INTRODUCTION

When Johann Christian Bach arrived in London in 1762, the capital's Italian Opera was in a period of relative calm after the turbulent events of the 1750s, a decade that had ended with the company in financial and operational difficulties.[1] The impresario responsible, Francesco Vanneschi, had become manager for the third time in 1757, but had then disappeared in mysterious circumstances around April 1760. The last trace we have of him in London is seemingly his signature on the licensing copy of *Antigona* submitted to the Lord Chamberlain before the opera's opening on 17 April that year.[2] By 28 April, his successor, one of the company's sopranos, Colomba Mattei, had swiftly snatched the prize of manager from the wreckage and announced that she—and her husband Joseph Trombetta—would run the opera.[3] Mattei had arrived in London for the 1758–59 season, and by this time was well-placed to step into the management breach.[4] She and Trombetta immediately invited subscriptions and generally attended to the business of the house,[5] and it was in her third season as manager that Mattei employed Bach as director of the music at the King's Theatre (see figure 1.)

Mattei's Company

During her time as impresario, Mattei maintained a company of between ten and thirteen singers, a significant increase on previous seasons where the personnel usually numbered six or seven and one that reflects Mattei's inclusion in the program of the new opera buffa genre.[6] In her initial advertisement, she divided her singers into a roster that reflected her repertory: those who were employed for the serious operas, those who would perform in the "burlettas," and those second serious singers who would sing the serious roles in the burlettas.[7] In this first season, 1760–61, the word "burletta" was used to describe the new genre of opera buffa, which Mattei introduced to London. In previous years, London impresarios and commentators had used the word to refer to intermezzo-type works, performed both in Italian and English.[8]

The only singer in Mattei's roster who was advertised as singing in both serious and comic roles was the tenor Gaetano Quilici (fl. 1754–64), who had arrived in London in 1754 as a singer with the burletta company at Covent Garden.[9] The personnel of the casts of both of Bach's new operas, *Orione* (Warb G 4) and *Zanaida* (Warb G 5), were the same:

Singer's Name	***Orione* Role**	***Zanaida* Role**
Livia Segantini	Retrea	Roselane
Domenico Ciardini	Orione	Tamasse
Gaetano Quilici	Enopione	Mustafà
Giovanna Carmignani	Argia	Osira
Giuseppe Giustinelli	Tirsi	Cisseo

1. Anon., *A Fair Enquiry into the State of Operas in England* (London: M. Cooper, 1759), 1–3. This introduction, with slight modification, is based on Michael Burden, "*Orione, ossia Diana vendicata* and *Zanaida*," in *Operas of JCB*, 61–84. For further background, see Frederick C. Petty, *Italian Opera in London, 1760–1800* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980); Eric Weimer, Opera Seria *and the Evolution of Classical Style, 1755–1772* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984); and Ian Woodfield, *Opera and Drama in Eighteenth-Century London: The King's Theatre, Garrick and the Business of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

2. *Antigona*, MS copy in US-SM, La 176; there is no application, but the libretto is annotated "Sig.^{r} Vanneschi, y^{e} Manager. Londra 1760."

3. He is usually referred to just as "Signor Trombetta"—for example, "Colomba Mattei," *BDA*, 10:138—but the Christian name "Joseph" appears against his account at Drummond's Bank; see Elizabeth Gibson, "Italian Opera in London, 1750–1775: Management and Finances," *Early Music* 18 (1990): 54.

4. There is considerable confusion in the literature caused by the conflation by *BDA*, 10:137, of the careers of Camilla and Colomba Mattei, a conflation then followed by Sartori, 7:419–20, and others. Camilla sang in London from 1754 to 1756; Colomba was noted as being in contention for the company in 1757 (*PA*, 18 May 1757), and as having arrived later that year (*PA*, 12 October 1757).

5. *PA*, 28 April 1760.

6. Saskia Willaert, "Italian Comic Opera at the King's Theatre in the 1760s: The Role of the Buffi," in *Music in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. David Wyn-Jones (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 17–71.

7. *London Evening Post*, 26–28 August 1760.

8. Walpole to Richard Bentley, 20 November 1754, in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W.S. Lewis, 48 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937–83), 35:192.

9. Michael Burden, "*Midas*, Kane O'Hara and the Italians: An Interplay of Comedy Between London and Dublin," in *Ireland, Enlightenment and the Eighteenth-Century English Stage, 1740–1820*, ed. David O'Shaughnessy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 108–10.

