incorporate his newer thinking, leading to repetition, variation and/or new terminology. Publication of his work was blocked during the Stalinist period, and his history of the *Bildungsroman* was lost in the German occupation during World War II. His thesis on Rabelais, completed many years earlier, could not be defended until 1945, when powerful people blocked awarding him a doctorate. Only after the death of Stalin did younger scholars rediscover Bakhtin's work and press for his reinstatement; in the early 1960s he was finally awarded his doctorate as well as a prestigious post in Moscow, where he was able to teach for the last decade of his life, inspiring a new generation of scholars. See Michael Holquist, "Prologue," in *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), xiii-xxiii.

²⁸ On the firm control exercised by the Venetian authorities over the populace, see Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, 135-81. See Chapter Two for a discussion of Venetian authorities' view of theatre.

hierarchy and status was turned on its head and those in authority were symbolically brought down, while those of low estate were temporarily raised up. With its reversals of status and role, Carnival can be seen as a re-enactment of the “world turned upside down,” a favourite theme in popular culture that appeared in illustrations from the sixteenth-century onward.²⁹ In Venice during Carnival, ritualized social critique was acted out in official pageants as well as in rude skits put on by artisan guilds in which the normal hierarchical structures were mocked and celebrated in inverted form. Venice had a highly stratified and regulated society, and the special period of carnival permitted a free mingling of people normally divided by barriers of class, sex and age. A festive atmosphere reigned in which all could participate in masking and impersonating other identities; this included upper-class women, normally confined to their homes, who could be seen on the street and at balls, banquets, and the theatre, with their identity safely hidden behind masks and costume dress.³⁰

Reversals of gender roles implying a change in identity and status were also an integral part of carnival farces celebrating the overturning of authority and hierarchy through symbolic “de-crowning.” The power of women was acknowledged in carnival pageants in which “Dame Folly” was crowned and the masculine ruling authorities and their symbols of authority debased.³¹ Theatre figured prominently in the celebrations held

²⁹ Illustrations featured reversals of role and status such as a horse driving a cart pulled by a man, a servant beating a master, and role reversal of husband and wife with the man spinning with the baby on his knee, while his wife carries a gun and smokes; Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978), 185-91.

³⁰ Peter Burke, “The Carnival of Venice,” in *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 183-90.

³¹ Ironically, the supersized Dame Folly was actually a cross-dressed man. Nathalie Zemon Davis has pointed out the significance of men needing to impersonate women to gain their power; “Women on Top,” in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, 124-51 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975). Women cross-dressing as men in these pageants is cited in contemporary diaries in the early sixteenth century; Burke, “Carnival of Venice,” 185.

both outdoors and indoors, ranging from street theatre by visiting *commedia dell'arte* troupes to performances of comedies organized by the *Compagnie della calza*, the fraternities of patrician youths not yet of the age of majority who had responsibility for carnival entertainments.

Bakhtin saw carnival as a deeply significant time in which the age-old powers of life and death, regeneration and laughter, could all be celebrated. In *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin analyses the various popular forms of festive celebrations, images, and language of the medieval and Renaissance periods; he considers carnival to have been an important source of social change until the end of the Renaissance.³² Bakhtin terms carnival a form of “*syncretic pageantry* of a ritualistic sort” pointing to its origin in ancient rites around procreation and fertility.³³ In addition to hierarchical inversions such as the de-crowning of the king, key features include the cyclical nature of the abolition of power (the new “king” will himself undergo de-crowning), the abolition of distance between individuals, ritual forms of profanation, and ambivalent carnival images that juxtapose “the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant.”³⁴

The carnival image of the *grotesque body* represents just such a unification of polar opposites: the generative female principle is acknowledged in the notion of the grotesque body in which sexuality is raised to a high plane as the source of birth, yet at the same time is linked with the other pole of life: degradation and decay which leads to death.³⁵ In Bakhtin’s words, “the grotesque image reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet

³² This position is not supported by Natalie Zemon Davis.

³³ Bakhtin presents his concepts of *carnival* and the *carnivalization* of literature at length in *Rabelais and his World*, and succinctly in his *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson, intro. Wayne C. Booth (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 122-37. I use both sources.

³⁴ Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 123.

³⁵ Bakhtin makes a connection between validation of the lower stratum of the physical body during carnival and the ascendance of the lower stratum of the body politic (the lower class); *Rabelais’ World*, 19.

unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming.”³⁶

We will find that the female protagonists in the early Venetian operas studied in this thesis attain power through their freedom of thought and action, an agency that seems permeated with a carnival spirit and presents a strong contrast to the restricted contemporary role of upper-class women in Venetian society. The fascination with the grotesque is also evident in the two Venetian operas studied in this thesis. For example, a reflection of the grotesque is evident in the older nurse figure, who obtains power by seemingly combining both masculine and feminine attributes.³⁷

2. The Carnavalesque and Renaissance Laughter

Bakhtin’s frequently cited concept of the *carnavalesque* refers to a literary mode that he describes as imbued with “the carnival sense of the world.” By this he means that it parallels the inversions of social hierarchy found in carnival by introducing a variety of voices from different social levels, which freely mock and subvert authority. Bakhtin found his most potent insights in early periods of European history such as the Hellenistic period, when social forces challenging the dominant ideas of high culture produced new literary forms. He termed the resultant genres *serio-comic* literature, an underground literary stream that ran parallel to serious classical literature, using various satiric techniques to parody classical works and challenge their ideals.

Another important period for Bakhtin is the Renaissance, where he singles out Rabelais for his creative incorporation of satiric and parodic language from popular sources into his novels *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, and for employing this language to combat

³⁶ Ibid., 24.

³⁷ In opera, stock characters are often individualized by being given characteristics that make them seem grotesque: dwarves, hunchbacks, stutterers, and those who consume in excess, whether drunkards or gluttons, are also common characters.

authoritarian official culture. Bakhtin labels these literary forms *carnivalized* for their “deep connection to a carnival sense of the world.”³⁸ Bakhtin expands the notion of a “carnival sense of the world” to include *carnival laughter*, which expresses itself in laughter in which “ridicule was fused with rejoicing.” For Bakhtin the basic orientation of *carnivalized literature* is opposition to authority – whether political, social or literary – through the laughter engendered by parody, travesty and similar genres.

Bakhtin’s depiction of laughter infused with a carnival sense of the world captures an important aspect of a broader Renaissance sensibility. He associates the great literature of Shakespeare, Cervantes, Boccaccio and Rabelais, among others, with a world view incorporating laughter and play as essential means for discovering truth about the human condition.³⁹ He argues that laughter has always been both a clue to the presence of political and social critique and a liberating force in itself; in his words, “by resisting hypocrisy ... laughing truth... degrades power.”⁴⁰

Bakhtin’s distinction between the function of laughter in the Renaissance and in the late seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries is key to understanding Venetian opera. He maintains that the world views of the Renaissance and the Baroque differ substantially:

For the Renaissance...laughter has a deep philosophical meaning, it is one of the essential forms of the truth concerning the world as a whole, and concerning history and man... Therefore, laughter is just as admissible in great literature, posing universal problems, as seriousness. Certain essential aspects of the world are accessible only to laughter.⁴¹

However, he suggests that for the later seventeenth- and eighteenth- centuries:

³⁸ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 11.

³⁹ Bakhtin traces the sources for the Renaissance humanist conception of laughter from the ancients (Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Lucian’s Menippean satire) to Renaissance medical treatises on laughter as healing. He also discusses the meaning of laughter in the literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 67-72.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁴¹ Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 66.

Laughter is not a universal, philosophical form. It can refer only to individual and individually typical phenomena of social life. That which is important and essential cannot be comical. Neither can history and persons representing it – kings, generals, heroes – be shown in a comic aspect.⁴²

While the latter position can be seen as more typical of *opera seria*, early Venetian opera fits into the Renaissance frame of laughter outlined by Bakhtin, and this thesis will explore some of the ways in which laughter relates to power differences in serio-comic opera. Venetian operatic characters conform to the carnival spirit, where the high are temporarily brought low and the low raised up. In this serio-comic genre the distinctions of authority, class and gender are all revealed as questionable: the parodic treatment of kings, heroes and men of authority shows them lacking in real power and rendered foolish by the dart of Cupid; princes may be warriors but concern themselves only with love; and women often prove more resourceful and authoritative than their fathers or lovers. In the Venetian operas treated in this thesis, the women are not only more active and assertive than their male counterparts, but they show a broader range of emotions, which permits them both to make mistakes and to learn from them.

3. The *Serio-Comic* and Venetian Opera

Bakhtin regards “serio-comic” genres as important for creating an alternative view of the world, a view opposing official culture. *Serio-comic* literature is superficially comic yet uses parody and other stylistic devices to achieve an underlying serious purpose: opposition to authority. Bakhtin describes three basic characteristics of serio-comic works, all of which are found in seventeenth-century Venetian opera. They are illustrated here using Cicognini’s and Cavalli’s *Giasone* (1649), which is often cited as the paradigmatic Venetian opera at mid-century.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 67.

1) In serio-comic works, the relationship of protagonists to myth and legend is downplayed. Heroes participate in adventures that have no connection to their mythic role, and the retelling relies on *free invention* to create character, often portraying them in a *parodic* light rather than drawing a heroic portrait based on legend. In the operatic retelling of Jason and the Golden Fleece, for example, Giasone participates in a dizzying number of plot turns involving the jealousies of the two women with whom he is involved, and the Golden Fleece is only incidental to the plot. Likewise, the two operas studied in this thesis both purport to be about kings and queens but their stories are freely invented.

2) Serio-comic genres contain comical representations of serious characters, whose actions are portrayed “without any epic or tragic distance, presented not in the absolute past of myth and legend but on the plane of the present day,” i.e. the immediate present of the story, even if set long ago.⁴³ They are thus brought up close and presented to the audience with all their flaws and humanity. For example, the two princes in *Ormindo* do not behave like warriors; instead, they are shown acting like foolish boys arguing over their love conquests. Likewise, while Erisbe may be a queen, she is shown flirting and deceiving first one suitor, then the other. Protagonists from Greek hero tales and other noble characters in early Venetian opera are treated similarly; for example, Giasone does not act a hero but rather like an ordinary man in love who is loath to attend to his duty.

3) Finally, serio-comic works are “deliberately multi-styled and hetero-voiced;”⁴⁴ in other words, many genres and distinct types of language are used in the course of presenting the storyline. This characteristic is a feature of serio-comic opera, where the variety of genres and types of language creates a mixed tone, at times comic and at other times

⁴³ Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 108.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 108.

serious, rather than maintaining the single high tone characteristic of genres such as epic or *opera seria*. Opera can be seen as fundamentally multi-voiced because it uses two basic forms of sung text: *recitative* for relating events and *aria* or *arioso* for reflecting on events and providing emotional responses.⁴⁵ In addition, other “voices,” or points of view, come from the variety of musical genres that Venetian opera uses to tell its stories, from lullabies to letters and from simple songs to elaborate incantations.

4. Truth Telling and Venetian Operatic Practice

Critiquing power carried risks in authoritarian Venice, which was formally a republic but was ruled by a powerful hereditary oligarchy. Yet, opera was supported by the high-level authorities both for its enhancement of the fame of Venice and its significant contribution to the coffers of the state through increased tourism. They regularly brought visiting dignitaries to show off the glories of the highest-prestige carnival entertainment the city had to offer, making opera the most direct route to the ears of those in power. In the privileged time and space of Carnival, the witty repartee of saucy servants and old nurses could deliver uncomfortable truths at the same time as they dispensed advice to on-stage masters or charges. The overall message of an opera and its characters could also present new perspectives on difficult social issues.

During Carnival, it was common for actors to erase the boundary between spectator and performer by addressing the audience directly, confirming Bakhtin’s contention that carnival “does not know footlights,” that is, does not acknowledge distinctions between actors and spectators: “Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people.”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ See Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, for various dramatic functions of the aria, 276.

⁴⁶ Bakhtin, *Rabelais’s World*, 7.

Breaking the “fourth wall” was a tried and true comedic technique used in contemporary spoken comedy and also served as an effective tool for socio-political critique in Venetian opera.⁴⁷ Although many of the topical references are indecipherable today without their context, these jokes are recorded in the librettos and we can imagine what they might have signified for their audiences.⁴⁸ The fact that references to specific politicians, recent political scandals, and so forth were cut when operas from Venice were taken on the road likely indicates that much of the entertainment value of opera lay in its ability to satirize and critique authority. Cavalli’s *Semiramide* (1670) provides an unusual example of a case where an opera originally composed for the Hapsburg court in Vienna was “venetianized” for production in Venice; this entailed both making the sexual content more transgressive and making minor characters more critical of authority.⁴⁹

Parody was a natural stylistic technique in this context, taking the form of comic scenes and dialogue that exaggerated posturing of every sort, from the foolishness of deluded rulers to the pretensions of outmoded chivalric ideals and the absurdity of the upper class notions of love. Since the effect of parody depends on the recognition of the values being satirized, it simultaneously reaffirms the codes it attacks. Building on Bakhtin, Robert Anchor points out that the unique comic effect of parody is created by bringing the code parodied into present-day reality, where it is examined, exposed, and its effect presented in a novel way.⁵⁰ Through parody, the reader or spectator can be exposed to a

⁴⁷ “Breaking the fourth wall” is the term used for addressing the audience directly. This technique has been used throughout history to create a break in the illusion of theatre, from the Greeks to the twentieth century, where it figures prominently in the *Verfremdungstheater* of Bertolt Brecht; see John Willett, ed. and trans., *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (London: Methuen, 1964).

⁴⁸ See Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, 113-120 for extensive use of audience-directed dialogue.

⁴⁹ Wendy Heller, “The Queen as King: Refashioning *Semiramide* for Seicento Venice,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5, no. 2 (1993).

⁵⁰ Robert Anchor, “Bakhtin’s Truths of Laughter,” *Clio* 14, no. 3 (1985): 242.

new vision of reality, opening up the possible “truths” of a given situation.

Another kind of vehicle for truth-telling in Venetian opera is found in the folk (and later literary) figures of *the rogue*, *the clown* and *the fool*. Bakhtin highlights the importance of these three figures, who “stand outside the official world,” enabling them to see the conventions, deceit, and corruption of that world. As such, they have the time-honoured right to speak bluntly, like the jester who is the only one who can speak truth to the King, and the fool whose simpleminded naiveté reveals deceptions others think hidden. Bakhtin describes these characters as forces that oppose and expose convention, and “rip off masks” to reveal truth underneath.⁵¹ These figures occur with regularity in Venetian opera, although they appear in many guises and can be found in unexpected places. The role of “truth teller” has traditionally been associated with the outsider and the powerless, a function found in both women and servants in the Venetian operas studied here.

The sets, stage machinery and costumes used in Venetian opera served two important functions. First was to contemporize and re-localize tales situated in other lands and times to Venice of the day, thereby encouraging Venetians to recognize themselves in the operatic drama. Sets and stage machinery also served a second important function: creating spectacle and enhancing illusion, a need felt by its creators in order to fulfill the spectators’ desire for the seemingly miraculous, for scenic wonders that would inspire *ammirazione*, a trend in evidence since the late sixteenth-century.⁵² The “marvellous” became an element

⁵¹ Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 158-66.

⁵² See Nina Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court: The 1589 Interludes for La Pellegrina*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008). Treadwell establishes the relation between political power and aesthetic appreciation of musical performance and notes the important role that wonder (*meraviglia*) played in the northern Italian courts in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. This aesthetic is based on Aristotle’s mention of the “amazement” of the audience when the denouement of a drama is unexpected yet based on probability. The concept was given further support by the noted Italian theorist Vincenzo Maggi, who explained that the incongruous or unexpected could serve as a source of laughter.

that made a performance memorable, and librettists sought ways to gain the attention of the spectators by incorporating elements that would provoke wonder and amazement (*meraviglia* and *ammirazione*). As we shall see, both of the operas studied in this thesis integrate elements designed to provoke this feeling of wonder. Spectacle was an intrinsic part of early opera and Venetian opera is documented as playing on the spectators' sense of wonder by introducing sets to represent the city of Venice itself in all its glory, as is evident in Cavalli's *Ormindo*, where the city's central San Marco plaza and the iconic Arsenale figure prominently in the action.⁵³

Wonder was also closely linked to female representation on the stage. During the late sixteenth century, in the serious Italian theatrical genres of *commedia grave*, *tragicommedia* and *pastorale*, women emerged as idealized figures who represented moral values which the increasingly urbanized Italian elites saw disappearing from their society. One study by Louise Clubb on women's roles in *pastoral* and *commedia erudita* is entitled "Woman as Wonder" and explores the enhanced role of women as carriers of moral values in these works during the latter part of the sixteenth-century.⁵⁴ Since mid-century when women began appearing on the stage in travelling *commedia dell'arte* troupes, the roles assigned to them had steadily grown more important.⁵⁵ The emergence of talented actresses such as Isabella Andreini gave the professional theatre of *commedia dell'arte* broader acceptance as a valid artistic form, even while the plots of this improvisational form of theatre continued to provide trenchant satire on conventional gender roles and

⁵³ See Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, on the productions of *La finta pazza*, 110-24, and *Il Bellefonte*, 125-153.

⁵⁴ Louise George Clubb, "Commedia Grave and the Comedy of Errors," 49-63, and "Woman as Wonder: Theatergram of Italian and Shakespearean Comedy," 65-89, in *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁵⁵ Richard Andrews, "Isabella Andreini and Others: Women on Stage in the late Cinquecento," in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*, ed. Letizia Panizza, 316-33 (Oxford; Legenda, 2000).

expectations.⁵⁶ Andreini herself was regarded as a “wonder” because of her amazing performances that foregrounded both passionate female emotionality and superlative literary skills.

It is perhaps not surprising that aspects of women’s lives were enacted on the Venetian opera stage, where their commanding voices asserted an authority they generally lacked in real life. In examining female characters in two significant early operas, we will discover women who have developed into powerful spokespersons for the concerns of many educated women on the social expectations and limited horizons of Venetian women. The social position of women of the noble and professional classes in Venice was particularly limited, and a number of women with a humanist education made their views known through treatises and dialogues on the equality of women and their desire to determine their own futures. Lucrezia Marinella, Moderata Fonte, and the reluctant nun Arcangela Tarabotti were all outspoken Venetian women whose voices found publication in the first half of the seventeenth century.⁵⁷ Because they were published, their views circulated and entered the *social imaginary* of contemporary educated Venetians. Thus, the musical dramas presented on the Venetian stage could amplify messages that were already implicit in the society at large; the feelings and desires of audience members were mirrored

⁵⁶ Richard Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios: The Performance of Comedy in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and Kerr, “Tra(ns)vesting Gender and Genre.”

⁵⁷ Lucrezia Marinella, *Nobility and Excellence of Women and Defects and Vices of Men*, trans. Anne Dunnehill (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). Orig. pub. as *La nobiltà e l’eccellenza delle donne, co’ difetti, ed mancamenti de gli huomini* (Venice: Ciotti, 1601); Moderata Fonte, *The Worth of Women: Wherein is Clearly Revealed Their Nobility and Superiority to Men*, ed. and trans. Virginia Cox (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). Orig. pub. as *Il merito delle donne: ove chiaramente si scopre quanto siano elle degne e più perfette de gli huomini* (Venice: Domenico Imberti, 1600); and Arcangela Tarabotti, *Paternal Tyranny*, trans. Letitia Panizza (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), orig. pub. as *Semplicità ingannata* (Venice: Valvesense, 1654). See also Margaret F. Rosenthal, “Venetian Women Writers and Their Discontents,” in *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images* ed. James Grantham Turner, 107-32 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

when they witnessed on-stage characters striving to develop into individuals with control over their own lives.

BAKHTIN'S POETIC THEORY

We turn now to key elements in Bakhtin's poetic theory. Bakhtin's early training as a philosopher determined his views on the nature of the self and the other, and this core orientation shaped his conception of the role of literature and the social nature of language based on human interaction.⁵⁸

1. Self-Consciousness and Unfinalizability / Becoming

Bakhtin maintains that it is only in interaction with other human beings that individuals are able to develop a notion of *self*. Since the understanding of one's self, or *self-consciousness*, is constantly changing in reaction to context and interlocutors, Bakhtin considers openness to change, or *unfinalizability*, to be a fundamental characteristic of the human being.⁵⁹ He adopts the term *becoming* to signal this orientation toward the future, that he regards as the essence of humanness. The notion of *becoming* is an essential element in this study, where it is associated with those female characters who undergo development over the course of the opera.⁶⁰ In Cavalli's *Ormindo* we will find that the two female protagonists differ markedly in terms of their openness to change through life experiences and that this affects their acquisition of full self-awareness.

2. The Dialogic Nature of Language and of Existence

⁵⁸ Kant and the Neo-Kantian school, as well as the phenomenology of Husserl, were important influences on Bakhtin; Michael Holquist, ed. "Introduction" to *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), xxiii.

⁵⁹ The notions of *self-consciousness* and *unfinalizability* are closely linked for Bakhtin. He says of the Dostoevskian hero, "His consciousness of self lives by its unfinalizability, by its unclosedness and its indeterminacy;" see Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 53.

⁶⁰ Bakhtin is thinking here of the hero or heroine of the novel, and it has often been noted that Bakhtin's texts themselves demonstrate this quality of openness; his treatise on Rabelais, *Rabelais and his World*, is the most famous example of an open novel.

A second fundamental concept of Bakhtin is *dialogism*, a concept that is eminently applicable to opera. Bakhtin sees all use of language – even thinking – as inescapably a form of *dialogue*. He notes that the meanings that cling to words from their prior use by others inevitably colour an individual’s thoughts and influence his or her actions.⁶¹ Since one’s sense of self is shaped by others, he conceives of the process of “human coming to consciousness” as involving a struggle and ultimately a balancing of the internal and external voices that battle each other in constant *dialogue*.⁶² Opera is a perfect medium for portraying characters involved in inner struggle, especially considering that the aria is the musical form specifically designed to carry personal reflections.

In the operas studied here, the internal voices of individual women grappling with finding their own path in the face of societal expectations allow their personalities to emerge in all their emotional complexity. For example, in Cesti’s *Oronhea*, the Queen’s attempt to sort out her feelings in her conflict between love and duty, between personal and public selves, takes the form of several dialogues, first with herself in the form of the aria, then with her advisor in recitative. Thus the contrast between her inner and outer voices is made clear through the use of contrasting musical forms.

3. Polyphony, the Monologic and Truth

In his *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Bakhtin labels the form of the Dostoevskian novel as *polyphonic*, consciously adopting a musical metaphor to represent the independent

⁶¹ In his focus on language as communication between speaking human beings, which shifts in meaning in response to context and in expectation of reception by the interlocutor, Bakhtin anticipated the performative speech act theories of later theorists such as Austin, Searle and Grice. Bakhtin treats these concepts in his late work, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, eds. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986).

⁶² Bakhtin concludes that consciousness and existence are themselves *dialogic*, because each is permeated with the consciousness of the other. See Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, where he explores the notion of dialogue and the dialogic in literature at length.

interaction of many voices. He designates the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels as, "[a] plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices," achieving "a kind of counterpoint" in which each voice is heard as an independent and fully valid line.⁶³ Bakhtin finds Dostoevsky's technique of eliminating the authorial voice compelling because it allows the characters to speak, interact and affect one another directly. At the same time, Bakhtin points out that individual characters in Dostoevsky's novels are complex personalities within whom inner and outer voices are constantly contesting each other as the individual passes through different stages of development.⁶⁴

Bakhtin considers Dostoevsky's many-voiced novel an example of the way dialogue allows truth to emerge that imposition of the author's or any other authoritative voice cannot. For Bakhtin the *monologic*, or single-voiced word of authority, closes down access to the truth, which he considers can only be revealed through a multiplicity of voices acting and interacting freely. Thus he feels that Dostoevsky's many-voiced novel is the best example of the way in which dialogue reveals truth. Bakhtin finds the fullest statement of his conception of the "dialogic nature of truth" in the literary genre of the Socratic dialogue.⁶⁵ As he phrases it, by bringing interlocutors together and causing them to "collide in a quarrel," Socrates acts as a "midwife" assisting in the "birth of truth," which emerges from the genuine dialogue of two or more interlocutors. Like Socrates, Bakhtin does not

⁶³ Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 6 (emphasis in original), first published in 1929, revised and expanded in 1963. In his later "Discourse in the Novel" Bakhtin's original term *multivoicedness* shifts to *heteroglossia* in order to indicate the multiple sub-categories of language present in any given national language. The emphasis in heteroglossia is thus on the fundamentally social character of language. This study uses the term *polyphony* and *polyphonic* to highlight the multivocality present in opera.

⁶⁴ Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 28.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 109-12. The Socratic dialogue is a Hellenistic literary form in which a dialogue is carried out by interested persons treating an argument in the Socratic fashion; it did not necessarily feature the character of Socrates himself.

believe that final, absolute truth can ever be reached, since the context is forever changing and generating new possible truths, but he considers dialogic truth-seeking to be an essential tool for reaching human understandings of the world that are capable of opposing authoritarian official views.

The dialogic means of seeking truth is counterposed to *official* monologism, which pretends to *possess a ready-made truth*... Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born *between people* collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction. (Emphasis in original)⁶⁶

Because Bakhtin considers literature a powerful tool for contesting and subverting authoritarian thought, eliminating the authoritarian voice from literature is essential to him.⁶⁷ The multi-voiced novel of Dostoevsky described by Bakhtin is very similar to Venetian opera for, just as in spoken theatre, there is no authorial voice and the characters interact directly with one another. In addition, in Venetian opera, the shifting emotions of the female protagonists are clearly distinguished from one another by means of the distinct musical form they take. Thus, Bakhtin's theoretical stance is a useful lens through which to examine these operatic characters.

In the chapters that follow, we will discover that the women in Venetian opera are independent minded characters. The women act as autonomous agents but their conclusions are often ambivalent, leading to behaviour that does not correspond to what Venetian authorities of the time might have approved of. This allows for a free interplay of

⁶⁶ Note that this process does not mean that truth is some kind of "average" of the views of all of those participating in the dialogue; in fact, the emerging truths may be different for each of the participants.

⁶⁷ Bakhtin's emphasis on the need to combat monologic authoritarian pressures was likely not just aimed at the Soviet system in general, as some have posited, but also represented opposition to formalism, the preeminent literary school in Russia during the first two decades of the twentieth century, featuring scholars such as Vladimir Propp and Roman Jakobson. One of Bakhtin's chief contributions to the stylistics of the modern novel is his recognition that "authorial presence" pervades the traditional novel, which he labels *monologic* because it presents only one view of the world and thus represents one "truth."

emotional identification with the characters by audience members, who are permitted to form their own opinions about the validity of the characters' actions and thus to censure or sympathize with them as they see fit.

RHETORICAL STRATEGIES BASED ON BAKHTIN

Bakhtin devotes much of his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* to the formal means used in this writer's novels for portraying the individuality of characters. His detailed analysis of the emotional load carried by speech in interaction between characters reveals his keen awareness of the drama that underlies every conversation. When he identifies the types of devices Dostoevsky uses, Bakhtin seems to be *hearing* characters' voices and attempting to convey each tone of voice with its associated emotional shading. This connection to emotion makes his categories a natural fit for opera, where literary devices are paired with musical voices conveying just such affective subtleties directly to the audience.

In adapting Bakhtin's literary devices to my purpose I have sought to identify techniques that are useful for understanding the representation of women's voices in the operas studied. By and large, these techniques represent *rhetorical strategies* that the characters use to influence others or to attain clarity in their own thoughts. Examples are provided from the paradigmatic Venetian opera *Giasone* (1649), as well as from the operas studied in this project.⁶⁸ Four basic strategies are identified below: *double-voiced duet aria*, *micro-confrontation*, *dialogue with one's double* and *musical re-accentuation*.

1. *Double-voiced duet aria* (from Bakhtin's "double voiced discourse")

For Bakhtin, novelistic *double voiced discourse* occurs when the point of view of

⁶⁸ Rosand considers *Giasone* to be the perfect balance between drama and music; *Opera in Venice*, 276.

another person enters into a character's verbal expression. In this study I use the term *double-voiced duet* when two characters interact in song using the same music, that is, in *aria* or the lighter, comic style known as *arietta*. In Baroque opera from this early period, the two participants do not generally sing simultaneously throughout a duet but rather alternate phrases and join together only at high points of the *aria*. The elements that make a duet *double-voiced* are first, the *shared emotion or state of mind* of the singers and second, *shared musical content*. The two singers may only share a refrain, taking turns singing verses on their own, or their voices may join only at key musical points; it is the mutuality of feeling and of musical content that is important. A well-known example from Act II of *Giasone* is the sleep aria *Dormi, stanco Giasone* between Medea and her lover Giasone: they sing separate verses with some variation of musical material but the verses are unified by the refrain, which establishes the feeling of mutual love.

In addition to duets between lovers, *double-voiced duet arias* may occur between characters of the same gender. Duets take different musical form depending on social context and emotional relationship, and in the operas studied we find that this musical form can convey subtle aspects of the unity – or even disunity – of the duet partners. For example, in the first act of Cavalli's *Ormindo*, the *double-voiced duet aria* sung by Queen Erisbe and her lady Mirinda, *Auree trecce innanelate*, demonstrates their shared state of mind. However, when the two male protagonists sing together in a *double-voiced duet aria* celebrating their friendship, it turns into a hilarious contest between them once they discover that they are rivals for the Queen's love; at this point it loses the aspect of shared intent and ceases to be a true *double-voiced duet aria*.

2. Micro-confrontation (from Bakhtin's "microdialogue")

Bakhtin uses the term "microdialogue" for an interaction in which "two voices collide

within it dialogically”⁶⁹ I have adopted the term *micro-confrontation* to more clearly incorporate the element of conflict between characters with different points of view. In this study, *micro-confrontation* will signify an interaction between two characters engaging in a musical argument, as they each defend their case using a separate musical style. This type of interaction is not a duet because the characters do not share an emotional standpoint; it remains confrontational. *Micro-confrontations* do not normally take the form of *aria*: they are primarily delivered in recitative. Note that at times the two interlocutors disagreeing with each other may become more lyrical as they seek to express their point of view fully; in this case a character may sing a few bars of *arioso* (a kind of heightened recitative without structured metre) while engaged in a *micro-confrontation*.

An example of *micro-confrontation* is the opening dialogue in Cavalli’s *Giasone* in which two Argonauts, Ercole and Besso, present contradictory interpretations of the behaviour of their leader Giasone: Ercole criticizes Giasone for his abandonment of his duty – the quest of the Golden Fleece – in favour of love, while Besso defends Giasone’s behaviour as a consummate lover. Another example, from Act 1 of Cesti’s *Oronthea*, is the interaction between Oronthea and her advisor Creonte in which the latter attempts to convince the Queen that she must marry for the good of the realm. In this case, even though there is a point at which they briefly sing simultaneously using the same music, this is not a duet because they remain diametrically opposed; by singing at the same time with different text, each attempts to have the last word.

3. Internal Dialogue with one’s double (Bakhtin’s term)

Bakhtin was fascinated by Dostoevsky’s ability to highlight the contradictions and

⁶⁹ Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 184.

ambivalence of characters, leading him to “dramatize... even internal contradictions and internal stages in the development of a single person, forcing a character to converse with his own double, with the devil, with his alter ego, with his own caricature.”⁷⁰ In this study the term *dialogue with one’s double* is used when characters engage in an *internal* struggle within themselves involving ambivalent emotions or conflicting roles, where the opposing ideas are heard as independent “voices.” In the female characters examined here, these contradictions are made transparent by their use of different musical styles for each of these voices. For example, at various points in *Orontea*, the Queen delivers a monologue dramatizing the way her public responsibilities and her personal desires are pulling her in different directions; the two poles are made audible by the shifting of musical styles as she explores these different possibilities.

4. Re-accentuation (adaptation of Bakhtin’s term)

In Bakhtin’s framework, *accentuation* means stress or emphasis, and he uses the term *re-accentuation* every time an individual takes a word or expression associated with another person and gives it his or her own nuance. In this study I use the term *re-accentuation* for the rhetorical strategy by which lower-status characters adopt the musical style of a higher-ranked person in order to manipulate a situation to their advantage. It is also used to adopt another identity, including imitating the particular speech style associated with it. Finally, *re-accentuation* can also occur as a form of parody when both text and musical style copy the musical speech of the other person. An example occurs in Act 3 of *Giasone* when Delfa, lower-class nurse of Medea, attempts to seduce Oreste, the representative of a foreign court, by adopting higher-class style markers in her invitation to

⁷⁰ Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 28.

romance. A similar situation occurs in Act 2 of *Oronthea* when Aristeia, also an aging lower-class female, attempts to engage the young “warrior” Ismero in an amorous affair (actually the Queen’s confidant in male dress).

The above devices are used in this study to highlight the various rhetorical strategies employed by composers of the two operas to represent the inner life of the female characters. These techniques serve to highlight some of the ways music and text work together to create the complex emotional lives of these female characters. In the next chapter the creation of the drama and the music of Venetian opera in its early developmental phase will be explored.

CHAPTER TWO

CREATING THE DRAMA AND MUSIC OF EARLY VENETIAN OPERA

A primary goal of this thesis is to gain insight into the behaviours and motivations of the complex female characters in early Venetian opera, as well as their potential impact on audiences. We first look at the goals of seventeenth-century librettists and composers as we consider the act of creating a new genre out of words and music.

CREATING THE DRAMA OF OPERA: THE LIBRETTO

For early modern audiences and men of letters the librettist rather than the composer was the creator of a *dramma per musica*; as a poet, the librettist was deemed the more important of the two collaborators and it was his name, as well as that of the all-important patron, that appeared on the *scenario*, or outline of the action, that spectators could buy along with their tickets to the opera.⁷¹ Because opera librettos were normally printed after the production by authors wishing to preserve their works, they circulated and influenced other librettists, stimulating rapid change of subject matter as well as copying of plots, characters and incidents.⁷² In contrast, the contribution of composers was regarded as replaceable, with a different composer generally setting each new production.

THE LIBRETTO AND THE BIRTH OF TRAGICOMEDY

By the late 1630s, when Venetian poets were creating librettos for the new *dramma*

⁷¹ Rosand has established that it was the librettist who paid for printing of both the libretto and the *scenario*, *Opera in Venice*, 198-220.

⁷² The topos of madness brought on by love and that of attempted rape during sleep scenes are only two of the themes popular in Venetian operas; for broader discussion of convention, see, *ibid*, 322-60.

per musica,⁷³ Aristotle's poetics was firmly entrenched as the pre-eminent literary theory. However, due to the still influential Horatian emphasis on decorum, according to which every social class had its typical characteristics, Aristotle's ideas were misinterpreted by Renaissance theorists in a number of ways. We may summarize the way the Aristotelian conceptions of tragedy and comedy were understood by Italian literary scholars as follows: 1) the characters in *tragedy* were to be those of high station, such as princes, kings and great men, whereas those in comedy were to be ordinary citizens; 2) the action of tragedy covered "great and terrible" deeds, while *comedy* dealt with the affairs of family and ordinary life; and 3) the poetic style appropriate to *tragedy* was a high, literary style, whereas that used in *comedy* was to be closer to everyday speech.⁷⁴

As writers became interested in evaluating contemporary works in relation to their adherence to Aristotelian rules, a series of literary quarrels engaged critics, known as the "Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns."⁷⁵ One of the most important debates focused on the question of the propriety of mixed genres, sparked by G.B. Guarini's exceedingly popular pastoral drama *Il pastor fido* (*The Faithful Shepherd*), first performed in 1585 but not published until 1590. In this debate the "Ancients" held that comedy and tragedy were to remain separate, as dictated by Aristotle, while the "Moderns," led by Guarini, asserted

⁷³ The new combination of drama, comedy and music had no standard designation at this time. Some of the many names allotted to it were *dramma musicale*, *commedia musicale*, *opera musicale*, *attione in musica*, *favola in musica*, *favola regia*, *tragedia musicale*, *tragicomica musicale*, and *opera drammatica*; *ibid.*, 35.

⁷⁴ For example, Aristotle's stipulations that the characters of tragedy were to be "better than" most men and that those of comedy should be "worse than" the average man, were understood to refer to the rank and social station of characters rather than the ethical qualities Aristotle intended. For the same reason, Aristotle's use of the term "embellished speech" to describe characters' diction in different parts of the drama was taken to mean high-flown literary style, rather than the difference in rhetorical style (song vs. speech) that he carefully enunciates. See Daniel Javitch, "The Assimilation of Aristotle's *Poetics* in Sixteenth-Century Italy," *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, Vol. 3, ed. Glyn P. Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 56-60.

⁷⁵ During the second half of the sixteenth century the most contentious issues revolved around the mixing of genres, and the question of which writers should serve as models for each genre. Serious debates were launched that involved recognition of the works by Italian poets in the vernacular; *ibid.*, 60-62.

that new genres, such as the hybrid genre of *tragicommedia* was, were appropriate in the modern age. Guarini summarizes the elements of tragedy and comedy combined in *tragicomedy* as follows:

It takes from the one [*tragedy*]the great persons, but not the action, the plot which is verisimilar but not true, the passions which are aroused but blunted, pleasure but not sadness, danger not death. From the other [*comedy*], laughter which is not dissolute, moderate pleasures, a fictional plot, a happy reversal, and above all the comic order.⁷⁶

Guarini's definition of tragicomedy could very well serve as a description of early Venetian opera, in which elements of tragedy and comedy were freely mixed for dramatic and musical purposes but the "comic order" generally predominated.

Not surprisingly, Venetian librettists considered themselves Moderns, since they sought to create a new art form which combined the distinct genres of drama and music. Despite the fact that the prefaces to their librettos (*argomenti*) contain various excuses for their failure to follow specific classical dramatic conventions (which were actually based on their need to please audiences), these very excuses reveal the librettists' need to establish their Aristotelian credentials in order for their new dramatic form to be taken seriously. These dramas also bespeak a desire to involve spectators emotionally in the performance of their works. In particular, Aristotle's ideas on the proper construction of drama are evident in their librettos, which generally include the following Aristotelian building blocks of drama: 1) a plot which unfolds according to probability; 2) a character flaw of the protagonist that causes him or her to commit a significant error; 3) recognition by the protagonist of his or her error; 4) an unexpected reversal of fortune that changes the outlook

⁷⁶ Giambattista Guarini, *Il Verrato* (1588), 19v; translation Bernard Weinberg, *Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, Vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 1080. After the literary debate following the publication of *Il pastor fido* in 1590, Guarini's 1601 edition explains how his play meets the definition of a tragicomedy.

for the protagonist; and 5) dramatic action that produces an emotional reaction in the spectators, who undergo a catharsis of these emotions.⁷⁷

Aristotle maintains that *catharsis* is an essential component of tragedy, such that upon viewing terrible and fearful events represented in the theatre, the spectator responds to the suffering of the characters in the drama by feeling pity and fear him- or herself, thereby undergoing a *catharsis* that produces relief of these same emotions. The exact nature of the cathartic experience conceived of by Aristotle has long challenged investigators and, in fact, is still vigorously debated today. The Greek word “katharsis” had at least three possible meanings in Athens at the time: that of purging or cleansing (medical metaphor), of purification (religious experience), or of clarification (cognitive or moral effect).⁷⁸ The traditional view has been that Aristotle intended that *catharsis* purge the audience of pity and terror, a position that led to Freud’s influential view that catharsis serves to discharge repressed emotions.

While most modern scholars concur that *catharsis* acts in some way on the spectator’s emotions to reduce their painful effect, some have emphasized that the bodily, physiological response brought about by *catharsis* is accompanied by a cognitive component which yields insight and a new sense of clarity. Catharsis has been variously described as “a therapeutic process that discharges repressed emotions,”⁷⁹ and as “a sudden emotional

⁷⁷ Aristotle. *Poetics I, with the Tractatus Coislinianus: A Hypothetical Reconstruction of Poetics II, the Fragments of the On Poets*, trans. and notes Richard Janko (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1987), 7-25.

⁷⁸ Jonathan Lear, “Katharsis,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Poetics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 315-40; Richard Janko, “From Catharsis to the Aristotelian Mean,” also in Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle’s Poetics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 341-58.

⁷⁹ Scheff, Thomas J. *Catharsis in Healing, Ritual and Drama*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 4. Scheff suggests that *catharsis* can occur when spectators feel strong emotions, such as crying at the plight of Romeo and Juliet, allowing them to reconnect with their own experiences of loss at a “safe distance,” which brings relief to unresolved issues. For the catharsis of laughter see Thomas J. Scheff and Don D. Bushnell, “A Theory of Catharsis,” *Journal of Research in Personality* 18, no. 2 (1984), 256-63.

breakdown or climax that constitutes overwhelming feelings of great sorrow, pity, laughter, or any extreme change in emotion that results in restoration, renewal and revitalization.”⁸⁰

For Aristotle, the experience of viewing tragedy also had a social function. In Book IV of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he maintains that, by feeling terror and pity when reliving terrible and fearful events represented in the theatre, spectators can become “habituated” to feeling these types of emotion, enabling them to feel them “towards the proper object, in the right way and in the proper proportion,” thereby teaching them to move closer to the ideal of the virtuous mean. In short, the viewing of tragedy can serve as a kind of “education of the emotions.”

Comedy is touched on only very briefly in the *Poetics*, where it is defined as related to ugliness and distortion.⁸¹ Aristotle’s definition of comedy in the *Poetics* is as follows:

Comedy is, as we said, a representation of people who are rather inferior – not, however, with respect to every kind of vice, but the laughable is only a part of what is ugly. For the laughable is a sort of error and ugliness is not painful and destructive, just as, evidently, a laughable mask is something ugly and distorted without pain.⁸²

Comedy too had a function of education of the emotions, in this case those involved

⁸⁰ Mosir Khan, “Catharsis’ in Aristotle’s *Poetics* 2, http://www.academia.edu/7853397/Catharsis_in_Aristotles_Poetics. Accessed Feb. 14, 2015. See also Janko, “Catharsis to Aristotelian Mean,” 343-53, and Lane Cooper, *An Aristotelian Theory of Comedy* (New York: Harcourt Brace: 1922; reprint, New York: Kraus, 1969), 60-76.

