

INTRODUCTION

La clemenza di Scipione (Warb G 10) was Johann Christian Bach's fifth and last opera seria for the King's Theatre in London.¹ In several respects he broke new ground in this masterpiece by integrating the ballet into spectacular choral scenes and by taking up the latest trends from Italy like the two-tempo rondò and elaborate tone painting in the orchestra. This made his last opera for London a promise for the future, which unfortunately was not fulfilled because of his early death. It was first performed on Saturday, 4 April 1778, two weeks before Easter, as the third of four new opera seria productions presented in the course of the 1777–78 season.² After the eight performances in April, May, and June 1778 it was never repeated until 1805, when the *prima donna* Elizabeth Billington launched a revival of Bach's twenty-seven-year-old opera. It was so successful that its run was prolonged into the following season.³ This version was still based on the original performance material from 1778, though with the necessary insertions and alterations.⁴ All the revivals of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (including a production in Septem-

ber 2000 at the Theater Mönchengladbach-Rheydt as part of the Knechtsteden festliche Tage alter Musik, conducted by Hermann Max and released on CD in 2002; and a co-production of the Staatstheater Meiningen and Landestheater Eisenach that premiered on 16 October 2021), on the contrary, had to be content with the printed score of the opera, published in 1778,⁵ and with its subsequent facsimile reprint.⁶ Since no *recitativi semplici* are contained in the printed score, Ernest Warburton offered newly composed recitatives of his own, based on the original libretto.⁷

Scipione in the Context of the 1777–78 Season

Given the devastating results of the previous season, the co-managers Mary Ann Yates and Frances Brooke had early on sought to restore the former glory of the King's Theatre by engaging the two most renowned opera composers in London: Antonio Sacchini and Bach.⁸ Sacchini had been absent from the King's Theatre since November 1775. For Bach it was his first new London opera since *Carattaco* (Warb G 7) from February 1767. The two of them were supposed to replace the unfortunate Tommaso Traetta⁹

1. Ernest Warburton, introduction to CWJCB, vol. 9, xiv–xviii. This introduction, with slight modification, is based on Karl Böhmer, “*La clemenza di Scipione*,” in *Operas of JCB*, 127–41.

2. Cresio by Antonio Sacchini (8 November 1777, sixteen performances), *Erifile, regina di Zacinto* by Sacchini (7 February 1778, eight performances), *Scipione* by Bach (4 April 1778, eight performances), and *Il re pastore* by Tommaso Giordani (30 May, two performances). See Curtis Price, Judith Milhous, and Robert D. Hume, *The King's Theatre, Haymarket, 1778–1791*, vol. 1 of *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth Century London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 193–202. For the eight performances of Bach's opera on 4, 11, and 25 April; 2, 9, 16, and 23 May; and 20 June see *The London Stage, 1660–1800*, part 5, vol. 1, 1776–1783, ed. Charles Beecher Hogan (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1968).

3. Warburton, introduction to CWJCB, vol. 9, xvi–xvii. See *ibid.*, xvii, the summary of the principal surviving sources for the opera: “1. The libretto: copies at F Pn Th^b 2455, GB Lbl 907.i.16.4. (reprinted in Volume 44 of this series), US NH Vq 14 and Wc Schatz 528. 2. The full score (lacking the recitatives) published by John Welcker (RISM A/I/1 B 175 and A I/1/11 BB 175), advertised (apparently for the first time) on 17 September 1778 (*The Public Advertiser*).”

4. The rondò Billington inserted was a *rondoncino* by Pietro Alessandro Guglielmi, printed in 1805 with Billington's embellishments: *Se ti perdo o caro bene, The Favorite Rondo, with the Graces & Embellishments As Sung by Mrs Billington, In the Grand Serious Opera of La Clemenza di Scipione, Composed by Guglielmi* (London: M. Kelly,

1805). Originally it had been composed for Anna Morichelli Bosello in the female title role of *Enea e Lavinia* (Naples, 4 November 1785), but it was replaced by two-tempo rondòs in all the later revivals of Guglielmi's opera, even by Morichelli herself. It was Elisabeth Mara who brought Guglielmi's *rondoncino* to London as an insertion in *The Innocent Usurper*, an *Artaserse* pasticcio from 1790. See Michael Burden, “Metastasio on the London Stage, 1728 to 1840: A Catalogue,” *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle* 40 (2007): 146.