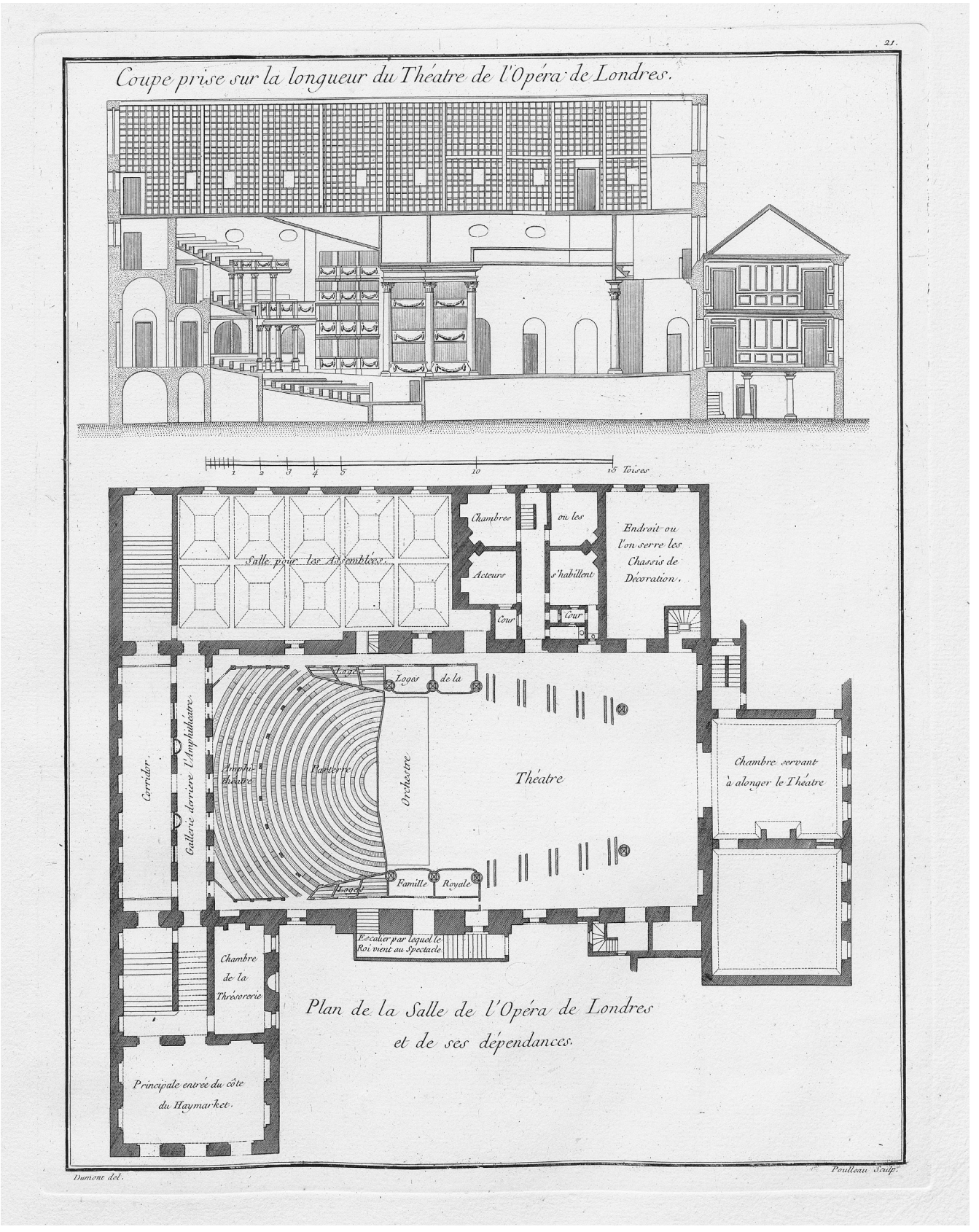

FIGURE 1. Plan of the King's Theatre, London. From Gabriel-Martin Dumont, *Parallèle de plans des plus belles salles de spectacles d'Italie et de France, avec des détails de machines théatrales* (Paris, [1774]).
Zürich, ETH-Bibliothek, Rar 9827, fol. 25r (scan available at www.e-rara.ch)

Singer's Name	***Orione* Role**	***Zanaida* Role**
Giovan Battista Zingoni	Mercurio	Gianguir
Anna Lucia de Amicis	Candiope	Zanaida
Clementina Cremonini	Nice	Silvera
Marianna Valsecchi	Diana	Aglatida

This includes everyone from that season's roster except Domenico de Amicis (fl. 1759–63), the buffo singer who in 1763 performed in a version of Carlo Goldoni's *La cascina*, Baldassare Galuppi's setting of *La calamita de' cuori*, and Bach's pasticcio *La finta sposa*, and who would not have been in contention for roles in either work; his appearance in these three opere buffe, does, however, contradict the assertion that he may not have performed with the company.[10] Apart from Quilici and Domenico de Amicis, the roster included Anna Lucia de Amicis, and also from the de Amicis company, Giovan Battista Zingoni. Giovanna Carmignani, Domenico Ciardini, Clementina Cremonini, Giuseppe Giustinelli, Livia Segantini, and Marianna Valsecchi made up the rest.

The star of the season was Anna Lucia de Amicis (c. 1733–1816). Born in Naples, she and her husband Domenico ran the burletta company which toured to Antwerp and Brussels, and to Dublin via London.[11] They returned to London in time to be available for the opening of the opera season in November 1762. Zingoni (1718/20–1811), who had sung at Naples, Torino, Savigliano, and with the de Amicis troupe in Dublin, was, for much of his career, a comic singer; the roles he took in *Orione* and *Zanaida* were both small and his only ones in serious operas. His name is not recorded in an opera libretto again after his appearance in *Zanaida*, and his career seems to have changed direction, for he is recorded as the *maestro di cappella* at the Dutch Court from 1764.

The career of Carmignani began in 1753 in Livorno and was spent entirely in Italy, with the exception of her 1763 London season and a later appearance in Munich in 1768.[12] Nearly all her roles were in opera seria, until her London appearances as Lavinia and Eugenia in *La cascina* and *La finta sposa*. She seems to have had a closer relationship with Bach than some of the other singers; Bach mentions to Padre Martini that two books the composer had procured for him—John Mainwaring's *Life of Handel* and Robert Smith's *Harmonics, or the Philosophy of Musical Sounds*—would be delivered to him by Carmignani's father.[13] The active stage career of Ciardini spanned from 1740 to 1767 and was spent primarily centered on Venice; his first out-of-Italy season was in Vienna, singing Nettuno in *Prometeo assoluto* in 1762, followed by his London performances in 1763 in *Orione* and *Zanaida*. He was to sing only a few more stage roles before retiring. Cremonini, who seems not to have had a stage career prior to her arrival in London, sang at the opera house in the 1762–63 season, and again in 1764–65; all her roles, apart from her first, Ismene in *La finta sposa*, were in opera seria, with a preponderance of Metastasio characters. A versatile singer, Giustinelli sang a variety of roles before he appeared in London for the 1762–63 season where he sang in most of the operas staged in 1763. When the season was over, he stayed on in London, singing in *Cleonice, regina di Siria*; *Alessandro nell'Indie*; and *Leucippo* in the 1763–64 season. He then returned to the capital in 1766 and 1771, with his last recorded stage role being in Mantua in 1777. Segantini, who had a career focused on Venice, Bologna, and Florence, was an experienced soprano who sang in all three opere serie staged in the 1762–63 season, appearing as Elisa in *Astarto, re di Tiro*, as well as in *Orione* and *Zanaida*. She departed for the Continent where she left the stage after 1770. Valsecchi arrived in London from Milan for the 1762–63 season; all her previous roles were comic ones, with the exception of Emilia in *Catone in Utica* immediately before her London sojourn. When the season was over, she returned to the Continent and sang on until 1776.