⁸¹ Many scholars have sought to elucidate the Aristotelian vision of comedy, particularly as it relates to the functioning of *catharsis*. Aristotle’s views on comedy, expressed only briefly in the *Poetics*, have been amplified and reconstructed by these scholars using Aristotle’s other works as well as commentaries from later antiquity. In this thesis I follow Richard Janko, who draws on Aristotle’s *On Poets*, the anonymous *Tractatus Coislinianus*, and other commentaries, to reconstruct the essential components of the Aristotelian view of comedy and its relation to catharsis; Janko *Aristotle, Poetics I*, 43-65.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 2.4, p. 6. The *Tractatus Coislinianus* amplifies this definition, contrasting the effects of tragedy and comedy and noting the parallels between these two genres in the use of catharsis: “Tragedy reduces the soul’s emotions of pity and terror by means of compassion and dread. It wishes to have a due proportion of terror. It has pain as its mother.... Comedy is a representation of an action that is laughable and lacking in magnitude, complete; accomplishing by pleasure and laughter, the catharsis of such emotions. It has laughter as its mother. There wishes to be a due proportion of terror in tragedies and of the laughable in comedies; *ibid.*, 3.1, 43-44.

in behaviours important for everyday interaction. In Book IV of *The Nichomachean Ethics* Aristotle specifies that one of the dimensions of social behaviour required for courteous interaction with one's peers is *laughter*: a citizen must take the middle way between buffoonery (continually trying to get a laugh) and moroseness (extreme dislike of humour). Accordingly, learning to laugh appropriately, at the right objects and to the right degree, was a skill that needed to be developed; scholars have assumed that comedy was the vehicle that was to accomplish this, for by observing a *comic catharsis* in comedy, spectators could learn to laugh appropriately. *Catharsis* was apparently assumed to be an essential part of a complete comic drama, with pleasure and laughter provoking the *comic catharsis*.⁸³ G.B. Guarini's description of the aim of *tragicomedy* as "bringing about laughter and driving away melancholy," is consistent with Aristotle's definition of comedy. The early Venetian operas studied in this thesis also follow the structure and elements of what appears to be Aristotle's complete vision of comedy, which includes the notion of *comedic catharsis*.

It is important to keep in mind that it is only in modern times that scholars concluded that Aristotle likely meant that "catharsis" occurred in the spectators rather than the heroes or heroines undergoing trauma in the tragedy. Yet it is clear that the actor in the drama must in some way telegraph to the audience the character's profound realization of his or her error, which is required for recognition and reversal of fortune to occur. It seems reasonable to propose that the reactions of the dramatic character must pinpoint a change, in essence send a signal of cathartic emotional response. The epiphany or sudden insight

⁸³ For Aristotle, experiencing emotions involves cognitive judgement as well as emotional response: learning how the character of the drama feels results in pleasure for the spectator, he considers learning to be intrinsically pleasant. Stephen Halliwell suggests that for Aristotle, "the nature of art can transform and integrate painful emotions into aesthetic pleasure;" "Pleasure, Understanding, and Emotion in Aristotle's Poetics," in Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 254.

appears to mark this point, as in the case when a character's comic realization affects the spectator by producing laughter.

In the analysis of the operas that make up the central part of this thesis we encounter episodes where what approximates a catharsis is a clue to a female character's recognition of a need for an education or adjustment in her self-understanding. Looking at the moments of insight, the epiphanies that stand in for a cathartic moment for the character, permits us to analyze changes in musical style in tandem with character shifts; both are aspects that give female characters complexity and reveal their ability to develop self-awareness.

For librettists of early opera, just as for playwrights for the spoken theatre, Aristotle remained the supreme authority. It is striking how closely Aristotelian theory was incorporated into Venetian Serio-comic opera. Aristotle's careful plot construction has been applied by librettists to create musical dramas with maximum emotional impact because they followed his psychologically astute rules.

ETHICAL AIMS AND COMEDY AS SUBVERSION

With their double mission of keeping audiences entertained and remaining grounded in the traditional aims of poetry, the librettists of early opera believed that their dramas should include a strong ethical component and have a higher tone than that of the often farcical performances of *commedia dell'arte*. Horace, the classical author most frequently mentioned by librettists, maintained that comedy had the double function of providing both pleasure (*il diletto*) and edification (*l'utile*). Early in the development of opera, Venetian librettists tended to emphasize the didactic effect of their work in order to promote the new genre as something of value and more than mere entertainment.⁸⁴ An example is Giulio

⁸⁴ Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, 56.

Strozzi's *La finta pazza* (*The Feigned Madwoman*) from 1641, publicized as offering a moral lesson illustrating "how wary fathers should be, in raising their children, to provide for them and foresee the dangers they face."⁸⁵ However, such concerns became less urgent with the wider acceptance of the new genre.

"Comedy," wrote Cicero, "is the imitation of life, the mirror of custom, and the image of truth."⁸⁶ The notion of comedy as a mirror of life representing essential truths about individuals and society situates the genre at the centre of ethical and moral concerns. Yet opera was far from a simple mirror of society. Following the long-standing tradition of Carnival theatre as a vehicle for satire and critique, Venetian opera used the "distorted mirror" of comedy to portray not only what spectators should emulate but that which should be shunned. As Deanna Shemek points out, since comedies were conventionally performed during Carnival, the comic mirror was frequently "carnavalesque," involving inverted power relations; the resulting distortion entailed a "turning away from reality in order to comment on it from an ironic distance."⁸⁷

In this, the Italians joined a long tradition, for at least since the Ancient Greeks, comedy had been a tool used to challenge power and express dissent. Comedy is inherently

⁸⁵ *Il cammocchiale per la Finta pazza* (*Spyglass on The Feigned Madwoman*), Venice: Surian, 1641) a widely circulated pamphlet designed as publicity for this opera by Count Maiolino Bisaccioni of Genoa, a member of the *Incogniti*; cited in Rosand, *ibid.*, 57. In this opera, Deidamia feigns madness in order to gain her father's permission to marry her beloved Achille before he departs for the Trojan War; presumably, the moral lesson to be learned is that fathers should take daughters' need to marry more seriously. Other librettists did not hesitate to highlight that it was primarily pleasure that audience members could expect from their dramatic creations. As the anonymous author of *Le nozze d'Enea* one wrote in 1640, "Of the two aims of poetry that Horace taught, only pleasure remains. In this age men have no need to learn the way of the world from the writings of others!" cited in *ibid.*, 57.

⁸⁶ This saying is attributed to Cicero by the fourth century grammarian Aelius Donatus; Henry Kelly, "Tragedy and Comedy," in *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, 2005, *Encyclopedia.com*. <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/G2-3424300783.html>, accessed April 6, 2015.

⁸⁷ For the "distorted mirror," see Deanna Shemek, "Aretino's *Marescalco*: Marriage Woes and the Duke of Mantua," *Renaissance Studies* 16, no. 3 (2002): 378; see also Snyder, "Introduction," to Andreini, *Love in the Mirror*, 4.

political and has traditionally acted as a voice of dissent across Western culture, taking on the role of gadfly to call attention to hypocrisy and highlight the veniality of the individuals and institutions that control society. As a consequence, those in power have often mistrusted the comic genre as a form of subversion and attempted to suppress its purveyors.

The notion of subversive critique is closely linked to the classical view of comedy as offering a corrective to society. In her study of carnival rites in Venice, Linda Carroll points out that, “In Renaissance Italy, comic theatre often acted as a foil to the rhetoric of official culture, assuming responsibility for objective criticism of society.”⁸⁸ Dramatists such as Ariosto declared that the aim of their poetic works was to critique social custom through laughter.⁸⁹

Examining carnival rites in Venice as vehicles of protest, Carroll traces the presence of critique and inversions of gender and status from the most primitive forms of carnival celebration involving fertility rituals, through crude Goliardic skits to the eventual emergence of scripted plays put on during carnival festivities.⁹⁰ Throughout her discussion, Carroll draws close links between prevailing social and political conditions and the genres of theatre that emerged as a forum for anti-establishment satire, parody, or other forms of critique. Carroll uses the career of the playwright Angelo Beolco (known as “Ruzante” for the rough peasant character he created) to illustrate the close connection between harsh external social conditions in the early sixteenth century due to incessant wars waged by the

⁸⁸ Linda Carroll, “Carnival Rites as Vehicles of Protest in Renaissance Venice,” *The Sixteenth-Century Journal* 16, no. 4 (1985): 487.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 487, n1.

⁹⁰ They began as re-enactments symbolically celebrating King Winter’s overturning by the new King and involved gender and role reversals. Such primitive rituals eventually merged with the crude and offensive Goliardic theatre by travelling students; Carroll, *ibid.*, 490-92.

Venetians and the extreme critique expressed in Beolco's comedies written for Venice.⁹¹ His sexually provocative satiric plays were accepted during Carnival, but when he attempted to present them outside of this season, they were shut down immediately; he was eventually banned from the Venetian stage for pointed parody of a political ally of Venice.

In keeping with Bakhtin, Carroll concludes that Carnival provided a sacrosanct time and place in which comedy could engage with specified types of prohibited behaviours as well as some limited political critique, with a degree of freedom not permitted outside of this time and space. She concludes that the importance of the development of *commedia dell'arte* in the second half of the sixteenth-century was its broadening of the reach of satiric theatrical performance, observing that, "by lifting the temporal boundaries of Carnival, it generalized [Carnival's] function." Performing across Italy, *commedia dell'arte* was able to engage in lively drama specializing in physical theatre, parody and social critique, pushing the limits of the acceptable in its improvisations based on standard scenarios.⁹²

In his study of *commedia erudite* performed in Venice, Eric Nicholson demonstrates that well before the emergence of *commedia dell'arte*, scripted learned comedy performed by amateurs was a vehicle for protesting against restrictive codes of behaviour of women and came under the censure of Venetian authorities for its transgressive sexual content.

⁹¹ Angelo Beolco's satiric comedy evidently stemmed from personal circumstances relating to broader social policy; a victim of the Venetian policy of limiting inheritance to one male, he was denied an inheritance due to his illegitimacy. He also had great sympathy for the peasants, who were literally starving, while their foodstuffs were taken to feed the inhabitants of the city of Venice. Carroll concludes that Beolco "traded on the [Venetian] tradition of anti-establishment criticism and obscenity associated with Carnival as a vehicle of protest;" *ibid.*, 490.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 502. During the Counter Reformation, religious authorities frequently shut down *commedia dell'arte* performances, but as itinerant companies, they could move on and perform elsewhere. Bishop Carlo Borromeo was particularly vocal in his conviction that theatre was immoral; Richard Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios: The Performance of Comedy in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 222-23.

Comedies such as Bibbiena's *La Calandria*, the anonymous *Gl'Ingannati*, and plays by the notoriously sacrilegious Pietro Aretino feature cross-dressing prominently, with both men and women dressing as the opposite sex in order to visit their lovers.⁹³ These comedies had evidently become vehicles for protesting against restrictive codes of behaviour for women, and the Venetian authorities reacted by repeatedly banning comedies, shutting down theatres, and even banning "dressing in transvestite fashion," which was seen as an invitation to illicit sexual behaviour, such as adultery, fornication and sodomy.⁹⁴ Even if these regulations were not all consistently applied, they demonstrate the extreme fears and authoritarian mentality of the Venetian authorities, who viewed theatrical representation as the first step on a downward path of morality. The link between cross-dressing and gender impersonation present in comic theatre was perceived as a fundamental threat to social order, signalling a breakdown of the "natural order" of society: if men could dress like women and women could behave like men, all authority was endangered.

During the second half of the sixteenth-century, the Counter Reformation created an even more severe climate of opinion regarding theatre. Comedy was regarded with suspicion, and church officials such as Bishop Carlo Borromeo instituted bans on theatrical representations as tools of the devil. During this period, the serious comedy called *commedia grave* developed as a way of making moral issues the central problem of dramas. The plots of these *commedie grave* were generally based on misunderstandings between

⁹³ *La Calandria* even has a female character defend this practice, complaining of a double standard: "Why should it be unlawful for me to dress up as a man, just this once, and visit him, since he, dressed up as a woman, has so often come to visit me? It's perfectly reasonable." Eric Nicholson, "That's How It Is: Comic Travesties of Sex and Gender in Early Sixteenth-Century Venice," in *Look Who's Laughing: Gender and Comedy*, ed. Gail Finney (Langhorne, PA: Gordon and Breach, 1994), 18.

⁹⁴ The authorities enacted regulations to control styles of dress that blurred the lines between the sexes and also between the social classes, for example banning "feminine" style of doublets for men and forbidding the wearing of pearls by prostitutes; *ibid.*, 21-22.

the upper-class characters and, as a result, dramatic conflict was lacking, but more developed characters and the pathos of their situations made these dramas attractive, and they circulated widely to a reading public.⁹⁵

By the time operas were being written in Venice, *commedia dell'arte* had perfected the art of a comic style of theatre that highlighted the difficulties of women's lives in plots that pushed social boundaries. While these plots always ended conventionally, the genre featured female protagonists not only cross-dressing to escape forced marriages, but also battling social norms by taking lovers below their class, living with a member of their own sex masquerading as male, as in Flaminio Scala's *Il finto marito* (*The False Husband*, 1611), or even with two women declaring their love and desire for each other publically, as in G. B. Andreini's *Amor nello specchio* (*Love in the Mirror*, 1622).⁹⁶

Both the sympathetic heroines of *commedia grave* and the independent female characters of *commedia dell'arte* paved the way for Venetian opera to explore increasingly challenging subject matter; it created operatic heroines whose behaviour pushed the boundaries of the sexual and behavioural norms for women while at the same time dealing with pressing social anxieties. For example, in *Ormindo* (Chapter Three), we will find a radical solution to the serious social problem of young brides paired with aging husbands: elopement with a young lover. The social prestige of opera and its importance both for the coffers and the renown of Venice made it the ideal means for reaching the authorities with impunity, for the highest government authorities attended opera and made a habit of taking

⁹⁵ See Coller, "Vernacular Antecedents of Early Opera's *Prime Donne*," 27-31.

⁹⁶ Rosalind Kerr, "Actress as Androgyne" and her "Tra(ns)vesting Gender and Genre in Flaminio Scala's *Il finto marito*," in *Queer Italia: Same Sex Desire in Italian Literature and Film*, edited by Gary P. Cestaro, 105-16 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); also Snyder, Introduction" to GB Andreini *Love in the Mirror* (*Amor nello specchio*)).

foreign ambassadors to these popular public entertainments. As Bakhtin suggests, the barbed arrows of derision and parody could penetrate through the chinks in the armour of the official view. Under these conditions, opera could become satiric socio-political theatre, as long as the requisite comic touch was maintained.

CREATING THE DRAMA OF OPERA: THE LIBRETTIST

Two types of librettists emerged during the formative period of Venetian opera: the academic poets and the professional playwrights. Their differing backgrounds and orientations account for their distinct approaches to choice of subject matter, type of plot, and portrayals of female characters. We look first at the influence of the earliest librettists, those from the first five years of opera creation by Venetians (1639-1643), whose works set the tone for the new *dramma per musica*.

The *Incogniti*: the Academic Librettists

The first librettists were upper-class intellectuals with a classical education to whom writing both prose and poetry came naturally. Almost all of these librettists were members of the *Accademia degli Incogniti* (Academy of the Unknowns), a select group of Venetian intellectuals who wrote and debated actively, and whose status as patricians (the Venetian noble class) insured their close connection to the centres of power. They not only wrote librettos but a group of them also founded and managed their own opera theatre at a critical time, which contributed substantially to establishing opera as a fixture on the cultural scene.⁹⁷ The subject matter chosen for their operas consciously played to the *venezianità*,

⁹⁷ While the Teatro Novissimo only existed for five seasons (1641-45), it exerted a powerful influence at a crucial time, ensuring that the new genre of opera became an essential element of the Venetian cultural landscape. For the importance and influence of members of the *Accademia degli Incogniti*, see Ellen Rosand, "Barbara Strozzi, virtuosissima cantatrice: the composer's voice," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 32, no. 2 (1978): 241-81. For the Teatro Novissimo and its influence, see Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, 124-53.

or civic pride of Venetians in their unique Republic; by featuring heroes from the Trojan War, they reinforced Venice's self-proclaimed connection with Troy in the "Myth of Venice."⁹⁸

For their librettos the *Incogniti* writers drew from the literary sources with which they were most familiar, the classical authors of Greece and Rome, such as Virgil, Ovid, and the Homeric tales. The type of women these librettists chose as their central characters owed much to the *Incogniti*'s conflicted attitudes towards female power. An unorthodox attitude toward religion prompted them to adopt an ambivalent approach to the female characters in their operas.⁹⁹ In print and in person, *Incogniti* members publicly debated a variety of topics concerning women, for example, whether female chastity was fraudulent, and even whether women had souls.¹⁰⁰ *Incogniti* founder Giovanni Francesco Loredano was famous for his licentious essays: one of his best known is "*In biasmo delle donne*" (In Reproach of Women), which begins as follows:

Woman, most virtuous gentlemen, is an imperfect Animal, an error of nature and a monster of our species... Her love is born from interest, her faith from necessity, her chastity from fear.¹⁰¹

Because the *Incogniti* delighted in arguing both pro and con on every topic, it is not clear how seriously this rhetoric should be taken. Nevertheless, the members of the academy

⁹⁸The "Myth of Venice" held that the city was founded by Aeneas fleeing from Troy, making Venice older than Rome and thus the first Christian city on the Italian peninsula, a boast it proudly made to the Holy City; Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, 126-27. In the first five years of local opera production, (1639-43), almost half of the operas had a connection to the Trojan War; Rosand, "Commentary: Seventeenth-Century Venetian Opera as *Fondamente nuove*," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 36, no. 3 (2006): 416-17.

⁹⁹ In their studies under the notorious philosopher Cesare Cremonini at the University of Padua, these intellectuals absorbed his heterodox views on religion. Like their teacher, they questioned the immortality of the soul and the existence of an afterlife and stressed the importance of bodily pleasure in the here and now; Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, 37-38.

¹⁰⁰Wendy Heller, "'O castita bugiarda': Cavalli's *Didone* and the Question of Chastity," in *A Woman Scorn'd: Responses to the Dido Myth*, ed. Michael Burden, 169-225 (London: Faber and Faber, 1998).

¹⁰¹ Giovanni Francesco Loredano, *Bizzarrie Accademiche, Parte seconda* (Venice: Guerigli, 1654), 167-68; cited in *ibid.*, 175.

were clearly conflicted and skeptical when it came to accepting women as individuals and particularly to accepting the idea of female rule.

For their operas, these librettists chose characters from classical sources whose stories were well known, which both limited librettists' scope for dramatic treatment and ensured that only one central aspect of the women would usually be portrayed. Characters with one of two qualities were generally chosen: licentious sexuality, or abandonment, or even both. The licentious sexual type is exemplified by Poppea, the scheming courtesan in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* who uses her sexual charms to ensnare Nero, and by Dido, whose retelling in *La Didone* altered the classical story to focus on her sexual torment, torn between her passion for Aeneas and a vow of chastity to the memory of her dead husband. The heroines of these operas were portrayed as immoral because of their hyper-sexuality. A second type of heroine was the abandoned woman, typified by Monteverdi's heroines Arianna and Penelope, again one-sided characters who were pure but had little identity save to lament their fate, without a chance to develop as individuals.¹⁰² These types of operatic women were very different from the characters created by the new professional librettists who entered the scene in the mid-1640s.

The Professional Librettists

The operatic works discussed in this thesis feature the two professional librettists who had the greatest influence on dramatic practice during the early period of Venetian opera development, the Venetian Giovanni Faustini and the Florentine Giacinto Andrea Cicognini.

Giovanni Faustini (1615-1651)

¹⁰² Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* (1643), *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse* (1641), and Arianna (1640), and Cavalli's *La Didone* (1641).

Giovanni Faustini, librettist of *Ormindo*, represents the new type of professional who soon supplanted the academic patrician *Incogniti* authors. Faustini came from an artistic branch of the professional class of *cittadini* in Venice, and he brought a fresh perspective to opera librettos.¹⁰³ He could not boast a classical education, but his strong interest in history and his receptivity to Venetian popular culture served him well in his chosen field of libretto composition. As patricians, *Incogniti* librettists typically made light of their operatic creations, denigrating them as things tossed off to while away an idle hour, but Faustini proudly declared his commitment to the craft:

I am not one of those ... who write to satisfy their own whims. I wear out my pen, I confess my ambition to see if it [the pen] can raise me above the ordinary and common achievements of dull and plebeian talents. This honorable madness (*honorata pazzia*) which began to assault me when I had scarcely emerged from swaddling clothes and has not yet abated, forces me to the assiduous creation of a variety of scenarios.¹⁰⁴

This clear self-identification as a professional reveals his desire to compete with and surpass his high-class but dilettante academic competitors.

The central quality distinguishing Faustini's librettos was what he termed his *inventione*, the ability to invent stories from his imagination. Rather than adapting classical stories to the Venetian context as the *Incogniti* librettists did, he crafted fictional stories, drawing inspiration from popular romances and Italian comedies as well as from history. The settings of his dramas were typically North Africa or the Near East, two areas which had come to be regarded as "exotic" in the public imagination, their appeal augmented by the wildly popular feminine adventure novels set in these locales by the French novelist

¹⁰³ Faustini's grandfather was the well-known artist and costume illustrator Cesare Vecellio, who learned his own trade in the workshop of his cousin, the famed Venetian artist Titian. Vecellio authored *Degli abiti antichi e moderni di diversi parti del mondo* (*Of Ancient and Modern Dress of Diverse Parts of the World*, Venice: Damiano Zenaro, 1590); Thomas Walker, Beth L. Glixon, and Jonathan Glixon, "Faustini, Giovanni, Biography," Grove Music Online: <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>, accessed Apr. 1, 2014.

¹⁰⁴ Rosand, *Opera in Venice*: translation on 169; original in Italian Appendix I, 33a, 422.

Mme. de Scudéry. Faustini gave his fictional protagonists individual histories that made them appear to be real historical figures, thereby producing pseudo-historical tales that melded history with the exotic, a combination with great audience appeal.¹⁰⁵

His standard model for opera construction, dubbed by Rosand the “Faustini mould,” proved enduringly popular. It had three key ingredients: 1) two sets of noble or royal lovers who are separated and go through many trials before being reunited; 2) comic servants, nurses and other supporting character types that generally add humour through their schemes and misplaced amorous attractions; and finally 3) a conclusion in which all complications are resolved in a series of recognitions and unexpected reversals of fate that bring about a happy ending. Faustini was particularly known for his ability to reach the maximum degree of confusion before all the complicated threads of the narrative were resolved, an element that he may have learned from Italian spoken comedy.¹⁰⁶

Despite the fact that Faustini employed the same basic plot structure in his operas, several factors contributed to giving them individuality. In the first place, he varied the specifics of each story by giving the protagonists a particular “backstory” (*antefatto*) that set up the dramatic conflict of the opera and was recounted in detail in the preface, a technique borrowed from the scenarios of *commedia dell'arte*.¹⁰⁷ Secondly, the female

¹⁰⁵ Madeleine de Scudéry (1607-1701) reached a broad European reading public with her many novels, from *Ibrahim or the Illustrious Basa* (1641, four vols.) to the “best seller” *Artamène or the Great Cyrus*, a ten-volume *roman-à-clef* set in ancient Assyria that appeared over the years 1648-1653; John C onley, “Madeleine de Scudéry,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2011), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/madeleine-scudery>, accessed April. 6, 2015.

¹⁰⁶ The dedication of Faustini’s *Eritrea* reveals that this quality was seen as a selling point by the publisher, Bartolomeo Ginammi, who predicts a bright future for the opera and highlights the suspense Faustini was able to achieve through his unique plot structure: “[*Eritrea*] will be wondrous (*ammirabile*) for its invention and structure... Only to idiots do those tales seem obscure that resolve in the final scenes; but connoisseurs and scholars admire them, because in such compositions even the most attentive minds must remain in suspense, and this is what the author always practiced;” cited in Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, 182-83.

¹⁰⁷ *Antefatti* in *commedia dell'arte* were an essential ingredient that both differentiated story lines and allowed the on-stage time to be primarily devoted to the slapstick comedy appreciated by a broad public; Henry F., Salerno, trans., *Scenarios of the Commedia dell'arte: Flaminio Scala's Il Teatro delle favole*

protagonists created by Faustini differ quite substantially from those of the *Incogniti*. Inventing his heroines rather than adapting the characters from classical myth and legend gave Faustini the freedom to design characters who embodied the social concerns of Venice of his day. The female protagonists who populated his dramas were women with whom the audience members could identify, for they reflected contemporary reality and projected the anxieties felt by the women, and often the men, on the audience side of the footlights. While the exotic setting and the royal or noble status of these characters added to their allure, their worries and concerns were recognisably Venetian.

Faustini operas generally revolve around the proper pairing of the protagonists, a topic of particular concern in Venice where marriage had social and political overtones for men and women alike. Since the mid-sixteenth century, Venetian elites had followed a policy of limiting marriage to one son and one daughter in each generation in order to conserve family wealth. This had many unintended social consequences: the cost of dowries skyrocketed; the majority of young women were relegated to convents and deprived of their dowries; the age gap between brides and husbands increased substantially; a socially disempowered class of men without wives developed; and fears of homosexual liaisons grew apace.¹⁰⁸ In Chapter Three we will meet young Queen Erisbe, who chafes at her marriage to an impotent old king, and Princess Sicle, an intrepid young woman who has set out to find the royal fiancé who abandoned her.

A final source of individuality in Faustini's opera librettos was his handling of the stock character types he borrowed from *commedia dell'arte* and inserted into the serious

rappresentative (New York: New York University Press, 1967) (Orig. pub. Venice: Pulciani, 1611).

¹⁰⁸ See Virginia Cox, "The Single Self: Feminist Thought and the Marriage Market in Early Modern Venice," *Renaissance Quarterly* 48, no. 3, 1995: 513-81; see also Jutta Gisela Sperling, *Convents and the Body Politic in Late Renaissance Venice* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999).

love travails of the principals. These characters include the randy old nurse, the not-so-innocent young page boy, the comic servant, and the male authority figure made foolish by love. Even though these characters remain easily recognisable through their conventional roles, dramatic functions, and standard voice parts, Faustini integrates them into the new context, giving them individualizing qualities and making them actors in the plot. For example, in Faustini's libretto for *Ormindo*, it is the bossy old nurse who concocts a scheme to win back her mistress's lover, thereby playing a key role in resolving the love triangle. These characters not only provide comic situations relished by audiences, but also function as a critical counterpoint to the "serious" doings of their betters. They represent the common sense of the ordinary lower-class citizen, and they poke fun at the naive ideals of the upper class and ridicule the foibles of those in authority. In *Ormindo* we find comic arias devoted to topoi of the age such as the foolishness of lovers, the danger women pose to men, and the superior value of money over love.

Faustini came up with a winning formula that allowed new operas to be produced quickly yet with novel elements that satisfied the Venetian public's demand for ever new stories. His fourteen opera librettos, ten of which were set by Francesco Cavalli, made him the most productive librettist of the early period, and his model of plot and characters influenced the dramatic structure of almost all of the operas written in subsequent generations.¹⁰⁹ While Faustini's literary style did not aspire to high literary merit, the very simplicity of his poetic texts seems to have allowed his collaborator Cavalli the freedom to create musical settings that were tailored to show the development of individual characters. We will see this at work in Cavalli's *Ormindo*.

¹⁰⁹ Almost all Venetian librettists adopted the Faustini mould, starting with Nicolò Minato, who became the librettist most frequently collaborating with Cavalli; Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, 175-84.

Giacinto Andrea Cicognini (1606-1649)

On a par with Faustini in terms of importance for the development of Venetian opera, is the second professional librettist of note, Giacinto Andrea Cicognini. Considered by many contemporaries to be the greatest dramatist of the seventeenth century, Cicognini was a playwright of great experience who had already authored over a dozen comedies by the time he turned to opera. A Florentine by birth, he immigrated to Venice in 1646, where he wrote the two of the most popular operas of the century, *Giasone* and *Orontea*.

Cicognini had ties to the rich literary and musical circles of Florence through his father, Jacopo Cicognini, whose avocation was writing and directing sacred dramas, and as a youth Cicognini gained theatrical experience acting in his father's plays.¹¹⁰ Cicognini also had a close connection to the Medicean Court where his father was employed, and his godmother was the Archduchess Cristina of Lorraine; through her he was able to attend the University of Pisa, graduating in 1627 with a degree in law. He embarked on a career in the theatre and adapted many Spanish plays for the Italian stage before moving to Venice and turning seriously to opera.

The primary influence on Cicognini's playwriting was the Spanish theatre current in Florence, where Medici rulers had close political and cultural ties with Spain.¹¹¹ Opera librettos by Cicognini demonstrate a number of characteristics based on Spanish comedies. Noteworthy is the more important role played by comic characters, who participate actively

¹¹⁰ Giacinto Andrea had his first play published and performed in 1619 at the tender age of 13. Three years later he demonstrated his acting ability, playing the double role of twins in a sacred drama by his father, *Il Martiro di Sant'Agata*. These experiences doubtless contributed to the keen sense of dramatic structure evident in his many theatrical works; Barbara Maranini, "Il comico nel tragico": Un Indagine," 4.

¹¹¹ Spain's *Siglo de Oro*, or Golden Age, coincided with its political domination of much of the Italian peninsula, which favoured the dissemination of Spanish ideas and customs. It had a marked impact on theatre and Lope de Vega's manifesto of 1609 rejecting the Aristotelian unities influenced Italian drama; see William C. Holmes, *Orontea: A Study of Change and Development in the Libretto and the Music of Mid-Seventeenth-Century Italian Opera*, PhD diss., Columbia University, 1968, 25. Proquest (0278819).

in the plot, and the figure of the *gracioso*, or clever courtier, who often serves the role of mediator between serious and comic characters, providing the drama with a more unified plot.¹¹² Another Spanish practice was the important role given to cross-dressing, a plotting device that is seen in *Orontea*. Perhaps the most lasting innovation from Spanish theatrical tradition was the adoption of the dramatic structure of the noted Spanish playwright Lope de Vega. He rejected the so-called “Aristotelian unities” of time and place as unduly restrictive and advocated a dramatic structure that allowed plot and characters to develop more naturally over a longer period of time.

A stylistic trait Cicognini gleaned from Spanish theatre is the setting of dialogue in short lines, creating lively exchanges between characters rather than extended speeches. In opera it led to the use of shorter lines of recitative, resulting in a more natural give and take between conversational participants. The character of the interaction changes from a musical point of view as well, as we shall see when we examine *Orontea*, where it is one of the elements that contribute to a more marked distinction between aria and recitative.

Another feature of Cicognini’s poetic style was his adoption of a uniform level of language for both serious and comic characters. The speech of comic characters incorporates vernacular expressions, and musical word play is one of the means he employs to create hilarious comic characters. Upper-class characters also speak in the language of the everyday, avoiding the flowery poetic language often found in the operas authored by *Incogniti* librettists.¹¹³ Cicognini was keenly aware of the need to provide audiences with dramas that spoke directly to them: as he famously said, “I write out of mere caprice, which

¹¹² A prime example of the *gracioso* is the role of Oreste in *Giasone*, the quasi-comic, quasi-tragic character in *Giasone* who mediates between the courts of Isifile and Medea, the women competing for the love of Giasone.

¹¹³ Holmes, *Orontea, A Study*, 100-04.

has no other aim than delight; and I delight myself by nothing more than accommodating the inclination and taste of those who listen or read.”¹¹⁴ Cicognini stresses the importance of listening to the audience and taking account of their tastes, thereby effectively bridging the divide between academic and professional creators of Venetian opera.

SHAPING THE MUSIC OF OPERA: THE LIBRETTIST

While the composer is the ultimate creator of the music in opera, the role of the librettist in determining the musical aspects of Venetian opera in the first two decades of its development was also considerable. Not only does the librettist shape the story to fit contemporary conceptions of entertaining drama and incorporate characters that fit Venetian values, but many musical aspects of the *dramma per musica* were also in the hands of the librettist. As Wendy Heller describes it, “the librettist determined, in large part, *when* women sang, *what* they sang, and to some degree, *how* they sang” (emphasis in original).¹¹⁵ I term these aspects the *architectural role*, the *formal role* and the *poetic role*. These three aspects of the librettist’s craft began as practices inherited from spoken drama and gradually became conventions of early opera, many of which persisted in opera of the succeeding centuries.

Through the shaping of the drama into acts and scenes – the *architecture* of the opera – the librettist determines when the protagonists will first enter the action and with whom they will interact in the various scenes. Early on, opera adopted the theatrical practice of using a prologue to communicate directly with the audience,¹¹⁶ and it became standard to

¹¹⁴ “*Io compongo per mere capriccio, il mio capriccio non hà altra fine che dilettere: L’apportar diletto appresso di me, non è altro, che l’incontrare il genio, & il gusto di chi ascolta o legge;*” Preface to *Il Giasone* (Venice, 1649); cited in Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, Italian and English, 168.

¹¹⁵ Wendy Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence*, 19.

¹¹⁶ A treatise published in 1599 by Venetian playwright and theatre director Angelo Ingegneri entitled *On Representational Poetry: How to Produce Stage Plays* (*Della poesia rappresentativa: Del modo di*

have a prologue in which allegorical figures presented the work's theme to the audience. We will find that the operas analysed below demonstrate attention to the careful structuring of the dramatic fabric, including the prologue.

The librettist's second role, determining what female characters were to sing, was closely tied to the notion of "probability" stipulated in Aristotle's *Poetics* and interpreted by the sixteenth-century Italian academics as *verisimilitude* (*verisimiglianza*). In a general sense, verisimilitude meant having a character behave in a way that would be seen as plausible by spectators. The primary concern of Venetian composers was the plausibility of having an entire drama that was sung rather than spoken, which affected both the language and the music of early opera. Because it was essentially heightened speech, *recitative* was viewed as an acceptable compromise between talking and singing and could be used for all characters. *Song*, however, was a violation of normal interaction and thus was seen as fully acceptable only in specific situations and for certain types of characters. Librettists handled this in a variety of ways, including incorporating scenes of on-stage performances by a musician (the music scene), or a lullaby, or a confession of love sung to a sleeping lover (the sleep scene).¹¹⁷ We will find such scenes in the operas studied in this thesis.

It was by means of his *poetic* role that the librettist had the most significant influence

rappresentare le favole sceniche) helped to codify the structure of spoken drama that was adopted in opera. Ingegneri's intent is to create a play so plausible that the spectators will forget they are in a theatre; Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*, Vol. 2, 1090-93.

¹¹⁷ Rosand points out that Venetian composers were far more concerned about the implausibility of sung drama than Roman composers of the same time period. She suggests that this might be due to the greater role of audiences in Venice, where operas were open to a broad public and success was contingent on audience approval; *Opera in Venice*, 249. Certain types of characters were also deemed to be exempt from the requirement of verisimilitude, such as gods and goddesses, children, and characters undergoing overpowering emotions such as grief or madness. Many of the dramatic conventions and scene types that became standard in Venetian opera originated in the requirement to make singing appear plausible to the audience; 246-48.

over the form of music the composer would choose to set the libretto text. That is, the verse form the librettist employed was a cue for the composer to treat a particular line of text either as *recitative*, or as some form of song (*arioso*, *arietta*, or formal *aria*). In the early phase of Venetian opera, the majority of operatic text in the opera was written in *versi sciolti* (“free verse”), the Italian equivalent of English blank verse, composed of freely alternating lines of seven syllables (*settenari*) and eleven syllables (*endecasyllabi*), without a strict rhyming pattern. This was intended to be interpreted by the composer as recitative (*stile recitativo*).¹¹⁸

Texts intended as some sort of “song” or aria would normally be written in *versi misurati* (metrical verse), arranged by the poet in strophes made up of a variable number of lines of the same number of syllables; the most common were lines of five syllables (*quinari*), seven syllables (*settenari*), and eleven-syllables (*endecasyllabi*). The pattern of accentuation at the end of a line was also important and could be used by the poet to create different effects. Since most Italian words have the accent on the penultimate syllable, termed *piano* (literally “plain” or “level”), this became the unmarked form, conveying a smooth melodic delivery appropriate for recitative. A few Italian words place the accent on the final syllable, termed *tronco* (“truncated”); having several lines all ending with this accent could be used for special effect, perhaps expressing anger or fear. When the accent falls on the ante-penultimate syllable, it is called *sdrucchiolo* (“slippery”), a verse form with a potent association with the underworld, magic, and the uncanny.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸This was the style adopted for spoken text in the earliest operas by Peri and Caccini in Florence (*Euridice*) and by Monteverdi in Mantua (*Orfeo*) and still used extensively in the early years of Venetian opera; *ibid.*, 245.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 245-50. *Versi sdrucchioli* were also considered ugly and were used to imitate the speech of uncultured individuals, such as peasants; *ibid.*, 143-44.

MUSIC, VERISIMILITUDE AND DECORUM: THE COMPOSER

Venetian composers as well as librettists were faced with the task of finding the best form of musical expression for defining the characters and depicting the action in the new *dramma per musica*. In the early 1640s in Venice, *verisimilitude* remained a central concern. An important component was *decorum*, which required the composer to craft his music to fit the personal comportment expected of a character of a given social status. Particular attention had to be paid to those of noble rank because, during the early period of development of Venetian opera, expression of emotions in both formal aria and comic song was deemed unacceptable for serious noble characters. When characters were intentionally represented as disregarding decorum, the composer had to use his skills to convey this through the musical settings. For example, when unhappy young Queen Erisbe sings light comic songs in *Ormindo*, we learn something about her character and emotional state, because she is not acting in a manner appropriate to her rank as Queen.¹²⁰ The composer thus had a vital role in shaping the drama of the opera as well as the way characters were perceived by the audience.

Adherence to verisimilitude had to be balanced with the fundamental need to keep the action of the drama moving forward while at the same time promoting understanding of characters through their moments of emotional expression in song. The balancing of narrative drive using recitative with the stasis in the action occasioned by an aria focusing attention on reflection or emotions, was an issue throughout the development of opera.¹²¹

Observance of musical verisimilitude was especially strong among Venetian composers, much stronger than in Rome in the same time period.¹²² This is relevant to this

¹²⁰ This discussion is based on Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, Chapters 9 and 10.

¹²¹ See Holmes, *Oronthea, A Study*, 149.

¹²² Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, 248-49.

study because, although both of our model operas originated in Venice, *Oronthea* had a Roman-trained composer who brought his Roman stylistic orientation with him. By 1640, librettos produced in Rome distinguished clearly between recitative and aria and contained many poetic indications of closed forms, particularly strophic arias.¹²³ This contrasts with Venice, where librettos were less differentiated in poetic style and arias and other closed forms were the exception, due to stronger pressure to create dramas that maintained verisimilitude. In Rome, during the same period, operas included a larger number of arias, resulting in a greater focus on the singers' performance of beautiful melodies rather than on the drama, a trend that came much later to Venice. The predominant role of lyricism in operas produced by composers trained in Rome or the Roman sphere, and the greater importance accorded to drama by those originating in Venice where Monteverdi's influence remained strong, has been noted by various scholars.¹²⁴ In her major work on the operas of Monteverdi, Anna Amalia Abert describes the development of Baroque opera from the mid-seventeenth-century onward as a synthesis of Roman opera, which concentrated mainly on vocal show, and Venetian opera, more focused on drama.¹²⁵ As we shall see, *Oronthea* exemplifies this synthesis.

RECITATIVE & ARIA: BUILDING BLOCKS OF MUSICAL REPRESENTATION

The dozen years between the creation of *Ormindo* (1644) and the 1656 score of *Oronthea* saw a musical transition between the early Venetian operatic style and the music of mid-century. This re-fashioning of the musical aspects of Venetian opera occurred

¹²³ Closed forms are songs or song-like sections that stand out by being organized into regular, metrical groupings of poetic lines; *ibid.*, 247.

¹²⁴ Holmes, *Oronthea, A Study*, 156-57; see Rosand on Monteverdi and drama, *Opera in Venice*, 250-56.

¹²⁵ "Das Römische Streben nach Prachtfaltung... "eine Synthese zwischen den Römischen Musikopern and dem dramatischen Geist von Venedig;" Abert, *Claudio Monteverdi*, 206.

during the period that professional librettists became active, with changes occurring swiftly over the decade of the 1640s. New types of librettos, such as the widely imitated Faustini model, inevitably had a stimulating effect on composers, who sought novel ways of setting new scene types (the sleep scene and the mad scene, for instance) and of musically portraying the new kinds of characters featured in these librettos. The influence of Spanish drama highlighting comic servants and other lower-class characters prioritized action scenes and comic philosophizing over lyrical expression. Rosand links the observance of verisimilitude to the broader social range of audience members in Venice, suggesting that they may have been less willing to suspend disbelief for the sake of entertainment than the aristocratic audiences in Rome. I suggest that the inclusion of more lower class characters may also have led to a stronger need for realism in the portrayal of operatic characters, heightening the expectations of decorum based on class distinctions and reinforcing the importance of verisimilitude to Venetian audiences and composers. The emphasis on verisimilitude had varying musical implications for composers responding to the poetic cues of librettists; the discussion that follows concentrates on the impact of the leading composers Francesco Cavalli and Antonio Cesti.

In the early 1640s composers enjoyed substantial freedom to determine the form of musical settings and thus to control the effect of the operatic drama, and Cavalli was one of the most independent of composers. As librettists' cues grew more explicit, expectations for composers to follow the librettist's lead solidified, until by mid-century the distinctions between aria and recitative had become clearly encoded and the composer's freedom to influence the drama had greatly diminished.

In his librettos for Cavalli, Faustini's poetic cues were clearer, employing rhyme and

metre more systematically and signalling closed forms more often, than those the composer had worked with earlier.¹²⁶ Faustini frequently used refrains to indicate sections that were worthy of expansion into a more structured lyrical expression. Cavalli picked up on this technique and, throughout the 1640s, created *refrain arias* by repeating a first line as the final section of a metrically structured group of lines or as a less formal *arioso* with a refrain. Cavalli did not hesitate to take control of the drama by altering Faustini's poetic suggestions or ignoring them altogether by expanding a few lines into a full aria or by setting rhyming metrical text simply as recitative.

Cavalli's creativity appears to have been driven by his instinct that music had to reflect and reveal the psychology of the characters. Even when using the same basic technique, such as the *refrain aria*, he rarely set two lyrical passages exactly the same way, adapting each one to the character's evolution and the larger dramatic framework. There were many factors he could manipulate; overall message and rhetorical intent, musical style and affect, metre and key area, repetition of text and variation of musical material, and type of accompaniment were all elements that could be mixed and matched to produce a variety of forms, each chosen for its dramatic effect. The variety of *refrain arias* Cavalli created is a source of insight in our discussion of female characters in *Ormindo* (Chapter Three).

Cicognini too did a great deal to regularize the distinction between *aria* and *recitative* in Venetian opera. His skill as a dramatic poet was admired and he also penned the librettos for the two most performed operas of the century, both of which ensured imitation of his style. His clear and unambiguous poetic cues to composers using *versi sciolti* for recitative and *versi misurati*, or metrical verse, for aria became the standard for the rest of the century.

¹²⁶ Cavalli worked with Gian Francesco Busenello on his first two operas, *Gli amori d'Apollino e di Dafne* and *La Didone*; *ibid.*, 257.

When Cicognini worked with Cavalli on *Giasone* (1649), Cavalli responded with appropriate settings in a work that became known as the epitome of balance between narrative action in recitative and emotional reflection in aria. Cicognini's use of a more realistic vernacular language for both comic and serious characters may well have helped to diminish some of the Venetian focus on decorum, thus changing the manner in which characters of different rank and status interacted on stage. We will find indications of this in the behaviours of female characters in *Oronthea* (see Chapter Four).

