

INTRODUCTION

Johann Christian Bach originally wrote *Amor vincitore* as a dramatic cantata for a concert to benefit the soprano Cecilia Grassi on 15 April 1774 at Carlisle House, Soho Square in London; it was repeated on 2 May to benefit the oboist Johann Christian Fischer.¹ The original cast featured Grassi as Dalisa and the *musicico* Giuseppe Millico as Alcidoro, with Karl Weiss (flute), Fischer (oboe), Joseph Beer (clarinet), and Georg Wenzel Ritter (bassoon) playing the obbligato parts in aria no. 3. Later that summer the work was staged as an “azione teatrale” at the Hoftheater in Schwetzingen on 11 August 1774, and repeated on 4 and 18 September.² The libretto for the Schwetzingen production does not list the singers; the roles were most likely taken by Dorothea Wendling and Francesco Roncaglia.³ Ritter, who was based at the Mannheim court, probably played the obbligato bassoon part, along with Johann Baptist Wendling (flute), Friedrich Ramm (oboe), and Jakob Tausch (clarinet) in aria no. 3. Normally, a ballet would have been performed in conjunction with this one-act opera, and it is possible that *Amor vincitore* was paired with either *La fête printannière*, by Étienne (Stefano) Lauchery and Carl Joseph Toeschi, or *Les amants protégés par l’amour*, by Lauchery and Christian Cannabich.⁴

The Hoftheater at Schwetzingen was designed by Nicolas de Pigage (see figure 1) and opened in autumn 1752 with a production of Johann Adolf Hasse’s intermezzo

Porsognacco.⁵ Between 1753 and 1756, the newly appointed kapellmeister Ignaz Holzbauer wrote a series of comic and pastoral works for the new summer theater, including *Il figlio delle selve* (1753), *L’isola disabitata* (1754), *Don Chisciotte* (1755), *I Cinesi*, and *Le nozze d’Arianna* (both 1756). Christoph Gluck’s *opéra comique* *Cythère assiégée* was performed at Schwetzingen in June 1759. Charles Burney reports that 1500 people, including a host of musicians, accompanied the elector to his summer palace: “To any one walking through the streets of Schwetzingen, during summer, this place must seem to be inhabited only by a colony of musicians, who are constantly exercising their profession: at one house a fine player on the violin is heard; at another, a German flute; here an excellent hautbois; there a bassoon, a clarinet, a violoncello, or a concert of several instruments together.”⁶

On Sunday, 9 August 1772, Burney attended a performance of Antonio Sacchini’s *La contadina in corte* at the Schwetzingen theater.

The Elector, Electress, and Princess Royal of Saxony, were present at this performance. The theatre, though small, is convenient; the decorations and dresses were ingenious and elegant, and there was a greater number of attendants and figures than ever I saw in the great opera, either of Paris or

1. See announcements in *PA*, 15 April 1774 and 2 May 1774; James Harris, the Queen’s Secretary, reports on a private performance for the British royal family on 3 May 1774. See *Music and Theatre in Handel’s World: The Family Papers of James Harris, 1732–80*, ed. Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 765–66.

2. Bach had been commissioned to write a second opera, *Lucio Silla*, for the Mannheim court that November, but it was not performed until November 1775; see JCB:ODW, vol. II. Richard Maunder, introduction to CWJCB, vol. 15, vii, was incorrect in thinking (“in all probability”) that *Amor vincitore* was written for the Mannheim court, though he was correct in suggesting that the bassoon part of aria no. 3 was written for Ritter, who was in London for the premiere.

3. Maunder, introduction to CWJCB, vol. 15, vii. The role of Dalisa could have been sung by Franziska Danzi, who later accompanied Roncaglia to London and sang in Bach’s *La clemenza di Scipione* in 1778; see JCB:ODW, vol. 12.

4. Friedrich Walter, *Geschichte des Theaters und der Musik am kurpfälzischen Hofe* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1898), 164. *La fête prin-*

tannière was performed with Niccolò Piccinni’s *Le finte gemelle* in November 1772, and *Les amants protégés* was performed in November 1774 with Antonio Salieri’s *La secchia rapita*. On the ballet repertory at the Mannheim court, see Paul Corneilson and Eugene K. Wolf, “Sources for Mannheim Ballets,” in *Ballet Music from the Mannheim Court*, part I, ed. Floyd K. Grave, Recent Researches in the Music of the Classical Era, vol. 45 (Madison: A-R Editions, 1996), xxiv–xxxii.