The list of personnel suggests that something unusual had taken place; apart from Quilici, no singer from the 1760–61 and 1761–62 seasons appears on the list, including Mattei herself. The sweeping changes are likely to have been caused in part by the replacement of Gioacchino Cocchi as musical director by Bach, but it is also true that the singers Mattei had so far employed had not been a huge success and had attracted criticism from a number of quarters. And according to Charles Burney, Bach concurred: "On his arrival here, he was extremely mortified to find that he had no better singers to write for than Ciardini and the Cremonini, and for some time totally declined composing for our stage, being unwilling, as a stranger, to trust his reputation to such performers."[14] This

10. *BDA*, 4:247.

11. Burden, "*Midas*, Kane O'Hara and the Italians," 114.

12. *BDA*, 3:74, invents a "Giovanni" Carmignani, and muddles this fictional husband with his "wife" "Signora Carmignani." However, the libretti for *Il tutore* (1762), *Astarto* (1762), *La calamita* (1763), and *Orione* (1763) give her name in full.

13. Letter from J. C. Bach to Padre Martini, 1 July 1763 (I-Bc, I.24.83), in CWJCB, vol. 48, pt. 2, 540.

14. Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, vol. 4 (London, 1789), 480–81.

situation was resolved by Bach's discovery of Anna Lucia de Amicis, who was not then associated with the opera. Burney reported that Bach, having heard her "sing two or three serious songs in private," then decided to promote her as a performer at the opera. What the nature of the negotiations with Mattei was we can only guess—Burney merely says that Bach "having communicated his design to Mattei the impresaria, matters were soon arranged"—but the complete replacement of the roster apart from Quilici at the start of the season suggests that a wholesale rethink of the company had already occurred. Assuming Burney to be correct in his supposition, Bach must have heard de Amicis before the first performance on 16 November 1762 of *Il tutore e la pupilla* in which she made her opera house debut with Bach as musical director. She was later to sing the *prima donna* role of Giunia in Mozart's *Lucio Silla* in Milan during carnival 1772.

The makeup of the company also included a chorus and dancers. Both of Bach's new operas required a chorus—in *Orione*, choruses for priests, warriors, and shepherds, while in *Zanaida*, for Persians and Turks—and this novelty was duly noted in the advertisements where they were billed as "grand choruses" in both cases. The only record that survives of the ballet dancers is the list of names in the libretto for each opera. There are only four of them: Giovanni Gallini (1728–1805), Mademoiselle Asselin (fl. 1759–66), and the two Binettis, Giorgio (fl. 1753–d. 1763/64?) and Anna (1738–86?).

Gallini was the most senior of the four in both age and reputation; he was also about to retire from the stage, leaving after the publication of the 1762 *The Art of Dancing* and his marriage to the aristocrat Elizabeth Peregrine Bertie. He had been among the first four dancers to have their names included in the libretti for a London season—that of 1754–55—and only the second to have his role as a choreographer—usually described as "composer of the dances"—acknowledged in them.[15] Asselin first appeared on the London stage in March 1760 in the last days of Vanneschi's period of management. She promoted her student "Miss Polly"—thought to be Polly Capitani—and danced seemingly as a guest performer during the season. It was then announced on 22 August that she had been engaged as the "first woman dancer" in Mattei's company for the 1760–61 season. She was retained until being dropped—with many other performers—by Felice Giardini when he succeeded Bach in the 1763–64 season. Anna and husband Giorgio danced under the name Binetti, an Italianized version of the French Binet. Anna, born Ramón in Venice, was a friend of Giacomo Casanova's, and danced in Italy, Poland, and Germany. In the years after her London engagement, she was also the wife of the dancer and ballet master Charles Le Picq (1745–1806). Anna's marriage to Giorgio must have taken place sometime during 1757, for by the end of that year she was dancing in Milan under the name Ramóni-Binetti, then subsequently as Binetti. Little is known of Giorgio; records show regular work in Italy during the 1750s as a ballet master, up to the season of 1761–62 when they both appeared in London. Giorgio's name appears in the libretto of *Zanaida*, last performed on 11 June 1763, after which he disappears from sight. Anna's marriage to Le Picq—which suggests that Giorgio may have died—seems to have taken place in the summer of 1763. The London bills listed the Binettis separately, an attempt perhaps to present themselves as brother and sister, and not as husband and wife; this may well have been the case if, as seems likely, Giorgio's gambling and otherwise dissolute behavior was as public as has been suggested.[16] In the libretti, the four are described as the "principal" dancers, and it is likely that there was the equivalent of a corps de ballet in the larger scenes. No dancing master's name is given, but Gallini was the most likely of those advertised to fill the role. Some were unenthusiastic about their performances, one perceptive author noting:

> Many persons of distinction express their surprize, that the Managers permit the same set to play their pranks over again. They all, except Mademoiselle *Asseline*, make use of the same steps continually, having only changed the symphony and their dresses. Esquire Ga-------i, in particular, has not any variety in his motions, and by his ridiculous tumbling, puts the Hay-Market Theatre on level with Sadlers-Wells.[17]

To be considered "on level" with the illegitimate theater of Sadler's Wells was to be bracketed with rope dancing and monkey tricks, acts at (almost) the opposite end of the artistic spectrum to the opera house.