5. See critical report, source C.

6. CWJCB, vol. 9.

7. See critical report, source OT. Warburton's edition of *Scipione* with new recitatives is preserved in D-LEB, MUS E 255.

8. Ian Woodfield, *Opera and Drama in Eighteenth Century London: The King's Theatre, Garrick and the Business of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 136–52; Paul F. Rice, *Venanzio Rauzzini in Britain: Castrato, Composer and Cultural Leader* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2015), 63–72.

9. Rice, *Rauzzini*, 65, quotes from the *Whitehall Evening Post* of 15–18 March 1777: “Signor Trajetta is the most tiresome, heavy, and noisy composer, that ever shocked the ears of a British audience.”

and Venanzio Rauzzini, the *primo uomo* turned into a composer of respectable, but not sensational serious operas.¹⁰ On the contrary, the revival of Bach's *Orione* (Warb G 4) had proved to be quite a success towards the end of the season, on 24 May 1777.¹¹ Thus Bach re-established contact with the managers, who invited him to present a new opera of his in the next season. According to the *Indice de' teatrali spettacoli*, this should have been *Lucio Silla* (Warb G 9), Bach's second opera seria for Mannheim, composed in 1774, but as yet unknown to the London audience.¹² However, this plan was later dropped in favor of the newly composed *La clemenza di Scipione*.¹³

The original choice of *Lucio Silla* was suggested by the leading singers of the new season. It was already known at the beginning of February 1777 that Brooke had hired Franziska Danzi from Mannheim as the new *prima donna* besides Francesco Roncaglia from Italy as the new *primo uomo*.¹⁴ Danzi was a high coloratura soprano soon to gain European fame in the inauguration operas of the Teatro alla Scala in Milan.¹⁵ Despite her successes in Mannheim, she had not yet been to Italy. In order to gain the necessary reputation, she left the Palatinate in March 1777.¹⁶ Although she had not sung in Bach's Mannheim operas, the composer had witnessed her abilities in the opera buffa productions at the Palatine court.

The *primo uomo* Francesco Roncaglia was also more of a "newcomer" than an approved star of opera seria. After three years as *secondo uomo* at the Bavarian court he was

headhunted by elector Carl Theodor for the Palatine court in 1771.¹⁷ In Mannheim he sang in both of Bach's operas: as *secondo uomo* in *Temistocle* (Warb G 8) and as *primo uomo* in *Lucio Silla*.¹⁸ In *Zemira e Azor*, he had appeared side by side with Danzi.¹⁹ Hence the two leading singers of the new London season and Bach knew each other well from Mannheim. Only in 1776 did Roncaglia return to his homeland, where he gained notoriety in the next carnival season at the Teatro Argentina in Rome. He rescued the first performance of Sarti's *Ifigenia in Aulide* by filling in for the *primo uomo* Vito Millico when he fell ill. After Millico's recovery, Roncaglia took over the *prima donna* part, thus enacting the leading male and female roles in the same opera.²⁰ His engagement for the Haymarket was an immediate consequence of this outstanding achievement.

It was also a clear signal to Rauzzini that his time as London's star singer was coming to an end after three consecutive seasons. The fact that his successor was Roncaglia of all people had a bitter aftertaste for Rauzzini. The young soprano from Faenza had been the *secondo uomo* during Rauzzini's highly successful term as *primo uomo* at the Munich court of elector Maximilian III Joseph. Although Rauzzini was praised for his physical beauty and musical ability, Roncaglia was called "the most beautiful voice of our court."²¹ In the carnival season of 1770, the

10. On his operas and insertion arias in the 1776–77 season and his cantata *La partenza* for the farewell of Nancy Storace, *ibid.*, 54–68.

11. *Ibid.*, 66.

12. *ITS*, 260, for 1777–78: "Dramma Terzo. Lucio Silla. Musica nuova del Sig. Maestro Bach." A separate volume for just carnival 1778, 283, again lists Bach's *Lucio Silla* as the third opera, and this time also lists Felice Alessandri as the supposed composer of *Il Creso*, the first opera.

13. The fact that Giovanni de Gamera was the librettist of both *Erifile* and *Lucio Silla* helps to explain why the latter was rejected: two consecutive operas by the same librettist would have seemed odd.

14. According to a letter of Reverend Coxe to Lady Pembroke from 3 February 1777, quoted in Woodfield, *Opera and Drama*, 316, n. 4, "As to Dantzy she has a prodigious compass and a surprising facility and sings most naturally and agreeably. She is engaged to sing at the opera next winter."