During the 1640s Venetian librettists increased the number of arias, thus expanding opportunities for lyric expansion, by inventing new scenes which adhered to the strictures of verisimilitude and decorum. Faustini created monologues for protagonists that enabled them to expose their innermost feelings without violating decorum. He also created more plots with female characters in disguise who assumed male gender identities where the expectations of decorum were less stringent.

Cesti's setting 1656 of Cicognini's *Oronthea* clearly shows the adoption of Roman musical style into Venetian opera. It was in Rome that the chamber cantata first developed, and Roman operas quite naturally incorporated musical scenes using chamber cantata style.¹²⁷ The structure of these chamber cantatas is strikingly similar to the musical sections which make up the musical soliloquies in *Oronthea*. Cesti was one of the leading Roman composers of chamber cantatas, and his operatic style features the same characteristics as these cantatas, including beautiful melodies and relatively simple harmonic language with

¹²⁷ The mid-century chamber cantata is defined as "a secular composition with continuo, usually for solo voice, on a lyrical or quasi-dramatic text, consisting of several sections that included both recitatives and aria;" Peter Burkholder, Donald J. Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 7th ed. (New York: Norton, 2006), 331. For a discussion of the process by which individual operatic scenes grew out of the chamber cantata during the 1640s and 1650s, see Holmes, *Oronthea, A Study*, 145-57.

the occasional piquant dissonance.¹²⁸ In essence, the cantata is a miniature operatic scene conveying both dramatic intensity and emotional reflection, the type of scene that became the norm for operas during the second half of the seventeenth century. These scenes are a prominent element in *Orontea*, where they serve to express the ambivalent emotions and rapidly changing behaviour of the female characters.

Creating operas in the manner described, ideally entailed close cooperation between librettist and composer. The opportunity to work together for a decade was enjoyed by Giovanni Faustini and Francesco Cavalli, who produced ten operas before Faustini's death in 1651. This fruitful partnership allowed Cavalli the opportunity to develop his mature musical style and made him the dominant figure in the decade of the 1640s. It also contributed to developing the fledgling genre into a viable cultural industry in Venice. *Ormindo*, the first of the operas we explore in depth in the next chapter is an example of the benefits of close collaboration between its creators.

The second opera we will examine did not have the advantage of cooperation between librettist and composer, as Cicognini died in 1649, seven years before Antonio Cesti created his setting of *Orontea*. However, its brilliant libretto was set so effectively that the opera went on to become the most performed work of the seventeenth-century.

¹²⁸ While today chiefly remembered for his operas, Cesti's cantatas were even more popular in his day; Holmes, *Orontea, A Study*, 150n.

CHAPTER THREE

POLYPHONIC VOICES IN CAVALLI'S *ORMINDO* (1644)

ORMINDO AND GENRE: THE TRAGIC AND THE COMIC

Performed during the 1644 Carnival season at the Teatro San Cassiano in Venice, *L'Ormindo* was the third collaboration between composer Francesco Cavalli (1602-1676) and librettist Giovanni Faustini (1615-1651), both of whom were already masters of their craft.¹²⁹ Subtitled a *favola regia per musica*, it spins a tale of royal and noble characters in a far-off land with an eventful plot that includes a reversal of fortune that brings about a happy ending. The opera can be viewed as both a tragicomedy and a serio-comic form. It is a prime example of Guarini's definition of *tragicommedia*: 1) it takes its high-born characters from tragedy; 2) its action is from comedy with a plot revolving around love; 3) its story is plausible but not historically true; 4) it engages the passions but blunts them with danger rather than death; and 5) it uses comedy in moderation. In sum, it finds a balance between tragic and comic, taking spectators on an emotional journey in which pity and terror are aroused in Aristotelian fashion and both dramatic and comic epiphanies are featured in resolving the emotional responses of the characters.

Ormindo also meets Bakhtin's criteria for a serio-comic work: the story is given a veneer of "pseudo-history" with all events occurring in the immediate present rather than in an historical time frame; royal characters are treated as comically human, on the same

¹²⁹ This study uses the libretto of *Ormindo*, translated by Christopher John Mossey, in Vol. II of "*Human after all: Character and Self-Understanding in Operas by Giovanni Faustini and Francesco Cavalli, 1644-52*," 650-746. PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1999, ProQuest (9917894), as well as a second libretto prepared by Natalie Shea for the 2009 production in Sydney, Australia, directed by Erin Helyard. Two recordings were consulted, the first directed by Rene Jacobs and the other by Raymond Leppard. Note also that the original title of the opera is *L'Ormindo* but I follow common usage, using *Ormindo*. Finally, editions differ on the spelling of the king's name (with or without an initial H): I have used "Ariadeno" in this study.

plane as audience members, who are invited to laugh at them and at themselves; and finally, as a musico-dramatic work it uses a variety of forms of musical and literary language to dramatize a multi-styled tale told with both seriousness and parody.

FEMALE CHARACTERS IN *ORMINDO*

This chapter explores the characters in *Ormindo* who most clearly embody the paradoxical nature of early Venetian opera: the women with their rich comic and tragic voices, namely, the abandoned princess (Sicle), the sexually frustrated queen (Erisbe), and the loyal *dama di corte* (Mirinda). Women are central to both the plot and the larger themes of *Ormindo*. Their contradictory desires, loyalties, fears and strategies embroil them in deception, blindness, and self-discovery, and leading them to epiphanies that radically alter their understanding of themselves and what it means to love.

The women depicted in *Ormindo* appear sometimes as tragic and other times as comic figures, and it is precisely their hybrid nature that is the focus of this chapter. The contrasting characters of Sicle and Erisbe are key to the denouement of the romantic plot of the opera, and each in her own way learns a lesson in how to balance love and responsibility, demonstrating to the audience the dangers of straying from the ideal balance of strict virtue and human fallibility. To this end, both of the female protagonists of royal status undergo radical transformation during the course of the opera. Notably, the secondary character of Mirinda, *dama di corte* of Erisbe, also evolves over the course of the work. Finally, the stock secondary servant characters that are the hallmark of comedy in Venetian opera remain true to form, mocking the pretensions of their noble masters. These characters, while retaining their quintessentially comic character and function, are also implicated in the web of deception that runs through the opera.

Deception is at the root of the central conflict of the opera, yet due to the blindness of mortals, deception is portrayed as a necessary tool to lead human beings to self-knowledge.¹³⁰ When the opera opens, Ormindo, a warrior from Tunisia, has come to provide military aid to King Ariadeno of Mauritania but does not know that he is actually the son of the king, who himself is ignorant of the fact that he has a son from a youthful liaison. Ormindo and another foreign warrior, Amida, have both fallen in love with young Queen Erisbe, who is unhappily married to the elderly Ariadeno; Erisbe returns the advances of both young men, each of whom is unaware of his rival. Sicile, a princess from a neighboring kingdom, arrives on the scene disguised as an Egyptian fortune teller, seeking Amida, the lover who abandoned her some years earlier. Her arrival will prove crucial to the unravelling of the identities of the other characters. See Figure 3.1 for a complete plot synopsis. Table 3.1 below lists the characters in the drama, while Figure 3.2 is a graphic representation of the relationships between the protagonists at the beginning and end of the opera.

PROTAGONISTS	ASSOCIATED CHARACTERS
Ormindo , warrior Prince of Tunisia	
Amida , warrior Prince of Tremiscene	Nerillo , Amida's page boy
Ariadeno , elderly King of Mauritania	Osmano , captain of the King's guards
Erisbe , Queen and young wife of Ariadeno	Mirinda , <i>dama di corte</i> of Queen Erisbe
Sicile , Princess of Susio, disguised as an Egyptian fortune teller	Erice , old nurse of Sicile, in Egyptian disguise Melide , lady-in-waiting

Table 3.1 – Characters in *Ormindo*

¹³⁰ Gods are present *in Ormindo* as allegorical figures who represent the human emotions of love and warring impulses in interludes between the acts. Christopher Mossey suggests that the presence of these gods signals that humans are guided by divine figures in the opera. I prefer to think of the humans as in charge of their own lives but with gods as allegorical reminders of the traditional view of human activity. See Mossey, "Human After All," 23-33.

SYNOPSIS – *ORMINDO* Faustini/ Cavalli (1644)

Prologue: Harmony sings praises of Venus and of Venice. The set is Venice itself.

Act I (The square of San Marco; the Queen's apartments; the royal gardens)

The first act presents the romantic dilemmas of each of the principal characters. Ormindo and Amida become rivals when they discover that Erisbe has vowed love to each of them; Amida's page Nerillo comments on the folly of lovers (Sc. 1-3). Sicle and her two women meet Nerillo and learn that Amida is in love with Queen Erisbe; Sicle gives way to despair at this news; her nurse Erice sings a comic aria on the false promises of lovers (Sc. 4-6). Queen Erisbe reveals her sexual "starvation" and misery in her marriage to her lady Mirinda; she meets her two suitors in the royal garden; when both princes confront her, she obliges them to agree to share her love (Sc. 7-8). A stern King Ariadeno greets Erisbe with love but Erisbe only feigns devotion to him; Mirinda sings comically of the miseries of marriage to an old man (Sc. 9-10). In the final scenes, Destiny orders Love to pair Ormindo with Erisbe and Amida with Sicle (Sc. 11-12).

Act II (The Queen's apartments; the square of San Marco; Venice's waterfront)

In this act both female protagonists initiate actions to resolve their amorous troubles. Erisbe celebrates her success in calming the jealousy of her lovers; fortune teller Sicle reads Amida's palm and reveals his potential for betrayal to Queen Erisbe; Sicle's nurse Erice persuades the angry Amida to attend a séance where she will help him regain "the woman he loves" (Sc. 1-4). Melide sings a comic aria rejecting the power of Cupid's arrows; Erisbe and Mirinda resolve to shun false lovers, and Erisbe vows to love Ormindo alone; Ormindo is unexpectedly recalled to his home country and Erisbe decides to flee with him (Sc. 5-8). Left behind, Mirinda fears the King's wrath (Sc. 9).

Act III (A deserted cliff with a cave; Venice's waterfront; the Arsenale prison)

The final act divides into two scene groups that allow the separate fates of Sicle and Erisbe to conclude successfully. After comic arias by Nerillo and Erice (Sc. 1-2), Erice deceives Amida with her fake séance and, telling him that Sicle has died, conjures up Sicle as the "spirit of an abandoned lover." Believing she is a ghost, Amida falls in love with her again; in a conflict-ridden but comic interaction, Sicle finally convinces him that she is alive, and they reunite as lovers (Sc. 3-5).

Meanwhile, the winds return Ormindo and Erisbe's ship back to shore, and wrathful Ariadeno, believing the gods support his desire to punish the lovers, has them cast into prison and orders them poisoned; Captain Osmano is loyal to Ormindo, and with Mirinda's encouragement, he determines to save them (Sc.6-10). In prison, Erisbe and Ormindo drink the poison brought by Osmano, prepare to die together in an extended lament and finally succumb. (Sc. 11-12). When Ariadeno sees the two lovers lying "dead," he is moved to pity. In the traditional "recognition" scene a letter from Ormindo's mother informs Ariadeno that Ormindo is actually his son. Osmano confesses that he substituted a sleeping draught for the poison and the lovers awaken, to the King's great joy. Ormindo learns of his heritage and the reformed Ariadeno cedes both his wife and his throne to his son. The opera closes with the promise of a triple wedding in which the four principals are joined by the deserving pair, Mirinda and Osmano.

FIGURE 3.1 – PLOT SYNOPSIS of *ORMINDO*

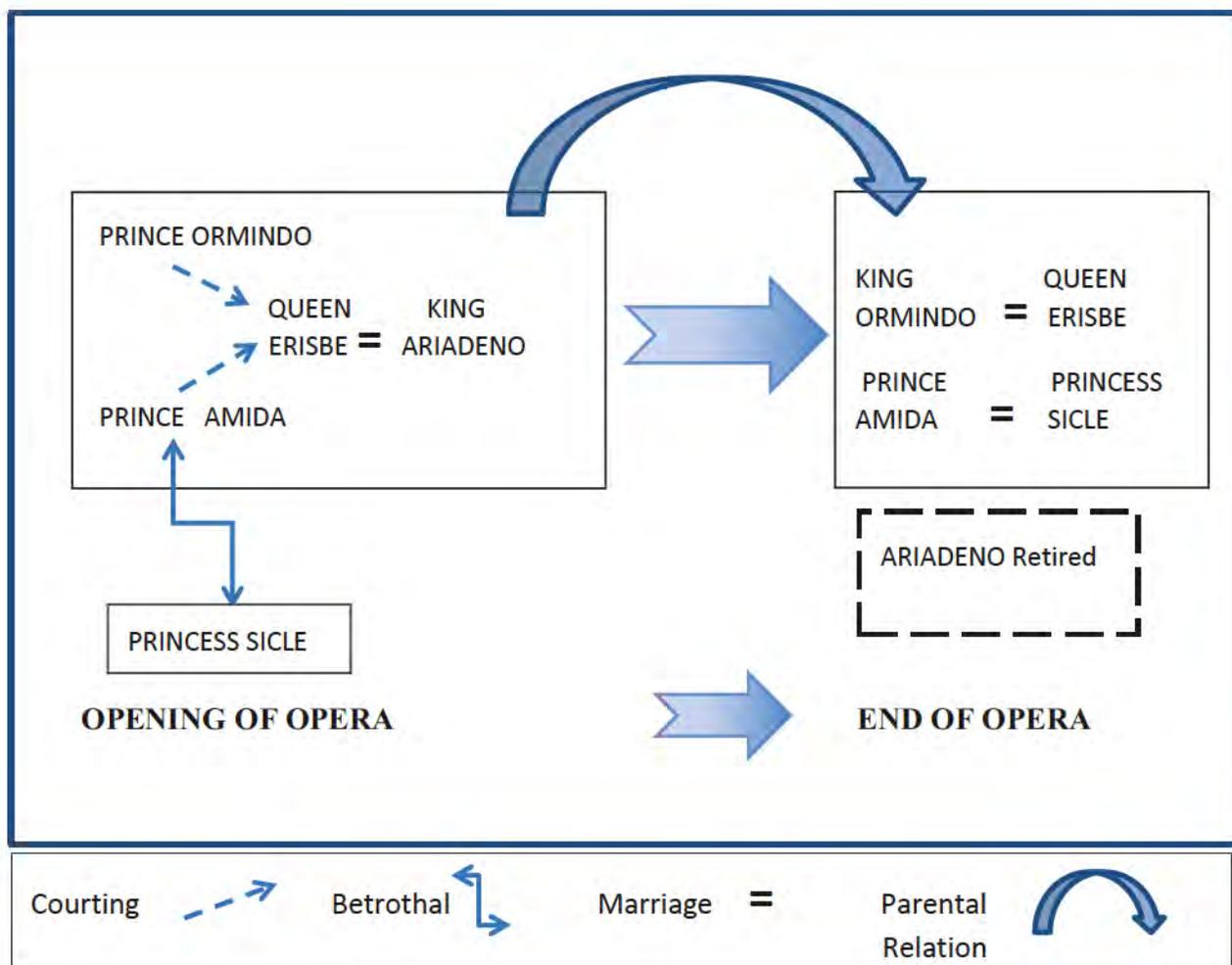


FIGURE 3.2 – Character Relationships in *Ormindo*

Music and drama are tightly integrated in this opera. With the exception of comic arias by lower-class characters, the dramatic situations in which the characters find themselves determine the musical form Cavalli uses, and these in turn are driven by the emotions of the characters. As a composer, Cavalli is both exceptionally attuned to the dramatic content of each situation and very skilled at calibrating shades of emotion in his musical settings. Our discussion of the musical representation of the characters' development will thus be guided by the unfolding drama as we examine each of these women in turn. We begin with the tragic princess Sicle, who is contrasted with comic,

fickle Queen Erisbe, and finish with her faithful confidant Mirinda, who mirrors her mistress in every mood. Each of these female characters is on a journey of self-knowledge, and each eventually proves herself capable of inner transformation and growth that allows her to become a truly conscious and moral human being. While all of the women are recognizable as figures inherited from spoken theatre, both the “serious” Italian genre of *commedia grave* and the generally lighter professional theatre of the *commedia dell’arte*,¹³¹ what makes these characters compelling is that they are not limited by the constraints of the theatrical stock character-types on which they are modelled – the abandoned virgin, the adulterous wife, and the flirtatious female confidant. Instead, they grow and develop over the course of the opera, demonstrating the quality of unfinalizability, the ultimate openness to change Bakhtin terms “becoming.”

Throughout our discussion, we are guided by the distinctive musical voices of these women, which are correlated with individual styles, allowing the auditors to hear each separate voice and respond to each one individually. Taken together, they present the polyphony of independent voices cited by Bakhtin as the condition permitting all facets of a situation to be taken into account.

SICLE: ABANDONED WOMAN

Sicle is clearly identifiable as a character-type that was a staple of spoken theatre: the

¹³¹*Commedia grave* was the drama that presented ethical issues and concerns on stage during the last quarter of the 16th century. This type of comedy was short-lived due to its distinctly moralistic tone and lack of strong dramatic characters; it tended to feature wordy debates on topics such as the merits of friendship over love, honour versus duty, and the qualities of a good ruler. However, as Alexandra Collier has pointed out, the heroines of *commedia grave* may have served as models for opera’s leading ladies; “Vernacular Antecedents of Early Opera’s *Prime Donne*.” See also Louise George Clubb, “Commedia Grave and the *Comedy of Errors*,” 49-64, in her *Italian Drama in Shakespeare’s Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); and Richard Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios: The Performance of Comedy in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) on *commedia grave*, 227-48.

abandoned woman who takes her fate into her own hands to regain her beloved.¹³² Sicle shares many features with the most famous of these theatrical characters, Drusilla, heroine of *La Pellegrina*, who was widely regarded as the epitome of constancy and feminine virtue.¹³³ Sicle too waits years for her fiancé to return before setting off to find him, and she too is disguised and not recognised by her lover when she does find him.

As an abandoned woman, steadfast in devotion to her beloved Amida, Sicle is the emblem of constancy in the opera and provides a serious counterweight to fickle Queen Erisbe, in both musical treatment and character. Yet despite her stellar qualities of constancy and seriousness, Sicle engages in scenes of deception and is revealed as a conflicted character who juggles different emotions. She has two voices at war within herself, a tragic voice reflecting the pain she has endured from her abandonment, and a second voice born of unresolved anger at her betrayer. In addition, she adopts a third role and distinctive voice with her masquerade as an Egyptian fortune-teller. In the end, her identity will be called into question when a final deception threatens to foil reunion with her beloved, and Sicle is forced to choose what is most important to her.

Warring Voices: Who is Sicle?

Sicle begins the opera as a woman with a mission: to right the wrong that has been

¹³² The abandoned woman had already been seen on the Venetian opera stage. Monteverdi's revival of *Arianna* (1640) and Cavalli's own *La Didone* (1641) both featured abandoned heroines based on classical sources. In *Ormindo*, Faustini appears to be adapting strong female characters found in spoken theatre, who were unconstrained by the need to respect classical sources: Drusilla, from G.B. Bargaglia's *La Pellegrina*, is a case in point. Key plot elements also seem to have been borrowed: for example, a guardian poisoning two lovers about to elope but the poison turning out to be harmless appeared in *L'amor costante*, attributed to Alessandro Piccolomini; cited in Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios*, 101-02.

¹³³ *La Pellegrina*, by Girolamo Bargagli, the play that was performed at the famous wedding of Ferdinando de' Medici with Christine of Lorraine in 1589, spawned a veritable industry of translations and imitations. In Venice, Drusilla appeared as the faithful lover of Ottone in Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* in 1640-41, only a few years before *Ormindo*. Bargagli's *Pellegrina* herself had a long history and was likely based on the story of Drusilla from Canto XXXV of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, who became the model of feminine virtue for many generations. For a complete history, see Girolamo Bargagli, *La Pellegrina*, Edizione critica con introduzione e note de Florindo Cerrata (Florence, IT: Leo S. Olschki, 1971), 7-30.

done her. To achieve this, she is ready to deceive others, resembling Arlecchino the comic fool of the *commedia dell'arte* whose deceptions are always undertaken in the service of a just cause.¹³⁴ Although Sicle's voice and the mannerisms she adopts as a fortune teller are fakery, with them she reveals the "truth." As a truth teller Sicle resembles the time-honoured fool figure identified by Mikhail Bakhtin (Chapter One) and discussed by psychoanalyst William Willeford.¹³⁵ Much of Sicle's power comes from the conviction that she brings the truth, a self-perception validated by the other characters in the opera.¹³⁶ She resembles the fool-hero familiar from folktales who often succeeds on a quest when "wiser" heads fail, overcoming all obstacles with purity of heart alone.¹³⁷ Sicle too is an innocent whose single-mindedness of purpose leads her to believe implicitly that when she finds Amida, the truth alone will be enough to bring success.

Thus, paradoxically, while remaining a consummate deceiver of others, Sicle is an exemplum of purity of heart because she is not guileful by nature and will need to depend on the crafty old nurse Erice to achieve her goal. While Sicle is a bringer of truth for others, we will find that, because she does not fully understand her own nature, this truth has unanticipated consequences for her. She understands her pain, and her tragic voice expressing this pain rings true, yet she is unaware of the degree to which her pent-up anger at Amida will sabotage her plans. Her masquerade as an Egyptian fortune teller not only

¹³⁴ Arlecchino plays tricks on Pantalone such as stealing the gold his miserly master has hidden or foiling the old man's plans to marry a young girl, but always in the service of a higher good.

¹³⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 158-67, posits three types of "fool" appearing in literary works across the ages: the clown, the rogue and the fool (or simpleton). In this thesis I primarily draw on the psychologically more sophisticated discussion of the historical fool figure by literary scholar and Jungian psychoanalyst William Willeford in *The Fool and His Scepter* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 9-29.

¹³⁶ Like the fool, Sicle is the agent who arrives from afar and brings the truth, unaware of her effect on the other characters in the drama. At the same time, her insider knowledge gives her unique power, for she knows the history of Amida, the lover who abandoned her and who is now a suitor of Queen Erisbe.

¹³⁷ Willeford, *The Fool*, 166.

hides her identity from others but symbolically presents her as someone who lacks self-awareness, someone who does not really know her own identity.

Sicle's role as a bringer of truth is enhanced by successfully "performing" three times, once in each of the opera's acts, and each performance leads her one step closer to regaining her lover. In each of these performances Sicle successfully deceives her audience despite conflicting inner voices that threaten to overpower her performance.

Two Voices: Pain and Rage

Sicle's first appearance in *Ormindo* in Act I, Scene 4 is her first performance, in which two conflicting voices are revealed in her musical expression. She appears in her disguise as an Egyptian fortune teller in the city square where she and her companions recognize Amida's pageboy Nerillo, who earlier facilitated the love affair between Sicle and Amida. Sicle easily convinces the street-wise Nerillo that she is a genuine soothsayer by her self-assured manner and by correctly recounting his past, which causes him to deem her a *Nova Sibilla, o dotta Maga* ("New prophetess or learned sorceress," v. 281).

Sicle's musical delivery as a fortune teller informs the listener immediately that this is not her real voice but that she is engaging in what Bakhtin terms *re-accentuation*, emulating a musical style and using it for her own purposes. In *O bel giovane* ("Oh handsome youth," Ex. 3.1) she adopts a high sing-song declamatory style with a piercing vocal delivery, a bold sound that commands attention and signals that she is a woman accustomed to performing in the public square, a persona antithetical to her real identity as a princess. Cavalli has set her declamatory recitative in a minor key, with repeated notes in a high tessitura (four long bars of alternation between d² and f). Chromatic descending notes and the frequent use of the interval of the minor third also contribute to an "exotic"

foreign impression.¹³⁸ It is the adoption of a fortune-teller's musical style markers (*re-accentuation*) that crowns Sicle's disguise and makes her believable.¹³⁹

Sicle is shocked to learn that, although she has found Amida, he is in love with young Queen Erisbe, who returns his affections. Barely holding herself together, she arranges to tell Nerillo's fortune later, and the moment he leaves, Sicle dissolves in a passionate outpouring of grief in which we hear her real voice, the voice of an abandoned woman in all its complexity. Cavalli has created two differing vehicles for conveying Sicle's conflicting voices in this scene: the intense recitative lament, *Perfidissimo Amida*, and the contrasting lyrical arioso, *Chi, chi mi toglie al die* (see Exs. 3.2a and 3.2b). Each of these musical numbers contains evidence of two voices at war within Sicle, one tragic, the other fueled by rage.

Cavalli differentiates between the musical characterizations of Erisbe and Sicle by associating unique musical forms with each character. While Erisbe uses a variety of types of formal aria, Sicle sings only in recitative and arioso style until the close of the opera, when she has been reunited with her lover and they sing in the conventional love duet.¹⁴⁰ Table 3.2 lists Sicle's musical numbers in Act I.¹⁴¹

Cavalli chose a free-form *recitative lament* to give voice to Sicle's torment, the

¹³⁸ On the slippery topic of defining exoticism Ralph P. Locke points out many ways that exoticism can exist, both with and without exotic style markers; *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Chap.3, 43-71. On the prevalence of Egyptian themes in seventeenth-century Venetian opera as markers of exoticism, see Wendy Heller, "Venezia in Egitto: Egyptomania and Exoticism in Seventeenth-Century Venetian Opera, in *Le arti della scena e l'esoticismo in età moderna*, edited by Francesco Cotticelli and Paulogiovanni Maione, 141-56. (Naples, IT: Turchini, 2006).

¹³⁹ The fact that these style markers create a clear impression of "gypsy otherness" to the modern ear as well suggests that the same exotic stereotypes of otherness tused by Cavalli for his seventeenth-century audience persist to this day.

¹⁴⁰ Rosand speculates that a convention may have existed whereby two competing female protagonists in the same opera would be distinguished on the basis of whether or not they sang in the closed form of aria; this hypothesis is borne out in *Ormindo*; see *Opera in Venice*, 303, n29.

¹⁴¹ Musical titles are often double, with // separating two contrasting sections marked by change of meter.

ACT/ SCEN	FIRST LINE TITLE	WHO	METER	MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL STYLE RHETOR. STRAT.
Act I.4	<i>O bel giovane</i>	Sicle	4 / 4	<i>Recitative</i>	Declamatory // Re-accentuation
Act I.5	<i>Perfidissimo Amida</i>	Sicle	4 / 4 // 4 / 4	<i>Recitative lament refr: A//B//A</i>	Tragic lament Dialogue with double
Act I.5	<i>Chi, chi mi toglie al die//Angosce aspre ed acerbe</i>	Sicle	4 / 4 // 4 / 4	<i>Arioso, refrain A//B //A</i>	Lyrical// Intense

Table 3.2 Sicle's Musical Numbers in Act I of *Ormindo*

same form he used successfully for Dido's lament in *La Didone* (1641), perhaps seeing similarities in the unrestrained outpouring of emotion of these two characters. Unlike the better-known Baroque *descending tetrachord lament*, with its repeating bass ostinato and formally measured structure simulating an aesthetic of emotional stasis, the variable bass pattern and shifting harmonies of the recitative lament creates a chain of changing emotional moods. It is possible that the more formal lament based on a descending tetrachord ostinato was deemed more suitable for the emotional climax of the opera, or Cavalli may have felt that this form carried with it an association with nobility of spirit in the face of death, a quality more in keeping with his musical characterization of Erisbe in her Act III.12 lament.¹⁴²

The lament *Perfidissimo Amida* begins and ends with a three-line refrain that encloses a 15-line recitative (vv. 333-53). It is through this *recitative lament* that the audience learns the story of Sicle's involvement with Amida and her arduous journey to locate her lover. By speaking of herself in the third person, Sicle invites the listener to follow her journey, sympathize with her, and vicariously feel her pain. Adopting an objective voice also presents her as divided, as if the abandonment by her lover has

¹⁴² Ibid., 361-86 for discussion of the differences between the recitative and descending tetrachord laments.

separated her former identity as a delicate, protected maiden from her new self as a resourceful pilgrim of love.¹⁴³ In effect, this objectification allows her to conduct a Bakhtinian *dialogue with her double* (i.e., a dialogue with an inner voice) demonstrating the split in her personality between her former self and her new self. This *dialogue with her double* also reveals the clash of the two emotions driving her forward: anger as well as anguish, each represented by a different voice.

Perfidissimo Amida;
il mio crudo martire,
Prese umane sembianze, empio, t'uccida.
 Lascia, lascia di Susio il tuo bel Regno
 Delicata donzella,
 E per monti scoscesi,
 E per deserte arene,
 Sotto spoglie mentite
 Gira le piante ardite,
 Per trovar il tuo bene,
 E lieta dove sai.
 Ch'egli dimora, corri, corri.
 Che lo ritroverai,
 –Amante disprezzata,
 Principessa schernita,
 Pellegrina tradita – **(Line 16)**
 Per novello desio,
 Languire, ohimè di te scordato. Oh dio
Perfidissimo Amida;
il mio crudo martire,
Prese umane sembianze, empio, t'uccida.

Most faithless Amida,
Let my cruel suffering
Take human form and kill you, cruel one!
 Leaving her fair kingdom of Suzio
 A delicate maiden
 Crosses both rugged mountains
 And desert sands,
 Puts on false clothes,
 Comes up with bold plans
 To find her beloved,
 And joyful when she knows the place
 She runs to where he lives
 Only to find him
 – Spurned lover,
 Scorned princess,
 Betrayed pilgrim! – **(Line16)**
 Languishing with a new lover,
 She, alas, forgotten. O God!
Most faithless Amida,
Let my cruel suffering
Take human form and kill you, cruel one!

The lament begins with an agonized address to Amida, her “most faithless” lover, in which she sings of her suffering at his hands in a tragic style with long note values and legato phrases on repeated notes. Unexpectedly, the third line suddenly explodes with her other voice of fury as she vehemently desires her suffering to take human form and kill her cruel lover. This three-line refrain is followed by a new mood in a narrative style. The recounting of her search for Amida, a dramatic journey over mountains and deserts, is

¹⁴³ Characterising herself as a “pilgrim” on her journey to reclaim her lover (Line 16) reminds spectators and readers of Drusilla in *La Pellegrina*, who made a pilgrimage for the same reason.

enlivened by colourful word painting such as wide intervals to represent crossing high mountains and repeated short note values to represent running (*corri, corri*). This passage culminates in Sicle's despair at discovering her lover unfaithful: increasingly urgent, intense music on the words *Prencipessa schernita / Pellegrina tradita* (scorned princess, betrayed pilgrim) pushes the phrase to a climax, then lingers on the word *languire*, where repetition, expressive chromaticism, and longer note values mirror and intensify the sexual connotation of "languish," highlighting her jealousy as she imagines her lover in the arms of another. The passage concludes with a powerful repetition of the first three-line refrain, reiterating Sicle's desire for her lover to suffer as keenly as she has.

Sicle refuses to be comforted by her two women, but when she sings the *arioso* passage with the refrain *Chi, chi mi toglie al die?* ("Who, who will take away my life?," Ex. 3.2b), her anger seems to have been transformed into resignation; despair has become intolerable anguish, and now Sicle only desires that someone put her out of her misery. In this refrain, one of the most haunting melodies in the opera, Cavalli has created the lyrical side of Sicle's anguish, using many techniques to augment its effect. The gently rocking 3/2 metre adds poignancy to the text in which Sicle pleads with someone, anyone, to take away her unbearable life. Repetition of the phrase *chi mi toglie* in a sequence up a fourth from d'' to g'' in bars 15-16, and again in bars 47-48, augments the pathos of Sicle's plea. The addition of strings to the continuo in instrumental texture in the ritornello also strengthens the effect. Here Cavalli has used his composer's prerogative to augment the impact of the refrain "*Chi, chi, mi toglie al die?*" by creating a refrain within a refrain to conclude the *arioso*.¹⁴⁴ See Appendix 3 for the musical analysis.

¹⁴⁴ Rosand points out that *Chi, chi, mi toglie al die?* is itself a refrain and resolves the half-cadence of *De le sciagure mie*; see *ibid.*, 262-63 and 268.

Chi, chi, chi mi toglie al die?
Carnefice pietoso
De le sciagure mie?
Chi, chi, chi mi toglie al die?
 [Ritornello]
Angosce aspre ed acerbe,
Se tanto fiere siete,
Perche non m'uccidete?
De la sua vita priva
Non viva più la misera, non viva.
 [Ritornello]
Chi, chi, chi mi toglie al die?
Carnefice pietoso,
De le sciagure mie?
Chi, chi, chi mi toglie al die?

Who, who, who will take away my life?
What kind executioner
Will free me from misfortune?
Who, who, who will take away my life?
 [Ritornello]
 Harsh and bitter anguish,
 If you are so savage,
 Why do you not kill me?
 Deprived of her life,
 Let the unhappy one no longer live.
 [Ritornello]
Who, who will take away my life?
What kind executioner
Will free me from misfortune?
Who, who, who will take away my life?

Yet, once again, Sicle's voice of rage comes to the fore in the 5-line recitative that is framed by the refrain. The text is syllabically set, with short note values repeated primarily on the triad, whose rhythmic repetition conveys her anger. Here Sicle describes herself in the third person as *la misera* ("the wretched one"), making her grief as an abandoned woman more concrete. When the refrain returns, it re-establishes the mood of calm despair. Repetition of the entire refrain as well as of individual words and phrases plays a large part in augmenting the effect of this arioso passage. Sicle's state of abandonment is emphasized in her repeated question of "who, who, who" will save her, heard a total of sixteen times. The interrogative "who?" is particularly apt for Sicle, a woman in a foreign land incognito, who not only hides her name and rank, but whose inner identity becomes an issue before the opera concludes.

Voices out of Control

Sicle's second performance in her guise of fortune teller occurs in Scene 3 of Act II. Her aim in this palm reading session for the Queen and her retinue is to lay bare Amida's past and convince Queen Erisbe to abandon her interest in him. This time, her own angry feelings start to emerge and she loses control of her performer's voice.

When Amida offers to have his palm read, Sicle first gains the trust of her audience by correctly recounting his past exploits,¹⁴⁵ then creates suspense before finally pointing out the line in Amida's palm that reveals his *natura perfida e infedele* ("perfidious, unfaithful nature").¹⁴⁶ Sicle reminds the shocked Amida of his betrayal of the Princess of Suzio (herself), and when he accuses her of lying, her rageful voice emerges and she is in danger of revealing her true identity and has to be restrained by her two women. Her performance has the desired effect on the Queen, who leaves in haste, but Sicle's deception has worked only too well on her ex-lover, who now hurls furious curses at her. Sicle is out of control, but her old nurse Erice has a plan to save the situation. She calms Amida and, by convincing him that she is a sorceress, persuades him to meet her at a cave on the mountain side where she will conjure up "the woman he loves." Sicle is forced to trust her conniving nurse. From this episode it is clear that Sicle may be in anguish, but she is in poor control of the anger she feels at her ex-lover, and without help, her two voices are in such conflict that her aim to win back Amida is at risk.

Performance and Identity: From Tragic to Comic

Sicle's final and most important performance is her scene as a "spirit," that is, as

ACT/ SCENE	FIRST LINE TITLE	WHO?	METER	MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL STYLE // RHETOR. STRAT.
Act III.4	<i>Ancor sazio non sei</i> Long dramatic scene	Sicle + Amida	4/4	<i>Through composed</i>	Dramatic recit. + lyrical arioso
Act III.5	<i>Saetta amor, saetta</i>	Sicle + Amida	3/2	<i>Strophic refrain aria</i>	Light, dancing rhythmic regularity
Act III.14	<i>Volate fuggite</i>	Sicle + Amida	3/2	<i>Strophic aria</i>	Light, joyful

Table 3.3 Sicle's Musical numbers in Act III of *Ormindo*

¹⁴⁵ Erisbe is impressed and Mirinda observes, "How wisely she speaks!" *Come saggia discorri!* v. 928.

¹⁴⁶ v. 966.

the ghost of herself, in Act III, Scene 4. This scene contains a new type of deception, connecting Sicle to the power of magic and the underworld through a fake séance orchestrated and conducted by Erice. While the audience is informed in advance by Erice that the incantation is a hoax, Amida believes it is real and is totally enthralled by Erice's calling forth the black spirits of Hecate, fearful goddess controlling the underworld.

The culmination of the scene is the appearance of the "spirit of an abandoned lover," Sicle herself. Sicle's physical appearance has been carefully prepared by her companions; her makeup as an Egyptian is scrubbed off to reveal her own pale virginal face, and her costume of fortune teller is replaced by diaphanous robes. When she appears in the dim light of the cave, Amida believes that she is a spirit. Sicle at last has the opportunity to confront her faithless lover, and she thinks that as a spirit, she can express her feelings freely. But the situation presents a double bind for her: she wants to castigate Amida and make him suffer for the hurt he has inflicted on her, yet at the same time she needs to win him back. In this performance, we hear Sicle's two conflicting voices: the tragic voice of pain and the raging voice that desires revenge.

The scene of the meeting between Amida and the "spirit" of the dead Sicle is the longest single scene in the opera: 246 bars of music and 119 lines of verse.¹⁴⁷ It can be broken down into three sections representing stages in the interaction between the two ex-lovers and the concomitant changes in Sicle. The entire scene is an extended *micro-confrontation* between the two lovers. The first section is characterized by Sicle's ambivalence toward Amida and is reflected in her domination of the interchange, which makes dialogue between the two impossible. In the second section, Amida expresses his

¹⁴⁷ The source manuscript contains no music for the final six lines of text; Mossey, "Human After All," 107.

emerging love for her, and Sicle takes a tentative step toward trusting him. In the final section, when Amida continues to address her as a spirit and fails to recognize her as a real person, Sicle is forced to change her behaviour in order to gain *his* trust and to attain her real goal. A close look at key passages reveals how Cavalli's masterful musical setting captures the emotional shadings of this intense interaction.

In this scene, Cavalli uses tonal as well as metrical means to distinguish the two protagonists, creating differing musical characterizations that reflect their dramatic personalities as well as their changing emotions. Amida is quite consistently represented by "softer" (*mollis*) tonal centres featuring flats (F major and g minor), while Sicle uses primarily sharp keys (*durus*), both D and E major, as tonal centres.¹⁴⁸ The shifting emotional states of both protagonists are shown in the conventional use of meter to represent affect: common time (4/4) for recitative, conveying narration, action, and intention, and triple time (3/2) to convey softer emotional states from sorrow to joy.¹⁴⁹ Cavalli also frequently uses word painting, interjecting humour through literal representation. See Appendix 3, Exs. 3.3-3.8 for the music and Italian texts referred to in the following discussion.

The opening of the scene captures the extreme psychological distance between the estranged lovers through tonal representation. Amida greets Sicle's sudden appearance with wonder, beginning in the *mollis* flat key of F major, asking himself whether this beautiful apparition might be from the heavens, rather than from Hell. In return, Sicle

¹⁴⁸ See Eric Chafe, *Monteverdi's Tonal Language* (New York: Macmillan, 1992) for use of *durus / mollis* tonal areas versus key in the early part of the century. See also Bernard McDonald, "Cavalli's *Ormindo*: Tonality and Sexuality in Seventeenth-Century Venice," M. Mus. University of Glasgow, UK, 2010. ProQuest (U620992), 4-10.

¹⁴⁹ Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, 246-47.

attacks Amida in the sharpest tonal area used in the entire opera, E major, hurling accusations at him like verbal bullets: “Is there no end to your ingratitude, Amida? Are you not yet satisfied, must you mercilessly torment my restless peace?”¹⁵⁰ Her pent-up fury is conveyed musically by eighth- and sixteenth-notes and a strong, angular melodic line that leaps up a perfect fifth (e’ to b’ natural), tracing the E major triad. In bar 1, both the text and the musical motive on *ancora, ancora* (“still, still”) are repeated up a perfect fourth, increasing emotional intensity and culminating in an *ff* lasting three beats.

Yet Sicle’s ambivalence is also given musical form: her love for Amida keeps inserting itself into her anger. Her complaint becomes more lyrical as she labels Amida *Traditor, traditor scelerato* (“wicked betrayer”) in half-notes that stretch out the final syllables. While these words proclaim her anger, Cavalli creates a softer affect with a repeated bass line pattern involving half-notes tied over the bar line, a gentle syncopation that shifts the rhythmic pulse, simulating 3/2 metre without changing the time signature.

Cavalli’s depiction of Amida is very different. He is portrayed as a traditional lover in his lyrical effusions on Sicle’s beauty and his protestations of innocence in love. Amida first tries to justify himself by saying that he has only just learned of her “death,” and that ever since, he has been pouring out his heart in “tears and sighing” (*lagrime e sospiri*, Ex. 3.4, mm 45-46). His pleading with Sicle is intensified by repeating her name at a higher pitch, and his pain is emphasized by a dissonance on the word *dolor* (pain) when he moves to an e^b over the D in the bass line. Amida emerges as a placating lover, trying to excuse himself and please the “spirit” but not grasping that Sicle is a real person with real feelings. This results in a crucial misunderstanding later in their interaction.

¹⁵⁰ *Ancor sazio non sei, ingrattissimo Amida / Di turbarmi spiettato gli inquiete reposi?* Ex. 3.3.

Sicle continues to raise the emotional level, her tone fluctuating between rage and regret. Returning to the contrasting tonal area of E major, she interprets Amida's "tears" as insincere, comparing him to a crocodile (*l'anguie del Nilo*). The passage is delightfully literal, portraying the duplicitous nature of this creature by a downward leap of a perfect fifth (b' to e'). Two contrasting rhythmic motives aurally imitate first the tears (a quarter tied to an eighth-note), then the sharp teeth (three sixteenth-notes) of the crocodile, whom Sicle describes as "weeping while lacerating with his teeth."¹⁵¹

But Sicle's two voices continue to battle within her. Her tragic voice takes over as she momentarily allows herself to feel regret: "Thus, thus you betray me? Thus, thus for an adulteress you leave me?" as she imagines Amida in the arms of his new love.¹⁵² Even though Faustini has not provided the poetic cues of lyricism, Cavalli takes this moment to underscore the pathos of Sicle's feelings. Marked by a change of metre to 3/2, the chromatically descending bass line from A down to E identifies this as a *tetrachord lament*. It repeats only twice, but despite its brevity, it recalls the passionate expressiveness of that genre. As well, long note values in the vocal part (half-notes, dotted half-notes) and a melody that leaps from a' to e'' and remains primarily on e'' for five bars create a static mood, musically reproducing the endless, sorrowful state of Sicle's abandonment.

Throughout this scene, Sicle's anger at Amida battles with her sorrow. In an abrupt change of meter and an imperious outburst, she calls on the Furies for revenge: "Come forth, Furies, and hurl snakes at his faithless breast! Hurt the traitor, torture him!"¹⁵³ The aggressive melodic line leaps up a perfect fourth (g' to c'') and repeated eighth- and

¹⁵¹ *Piange colui che lacero col dente*, Ex. 3.4, mm. 50-54.