The house poet during Bach's year at the King's Theatre—and the author of both *Orione* and *Zanaida*—was Giovan Gualberto Bottarelli. Little is known of Bottarelli's pre-London years, apart from a period during

15. Michael Burden, "Dancers at London's Italian Opera Houses as Recorded in the Libretti," *Dance Research* 33, no. 2 (2015): 159–211.

16. *BDA*, 2:130–31.

17. Philetymus [pseud.], *Critical Observations on the Tragic Opera of Orion* (London: C. Fourdrinier, 1763), in *London Opera Observed, 1711–1844*, 5 vols., ed. Michael Burden (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), 2:19.

which he worked in Berlin for King Frederick the Great in the 1740s[18] and some extraordinary gossip mentioned by Casanova, who noted that Bottarelli "was a monk in Pisa, his native city, which he had left with . . . a nun. He married her in London."[19] The aside's implausibility does not, of course, mean that it is not true, although how it reached Casanova's ears is anybody's guess. In 1752 Bottarelli is recorded as the manager of the Giordani burletta company, which toured to London in 1754. The burletta company moved on, but Bottarelli seems to have stayed. His earliest works performed in England were two cantata texts written for the installation of John Fane as Chancellor of the University of Oxford, when the King's Theatre company performed *La vera lode* and *Il merito corona* on 2 July 1759. These works added to an occasion that was already one of unusual magnificence. But their existence suggests that Bottarelli was at this point a jobbing writer with some interest in the theater, for at this time the opera house's theater poet was the impresario Vanneschi. As mentioned above, Vanneschi disappeared after April 1760 and it was not until after his departure that Bottarelli's name was first associated with the theater with the staging of his *Le promesse del cielo; ovvero, Il tempio dell'eternità* on 3 June 1761 to mark the King's birthday. This was restaged together with a second work, *Il tempio del destino*, a serenata written and staged for the Royal Nuptials and Coronation on 19 September.[20] These performances were both advertised as having "a second Band (disposed after a new Manner) with a very great Number of additional Voices; together with a new Dance, and a Piece of Scenery suitable to the Solemnity." Bottarelli was clearly interested in experimentation.

By the time Bach arrived, Bottarelli had been in post for several seasons, and his work had settled down to the alteration for London performance of Continental operas—these were mostly comedies and included the two important adaptations, *Il filosofo di campagna* (1761) and the later *La buona figliuola* (1766)[21]—and writing his own libretti, which were set by Alessandri, Bach, Cocchi, Guglielmi, and Sacchini. Casanova's visit also yielded this anecdote:

> On the fourth floor of a dilapidated house we enter a room where we see the picture of poverty, composed of a woman, four children, and a man at a writing table. The man was Bottarelli. He rises, I ask him if he knows me, he answers no, whereupon I tell him that I am the Casanova whom his testimony had sent to Newgate the day before.[22]

One of those children, Francesco (or Ferdinando), would go on to work as a translator for some of the King's Theatre libretti, including that of *Zanaida*. Bottarelli, when asked by Casanova if he was a poet, replied in the affirmative, and remarked, "I have lengthened the *Didone* and shortened the *Demetrio*." This remark, referring to butcherings of texts by Metastasio, was received with scorn by his interlocutor.[23]

But despite all these efforts, the company did not shine. The possibly pseudonymous Arcangelo Bimolle remarked that "the performers were bad; so that [the opera] was immediately deserted, though never actually damned."[24] Burney noted that "Ciardini, the only performer of whose abilities any expectations were formed, disappointed every hope, by turning out a singer who seemed possessed of no very capital powers, originally, but now in decay."[25] And Elizabeth Harris thought the singers "wretched," and commented that the "first man Ciardini is very old & has been lain by in Italy seven years & the first woman [has] no voice."[26] It was not, however, all dust and ashes. Giustinelli was said to have "had a good voice, and sufficient merit to supply the place of second man on our stage in the serious operas for several years." And it seems it was de Amicis who stole the show, at least dramatically, except that she did not "offer either the majesty of Signora Mingotti, or the vivacity of Signora Mattei," really emphasizing that the serious-comic cross-over was not all that everyone (including Bach) might have hoped.[27]

18. *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Giovanni Gualberto Bottarelli," by Saskia Willaert, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/ (accessed 9 June 2023).

19. Giacomo Casanova, *The History of My Life*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 9:339.

20. *PA*, 3 June 1761.

21. Michael Burden, "From Recycled Performances to Repertory at the King's Theatre in London," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Operatic Canon*, ed. Cormac Newark and William Webber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 120–24.

22. Casanova, *History of My Life*, 9:339.

23. Ibid.

24. Arcangelo Bimolle [pseud.?], "Translation of a Letter from Signor Bimolle (a Florentine Fiddler) in London, to the Signora Chiara Aquilante (the Famous Opera Broker) at Naples," in *The Theatrical Review; or, Annals of the Drama* (London: S. Williams; Wilson and Fell, 1763), 172.

25. Burney, *A General History of Music*, 4:380.

26. *Music and Theatre in Handel's World: The Family Papers of James Harris, 1732–1780*, ed. Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 402.