15. Paul Corneilson, "Franziska Danzi-Lebrun, Prima Donna: Her Career and Portrait by Gainsborough," in Daniel Heartz, *Artists and Musicians: Portrait Studies from the Rococo to the Revolution*, ed. Beverly Wilcox (Ann Arbor: Steglein, 2014), 207–42.

16. Danzi's departure from Mannheim can be dated precisely on the basis of Wieland's letter of 16 April 1777 to his friend Merck. *Johann Heinrich Merck, Briefwechsel*, ed. Ulrike Leuschner, 5 vols. (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007), 1:719.

17. As yet, no special study has been dedicated to Roncaglia, who was later the long-term *primo uomo* at the Teatro S. Carlo in Naples. For an overview of his opera roles see Corago: Repertorio e archivio di libretti del melodrama italiano dal 1600 al 1900, online database hosted by the University of Bologna, <http://corago.unibo.it>.

18. Bärbel Pelker, "Theaterraufführungen und musikalische Akademien am Hof Carl Theodors in Mannheim: Eine Chronik der Jahre 1742–1777," in *Die Mannheimer Hofkapelle im Zeitalter Carl Theodors*, ed. Ludwig Finscher (Mannheim: Palatinum Verlag, 1992), 246, 254.

19. Mattia Verazi's Italian adaptation of André Grétry's famous *opéra comique* from January 1776, *ibid.*, 254.

20. *Gazzetta universale*, 7 January 1777, 14: "Roma 1. Gennajo. Sabato 28. dello scorso dicembre fu posto in scena nel Teatro di Torre Argentina il Dramma l'*Ifigenia*, musica tutta nuova del Maestro di Cappella Sig. Giuseppe Sarti, che non ebbe troppo incontro, non ostante che il Sig. Francesco Roncaglia chiamato da Firenze a fare la parte di primo Soprano in luogo del Sig. Vito Millico, sostenne colla sua abilità tutto il decoro di quel Teatro. Ora poi che il Sig. Millico è in grado di poter cantare, con sommo piacere del Pubblico, il Sig. Roncaglia passa a far la parte di prima Donna, invece del Sig. Neri, che canterà da secondo Soprano." *Ibid.*, 14 January 1777, 31: "Roma 8. Gennajo . . . Il Dramma l'*Ifigenia*, che si recita nel Teatro d'Argentina, ha avuto grande applauso dopo che il Sig. Vito Millico rappresenta la sua parte di primo Soprano, e il Sig. Francesco [*sic*] Roncaglia quella di prima Donna."

21. D-Dla, HStAD 10026 Geheimes Kabinett, Loc. 3292/10, Münchener Berichte vom Legationssekretär Unger an die Kurfürstin Witwe Maria Antonia, vol. 5, 1771: "Munic ce 7. Avril 1771. Nous avons perdu

two of them had appeared together in Sacchini's *Scipione in Cartagena*, based on an original libretto by Eugenio Giunti, the court poet of Duke Clemens Franz de Paula of Bavaria. This was the exact libretto used as the basis for *La clemenza di Scipione*.²² The choice was anything but random. By giving Bach an opera libretto originally set to music by Sacchini and giving Roncaglia the role of Luceio originally intended for Rauzzini, the co-managers created double competition.

Press Reviews and the Origin of the Libretto

The extraordinary success of *Scipione* is documented in a number of press reviews and private documents. James Harris and his family attended the opera four times, starting with the second performance in the presence of the royal family.²³ The *Public Advertiser* referred to the same evening as extremely packed.²⁴ A long review of the first performance had appeared in the same journal a week earlier.²⁵ Antoine Le Texier published a much shorter review in his *Journal Étranger*:

The first performance of *la clemenza di scipione* was given at the opera house, the music is by Monsieur Bach, this word is enough to praise it; there are pieces of the greatest beauty, but above all, that of the second act with obligato accompaniment of oboe, violin, cello, & flute, performed by Messrs. le Brun, Cramer, Cervetto, & Florio, is above all praise, & Miss Danzy sang with her usual superiority. The last ballet,

analogous to the *denouement* of this opera, does honor to the composition of Sieur Simonet.²⁶

Certain similarities in the wording of this article suggest that Le Texier was also the author of the long French review published by the *Courier de l'Europe* in Paris. It reveals that Bach's libretto was modeled on the one written by Giunti in Munich in 1769:²⁷