¹⁵² *Così, così tradirmi? Così, così per una adultera lasciarmi?* Ex. 3.4, mm. 55-61.

¹⁵³ *Uscite, Furie, è in quel petto inconstante, i Chelidri aventate. Affligete il fellone e tormentate* (Ex. 3.5, mm. 62-70).

sixteenth-notes on the pitches of the triad give punch to her commands. Just as quickly, however, fears for her beloved cause her to reverse her stance and beg the furies *not* to come. In a lyrical return to the soft affect of 3/2 meter and the same melody used for “*Così, così tradirmi,*” she admits that, despite everything, she still adores her betrayer, briefly recalling the cadence of the wicked crocodile who has abused her.

Sicle does not begin to soften in her attitude toward Amida until he dramatically describes himself as falling in love with her all over again. In a passage in 3/2, Amida recreates – both musically and textually – the growing “fire” which the sight of Sicle has reignited in him. The striking vocal line gradually ascends from a low E to the high g’ a tenth above, increasing dramatic tension over seven measures. The climax reached, Amida suddenly realizes his predicament and cries despairingly, “Alas! I love you but I can never hope to possess you!”¹⁵⁴ He concludes that he will join her in Tartarus, the hell below Hades (represented by the downward leap of a perfect fifth, B to E), where he will finally become her faithful consort and “find life in death,”¹⁵⁵ an even more frightening destination dramatically portrayed by a diminished fifth, the tritone D to G# (Ex. 3.6, mm. 90-97).

The turning point has been reached: although Sicle’s words show that she cannot trust Amida, Cavalli’s music shows that she actually dares to hope. For the very first time in the scene she responds to him *without* changing key but rather joins him in the tonal area he is using (Ex. 3.6, m. 108). This marks the beginning of the second section of the scene. From this point onward, she ceases to combat him by singing in a sharp key but rather begins to actually interact with him in a real dialogue. This is a turning point for Amida as well:

¹⁵⁴ *Oimè! T’amo, e non spero /Di possederti mai*, Ex. 3.6, mm. 98-100.

¹⁵⁵ *Ritrovarò la vita entro la morte*. Ex. 3.6. mm. 90-97.

finally realizing what he has lost, he cries, “O my Sicle, why are you not alive?”¹⁵⁶ Sicle’s joy is unmistakable in the pairs of melodic eighth-notes that trace a curving, hopeful line as she sings, “I live, live if you love me!”¹⁵⁷

Sicle’s Transformation: From Tragic to Comic

In the final stage of the scene, Sicle faces a new challenge: Amida does not understand that she is alive. She tells him several times in poetic language, “I am not what you believe, a body formed of air,”¹⁵⁸ and even more directly, “Here is your Sicle, beloved Amida, alive and breathing in her constant love.”¹⁵⁹ Yet Amida continues to call her “beloved spirit” and addresses a farewell refrain to her, “Go in peace, lovely shade.”¹⁶⁰ The blindness that afflicts all the lovers in the opera is in evidence here: Amida has fallen back in love with Sicle the *spirit*, not Sicle the woman. Amida’s inability to see her as real becomes a metaphor for his lack of understanding of the strong woman she has become in the process of searching for him, while her need to be recognized for who she truly is represents a *cri de coeur* from her soul. Yet it is not just Amida whose attitude is problematic, for Sicle herself has been hampered all along by her need to punish him. To regain his love, she must let go of the unrealistic dream of him she has cherished for five years and accept *him* as the real person he is. In fact, she too has been afflicted with the blindness of unrealistic love.

At this point, Sicle has begun to realize that her deception has its costs and that she needs to be honest with him. When Amida stubbornly refuses to believe that she is really

¹⁵⁶ *O Sicle mia, perché non sei tu viva?*

¹⁵⁷ *Viva son, viva son, se tu m’ami* Ex. 3.7, mm.133-136.

¹⁵⁸ *Non son, non son, qual credi, Corpo d’aere formato*, Ex. 3.8, mm. 193-94.

¹⁵⁹ *Ecoti la tua Sicle amato Amida/ Ne l’amor suo costante, Animata, e spirante.*

¹⁶⁰ *Va in pace ombra vezzosa,*” Ex. 3.8, mm. 202-11.

alive in spite of all her efforts, a dawning understanding of her own role is evident in her humorous, exasperated aside to the audience: “What troubles are mine to make him believe that I am alive!”¹⁶¹ We can laugh with her now that we hear this new comic voice from her, understanding that she sees that, in order to regain his love she must admit directly to Amida the deception she practiced on him. This admission entails giving up the power of the new identity she gained through her masquerade, yet this is the price for his love. In Sicle’s identity crisis, we both laugh and sympathize with her, now that she has recognised that she is flawed and only human like the rest of us. From a dramatic point of view, Sicle has undergone a comic epiphany, in which she realises that she herself is partly to blame for the misunderstanding between her lover and herself. Once she is able to see her own role, her anger melts away – in Aristotelian terms one might say she is purged of the negative emotions that have blocked her – and she is at last able to change her own behaviour.

In the end, Sicle must become vulnerable and step out of her performing role and admit the fraud she has perpetrated on Amida in order for the two of them to be united. Indeed, once she explains that she was the gypsy fortune teller who read his palm and that the séance was a fake, conducted by her harmless old nurse, the way is clear for him to accept her embrace as a real woman. The two are then reunited in a tuneful duet *Saetta amor, saetta* (“Arrow of Love, pierce our hearts,”vv. 1646-49, Act III.5). While Sicle has demonstrated her ability to change and has become a fully sympathetic heroine, it is clear that her journey of self-knowledge has only begun. The audience may suspect that the reunited lovers will have some work to do to become a harmonious couple, and Sicle’s

¹⁶¹ *Qual fatica è la mia / Per farmi creder viva!* Ex. 3.8, vv. 1606-09.

incorrigible old nurse Erice may be right when she comments wryly that Cupid will doubtless be sending more troublesome arrows their way.

Ironically, it is only through many layers of deception, by assuming not one but *two* new identities, first as an Egyptian fortune teller, then as the ghost of herself, that Sicle is able to bring her quest to a successful close. While she began the opera as a bringer of “truth,” the truth she unveiled was less significant than her victory over her own blindness. She is the first beneficiary of her false identities and deceptions, for she not only regains her beloved, but learns new things about herself and about the nature of love. Sicle’s journey to self-knowledge was bumpy, yet in the end she too has demonstrated the openness to change implicit in Bakhtin’s concept of “becoming.”

However, as we shall see below, the remainder of the opera reveals that Sicle’s deceptive “truth” has larger and more tragic consequences she did not foretell. Her fakery is thus part of a complex web of deception that runs through the entire opera.

ERISBE: CONFLICTED QUEEN

The character of Erisbe provides a sharp contrast with that of Sicle. As a sexually “starved” young Queen, unhappily married to the elderly king Ariadeno, Erisbe craves young lovers. When the opera opens, she has convinced two suitors – Ormino and Amida – that each has stolen her heart, setting in motion the rivalry that drives the romantic plot line. Her comic voice dominates in the first act: she amuses herself by keeping both of her young suitors dangling, all the while deceiving her husband into thinking she adores him. As the opera progresses, precipitated by the intervention of Sicle, a more serious side of Erisbe emerges, and by the opera’s conclusion she has become a tragic figure willing to die for love. In the discussion below, I chart the dramatic and musical trajectory of Erisbe’s

evolution from a comic character, who justifies her multiple deceptions in amusing arias, into a tragic character who accepts the consequences of her choices.

Fickle Lover and Unhappy Queen

The Erisbe we meet in Act I appears fickle and superficial. Her marital situation and restless search for sexual satisfaction outside of marriage identify her as one of the most popular female stock character-types inherited from Italian spoken comedy, the adulterous wife. Erisbe's musical portrayal reinforces this characterization by means of the numerous comic numbers in which she participates, four in the first act alone. (Table 3.4 lists Erisbe's musical numbers in Act I. Only the first is analyzed in Appendix 3.) While Erisbe does not appear until Act I, Scene 7, Faustini has carefully prepared the audience to expect a light-weight character. The hilarious first scene of the opera is a slapstick farce, a *parody* with warrior princes acting like foolish young boys in love, as the two suitors boast about their beloved, only to find that she is one and the same person! In their consternation at the Queen's deception their duet disintegrates into a *micro-confrontation* in which each attempts to outdo the other with ridiculous threats and counter-threats. Audience anticipation of the entrance of Erisbe has been whetted by this introduction.

Before meeting her lovers, Erisbe appears alone with her faithful lady confidant Mirinda. The contrasting musical numbers she sings in this scene depict the two sides of her character: the lighthearted comic side and the deeply unhappy, potentially tragic side. Her first number reveals the inner conflict that is the source of her fickle behaviour: what Heaven has ordained for her is not the fate her soul desires. *Se nel sen di giovanetti* ("In the arms of young men," Ex. 3.9, vv. 416-28) is a comic aria in 4/4 beginning with a catchy refrain: "My soul only wanted to take delight in the arms of young men." Cavalli has set

ACT/ SCEN	FIRST LINE TITLE	WHO?	MET ER	MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL STYLE // RHETOR. STRAT.
Act I.7	<i>Se nel sen di giovanetti / Vecchio Re per marito</i>	Erisbe	4 /4// 3 /2// 4/4	ABA refrain aria [A//B//A]	Comic, light// Parody of tragic lament
Act I.7	<i>Il mio core, fu d'amore //Se mi cinge, se mi stringe</i>	Erisbe	4 / 4 // 4/ 4	Varied refrain aria: (varied text);	Comic, light: mixes syllabic & melismatic
Act I.8	<i>Vedi là quella rosa</i>	Esbe	4/4	Through composed	Calm strophic regularity // Expansive, lyrical
Act I.8	<i>Fortunato mio cor</i>	Erisbe	4/4	ABA tripartite aria	Light, dancey; extensive rep of text, music
Act I.8	<i>A Dio miei soli //</i>	Erisbe O + A	4/4	Free recitative	Mock heroic arioso

Table 3.4 Erisbe's Musical numbers in Act I of *Ormindo*

the rhyming couplets of the A section syllabically in a jaunty eighth-note melody over a walking bass line. A melismatic setting of the words *trar diletto* (“take delight”) propels the melody upward in a sequential pattern (a dotted quarter, two sixteenths and an eighth note). Erisbe’s rising sexual “delight” is aurally recreated by this setting, which is augmented by a textural change in accompaniment from basso continuo to full string complement.

A dramatic musical shift occurs at the transition to the B section of the aria, where an E minor chord on the words *Vecchio Re per marito* (“An old King for a husband”) signals a change in affect as well. Long note values in triple time (3/2) add weight to Erisbe’s complaint of the tragic fate she has been dealt, further intensified by a repeat of *Vecchio Re* up a diminished fifth (the tritone g# to d’): “Heaven gave me an old king for a husband!” Clearly intended as a parody, Erisbe’s “lament” is far removed from the heartfelt cry of Sicle in *Perfidissimo Amida*. Here, the exaggeratedly serious musical style sets a

light and lascivious text and does not conform to the stylistic markers of a true lament.¹⁶² After a ritornello with full string complement in 3/2 metre, the text that follows returns to recitative in 4/4: as Erisbe describes her sexual hunger and thirst that are never satisfied, she concludes, “I am dying of hunger at the royal table!” The result is comic rather than tragic, but tellingly, a note of genuine distress is evident.

<i>Famelica, e digiuna</i>	Famished and starved
<i>di dolcezze veraci,</i>	For true sweetness,
<i>Con sospiri interrotti,</i>	In interrupted sighs
<i>Passo le triste notti,</i>	I spend the sad nights,
<i>Satia di freddi, e di sciapiti baci,</i>	Tired of cold, bland kisses,
<i>Pasco sol di desio l'avide brame,</i>	I have only desire to feed my eager longings,
<i>Ed à mensa Real moro di fame.</i>	And I am dying of hunger at the royal table! ¹⁶³

In addition to amusing spectators by adding an ironic twist to the conventional metaphor of the food of love, this parodied *recitative lament* is a key plot element. It provides a significant motivation for Erisbe's behaviour, for in Venice during the seventeenth-century, a woman unable to get sexual satisfaction from her husband was legally permitted to annul the marriage.¹⁶⁴ Erisbe's lament is also essential for establishing her character in musical terms: Cavalli's striking musical setting captures her almost palpable state of torment, signalling a degree of emotional distress that makes her later decision to leave her husband for Ormindo understandable. Thus, in Erisbe's first musical utterance, Cavalli has revealed her to be a person divided in herself, capable of volatile shifts in emotion but also of passionate conviction, both qualities that will come to the fore in the second and third acts of the opera.

¹⁶² This parody is an example of high burlesque in which Erisbe's "low" sexual longings find expression in an exaggeratedly "high" (serious) musical style. See M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 6th ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993).

¹⁶³ Translation from Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, 478.

¹⁶⁴ In *Women, Sex and Marriage in Early Modern Venice* Daniela Hacke documents male impotence as the only legally valid rationale for annulment of marriage, including the surprisingly frank details that appear in contemporary court records (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004), 144-48.

Erisbe's amusing songs sung with Mirinda reinforce the impression of the Queen as comic. In the lighthearted aria, *Se mi cinge, Se mi stringe* ("If I am encircled, If I am bound") she seeks to justify her dalliance with two lovers. Erisbe describes the "double helping of love" brought to her by the two princes, rhapsodising about the "double cords and double knots" which bind her but which allow her to "taste the delights of double joy." This comic aria sets the stage for Act I.8, in which the two suitors meet Erisbe in the royal gardens and the Queen is revealed as a duplicitous lover. First Amida, then Ormindo, observes from a post hidden in the garden as she addresses each in turn with assurances of her love.

When challenged by both of her suitors together, Erisbe blames the flying archer Cupid, whom she claims has shot her with two arrows, so that she is forced to love them both, in rotation! This flirtatious behaviour presents Erisbe as superficial and immature in comparison to the constancy of Sicile seen in Act I.5. Erisbe's other lyrical musical numbers in this scene contribute to consolidating the impression of her as a Queen who is both fickle and comic.¹⁶⁵ Her farewell to Amida and Ormindo, *A Dio, miei soli* ("Adieu, my suns") is particularly interesting. While primarily a duet between the two suitors forced to accept her "barbaric command" to share her love, Erisbe briefly inserts her own voice. Even though she has stopped deceiving her suitors, Cavalli seems to imply that, she is not ready to relinquish control, perhaps a hint of the steel underneath the Queen's flighty exterior.

From Comic to Tragic: The Journey begins

In the opera's second act, two events set in motion a process of transformation in

¹⁶⁵ These are the arioso *Vedi là quella rosa* ("Look there at that rose," vv. 483-88), which uses the classic topos of the unloved maiden as a rose withering on the stem, and the upbeat miniature aria *Fortunato mio cor* ("My heart is fortunate" vv. 571-74). See Table 3.4 for a summary of their musical characteristics.

Erisbe: a more responsible side of her emerges and she sheds her fickle exterior. Each of her three musical numbers in this act represents a different stage in her character development (see Table 3.5). Significantly, all three are duets, the first two with her faithful confidant Mirinda and the last with her new love, Ormindo. Because of the requirements of decorum imposed on a queen, Erisbe appears to be able to express herself freely only when singing with someone else.

Act II opens with a comic duet aria between Erisbe and Mirinda, *Auree trecce immanellate* (“Golden Tresses, all in Curls,” Ex. 3.10. vv. 831-46). The text presents the conventional theme that women’s beauty allows them to manipulate men as they wish.¹⁶⁶ The two women share the duet equally, with neither dominating, and their interweaving soprano voices reveal their close agreement. On a literal level, the duet celebrates the power Erisbe has demonstrated with her two suitors; as the text suggests, Erisbe has no formal power in her circumscribed role as consort of a despotic monarch and renders her life tolerable by cultivating lovers. On a deeper level, Cavalli’s setting of the duet prefigures the power that each woman will access over the next two acts of the opera to take her personal future into her own hands.¹⁶⁷

Act II brings about a complete reversal of Erisbe’s view of lovers and leads to a change in her life goals. As a result of the information brought by Sicle about Amida’s earlier infidelity, her world has been shaken to the core. In Act II.7 she takes Sicle’s words to heart. The sorrowful lyrical refrain in a slow 3/2 metre *Nò, nò, non vo’ più amare / Un*

¹⁶⁶ Although it begins as a fast-paced patter song with syllabically set text, it has an extensively melismatic setting of the refrain, *Auree trecce immanellate*, in which voice and melody repeatedly twine around each other, mirroring the text’s “curly tresses.”

¹⁶⁷ McDonald, “Cavalli’s *Ormindo*: Tonality and Sexuality,” regards this musical interaction as sexual attraction between the two women, 40-41. I read it differently, as close friendship and support.

core assuefatto ad ingannare (“No, no longer do I wish to love /A heart accustomed to deceiving”) makes it clear that she now understands the folly of her former behaviour. Unlike the exaggerated pathos of Erisbe’s parodied lament in Act I.7, there is no contradiction between content and musical form: the long notes and lyrical expansion are appropriate to her recognition that her former life of deception leads to sorrow.

Through the joint participation of Erisbe and Mirinda in this musical number, Cavalli has crafted Erisbe’s emotional turnaround as an intimate moment between the young Queen and her supportive confidant, tailoring the musical form to fit the situation: the three verses, including the unifying two-line refrain, are sung alternately by Erisbe and Mirinda. The rhyming couplets of the verses are set in unmeasured recitative style, allowing each singer to adapt the music to her own words. The first verse, sung by Erisbe, presents the conclusion of her reflection: anyone who loves an inconstant heart will “reap a sad harvest of tears and suffering.”¹⁶⁸ Mirinda sings the second verse, confirming her agreement with her mistress’s conclusions. Finally, the last verse is raised to a solemn moment as Erisbe vows her heart and her whole self to Ormindo: “Ormindo, to you alone do I consecrate my entire soul.”¹⁶⁹ The final arioso refrain, sung twice by both together, is arranged as a duet, a *double-voiced duet aria* in which both music and text testify to the unity between the two women. The long notes in 3/2 meter have the feeling of a slow measured dance, and the addition of full orchestra raises this moment of Erisbe’s decision to a quasi-religious experience; it represents a profound shift in her mental world. She has experienced a life changing epiphany that has transformed her into an active participant in her own destiny rather than a feeble royal pawn reduced to playing amorous games.

¹⁶⁸ *Trista messe raccoglie, di disperate lagrime.*

¹⁶⁹ *A te sola consacro l’anima intera Ormindo.*

ACT/ SCENE	FIRST LINE TITLE	WHO?	METER	MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL STYLE RHETOR. STRAT.
Act II.1	<i>Auree trecce immanelate</i>	Erisbe and Mirinda	4/4 // 3/2 // 4/4	<i>Refrain aria</i> A//B//A	Comic patter style // melismatic
Act II.7	<i>No, nò, non vo' più amare</i>	Erisbe and Mirinda, alt. verses	3/2	<i>Varied verse refrain aria:</i>	Serious, sorrowful Double-voiced duet aria
Act II.8	<i>De' nostri abeti</i>	Erisbe + Ormindo	4/4	<i>Refrain aria</i> A//B//A	A = Serious, sad B = Lively A = Serious, sad

Table 3.5 Erisbe's Musical numbers in Act II of *Ormindo*

Ormindo to return home unexpectedly and she instantly determines to go with him, precipitating a tragic turn of events. The two lovers sing a brief *double-voiced duet aria*, *De' nostri abeti* ("On our ships"), highlighting their unity of heart and mind; only after this prayerful duet do they declare their love for one another.

From Comic to Tragic: Transformation of a Queen

Act III brings about the final transformation of Erisbe from immature girl to adult ready to assume responsibility for her choices. The winds blow their ship back to shore and the fleeing lovers are taken into custody by the King's soldiers. Two crucial scenes in this act reveal a new firmness of character in the young Queen that is supported by her musical style, even as her emotions and her strength of will are challenged in the wake of the King's jealous wrath.

Alone in the prison in Scene 11 of Act III, Ormindo foresees their fate and seeks to take the blame; however, Erisbe maintains her own guilt, steadfastly refusing to live if he is to die. When Captain Osmano brings the lovers their death sentence in Scene 12, Ormindo attempts to bargain for Erisbe's life. But Erisbe shows her resolve to join him in

death, crying “I chose to flee, I followed you; the guilt is mine. I deserve this poison!”¹⁷⁰ Before Ormindo or Osmano can stop her, she grabs the flask and drinks. Shocked by her rash courage, Ormindo hastens to follow her example so that they may both die together.¹⁷¹

The centerpiece of the lovers’ scene while they await the effect of the poison, *Ah questo è l’himeneo?* (“Is this the wedding?”), is a deeply moving lament in C minor shared by both lovers equally.¹⁷² This is unusual, for in the operatic tradition of this period, laments were normally sung by one individual only, most often a woman.¹⁷³

The decision to set this text as a formal lament rather than as recitative, as well as to include Ormindo as an equal partner, appears to have been Cavalli’s, for Faustini’s text

ACT/ SCENE	FIRST LINE TITLE	WHO?	METER	MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL STYLE / RHETOR. STRAT.
Act III.11	<i>Scocchi in me sol la morte il negro telo</i>	Duet: E + O	3/2	No info.	No information See Note.
Act III.12	<i>Ah questo è l’himeneo?</i>	Duet: E + O	3/2 3/2, 4/4 3/2	<i>Descending tetrachord lament</i>	Tragic, lyrical, expansive Double-voiced duet aria
Act III.12	<i>Rallegramci, che corte</i>	Duet: E + O	3/2	<i>Truncated aria AB only</i>	Serio-comic (light & tragic style mixed)
Act III.14	<i>Un thalamo, ed un letto</i>	Duet: E + O	4/4 // 3/2	<i>Refrain Aria A // B</i>	Quiet joy // Rhythmic, melismatic

Table 3.6 Erisbe’s Musical numbers in Act III of *Ormindo*

¹⁷⁰ *Fu la fuga elettiva: /Io ti seguì, la culpa è mia, / si deve a me questo velen*, vv.1927-28.

¹⁷¹ The entire short scene consists of alternating passages of *arioso* in 3/2 metre in which the two lovers vie to assume the blame for their elopement. They are united in purpose and join in a brief duet on the final line: *Scocchi in me sol la morte il negro telo* (“Let Death cast his black cloth over me alone,” v. 1900). The Mossey libretto states that this line *only* is set as a duet in the score. Since all the previous lines were in 3/2, the metre seems clear, but I have no information on its musical form or style

¹⁷² Mossey, “Human after All,” suggests that the key of the lament, C minor, was a common key for a sleep scene, thereby providing knowledgeable contemporaries with a hint of the ultimate outcome of the opera.

¹⁷³ McClary, “Constructions of Gender,” 205 and 210; see also Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, on the tradition of the lament, 362-86.

is framed in irregular verse and does not contain the normal strophic cues for aria.¹⁷⁴ A close look at the musical and textual components of the lament confirms the psychological complexity that Cavalli has invested in his structuring of the piece. His task was seemingly to draw portraits of each of the lovers as individuals and to chart the emotional evolution necessary for them to join in a shared death. The opera has already revealed a great deal about Erisbe's personality from her previous actions, and her impulsive downing of the poison seems quite in character. But will she start to regret her haste once the poison starts to take effect? Her action catches Ormindo by surprise, and one may wonder how well he knows the woman he has chosen, and what kind of a husband he will prove to be. Cavalli's musical exploration of both questions makes the lament a masterpiece of subtlety and human understanding.

Although this lament is described by Rosand as having a tri-partite structure, close examination of the score leads me to believe there are grounds for concluding that Cavalli conceived of it in two major sections, a formal division based on psychological considerations.¹⁷⁵ Even though the lament is twice interrupted by recitative text from Ormindo, Cavalli has written only two sets of double bars and fermatas in both vocal and instrumental parts in the entire piece: these occur at the close of bar 98, the conclusion of Ormindo's second recitative, and bar 174, when the lament itself ends. Significantly, these double bar lines divide the lament into two equal parts: the first section contains 15 repetitions of the lament's ostinato bass line pattern (75 bars of ostinato pattern plus 23 bars of recitative), while the second section also contains exactly 15 repetitions of the ostinato pattern (75 bars). However, these markers should not be seen as merely formal,

¹⁷⁴ Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, 266.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 266-67.

for they clearly delimit the psychological boundaries of the two sections. Section 1 contains Erisbe's doubts on the wisdom of their choice and Ormindo's attempts to deal with her fears; in contrast, Section 2 shows the two lovers singing together in complete agreement with one another. The text of *Ah questo è l'himeneo?* is found below, while the structure of this lament is outlined in Table 3.7 and is also portrayed graphically in Figure 3.3.¹⁷⁶ See Ex. 3.11 in Appendix 3 for the musical analysis.

The lament begins with Erisbe's question *Ah questo è l'himeneo?* ("Ah, is this the wedding?" vv. 1947-53), expressing her sorrow for the wedding she will never have. As a Queen, she remains conscious of the status conferred by being officially wedded and appears to keenly feel the loss of the rites accompanying marriage when she asks, "Are these the torches that should have burned around our beds to further inflame our breasts?" But even beyond that, using the vocabulary of abandonment, she voices her deep sense of betrayal that both gods, deceitful Nature (*traduttrice natura*) and Love (*Amore*) whom they followed so trustingly, led them to death.

Ormindo takes up the lament at this point, introducing a refrain with which he seeks to comfort Erisbe while maintaining the same metre and the same descending bass line: "*Non ti doler d'Amore / Non l'oltraggiar, mio core*" ("Do not sorrow because of Love/ Do not offend him, my beloved!" vv.1954-55, etc.). While Faustini's libretto only states this text twice, Cavalli has accorded it greater importance, allowing Ormindo to interject these comforting words four times, where it becomes a unifying refrain. Switching to recitative in 4/4, he explains that Heaven, rather than Love, is at fault for stilling the winds and

¹⁷⁶ Mossey suggests that the key of the lament, C minor, was a common key for a sleep scene, perhaps providing contemporary audiences with a hint of the ultimate outcome of the opera; "Human after All," 135.

driving their ship back to shore. He reminds her that it is because of Love that they shall “taste infinite joy in the happy gardens of true repose..., spirits united and faithful for eternity.”¹⁷⁷ He has finally reached Erisbe, and it is at this juncture that the second section of the lament begins in which their voices are united in a *true double-voiced duet aria*.

Over the course of the second section, sung alternately by Erisbe and Ormindo, the two lovers are shown to grow closer emotionally, a closeness that is reflected musically in their overlapping lines and overlapping ostinato patterns. Twice, at the apex of Erisbe’s reflections, the two join their voices, each taking a turn to assent to the other’s words with repetitions of “*Si, si*.” This occurs first when Erisbe understands that it is because of their love that death will “open up to a shining day of a perpetual, permanent union” (mm. 111-19) and again in her striking metaphor reframing the darkening shadow of night as “giving birth” to a state of joy for them, thereby becoming the “mother of light” (mm.151-59). The lovers’ unity of heart and mind is highlighted musically not only by sharing the same ostinato bass line but also by the use of melodic motives that become more and more similar to one another.¹⁷⁸

Ormindo's intervention into the lament is essential to bringing about Erisbe's cathartic emotional turnaround. As she sings “*in lucente perpetuo e permanente*” in bars 111-19, the seven syllables of the last three words are stretched out over seven bars, each syllable taking up one entire measure, musically portraying the permanence of their future together in perpetual light after death. This seven-bar sustained note on the tonic C (mm.113-19)

¹⁷⁷ “*Sua mercede godrem gioia infinita /Ne’felici giardini...Spiriti uniti eternamente, e fidi*,” vv. 1963-66.

¹⁷⁸ For example, Erisbe’s sequential use of a rising three-note pattern of two quarter-notes plus half-note on “*aprirà*” (“will open,” vv. 109-10) and then again three ascending quarter-notes plus a descending half-note (mm.150-51) strongly resembles Ormindo’s refrain motive of three quarter-notes plus half-note (mm. 119-27, etc.)

ERISBE: *Ah questo è l'himeneo?
Che ci promise d'Amatunta il Dio?
Son queste le sue faci,
Ch'arder dovenano intorno à nostri letti,
Per infiammarci maggiormet i petti?
O di superbo, e dispietato Nume,
Traditrice natura, empio costume.*

ORMINDO: *Non ti doler d'Amore
Non l'oltraggiar, mio Core!*
*Querelati del Cielo
Contro di noi d'hostilità ripieno,
Ei fè l'aere sereno
Per negarci il fuggir, divenir fosco
Egli crudel ci preparò quel tosco.*

*Non ti doler d'Amore
Non l'oltraggiar, mio Core!*
*Sua mercede godrem gioia infinita
Ne'felici giardini,
Di veraci riposi unichi nidi,
Spiriti uniti eternamente, e fidi.*

ERISBE: *Sì, sì, che questa notte
In virtude d'Amore à le nostre alme
Aprirà un dì lucente
Perpetuo, e permanente.*

[**ORMINDO:** *Non ti doler d'Amore
Non l'oltraggiar, mio Core!*]

ERISBE: *L'ombra, ch'hor vela il mondo,
Se terrore produce
A noi partorirà stato giocondo
Contro il costume suo madre di luce.*

[**ORMINDO:** *Non ti doler d'Amore
Non l'oltraggiar, mio Core!*]

ERISBE: Ah, is this the wedding
We were promised by the Cyprian god?
Are these the torches
That should have burned around our beds
To further inflame our breasts?
Oh, haughty and unfeeling god,
Deceitful nature, pitiless custom!

ORMINDO: Do not sorrow because of Love:
Do not offend him, my beloved!
Complain to Heaven
That is filed with hostility against us.
It is he who made the calm air,
Become murky to deny us flight,
He, cruel one, prepared for us that poison.

Do not sorrow because of Love
Do not offend him, my beloved!
As his reward we shall taste infinite joy
In the happy gardens,
Of true rest, the sole refuge of
Spirits united and faithful for eternity.

ERISBE: Yes, yes, this night,
Thanks to Love, our souls
Shall open up to a shining day,
Perpetual and permanent.

[**ORMINDO:** Do not sorrow because of
Love; Do not offend him, my beloved!]

ERISBE: The shadow that now veils the
earth, Although generating terror,
For us will give birth to a state of joy,
Becoming, contrary to its nature, the mother
of light.

[**ORMINDO:** Do not sorrow because of
Love, Do not offend him, my beloved!]

**Erisbe and Ormindo's Lament, *Ah questo è l'himeneo?* (vv. 1947-74).
Brackets indicate refrains added by Cavalli.¹⁷⁹**

¹⁷⁹ Source of table: Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth Century Venice*, 266. I have amended the translation in a very few places and also excluded the three-line coda in recitative, which is not part of the lament proper.

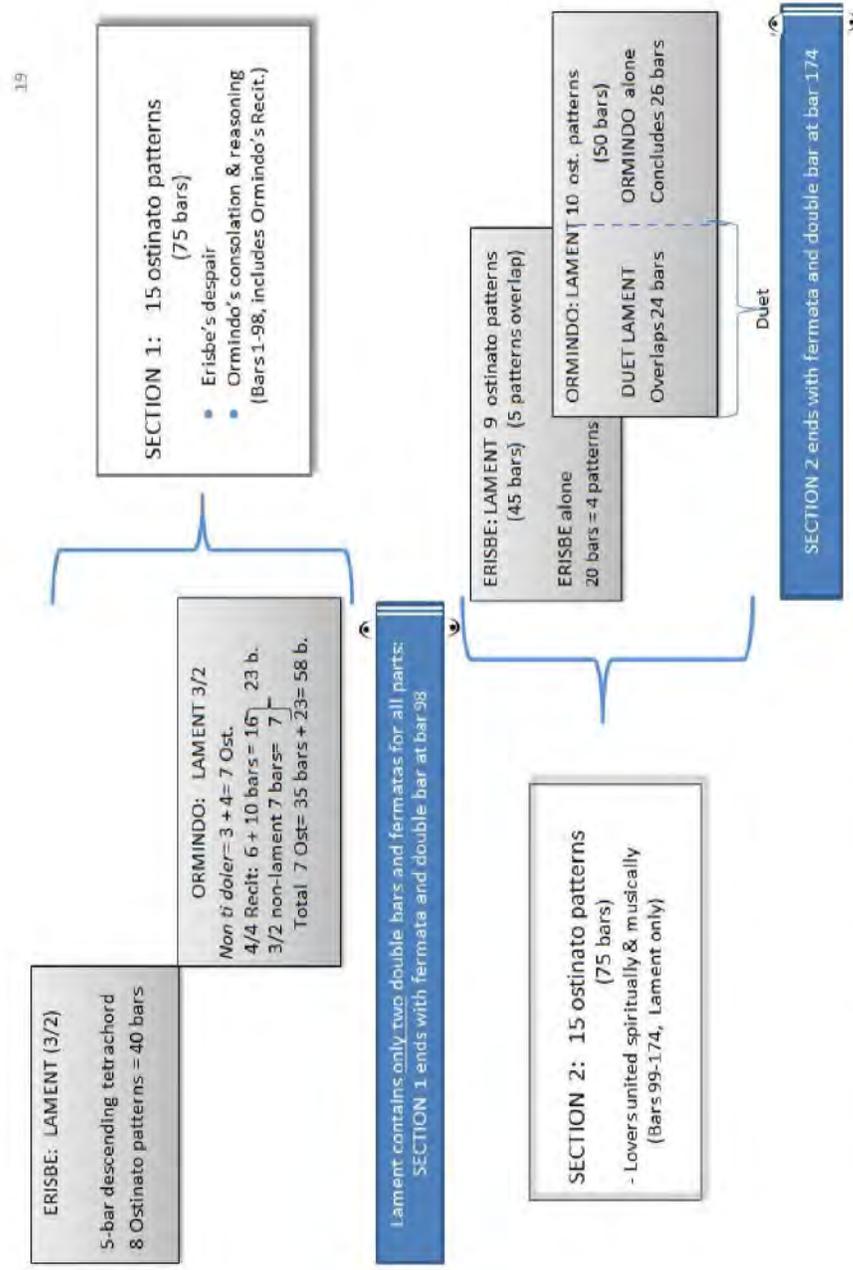


FIGURE 3.3 Structure of Lament Erisbe and Ormindo " Ah, questo è l'himeneo?"

communicates Erisbe's new sense of calm certainty. It is an aural affirmation that she has made the right choice of Ormindo as her husband, even in death, for the discordant voices within her are at last stilled and she is at peace with herself and her fate. Erisbe's emotional transformation from willful young person to mature adult has shown her to be an individual capable of completely reversing her former immature behaviour, developing and growing in the best sense of Bakhtin's "becoming."

Rosand has termed the lament a "dialogue aria," emphasizing the way the two lovers take turns contributing their voices, and I concur that the second section of the lament is truly conversational, allowing the separate voices of Erisbe and Ormindo to be heard on an equal footing. However, I find that the term *double-voiced duet aria* better represents the lovers' equal emotional and musical participation in this musical conversation and is also in keeping with its overlapping, interconnected structure. From a musical as well as a psychological perspective, looking at the total number of bars sung by each character in terms of ostinato patterns is a fruitful way to assess their individual contribution to the lament. It produces interesting results. In fact, Erisbe and Ormindo each sing an *identical* number of ostinato patterns: each sings 17 ostinato patterns, but setting aside the two overlapping sections, this leaves 15 ostinato patterns in each section of the lament, for a total of 30 patterns for the complete piece (see Table 3.7).

	ERISBE	ORMINDO	TOTAL
Sect. 1 (bars 1- 98)	8 ostin. patterns	7 ostin. patterns	15 ostin. patterns
Sect. 2 (bars 99-174)	7 (9 - 2 overlap)	8 (10- 2 overlap)	15 (19- 4 overlap)
TOTAL:	15 (17- 2 overlap)	15 (17- 2 overlap)	30 (34- overlap)

Table 3.7 Number of 5-Bar Ostinato Patterns in the Lament
Ah questo è l'himeneo?

This is a stunning demonstration of Cavalli's craftsmanship and confirmation of his conviction that the two lovers are equal and indispensable partners in this duet lament.¹⁸⁰

MIRINDA: DAMA DI CORTE & FACILITATOR

As Erisbe's lady confidant (*dama di corte*), the young noblewoman Mirinda has many roles to play in this opera; she speaks in many different voices and can be described as "poly-voiced." Mirinda's overarching function is that of facilitator between the various characters in the opera as well as between opera and spectators. In this capacity she is a loyal supporter of Queen Erisbe but also a truth teller who guides the audience's interpretation of the drama. As the opera unfolds, she gradually emerges as an individual with her own musical voice, leading her to become an actor who plays a role in averting tragedy. Her flexibility as a character marks her as someone who is fundamentally open and able to evolve based on experience.

Mirinda is a descendant of the stock comedy type the *serva* (female servant) who was an essential adjunct of the female protagonist, someone to whom the heroine could confide her feelings and plans, and who played a facilitator role between her and her lover. The *serva* in comedy was the female version of the *servo di corte*, the clever servant who initiated intrigues, but always managed to come out on top.¹⁸¹ However, in Mirinda we see a new type of *serva*, one who is not only competent and effective but who also possesses a

¹⁸⁰ This lament has a coda. After Ormindo's final comforting refrain, the double bar signals the end of the lament. But Erisbe seems to arouse from her sleepy trance and, suddenly switching to recitative, she confides her final worry: "But I fear, alas, my beloved / That in passing through Lethe, / The waters of forgetfulness may extinguish your passion" (*Ma temo ohime ben mio/ Che nel varcar di Lete,/ Non spegna in te l'ardor l'acqua d'oblio*, vv. 1975-1977). While Faustini should be credited for this psychologically astute coda, Cavalli has perceptively set it to a chromatically descending bass line that travels from G to GG, mirroring the reference to the body, not just the soul, that Erisbe has added to the dialogue.

¹⁸¹ Originally this role was played by a wily procuress (*ruffiana*), such as Corisca in *Il pastor fido*, and later by a servant.

sense of integrity and a depth of character that the rascally servants of earlier Italian Renaissance comedy do not.¹⁸² Because opera usually dealt with noble or royal characters, the key dramatic role of *serva* evolved upward, assuming a title more in keeping with the rank of the protagonist she served. A queen frequently had a lady confidant (*dama di corte*), or a lady-in-waiting (*damigella*), or she might also have a lower-class nurse (*balia*).

“Fida Mirinda:” Facilitator and Supporter

As the Queen’s loyal confidant, Mirinda begins the opera as an active supporter of Erisbe’s drive to find extramarital solace in young lovers. In her role as facilitator Mirinda provides a link between characters of different levels in the chain of events that resolve the romantic triangle. For example, in the garden scene in Act I.8, Mirinda acts as the eyes and ears of Erisbe, warning the queen of the approach of the King, and protecting her reputation by showing the two suitors how to leave the garden without being seen. Erisbe frequently indicates how important Mirinda’s support is to her, calling her *Fida Mirinda* (faithful Mirinda, v.440).

By joining Erisbe in comic arias, Mirinda initially appears to be as fickle as her mistress and appears to have modelled herself on the Queen by keeping her own suitor Osmano dangling. However, the primary purpose of the comic arias she shares with Erisbe is to form the audience’s impression of her character, since singing a solo comic song would have been a violation of decorum for the Queen. Thus, even though she herself is single, all of the comic arias Mirinda performs in Act I treat the theme of the misery of being married to an impotent old man, which is Erisbe’s problem. For example, following

¹⁸² In many ways Mirinda presents a parallel with the figure of Oreste in Cicognini and Cavalli’s *Giasone*: they both act as go-betweens for various factions and are sometimes comic, sometimes allowed to show their very human fears. In this sense, both can be seen to have developed into more rounded characters than stock secondary characters.

Erisbe's parodied lament, *Vecchio Re per marito* in Act I.7, Mirinda shows her sympathy with the Queen by singing the customary combination of *recitative* and comic song in *Mal se conviene in vero / Congiunger treccia d'oro a crin d'argento* ("It really doesn't work, joining golden tresses to a mane of silver," Ex. 3.12, vv. 429-34), which is paired with the comic arioso, *Ti compiangio, Reina* ("You have my sympathy, my Queen," vv. 439-34), which again refers to the King's age and impotence. Even Mirinda's one solo song in Act I.9, *Se del Peru le vene* ("All the gold in Peru," vv. 759-789), maintains that no amount of gold could induce her to marry an old man¹⁸³ and is paired with the customary recitative, *Vecchi, vecchi insensate* ("Useless old men") in the style of a *parodied lament*, resembling the one performed by Erisbe.¹⁸⁴

Truth teller: Reliable and Realistic

Through her role as truth teller, Mirinda serves an essential function by drawing the audience into the drama. Because much of the plot in this opera is based on deception, it is important for the audience to know when one character is deceiving another.¹⁸⁵ Mirinda fulfills the role of *truth teller* consistently, informing the audience of what is really going on through asides. For example, in Act I.8 when King Ariadeno takes Erisbe's feigned declaration of love at face value, Mirinda twice communicates to the audience that the Queen's words are a sham, first with the words, "How sweetly he drinks up the lies of his wife!" then again by observing ironically, "What a respectful wife!"¹⁸⁶ Her astute

¹⁸³ The theme of older men married to young women was popular in Italian Renaissance comedy and was intimately linked to societal marriage customs. See Giannetti, *Leila's Kiss*, 198-218.

¹⁸⁴ It uses colourful word painting to characterize the "frozen," impotent old husband by the familiar descending interval of a perfect fifth (a' to d'), followed by a diminished fifth (tritone g' to c#').

¹⁸⁵ Because the romantic plotlines revolve around each female protagonist and remain separate for the bulk of the opera, two truth tellers are necessary.

¹⁸⁶ *Con qual dolcezza ci beve Le bugie de la moglie* (vv. 708-709) and *Riverente consorte* (v. 748).

ACT/ SCENE	FIRST LINE TITLE	WHO?	METER	MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL STYLE & RHETOR. STRAT.
Act I.7	<i>Mal se conviene // Ti compiangio, Reina</i>	Mirinda	4/4 // 3/2	<i>Recitative // Arioso</i>	Serious // Light, comic
Act I.9	<i>Se del Peru le vene // Vecchi, vecchi insensati</i>	Mirinda	3/2 // 4/4// 3/2	<i>Comic aria Recitative</i>	Light, comic // Parodied lament
Act II.1	<i>Auree trecce immanellate</i>	Erisbe & Mirinda	4/4 // 3/2 // 4/4	<i>Refrain aria</i>	Comic patter style // Melesmatic
Act II.7	<i>Nò, nò, non vo' più amare</i>	Erisbe & Mirinda	32	<i>Varied refrain aria</i>	Serious, sorrowful Double-voiced duet aria

Table 3.8 Mirinda's Musical numbers in Act I and early Act II of *Ormindo*

observations on the behaviour of others confirm her as the most reliable truth teller in the opera. Unlike the lower-class characters, whose advice to the audience is usually comically cynical, Mirinda appears to be the author's mouthpiece, for her remarks seem to contain important nuggets of truth, even when uttered ironically.