5. For a history of the theater at Schwetzingen and its repertory, see *Hofoper in Schwetzingen: Musik, Bühnenkunst, Architektur*, ed. Silke Leopold and Bärbel Pelker (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2004).

6. Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (London, 1775), 1:98–99. Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart likened Schwetzingen to “a magic island, where everyone played and sang” (Wenn der Churfürst in Schwetzingen war, und ihm sein vortreffliches Orchester dahin folgte; so glaubt man in eine Zauberinsel versetzt zu seyn, wo alles klang und sang); see *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, ed. Ludwig Schubart (Vienna, 1806), 130. For an overview of the Mannheim orchestra, see Eugene K. Wolf, “On the Composition of the Mannheim Orchestra, ca. 1740–1778,” *Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis* 17 (1993): 113–38.

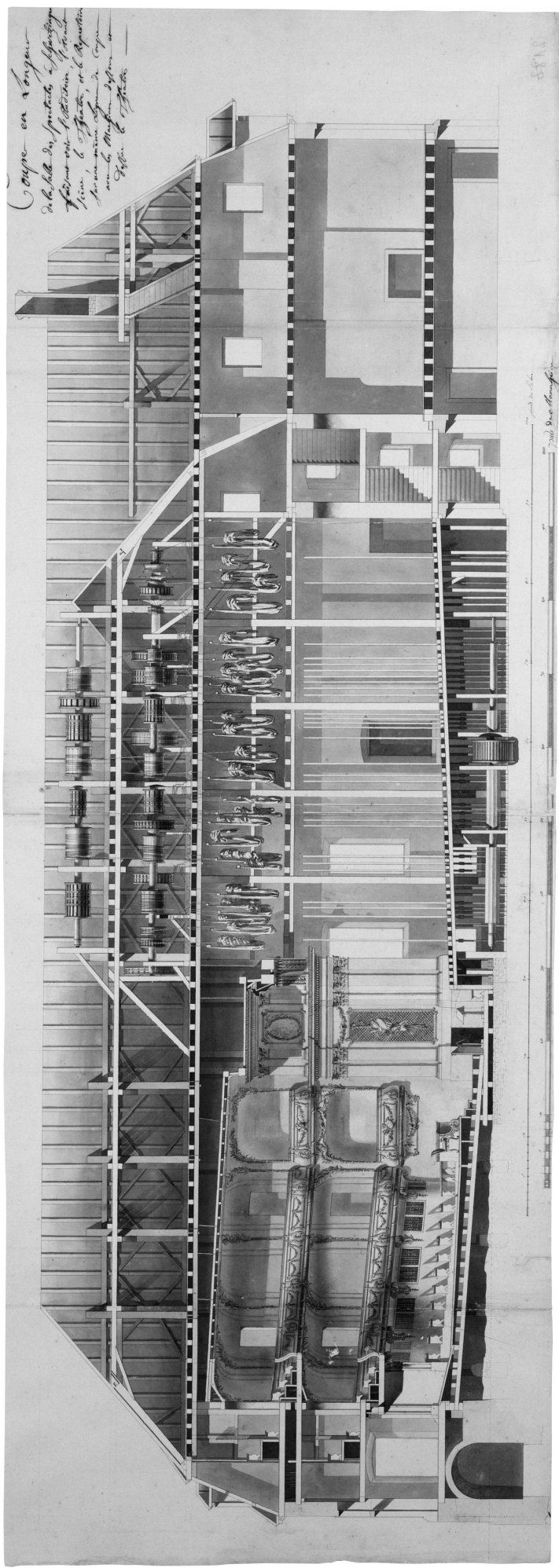


FIGURE 1. Plans of the Schwetzingen court theater. Potsdam, Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten, Berlin-Brandenburg, 14771.