Last Saturday there was given the first performance of *La Clemenza di Scipione*, originally *Scipione in Cartagena*, an old canvas, treated nine years ago in Munich by *Signor Giunti*, successfully set to music by *Signor Sacchini* & partly recast in *London*. They had the idea to add useless choruses; the first and second acts are above mediocre, the third is very insipid; it does not matter, since it is the music that matters, it is by the famous Mr. *Bach*, Master of Music to the Queen, an author known for the variety and success of his works.²⁸

In the London libretto the author is not named, only "F. Bottarelli" as the translator. The following assumes that Ferdinando Bottarelli also adapted Giunti's model libretto, following the practices of his father Giovan Gualberto Bottarelli, who had died in 1775. The *Public Advertiser* somewhat mysteriously attributed the model libretto to a distinguished author from the diplomatic world.²⁹ The *Courier de l'Europe*, however, is unequivocal in its attribution to Giunti, which is confirmed by a comparison of the two libretti.

Roncagli, qui étoit la plus belle voix de nôtre opera." See also Unger's earlier description of Rauzzini and Roncaglia in *Antigono* by Pompeo Sales (Munich 1769): "Le premier a plus de musique, mais le second a la voix plus flûtée, et pourra devenir un des premiers chanteurs, étant fort jeune encore." Quoted in Karl Böhmer, *W. A. Mozarts Idomeneo und die Tradition der Karnevalsoper in München* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1999), 47.

22. Böhmer, *Mozarts Idomeneo*, 38, especially n. 5.

23. "Saturday April 11 went to the new opera, *La Clemenza di Scipione* by Bach—King & Queen, Prince of Wales & brother there—House remarkably full!" Quoted in *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), 977. James Harris also heard a morning rehearsal (1777) and attended a number of other performances (1783–85).

24. "On Saturday last the new Opera of *La Clemenza di Scipione*, composed by Mr. *Bach*, was performed for the second Time, with the greatest Applause, to a crowded and brilliant Audience." *PA*, 13 April 1778, quoted in Warburton, introduction to *CWJCB*, vol. 9, xvi.

25. *PA*, 6 April 1778, quoted in Warburton, introduction to *CWJCB*, vol. 9, xv–xvi, the source for all further quotations from the *Public Advertiser*.

26. "On a donné à l'opéra la première représentation de *la clemenza di scipione*, la musique est de Monsieur *Bach*, ce mot suffit pour en faire l'éloge; il y a des morceaux de la plus grande beauté, mais surtout, celui du second acte, avec accompagnement obligé du Hautbois, du Violon, du Violoncel, & de la Flutte, executé par Mrs. le Brun, Cramer, Cervetto, & Florio, est au dessus de tout éloge, & M^{lle}. Danzy la chanté avec sa supériorité ordinaire. Le dernier ballet, analogue au denouement de cet opera, fait honneur à la composition du Sieur Simonet." *Journal Étranger*, no. 21 (April 1778), 129–30, quoted in Woodfield, *Opera and Drama*, 294. My translation.

27. *Scipione in Cartagena, Damma per Musica* [. . .] nel Carnevale dell'Anno M. DCC. LXX. *La Poesia è del Signor Eugenio Giunti*, [. . .] *La Musica è del Sig. Antonio Sacchini* (Munich: Magdalena Mayr, 1770).

28. "Samedi dernier on a donné la première représentation de la *Clemenza di Scipione*, originairement *Scipione in Cartagena*, ancien canevas, traité il y a neuf ans à *Munich* par il *Signor Giunti*, mis en musique avec succès par il *Signor Sacchini* & refondu en partie à *Londres*. On s'est avisé d'y ajouter des chœurs inutiles; le premier & le second acte sont au dessus du médiocre, le troisième est très-insipide; n'importe c'est de la musique qu'il s'agit, elle est du celebre Mr. *Bach*, Maître de Musique de la Reine, Auteur connu par la variété & le succès de ses ouvrages." *Courier de l'Europe*, 7 April 1778, 224. My translation.

29. *PA*, 6 April 1778.