Mirinda's remarks are essential to forming the audience's perception of Erisbe's emotional journey from lightweight to serious character. In fact, every change in Erisbe is mirrored and made crystal clear to the audience through Mirinda's observations. When Erisbe is considering rejecting faithless Amida, Mirinda confirms Erisbe's wisdom when she says: "Anyone who follows the lying hypocrite of Love /Will find in the end that their only refuge is weeping."¹⁸⁷ When Erisbe rationalizes her decision to flee with Ormindo based on love, it falls to Mirinda to articulate the folly of following Amor; referring to the traditional image of Cupid as a blindfolded cherub, she wryly comments to the audience, "Blind child, how you blind these minds!"¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ *Chi d'amor segue Hippocrito mendace / I suoi rifugi al fin sono i lamenti* (vv. 1173-74).

¹⁸⁸ *Cieco fanciul come le menti acciechi!* (vv. 1249-52).

Mirror of the Queen or Individual?

The audience gets to see another side of Mirinda when she is left behind after Erisbe elopes with Ormindo. At last we hear her personal voice telegraphing both fears for the Queen and her own inner debates. The changes we see in Mirinda are conveyed in her musical production: rather than comic arias, she now sings primarily dramatic musical numbers in which her feelings are revealed. See Table 3.9.

At the close of the second act, Mirinda sings a dramatic paired recitative and comic aria that allows the audience to appreciate the gravity of the lovers' situation: *Che dirà, che farà?* ("What will he say, what he will do?" Act II.9, vv. 1277-88), reveals Mirinda's intense fear of the king's reaction to Erisbe's flight, enhancing the sense of impending tragedy for the spectators. The accompanying tuneful comic aria, *Non vorrei, nò, morire*

ACT/ SCENE	FIRST LINE TITLE	WHO?	METER	MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL STYLE & RHETOR. STRAT.
Act II.9	<i>Che dirà, che farà?</i> // <i>Non vorrei, nò, morire</i>	Mirinda	4/4 // 3/2	<i>Recit.</i> // <i>Refrain aria</i>	Dramatic, syllabic text setting // Comic
Act III.10	<i>In grembo al caro amato</i> // <i>Invidio la sua fuga</i>	Mirinda	Ritorn 3/2 Vocal 4/4 // 4/4	A/B	Ritornello: light // Vocal: serious, noble //Serious urgent

Table 3.9 Mirinda's Musical numbers in late Act II and Act III of *Ormindo*

("No, I would not like to die," vv. 1289-1303) has the dramatic function of keeping the notion of Ariadeno's age and impotence alive, encouraging the audience to regard Erisbe with sympathy by providing them with a justification for her elopement with Ormindo.

In Act III.9 Mirinda sings a purely serious number for the first time, in which she reflects on her absent Queen but also discloses her own emotional state. Cavalli's ingenious use of musical setting to create character is at work in this solo, where he puts the focus

squarely on Mirinda's more serious side by assigning the conventional lighter section in 3/2 to the orchestra alone, while Mirinda herself sings only in 4/4. The serene reflection, *In grembo al caro amato* ("In the Arms of the Beloved," Ex. 3.13 vv. 1786-92), validates Erisbe's choice to follow love and reveals that Mirinda herself envies the Queen's flight and her state of being loved. Her feelings find a voice in a melody with a rising line, conveying an urgency that increases in intensity through repetition of *Invidio la sua fuga* ("I envy her flight") until the high point is reached; the final section *ed' il suo stato* ("and her state") descends in a long sweeping line, musically confirming Mirinda's new clarity that she herself needs someone to love her.

When Mirinda learns of the capture of the lovers and the death sentence the King has imposed from Osmano (the suitor she has been ignoring), she impulsively promises to marry him if he can save the lovers.¹⁸⁹ This crisis has forced her to struggle with her underlying feelings and to make a decision that she now realizes she has actually desired all along. Like her mistress, under stress she has shown a willingness and ability to change in order to become the person she really wishes to be.

In sum, Mirinda is an unusually complex secondary character because we find depth and character growth in her as the opera advances. She begins the opera with a comic voice, supporting and efficiently facilitating deceptions of her mistress; at the same time, her objective, realistic voice as a truth teller hints at a more serious side of her as yet unrealized. When Erisbe elopes with Ormindo, Mirinda develops her own strength and uncovers her psychological blind spots, becoming an active character able to affect the fate of her Queen.

¹⁸⁹ This is a conventional ploy in Venetian operas, where male characters often respond that the promise of love "spurs them on" to accomplish great deeds. In Mirinda's case there is a sound psychological basis for her offer. As well, Osmano is given the extra push he needs to substitute a strong sleeping draught for the poison the king has ordered.

She has learned to listen to her own inner voice, one that bids her to pay attention to her own needs as well as those of the Queen. This new self-awareness allows her to become an individual capable of creating her own happiness by marrying the deserving Osmano.

ERICE: COMIC NURSE

The most notable of the stock comic servants is Sicle's old nurse Erice, a character inherited from the *balia*, or nurse, who featured prominently in early *commedia erudita* and in *commedia dell'arte*.¹⁹⁰ The nurse occupies a special status due to her history of close relationship with her mistress; though she is of a lower class, she wields more power and influence than other servants.

Accompanying Sicle on this perilous journey has given Erice a vested interest in the success of the expedition. She expertly keeps Sicle in line, ordering her to take control of herself to prevent her from revealing her identity. Staging a séance is Erice's idea, and she singlehandedly persuades Amida to attend. Finally, she officiates at the séance, mounting a terrifying performance complete with an incantation calling forth the spirit of Amida's "dead lover."

ACT/ SCENE	FIRST LINE TITLE	WHO?	METER	MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL STYLE RHETOR STRAT.
Act I.6	<i>Verginella infelice // Ma volsi ch'il mio core</i>	Erice	4 /4 // 4 /4	<i>Recitative // Strophic aria</i>	Comic: ridicules Sicle
Act III.2	<i>Negl'anime reali // In van spendete l'ore</i>	Erice	4 4 // 4/4	<i>Recitative // Strophic aria</i>	Comic tone Comic aria
Act III.3	<i>Opportuno chi giungi // O anime infelice</i>	Erice to Amida	4 /4// 4 /4	<i>Recitative // Recitative</i>	Incantation <i>Re-accentuation</i> // <i>Parody</i> : death scene

Table 3.10 Erice's Musical numbers in *Ormindo*

¹⁹⁰ Erice's sidekick Melide is a young lady in waiting, who primarily functions to support Erice in her plots. She sings a comic aria, *Volevo amare anch'io* ("I too would have wished to love") in Act II.5, in which she rejects love as bringing about too much pain.

Where does Erice get her power? In *La finta pazza* (1641), the young heroine gains the power to change her life by tapping into the underworld as part of her feigned madness, but Erice, as an older woman, seems to inhabit a liminal zone naturally as an extension of her age and sex. She is in effect a representative of Bakhtin's grotesque, a powerful figure with uncanny associations. The voice part for Erice indicates that the role was evidently intended to be played by a male tenor or an alto castrato, a casting decision that reflects the gender ambiguity of the older nurse figure.

A parallel tradition exists in the witch figures of the seventeenth-century English stage, also commonly played by men, reflecting the contemporary belief that a mere woman could not attain the power ascribed to a witch. Through their loss of the feminine attributes of beauty, indispensable in the Renaissance value system, where outer beauty signified inner purity and ugliness connoted evil, older women were deemed unnatural and full of guile. By containing both the feminine and the masculine within her, the older witch-woman occupies the uncomfortable space of androgyny, thereby gaining power but arousing anxiety. Having the role played by a cross-dressed man makes overt the conception of older women as masculine yet allows the character to be played for comedy to relieve this anxiety.¹⁹¹

The musical treatment of Erice alternates between overtly comic and mock serious over the course of the opera. While in Act I she plays the familiar role of the comic older woman whose advice to youth is to enjoy the embraces of lovers "but never [to] give your heart," her most important scene comes in Act III, where she demonstrates a convincing

¹⁹¹ Amanda Eubanks Winkler, *O Let us Howle Some Heavy Note: Music for Witches, the Melancholic and the Mad on the Seventeenth-Century English Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 19-20.

ability to connect to the demonic. As she prepares for the séance, lest the spectators take it too seriously, she speaks directly to them, explaining, “To lend an air of truth to my fake incantations, I shall draw circles all over the ground.”¹⁹² While waiting for Amida, she sings a comic aria that makes fun of royalty: “In royal souls only love can arouse love / But in common hearts, love is born from gold!”¹⁹³

Like Sicle, Erice is disguised as an Egyptian, and the incantation scene that follows is a *re-accentuation* of the musical and textual language used by the sorceress role she impersonates. In the recitative *Opportuno chi giungi* (“Opportune arrival,” vv. 1412-18) and the chanted incantation *O anime infelice* (“O, unhappy soul,” vv. 1470-1505), both text and music contribute to create a solemn, otherworldly effect. Like Sicle, Erice adopts a high singsong speech style to the accompaniment of a long held bass pedal when pronouncing her spells: religious word painting describes the cave as *chiostri* (“cloisters”) with a suggestive upward scalar gesture. At the same time, the scene becomes more and more comic: Amida’s constant interruptions derail the intended solemnity of the séance and Erice’s frustrated responses contribute to the humour.

Erice’s recounting of Sicle’s supposed suicide in *O anima infelice* (“O unhappy soul”) is an effective parody of a tragic death scene, employing long tones, repetitive notes, and an exaggerated mock sobbing trill on the word *petto* (breast).¹⁹⁴ The fourfold repetition of the refrain beginning *O anima infelice* increases the dramatic tension as well as the hilarity of this fake incantation.

¹⁹² *Vo'raccreditare i miei mentiti incanti / Tutto il suolo di circoli segnare* (vv. 1374-75).

¹⁹³ *Negl'anime reali non può destare amore altri ch'amore, Ma ne' cori volgari, nasce da l'oro amor* (vv. 1388-91).

¹⁹⁴ This trill is featured in the René Jacobs 1994 recording and apparently represents contemporary practice.

Although the scene begins as comic, Erice's invocation of the spirits of the underworld must have been electrifying for the audience when the ghostly figure of Sicle suddenly appears in the dim light of the cave. This type of unexpected and marvellous appearance, a trick of lighting, invites the spectators to half-believe what Amida imagines, that Sicle is a ghost; it is an example of the aesthetic of "wonder" (*meraviglia*) highly sought after in the spectacle of opera. Although less elaborate than the later incantation scene of Medea in Cavalli's *Giasone*,¹⁹⁵ the scene in *Ormindo* may well have stimulated the demand for more such scenes, for the invocation scene became one of the most popular and long-lived of operatic conventions.¹⁹⁶

Throughout the opera, Erice performs the standard function of stock characters of presenting an ironic view of the love travails of their upper-class masters. For example, when Sicle and Amida are reunited and sing a melodious duet to Amore, Erice adds a wry commentary on the unlikelihood of their union lasting. Despite her important role in the resolution of Sicle's quest, Erice has not changed her ironic, down-to-earth orientation and remains a comic servant character, albeit with unwavering loyalty to her mistress.

CONCLUSION: BLINDNESS AND DECEPTION IN *ORMINDO*

In *Ormindo*, blindness is a significant source of error that hinders characters in their development into fully moral human beings.¹⁹⁷ All of the main characters in *Ormindo* are

¹⁹⁵ Erice's séance invites comparison with the most famous incantation scene in Baroque opera, Medea's calling forth of the spirits of the underworld in *Giasone*. The one in *Giasone* may have been inspired by Erice's séance, but it is much more elaborate, involving the actual appearance of supernatural beings and also gains much of its effect from its metrical text setting.

¹⁹⁶ Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, 343.

¹⁹⁷ The theme of blindness, whether to love or to fate, was a familiar Renaissance conceit and appeared in countless 17th century works. It is a central element in G.B. Guarini's *Il pastor fido*, beginning with the iconic blindfolding game which causes the two protagonists to fall in love, and finishing with the revelation that the young shepherd is actually the High Priest's lost son. See Nicholas J. Perella, "Fate, Blindness and Illusion in the *Pastor Fido*," *Romanic Review* 49, no.4 (1958): 252-68.

afflicted with blindness to some extent, which keeps them from full self-knowledge.¹⁹⁸ It is by becoming aware of and overcoming their blindness that the female protagonists in *Ormindo* are revealed as hybrid characters, neither wholly tragic nor wholly comic. They are not fixed in stone as are the stock comic lower-class characters but rather evolve over the course of the opera, demonstrating the open quality of “becoming” cited by Bakhtin. In this process, they become more individuated and able to correct their moral direction, thereby fulfilling their potential as fully moral human beings. All three women – Erisbe, Sicle and Mirinda – undergo a crisis of self-understanding that produces a dramatic change in their attitudes and their actions.

Erisbe begins as a primarily comic character but with a latent serious depth already hinted at in Cavalli’s music. In order for her to develop fully she undergoes two successive awakenings: her first *epiphany* occurs after Sicle has warned her of Amida’s betrayal when a flash of clarity permits her to realise her error in keeping two suitors dangling and see that her own behaviour must change. Her prescience and strength of character are evident, for she not only foresees her probable future but also acts to change it. Because Erisbe has already been portrayed as changeable and impulsive, the audience can believe her subsequent elopement with Ormindo. Her second moment of truth, an awakening of the soul, occurs in prison when she and Ormindo have drunk the poison, and she begins to question the wisdom of their action. Ormindo supports and comforts her with such love and care that she is able to envision the light, “perpetual and permanent,” that will be theirs

¹⁹⁸ Ormindo is unaware of his true heritage as the son of Ariadeno, while the king has no idea that he has a son and is also blinded by his position of power. Amida lacks self-understanding, ignoring his culpability for having abandoned Sicle, his inability to recognize that Sicle is alive points to his blindness to the strong woman she has become; even Osmano is unaware of his own agency, feeling himself bound by the king’s despotic orders.

in a united death. By the time she chooses to die with her love, we believe that she has truly undergone a transformation from superficial flirt to mature lover who will forever be faithful to her chosen mate. Her hybrid nature has allowed her to grow and develop, and Cavalli's settings for her words perfectly portray her life journey.

Despite the false identity she assumes, Sicle maintains a consistent moral bearing in the opera, never wavering in her constancy toward her beloved. Even her deception of Amida and Erisbe is in the service of the restoration of justice and social order through proper alignment of marriage partners. Yet, while she began as the self-designated truth teller of the opera, Mirinda supplants her as moral lodestone when Sicle strays from truthfulness in her interactions with her erstwhile lover.

The truly remarkable aspect of *Ormindo* is the treatment of its female characters, each of whom is tested in her struggle with her own nature.¹⁹⁹ The transformation of the female characters is fundamental to the structure of the opera. While Saccati's *La Finta pazza* may be the first Venetian opera to feature a strong, independent woman protagonist, *Ormindo* is unique in terms of presenting the development of contrasting female characters in which there are no winners or losers: both are deserving of happiness and love despite – or because of – their human fallibility. Rather than two protagonists, one labelled tragic and the other comic, this opera features two women who actually change places on the continuum of tragic to comic. Sicle begins as purely tragic but it is by learning to laugh at herself that she becomes more comic. In other words, her personality becomes more balanced when she is more able to recognize her flaws. On the other hand, Erisbe begins

¹⁹⁹ The notion of testing and the necessity of character development is a theme identified by Bakhtin in his treatment of the novels of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; see "Epic and the Novel" in *The Dialogic Imagination*, 9-10.

as a comic female who does not behave with queenly decorum but ends as a tragic figure and is every inch a queen.

It is striking that the male protagonists do not undergo the same type of growth even though they too suffer from blindness.²⁰⁰ Only Ariadeno undergoes catharsis, which is both psychologically and dramatically necessary for the satisfactory resolution of the drama, and is the element that gives the opera its tragic weight. But his development is not the central feature of this serio-comic opera which has highlighted the development of the female protagonists.

In this moving drama, the music is central to creating the complex, hybrid female participants. By foreshadowing and mirroring their emotional changes, Cavalli's musical settings allow audience members to participate vicariously in their struggles, creating intense sympathy for the characters. In this early stage of the development of Venetian operatic conventions, before the da capo aria had become the norm, Cavalli used arioso passages with lyrical refrains effectively as a unifying device, allowing arioso to grow naturally out of dramatic recitative and reflect the changing emotions of characters in a faithful mirror. Over its three acts, their development is revealed in the endlessly inventive musical settings Cavalli has created for them, with each recitative or lament, aria or arioso, tailored to the particular character's stage of growth.

We have seen how independent Cavalli was in his responses to the poetic cues given by Faustini. He largely followed the librettist's direction when it came to setting strophic

²⁰⁰ Ormindo is unaware of his real identity only through chance, and his nature does not change over the course of the opera: honourable and true from the beginning, his actions and his musical voice only confirm his character. Amida, the cad who abandoned Sicle, has not developed as a character: ever fickle and unpredictable, despite his sea-change under pressure from the "spirit" Sicle, the spectator may not be convinced that he has learned his lesson.

texts: he set 12 out of 14 strophic texts as strophic arias and only two as recitative. Nevertheless, Cavalli gave about twice as many recitatives a strophic setting, notably the most important *double-voiced duet aria* in the opera: “*Ah, questo è l’himeneo?*” He also used laments sparingly, ensuring their impact, and carefully chose between the forms of *recitative lament* and *descending tetrachord lament* as best fit the character’s dramatic function. Through his sensitive and varied settings, Cavalli seems to have been the ultimate arbiter of the dramatic component of this opera.

Ormindo is a serio-comic opera par excellence, relating a potentially tragic story yet with a comic sensibility reigning throughout. Love has ruled but also taught moral lessons. It required the feigned deaths of not one but two heroines to teach each of them, as well as the audience, the intended lesson in becoming fully human. Finally, *Ormindo* is a story about women, their struggles, their epiphanies, and their personal paths from tragic to comic, from comic to tragic, and to expression of their own personal voice. The changing inner voices of Sicile, Erisbe, and Mirinda are faithfully portrayed in their musical performances as these conflicting emotions are integrated into their personalities, making them flawed yet believable human beings. It is their voices that remain in our ears and hearts as we turn the page and close the book on *Ormindo*.

CHAPTER FOUR

ORONTEA: LOVE VS. DECORUM

THE OPERA IN CONTEXT

Orontea, a *drama musicale* by Giacinto Andrea Cicognini (1606-1651), with music composed by Antonio Cesti (1623-1669),²⁰¹ exhibits a number of serio-comic characteristics, balancing the pathos of the central characters' predicaments with the comic antics of stock secondary characters. As in *Ormindo*, its protagonists are high-born but its central theme is the traditionally comic subject of love.

Orontea, the young Queen of Egypt, coping with the obligations of her royal status as well as love, has very different problems than the female royal protagonists met in *Ormindo*, who were motivated by love alone and seemed relatively independent of issues of power and status. In contrast, class difference becomes the central problem around which the romantic plot circles in *Orontea*: the Queen's troubles arise because she has fallen in love with a disreputable foreign commoner – a court painter named Alidoro – whose occupation identifies him as belonging to the servant class. In this chapter, as was the case with *Ormindo*, we identify the “polyphonic” or multiple voices that reveal the conflicting

²⁰¹ The first performance of *Orontea* took place in January 1649, at the Teatro SS Apostoli in Venice, with music by Francesco Lucio (music now lost). While there is evidence that five different Italian composers set the opera, the only music that has come down to us is the setting by Antonio Cesti. It premiered in 1656 in Innsbruck, Austria at the court of the Hapsburg Archduke Ferdinand Karl where Cesti was *maestro di cappella*. This setting was a hit across Europe, for at least 17 libretti from performances in Italy, Austria and Germany between 1656 and 1687 appear to have used Cesti's music; see Franco Schlitzer, “L'*Orontea* di Antonio Cesti: Storia e bibliografia” (Florence: Edizione Samsoni, 1960).

The modern edition I refer to throughout this thesis is: Antonio Cesti, *Orontea: Regina d'Egitto, Opera in Three Acts and a Prologue* (Musical score), edited by William C. Holmes (Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College, 1973). Since no score from the first performance of Cesti's setting in Innsbruck survives, Holmes reconstructed what is regarded as the definitive score for *Orontea* from four libretti from the 1660s whose minor differences are attributable to differing production conditions. For the history of the Holmes edition see Jennifer Williams Brown, “Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen’: Cesti, *Orontea* and the Gelone Problem,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 12, no. 3 (2000): 183-85.

desires of the women of the opera: proud Queen Orontea, flighty *dama di corte* Silandra, and trusted servant Giacinta. A second focus of the chapter will be the impact of court etiquette on these characters. By observing the effect of court etiquette on three women at different levels in the social hierarchy in the opera, we will discover its role in the suppression of emotion and its effect on the development of these characters.

Over the course of three acts, the central character, Orontea, is forced to confront the constraints of her role as Queen and we hear her inner voices as she wrestles with her responsibilities to society in a series of soliloquies.²⁰² Orontea's understanding of love is contrasted with the experiences of fickle Silandra and loyal Giacinta. Cicognini's brilliant exploration of the psychology of three very different women, whose psyches are laid bare as they confront the demands of the court society that regulates their behaviour, is matched by Cesti's elegant musical settings.

Cesti's style reaches beyond the established musical conventions of mid-century Venetian opera in this work. By incorporating the compositional style of the chamber cantata that he learned in Rome, his third opera already shows Cesti to be a master at setting texts that reveal the changing emotions of the characters.²⁰³ In particular, Orontea's various voices, which shift continually with her thoughts and emotions, become instantly recognizable by the distinct musical forms in which they are set. In analyzing the role music plays in these examples, I make use of four categories of rhetorical intent adapted from Bakhtin's literary techniques: 1) *double-voiced duet aria*; 2) *micro-confrontation*; 3) *(internal) dialogue with one's double*; and 4) *re-accentuation*.

²⁰² I refer to these solo scenes with the generic term "soliloquy" rather than as "aria" since their musical form varies with the situation and the emotions being expressed.

²⁰³ Holmes, *Orontea, A Study*, 154-55.

SYNOPSIS of *L'ORONTEA*

Prologue Two tritons and a siren in the Red Sea greet Amore, who arrives on a cloud. Amore relates that the Queen of Egypt boastfully proclaims that she is above his power; he determines to teach her a lesson and departs on his mission to make Orontea fall in love.

Act I The first act presents the dilemma of Orontea, Queen of Egypt, torn between love and duty. Orontea proudly proclaims her liberty and her intention to never fall in love, despite pressure from Creonte to marry. However, in the next two scenes she meets the handsome stranger Alidoro wounded by an unknown attacker and rescued by her page Tibrino. Orontea is immediately attracted to him and even the knowledge that he is a commoner, a court painter by trade, does not weaken her attraction. However, she communicates her interest to him in such a contradictory manner that Alidoro is left perplexed. The love affair between Silandra, a lady of the court, and Corindo, a courtier, gets underway, and is introduced in two comic scenes with Tibrino. Silandra catches sight of Alidoro and is smitten; he does not refuse her advances.

Act II In this act, further emotional complications are introduced. Orontea admits first to herself, then to her counsellor Creonte, that she loves Alidoro. Giacinta, a former intimate of Orontea, arrives unexpectedly disguised as a young man ("Ismero") and relates her escape from captivity by the Turks, taking refuge at the Phoenician court, and being forced by a jealous Phoenician queen to wound Alidoro. Orontea is furious at her and Creonte has to restrain her from attacking Giacinta. Creonte begs her to desist from her unseemly passion for the sake of the realm, but Orontea refuses. Aristeia, aged "mother" of Alidoro, spies "Ismero" and sees a chance for love but Giacinta rebuffs her. Silandra informs the astonished Corindo that she has a new love, and then goes to find Alidoro. He sets up his easel to paint her portrait and they exchange words of love. Orontea finds them and erupts in jealous rage. Alone, Alidoro is shaken by the queen's behaviour and faints. Gelone finds Alidoro and is caught by Orontea trying to pick his pocket. In a long soliloquy the queen confesses her love to her unconscious beloved and leaves her scepter and crown with him with a note telling him she wishes him to be her husband and King of Egypt. The astonished Alidoro awakens and reads the letter, marvelling at his change of fortune.

Act III The final act increases complications before everything ends happily. Silandra is rebuffed by Alidoro, who now considers himself a future king. Creonte puts pressure on Orontea to give Alidoro up, since the court is in an uproar, and Orontea finally succumbs to his logic but says she will never stop loving him. To Alidoro's surprise, Orontea now rejects him, snatching her letter from him and tearing it to bits. The resourceful Alidoro takes this philosophically, but his attempt to make up with Silandra fails, and Silandra goes back to Corindo, who plots with Gelone to kill Alidoro. Meanwhile, Giacinta is again wooed by Aristeia, who persuades her to give her a kiss in exchange for a gift—a costly gold medallion. Giacinta gives Alidoro his mother's inappropriate gift, hoping for love in return, and he puts it on. Gelone notices the medallion around Alidoro's neck and, believing he has stolen it, calls the queen's guard. In the final recognition scene, the medallion is the key to Alidoro's identity: Aristeia tells the story that her adoptive son had this medallion around his neck as an infant, when he was captured by her pirate husband: he is Floridano, son of the King of Phoenicia. Orontea is free to marry him and she also joins Silandra and Corindo in marriage, as all express their happiness in song.

FIGURE 4.1 -- PLOT SYNOPSIS of *ORONTEA* (Cicognini 1649)

CENTRAL CHARACTERS	ASSOCIATED CHARACTERS
Orontea , Queen of Egypt	Creonte , advisor and tutor of Orontea
Alidoro , court painter (later revealed as Prince Floridano of Phoenicia)	Aristea , adoptive mother of Alidoro
Silandra , a lady of the court	Corindo , a courtier, in love with Silandra
Giacinta , servant of Queen returned from Turkish captivity, posing as the youth “ Ismero ”	Tibrino , the queen’s page Gelone , a drunken servant

Table 4.1 - Characters in *Orontea*

These rhetorical strategies become useful markers of challenge to authority by their users.

The characters of this *drama musicale*, as it was termed in the libretto, are listed in Table 4.1. A synopsis of the plot is found in Figure 4.1, while Figure 4.2 shows the complex series of emotional entanglements portrayed over the course of the opera.

DECORUM AND COURT ETIQUETTE IN *ORONTEA*

In *Orontea*, class difference is coupled with the notion of decorum, the expectation of proper behaviour by royalty that was *de rigueur* in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe led to a rigid system of etiquette both for royalty themselves and for those around them. So pervasive were these expectations of etiquette and decorum that they were incorporated into operatic libretti. John Walter Hill’s discussion of the origin and function of standards of court decorum clarifies the rigid demands placed on royalty. The most important prohibitions involving royal individuals and court etiquette were the expectation that they maintain self-control at all times and that they avoid all public expression of emotion.²⁰⁴ Etiquette also applied to those serving royalty, regulating who had access to

²⁰⁴ John Walter Hill, “Ovè il decoro?” Etichetta di Corte, Espressione degli Affetti e Trattamento dell’Aria nell’*Orontea* di Antonio Cesti,” in *La Figura e l’Opera di Antonio Cesti nel Seicento Europeo*, ed. Maria-teresa Dellaborra (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2003), 4-8. The basis of etiquette in self-control resulting from the “courtization” of European society is discussed in Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund

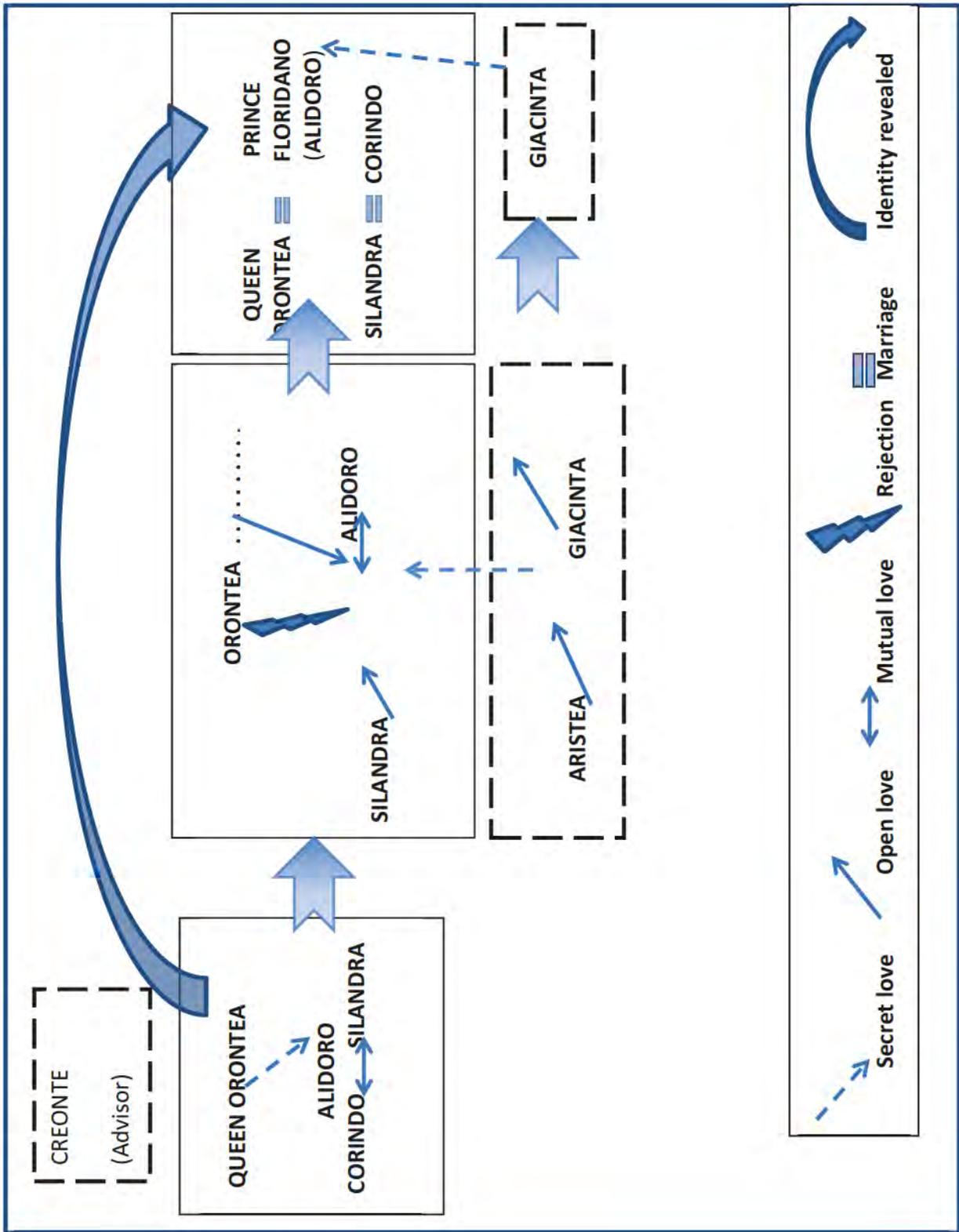
royal persons and when and how they were to be approached. Hill's discussion is pertinent to our analysis, for he succinctly summarizes the plot of this opera as a conflict between passion and royal dignity, between "*amore e decoro*." Decorum was considered an indispensable aspect of *verisimilitude* when it came to the appropriate representation of royal and noble characters on stage. In opera of this period, decorum regulated both musical and social interaction between characters, determining what could be sung, in whose presence and in which circumstances, and the musical style markers that were appropriate in each case. For example, it was not proper for a noble person to sing comic songs, nor was it acceptable for a king or queen to express tender feelings for their beloved in the presence of others.²⁰⁵ When these rules are violated, this conveys pertinent information about the characters and their states of mind. *Ormindo* reflects this distinction throughout, for the Queen expresses her emotions in aria only when she is alone on stage, or when her beloved cannot hear her.²⁰⁶

Consciousness of class and status is woven through the fabric of the opera, affecting both characters and plot, and providing the comedy with a satiric motivation. Etiquette is a top-down code which affects all those surrounding royalty, from noble couriers to humble servants, all of whom must carefully regulate their behaviour around their royal masters.

Jephcott (New York: Pantheon, 1982), 242-43, cited in Hill, 5. Other important sources on court etiquette are Jonathan Deward, *The European Nobility, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and Paul Kleber Monod, *The Power of Kings: Monarchy and Religion in Europe, 1589-1715* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999). The spread of Spanish court etiquette throughout Europe is treated in John Elliott, "Phillip IV of Spain: Prisoner of Ceremony," in *The Courts of Europe: Politics, Patronage and Royalty, 1400-1800*, ed. Arthur Geoffrey Dickens (New York: McGraw Hill, 1977), 169-90.

²⁰⁵ Rosand, in *Opera in Venice*, 44-45 and 49, discusses the prevalence of such musical prohibitions in the first decade or so of Venetian opera production.

²⁰⁶ Note that this is a more liberal view of decorum than that which prevails in Faustini and Cavalli's *Ormindo*, where Queen Erisbe never addresses the audience directly to express her feelings but rather only sings with a partner. See Rosand, *ibid.*, 314-21, for the gradual loosening of concern with verisimilitude and decorum in Venetian opera, which is more evident by 1650.



It is an autocratic rule imposed by those in power. Bakhtin's conviction that there are multiple voices present in every interactive situation, both spoken and unspoken, and that it is only by listening to these voices that we can reach truth, is in direct opposition to the monologic voice of authority represented by court etiquette. In *Oron tea* it is precisely by listening to the independent perspectives of each of the women that we can become aware of the powerful impact of rigid standards of decorum on all those who live under its sway.²⁰⁷

The composer has the role of translating the emotions of the singers into music. In the opera, the settings of the characters' words demonstrate their battle with inner voices (for example, between private and public selves), and Cesti brings out the contrast through a variety of formal means. Most notably, the character of Oron tea is illuminated by following the trajectory of her changing emotions, both in her interaction with other characters and in soliloquies communicating her feelings directly to spectators. The audience is thus provided with a window into her psychological makeup and comes to understand her difficulty in maintaining royal dignity on her journey through the labyrinth of love's emotions. The supporting characters Silandra and Giacinta also provide evidence of the hold decorum has over their behaviour.

ORONTEA: LOVE VS. A QUEEN'S DUTY

A Queen's Stand

As the opera opens Oron tea, the young Queen of Egypt, speaks so confidently as a

²⁰⁷ Bakhtin stresses that he is using "polyphony" in a metaphorical sense only. "It must be noted that the comparison we draw between Dostoevsky's novel and polyphony is meant as a graphic analogy, nothing more. The image of polyphony and counterpoint only points out those new problems which arise when a novel is constructed beyond the boundaries of ordinary monologic unity, just as in music new problems arose when the boundaries of a single voice were exceeded. But the material of music and of the novel are too dissimilar for there to be anything more between them than a graphic analogy, a simple metaphor." *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 22.

ruler that she invites the god of love to dialogue with her. As the opera proceeds, we hear several more voices within the Queen which aurally represent her inner being as divided.

By featuring the allegorical figure of Amore,²⁰⁸ who declares that he will convince the Queen of Egypt to accept his dominion, the prologue sets the stage for the internal battle that will take place in Orontea between love and duty.²⁰⁹ Act I opens with Orontea alone on the stage, proudly declaring her independence from love in the bipartite strophic aria, *Superbo Amore*. (See Table 4.2 for a listing of Orontea's musical numbers in Act I through Act II, Scene 13).²¹⁰ Here the aria stands alone as a perfect demonstration of Orontea's unusual strength of character, and it also signals an important issue the young Queen will have to deal with: her pride. However, the first words sung by Orontea reveal her view that Amore, the god of Love, is the one who is proud: "Proud Love, who rules the world, should not hope to rule my heart."²¹¹ The two strophes of the aria proclaim his faults, and in the refrain that follows each verse, Orontea resolutely declares that her immortal royal

²⁰⁸ In many Venetian operas before 1650, the gods either control some of the action or appear between scenes to comment on the action. By about 1650, gods had ceased to be actors in operatic drama, although they continued to be featured in the traditional prologue; Mossey, "Human After All," Chapters 1 and 2.

²⁰⁹ The prologue composed by Cicognini for the 1649 production is used in this study because it appears to be an integral part of the librettist's overall plan for the opera. It introduces the important figure of Amore, the god of love, who never appears in the opera proper but becomes a "shadow character," an entity with whom Orontea and other characters dialogue. This prologue was preferred over the one written for the Innsbruck performance which featured the allegorical characters Filosofia and Amore and set the theme as the conflict between reason and the senses, a theme not clearly evident in the rest of the opera. The original prologue by Cicognini, with its particular Venetian sensibility, appears in almost all the extant librettos from Italian productions of *Orontea*, indicating the popularity of interpreting the opera as a story about love, rather than philosophy; Brown, "Orontea and the Gelone Problem."

²¹⁰ The Roman influence of Cesti is evident in this opening scene, for in Venice in the 1650s it was unusual to begin an opera with a solo scene by a protagonist, especially a dramatic aria not preceded by recitative. Termed a "presentation aria," this form is a style trait that may have been adopted by Cesti from Roman practice. On presentation arias, see Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, 314-17.

²¹¹ *Superbo Amore / Al mondo imperi, / Ma nel mio core / Regnar non spero* (Act I.1). Other than the Prologue mentioned above, all Italian citations from the libretto are from *Orontea: Regina d'Egitto*, libretto by Giacinto Andrea Cicognini, ed. and trans. William C. Holmes (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968). English translations are generally my own. As line numbers are not given in this source, passages are identified by act and scene only, except in musical analyses, where measure numbers are provided. Note that the scene changes each time a new character enters.

ACT/ SCENE	FIRST TITLE	LINE	WHO? *= Solo	METER	MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL STYLE & RHETOR. INTENT
Act I.1	<i>Superbo amore// Un nume infante</i>		Orontea*	4 / 4 3 / 4	<i>Strophic aria</i> ABA'B'	Regal, commanding: <i>Power sixteenths</i> over walking bass line.
Act I.2	<i>Amante, amante</i>		Creonte + Orontea	3 / 4	<i>Arioso</i> duet	Comic: <i>Micro-confrontation</i>
Act I.5	<i>Ardo, lassa, o non ardo?</i>		Orontea*	4 / 4	<i>Free recitative</i>	Erratic melody stops & starts: indecision
Act II.1	<i>S'io non vedo Alidoro</i>		Orontea*	4/4	<i>Emotional recitative</i>	Serious, confiding
Act II.1	<i>Adorisi sempre</i>		Orontea*	3 / 4	<i>Through comp. aria</i>	Lively, purposeful
Act II.1	<i>Amor, ti conosco</i>		Orontea*	4 / 4	<i>Dramatic recitative</i>	Teasing: addresses Love directly
Act II.1	<i>Amore ? Amore?</i>		Orontea*	4 / 4	<i>Recitative Lament</i>	Lamenting affect
Act II.13	<i>Ah, v'ho discoperti</i>		Orontea to Sil. + Ali.	4 / 4	<i>Free recitative</i>	"Rage aria" style

Table 4.2 Orontea's Musical numbers in Act I.1 - Act II. 13

spirit gives her the power to reject Love: *Miei spirti reali, miei spirti immortali /Libertà, libertà!* ("My royal spirit, my immortal spirit/ Liberty, liberty!")

Cesti's musical settings reinforce the intentions expressed in Cicognini's poetic texts: here the music confirms Orontea's belief that her power as a queen makes her a match for Love. The aria, with its strophic form, is divided into two sections, each of which is repeated with the refrain. The A section, *Superbo Amore* (mm. 1-7), is a dramatic recitative with a powerful walking bass line, in which the Queen issues her challenge to Love. In 4 /4 meter, its quick, steady tempo conveys resolute affirmation. In the phrase, *Ma nel mio core / Regnar non spero* ("But he cannot hope to rule my heart"), the word "regnar" is extended over two bars in an ornate repeated figuration in sixteenth notes, culminating in a sweeping scalar motion ascending a full octave from c" to c." I call this figuration "power sixteenths," because the overall musical effect is the sonic equivalent of the power

of which the Queen boasts. Later, other female characters make use of this figuration for the same purpose.

The B section, *Un nume infante* (mm. 13-18) with its character of a festive dance in 3/4 metre, is Orontea's celebration of her invincibility over this "infant god." Confident that Love can never conquer her, she calls him "A blind, nude infant god, a crazy tyrant, crude and cruel, full of deceit"²¹² and then proclaims, "But he will not triumph over one who reigns!"²¹³ Repetition of *libertà* makes the refrain longer than the verse, allowing the Queen's central message to remain front and centre: *Miei spirti reali, miei spirti immortali / Libertà, libertà!* ("My royal spirit, my immortal spirit. Liberty, Liberty!") (See Ex. 4.1 in Appendix 4.) By the end of the opera the very accusations Orontea throws at Love come back to haunt her.

The instrumental component of this aria adds greatly to its effect. Cesti places ritornelli not only after each verse but also between the A and B sections. These instrumental sections present echoes and variations of the vocal melody, with the two upper string lines interacting fluidly with each other to create a harmonious accompaniment that shifts between minor thirds and major sixths above the vocal line. See Ex. 4.1 in Appendix 4 for a more detailed analysis of the instrumental echo techniques Cesti uses in this aria as well as in many subsequent arias in the opera.

While Orontea believes that her power as a queen will insulate her from love, in the next scene (Act I.2) her tutor and advisor Creonte informs her that, on the contrary, as a queen she has the duty to marry. Creonte represents the voice of reason, and Cesti signals the importance of the tutor's words musically in two places in this scene, first by shifting

²¹² *Un cieco, un nudo / Folle tiranno, / Spietato e crudo / Pieno d'inganno* (I.1).

²¹³ *D'alma regnante / Non trionferà* (I.1).

from chordal basso continuo to a walking bass line and then by adopting an *arioso* vocal style in *E pur sempre fastosa?* (“Are you still stubbornly proud? Ex. 4.2, mm.12-13 and 17-21).²¹⁴ Orontea categorically refuses to accept marriage out of duty, declaring that only real love can bind two people, while Creonte emphasises the need to overcome personal feelings. The two are at an impasse, and engage in a sparring match, employing the theatrical technique of *stichomythia*.²¹⁵ Bakhtin’s term *micro-confrontation* perfectly describes the verbal duel in which Creonte and Orontea engage, here in recitative form.