27. Philetymus, *Critical Observations*, in *London Opera Observed*, 2:18.

Bach's Season

How and when J.C. Bach came to London is unknown. Stephen Roe remarks that the success of Bach's operas in Italy "attracted the attention of the management of the King's Theatre, London, who commissioned two operas for the 1762–63 season";[28] the authors of *Biographical Dictionary* remark that "Bach came to England at the invitation of Signora Mattei";[29] and Daniel Heartz refers to Bach's "contract";[30] but there is no evidence of the management being thus attracted, nor that on this basis was it agreed to commission two more operas, nor does a contract survive. In the absence of any documentation, then, the repertory suggests that Bach accepted a standard seasonal agreement, which included the getting up of the operas for the season, plus the provision of two new operas, and, as we discover from the libretto, acting as "director of the music."[31] Equally mysterious is his date of arrival. There seems to have been no newspaper announcements, and no over-promotion by the King's Theatre, facts that are as puzzling as they are inexplicable. And if Roe's suggestion of free-standing commissions is correct, then the theater must have been taking a considerable risk in employing Bach at all—he had, at this point, written only three operas: *Artaserse* (Warb G 1; 1760) for the Teatro Regio in Turin, and *Catone in Utica* (Warb G 2; 1761) and *Alessandro nell'Indie* (Warb G 3; 1762) for Naples's Teatro San Carlo, all being settings of well-known Metastasio texts. Indeed, it is hard to support the claim that *Artaserse* "launched his international career as an Italian opera composer," given that his total output—twelve operas, most of which were not particularly successful—was meager for an eighteenth-century opera composer.[32] The London theater, then, really needed to promote Bach as the new attraction.

The earliest notice of him in the city comes in the libretto of *Il tutore e la pupilla; o sia, Il matrimonio alla moda* where he was billed as the director of music in the show that opened on 13 November 1762.[33] (See table 1 for performance dates and corresponding newspaper notices.) The music of *Il tutore e la pupilla* was attributed to "various authors" and the compiler of the pasticcio unacknowledged, although it seems unlikely to have been anyone other than Bach. This comedy was the first opera of the season and had a dozen performances scattered throughout the year, with the last on 9 May 1763. This was followed by *Astarto, re di Tiro* on 4 December, again without Bach advertised in connection with it, but with the libretto noting: "The music of the airs is selected from various celebrated authors, excepting what are marked with an asterisk, which are Mr. John Bach's, a Saxon master of music, under whose direction the whole is performed."[34] An explicit note, then, that Bach had not only directed the pasticcio, but had contributed to it. Of similar smorgasbord quality was the libretto: "The poetry of the opera, whose first author imitated the two tragedies of Monsieur Quinault, viz. Astartus and Amalasunta, has been newly revived upon the same plan, and adapted to the present taste by Signor John Gualberto Bottarelli, excepting many of the airs."[35]

Bottarelli, then, did not alter most of the arias. *Astarto* had a total of twenty-five musical numbers, of which Bach contributed the overture, borrowed from his setting of *Alessandro nell'Indie*; a single aria, "Saprei soffrir costante"; the duet "Io so ben, che sei costante" at the end of act 1; the quartet "Deh, torna in te stesso" at the end of act 2; and the duet "Deh, seconda, amor cortese," which precedes the final chorus in act 3. The placing of the new duets and the quartet is to be expected; they reflect the growing desire for more ensembles and more variety in those ensembles in opera seria, and a greater flourish at the end of each act. It is the aria that should give us pause, for Bach wrote or adapted it for Giustinelli, not as would be expected for Ciardini, for whom Burney suggested the pasticcio had been "cooked up" by Mattei to showcase this newly arrived castrato:

28. *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Bach, III: (12) Johann Christian Bach," by Stephen Roe, http:www.oxfordmusiconline.com/ (accessed 30 April 2023).

29. "Johann Christian Bach," *BDA*, 1 (1973):194.

30. Daniel Heartz, *Music in European Capitals: The Galant Style, 1720–1780* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 896.

31. Nieves Pascual León, "A Collection of Italian Librettos: A New Source for the Study of the Central European Reception of Italian Opera During the Mid-Eighteenth Century," *Fontes Artes Musicae* 66, no. 3 (2019): 263–78.

32. Margaret R. Butler, "The Misadventures of *Artaserse* (Turin, 1760): J.C. Bach's First Italian Opera from Production to Performance," in *Theatrical Heritage: Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. Bruno Forment and Christel Stalpaert (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015), 103; reprinted in *J.C. Bach*, 405–22.

33. Petty, *Italian Opera in London*, 90–105, includes a survey of the season.

34. Bottarelli, *Astarto Rè di Tiro, drama da rappresentarsi sopra il Teatro di S. M. B. Astartus King of Tyre, An opera to be represented at the King's Theatre in the Hay-Market* (London: George Woodfall, 1762), 4.

35. Ibid.

TABLE 1. OPERA PERFORMANCES IN BACH'S 1762–63 SEASON AT THE KING'S THEATRE

Opera (Genre)	Performances
Il tutore e la pupilla; ossia, Il matrimonio alla moda (comic opera)	**1762:** 13,[a] 20, 27, 29 November; 6, 13, 20 December **1763:** 1, 15, 24 January; 14 February; 14, 24 March;[b] 9 May[c]
Astarto, re di Tiro (serious opera)	**1762:** 4,[d] 11, 18 December **1763:** 22, 29 January
La cascina (comic opera)	**1763:** 8,[e] 10 January
La calamita de' cuori (comic opera)	**1763:** 3,[f] 5, 7, 12, 21 February; 7, 21 March; 21 April[g]
Orione, ossia Diana vendicata (serious opera)	**1763:** 19,[h] 26,[i] 28 February; 5, 12, 19, 26 March; 9, 16, 23, 30 April; 16 May; 2 June
La finta sposa (comic opera)	**1763:** 14,[j] 28 April
Zanaida (serious opera)	**1763:** 7,[k] 14, 20, 28, 31 May; 11 June