London: in the dance, representing a German fair, there were upwards of a hundred persons on the stage at one time

The going out from the opera at Schwetzingen, during summer, into the electoral gardens, which, in the French style, are extremely beautiful, affords one of the gayest and most splendid sights imaginable⁷

Bach's association with the Mannheim court began in 1772, when his *Temistocle* was performed at the Mannheim court theater in November (see JCB:ODW, vol. 9), possibly preceded by his serenata, *Endimione*, which was first performed as a benefit concert for J. B. Wendling in London in April 1772 (see JCB:ODW, vol. 8).⁸

Gluck reportedly attended a performance of *Amor vincitore* at Schwetzingen in September 1774; the painter Johann Christian von Mannlich tells an amusing anecdote:

We sat behind the elector, because he apparently wanted to observe the impression that the performance of his singers and orchestra had on this great master of music. The Italian opera *Amor vincitore* was performed. As usual I sat beside Gluck, who with Holzbauer had satisfied his appetite to his heart's content [i.e., a hearty meal before the opera]. From the outset the elector turned frequently to his famous guest. I had taken my eye off him for some minutes, when Mme Gluck motioned to me: "Wake up my husband, if you please." I turned to him and indeed found his chin lowered on his chest in deep slumber. A light bump with the elbow brought him awake. From this moment on I dared not keep him out of my sight, even calling out "Bravo" a couple of times as if it had come from his mouth. My own physical discomfort was compounded by the fear of his anger, as I continuously sought to prevent him from falling asleep again, and thus what delighted me most about this work was that it came to an end.⁹

7. Burney, *Present State of Music in Germany*, 1:93–94, 98. The ballet was *Le foire hessoise*, by Lauchery and Cannabich; see Walter, *Geschichte*, 165–66. The theater and gardens of Schwetzingen are well preserved and still offer visitors a charming sight. See also Joachim Kresin, "Merkwürdiges Schwetzingen," in *Es ist nur ein Dorf: Schwetzingen mit den Augen Leopold Mozarts*, ed. Rüdiger Thomsen-Fürst (Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing, 2020), 45–69.

8. During his visit to Mannheim, Bach fell in love with Wendling's daughter, Elisabeth Augusta, but that summer she had been involved in an affair with Elector Palatine Carl Theodor; see Paul Corneilson, "A Context for Mozart's French Ariettes: The Wendling Family and Friedrich Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*," *Current Musicology* 81 (2006): 53–72.

9. "So kamen wir hinter den Kurfürsten zu sitzen, offenbar weil dieser den Eindruck der Leistungen seiner Sänger und des Orchesters auf diesen großen Meister der Musik beobachten wollte. Es gelangte die italienische Oper *L'amore vincitore* zur Aufführung. Wie gewöhnlich saß ich neben Gluck, der sich bei Holzbauer nach Herzenslust seinem Appetit hingeeben hatte. Von Anfang an wandte sich der Kurfürst häufig nach seinem berühmten Gaste um. Ich hatte ihn für einige Minuten aus

Unfortunately, we don't know what Gluck himself thought of the opera, but we do know that he enjoyed the local wine.¹⁰ Perhaps, he nodded off during the ballet music, when Dalisa falls asleep. Several years later *Amor vincitore* was revived in a benefit concert for the castrato Fernando Tenducci on 10 May 1779.¹¹ The same year Bach's *tragédie lyrique Amadis de Gaule* had its premiere at the Paris Opéra, in competition with Gluck, whose *Iphigénie en Tauride* was performed in May 1779 with great success.

Drama and Music

The subject *Amor vincitore* (Love victorious) was suitable for a dramatic cantata but was not a common subject for opera, and although Amor (Cupid) is referred to throughout the work, he does not have a singing role. Perhaps the most famous depiction of the subject is Caravaggio's painting *Amor vincit omnia*, painted in 1601–2 for the Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani, and now held by the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin.¹² The libretto of Bach's cantata or *azione*

dem Auge verloren, als mir Mme Gluck durch ein Zeichen zu verstehen gab: 'Wecken Sie doch meinen Mann auf, ich bitte Sie darum!' Ich wend mich nach ihm und finde ihn wirklich, das Kinn auf die Brust gesenkt, in tiefem Schlummer. Ein leichter Stoß mit dem Ellbogen brachte ihn wieder zu sich. Von diesem Augenblicke an wagte ich ihn nicht mehr außer acht zu lassen, ja ich rief sogar ein paarmal 'Bravo', wie wenn es aus seinem Munde käme. Zu meinem eigenen körperlichen Unbehagen gesellte sich noch die Furcht vor seinem Zorn, da ich ihn stets von neuem am Einschlafen zu verhindern suchte, und was mich am meisten an diesem Theaterstück entzückte, war, daß es zu Ende ging." Mannlich, *Rokoko und Revolution: Lebenserinnerungen* (Berlin: Mittler, 1923), 187–88. Patricia Howard quotes a few excerpts from Mannlich's memoirs in *Gluck: An Eighteenth-Century Portrait in Letters and Documents* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 108–12, 117–19, but not this passage.