<p>ORON: <i>A ragion m'insuperbisco perché amante esser non so.</i></p> <p>CREON: <i>Politica reale deve insegnarti a superas te stessa.</i></p> <p>ORON: <i>Non si può superar genio fatale.</i></p> <p>CREON: <i>Io prevedo rovine.</i></p> <p>ORON: <i>Non temon le Regine.</i></p> <p>CREON: <i>Ti vuole sposa il Regno.</i></p> <p>ORON: <i>Delle nozze me sdegno!</i></p>	<p>ORON: It is reason that makes me appear proud: I am simply not able to be a lover.</p> <p>CREON: Royal policy must teach you to over- come your personal feelings.</p> <p>ORON: One cannot overcome one’s destiny.</p> <p>CREON: Then I foresee ruin.</p> <p>ORON: Queens have no fear.</p> <p>CREON: The realm desires you to marry.</p> <p>ORON: I scorn the idea of marriage! Act I.2 (mm. 21-47)</p>
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As the dispute intensifies emotionally, Creonte joins her in 12 bars of *arioso*, initiating a brief mini-duet in which they are at cross purposes: Creonte proclaims *Amante, amante, ti vedrò!* (“I shall see you a lover!”) while Orontea responds, *Non amerò, no, no!* (“No, no, I will never love!”).²¹⁶ Despite the fact that they sing at the same time and use the same music (a reprise of Orontea’s opening music), this duet does not meet the requirement of a

²¹⁴ Such important lines were performed with added lower string continuo accompaniment to emphasize their emotional weight; see Margaret Murata, “The Recitative Soliloquy,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 32, no.1 (1979): 50, where she cites the French Jesuit Claude Francois Menestrier on the instrumentation used in soliloquies (“monologues”): “The Italians dearly love the Monologue or the solo speech, for which they choose a fine voice that is supported by an ensemble of theorbos and harpsichords;” *Des representations en musique anciennes et modernes* (Paris, 1681), 213-14. This form of continuo accompaniment appears in informed modern performances, such as the recording by René Jacobs.

²¹⁵ Inherited from classical Greek drama and its Roman imitators, *stichomythia* consists of two characters trading alternate lines of verse, usually in the form of pithy aphorisms. This technique was copied by Italian literati, including Cicognini, who frequently incorporated it into his librettos.

²¹⁶ In Act I.2, Creonte sings only mm. 49 to 60, while Orontea continues through m. 87.

double-voiced duet because the two do not share the same point of view; it is actually a continuation of the *micro-confrontation*, here fleetingly overlapping in duet form.

Creonte's final epithet before departing, "*Superba vanità!*" ("Arrogant vanity!"), echoes the words of Amore in the Prologue, for Creonte considers Orontea's disregard of the needs of her kingdom to be willful pride and female vanity rather than the strength appropriate to a ruler. As her advisor, Creonte represents the voice of reason and authority, and the scene is now set for a battle of wills on the meaning of pride for a ruler, between Orontea's conception and that of her advisor.

But is it Love?

The entrance of Alidoro on the scene radically alters the queen's stance on love, introducing conflict into her frame of mind. In the next scene, her page Tibrino breathlessly announces that he has rescued a stranger wounded in an attack by an unknown assailant and conducts the wounded man in, limping, aided by an elderly woman.²¹⁷ Orontea gives orders to have the young man's wounds taken care of, but once alone on stage in Scene 5 she reels from the impression the young stranger has made on her. In *Ardo, lassa, o non ardo?* ("Do I love, or do I not?" Ex. 4.3, Act I.5) Orontea's confusion is portrayed as she explores the possibility that the unknown emotion she is experiencing is love. Only twenty bars of recitative, it is able to encapsulate several rapid changes of emotion in this volatile young woman.

Ardo, lassa, or non ardo?

Do I burn with love or do I not?

²¹⁷ Tibrino calls the queen's attention to his exceptional beauty *Deh, miralo, Signora / E di', se cosi bello/ In grengo a Citerea Adon languiva!* ("Look at him, Madam, and tell me if even Adonis, languishing in the arms of Venus, looked so beautiful!" I.3). In her dissertation (ProQuest 3396219). Kristin Kane reads Tibrino's remark as indicating his attraction to the same sex. However, I interpret it as a way of pointing out the cause of Orontea's sudden passion, and motivating the astonishing effect he has on every woman who catches sight of him.

*Qual insolit foco Mi tormenta e
 diletta a poco a poco?
 Così dunque Orontea,
 Nemica inesorabile d'amore,
 D'un soggetto straniero
 Farà schiavo il suo core?
 Ah non è vero!
 Ma la pietà, ch'io sento,
 Ma l'incognito affetto,
 Che spinge a mio dispetto,
 Ad adorarlo il piè,
 È amore, o che cos'è?*

What unfamiliar passion begins little by
 little to torment and delight me?
 Is it possible that Orontea,
 that great foe of love,
 Could make her heart a slave
 to a foreigner, a commoner ?
 Oh, no, it can't be true!
 But the pity that I feel,
 This new feeling of attraction
 That pushes me in spite of myself
 To adore him:
 Is it love? What can it be?
 Act I.5 (mm.1-20)

The confusion Orontea feels is reflected in an erratic recitative: her hesitation is mirrored in broken phrases and pauses, while short repeated notes represent agitation as she questions the nature of the unfamiliar passion that simultaneously “torments and delights” her; its sexual nature is alluded to by the chromatic slide up from c#” to d”.²¹⁸ When she doubts and speaks of herself in the third person, as if Orontea, the “enemy of love,” is another person, she is conducting a *dialogue with her double* in the Bakhtinian sense, that is, an internal dialogue with an inner self. In this case, she becomes aware that her *rational self* is telling her one thing and her *feeling self* is communicating another. In this dialogue, we also hear a third voice in Orontea, the *innermost self* that attempts to balance her rational and emotional sides. The resulting indecision manifests itself musically in rests between notes and in her cry of *Ah* (on b^b) repeated up a perfect fourth (on e^b), as she doubts that it is love (Ex. 4.3, mm. 11-12). The lyrical tone of the final two measures conveys her dawning conviction that this strange new emotion really *is* love.

When Orontea finally talks personally with Alidoro in Act I, Scene 9, her socially inappropriate behaviour communicates her ambivalence. After learning that he is a court painter by trade, she assures him that he is welcome in her court, where she will make him

²¹⁸ *Mi tormenta e diletta* (Ex. 4.3, m. 5).

a gentleman (*cavalier*). This sudden raising of his rank from humble painter to gentleman must have raised eyebrows as the audience wondered whether the Queen was losing her judgement. When Orontea asks Alidoro why he came to her kingdom, his reply is a courteous “Only to serve you,” but her response, “You who are of noble bearing do not have to serve me!” must have seemed out of place to the seventeenth-century ear, ever attuned to status markers.²¹⁹ However, it introduces the Renaissance cultural belief that physical beauty and carriage of the body were thought to be signs of inner purity and nobility of character.²²⁰ Orontea’s sudden passion for the handsome Alidoro reiterates a common literary motif and may well have seemed natural to a contemporary audience.

Orontea’s inability to master her own feelings is evident: when Alidoro asks whether she wishes him to stay or to withdraw, the Queen declares in obvious confusion, “Leave me...oh stay, no...yes...Oh Heavens, I’m at my wit’s end!”²²¹ Cesti’s music perfectly mirrors Orontea’s confused state of mind; her indecision is conveyed by short notes separated by rests and a jerky alternation between low and high notes in *Faccio che vuoi!* (“Do whatever you want!” Ex. 4.4, mm. 78-85). When she abruptly rushes off the stage, Alidoro decides he is better off not to count on the Queen’s affections. In the next scene he meets the attractive Silandra, who is immediately smitten, providing him with an opportunity he cannot pass up.

For the opening scene of Act II, Cicognini creates an emotional soliloquy that aurally portrays Orontea’s conflict with herself by writing three distinct voices, each depicting a

²¹⁹ ALI: *A servirti*. ORON: *Non deve servi mi un ch’a imperi è nato* (I.9, 66-68).

²²⁰ This notion can be traced to Aristotle, who argued, “Virtue aims at the beautiful;” Ronna Burger, *Aristotle’s Dialogue with Socrates: On the “Nicomachean Ethics,”* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008), 81. The idea survived in the Neoplatonic belief that “outward beauty was a sign of inward virtue;” Muir, *Civic Ritual in Venice*, 15.

²²¹ ALI: *Comanda qual mi vuoi, seguace o scorta*. ORON: *Vieni, resta, no, si; oh Dio, son morta!* (I.9, mm.79-85).

different position on love. Cesti responds by setting each voice in a separate section with a corresponding musical style, in the manner of a cantata²²² (In Ex. 4.5, the sections of the soliloquy are marked 4.5a, b, c, and d). The first voice we hear is Orontea's private *feeling voice* in the expressive recitative *S'io non vedo Alidoro* (Ex. 4.5a, mm.1-15) as she declares, "If I don't see Alidoro soon, my spirits will sink even lower. I almost die when I am far from him."²²³ Yet she admits the thought of seeing him face to face terrifies her because she will not know how to comport herself. It is evident that the violent emotions brought on by love have already affected Orontea's behaviour and proper deportment as a queen. Finally, she admits, "Deep within myself a quiet voice tells me, 'Orontea, adore him!'"²²⁴ Addressing herself by name draws attention to the *inner voice* that speaks for Orontea's truest self, which has now granted her permission to give in to the attraction she is feeling. The intimacy of this most private voice is conveyed by a restrained basso continuo accompaniment. For the audience, poignancy is added to this scene by the knowledge that, at the moment Orontea admits her passionate feelings for Alidoro, he is exchanging words of love with a lady from her court.

The second section is a foretaste of the bittersweet love which will soon be the Queen's fate. In the through composed aria *Adorisi sempre* ("Everyone always adores," Ex. 4.5b, mm. 16-91), Orontea speaks of love in terms familiar from the tradition of the mid-

²²² Trained in the Roman style of cantata composition, Cesti had ample experience in combining instrumental forces and voices in what amounted to short operatic scenes. In chamber cantatas for one or more voices, singers interacted with one another, or simply expressed their emotions in song, but always with instrumental accompaniment. Cantatas gave instrumental and vocal parts equal prominence and were typically divided into musical sections displaying differing moods and musical character. See David Schulenberg, *Music of the Baroque* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 110. For Cesti and the cantata, see Holmes, *Orontea*, 153-156, where he refers to David Burrows, *Antonio Cesti, The Italian Cantata I* (Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College, 1963) and to Anna Amalie Abert, *Claudio Monteverdi und das musikalische Drama* (Lippstadt, Germany: Kistner & Siegel, 1954).

²²³ *S'io non vedo Alidoro / Par che manchin li spirti / E lungi dal suo bel quasi mi moro* (II.1, mm. 1-6).

²²⁴ *E sento dirmi in tacita favella: Adoralo, Orontea* (II.1, mm.7-15).

seventeenth century Italian madrigal, which characterises love using the Petrarchan binary opposites of pain and sweetness, joy and torment.²²⁵ In this aria, Orontea takes on yet another new voice, this time speaking in the third person on behalf of all lovers, of whom she now considers herself a member, one of those who, as she says, if they desire love, “should not complain that the joys of love are also its torments.”²²⁶

The aria is set in a lilting triple time, with phrases beginning on the upbeat, gently propelling the melody forward.²²⁷ In this aria, Cesti has completely integrated the instrumental parts into the vocal line, musically confirming the new unified state of mind in which Orontea accepts that she has now become a lover. Unlike the other instrumental settings in the opera, here there is only one upper violin part, a topic that has intrigued scholars.²²⁸ To me, the masterful effect of two voices – a single violin and a singer – intertwining in a musical representation of a text on the interaction of two lovers, speaks for itself. Ex. 4.5b in Appendix 4 offers a detailed analysis of the instrumental echo techniques Cesti uses in this aria, as well as in other arias in the opera.

In the brief third section of her soliloquy *Amore, Amore* (Ex. 4.5c, mm. 92-100), the Queen addresses Love in a lively complaint, with a playful, almost mischievous tone, as she blames him for her predicament, “Love, oh Love, I know you: you are responsible, this ardour comes from you!”²²⁹ Her attitude toward love has undergone an about-face. It is striking how often Orontea interacts with another sentient being in her soliloquies.

²²⁵ Originally found in the sonnets of Petrarch, such oppositions became a standard element in the poetic literary repertory of the Renaissance; see Robert M. Durling, trans. and ed., “Introduction” to *Petrarch’s Lyric Poems: The Rime Sparse and Other Lyrics*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 1-33.

²²⁶ *Non si lamenti, / Che le gioie d’amor sono i tormenti* (II.1).

²²⁷ In this opera Cesti makes a distinction between 3/2 and 3/4 meter based on the type of emotion being expressed; Holmes, *Orontea, A Study*. This aria in 3/4 is Orontea’s active reflection on all lovers in general rather than being an expression of her particular mood.

²²⁸ Holmes, *Orontea: A Study*, 177.

²²⁹ *Amore, ah, ti conosco. / Dalla facella tua vien quest’ardore* (II.1).

Reluctance to have royal characters express their feelings openly on the stage may be the cause, since it may have been considered less of a violation of decorum.

In the final segment of the soliloquy in recitative, *Amore! Amore!* (Act I.5, Ex. 4.6d, mm. 101-13), Orontea utters one of the significant phrases of the opera. Turning to her own situation, she realizes with increasing consternation how far she has fallen from the behaviour expected of a queen: “I, love a commoner, a foreigner? I, who have refused the suits of royalty? Where is my royal dignity, where is my decorum?” (*Ov'è 'l fasto reale, ov'è 'l decoro?*)²³⁰ We hear the Queen's *socially constructed voice*, the public voice formed by schooling since childhood in the behaviour expected of a queen. Thinking with this *socially constructed voice*, she finds it incomprehensible that she should be falling in love with a person unsuited to her class and status. Yet she recognizes that love has defeated her and she is powerless to prevent her feelings, crying in her new feeling voice, “Oh God, I can no longer stand it! I am won over. Let the whole world hate me, I love Alidoro!”²³¹ With this admission, the die is cast: she will fight the world to gain her beloved.

A Queen out of Control

The degree to which Orontea has deviated from the self-control necessary for a monarch is portrayed in two powerful scenes in Act II. The first indication that something is amiss with the Queen is in Act II.3, when she welcomes her “faithful servant” and friend Giacinta, who has returned from captivity by the Turks dressed as a young warrior. Giacinta relates having been forced by the Queen of Phoenicia to follow Alidoro in order to kill him, and tells of wounding him. Orontea is outraged at this affront to her beloved

²³⁰ *Amo un vil Pellegrino, / Io che danzi sprezzi più d'un regnante. / Ov'è 'l fasto reale, ov'è 'l decoro?* (II.1)

²³¹ *Oh Dio, non posso più, vinta son io; Odami il mondo tutto, amo Alidoro* (II.1).

and, forgetting all decorum, she curses Giacinta and rains blows on her – this just after having greeted her with unusual warmth. Arriving on the scene, Creonte pulls her off Giacinta and rebukes her strongly. Orontea is completely unreasonable, calling Giacinta a traitor who deserves death. When Creonte attempts to reason with the Queen in “*Così arrogante?*” (“What are you doing, arrogant one?”, Ex. 4.6, mm.25-35), surmising that love for the painter has clouded her judgement, she at first denies it, then defiantly repeats openly what she has only admitted to herself: “Let the whole world hate me, I love Alidoro!”

An even more striking incident in which Orontea publically shows her unstable mood and lack of self-control occurs in Act II.13. The romance between Alidoro and Silandra has blossomed, and Alidoro has set up his easel ready to paint her portrait. The couple exchanges romantic pleasantries when Orontea happens on the scene: she explodes in jealous rage in a long tirade of 31 uninterrupted lines cursing the unfortunate pair. She begins, *E che vorresti?* (“What are you trying to do?” Ex. 4.7, mm. 1-24)

<p><i>Ah, v'ho scoperti, Immodesta Silandra, Temerario Alidoro! Tu sei l'original, questo è 'l pittore? Lascivo indegno amore, Vi contamina il cor, l'alma v'infetta! O coppia maledetta, Maledetto ritratto, Portentosi pennelli Mostruosi colori, Empi ministri di lasciva guerra, Già vi sbrano, vi rompo...a terra, a terra</i></p>	<p>Ah, I have discovered you both, Immodest Silandra, Audacious Alidoro! You, a model? This one, a painter? Lascivious love contaminates your Hearts, infects your souls! Oh cursed couple, Cursed portrait, Fateful brushes, Monstrous paints Wicked ministers of lascivious war! I shall break you, tear you to pieces. Act II.13 (mm. 1-24)</p>
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In this raging recitative, Cesti's use of word painting is typical of seventeenth-century representation: he paints a graphic tonal picture of the singer's words. There is a build-up of momentum as Orontea's fury hits fever pitch with a hail of curses not only at the couple

but also at the portrait, the brushes, and the paints: the short arched phrases form an ascending sequence, each starting on the final note of the previous one: *Portetosi pennelli* (g'-c''-a'), *Mostruoso colori* (a'-d''-b''), *Empi ministri di lasciva guerra* (b'-e''-d''-c'') (mm.19-21). Orontea addresses each of the lovers in turn with contempt, allowing them to feel the full impact of her royal rage as she orders them to fall at her feet: the phrase "*Cadrete...cadrete*" descends a tenth (g'' to d'), a musical embodiment of her words.

After delivering her damning speech, Orontea rushes off stage, along with Silandra, but her outrageous behaviour has a powerful effect on Alidoro. Left alone, he is dazed and wonders aloud:

*Qual fulmine tonante,
M'atterri, m'atterrò in un instante?
Coei che dianzi qui parlo, che fu
La regina d'Egitto, o degli abissi?
Formava accenti, o vomito saette?*

What was that thunderbolt
That threw me to the ground in an instant?
Who was she who ranted here,
The queen of Egypt or of the underworld?
Did she only scream or did she spit arrows?
Act II.14 (mm.1-8)

Orontea's rage is so monumental that, in the eyes of the recipient of her fury, she has become a force of nature. She appears to be a creature from the underworld, cursing first the supposed lovers, then the tools of Alidoro's trade, throwing his canvas, paints and brushes to the ground and promising to trample them under foot. The curses she rains on the two victims are followed by commands to alter their behaviour and even their thoughts: they are ordered to banish the other from their heart and mind, never to think of that person again. Orontea has assumed the role of a witch or sorceress, laying curses on them and acting as though her commands can transform both the bodies and the minds of the unfortunate recipients of her wrath.

What exactly is happening with the Queen? She loses control of her emotions so completely that she is no longer recognizable as the Queen of Egypt. Her loss of decorum

is here presented as profoundly threatening, an outrageous display of power. The scene concretely demonstrates the broader social implications of the rigid system of court etiquette. Without a mechanism to allow natural human emotions to be expressed, rulers can act like despots, subject to fits of rage. Orontea's behaviour is truly beyond the pale, yet we feel for her, for the demands of royal decorum are simply inhuman and take an emotional toll on those subject to its rule.

Incorporating the notion of Orontea harnessing the powers of the underworld was a masterstroke on the part of Cicognini. This drama focussed primarily on personal interaction needed to incorporate something sensational and spectacular to fulfill the seventeenth-century audience's desire for the wondrous or astounding, their need to be dazzled by a *'meraviglia* ("the marvellous").²³² Such emotions could be created by employing machinery to allow gods to traverse the heavens, or a trick of lighting to create a visual illusion, or by using incantations — anything to transport the spectators to another realm in their imagination. In this case, Orontea's display of excessive rage fulfills that function. The scene not only provokes wonder and astonishment in the spectators but also serves to demonstrate the ultimate consequences of the regime of etiquette on those who wield power.

The Queen's behaviour has the most effect on the object of her devotion. Alidoro has a vague intuition that it is jealousy that he has witnessed, wondering whether this means he is still in the running for her love. Yet his head is turning, and he feels the brunt of her rage physically, as if her words were arrows: literally crumpling under her assault, he faints. Alidoro's sudden faint may appear risible to modern eyes, a demonstration of a weak and

²³² See Treadwell in Chapter One of this thesis.

indecisive romantic partner, but it was likely welcomed by a contemporary audience as the opportunity for a juicy sleep scene.²³³ In Venetian convention, the sleeper was generally female, but in this case, it is the male who is unconscious, and it is the Queen who returns to the scene, anticipating the opportunity to express her love to him in a context where she does not have to hold back her feelings.²³⁴ Cicognini cleverly breaks the former mood of wonder by having Orontea catch the drunken servant Gelone in the process of picking the pocket of the unconscious Alidoro. Here, in another inspired bit of play, Cicognini contrasts the Queen's female caring with the actions of a male of doubtful virtue.

Orontea's lengthy soliloquy addressed to the sleeping Alidoro in Act II.17 is crucial to understanding her character. For the second time Cicognini creates a scene complex in which we are privy to her many competing voices, in this case in a setting where her emotions are heightened by the presence of her beloved yet she has the freedom to express her true feelings. Due to extensive text repetition and many instrumental sections, 32 lines of text take up 162 measures of music, divided by Cesti into five discrete sections set off by double bar lines. Each section provides a different facet of the complex character of the Queen by employing differing musical styles (see Ex. 4.9).

The soliloquy begins with the opera's best-known musical number, the *strophic aria Intorno all'idol mio* (Act II.17, Ex. 4.9a, mm.1-80). Cesti is known for the beauty and elegance of his melodic lines, and in this aria he has crafted a piece in which the form

²³³ Monteverdi was the first to explore the musical representation of losing consciousness, a tradition Cavalli and Cesti both follow. Cesti effectively renders the act of losing consciousness with a disjointed musical line, with rests between Alidoro's words as he becomes increasingly weaker and finally faints, lying unconscious throughout the next scenes. Sleep (or in this case a faint) presented a situation in which a character was uniquely vulnerable, and it offered many opportunities to the characters around them, from attempted rape to sharing information the sleeper is not privy to. See Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, 338-342, for musical techniques for creating sleep and the functions fulfilled by this convention.

²³⁴ One might speculate as to the reversal of the usual dynamic: here, it is the Queen who is the stronger, more aggressive, and higher on the status scale, while Alidoro is a feminized, shown in a weak position.

perfectly embodies the unified mood of the Queen, for once free of the requirements of etiquette.²³⁵ A gentle lullaby to the sleeping Alidoro, in a rocking 3/2 meter, the melody is simple and regal sounding, inviting repose rather than passion. Orontea addresses the gentle breezes and begs them to kiss the cheeks of her beloved and cause him to have pleasant dreams.²³⁶ Set to Cesti's music, this familiar conceit becomes an invocation, a kind of magic charm that Orontea works on her adored one to ensure his love, and for the first time we hear the loving voice of Orontea.

The second portion of the soliloquy, a wide-ranging recitative in 4/4, allows us to hear Orontea's passionate voice as she traverses a series of different emotions; each section indicates her change in affect. Beginning with *Ohimè, non son più mia* (Ex. 4.9b, mm. 81-103), the Queen laments the possibility that Alidoro does not love her but finishes by placing a crown on his sleeping head crying, "You are my love, you are my king!"²³⁷ The dramatic recitative that follows, *Ma nel mio cor sepolto* ("But in my secret heart," Ex. 4.9c, 104-119) changes character. Reference to her "secret heart" marks her as well aware of her own inner feeling voice: realizing that she has strayed from her powerful position, she reminds herself that she is a queen and that she has the right to love. Orontea accesses her voice of power musically by reprising the *power sixteenths* in the opera's opening scene, reconnecting to the royal resolve she expressed there. This prompts a shift to a softer affect: a tender recitative, *Leggi, leggi, o mio caro* ("Read, read, my dearest" Ex. 4.9d, 120-26),

²³⁵ In this aria the instrumental parts are completely integrated into the fabric of the piece: instrumental sections between the two verses and at the end provide echoes of the vocal themes. The melody has smooth flowing lines with whole and half-notes contributing to the legato feel. It uses primarily stepwise motion, with graceful upward leaps of sixths that then descend by step. It eschews both rhythmic complexity and dramatic gestures, and its most daring harmony is a falling diminished seventh (f' to g'). symbol?

²³⁶ This conceit from contemporary poetry was adopted in opera, its popularity ensured by the Venetian convention of the sleep aria; Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, 339.

²³⁷ *Tu sei l'anima mia, tu sei mio rè* (II.17)

ACT/ SCENE	FIRST LINE TITLE	WHO?	MET -ER	MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL STYLE/ RHETOR. INTENT
Act II.17 (Ex 4.9a)	<i>Intorno all'idol mio</i>	Orontea Alidoro	3 /2	<i>Strophic aria</i>	Lullaby to sleeping lover
(Ex .9b) (Ex 4.9c) (Ex 4.9d)	<i>Ohimè, non son più mia Leggi, leggi, omio caro Ma nel mio cor sepolto</i>	Orontea *	4 /4 4 /4 4 /4	<i>Recit. lament Dramat. recit Narrative recit.</i>	Lamenting affect Confident affect: <i>Power-sixteenths</i> and walking bass
Act II.17 (Ex .9e)	<i>Dormi, dormi, ben mio</i>	Orontea *	3 /2	<i>Aria</i>	Lullaby
Act III.4 (Ex4.10)	<i>Maledette grandezza</i>	Orontea *	4 /4	<i>Recitative</i>	Rage turns to lament
Act III.9	<i>Temerario, arrogante!</i>	Orontea Alidoro	4 /4	Rage-filled <i>recitative</i>	Raging affect
Act.III. 20	<i>Innocente mio tesoro</i>	Orontea Floridan	3 /2	<i>Strophic aria</i>	Serene
Act.III. 20	<i>Castissimi amori</i>	Oro+Flo Sil+ Cor	3 /2	Duet <i>aria</i> Quartet <i>aria</i>	Lively, celebratory

Table 4.3 Orontea's Musical numbers: Act II. Scene 17 to end of Act III

in which she instructs Alidoro to read the letter of love she has left for him, which tells him that she will make him her king. Concluding the soliloquy is a final lullaby to Alidoro in the form of a strophic aria *Dormi, dormi, ben mio* ("Sleep, sleep, my darling," Ex. 4.9e, *mm.127-59*). Here, she is able to try out her emotional wings and at last reach a state in which her heart and mind are in unity. She weaves a spell, working protective magic over her beloved, and reveals a new maternal voice through her words "Orontea will watch over you."²³⁸

At the conclusion of her long soliloquy it is clear that Orontea is determined to make Alidoro her husband, but this is a decision necessarily fraught with difficulty for her. In an unexpected turn of plot in Act III.4, Creonte is able to convince her that she must give

²³⁸ Act II ends with Alidoro's awakening, ready to embrace his new role. As he says, "I fell asleep as a beggar but awaken a king!" *M'addormentai mendico e re mi sveglio!* (II.18).

Alidoro up for the good of the kingdom.²³⁹ When he meets Orontea to communicate the feeling of the people, Creonte tries a new strategy in *A cosi infausto segno?* (“On this unlucky sign?” Ex. 4.9a, 1-72) and presents his vision of what she should be as the ruler of Egypt. After telling her how she once epitomized this vision, and how her former glorious self has been lost in her obsession with Alidoro, Creonte concludes sorrowfully, “And by your madness you have hurt me, your old tutor.”²⁴⁰ This is the one approach that touches her, and Cesti’s musical setting makes the sudden collapse of Orontea’s resistance believable: she finally concedes, “I see that I must bow to your advice,”²⁴¹ though she maintains she cannot banish Alidoro from her heart. Set in long notes, with minor intervals and significant rests, her words are uttered in the tone of quiet mourning, providing musical evidence that she knows her objections are in vain.

Alone, Orontea bitterly rues her royal status in *Maladetta, politico reale!* (“Cursed royal policy,” Ex. 4.9b): personifying “*politico reale*” (royal policy), she curses this requirement in strongest terms, using the words “*Ti bestemmio*” (literally “I blaspheme you”) before dissolving into despair. One might ask whether this change of heart constitutes a cathartic experience for Orontea? It does not appear that she has experienced the kind of emotional epiphany in which recognition of error is transformed into resolve to live up to her royal responsibility. Lacking the beneficial result of a new insight into her own behaviour, what she experienced might be better termed a “pseudo-catharsis.”

Her despair gives way to anger in the very next scene (Act III.5) when she is

²³⁹ Several scenes allow the audience to see for themselves the problems Creonte enumerates, from Alidoro who boasts of being a king, to popular opinion of the love-sick Queen: “/Gossip is everywhere .../ The Queen has gone crazy!” (*Si sente un gran bisbilio... La regina è impazzita!*), Tibrino has a comic aria addressed to Love, telling him, “Stay away from me, or else I will become insane like Orontea!” (*Amor attendi a te, Lasciami star...Faresti timpazzirme, Come Orontea che devento hmatica!*, III.3)

²⁴⁰ *M'en volo a palesar, regio tutore* (III.4).

²⁴¹ *Amor legge non ha... Al tuo consiglio mi soscrivo, e m'appiglio* (III.4).

approached confidently by Alidoro. She rejects him with a cruel vehemence in *Temerario, arrogante* (“Rash and arrogant one!” Ex. 4.10) that appears completely unjustified, since her letter raised his hopes. Her attempts to justify her change of heart by heaping scorn on him do not ring true: it is evident that her pain still informs this unjustified rage.

<i>Temerario, arrogante,</i>	Rash and arrogant one
<i>Tu re, tu mio consorte? Ancor non sai!</i>	You a king, you my consort?
<i>Che per troppo inalzarsi Icaro cadde,</i>	You are not that yet!
<i>E che d'un vano ardir premio è la morte?</i>	Do you remember that Icarus flew too high
<i>Vilissimo vagante,</i>	And his vain daring was repaid with death?
<i>In mar d'eterno oblio</i>	Base wanderer, extinguish your ill-conceived
<i>Spegni il foco mal nato!</i>	Ardor in the sea of forgetfulness!
<i>In cui l'istessa maestà soggiorna,</i>	Remove yourself from my presence
<i>Ti diletta per sempre e più non torna.</i>	And never return! (Act III.5 (mm. 25-39)

This rage-filled speech shares many musical characteristics with the Queen's earlier condemnation of Alidoro and Silandra in Act II.13. Particularly effective here are the epithets she hurls at Alidoro, which Cesti has again fashioned into a chain of ascending imitative gestures.²⁴²

In her extreme rejection of the one she loves, Orontea demonstrates that she is trapped by the demands of decorum: her powerlessness leads her to behave like a despotic ruler while continuing to deceive Alidoro about her real feelings for him. At this point in the drama, things do not look promising for Orontea's love, and true to contemporary operatic convention, the level of tension rapidly increases through a series of comic misunderstandings. Alidoro's aged “mother” Aristeia woos Giacinta (disguised as

²⁴²Cesti creates increasing tension by starting each word on the final pitch of the previous one: *temerario* (d' to f#'), *arrogante* (f#' to a'), and *tu re?* (a' to d'') (Ex. 4.11, mm. 25-26). Orontea's comparison of Alidoro to Icarus stands out as the most significant classical reference in the opera, and Cesti's literal word painting provides colorful treatment. The fall of Icarus is mimicked in a plunging minor sixth from d'' to f#,' while his “vain daring” is represented by the dissonance of a tritone (d'' to g#'). Similarly, Orontea's command to Alidoro to “extinguish his ardor in the sea of forgetfulness” is portrayed in a long descent over two bars from e'' to f#,' interrupted by a sudden drop of a major sixth (c#'' to e') on *nel* (“into”) then rising to g' on *mare* (“the sea”) before sliding down a semi-tone to f#' on *oblio* (“forgetfulness”), imitating the literal meaning of the text (mm. 33-34).

“Ismero”) and gives her a precious medallion in return for a kiss, but Giacinta returns the medallion to Alidoro, hoping for love from him. Rejected by Alidoro, Silandra goes back to Corindo, who has received a note from Alidoro challenging him to a duel. Finally, Alidoro is branded as a thief for supposedly stealing the medallion Giacinta gave to him.

In the concluding Aristotelian recognition and reversal scene witnessed by the entire court, a mystery is unravelled. Alidoro is recognized as the son of the deceased king of Phoenicia; born in Egypt, where Orontea’s father gave him a royal medallion, and captured by pirates as an infant with the medallion around his neck, he was adopted by Aristeia. As Prince Floridano, Alidoro is now a suitable match for Orontea, and the opera can end with the customary *lieto fine*.²⁴³ Orontea expresses her joy to Alidoro in a short, lyrical aria, *Innocente mio tesoro*, which finishes: “Proud jealousy has left my soul... Floridano, my darling... I desire you for my husband.”²⁴⁴

This recognition scene is notable for several things. First, court etiquette still prevails; as Queen, Orontea must disclose her feelings to her beloved in a public declaration directed at the entire court. Secondly, Alidoro’s response shows that Orontea is still in charge in their relationship; his reaction is politically correct but guarded – we hear nothing of love in his words: “Such strange events confound the mind and confuse the senses. Whether servant, slave or consort, I will be whatever you wish until my death.”²⁴⁵ Finally, Orontea believes that she has overcome “proud jealousy.”

²⁴³ Playwright and theoretician G.B. Gherardi recommended tragedies ‘a *lieto fine*’ (with a happy ending), in his major treatise on adapting Aristotelian theory to Italian drama, *Discorso ... intorno al comporre delle comedie a delle tragedie* (1554); six of his own nine tragedies had happy endings. Over time, happy endings became obligatory; see Javitch, “Assimilation of Aristotle’s Poetics,” 62-63.

²⁴⁴ *Parta dall’alma mia La fiera gelosia. Con amoreso invito Floridano mio beneTi brama per marito.* (mm. 144-208)

²⁴⁵ *Fra sì strane vicende/ Si confonde la mente, e non l’intende/ Servo, schiavo, e consorte / Ti sarò più. vuoi sino alla morte* (mm. 209-215). One could feel somewhat sorry for Alidoro, deprived by etiquette of a private scene with Orontea.

But has she actually conquered pride? A review of her treatment of her lover is instructive. Recalling Orontea's original indictment of the god Love as "blind, cruel, tyrannical and full of deceit," we see that in her treatment of Alidoro, she has exhibited all of these traits herself. She was blind to Alidoro's fickle nature; she cruelly encouraged him by her ambivalent behaviour and by her letter promising to make him king; she twice acted like a tyrant, both in her jealous rage at his flirtation with Silandra and then in her violent rejection of him. And finally, by never letting him know her true feelings or explaining the reason for rejecting him, she deceived him repeatedly. Orontea's alternation between indecision and fury indicates that it is unlikely that her stubborn pride has been banished forever. Yet we are conscious that the demands of court etiquette have been instrumental in her behaviour, and we feel compassion for the Queen, whose inner voices have gradually emerged from under the carapace of etiquette, revealing a passionate, loving heart.

Before drawing conclusions about Orontea's development as a character deeply marked by the demands of royal decorum, we need to examine its effect on those who serve the Queen. We turn now to the aristocratic court society surrounding Orontea to examine the ways court etiquette determines their personalities and behaviour.

SILANDRA: ARISTOCRACY & SUPPRESSION OF EMOTION

Silandra represents the aristocratic court circle surrounding the Queen. In some respects she is a stereotyped character who shows the distorted atmosphere in which Orontea is embedded. As a noble *dama di corte*, she serves the Queen but maintains a formal relationship with her. For example, when Orontea gives orders, Silandra's answer is a formulaic response, "Your wish is my command," signalling that etiquette controls this

relationship.²⁴⁶ Silandra embodies a type of femininity diametrically opposed to that of Orontea, and her presence in the drama highlights the unusual nature of the young Queen's opposition to love. While Orontea is presented as a novice at love, unsure and ambivalent, Silandra is characterized as a woman whose very being propels her to love. In fact, before the end of the opera Silandra has gotten herself into and out of not one, but two, love affairs. She instantly recognises an opportunity for love when she sees it and takes initiative to pursue it. In these instances, Cicognini parodies aristocratic attitudes and manners in the libretto, and Cesti provides inventive music that highlights the exaggerated behaviour of the lovers.

Silandra's musical production is very different in character than that of Orontea. First, she almost always sings with a romantic partner and has only one reflective aria. Silandra is portrayed as a fully formed personality who seldom engages in soul searching; she wears her heart on her sleeve and says what she feels immediately, so we see little in the way of inner voices representing conflicting impulses. Cesti has set Silandra's texts in a series of arias and recitatives in which her feelings are communicated to the audience at the same time as to the object of her attention. She pursues love in scenes with both the courtier Corindo and Alidoro, and differences in the music inform the auditors of the strength of her emotional investment in each relationship.

Silandra's scenes are strategically placed to maximize the contrast between her attitudes and those of Orontea. For example, it is shortly after Orontea's initial tentative attraction to Alidoro that Silandra initiates her first affair in a scene in which the pleasures of love are celebrated. In Act I.7 the courtier Corindo is heard extolling the delights of love

²⁴⁶ *Il tuo commando adempio* (II.2)

in the strophic aria *Come dolce il vezzeggiar amorosa beltà* (“How sweet is the caress of amorous beauty,” Ex. 4.12, mm. 1-82). Unexpectedly, the second verse of this lyrical aria is taken up by the perpetually drunken comic servant Gelone, who imitates his Romantic style with the words, “How sweet it is to see Marzimino wine pour from the cask!”²⁴⁷ This ode to wine is a *re-accentuation* of Corindo’s “high” romantic style, a *parody* used for Gelone’s own “low,” comic purpose: to mock Corindo.

Silandra inserts herself into this scene literally without missing a beat as she enters in Act I.8, singing the third verse of the aria to the words, “How sweet it is when the beautiful gold of your hair invades my heart!”²⁴⁸ Cesti’s response to the librettist’s cues is an amusing, musically light-weight scene that aptly characterizes the three individuals in accordance with Cicognini’s vision: naive Corindo dreams of love, Silandra pursues it actively, and Gelone mocks the exaggerated love pretensions of the upper class.

The two lovers continue to exchange courtly love gallantries in two musical numbers in different metres and musical styles: the arietta *Spunta in ciel* (“Rising in the heavens”), in which the two singers again take turns.²⁴⁹ The entire scene creates a cheerful, up-beat impression rather than a sense of connection on an emotional level. The fact that we see two noble characters singing a flirtatious duet in the presence of a lower-class servant is a clear violation of decorum: this fact, as well as text composed of trite love commonplaces such as *mio ristoro* (“my salvation”) and *mio desio* (“my desire”) points to parody (see Exs. 4.12- 4.14).

Silandra’s first meeting with Alidoro in Act 1.11 differs in context, mood and musical

²⁴⁷ *Quant’è dolce rimirar dalla botte uschir fuor Marzimino liquor* (I.8).

²⁴⁸ *Come dolce, m’invaghi il bell’oro d’un crin* (I.7).

²⁴⁹ The lovers alternate sections in 3/2 and 3/4 twice, ending with 3/2 (mm. 166-184) before the concluding sixteen-bar instrumental section.

ACT/ SCENE	FIRST LINE TITLE	WHO?	METER	MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL STYLE RHETOR STRAT.
Act I.8	<i>Come dolce //</i> <i>E se dolce è'l suo ferir</i>	Corindo/ Gelone/ Silandra	3/ 2	<i>Bipartite aria</i> A B: <i>varied</i> <i>refrain</i>	Lyrical, romantic/ Parody of roman- tic style
Act I.8	<i>Spunta in ciel (Cor.)</i> <i>Sorge il sol (Sil.) //</i> <i>Mio ristoro, Mio desio</i> <i>Quanto cara è tua</i> <i>beltà</i> <i>Per te questo core//</i>	<i>Corindo &</i> <i>Silandra</i> <i>Cor. & Sil.</i> <i>Corindo &</i> <i>Sil.andra</i>	4/ 4 // 3/ 2 3/ 2 // 3/ 4	<i>Arietta</i> Alternate verses <i>Bipartite aria;</i> <i>Rondo form</i> ABABA	Comic: lively Eighth-note bass Lyrical, dreamy A:Lyrical, dreamy B: Lively presto
Act I.11	<i>Donzelletta, vezzoletta</i> <i>Non schernisco,</i> <i>riverisco</i> <i>Or s'amore....Stringi</i> <i>pur</i>	Alidoro & Silandra Silandra & Alidoro	3 /2 3 /2 3 /2	<i>Arietta : stro-</i> <i>phic variation</i> verses alternate <i>Strophic aria</i> sung together	Light, melodious Joyous, dreamy Double-voiced duet
Act II. 8	<i>Addio Corindo, addio!</i> <i>Vieni, Alidoro, vieni!</i>	Silandra* Silandra *	4 /4 3/2	Dramatic <i>recit.</i> <i>Descending</i> <i>tetrachord</i> <i>lament</i>	Assertive: <i>Power</i> <i>sixteenths</i> Lamenting affect expresses longing
Act. III. 20	<i>Castissimi amori</i>	Oron, Flor. Sil., Cor.	3 /2 3 /2	Duet / Quartet	Celebratory

Table 4.4 Silandra's Musical numbers in Acts I, II, and III of *Orontea*

style from her scene with Corindo interact in a much more realistic manner. Silandra's sudden passion for Alidoro seems genuine because the dialogue between them unfolds in such a natural manner.²⁵⁰ Cesti has set the courtship scene using strophic variation, a technique ideally suited to a dialogue between two participants, since each strophe varies melody and harmony slightly to reflect the text describing their unfolding emotions. Instead of long passages of recitative, Cicognini employs the stichomythia practiced in Spanish theatre in which dialogue is constructed through alternating short lines; as a result, the courtship of Silandra and Alidoro proceeds like a real (musical) conversation. Once

²⁵⁰ When she first catches sight of the handsome stranger, she confesses that she has fallen in love with him, and Alidoro's objection that there is no such thing as love at first sight sounds true to life.

Silandra confesses she has fallen in love with him, and Alidoro is assured that she is not making fun of him, he addresses Silandra in a tuneful arietta.²⁵¹ Alidoro's opening *Donzelletta, vezzoletta* ("Charming young lady," Ex.4.14a) in which the two lovers alternate verses, is expanded by ritornellos between each of the four verses.²⁵² The couple's arietta remains in 3/2 meter, in contrast to the playful interchange just seen between Silandra and Corindo, where switching of meters and styles creates the impression of a flirtation, rather than deeply felt emotion.

At the close of the arietta Silandra and Alidoro unite in the *double-voiced duet aria*: *Or s'amore ...Stringi pur* ("Now Love has smitten my heart...Hold me tight," Ex. 14.4b). Whereas Silandra and Corindo sing alternately for most of their duet, here Silandra and Alidoro perform the majority of their duet together, including starting together, singing all cadences together, and ending together after 32 measures of music.²⁵³ This musical representation using the most serious form of duet, the *double-voiced duet aria*, signals the importance of Silandra's relationship with Alidoro, which is represented as more genuine than her flirtation with Corindo. We know that their hearts and minds are united because they only sing in the meter reserved for intense emotional feelings (3/2), and their duet is completely shared. Additionally, in accordance with the conventions of decorum in this early period of Baroque opera, Alidoro and Silandra's relationship assumes more weight by the fact that they are alone when they express their feelings of love for one another. In contrast, when Silandra and Corindo initiate their flirtation, the presence of the comic

²⁵¹ The term *arietta* is used to distinguish the comic, light song from the generally more serious *aria*. Set in a lilting 3/2 meter, the *arietta* (Act I.11, mm. 44-167, has no consistent refrain but the opening line of each verse is repeated as a "refrain" (text and music) in each variation.

²⁵² See Murata *supra*, n.36, for Menestrier on doubling of solo voice parts by "an ensemble of theorboes and harpsichords." The sensitive interpretation of the recording of the opera by René Jacobs uses this kind of doubling (see Bibliography, Sound recordings).