When Paul Corneilson hinted at the Paris review and the possible model libretto from Munich, he dismissed the idea because almost all of Giunti's original aria texts were substituted with new ones.³⁰ This, however, was the usual method of G. G. Bottarelli. When he arranged Pasquini's Dresden libretto *Leucippo* for the 1763–64 season, he claimed to have "altered in a great measure the plot, and the recitatives, and also the airs, as will more plainly appear by comparison."³¹ Dennis Libby arrived at the same conclusion when comparing the libretto of Sacchini's *Il Cid* to its model by Gioacchino Pizzi.³² In contrast it seems revealing that F. Bottarelli did keep Giunti's texts for three important numbers in *Scipione*: Luceio's first aria "Parto, ma serbo in mente," Arsinda's last aria "Ah, si vada . . . Ma il piede vacilla," and the final quintet with chorus "Se mesti e dolenti." Though all three texts were paraphrased in individual verses, they are unmistakably Giunti's poems. The same can be said of 80% of the recitatives in *Scipione*. Although heavily cut and full of small variants in wording, they obviously stem from Giunti's Munich libretto, as does the whole construction of the drama.³³

In his arrangement of Giunti's *Scipione in Cartagena* F. Bottarelli strove for modernity.³⁴ He reduced a typically long and complicated *dramma per musica* of the late 1760s

to a much more condensed and straightforward drama, anticipating the style of the 1780s. The first letter to the *Public Advertiser* clearly described this character, "As to the Drama (though it is the *Fashion* not to pay much Attention to it) yet it must be confessed, that the Language is both correct and poetical; and that it is free from the Turgidity and Bombast, which is the Bane of most Italian Operas."³⁵ Bottarelli started with a radical reduction of the number of scenes. He reduced the scenes in act 1 from fourteen to eight by leaving out five complete scenes, comprising ten pages of Italian text in the bilingual Munich libretto. He also drew together two separate dialogues of Arsinda with Scipione (act 1, scene 2) and Marzio (act 1, scene 3) into just one confrontation between the Celtiberian princess and the Roman conqueror. For this new scene (act 1, scene 2) he kept no more than thirty-one recitative lines out of the 107 lines in Giunti's original two scenes. In the same manner he reduced all the scenes he kept, giving not more than condensed versions of the respective dialogues.³⁶ While Bottarelli kept the number of eleven scenes in act 2, he rearranged and shortened them considerably. Act 3 was cut from nine to five scenes by simply leaving out the first five scenes, but transferring Arsinda's aria in the second scene to the penultimate scene.

One reason for Bottarelli's cuts was the reduced number of soloists. The *ultima parte* in Giunti's libretto, the Numidian prince Massinissa, was cut. For the remaining five singers, certain rearrangements seemed necessary. In Munich the title role was sung by Guglielmo d'Ettore, by far the most prominent singer of the cast. Therefore, he was granted the very first aria of the opera. In London this privilege was transferred to Danzi. Since she was given a cavatina to open the last scene of act 1, Roncaglia was allowed another cavatina as an introduction to act 3. Necessary insertions were the grand scene of the *prima donna* before the terzetto finale of act 2 and the rondò for the *primo uomo* in act 3.³⁷ The penultimate scene was again reserved for Danzi. All this shuffling around of arias was intended to underline the dominant position of the two most prominent singers.

30. Corneilson, "Danzi-Lebrun," 219, n. 29.

31. Quoted in Michael Burden, *Regina Mingotti: Diva and Impresario at the King's Theatre, London*, Royal Musical Association Monographs 22 (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013), 103.

32. Dennis Libby, introduction to Antonio Sacchini's *Il Cid*, reprint of Robert Brenner's 1773 London edition (London: Stainer & Bell, 1996), xi.

33. Giunti was probably a Tuscan from Florence and served the Bavarian duke Clemens Franz as court poet from 1754 until the duke's death on 6 August 1770. Robert Münster, *Herzog Clemens Franz von Paula von Bayern (1722–1770) und seine Münchener Hofmusiker* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 2008), 38. Since the duke was a member of the Roman Accademia degli Arcadi and wrote Italian libretti himself, Giunti was well acquainted with the art of libretto writing. His main duty at the Electoral court was teacher of foreign languages, a position he held until 1789, when his name appears for the last time in the *Hofkalender*.

34. As a curiosity, it should be reported that G. G. Bottarelli wrote a libretto about Scipio as early as 1743 in Berlin. It was his third libretto as court poet of Frederick the Great but it was never set to music, since he was caught for stealing golden braids from the chapel in Schloss Charlottenburg while on his way to the king in order to present "seine neue Opera Scipio." See Carl Heinrich Graun's letter of 22 June 1743 to Telemann, in Georg Philipp Telemann, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Hans Grosse and Hans Rudolf Jung (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1972), 271. Concerning his time in Berlin see *Italienerinnen und Italiener am Hofe Friedrich II. (1740–1786)*, ed. Rita Unfer Lukoschik (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2008), 271–74.