10. Burney, *Present State of Music in Germany*, 1:291–92, reported that Gluck received a present from Carl Theodor for his *opéra-comique* in 1759: "A few years since, a comic opera of Gluck's was performed at the Elector Palatine's theatre, at Schwetzingen: his Electoral highness was much struck with the music, and enquired who had composed it; and, upon being informed that it was the production of an honest German, who loved old hock; 'I think, says the Elector, he deserves to be made drink for his trouble;' and ordered him a tun, not indeed quite so big as that at Heidelberg, but a very large one, and full of excellent wine."

11. *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*: "A favourite Cantata, with grand Chorusses, called *Amor Vincitore*, composed by Mr. Bach and sung by Mr. Tenducci and Signora Marchetti. With a Song, Concertato, by a Violin, Tenor, Haut-boy and Violoncello." Cited by Richard Maunder, introduction to CWJCB, vol. 15, vii. Tenducci had accompanied Bach to Paris and Versailles in the autumn of 1778 to hear the singers for *Amadis*, and the two of them met Mozart, who was waiting for his opus 1 violin sonatas to be engraved.

12. See Avigdor W. G. Posèq, "Caravaggio's *Amor Vincitore* and the Supremacy of Painting," *Source: Notes in the History of Art* 12/4 (1993): 13–18. The subject comes from Virgil's *Eclagues* 10.69: "Omnia vincit Amor" (love conquers all).

teatrale features Dalisa, a nymph and enemy of Cupid, and her lover, the hunter Alcidoro. The poet is not named in the libretto printed at Mannheim, which probably rules out Mattia Verazi. More likely it was written by Giovan Gualberto Bottarelli, who collaborated frequently with J.C. Bach in London in the 1760s and 1770s.

Amor vincitore was originally written for Grassi (Dalisa) and Millico (Alcidoro). Following her two seasons at the King's Theatre from 1770 to 1772, Grassi appeared occasionally in oratorios at Drury Lane and at the Haymarket Theatre, as well as at the Bach-Abel concerts; in 1776 Bach wrote the cantata *Cefalo e Procri* for her.¹³ Millico came to London in 1772, after establishing himself as a leading castrato in Parma, where Gluck revised his *Orfeo* for Millico in 1769, and in Vienna, where he sang Admeto (originally a tenor role) in Gluck's *Alceste* and *Paride e Elena* in 1770. In London, Millico sang at the King's Theatre from 1772 to 1774, taking the *primo uomo* roles in two pasticcios, *Artaserse* and *L'Olimpiade*; *Demetrio* by Pietro Alessandro Guglielmi; *Il Cid*, *Lucio Vero*, *Tamerlano*, and *Perseo* by Sacchini; and *Orfeo ed Euridice* by Gluck. In 1774 Millico returned to Italy, where he sang consecutive seasons in Venice (1774–75), Florence (1775), and Milan (1776), before settling in Naples in 1780.

The first scene in *Amor vincitore* is a cheerful countryside, with a chorus (no. 1, Moderato in E major) praising the peaceful outdoors; Dalisa has an extended solo in the middle stanza mentioning the gentle breezes.¹⁴ This is followed by a pastoral aria for Dalisa (no. 2, Andantino in A major) accompanied by two flutes in which she again sings of the “zeffiretti” and little birds that make her content. Alcidoro enters and is suffering from unrequited love; his accompanied recitative includes obbligato flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon, and these wind instruments accompany his aria (no. 3, Allegro maestoso in B-flat major).¹⁵ A second chorus (no. 4, Larghetto in E-flat major) appeals for

mercy toward Alcidoro. The music seems to lull Dalisa to sleep, and while she sleeps Cupid appears (in pantomime) and chases away the beautiful nymphs surrounding her. This would be an opportunity for a short pantomime ballet, though Bach apparently didn't write any music for one. At Schwetzingen, Lauchery was credited with the “ballo analogo al sogetto” (the dance analogous to the subject) in the printed libretto.