²⁵³ Note: the lengths given for accompanied arias include instrumental portions in the count of bar numbers.

figure Gelone lends the scene an aura of superficiality, and his attempt to intervene in the love duet also injects a crude humour: both factors would have invited the spectators to treat that love scene as a parody of “real love.” Finally, the musical style of Corindo and Silandra is an exaggerated approach to courtly romantic love suited to comic interaction, while the musical style of Alidoro and Silandra characterises them as serious lovers.

In Act II.8 Silandra declares her freedom from Corindo, who is now supplanted in her affections. Alone on stage, she sings the dramatic recitative *Addio, Corindo, addio!* (mm. 1-17, Ex. 4.15) followed directly by the lament in aria form, *Vieni, Alidoro, vieni* (mm. 19-113, Ex. 4.16). The structure and affect of the recitative closely parallel the opening section of Orontea’s *Superbo amore* (I.1); both words and music indicate that Silandra is now a rival of the Queen for the love of Alidoro. She rejects Corindo with the same vehemence with which Orontea rejected the god Love, using exactly the same rapid tempo over an active walking bass composed primarily of eighth- and quarter-notes. The verse also employs *power sixteenths*, first in a rapid scalar motion from g^{'''} down to g^{''} and back up again, then in a series of sequentially ascending sixteenth-note patterns. With this dramatic gesture, Silandra proclaims her freedom and power as a woman to love whomever she wishes. This may also be read as dramatic irony, for just as Orontea’s rejection of love does not prove lasting, soon Silandra too will have cause to alter the resolve she expresses here.

Somewhat surprisingly, Silandra now gives voice to a descending tetrachord lament, *Vieni, Alidoro, vieni* (“Come, Alidoro, come!” Ex. 4.16, Act II.8, mm. 18-113). An initial statement of the four-bar ostinato bass line (mm. 19-22) sets up the lament, and the ostinato bass line pattern descending from tonic to dominant (D to A) repeats a total of 17 times. This formal lament allows Silandra to express her intense longing for Alidoro.

Repetition is the main technique used to structure this aria, which also gains power from the obvious sexual connotation of the text.

Since Alidoro returns her love, we need to ask, why does Silandra lament? And why has the composer given her the most formal of the lament forms, the descending tetrachord lament? In comparison, we should recall that Orontea laments only in expressive recitative. I contend that it is because Silandra and Alidoro, rather than Orontea and Alidoro, are the real lovers in the opera.²⁵⁴ By assigning Silandra the most important type of lament, Cesti has raised her dramatic role to that of significant protagonist. In the end, Orontea will claim Alidoro, and his and Silandra's love comes to naught, yet one of the elements providing pathos in the opera is that the two who have a genuine love for each other are parted. In comparison, although Orontea clearly loves Alidoro, he is decidedly neutral toward her.

Silandra's relationship with Alidoro is not in doubt when she sings this lament, but it foreshadows the eventual outcome of the opera. I suggest that she performs it at this point because convention dictated that only the principal heroine could sing the most important lament in the last act, just before the denouement. When Alidoro rejects Silandra because Orontea has promised to make him king, she does not hesitate to return to Corindo. Whatever one thinks of Silandra's self-serving disregard for others' feelings, we cannot help but admire her resilient nature; she is a survivor and will always manage to come out on top. In this she is the female incarnation of the *servo astuto*, the clever courtier made popular by Spanish drama.²⁵⁵ Silandra's acceptance of Corindo as husband is required by

²⁵⁴ Maranini has made the same observation for Medea and Giasone in Cicognini's *Giasone*, deeming them to be the true lovers of the opera even though the hero marries Isifile in the end; see her " 'Il comico nel tragico: 'Un indagine,'" 97.

²⁵⁵ Holmes, *Orontea, A Study*, 27.

the Venetian convention of two happy couples the opera's end but she remains true to character as a woman who, even when "playing by the rules" usually bends them to her advantage.

In many ways, Silandra is a caricature, for she does not undergo fundamental change over the course of the opera; despite being very flexible, she is far from embodying Bakhtin's concept of "becoming." However Silandra's rather extreme representation serves a Bakhtinian aim – demonstrating the weakness of the political system in power – indicating that Cicognini intended the audience to draw a lesson from her actions. Her character is a reminder that the draconian rule of etiquette distorts human personality. Silandra's strengths lie in adapting to a cruel environment: court society demanded that those close to a ruler suppress feelings and mask intentions in accordance with rigid standards of appropriate behaviour, but this affects the development of inner character traits such as loyalty, honour and sincerity. These qualities, so notably absent in Silandra, become the chief focus in the next female character we explore, that of Giacinta, loyal servant of the Queen.

GIACINTA: POLYPHONIC VOICES & "BECOMING"

We turn now to a character at the lower end of the social scale to explore the impact of a court and ruler under the sway of an inflexible system of etiquette on a woman without power or status. Giacinta is characterized as a "faithful servant" who was the Queen's confidant, similar to Mirinda's role with Queen Erisbe in *Ormindo*.²⁵⁶ Like Orontea, she

²⁵⁶ The status of Giacinta is somewhat ambiguous. In his modern edition of *Orontea*, Holmes lists her in the *dramatis personae* as "a former lady of the court, "which would give her noble rank. However, based on internal evidence in the opera, I interpret her status as closer to that of a servant, for, in Act III.12, Giacinta justifies her gift to Alidoro by saying, "So that you will realize that, despite my servitude, I am generous..." (*"Perché tu veda / Che, bench é schiava, generosa io sono"*).

struggles with conflicting inner voices that are revealed in moving soliloquies, voices that are evidence of an individual striving to remain an ethical human being.

Unlike Silandra, who is a divisive figure fuelling the Queen's jealousy by competing for the love of Alidoro, Giacinta acts as a positive force in the opera. First of all, she is the opera's model of virtuous womanhood, providing a standard against which spectators may judge the behaviour of the other women. For example, her first scene with the Queen not only establishes Giacinta's character but also allows the viewer to draw a comparison with that of Orontea. Secondly, it is only due to an honourable action by Giacinta that the Queen's predicament can finally be resolved.

When Giacinta arrives in the Queen's apartments disguised as a young warrior called "Ismero," once she knows her true identity Orontea greets her warmly and waves away the customary formal courtesies imposed by etiquette. Orontea's behaviour with Giacinta contrasts with the stilted, formal interactions she has with Silandra. The wall of etiquette surrounding the Queen has evidently prevented her from expressing her feelings with other women, and Giacinta is the one person with whom she can feel at ease.²⁵⁷

Giacinta's tale of her own adventures reveals her qualities of faithfulness and honour: the epithet *fidele* (faithful) is applied to her five times in this scene. She shares many characteristics with the resourceful *innamorata* of spoken comedy, where plots often featured young women captured in war returning in male disguise, and here too her disguise has allowed her to maintain her honour.²⁵⁸ Giacinta identifies herself as the person who wounded Alidoro, presenting this act as confirmation of her ability to faithfully carry out

²⁵⁷ This scene is important for engendering audience sympathy with Orontea's difficulties because it reveals the Queen as a warm individual underneath the barrier of etiquette and expectations of royal decorum.

²⁵⁸ See Giannetti, for a discussion of the dramatic and character implications of women cross-dressing when returning from captivity by the Turks; *Leila's Kiss*, 31-32, 41-43.

orders from the Queen of Phoenicia, whom she served after saving her honour by escaping from her Turkish master in male disguise.

Oron tea's reaction to Giacinta's truthfulness is both unexpected and undeserved: she erupts in rage, striking her and calling her a traitor deserving of death for wounding Alidoro. When ordered to leave, Giacinta demonstrates her sense of honour, replying, "I depart. But if you wish me dead, I will return to die."²⁵⁹ Giacinta is crushed by the Queen's rejection and voices her misery in the first of two laments. In the recitative lament *Dove, dove, infelice me* ("O unfortunate me, where can I go?" Ex. 4.17 Act II.7, mm. 1-17), she describes the world as a dangerous place now that Oron tea has rejected her: "At every step I risk stumbling into death and danger!"²⁶⁰ Here Giacinta embodies the trope of the lamenting woman in a foreshadowing of her final fate, when she will find herself abandoned by the one she loves.

Oron tea's rejection leaves Giacinta vulnerable to the attentions of Ariste a, the foolish old woman (*vecchia*) who falls for her as the attractive young man "Ismero," initiating an amorous entanglement that will have important consequences. Ariste a sees a chance to find some love and affection from Giacinta, provoking a comic scene in which she bargains for "just a little" love," describing herself as afloat in a tiny bark "lost on the sea of love" and begging Ismero to become the "helmsman" who will "guide her ship." A comic game ensues: Giacinta does not bite, deftly circumventing Ariste a's ploys with double entendres about her inability to successfully "bring her ship to shore." Ariste a's tone turns pleading and her vocal style becomes exaggerated in "*Poco stille amorose*" ("Just a

²⁵⁹ *Parto per obbedire, /Ma se morta mi vuoi, torno a morir* (II.4). Giacinta's upright behaviour demonstrates how far Oron tea has deviated from queenly decorum due to the hold her passion has on her.

²⁶⁰ *E parmi ad ogni passo inciampar nella morte and nei perigli* (II. 7).

few drops of affection,” Ex. 4.18, Act II.7), a parodied lament in 3/2 metre in which she argues that “Just a few drops of affection would dampen the fire that consumes me!” while the protracted ascending musical line proclaims the opposite, that her “fire” will increase!²⁶¹ In this example of both textual and musical *re-accentuation*, Giacinta humorously – and realistically – observes that a few drops would not suffice to put out this fire and that the little she could provide “would amount to a big zero!”²⁶² In the musical interplay between the wheedling old woman and the young woman, Giacinta is painted as kind and caring, for despite the exasperation she expresses in asides to the audience, she tries to avoid hurting Aristeia’s feelings as the old woman alternately propositions her and sings a parodied lament.

While Giacinta does not give in to Aristeia this time, by Act III she is feeling even more needy and abandoned. In Act III.10 she sings a full-fledged da capo aria, the only one in the opera, a musical choice that seems significant.²⁶³ In this aria we learn that Giacinta has now joined the opera’s ranks of yearning lovers, for she too has fallen for the handsome Alidoro. In *Mie pene, che fate?* (“Painful thoughts, what are you doing?,” Ex. 4. 19, Act III.10, mm. 1- 78) she struggles with her sense of honour as she expresses despair at being unable to reveal herself to the one she loves.

Cesti’s setting of Giacinta’s dilemma is particularly apt, for her conflicting emotions are mirrored in the formal aspects of this da capo aria. The A section is in an elegant and lyrical 3/2 meter, with upper-string echoes of each phrase creating the effect of a dialogue with the instruments, as if Giacinta were confiding her dilemma to her absent beloved. The

²⁶¹ *Poche stille amorse. Posson temprar il mio concente foco.* (II.7)

²⁶² *E so ch’ il poco mio / Nelle sue man, diventerebbe un nulla!* (II.7)

²⁶³ Da capo arias were still relatively uncommon in the 1650s; Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, for a discussion of da capo and refrain da capo arias, the more common form, 302-20. Also see Appendix 1 for definitions.

opening of the A section, *Mie pene, che fate*, poses Giacinta's question in a plaintive melody which is answered with a reversal of the text *Che fate mie pene?* in another rhetorical question, as if the singer were caught in a circular net.

Mie pene, che fate?
Perche non osate,
Scoprivi al mio bene?
Mie pene, che fate?
Che fate mie pene?

A *Painful thoughts, what are you doing?*
 Why do I not dare
 Reveal myself to my love?
Painful thoughts, what are you doing?
What are you doing, painful thoughts?

Se spera Giacinta,
Ismero paventa;
Di frode convinta.
Honor mi tormenta.
Amor me da morte
Neppur la mia sorte,
Si muove a pietade

B While Giacinta hopes for love,
 Ismero fears it.
 Convicted of fraud,
 My honour torments me,
 Love is killing me,
 And my sorry fate
 Does not move him to pity.

Mie pene, che fate?

A *Painful thoughts, what are you doing?*

The B section presents a strong contrast in a lively 3/4 meter in D major, with a quickly moving bass line in quarter notes in which Giacinta verbally expresses the conflict between love and honour brought about by her male disguise: as she ponders, "Giacinta" hopes for love but "Ismero" fears that she will be seen as a fraud for disguising her true sex. As a cross-dressed woman, she literally has two identities, and in this *dialogue with her double*, she portrays the conflict between her inner self and the self she shows to others. The da capo form of the aria perfectly mirrors Giacinta's situation: the exact return of the A section emphasizes that her dilemma remains unresolved.

While Giacinta's impasse is not resolved in this aria,²⁶⁴ it seems that deep down, she recognizes that Alidoro will never be her lover, for the aria is immediately followed by her second lament, *Infelice cor mio* ("My unhappy heart" Ex. 4.20, Act III.10, mm.79-96). In

²⁶⁴ In this aria, Cesti plays with tonality to underscore Giacinta's ambivalence, for the A section appears to be in D major yet every cadence is in A major until the B section, which is convincingly in D major. The A section returns, again seemingly in D major but cadencing in A major; she appears to be going in circles.

this brief expressive recitative she mourns the state of her heart, that is, her feeling self, describing how she has come to love Alidoro, the very one she once attempted to kill, but shame keeps her from revealing herself to him. The closing refrain, “*Infelice cor mio*” is repeated, extended and elaborated in the final measures to emphasize her misery.

It is immediately after this, when she is the most vulnerable, that Aristeia again approaches her, and this time Giacinta is more amenable to the old woman’s entreaties. After singing a comic bipartite arietta as a duet with Aristeia, “*Al mio periglio*” (“If I may be so bold”), this time Giacinta agrees to exchange a kiss for a gift, and much to her surprise, the gift is a valuable gold medallion.

In Act III.12, Giacinta solves her love dilemma by taking action like a typical resourceful ingénue. She dares to reveal her true identity to Alidoro, confesses her love to him, and presents him with the costly medallion given her by Aristeia, saying, “So that you will realize that, despite my servitude, I am generous.”²⁶⁵ Left alone, Giacinta once again finds herself in a peculiar emotional state, suspended between two contradictory states. Should she dare to hope? Again, her emotional needs (her feeling voice) and her sense of reality (her reasoning voice) are in conflict, two different voices competing for her attention. Her confusion is expressed in *Il mio ben* (“My beloved,” Ex. 4.20, Act III.12), an accompanied strophic aria which Cesti sets appropriately in a rondo form (ABABA).²⁶⁶

In the final scene of the opera, Alidoro’s royal heritage is revealed through the medallion Giacinta gave to him: had it not been for Giacinta’s trusting heart and honourable action, Orontea’s story would not have had such a happy outcome. It seems evident that

²⁶⁵*Perché tu veda che, benché schiava, generosa io sono*/(III. 12).

²⁶⁶ A lyrical A section in G minor forms the refrain. Its 3/ 2 meter, with half-notes that linger on the “hope” that Alidoro’s words have instilled in her, a hope she desperately desires to believe in, saying. “My love tells me to hope: yes, my thoughts, hope!” (*Il mio ben dice ch’eo spero, Sì, sperate, o miei pensieri!* III.12)

Cicognini intended this as dramatic irony: the humble servant whom Orontea reviled has now become the source of the Queen's own happiness, yet she herself receives no reward.²⁶⁷ Giacinta is not a stock character: she has too much depth for that. She shares two involved comic scenes with Aristeia and participates comically in them, but even then she stays true to her own values and does her best not to mislead the foolish *vecchia*. We might describe her as having one foot in comedy and one foot in serious drama. The remainder of the music Cesti gives her identifies Giacinta as a character with serious concerns and inner conflict about how to remain honourable while still meeting her human

ACT / SCENE	FIRST LINE TITLE	WHO?	METER	MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL STYLE/ RHETOR. STRAT.
Act II.7	<i>Dove, dove, infelice me?</i>	Giacinta *	4 /4	<i>Recitative lament</i>	Lamenting affect; g minor, c minor
Act II.7	<i>Poche stile amorose // Mi contento del poco</i>	Aristea & Giacinta	3 /2 // 3 /4	<i>Arioso</i>	Re-accentuation (parodied lament) Micro-confrontation
Act III.10	<i>Mie pene, che fate?</i>	Giacinta *	3 /2 // 3 /4 // 3 /2	<i>Da capo aria: A -B-A</i>	A Languorous, lyrical B Vigorous, over walking bass
Act III.10	<i>Infelice cor mio</i>	Giacinta*	4/4 // 3 /4	<i>Recit lament with refrain</i>	Serious, lamenting
Act III.10	<i>Al mio perilio// Più ch'oro, argento assai</i>	Giacinta to Aristeia	3 /2 // 3 /2	<i>Bipartite strophic aria A //B</i>	Gives teasing advice Re-accentuation
Act III.12	<i>Il mio ben // E la speme</i>	Giacinta *	3 /2 // 3 /4	<i>Strophic aria: rondo ABABA</i>	A :Moving, lyrical // B :Energetic

Table 4.5 Giacinta's Musical numbers, Acts II and III of *Orontea*

needs. By accepting her need for love and permitting herself a brief playful dalliance with Aristeia, Giacinta accepts her own vulnerability, the flip side of her active, passionate nature. She is the only character in the opera who sings a da capo aria, and her two recitative

²⁶⁷ Aristeia's amorous desires are also left hanging, but this is expected, for she is a stock comic character.

laments are plaintive and heartfelt. Yet she is literally left out of the final recognition scene, her fate left hanging.

Giacinta represents the feminine ideal of a loving woman in the opera: she is the one character who is truly open, ready and willing to develop into everything she can be, an inspiring example of Bakhtin's concept of *becoming*. Yet she cannot find love in the society that the opera represents; there is no place for her goodness in a royal court ruled by the unfeeling regime of etiquette that Cicognini describes. I suggest that this is the ultimate message that Cicognini intended for his audience: virtuous people cannot thrive in the destructive atmosphere of the court system. The idea that Giacinta is the character who most closely expresses the point of view of the author of the drama is reinforced by the name assigned to her: Giacinta is the feminine equivalent of Giacinto, the name of the librettist. This does not appear to be accidental: Cicognini gave significant names to all of the characters, most of whom are based on classical sources: Giacinta and Alidoro are exceptions.²⁶⁸ In addition, Giacinta's operatic fate in a court environment may perhaps parallel that of Cicognini's own experience in Florentine society, discussed below.

CONCLUSION

Oronthea provides a striking contrast to *Ormindò* in terms of the emotional journeys presented by the female characters. In *Ormindò* the voices of the strong women protagonists are an indication of their evolving self-knowledge and progression toward full maturity as human beings, but in *Oronthea* there is no such clear progress toward personal development. The Queen has opened up as a person by accepting her need to love while

²⁶⁸ All of the other characters' names in this opera have significance that would have been obvious to classically trained spectators. The characters' functions tend to be the same as their Greek counterparts: *Oronthea* is the feminine form of *Oronte*, a well-known Greek king *Creonte* is a famous advisor, etc., while the lover *Alidoro*'s name incorporates the word *adoro*, or "I adore."

still being a ruler, yet had it not been for Giacinta's generous gift due to her human impulse to love, the Queen's jealousy might have turned her into a despotic monarch. It appears as if Orontea's development as a human being has been arrested; she has not learned to moderate her behaviour; rather, she has simply been forced to accommodate her personal needs and desires to the rigid demands of decorum and royal politics, even though this has demonstrably negative consequences for her behaviour as a ruler. Yet Orontea has clearly not experienced the recognition of error that would have underpinned a true change of heart; rather, she has only undergone what one might term a "pseudo-catharsis," for she only reluctantly submits to duty and continues to bitterly curse "*Maladetta politico reale!*" It appears that her impulse to love is not only too strong but also is a positive force in the world, something with which the audience would be in total agreement. Thus, when Orontea gets her heart's desire, we rejoice for her because we have suffered with her and come to know her as the layers of rigid decorum are peeled back to reveal an ardent, loving heart.

Throughout the opera, Orontea's pride is presented as an obstacle to acceptance of her royal obligations. Even though a contemporary audience would have been well schooled in the acceptance of duty, with its effective psychological portrait of the Queen, Cicognini has put his finger on the flaw in the *system* in this opera. The drama with its personal voices of three different women likely had an emotional effect on the audience and convinced them that the Queen's human feelings are more important than obedience to duty; thus, because of the skewed regime of court etiquette, royal "duty" is shown to be unacceptable on a human level.

Nor has society been kinder to the other two central female characters. Unlike her

royal mistress, Silandra has not developed at all, remaining the self-centred femme fatale who plays games with the hearts of others and protects her status. While her behaviour is exaggerated for dramatic effect, it served as a vehicle for Cicognini's pointed satire of the behaviour he witnessed among Florentine aristocracy and undoubtedly struck a chord with the society for which she was created.²⁶⁹

Giacinta is the one character in the opera who experiences full personal growth. She overcomes fear and despair after her unjust rejection by the Queen, she conscientiously weighs her moral obligations, and she does the honourable thing by returning the medallion to Alidoro, thus bringing about the happy resolution of the opera. She also dares to express her love despite its hopeless nature, opening her heart, only to be shut out from love in the end. In short, she develops into exactly the woman her own nature pushes her to become. Giacinta is the character who appears to express the librettist's own vision of ideal womanhood and whose sorry fate stands as a demonstration of the urgent need for change to the system of court etiquette and royal decorum.

A common thread in these characters' struggle with love is a concern for their social status first and foremost. In this opera, the comic complaints of the stock lower-class characters regarding love have a new flavour: while the conventional topoi on love remain, there is a new class-based edge to these criticisms. For example, Tibriano's notion that love makes people crazy is founded on the premise that it causes them to forget their proper place in society, while Gelone intentionally disrupts a budding love affair to mercilessly

²⁶⁹ While most characters in *Oronota* are depicted as suffering from the constraints placed on them by decorum, Alidoro and Silandra could be regarded as individuals who demonstrate more effective forms of adaptation to the society in which they find themselves. From this point of view, Alidoro's fickleness and social climbing become adaptive strategies suited to a precarious social environment. As an artist whose social status is that of an artisan, Alidoro could be conveniently denigrated by aristocratic spectators, perhaps rendering Cicognini's critique of the social atmosphere of the court system more palatable to some audience members.

mock upper-class pretensions. Nor are the principals immune from status-based considerations: Giacinta's gift of the gold medallion to Alidoro is based on her desire to make up for her servant status, and Orontea herself, when forced to give up Alidoro, rejects him based on his social class: "You a king? Base wanderer, extinguish your ill-conceived ardour in the sea of forgetfulness!" Whether of high or low station, all are concerned about social status and reputation, which drive the plot as motivation for the characters.

While the love travails of the female protagonists in *Ormindo* are primarily personal and internal, this is less true of the women in *Orontea*, who are more firmly anchored in external social reality. In this opera, rather than show the development of self-understanding in the female characters, Cicognini presents three individuals whose personal development is either stunted, as in *Orontea*, warped as in *Silandra*, or rejected entirely as in *Giacinta*. Cicognini has crafted a psychological drama with a strong satirical moral tone whose implications are there for spectators who delve below the surface.

CRITICAL MESSAGES OF THE OPERA

The central function of serio-comic literature proposed by Bakhtin is to challenge the power of those in authority through satire and parody. *Orontea* accomplishes this through its combination of broad humour and deceptively biting satire. Librettist Cicognini was no stranger to provocative theatre capable of pricking the sensibilities of the audience, and it is probable that he intended this opera to be interpreted satirically. Both the drama itself and certain elements in his biography support this interpretation.

Recent archival evidence sheds light on the date and reason for Cicognini's hasty departure from Florence, which remained conjectural for many years. In his work as a playwright, Cicognini apparently lampooned lapses of the court society under the rule of

Cardinal de'Medici, who had him beaten publically, precipitating Cicognini's hasty departure for Venice in August 1646.²⁷⁰ This finding confirms persistent rumours of negative reaction to Cicognini's satiric plays in Florence by those in high places, and also provides evidence of his presence in Venice three years earlier than formerly believed.²⁷¹

I conclude that the opera *Orontea* had more contemporary social impact than it has been given credit for. The opera itself assumes a critical stance toward ruling society, both in the portrayal of characters and in the dramatic action. First, it is evident that official distinctions of authority, class, and gender have been turned on their head in this opera in a typical carnivalesque portrayal of authority figures. In this "distorted mirror," the Queen is frequently shown to be out of control and lacking in royal dignity.²⁷² Likewise, her noble *dama di corte* Silandra engages in questionable behaviour for a member of the ruling class. Giacinta, a trusted servant and the woman with the lowest status, is the individual with the highest moral character; she is consistently shown as concerned with behaving honourably, ethically, and with justice toward others. Official rank and merit thus seem to be in inverse

²⁷⁰ Italian scholar Sylvia Castelli's research in the Crinò collection of unedited papers on Cicognini has discovered the following entry in a Florentine state document from August, 1646; see her "Il teatro e la sua memoria," in *Tradurre, riscrivere, mettere in scena*, ed. Maria Grazia Profeti, 85-94 (Florence, IT: Alinea, 1996); cited in Maranini, " 'Il comico nel tragico,' Un indagine," 5.

"Giacinto Andrea in his native city of Florence,[was] beaten with a cudgel on the public street of the central square by a certain Boccardini, well-known hired thug of Cardinal Giovan Carlo de'Medici, Prince of Tuscany, because he learned that that one had brought shame upon him through the profession he was known for."

...*Giacinto Andrea*] in Firenze sua patria in pubblico corso del palio [fu] bastonato da un certo famoso Boccardini ruffian del cardinale Giovan Carlo de'Medici e d'altri Principe di Toscana, per aver saputo che egli l'avesse vituperato per detto mestiero.

²⁷¹ Although never proven, several early scholars maintained that Cicognini left Florence either because of a quarrel, or a death threat, from certain powerful individuals in reaction to his satiric play *Scappini sopra le Dame di Firenze*; he was assumed to have moved to Venice around 1649, when both *Orontea* and *Giasone* were premiered there. See Linda Kay Indian, "Introduction" to *An Edition of Pier Francesco Cavalli's Opera "Il Giasone,"* M.A. Thesis, Smith College, 1974, 10, where she cites Alberto Lisoni's *Un famoso commediographo dimenticato: G. A. Cicognini* (Parma, 1896), Mario Sterzi's *Giornale storico e letterario della Liguria* (Anno III, vol 11-12, Nov-Dec., *La Spezia*, 1903), and Giulio Negri's *Istoria degli scrittori fiorentini* (Firenze, 1722).

²⁷² Venetian opera commonly portrayed male authority figures as powerless before the darts of love. In this case it is the woman of highest standing, the Queen, who is shown to be defenceless in the face of love.

proportion to one another in this portrait of the effects of court etiquette on three women at different social levels.

Secondly, the women in this opera are portrayed as lacking the independence to develop their moral character fully. Again, there is an inverse proportional relationship between rank and personal freedom to act; Giacinta, who has strong personal ethics and judgement, has no power to exercise them, while those whose judgement is clouded by rank are in positions of power – Orontea and Silandra – are the most negatively impacted by their role and social status. The draconian role of etiquette is again the culprit.

Because each of the characters speaks with an independent voice, exactly as Bakhtin advocates, spectators are able to hear these voices individually, directly from the lips of the characters, allowing them to draw their own conclusions about the behaviours they witness. We can conjecture that members of the audience would have been moved by the performance of the opera and thus that they likely empathized with Orontea when she had to sacrifice her personal happiness to the call of duty, just as they may have willingly suspended disbelief and enjoyed the happy ending. But others may have recognized the *lieto fine* (happy ending) for the operatic convention it was, a signifier of restoration of order, and they might also have read in the opera a pointed critique of the way monarchy and court etiquette constrain people's natural human desires and needs. The rigid demands of etiquette deform all human beings but affect those to whom these practices are directed – the rulers – most profoundly of all.

This would have been a conclusion welcomed in the anti-monarchical Republic of Venice and it may also have registered in jurisdictions where the aristocracy was subjected to court etiquette.

EPILOGUE

Adopting a Bakhtinian perspective has proven a productive approach for investigating the musical and the dramatic representation of women in early Venetian opera. This thesis has focussed primarily on three intertwining concepts of Bakhtin essential to understanding these female characters through their voices: the notion of “*polyphonic*” or *multiple voices* both within each character and within the opera as a whole, Bakhtin’s concept of “becoming” as openness to change and growth, and his overarching view of the *carnavalesque*, or *serio-comic*, genre of literature as opposing authority through parody and satire. Placing significant emphasis on the drama has permitted tracing the way the moments of epiphany experienced by each of these characters have led to portraits of the strong yet flawed women who were the centrepieces of Venetian opera in its first two decades. Throughout, music has been of critical importance in revealing the emotions of these operatic women and portraying them as characters with whom audience members could identify. Finally, the thesis has examined how the concerns of contemporary Venetian society are reflected in these operatic portraits of women.

THE WOMEN AND THEIR VOICES

Using Bakhtin’s concept of “polyphonic voices” has brought focus on the contradictory feelings expressed by these operatic characters.²⁷³ The two operas studied in this thesis – Cavalli’s *Ormindo* and Cesti’s *Oronthea* – present female characters torn by inner conflicts. Their ambivalent voices and the riveting play of emotions between these characters become the central features of each work.

²⁷³ The term “voice” is used here primarily to refer to the emotions and inner feelings of the characters as conveyed in both text and music.

In *Ormindo*, flexible recitative and fluid arioso, which delicately reflect the smallest nuances in feeling, are skillfully employed by Cavalli to create two very different protagonists in the abandoned princess Sicile and the unhappy queen Erisbe. Sicile, the abandoned woman, is portrayed as lamenting her tragic fate, alternating between anguish at her plight and rage at her betrayer, while young Queen Erisbe is depicted as a comic flirt playing games with two lovers yet with music that reveals flashes of underlying desperation at her loveless and sexless marriage.

Applying Bakhtin's notion of the *serio-comic* to identify the "comic" and "tragic" (or serious) dimensions of the musical soliloquies and interactions of the female characters in *Ormindo* reveals not only that both women evolve over the course of the opera, but that their trajectories are exactly reversed, for they actually change places on the tragic-comic continuum. Sicile begins as the "tragic" abandoned woman bewailing her fate, but is able to win her beloved by incorporating more of the comic into her personality, while fickle, "comic" Queen Erisbe allows her serious side to emerge, growing into a mature individual who takes responsibility for her actions, with tragic consequences.

In both cases, it is the epiphanies they experience that allow these women to become aware of their character flaws and to alter their behaviour in order to achieve personal happiness. Both characters are represented as having the capacity to grow and develop, demonstrating the quality of unfinalizability, or "becoming," the fundamental openness to change that Bakhtin regards as the essence of humanness. It is the subtle variation of musical setting by Cavalli that permits the changing emotional tenor of the women's voices to emerge clearly. The changes these women undergo over the course of the opera are thus made audible, rendering their transformations emotionally satisfying to auditors.

Orontea contrasts strongly with *Ormindò* by featuring three women whose capacity to develop is limited by their social roles. The portraits of the three central female characters are distinctly drawn through composer Cesti's use of cantata style, where soliloquies are segmented into distinct sections of aria, arioso and recitative. The central protagonist Queen Orontea is constantly in an ambivalent state, conflicted first about whether she is falling in love, and then about how to reconcile love and duty; like Sicile, she too expresses rage at her fate. However, the fickle court lady Silandra, Orontea's rival for the affections of her beloved, dumps lovers without a qualm and is essentially one-dimensional, for she lacks inner voices. Finally, the woman of lowest status is the Queen's loyal servant Giacinta, the only character who learns from experience and shows the quality of openness implied by Bakhtin's term "becoming."

Yet all of these women face a concrete, realistic hurdle: the rigid regime of court etiquette. The characters seem closer to real life but also less able to exercise agency as individuals. All three women are caught in the web of their socially imposed hierarchical roles: from the Queen to loyal servant Giacinta, none seems able to attain her desire.

LAUGHTER, EPIPHANY AND CRITIQUE

Self-awareness plays a different role in each of the two operas studied here, and I suggest that it may be connected to the part played by laughter, which signals the kind of satiric critique offered by *Ormindò* and by *Orontea*.

In *Ormindò*, cathartic insights are essential in enabling the female protagonists to obtain the self-knowledge that brings about meaningful character change. Comic Queen Erisbe undergoes a dramatic turnaround of her affections and her life goals, prompting her to take serious actions that render her worthy of her love in the end, while it is a comic

epiphany that enables Sicile to see that her own deceptions have kept her from reuniting with her estranged lover.

In *Orontea* neither of the female protagonists experiences this kind of cathartic awakening. When Orontea is faced with a choice between acceptance of her duty and her love, her change of mind could be labelled a “pseudo-catharsis” that mimics but does not bring the emotional benefit of a real cathartic epiphany, for she does not fully embrace her decision to give up Alidoro but rather continues to hold onto her anger. Silandra lacks self-awareness and neither sees a need to change her behaviour nor experiences any kind of insight about her behaviour. The only one obtaining cathartic insight is Giacinta, who does undergo a flash of insight that causes her to recognize her need for love, and it this revelation that causes her to take the action that sets in motion the chain of events that brings about the happy resolution of the Queen’s love dilemma.

Laughter also seems to operate differently in these two dramas. In *Ormindo*, laughter is used to highlight the fallible but very human natures of the central characters. Both protagonists are revealed as ridiculous at one point or another in the opera, and it is this that leads to character growth. Laughter is thus interwoven into the main characters, who are portrayed as foolish in their self-deceptions, permitting the spectators to see their full humanity. The critique offered by the opera is Horatian in its treatment of human beings as basically flawed but redeemed by their humanity. The opera conforms most closely to Guarini’s definition of *tragicommedia*, borrowing the trappings of comedy but also keeping the tragic element, making *Ormindo* a drama that imparts the moral that changing oneself *is* possible but not without personal effort.

In *Orontea*, however, laughter appears to be external to the protagonists, primarily

reserved for the hilarious doings of the comic servant characters. Laughter is not used to guide the royal and noble protagonists to recognition of a need to change their behaviour. Of the three central female characters, only the servant Giacinta is able to laugh at herself and also to develop fully as a character. Yet despite Orontea's lack of self-awareness and inability to laugh at herself, she is treated sympathetically in her dilemma between passion and public duty; she is undeniably naive, an innocent caught in Love's web, for even her royal status cannot save her from the foolishness of her human behaviour.

Orontea appears to be a blend of Horatian and Juvenalian satire, a true *serio-comic* work that mixes light and dark, comic and serious. The sympathetic laughter engendered by Orontea's foolishness is accompanied by the pathos stemming from her evident suffering but is also sharpened by the spectators' underlying awareness that, in the real world, she would not have gotten her heart's desire. The Horatian approach that views the foibles of humankind with an accepting eye masks an underlying biting satire, Juvenalian in its desire to correct a serious social ill: the negative effect of court etiquette on the human beings under its sway

The eventual fate of the powerless secondary female characters in these two operas makes clear the difference in their final messages. In *Ormindò*, Queen Erisbe's confidant Mirinda follows the same path as her mistress, experiences her own revelation of her need for love, and finishes the opera joined in marriage to her lover. In *Orontea*, however, loyal servant Giacinta is denied the love she so richly deserves and is locked out of the happy ending, which her own ethical behaviour has made possible for the Queen.²⁷⁴

The critical messages of *Orontea* are thus more complex than those of *Ormindò*. As

²⁷⁴ For the differences between Horatian and Juvenalian satire, see M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 6th ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993), 187-190.

an experienced dramatist, Cicognini was careful not to make an overt political statement, yet perhaps those in aristocratic circles viewing the performances could laugh at the comedy while still registering the critique on a subconscious level.

OPERA: REFLECTION OF VENETIAN CONCERNS

Based on our understanding of issues that were contentious in early seventeenth-century Venice, it is evident that opera was a reflection of the cares and preoccupations of the day, which it brought vividly to life. Due to the Venetian State policy of marriage limitation, marriage had become a political and social problem at the top of every family's concerns, and it was also the central issue around which every serio-comic opera was constructed. Not only did marriage affect personal lives but it also had broader social, political and financial implications, which are often reflected in opera.

Historian Dennis Romano has suggested that one of the reasons opera could speak so clearly to audiences was that it reflected a relatively recent change in the orientation toward family that was occurring across European elite classes. He points to a "new emphasis on personality and feeling," evident in wills and diaries of Venetian patricians, who indicate their unhappiness when they are unable to satisfy the wishes of their offspring in settling their futures.²⁷⁵ This trend to validation of feelings, known as *affective individualism* after the term given it by Lawrence Stone²⁷⁶ is also attested to by Stanley Chojnacki in his study

²⁷⁵ Given the policy that only one daughter and one son could be married, fathers evidently considered the suitability of their children, for marriage or the convent for girls and as head of the household or bachelor for sons. Writing about his daughter, nobleman Nicolò Donà notes in his diary, "I can't afford to make her a nun as I would like and she also wants;" see Dennis Romano, "Commentary: Why Opera? The Politics of an Emerging Genre," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 36, no. 3 (2006): 407.

²⁷⁶ Stone coined the term for changes in family relationships in England in the seventeenth century in *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England: 1500-1800*, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1979), 149-80.

of the wills of Venetian patricians, which reveal bonds of mutual affection and caring.²⁷⁷ At the same time as these concerns with feeling and personality were actively felt, however the policy of marriage limitation meant that the majority of upper-class women would not be permitted to marry.²⁷⁸ The question grappled with by Queen Erisbe in *Ormindo* (geriatric husband or lover?) was topical, for those in Venice lucky enough to marry could expect a bridegroom up to three times their age.

Many early Venetian operas provide models of women charting the course of their own lives, as seen in Sicle and Erisbe in the operas studied in this thesis. Among them are Doriclea the Amazon queen in male disguise seeking to free her country from foreign dominion (*Doriclea*, 1645), and Amastre a cross-dressed princess, who literally fights for the affection of her fiancé, the King of Persia (*Xerse*, 1654).²⁷⁹ There is also Deidamia in *La finta pazza*, 1641), who feigns madness in order to win the man of her choice. Her agency and cleverness might well have served as an inspiration for girls desiring marriage and opposing a future to be spent in a convent. This opera was publicised as teaching fathers “to provide for [their daughters] and foresee the dangers they face,” which appears to be a clear reference to the need for providing dowries and marrying them appropriately.

Marriage wasn't the only topic treated in opera: Venetians were also preoccupied with the wellbeing of the state, and the morality of politicians was a perennial concern. Opera

²⁷⁷ In Venice Stanley Chojnacki found increasing indications of mutual affection and caring for spouses and children in the emotional wording of their wills as well as, in the bequests they stipulated, from the fifteenth century onward; see Chojnacki, “The Power of Love: Wives and Husbands,” Chap.7 in *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 153-68.

²⁷⁸ Jutta Sperling's careful research has reveals that over 60% of patrician females over the age of 13 were residents of a Venetian convent by 1650; *Convents and the Body Politic in Late Renaissance Venice* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999). See also the revealing study of the lives of these women in Mary Laven's *Virgins of Venice: Broken Vows and Cloistered Lives in the Renaissance Convent* (London: Penguin, 2004).

²⁷⁹ In Giulio Strozzi and Francesco Saccati's *La Finta Pazza* (1641), Faustini and Cavalli's *La Doriclea* (1645) and Nicolò Minato and Cavalli's *Xerse* (1654), respectively.

became the ideal vehicle for presenting absorbing moral tales of redemption of corrupt rulers, such as that found in *Ormindo*, where King Ariadeno undergoes a cathartic change to become a compassionate rather than a tyrannical monarch. However, I suggest that for female audience members, the need for women to direct their own lives, whether to marry or not, and to a person of their own choosing, would likely have registered as the most vital theme of *Ormindo*.

Romano concludes that attending the opera was part of the audience's desire to "hear expressed those feelings and emotions that were coming to play a more significant role in their own lives."²⁸⁰ The findings in this thesis confirm this statement and suggest that opera in Venice not only provided a temporary relief from daily worries but, more importantly, endorsed the broader concerns of the elite classes by reflecting their feelings back to them in the emotional dramas they saw enacted on stage.

Gender and power issues were at the centre of early modern European consciousness, and debate in Venice was particularly virulent due to the combination of the tight restrictions on upper-class women and the vaunted freedom of the press. Discussion of the natural human rights of women and their frequently unjust restrictions by fathers and husbands appeared in proto-feminist works by educated Venetian women such as Lucrezia Marinella, Moderata Fonte, and the outspoken nun Arcangela Tarabotti.²⁸¹ Thus, the musical dramas presented on the Venetian stage amplified messages that were already present in society at large, enabling emotions and ideas of audience members to be mirrored when they witnessed women on stage exerting control over their own lives.

²⁸⁰ Romano, "Politics of an Emerging Genre," 407.

²⁸¹ Lucrezia Marinella, *La nobilita, l'eccellenza dell'edonne*; Moderata Fonte, *Il merito delle donne*; and Arcangela Tarabotti, *Semplicità ingannata, Antisatira* and others (see Panizza, *Paternal Tyranny*).

Since opera was performed during the season on Carnival, when theatrical works were expected to deliver risqué entertainment that challenged sexual stereotypes and satirised all types of behaviours, the annually recurrent nature of carnival ensured that the operatic stage could repeatedly feature women carving their own paths and gaining freedom in personal choice regarding their affections. Thus, the possibility of challenging gender roles and striking out on new paths was kept alive in the *social imaginary*.

Finally, it is possible that the emotional drama of *serio-comic* opera might, given the right individual in the right situation, have had a cathartic emotional effect on the spectators themselves. The emotional impact of *serio-comic* opera, filled with pathos as well as comedy, may well have acted like the tragic and comic drama described by Aristotle, where spectators experience catharsis, thereby attaining new clarity about their own emotional lives and acquiring the ability to better handle emotions in the future.²⁸²

An observer at the Mantuan court in 1608 famously reported the reactions of the female listeners to a performance of Monteverdi's "Lament of Arianna" as, "There was not one lady who failed to shed a tear."²⁸³ Suzanne Cusick suggests that the women at Mantua wept because they identified with the sorrow of Arianna as a woman, since they themselves had been socialized into the woman's role in marriage.²⁸⁴ I suggest further that these women were likely experiencing a genuine Aristotelian catharsis of emotions that allowed

²⁸² There is scholarly agreement that the catharsis Aristotle describes occurs in the spectator and not in the hero of the tragedy; see Janko, "From Catharsis to the Aristotelian Mean." See Cooper on the cathartic function of comic laughter in *An Aristotelian Theory of Comedy*, 60-76.

²⁸³ Federico Follino, eyewitness account, cited in Suzanne G. Cusick, "'There Was Not One Lady Who Failed to Shed a Tear': Arianna's Lament and the Construction of Modern Womanhood." *Early Music* 22, no. 1 (1994): 22.