NOTES

a. "A new Comic Opera"; *PA*, 8 November 1762.
b. "Benefit for S[ga] De Amicis" with *La serva padrona* by Pergolesi; *PA*, 24 March 1763.
c. "Benefit for the General Lying-In Hospital" with *La serva padrona*; *PA*, 7 May 1763.
d. "A new serious Opera"; *PA*, 4 December 1762.
e. "By Command of their Majesties. A new comic Opera"; *PA*, 5 January 1763.
f. "A new comic Opera . . . By Command of their Majesties"; *PA*, 29 January 1763.
g. "Only two acts of the mainpiece will be performed. Benefit for Gallini" with *La serva padrona*; *PA*, 20 April 1763.
h. "By Command of their Majesties. A new serious Opera"; *PA*, 18 February 1763.
i. "By Command of their Majesties"; *PA*, 24 February 1763.
j. "A new Comic Opera"; *PA*, 13 April 1763.
k. "A new serious Opera"; *PA*, 6 May 1763.

> CIARDINI, a soprano, the first serious man, being arrived, Mattei hastened to try his powers and those of such other performers as she could muster, in a serious opera; and had a pasticcio cooked up for the occasion . . . in which Ciardini, Giustinelli, and Quilici were the male singers and the Cremonini, Valesecchi, Carmignani, and Segantini, the female.[36]

Whatever the circumstances of the provision of Bach's aria, this suggests that both the libretto and the music were chosen and arranged to showcase the newly arrived castrato, but also probably the rest of the cast for the season. And indeed, it is clear that Bach set at least one aria for Ciardini, "Pupille vezzose," which is not attributed to him in the libretto; the setting was published in the *Favourite Songs* from *La calamita de' cuori*. Another anonymous source remarked that "the music of [the opera] in general was good, and some airs, &c, inserted by *Bach*, remarkab'y fine."[37] It is also the case that *La calamita de' cuori* was an opera buffa, which gave the singers more scope for vocal display, and demonstrating to the subscribers the superiority of the performers who had, for the majority, just arrived in London.

Similarly, in the case of the next opera, *La cascina*, another pasticcio with a libretto produced by Bottarelli which appeared on 8 January 1763, the work was advertised with "music by several celebrated composers";[38] Bach was not credited with either the compilation of the score or the musical direction of the performances, but again, he is likely to have done both. And lastly, in the next month, came *La calamita de' cuori* on 3 February 1763, an opera by Goldoni set by Galuppi in 1752 and reworked by Bottarelli for London; Galuppi's music was reused at least to some extent, and the result was directed by Bach (as noted in the libretto): "La musica è del Signor Baldassar Galuppi eseguita sotto la direzzione del Signor Giovanni Bach, Maestro di Cappella Sassone." / "The Music is taken from Signor Baldassar Galuppi, executed under the Direction of Mr. Bach, a Saxon Master of Music." Burney noted that the *Favourite Songs* contained the "charming airs" that were "originally intended for the display of all the enchanting powers of the young Anna De Amicis," but that otherwise "the singing was . . . despicable."[39]

36. Burney, *A General History of Music*, 4:480.
37. Bimolle, "Translation of a Letter from Signor Bimolle," 172.
38. *PA*, 3 January 1763.
39. Burney, *A General History of Music*, 4:480.

Orione, ossia Diana vendicata

Bach had by this time been director of music and the opera house's resident composer for several months, but he had no public profile and had done nothing but direct and produce pasticcios and conduct other composers' music. But this was to change, as he now embarked on the staging of his first new opera for London, *Orione, ossia Diana vendicata*. Based on a version of the myth of Orion, it ratcheted up thirteen performances during the season, the second most successful work programmed.

The first announcement of *Orione* can be found on Wednesday 16 February 1763, when it was noted as "a new serious opera" for the next Saturday, 19 February 1763.[40] Its novelty, grandeur, and unusual size were reflected in the advertisement that noted that there were "Several Vocal and Instrumental Performers" especially engaged for the opera,[41] which would be "decorated With new Scenes, new Cloaths, and new Dances." And the lushness of Bach's setting of the text drew comments:

> Every judge of Music perceived the emanations of genius throughout the whole performance; but were chiefly struck with the richness of the harmony, the ingenious texture of the parts, and, above all, with the new and happy use he had made of the wind-instruments: this being the first time that *clarinets* had admission in our opera orchestra.[42]

Mention of Bach's "new" orchestration can be found elsewhere, perhaps more dryly here:

> Flute, Hautboys, Bassoons, and Clarinets, were accordingly employed; and with so much art, that both Actors and Audience were equally deceived, the Actors attributing the applause to their own abilities [while] the Audience never distinguished between an intrinsically good *Opera*, and a merely judicious one.[43]

The commentator here attributes these changes to Bach's desire on one hand to "comply" with the taste of the town, while on the other "to assist the defects, and conceal the faults, of the voices" of the singers of Mattei's company. The same author thought that the whole opera had been miscast against each singer's natural bent:

> The boisterous *Quilici* became the pacifick Eunopione; the sluggish *Ciardini*, the impetuous Orion; the gay *Amicis*, the puling Candiope; and the placid *Zingoni*, the sprightly son of *Maia*.[44]

Despite the sarcasm of the commentary quoted above, the work does seem to have met with some success; the first two performances of the opera were Royal Command performances on 19 and 26 February, and these were followed by eleven further performances, the last on 2 June, a respectable number of shows in the context of the London opera scene.