35. PA, 6 April 1778.

36. "It had long been customary to reduce the recitative to a minimum in Italian libretti adapted for English use." Libby, introduction to *Il Cid*, xiii.

37. For Luceio's rondò "Nel partir, bell'idol mio" Bottarelli used the obligatory *ottonario* meter, but wrote only two quatrains instead of the usual three. Nevertheless, Bach composed a two-tempo rondò in the most modern form, established by Giuseppe Sarti and other composers during the years before.

Whereas Bottarelli's main task was to reduce, he had to find room for the insertion of three new "grand choruses." In the very first scene, Giunti led the way with his own elaborate choral introduction. In act 2, Bottarelli had the brilliant idea to illustrate the battle between Romans and Celtiberians by choral singing whereas Giunti had confined himself to the usual noise of battle. Totally new was Bottarelli's idea for the chorus of act 3: the invocation of the priests in the Temple of Vengeance. It was a tribute to the new fashion for temple scenes in the late 1770s. The three grand choruses offered Bach new possibilities for integrating choral singing, orchestral music, and dancing into scene complexes. This concept was meticulously arranged with the stage director Vincenzo Valdrè and the choreographer Louis Simonet.

The Stage Designer Valdrè, the Choreographer Simonet, and Bach's "Pictorial" Music

The spectacular *mise-en-scène* contributed considerably to the success of the new opera.³⁸ Unfortunately, no stage designs by Valdrè have been preserved.³⁹ The painter from Faenza had been staying in London since 1774 and was hired by the co-managers as the stage designer only for the 1777–78 season.⁴⁰ In view of his later innovative designs for the famous music room at Stowe, decorated in 1780 in pure neoclassicist style, his stage sets for *Scipione* must have shown an equally authentic renewal of the antique, given the time he spent in Rome between 1768 and 1774. His continuous studies of Roman architecture are documented in the travel diary of the young Richard Norris from London.⁴¹

38. "With magnificent new Scenes, Dresses and Decorations, both for the Opera and the Dances." PA, 4 April 1778.

39. Andrea Fabbri, "Un artista faentino in Inghilterra: Vincenzo Valdrè (1742–1814)," *Romagna arte e storia* 49 (1997): 43–56. Ugo Valdrè, Valentina Berti, and Bryan Lynch, *Recenti indagini, chiarimenti e considerazioni su Vincenzo Valdrè (Faenza 1740–Dublino 1814)* (Faenza: Società Torricelliana di Scienza e Lettere, 2018).

40. Ibid., 46–47. See the spelling of his name in the libretto of *Scipione* in the *Personaggi*: "Pittore, e Macchinista, Signor Valdré," and in the English translation on the opposite page: "Painter and Machinist, Signor Valdré." Both spellings were used in London and later Dublin.

41. The son of a powerful building contractor from Castle Yard in Holborn, Norris joined Valdrè in his daily drawing exercise during several months in 1771–72. See Andreas Gestrich, "it will be the greatest disappointment in the world for me to be necessitated to quit Rome: Zwei Vignetten zu Kunst und Kommerz in Rom und London im 18. Jahrhundert," in *Trier-Mainz-Rom: Stationen, Wirkungsfelder,*

Valdrè's most spectacular decorations were intended for the two battle scenes of the opera: the conquering of the city in the very first scene and the battle around the ships in act 2. The opening scene showed the Roman forces entering the city by night. Although the setting was derived from the much shorter description in the Munich libretto, it was considerably enlarged for London, in order to create a highly refined nocturnal scene.⁴² Showing the destroyed city gate and "standards and dead bodies on the ground" was one spectacular aspect of that scene, the other being the dynamic action on the dimly lit stage: "Roman Soldiers holding lighted torches in one hand, and their swords in the other" and "the affrighted people are in different attitudes, whilst the Roman Guards put them in chains." The Italian expression "in diverse attitudini" unequivocally hints at the involvement of the ballet as "attitudine" was the common expression for complex gestures of ballet dancers in a pantomime.⁴³

In 1778, the choreographer Louis Simonet made his first serious attempts to integrate ballet into the action of serious operas.⁴⁴ In *Scipione* he demonstrated this innovation in the "new grand Serious Ballet" at the end of the opera, "analogous to the *denouement*"⁴⁵ and by integrating ballet pantomime into the two battle scenes. Since there is no

Netzwerke, ed. Anna Esposito (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2013), 344–45.