²⁸⁴ In Cusick's words, based on the Venetian Lodovico Dolce's widely reprinted marriage manual, *Dialogo: delle institutione delle donne* (Venice: Giolito, 1560, f 2.r.), women were "trained" for marriage just as one might break in a horse (Dolce's simile).

them to lessen painful real life feelings by weeping for Arianna.²⁸⁵

Certainly, audiences in Venice were equally receptive to opera, a form of theatre that allowed them to lessen the stresses of daily living by experiencing the lives of others on the stage. I conjecture that serio-comic operas that mixed laughter and pain through the depth of emotional connection provided by both dramatic storytelling told in music along with the powerful effect of women's voices, may have been effective at eliciting emotional release for audience members.

FUTURE RESEARCH

There are a number of areas of interest in the early Venetian operatic repertory with which this thesis has not been able to engage. My focus has performed on women, and I have paid scant attention to the male characters. However, my observation that the male protagonists with whom these women are paired do not appear to evolve in these operas as the women do begs to be explored in more depth. As well, Hendrik Schulze's work on the ambivalent hero in epic and drama and the studies of Wendy Heller on the evolving view of masculinity in seventeenth-century opera also invite further study.²⁸⁶

A second area warranting close examination is the concrete musical forms in the comedic scenes of these operatic works. Space considerations have precluded delving deeply into this subject in the thesis, but some incidental findings of this study might bear further investigation. For example, the well-known function of the *aside* as a means of connecting with audiences has both comic and musical implications. While the very act of

²⁸⁵ See Thomas Scheff on the physical manifestations of cathartic release, including tears and laughter; *Catharsis in Healing, Ritual and Drama* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); see also Thomas J. Scheff and Don D. Bushnell, "A Theory of Catharsis," *Journal of Research in Personality* 18, no. 2 (1984): 238-64.

²⁸⁶ See Schulze, *Odysseus in Venedig*, and Wendy Heller, "Reforming Achilles: Gender, 'Opera Seria' and the Rhetoric of the Enlightened Hero," *Early Music* 26, no. 4 (1998): 562-81.

addressing the audience when other characters are on stage provokes a comic response, this type of intervention also typically involves irony and suggests a study of whether ironic and critical comments take specific musical forms. Another technique noted is that of characters referring to themselves by name, seen particularly by male characters, while women often speak of themselves in the third person (such as “*la misera*”), raising the question of whether these differing forms of comic treatment are gendered.

A related technique of note is the wordplay frequently engaged in by comic operatic characters, especially seen in the works of Cicognini. Examples include the dialogue between the stutterer Demo and the courtier Oreste in *Giasona*, and the comic servant Gelone in *Orondea*, who utilizes free word association in a series of absurd non-sequiturs to portray his drunken state. Comic situations involving wordplay have been looked at from a textual point of view by Italian scholars of *commedia dell'arte*, but they also deserve a more thorough look from a musical perspective.²⁸⁷

WOMEN IN VENETIAN OPERA

The Bakhtinian perspective set out in this thesis has permitted us to delve more deeply into the women characters in the early Venetian operas *Ormindo* and *Orondea* in order to understand the emotions conveyed by their polyphonic voices. The librettists and composers of early opera sought to create musical dramas using the “distorted mirror” of comedy, structuring their operatic works using Aristotelian principles to create psychologically satisfying dramas while entertaining with liberal doses of comedy. These musical dramas featured strong women whose character flaws did not diminish their humanity but rather provided the impetus for growth, revealing them as open to

²⁸⁷ Maranini, “Il comico nel tragico”: Un indagine.”

“becoming,” Bakhtin’s term for fulfilling the innate human capacity for change and self-actualization.

In the sacrosanct space and time of Carnival, the Venetian stage served as a place where ideas hovering in the ether of the *social imaginary* could find concrete shape in the voices and bodies of women, representing characters with whose emotional dilemmas the audience could identify. *Serio-comic* early Venetian operas did more than entertain; they touched the spectators deeply and moved them to see their problems a little bit differently, or perhaps even to experience cathartic emotional release, allowing them to leave the theatre better able to cope with the emotional ups and downs of their own lives.

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APPENDIX 1

MUSICAL FORMS IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY OPERA

In our discussion of musical trends in the early period of seventeenth-century opera development a number of different musical forms are mentioned. The following definitions are based on Rosand, *Opera in Venice*.²⁸⁸

1) *Arioso* - Lyrical passage that blossoms out of its recitative context and falls back into it; lacks the structured metre and rhyme of *aria*.

2) *Aria* – A closed form which stands apart from recitative by virtue of its regular metre, its rhyme and often by its syllable structure. Note subtypes below.

3) *Arietta* -- A light “singsong” aria based on a strongly metrical text that is generally lighter in character. Mid-century writers often used “**arietta**” as a synonym for *aria*.²⁸⁹

4) *Mezz’aria* – Short aria (literally, “*half’aria*”) that is musically undeveloped, without accompanying ritornello or repetition and development of text. Term used by some contemporary writers.²⁹⁰

5) *Strophic aria* – An aria with a series of verses (strophes) and a refrain whose text and music remain the same; strophe and refrain each have their own music [**A B A’B’**].

6) *Strophic aria with varied refrain* -- Strophic aria whose refrain has a different text each time, but is recognizable as a refrain because the music stays the same. [**A B A’B’**]

7) *Refrain aria* – Aria beginning and ending with a refrain of one to a few lines (text and music the same or with close variation). Refrain is repeated at end of main section Also occurs in *arioso* form with refrain. [**A B A**].

8) *Bipartite aria* - Aria with two sections differing in content and mood and usually meter as well. [**A B**]

9) *Da capo aria* – Aria with A and B sections of differing dramatic intent and different metre, where A section returns exactly [**A B A**].

²⁸⁸ Rosand, *Opera in Venice*, 279 -80 for 1) - 4).

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 280 n 43.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 280, n 42.

10) *Through-composed aria* – An aria in which the regularity of the rhyming metrical text identifies it as an aria with A and B sections distinguished by contrasting affect; no musical material repeats. [**AB**]

11) *Rondo form* – A musical form in which a particular line or lines recurs three or more times as a unit, yet is not an invariable strophic refrain. [**A B A C A]**

12) *Truncated refrain aria* – Aria with A and B sections as in Refrain aria. However, the A section does not return at the end, even though it is expected; this absence holds a dramatic meaning. [**A/ B / -**]

APPENDIX 2

PROLOGUE TO CESTI'S *ORONTEA* (1649)

Original written by G.A. Cicognini, performed in the Teatro SS. Apostoli in

Venice, 1649

ORONTEA

Drama Musicale,

DEL
D. HIACINTO ANDREA
CICOGNINI,
Academico Inltancabile.

*Da Rappresentarsi in Venetia nel Teatro
di SS. Apostoli.*

Nell' Anno 1649.

ALL'ILLUSTRISSIMO SIGN.

GIOVANNI GRIMANI
Calergi.



IN VENETIA, M.DC.XLIX.

Con Licenza de Superiori, e Privilegio.
Si Vende in Frezzaria per Giacomo Batti.

Gr. 3104

9

P R O L O G O .

LA SCENA RAPPRESENTA.
Il mar Rosso.

Due Tritoni: Sirena In mare:
Amore in vna nube , che
Viene allargando .

1 Trit. **S** Pirano ardorè
Questo marine

2 Trit. Son'tutto foco
L'umide Stille

1 e 2 Trit. Per l'onde brillanti
Guizzano i Pesci Amanti

Sir. Se del marino e biostro
Ogni Nume, ogni Mostro
Per queste algose Valli
Guida festosi balli,
Dalte muscose Arene
Festeggiamo ancor noi Ninfe, e Sirene

1 Trit. Stendè in aria i vanni d'oro
Chiara nube
Che deffonde diluce ampio Tesoro

2 Trit. Tanto ardor vien di la sù
A incenerir quest'onde
Forse il Ciel piomba qua giù

A 5

Sir.

10

Sir. Cinto Amore
Di splendore
Maest' so à noi sen'viene
Festeggiamo ancor noi Ninfe, e Sirene

I

Amore. Deità di quest'acque
Nel cui sen Venere nacque:
Vdite Amore
Che per domar vna beltà superba
Che il suo gran' nume offese
Oggi s' accinge à memorande imprese

I I

La Regina di Egitto,
Che sprezzo mio dardo inuitto,
Impari, che Amore
Da legge al mondo e all' uniuerso Impera
E tra pianti, e sospiri
Bersaglio di miei strali arda, e sospiri
Sir. Se all' apparir del tuo Dinin sembante
Abrucian questi lidi
O gran Monarca infante,
Ben di quel Regio cor
Tuo valor
Trionferà,
E la bella Crontea
Arderà
Cederà

Lez Trit. Arderà,

Cede-

Cederà

La Superba beltà

Più pomposa,

Più fastosa

La tua gloria al fin sarà.

Arderà

Cederà

La superba beltà

Amo. Questo strale

Immortale

Guereggi, trionfi in questo dè

Ferisca

Colpisca

Quell' Alma fiera, che tanto ardè

Io del proteruo core

Alle vittorie intento

Lascio il polo,

E al par del vento

Al Regno de mortali abbasso il volo;

Ecco in terra

Donne belle

Vn che guerra

Fa alle Stelle:

Ma de vostri sembianti al puro ardore

Resta ammirato, e innamorato Amore

Più degl' astri del Ciel,

Che scintillano sì

I veri occhi da me belle si onorano

A 6 Quel-

Iz

*Quelli al fin non m'innamorano
Et i veri occhi si, si, si:*

prim.e

2. Trit.e

Sir.

} *Se à punir vn cor seucro*

Sdegnato arciero

Amor sen va,

Arderà

Cederà

La superba beltà.

AT-

APPENDIX 3 -- MUSICAL EXAMPLES: CAVALLI'S *ORMINDO*

(Full scene if measures not specified)

SICLE

Ex.3.1	Act I.4	Sicle: " <i>O bel giovane</i> "	mm. 5 - 7
Ex. 3.2a	Act I.5	Sicle: " <i>Perfidissimo Amida</i> "	
Ex. 3.2b	Act I.5.	Sicle: " <i>Chi, chi mi toglie al die?</i> "	mm. 7 - 55
Ex. 3.3	Act III.4 Opening:	Amida: " <i>Che rimiro?</i> "	mm. 1 - 8
		Sicle: " <i>Ancor satio non sei?</i> "	mm. 9 - 24
Ex. 3.4	Act III.4	Amida: " <i>Sicle, Sicle!</i> "	mm. 38 - 49
		Sicle: " <i>Ancor l'angue del Nilo?</i> "	mm. 50 - 61
Ex. 3.5	Act III.4	Sicle: " <i>Ma che?. Uscite furie!</i> "	mm. 62 - 70
		Sicle: " <i>Ah nò, non venite</i> "	mm. 71 - 79
Ex. 3.6	Act III.4	Amida: " <i>Da che...á poco á poco</i> "	mm. 86 - 107
Ex. 3.7	Act III.4	Amida: " <i>Lasso d'ogni speranza</i> "	mm. 124 - 133
		Sicle: " <i>Viva son, se tu m'ami</i> "	mm. 133 - 149
Ex. 3.8	Act III.4	Sicle: " <i>Non son qual credi</i> "	mm. 193 - 201
		Amida " <i>Và in pace, ombra vezzosa</i> "	mm. 202 - 211
		Sicle: " <i>Qual fatica è la mia!</i> "	mm. 212 - 213

ERISBE

Ex. 3.9	Act I.7	Erisbe: " <i>Se nel sen di giovanetti</i> "	mm. 1 - 47
Ex. 3.10	Act II.1	Erisbe & Mirinda " <i>Aure trecce immanelata</i> "	mm. 1 - 54
Ex. 3.11	Act III.12	Erisbe & Ormindo: " <i>Ah, questo è l'himeneo?</i> "	mm. 1 -
174			

MIRINDA

Ex. 3.12	Act I.7	Mirinda: " <i>Mal si conviene\, Ti compiango, Reina.</i> "	
Ex. 3.13	Act III.1	Mirinda: " <i>In grembo al caro, caro amato</i> "	mm. 1 - 22

3 ARIOSO REFRAIN
Ex. 3.2 b: Act I, Side: "Chi, chi mi toglie al die?"

7 **SECT. 1**

Chi, chi mi to - glie al die?

11

di - a, di - a, Chi mi to - glie al die?

15

to - san De - le sta - giu - ne na - e?

19 **Refrain within refrain**

Intensifies emotion

Imitation up P4

chi, chi mi to - glie al die?

Ex. 3.2 b

24 **RIPORELLINO**

29 **Dramatic RECITATIVE**

Down -6 on "bitter"

An - gi - so - sa al - ti - vo - ta, Se - lan - to fi - ere se - re - re,

33 **Rises for question: "Why?"**

Falling on wish for death

Per - che, que - ste non in - via - de - re?

36

In ma vi - ta pi - na non - pu - va più la mi - sa - ra, non vi - va

Ex. 3.2 b (cont.)

Ex. 3.8: Act III.4 Sicile: "Non son qual credi"

19

Rising line =
despair

SICILE

Reassures
Descends, reassuring

Negative

20

Reassures
Tritone = fear

Rising line =
suggestion

21

Reassures
Tritone = fear

Rising line =
suggestion

22

AMIDA

Bids farewell to "spirit"

23

Descending chromatic bass line

24

Repetition and elongation of farewell

25

SICILE

Repeat of chromatic descending bass line

Aside expresses comic exasperation!

Ex. 3.8

Ex. 3.9: Act I.7 Erisbe: "Se nel sen di giovanetti"

13

ERISBE

REFRAIN

Ascending sequence

Short notes + bouncy = lighthearted

14

conveys anticipated sexual delight

15

Dramatic slowing of harmonic rhythm

Descending line = exaggerates her horrible fate

16

Repeated up tritone

Intensifies complaint

17

(Parodic effect)

Ex. 3.9

19 2 violins, alternating and coming together, showing harmony of the 2 women
[RIGORIELLO]

37

Viol. I

Viol. II

39

40

Finishing with Refrain with both singers together

41

42

ESURISE

Aut - te pas - san - na tis - se

Ex. 3.10 (cont.)

18

34

35

36

de - ta, pas - sa - de - te

di - Vol - unt - as - ta, pas - sa - de - te, pas -

cor

36

37

38

te - tu - di - je - pi

de - te - Con - tu

39

40

41

mi - si - me - di - (sore - di)

o - ra - ga - ra - tu - si - pro -

Ex. 3.10 (cont.)

23 **ASPIRADO** **1x**
 Continua LAMENT
 Non ti do - lar,

9
 2x
 Non ti do - lar, non ti do - lar, do - lar do - lar do - lar do - lar

10
 1x
 Non vol - lag - gar,

11
 2x
 non vol - lag - gar.

3x
 LAMENT Interrupted
 gar - mo Co - ra,

37
 Que - re - la - ti del

37
 Che - lo Cri - sta - do non do - lar, U - la - ti del

Ex. 3.11 (cont.)

31
 5
 re - a - do - ar - bo - ra - no, ut - bor - no - gis - no - ar - let - ti, Char -

35
 6
 det - do - re - a - do - re in - fan - tar - ci - mag - gis - tu - men - to i

39
 7
 pet - ti - Co - di - tu - per - bo - a - di - que -

43
 8
 sa - us - su - me [Trasoli - ri - ce] tra - di -

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Ex. 3.11 (cont.)

ARIA LAMENT

27 *rit.*
 per - te - rum - que - cae - les - tes - spi - ritus - san - ctus - qui - ex - pat - ri - bus - pro - ce - dit - qui - se - dit - ad - dex - te - ram - pa - tris - qui - cum - pa - tre - spi - ri - tu - con - spi - ritus - et - con - glo - ber - a - tus - qui - cum - pa - tre - spi - ri - tu - con - spi - ritus - et - con - glo - ber - a - tus - qui - cum - pa - tre - spi - ri - tu - con - spi - ritus - et - con - glo - ber - a - tus

28 *rit.*
 qui - se - dit - ad - dex - te - ram - pa - tris - qui - cum - pa - tre - spi - ri - tu - con - spi - ritus - et - con - glo - ber - a - tus

29 *rit.*
 qui - se - dit - ad - dex - te - ram - pa - tris - qui - cum - pa - tre - spi - ri - tu - con - spi - ritus - et - con - glo - ber - a - tus

30 *rit.*
 qui - se - dit - ad - dex - te - ram - pa - tris - qui - cum - pa - tre - spi - ri - tu - con - spi - ritus - et - con - glo - ber - a - tus

31 *rit.*
 qui - se - dit - ad - dex - te - ram - pa - tris - qui - cum - pa - tre - spi - ri - tu - con - spi - ritus - et - con - glo - ber - a - tus

32 *rit.*
 qui - se - dit - ad - dex - te - ram - pa - tris - qui - cum - pa - tre - spi - ri - tu - con - spi - ritus - et - con - glo - ber - a - tus

Ex. 3.11 (cont.)

ARIA LAMENT

33 *rit.*
 qui - se - dit - ad - dex - te - ram - pa - tris - qui - cum - pa - tre - spi - ri - tu - con - spi - ritus - et - con - glo - ber - a - tus

34 *rit.*
 qui - se - dit - ad - dex - te - ram - pa - tris - qui - cum - pa - tre - spi - ri - tu - con - spi - ritus - et - con - glo - ber - a - tus

35 *rit.*
 qui - se - dit - ad - dex - te - ram - pa - tris - qui - cum - pa - tre - spi - ri - tu - con - spi - ritus - et - con - glo - ber - a - tus

36 *rit.*
 qui - se - dit - ad - dex - te - ram - pa - tris - qui - cum - pa - tre - spi - ri - tu - con - spi - ritus - et - con - glo - ber - a - tus

37 *rit.*
 qui - se - dit - ad - dex - te - ram - pa - tris - qui - cum - pa - tre - spi - ri - tu - con - spi - ritus - et - con - glo - ber - a - tus

38 *rit.*
 qui - se - dit - ad - dex - te - ram - pa - tris - qui - cum - pa - tre - spi - ri - tu - con - spi - ritus - et - con - glo - ber - a - tus

39 *rit.*
 qui - se - dit - ad - dex - te - ram - pa - tris - qui - cum - pa - tre - spi - ri - tu - con - spi - ritus - et - con - glo - ber - a - tus

40 *rit.*
 qui - se - dit - ad - dex - te - ram - pa - tris - qui - cum - pa - tre - spi - ri - tu - con - spi - ritus - et - con - glo - ber - a - tus

Ex. 3.11 (cont.)

Ex. 3.12: Act I.7 Mirinda:
"Mal si conviene"/Ti compiangi, Reina"

31

Short repeated notes convey strong affirmation of Queen

MIRINDA:
Mal si con-vie-ne in ve-ro Com-pian-gi-ati-ta d'o-ro à chi dar-pen - se

Slowly rising line mirrors rising hopes dashed by a mane of white hair* (falling 8th)

Downward PS conveys negative situation

32

Ne l'a-gi-ate d'A-mu-re Po-ve-ri in di-ve-go-re, Sen-za po-ter fe-li-ci-tà

Lively dancing rhythm

33

pi-gri vec-chi-er-zà il so-litar-di-re. Tu com-

30

ORAMINDO (cont.):

let-ter d'A-mo-ri-ze.

Non l'ol-trag-giar.

2x

non l'ol-trag-giar. non l'ol-trag-giar. mio Co-

3x

re, mio co-ri.

30

Ex. 3.11 (cont.)

Ex. 3.12

EX. 3.13: Act III.9 Miranda: "In grembo al caro, caro amato"

33 METABOLA
Use of rests give this 4/4 a rocking feel imitating motion of sea

38 Short repeated notes convey urgency
Repetition + rising line convey envy of Erisebe's flight

40 High point: She envies Erisebe's state of being loved
Rising exclamations as she imagines love

42 Sexual pleasure over 2 1/2 bars
Decent as she imagines being told she is loved, and being kissed

46

EX. 3.13

32

30 Upward leap conveys youthful hopes ("laughing April of youth")

27 Falling P8 for "frozen old man" by tritone
Further emphasized

EX. 3.12 (cont.)

APPENDIX 4 - MUSICAL EXAMPLES: CESTI'S *ORONTEA*

(Full scene if measures not specified)

ORONTEA:

- Ex. 4.1 Act I.1 Orontea: "*Superbo Amore*"
- Ex. 4.2 Act I.2 Creonte & Orontea: "*E pur sempre fastosa*"
- Ex. 4.3 Act I.5 Orontea: "*Ardo, lassa, o non ardo?*"
- Ex. 4.4 Act I.9 Orontea & Alidoro: "*Facciò che vuoi*" mm. 78 - 85
- Ex. 4.5 a Act II.1 Orontea: "*Se non vedo Alidoro*"
 Ex. 4.5 b "*Adorisi sempre*"
 Ex. 4.5 c "*Amor, ah. ti conosco*"
 Ex. 4.5 d "*Amore, amore?*"
- Ex. 4.6 Act II.5 Orontea & Creonte (conclus.) "*Così arrogante?*" mm. 25 - 35
- Ex. 4.7 Act II.13 Orontea: "*E che vorresti?*" mm. 1 - 44
- Ex. 4.8 a Act II.17 Orontea: "*Intorno all'idol mio*" mm. 1 - 35
 Ex. 4.8 b "*Ohimè, non son più mia*"
 Ex. 4.8 c "*Ma nel mio cor sepolto*"
 Ex. 4.8 d "*Leggi, leggi, o mio caro*"
 Ex. 4.8 e "*Dormi, dormi, ben mio*" mm. 127-151
- Ex. 4.9 a Act.III.4 Creonte & Orontea: "*A così infausto segno?*"
 Ex. 4.9 b Orontea: "*Maledette grandezze!*"
- Ex. 4.10 Act III.5 Orontea: (conclus.) "*Temerario, arrogante!*" mm. 21- 39
- Ex. 4.11 Act III.20 Orontea: (conclus.) "*Innocente mio tesoro*" mm. 170- 215

SILANDRA:

- Ex. 4.12 Act I.8 Silandra: "*Come dolce, m'invaghi il bell'oro*" mm. 1 - 28
- Ex. 4.13 a Corindo & Silandra: "*Spunta in ciel*" mm. 90 -116
 Ex. 4.13 b Corindo & Silandra: "*Quanto cara è tua beltà*" mm. 129 -184
- Ex. 4.14 a Act I.11 Alidoro & Silandra: "*Donzelletta, vezzoletta*" mm. 44- 99
 Ex. 4.14 b Alidoro & Silandra: "*Or s'amore...Stringi pur*" mm. 168- 199

- Ex. 4.15 Act II.8 Silandra: "*Addio, Corindo. Addio!*" mm. 1 - 17
 Ex. 4.16 Silandra: "*Vieni, Alidoro, vieni!*" mm. 18- 85

GIACINTA:

- Ex. 4.17 Act II.7 Giacinta: "*Dove, dove, infelice me?*"
 Ex. 4.18 Aristeia & Giacinta: "*Poche stille amorose*" mm. 75- 96
 Ex. 4.19 Act II.10 Giacinta: "*Mie pene, che fate?*"
 Ex. 4.20 Giacinta: "*Infelice cor mio*"
 Ex. 4.21 Act III.12 Giacinta: "*Il mio ben dice*" mm. 37 - 99

5. REFRAIN 15 bars

39

si - ni - si, si - ni - si, si - ni - si, si - ni - si

43

si - ni - si, si - ni - si

46

si - ni - si, si - ni - si

6. EUCONCELLO 17 bars

49

Ec. 4.1 (cont.)

51

Ec. 4.1 (cont.)

Ex. 4.2. Act 1.2. Creonte & Oromitea: "E pur sempre fastosa"

CREONTE RECITATIVE
High register = frate, upset

E pur sem- pre in- do- ra, Di- ti- ber- tis, ti man- to. E gran- de cor- tu-

Al- le pre- ghe- ro- mi- ni- E di- g- na- sal- di- do- ra- ren- ti, Di- g- ni- us- a- to

Continues very frate

de- g- na, De- que non- nar- das- que- ri, E non- mi- g- ra- ho- rit- ty- Sin- te- re- ra- con'

ARIOSO = Signals importance of message

E- ti- er- o- di- a- ti- (4) E- ti- er- o- di- a- ti- (4)

ter- g- na- de- re- co- gli- Ma non- fi- uo- con- a- gli- so- la- no

Ex. 4.2

ARIOSO = importance of message

ed- di- g- na- fan- ta- am- ma- o- che- non- do- cu- per- bi- le- re- co- gli- e

OROMITEA

I- co- di- di- ur- me- re- to- tu- ur- ge- A- mo- re- fo- di- do- po- sta- non- uo- ra

to- di- non- to- non- am- bi- con- E- ti- er- o- g- na- non- ar- per- bi- do- non- ho- ri- ti- a- non- do- cu- per

Partial repetition

per- bi- do- non- ho- ri- ti- a- non- do- cu- per

Repetition up 41

Al- ma- non- lo- non- am- bi- con- E- ti- er- o- g- na- non- ar- per- bi- do- non- ho- ri- ti- a- non- do- cu- per

Ex. 4.2 (cont.)

Ex. 4.5 b Act II.1 Orotica: "Adornati sempre"

1 violin only: Echo at pitch =
disjuncte

15

16

ad - or - na - ti - bus - sem - pre

Rep. Text and Melody

Echo down P4

17

18

do - ri - ti - bus - sem - pre

V 1. Echo up P5

19

20

na - tal - it - em

Rep. text down P4

Ex. 4.5 b

Echo

21

22

ne - cess - a - rii - sunt - ut - qui - se - qu - i - tur

Up P8

23

24

qui - se - qu - i - tur - se - qu - i - tur

Motive B

25

26

le - na - do - gli - a

Ex. 4.5 b (cont.)

Ascending = increasing rage

23. **B** **C**
 cca-qua-ri, Bor-jo-mi-ri-cha-ri di-la-cou-ri-gue-ri, Gai-vi-sha-ri-ou, vi-rem-fo-ge-ri
 24. **D**
 "Fall to the ground"
 a-que-co-ri-gue-ri, a-que-co-ri-gue-ri, Tu-gi-ri-cou-ri-gue-ri, a-que-co-ri-gue-ri
 25. **E**
 Es-tu-que-ri-gue-ri, a-que-co-ri-gue-ri, Tu-gi-ri-cou-ri-gue-ri, a-que-co-ri-gue-ri
 26. **F**
 Ri-ou-ri-gue-ri, a-que-co-ri-gue-ri, Tu-gi-ri-cou-ri-gue-ri, a-que-co-ri-gue-ri
 27. **G**
 Ri-ou-ri-gue-ri, a-que-co-ri-gue-ri, Tu-gi-ri-cou-ri-gue-ri, a-que-co-ri-gue-ri
 28. **H**
 Ri-ou-ri-gue-ri, a-que-co-ri-gue-ri, Tu-gi-ri-cou-ri-gue-ri, a-que-co-ri-gue-ri

Ex. 4.7 (cont.)

STROPHIC ARIA

Ex. 4.8 a Act II, 17 Orontea: "Informe all' idol mio"

29. **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 30. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 31. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 32. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 33. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 34. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 35. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 36. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 37. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 38. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 39. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 40. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 41. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 42. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 43. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 44. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 45. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 46. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 47. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 48. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 49. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 50. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 51. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 52. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 53. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 54. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 55. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 56. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 57. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 58. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 59. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 60. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 61. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 62. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 63. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 64. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 65. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 66. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 67. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 68. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 69. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 70. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 71. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 72. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 73. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 74. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 75. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 76. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 77. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 78. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 79. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 80. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 81. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 82. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 83. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 84. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 85. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 86. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 87. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 88. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 89. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 90. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 91. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 92. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 93. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 94. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 95. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 96. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 97. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**
 98. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R**

27

28

le - ti, cor - te - si - ga - ni .

Detailed description: This block contains musical notation for measures 27 and 28. It consists of four staves: two for the vocal line (treble clef) and two for the piano accompaniment (bass clef). The vocal line includes lyrics: "le - ti, cor - te - si - ga - ni .". Measure 27 shows the vocal line starting with a quarter note 'le', followed by a half note 'ti', and a quarter rest. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Measure 28 continues the vocal line with a half note 'cor', a quarter note 'te', a quarter note 'si', and a quarter note 'ga', followed by a quarter rest. The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern.

27

28

re - ti - bus .

Et nos . le - gi - mus . et re - fer - re .

Repeat Phrase 2

Detailed description: This block contains musical notation for measures 27 and 28. It consists of four staves: two for the vocal line (treble clef) and two for the piano accompaniment (bass clef). The vocal line includes lyrics: "re - ti - bus .", "Et nos . le - gi - mus . et re - fer - re .". A bracket labeled "Repeat Phrase 2" spans the second and third measures of the vocal line. The piano accompaniment features a consistent eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

27

28

cus - ti - tu - to per - nos .

ba - tis - ta - te - lo - quens .

cor -

Ex. 4.8a (cont.)

Detailed description: This block contains musical notation for measures 27 and 28. It consists of four staves: two for the vocal line (treble clef) and two for the piano accompaniment (bass clef). The vocal line includes lyrics: "cus - ti - tu - to per - nos .", "ba - tis - ta - te - lo - quens .", "cor -". The piano accompaniment features a consistent eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

Ex. 4.8 a (cont.)

Ex. 4.8a (cont.)

Ex. 4.8 b Act II, 17 Oroncea: "Olimè, non son più mia" 34

Musical score for Act II, 17 Oroncea: "Olimè, non son più mia". The score is in C major, 4/4 time. It shows a vocal line with lyrics: "Olimè, non son più mia". A red box highlights the first two measures of the vocal line.

Descends on "prey of death"

Musical score for Act II, 17 Oroncea: "Olimè, non son più mia". The score is in C major, 4/4 time. It shows a vocal line with lyrics: "Olimè, non son più mia". A red box highlights the first two measures of the vocal line.

Musical score for Act II, 17 Oroncea: "Olimè, non son più mia". The score is in C major, 4/4 time. It shows a vocal line with lyrics: "Olimè, non son più mia". A red box highlights the first two measures of the vocal line.

Ascending gesture = happy
Repetition up P6 = happy

Musical score for Act II, 17 Oroncea: "Olimè, non son più mia". The score is in C major, 4/4 time. It shows a vocal line with lyrics: "Olimè, non son più mia". A red box highlights the first two measures of the vocal line.

Ex. 4.8 b

Musical score for Act II, 17 Oroncea: "Olimè, non son più mia". The score is in C major, 4/4 time. It shows a vocal line with lyrics: "Olimè, non son più mia". A red box highlights the first two measures of the vocal line.

Musical score for Act II, 17 Oroncea: "Olimè, non son più mia". The score is in C major, 4/4 time. It shows a vocal line with lyrics: "Olimè, non son più mia". A red box highlights the first two measures of the vocal line.

Musical score for Act II, 17 Oroncea: "Olimè, non son più mia". The score is in C major, 4/4 time. It shows a vocal line with lyrics: "Olimè, non son più mia". A red box highlights the first two measures of the vocal line.

Musical score for Act II, 17 Oroncea: "Olimè, non son più mia". The score is in C major, 4/4 time. It shows a vocal line with lyrics: "Olimè, non son più mia". A red box highlights the first two measures of the vocal line.

Ex. 4.8 b (cont.)

Ex. 4.8 e Act II.17 Otonica: "Ma nel mio cor sepolto"

36

106 Ma nel mio cor se - pol - to Non vo le-ria lo-sser

109 **Power-akzents**

110 **Chromaticism = sexual allusion Rep. up P4**

111 **Rep. of b. 109-110 down P5 = neg. affect**

112 **Rep. of b. 111 down 1 tone**

113 **Rep. of b. 113 down P5**

Repetition = intensity

Ex. 4.8 e

Ex. 4.8 d Act II.17 Otonica: "Leggi, leggi, o mio caro"

37

120 **RECITATIVE**

121 **High notes = intensity**

122 **Tritone leading to her "ardour" = sex**

STROPHIC ARIA

Ex. 4.8 e Act II.17 Otonica: "Dormi, dormi, ben mio"

Exact rep.

128 **STROPHIC ARIA**

Exact rep.

Lulaby - calm, peaceful

Ex. 4.8 d & Ex. 4.8 e

Ex. 4.9 a Act III.4 Creonte & Oronca: "A così infuisto segno?"⁴⁰
OPERA
DRAMATIC RECITATIVE Creonte's impassioned

1 A co-sì in-fu-isto se-gno? In-giù - da, sco-ma-gli-a, Un - amo - de - sta - to a - do - re, un

2 Plea for Oronca to give up Alidoro
 Describing Oronca's each gesture higher: F

3 La - bi - si - na d'è - gi - tu, Di - to - lo - me - o - la fi - gura,

4 Description of Alidoro's each gesture's lower:
 A G G Euf C
 un - pit - to - re - can - te, ad - un - gi - to - gra - m - me - gli - to - sta - crabi - con - do - ra - di - re - gna,

5 Highest point of phrase on lilt sext! Oronca's negative actions
 di - ti - xerò, k - bo? Di - o, do - da - te - ces - sa - ti

Ex. 4.9 a

Word painting:
 4) demolish the throne break the scepter brink of ruin
 de - mo - li - sta il tro - no, spe - sta il sce - tro, i pre - ci - pi - ar - mi - pre - sti, E via ven - ge - gna e

5) "Pride"
 Word painting "trample on"
 in - te - tu - ta per - gna - re - al - qua - s'è cal - po - sti Le - li - gger - so - za - tu - e Ad - giu -

6) Describing Alidoro's behaviour
 Boasts he is "king" Makes people
 "puffed up"
 que - ri - li - cre - re - so - sta - di - h - si - van - ta - Roy, di - bli - mi - ab - ba - gi - giu - tu, E in

7) majesty unworthy
 Word painting
 "untuns" the flag
 ma - sta - de - ra - de - gra - de - ca - rit - ta - de - i - gna - ga - in - za - gna.

8) Rising line
 Action required on chord tones
 Al - yo - po - to, Al - de - ca - ri - vi - le - De - ti - bo - gra - gio - sto - re,

Ex. 4.9 a (cont.)

RAGE RECITATIVE

Ex. 4.10 Act III.5 Oroncea: "Temerario, arrogante!" 46

ORONCEA Rising line as fury grows Negative affect = down p5

Te-que-na-ni-u ar-ro-gan-te! To re, in mi-co-nser-ve, ar-ro-con- sult, Che-per-ro-pi-ni-mal-za-re!

Intertwining chain

24 "Icarus fell" = falling line Tritone on "vain hope" -3 on "vile"

I-ca-ro cad-de, E che dum va-por-ur pre-mio mor-tu?

VI-le-si-ano va-

29 Chromatic slide "Put out his 'fire' in the sea of forgetfulness"

gurek, Nel-mad-be-re-sa-to = bli-er! Sp-gar-dl'ev-za-mal-za-to, E-dal' as-pe-cto-mu-4, In-cu! (Te-ks-ta-a ma-ke-

31 Leave "forever!" Negative affect down p5 "And don't return!"

ad, as-pa-ga-lu-ita, Ti di-ko-qui-por-son-pre o-pi-a non tor-tu!

Oroncea scans up the letter and departs

Ex. 4.11 Act III.20 Oroncea & Alidoro (Conclusion): "Innocente mio tesoro!"

47 ARIA 33 175 176 177 178

Con a - mo - to - sal-ub - vi -

179 Rep. up a tone

Flo - ri - di - co, mio be - no, Ti ber - no, di ber - no.

180 Rep. down a tone

E ber - no - per - ma - ri - lo -

181 Verse down -3

a - mo - to - sal-ub - vi -

182 Chromatic slide on "loving"

183 Repeat of entire verse

Flo - ri - di - lo - no, mio be - no, Ti ber - no.

Ex. 4.11

Ex. 4.13 b Act 1.8 Corindo & Silandra: "Quanto cara è tua beltà"
A Section (slow and dreamy)

ALLEGRETTO Alternating voices

52

Corindo: Mio, de - si - a

Silandra: Tut, to

Repetition Intensifies

Corindo: Mio, in - sto - ro

Silandra: Mio, de - so - lo

Sing together for 4 bars

176

Corindo: Quan - to cara è tua beltà

Silandra: Quan - to cara è tua beltà

B Section (presto)

180

Corindo: Per la que - sto cor, re - so - lo da - mio - re Be - a - to sem - pre

Silandra: Per

Repeat of entire

53

Corindo: De qua - sto cor, re - so - lo da - mio - re Be - a - to sem - pre

Silandra: Per la que - sto

phrases together

177

Corindo: cor, re - so - lo da - mio - re Be - a - to sem - pre

Silandra: Per la que - sto cor, re - so - lo da - mio - re Be - a - to sem - pre

A section (slow and dreamy) - repeats exactly

181

Corindo: Per la que - sto cor, re - so - lo da - mio - re Be - a - to sem - pre

Silandra: Per

Ex. 4.13 b (cont.)

57

58

Ornamented notes on "heart" show her extreme feelings

59

60

Melismatic extension - Even more extreme

61

62

[RITORNELLO]
[VERSES 3 & 4 with RITORNELLO] Alternating between lowers

Ex. 4.14 a (cont.)

56

57

Repetition and variation of melody

58

59

[RITORNELLO]

60

61

Verse 2
Begins with same melody
Varied to represent "reverence"

62

63

64

65

Same melodic line but with rhythmic variation
Variation up PB

66

67

Ex. 4.14 a (cont.)

DUET ARIA

Ex. 4.14 b Act 1, 8 Alidoro & Silandra: "Or s'amore... Stringi pur"
Sing together — harmonize closely — finish together 58

58
Or sà - no - re. Or miel - to - re (Woman ornaments)
Or sà - no - re. Per mel - di - re.

Starts starts apart

63
Dol - ce - men - te. In ti - so - ni. Min di - li - ta - to.
Dol - ce - men - te. In ti - so - ni. Que - do - per - to - que - do.

When sing different words, offset by 1 bar for clarity

Finish all final phrases together
imitative — same rhythm

67
ma di - le - tu - ra. Stringi - gi - pur, stringi - gi - pur.
per - to - Stringi - gi - pur, stringi - gi - pur. Es'

Ex. 4.14 b

71
La - no - ta - re - ti. Si - tu - gi - fur - no - ta - re.
La - no - ta - re - ti. Si - tu - gi - fur - no - ta - re.

Offset, imitative

Final phrase finished together (woman ornaments)

75
La - no - ta - re - ti. Si - tu - gi - fur - no - ta - re.
La - no - ta - re - ti. Si - tu - gi - fur - no - ta - re.

79
per - to - Stringi - gi - pur, stringi - gi - pur.
per - to - Stringi - gi - pur, stringi - gi - pur. Es'

Ex. 4.14 b (cont.)

Ex. 4.15 Act II.8 Silandra: "Addio, Corinaldo, Addio!"

Emphatic repetition down -3
 Minor key = vocals with love
 Uses sixteenth notes

"Power-sixteenths" descend 1 octave, then rise = Show her power!

Elaborate ornamentation on "five" of love.

Repeat of whole first phrase

Repetition down -3
 Retraces same notes

Ex. 4.15

LAMENT
Ex. 4.16 Act II.8 Silandra: "Vieni, Alidoro, vieni!"

1 Descending intrachord ostinato

Instrumental and vocal "voices" alternate throughout, overlapping on final note.

One full cycle before vocal line begins

Ex. 4.16 3

62

63

so - la - ti - ni - ter

6

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 62 through 65. It features four staves: two for the vocal line (Soprano and Alto) and two for the piano accompaniment (Right and Left Hand). The vocal line begins with the lyrics 'so - la - ti - ni - ter' and includes a fermata over the final note. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. Measure numbers 62, 63, and 6 are indicated.

64

65

6

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 64 through 67. It features four staves: two for the vocal line (Soprano and Alto) and two for the piano accompaniment (Right and Left Hand). The vocal line continues with the lyrics 'so - la - ti - ni - ter'. The piano accompaniment continues with harmonic support. Measure numbers 64, 65, and 6 are indicated.

66

67

7

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 66 through 69. It features four staves: two for the vocal line (Soprano and Alto) and two for the piano accompaniment (Right and Left Hand). The vocal line continues with the lyrics 'so - la - ti - ni - ter'. The piano accompaniment continues with harmonic support. Measure numbers 66, 67, and 7 are indicated.

68

69

5

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 68 through 71. It features four staves: two for the vocal line (Soprano and Alto) and two for the piano accompaniment (Right and Left Hand). The vocal line continues with the lyrics 'so - la - ti - ni - ter'. The piano accompaniment continues with harmonic support. Measure numbers 68, 69, and 5 are indicated.

63

64

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Ex. 4.16 (cont.)

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Ex. 4.16 (cont.)

A section Ex. 4.19 Act V.10 Giacinta: "Mie pene, che fate?" 72

Musical score for Ex. 4.19, Act V.10, Giacinta's "A section". The score includes vocal lines for Soprano and Alto with lyrics: "Mie pe - na, che is - to / per - dison - a". An "Echo" section is marked above the vocal lines. A blue box highlights the instrumental accompaniment in the lower staves.

Accompanied by DA CAPO ARIA
- Echo effect creates dialogue between vocal and instrumental lines
- Plaintive mood, 8 minor

Musical score for Ex. 4.19, Act V.10, Giacinta's "A section" (continued). The score includes vocal lines for Soprano and Alto with lyrics: "per - dison - a - to / per - dison - a - to". An "Echo" section is marked above the vocal lines.

Ex. 4.19

Musical score for Ex. 4.19, Act V.10, Giacinta's "A section" (continued). The score includes vocal lines for Soprano and Alto with lyrics: "Mie pe - na, che is - to". An "Echo" section is marked above the vocal lines.

Musical score for Ex. 4.19, Act V.10, Giacinta's "A section" (continued). The score includes vocal lines for Soprano and Alto with lyrics: "per - dison - a - to / per - dison - a - to". An "Echo" section is marked above the vocal lines.

Ex. 4.19 (cont.)

80

Longer notes = "in his arms"

66 *pa - ta pã. Sre-ve-ri: bra-ço al-la spe-ral-za, Cõa-ço - la - ve - ter - sis.*

67 *za, com-ço - la - ta - mu - za, Eu-ke-ria braço - al-la spe-*

Longer notes = "in his arms"

70 *ran - za, sus-tilan braço - so - al - la spe - ral - za, Cõa - ço -*

71 *la - ve - ter - sis, za, com - ço - la - ve - ter - sis.*

G minor. Return to g minor = Her hopes are in vain

74 *la - ve - ter - sis, za, com - ço - la - ta - mu - za.*

75 *ti mo - beno di - ger sãbo - ape -*

Ex. 4.21 (cont.)

81 Rising hope

82 *ra, Si - çõ - ra - ta, o - ra - ta, o - ra - ta.*

83 *ra, Si - çõ - ra - ta, o - ra - ta, o - ra - ta.*

"Yes" - 3 times

86 *ra, Si - çõ - ra - ta, o - ra - ta, o - ra - ta.*

87 *ra, Si - çõ - ra - ta, o - ra - ta, o - ra - ta.*

90 *ra - ta, o - ra - ta.*

91 *ra - ta, o - ra - ta.*

[Verse 2] [Refrain]

Ex. 4.21 (cont.)