The work did not entirely slip from sight but was revived on 24 May 1777 in an altered form that allowed the theater to claim it as a "new serious opera." But although the second performance on 31 May was a Royal Command performance, only two further performances followed. The inclusion of this work as the last in a season of thirteen operas suggests that it may have been used as a vehicle for the castrato Venanzio Rauzzini, who had arrived in London in 1774 and who sang the title role; the alterations included the excision of the role of Diana and—as was now becoming more common in opera seria—a death on stage before the audience, that of Orione. These alterations were possibly made by Ferdinando Bottarelli, and Bach further provided five new arias and—Warburton suggests—an accompanied recitative for Orione.[45]

The plot of Bottarelli's libretto for *Orione* is not based on a preceding model; indeed, the author comments that "There is not a fable in the whole system of Paganism, on which Mythologists differ more."[46] The subject does have some track record as an opera subject; it has been used by Cavalli, Louis de la Costa, and more recently, Philip Glass.[47] However, the plots have little in common apart from the death of Orion from an arrow at the end of each piece. Bottarelli does, however, reference Horace as a source, but acknowledges that: "The idea, intrigue, episodes, and catastrophe of the Drama will, as the author humbly hopes, be considered as reasonable poetical fictions, built, with some appearance of probability, on that fabulous foundation."[48] Bottarelli's text did garner praise:

40. *PA*, 16 February 1763.
41. *PA*, 24 February 1763.
42. Burney, *A General History of Music*, 4:481.
43. Bimolle, "Translation of a Letter from Signor Bimolle," 175–76.
44. Ibid., 176.
45. CWJCB, vol. 48, pt. 2, 263–64.
46. Bottarelli, *Orione*, Argument. See critical report, source **OT**.
47. H.J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology* (London: Routledge, 1991), 115–17.
48. Bottarelli, *Orione*, Argument.

> Orion is distinguished by a pure, elegant, and concise style. Every character is well-drawn, natural, and uniform. The moral is well-designed, inculcating throughout, the principles of virtue and religion, with a proper resignation to the dispensations of providence.[49]

The author went on to note the sensitivity of the romantic intrigue. However, the genre of Bottarelli's text can be interpreted more subtly than labeling it an opera seria. The title page—from a number that season where a single page was in both Italian and English—describes it as a "drama" rather than, as elsewhere (including *Zanaida*), a *dramma per musica*. A shortened genre title perhaps, except that the text is also referred to in one commentary as a "pastoral" characterized by "nature and unaffected simplicity."[50] The layout of the personaggi, too, suggests that Bottarelli was aware that his text was unconventional; it is divided into ordinary characters, pastoral characters, and deities, a type of layout only found in about half a dozen libretti prepared for the London Italian opera in the eighteenth century.

Musically, however, the structure of Bottarelli's libretto—like that of *Zanaida*—is essentially conservative. With the exceptions of the final scenes of acts 1 and 3, which end with a chorus, each scene of the opera ends with an aria, and of these, fourteen are da capo in form, and four are through-composed arias. This rhythm is broken only by scene 6 of act 1, which opens with the opera's only duet. The main novelty in the opera is the opening sequence, which consists of two chorus interjections, the second of which is in response to Oracolo's prediction for Orione delivered during a thunderstorm. The sequence also includes two accompanied recitatives, a genre which, as might be expected, occurs at a scene set at the Temple of Diana involving the supernatural. Other recitatives are allocated to Candiope—while she is praying at Orione's tomb at the royal burying place in act 2, scene 8—and to the Ombra di Orione—"The Manes of Orion," the divine dead at the place of horror in act 3, scene 1. None of the accompanied recitatives are so marked in the libretto; their form is known only from surviving portions of the score.

Act 1 opens at the Temple of Diana, furnished with Oracolo, the altar, and a statue of the huntress. Enopione, King of Arcadia and father of Candiope, and Argia appear. Then enter the young pastoral lovers, the shepherdess Nice and the shepherd Tirsi, and lastly, two deities, Diana and Mercurio; they are followed by a chorus of priests and warriors, guards and spectators. Oracolo promises Orione glory and death on the battlefield but forbids his union with Candiope on earth. He goes to take his final leave of her, but she refuses to accept that Mercurio will protect Orione and tries to persuade him not to go into battle. But Mercurio tells him that the armies of Thebes and Arcadia are waiting; he has the choice of fighting or staying at home. However, Mercurio's aside "thus I stir him up" suggests that Candiope's fears for Orione's safety are justified, and left alone, he grows concerned at Orione's attitude towards Diana, fearing that Mercurio's protection will not be enough to save him from the goddess's wrath. Nice and Tirsi arrive at a small grove adjacent to the Temple of Diana; Tirsi comforts Nice, as he prepares to leave for battle to fight under the standard of Orione. The battle, which takes place offstage and between scenes, ends with Orione triumphant. He arrives on the battlefield with Tirsi and Mercurio and followed by warriors with the ensigns of the defeated, to be met by the rest of the characters, including Diana. The chorus of shepherds and slaves, extravagantly praising Orione, closes the scene.

Act 2 opens in the cabinet of the Court of Enopione. Diana, having long been the subject of Orione's taunts, now finds him insufferable in the face of his triumph; he has undermined her rule in Thebes and Arcadia. Mercurio remonstrates, but she is determined. At a triumphal arch, Enopione, Candiope, and Argia entreat Orione not to anger the gods. They remind him of the fates of Acteon and Calisto but he dismisses their fears and departs. He is then killed by Diana's arrow offstage, a disaster that is reported by Tirsi to Argia; and then to Retrea leaving her in deep mourning. At the Temple of Diana, Nice declares her love for Tirsi. Candiope arrives at Orione's tomb and is so distressed that she prepares to stab herself to join him. She is saved by the arrival of Mercurio, who will conduct her to "Pluto's gloomy region" where Orione awaits her arrival.