After a fermata, Alcidoro finds Dalisa asleep, and Dalisa while still asleep, having been pierced by one of Cupid's arrows, professes her love for Alcidoro. In the next aria (no. 5, Andantino in F major) Alcidoro sings of his happiness, though he is uncertain about Dalisa's faithfulness. Dalisa awakes and sings an aria (no. 6, Allegro assai in D major), now agitated by the sight of Alcidoro. He interprets this as rejection and threatens to kill himself. But Dalisa assures him that she loves him. They sing a duet (no. 7, Larghetto in A major) affirming their mutual happiness. The final chorus (no. 8, Allegro con spirito in E major) praises love's triumph. (It is not entirely clear whether the Italian word “amore” should be rendered with a capital A for Cupid, the god of love, or a lowercase *a* for the concept of love.) The tonal dramaturgy is quite innovative, with the music moving in part 1 from E and A major to B-flat and E-flat major (from sharp to flat areas), and then in part 2 from F major back to D and A major, and finally returning to E major.

Sources and Performance Issues

Amor vincitore survives in two complete eighteenth-century manuscripts, the first in Darmstadt (D-DS, Mus. ms. 82 = source B 1) and the second in Paris (formerly in the Paris Conservatoire, now F-Pn, D 362 = source B 2). The only surviving libretto (OT) is from the performance at Schwetzingen in 1774. The Darmstadt MS was copied by a Mannheim scribe (Wolf Mh. 5), who also copied most of *Endimione* in D-DS, Mus. ms. 57. Maunder suggests that the Darmstadt MS was likely copied from Bach's autograph (now lost), which was most likely sent to Mannheim after the premiere in London. There is no evidence that Bach himself came to Schwetzingen for the performance in August 1774. The Darmstadt MS has no mention of a ballet, and there would not have been a ballet in the London performance. The ballet was likely added at Schwetzingen for the staged performance, and the Paris MS has a cue, “Segue il Ballo,” which suggests that this score was made after that performance (cf. “Libretto,” p. xxi). It is also possible (though not documented to my knowledge) that it might have been performed with ballet

13. Terry, 138, assumes that Bach married Grassi “in the latter part of 1773” since Bach had a new address in January 1774. But Stephen Roe thinks it is more likely the two were wed in 1776, when Bach purchased a new townhome. However, no marriage certificate or other documentation has been found to this date. See Roe, “J.C. Bach and Cecilia Grassi: Portrait of a Marriage,” in *The Sons of Bach: Essays for Elias N. Kulukundis*, ed. Peter Wollny and Stephen Roe (Ann Arbor: Steglein, 2016), 134–57.

14. Mozart chose the key of E major to depict gentle breezes in *Idomeneo* (“Placido è il mar” and “Zeffiretti lusinghieri”) and *Così fan tutte* (“Soave sia il vento”).

15. Bach also uses four obbligato instruments (flute, oboe, violin, and violoncello) in aria no. 16 in *La clemenza di Scipione*; see JCB:ODW, vol. 12.

music at the theater at Versailles, since it bears the stamp of the “Menus Plaisirs du Roi” on the title page.

Both sources are fairly sloppy in terms of articulation, and the slurring in particular is often vague and inconsistent. Slurs are often missing in one or the other violin part, and in parallel passages. Although some of the slurring is the same in both sources, it is not always consistent. If one source has slurring for a particular passage, we were more inclined to add it editorially throughout, and where neither source has slurring, we generally have not added it. When the strings or winds are doubling the voices with a melisma, the slurring often matches, though this is not always consistent.

Both sources are written on paper with ten staff lines

per page; the wind parts in the choruses were added on separate *particelle*, either immediately after each chorus (Darmstadt MS) or at the end of the score (Paris MS). The Paris MS also includes a separate *particelle* with a written-out cadenza for the four wind instruments in aria no. 3. It is possible that both MSS follow J.C. Bach’s autograph score, since he often used ten-stave paper in London. Although we cannot be certain that the cadenza was prepared by Bach himself, the present edition includes it in the main text because it appears to be contemporaneous with the rest of the score. Unfortunately, none of the original performance parts survive either for London or Schwetzingen.

Paul Corneilson