42. "Parte interna della Città di Cartagena, con veduta in prospetto del gran Porto di mare, e da una parte la porta della città, abbattuta dai vincitori Romani. Insegne, e morti sparsi per terra. All'alzarsi della Tela la scena è oscura con soldati Romani, i quali tengono una Torcia accesa da una mano, e la Spada dall'altra. Il Popolo sorpreso in diverse attitudini, e alcuni Custodi romani che l'incatenano." This quotation as well as later ones derive from source OT.

43. "Le Attitudini si possono fare a piè fermo, avanti, in dietro, in giro, e sforzate." Gennaro Magri, *Trattato teorico-prattico di ballo* (Naples: Vincenzo Orsino, 1779), 110–11. See also *The Grotesque Dancer on the Eighteenth-Century Stage: Gennaro Magri and His World*, ed. Rebecca Harris-Warwick and Bruce Alan Brown (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005).

44. Price, Milhous, Hume, *King's Theatre*, 446–48.

45. According to Le Texier the third ballet was "analogue au *denouement* de cet opera," quoted in Woodfield, *Opera and Drama*, 294. The titles of all three ballets are mentioned in PA, 4 April 1778: "With new Dances, composed by Mons. Simonet. End of Act I. A Divertissement. . . End of Act II. A new Ballet Pastoral called La Surprise de Daphnis et Cephise, the Ballet by Mons. Simonet, the Introduction by Mons. Banti . . . End of the Opera, A new grand Serious Ballet called Les Amours unis par L'Hymen, by Mons. Simonet." The most celebrated dancer in Simonet's company was Giovanna Baccelli, the notorious *prima ballerina* from Venice. Apart from her, there were several members of the Banti family among the solo dancers; cf. the detailed information in PA, 4 April 1778.

ballet music to the first scene, the pantomime must have taken place during the overture. Bach depicted the stage action of the ballet dancers in the music of his stormy Allegro with its allusions to military fanfares and battle music. As soon as Scipione appears, the brutal action comes to a sudden halt, but the orchestra repeats three characteristic motives from the overture as insertions into his recitative, revealing their “pictorial” meaning: the military fanfares of the unison head motive as a symbol of the “brave sons of the Tyber” and their “vengeful steels”; a falling motive for “the proud city [that] falls and yields to the force of our arms”; and very fast *tirate* for the “victorious standards” being “erected upon the vanquished walls of the city.”

The pantomime of act 2 showed the Romans defeating their enemies on the ships in the form of a danced chorus: “Exeunt Scipio and Luceius fighting, whilst all the Roman soldiers run to the ships, with their drawn swords; and then all return, each of them leading a prisoner by the hand, while the following chorus is singing.” Unequivocally this is the scenario of a ballet pantomime. While the chorus was singing at the sides of the stage, the ballet dancers enacted the victorious Romans dragging their captives to the foreground. Not by chance, Bach chose the musical character of a passacaille in $\frac{3}{4}$, first for the orchestra, then joined by the chorus. Over a descending bass the chorus sings in a clearly articulated four-measure structure combined with stormy orchestral motives.⁴⁶

The Art of the Singers as Reflected in Bach’s Music

When comparing *Scipione* to the Sacchini operas of the same season, the reviewer of the *Public Advertiser* praised the melodic quality of Bach’s arias so perfectly tailored to the voices of the soloists:

La Clemenza di Scipione, is the third new Serious Opera produced this Season at the King’s Theatre: They are all excellent in their Kind. *Creso* is remarkable for its Melody, *Eriphile* for [its] Harmony: We do not mean to enter into invidious Comparisons, but Signor Bach seems to have paid a proper Attention to both; though chiefly to the Melody of the Airs, which are finely adapted to the Voices, and are composed with great Learning, Taste, Feeling, Novelty, and Variety.⁴⁷

46. According to the printed score this movement was a simple four-part chorus on the text of the first stanza. The libretto, however, contains two quatrains for the “Coro di Romani” and “Coro di Celtiberi.”

47. *PA*, 6 April 1778.