At the opening of act 3, Mercurio and Candiope arrive from their crossing of the River Styx at "a place of horror, where two ways meet, one obscure and the other enlightened." The obscure way leads to "Pluto's gloomy mansions of misery," the "enlightened" way to the "Elysian plains" where now lives Orione. Mercurio and Candiope pass along the lighted way towards the Elysian Fields, to which the set changes, and they discover the Manes of Orione. Candiope does not want to live, but Orione, taking his final farewell, reminds her that he was born to serve his country and that he laid down his life of his own free will. Mercurio and Candiope pass through an ivory gate to the Temple of Neptune in which the final fate of Orione will

49. Philetymus, *Critical Observations*, in *London Opera Observed*, 2:8.

50. Ibid.

be pronounced. In the last scene, set at the Temple of Neptune "with a prospect of the sea," the gods gather to receive Mercurio returning from Arcadia; the gods have agreed to place Orione in the firmament "there to shine in full lustre amidst the other constellations" where his example will inspire all to the practice of "piety towards the Gods, and justice towards men." The closing chorus is a paean to Orione that echoes round the globe.

Sources and Reception

The autograph of *Orione* is missing, presumed lost, and while substantial portions of the work survive in three sources, none is the entire musical text of the opera and the contents do not collectively add up to the complete work.[51] It is probable that the original performing parts were lost in the fire that destroyed the King's Theatre on 17 June 1789; it was reported several days later that "a large and valuable quantity of manuscript music is destroyed."[52] According to a note on the incomplete score in GB-Ob: "This Volume containing all the Recit:^{ves} with Accomp:^{tas} and the Chorus:^{s} of G: C: Bach's Opera of Orione, I copied from his Original Score. Fred: Nicolay. N: B: The Original Score having been burn'd (as supposed) at the Opera-house, I believe there is no Copy extant besides this. F. N." The copyist, Frederick Nicolay (c. 1728–1809), was "first favourite, first fiddle, and first news-monger" of George III, and also served as Queen Charlotte's librarian; it seems likely that this copy from the now lost "Original Score" was made in pursuit of his Court duties.[53]

The total losses include the music to act 1, scenes 2–4 and 6, with the exception of Orione's "Nel trionfare il fato" and Nice's "Andrò dal colle al prato"; act 2, scenes 1–5 and 7, with the exception of Orione's "Se mi è caro l'idol mio," Argia's "Il figlio tuo," and Nice's "A me basta, caro Tirsi"; and act 3, scenes 3–6, with the exception of the final chorus "Della fama all'aurea tromba." There seems to be no pattern to these losses that would suggest alterations to accommodate a replacement singer, or the excision of a character, or even a set of more extensive revisions. Some of the songs appear in John Walsh's *Favourite Song* collections, with the first set of songs from *Orione*, "The favourite Songs in the Opera of ORIONE," appearing by 5 March (by which time Walsh was also advertising those from the earlier shows *La calamita de' cuori* and *Il tutore e la pupilla*) and the second set being advertised on 4 April (see source **C**). That the collections had the moniker "favourite songs" was no more than a marketing ploy;[54] as Burney pointed out in the case of the 1756 *Tito Manlio*, "the *favourite airs* of this opera were printed by Walsh, though none were favoured by the public."[55] The first set contained four arias sung by Ciardini, de Amicis, and Carmignani, and the second, three sung by de Amicis, Cremonini, and Segantini. The sets later appeared in volume 11 of *Le Delizie dell'Opere* of 1764,[56] which was further reprinted in the William Randall republication of the whole *Delizie dell'Opere* collection in 1776. While these sets of songs were expensive, their contents had an extensive circulation through personal loan and the activities of professional copyists.[57] There are two surviving libretti for *Orione*, one published by George Woodfall in 1763 for the first performances, and the other published by Thomas Cadell in 1777 for the revival on 24 May (sources **OT 1** and **OT 2**). The latter libretto contains the cast for this new staging:

Singer's Name	**Role**
Anna Pozzi	Retrea
Venanzio Rauzzini	Orione
Giuseppe Trebbi	Enopione
Luigia Farnese	Argia
Marianna Farnese	Tirsi
Gaspare Savoi	Mercurio
Cecilia Davies	Candiope
Maria Prudom	Nice
Leopoldo Micheli	Oracolo

One new role (Oracolo) was added in 1777. Most of the music written for the revival appears to have been lost, with the exception of Retrea's aria in act 3, "Fra quest'ombre," which survives in manuscript (see appendix).[58]

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51. An incomplete manuscript at GB-Ob, Tenbury MS 348 (source **B 2**), with selections in GB-Lbl, Add. 31,717 (source **B 1**).

52. *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 20 June 1789.

53. *BDA*, 11:24–25.

54. Michael Burden, "Divas, Arias, and Acrimony: The Revolving Door of Musical Resources for London's Italian Opera," in *Theatrical Heritage*, 84–86.

55. Burney, *A General History of Music*, 4:466.

56. William C. Smith and Charles Humphreys, *A Bibliography of the Musical Works Published by the Firm of John Walsh During the Years 1721–1766* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1968), 122, 124–25.

57. Michael Burden, "From London's Opera House to the Salon?: The *Favourite* (and not so "Favourite") Songs from the King's Theatre," in *Beyond Boundaries: Rethinking the Circulation of Music in Early Modern England*, ed. Linda Austern, Candace Bailey, and Amanda Eubanks Winkler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 231–35.

58. CWJCB, vol. 48, pt. 1, 264.