The *dramatis personae* consisted of five singers:

Singer’s Name	Role
Valentin Adamberger	Scipione
Franziska Danzi	Arsinda
Francesco Roncaglia	Luceio
Maria Prudom	Idalba
Giuseppe Coppola	Marzio

However, there is a sixth character in the opera, who sings just six lines of simple recitative, the *sommo sacerdote* in the temple scene. After the chorus “I suoi strali, terror de’ mortali” the high priest invokes the goddess Vengeance and lifts the sword in order to sacrifice Luceio on the altar. At the very last second, Arsinda prevents this brutal massacre, much like Ilia in the temple scene of Mozart’s *Idomeneo*. It was certainly the bass Leopoldo Micheli who enacted this short role.⁴⁸ The long-term buffo, copyist, and dramaturge of the King’s Theatre appeared only in very small roles during his later years.⁴⁹ After singing the *ultima parte* in Sacchini’s *Creso*, he was confined to the role of high priest in the remaining operas of the season.⁵⁰ As late as 1781, Micheli sang the recitative of a *sommo sacerdote* in Bertoni’s *Quinto Fabio*. Susan Burney reported that he “Dieu soit benit, has only 3 or 4 lines of Rec^a as high Priest to sing.”⁵¹

The singers of the secondary parts were the English soprano Maria Prudom⁵² and the Italian soprano castrato Giuseppe Coppola.⁵³ They also enacted the serious parts in the *opere buffe* of the season. Their music in *Scipione* was restricted to simple and short arias almost without

48. The “List of Singers and Dancers, &c. for the ensuing season” in the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 20 September 1777, still contained his name as “last man” in “serious opera.”

49. Concerning his career, voice, and many functions in London see Saskia Willaert, “Italian Comic Opera in London, 1760–1770” (Ph.D. diss., King’s College, University of London, 1999), 170–73.

50. In *Eriphile*, the “high priest Astidimas” invokes the goddess Giuno in the wedding ceremony of act 1, scene 7.

51. Philip Olleson, *The Journals and Letters of Susan Burney: Music and Society in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 112.

52. She had started her career only in the previous season and was confined mostly to buffa and *seconda donna* roles until her early death on 14 March 1783. Price, Milhous, Hume, *King’s Theatre*, 72.

53. He came to London with a whole decade of experience as *ultima parte* in Naples and *secondo uomo* in Venice, Padua, and Florence. During Advent 1775, he had sung with Adamberger in oratorio performances in Florence. *Gazzetta toscana* (1775), no. 48, p. 191, and no. 52, p. 206. After two seasons in London he returned to Italy, occasionally advancing to the position of *primo uomo*, especially in Florence.

coloratura and in no way comparable to the arias of the three leading singers. Despite their ostentatious simplicity and buffa-like *leggerezza*, they were infused with a maximum of Bach's sweet melody. The Paris review mentioned "Coppola's air in the second act" as one of the highlights of the opera.⁵⁴

Of the three leading singers, Danzi was praised in the highest terms.⁵⁵ According to the Paris review, it was her first aria "Confusa, abbandonata" that contributed most to the overwhelming impact of her performances.⁵⁶ In this Allegro moderato in C major Bach strove for a perfect equilibrium between the singing allegro of the first subject, the soft unison canon of the second subject, so subtly colored by the horns, and the *Empfindsamkeit* of the third motive leading directly into Danzi's entry. The coloratura passages are woven quite naturally into the flow of the melody, although they go all the way up to d'''.⁵⁷ This aria had an astonishingly long afterlife in concert halls. It was still sung in June 1836 by Maria Malibran and in May 1841 by Sophie Loewe.⁵⁸ All reviewers from 1778 and many later writers praised Arsinda's *aria concertata* with four obbligato instruments, a kind of *sinfonia concertante* with integrated coloratura soprano. It has often been noted that it might have been a model for Constanze's aria "Martern aller Arten" in Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. The Paris review reports that this aria was encored in the first performance.⁵⁹

Valentin Adamberger, the future Belmonte in Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, had developed an international reputation as a stunning *primo tenore* in opera seria beginning with the Florentine autumn sea-

son of 1775. The Italians were amazed to find that a German tenor sang flawlessly in the purest Italian style.⁶⁰ By mid-July 1777 it was known in Munich that he had gone to London: "The electoral chamber virtuoso, Valentin Adamberger, whom your Electoral Highness had graciously permitted to travel to Italy, did not return at the specified time in accordance with his duty, but in breach of duty went to London for two years service without having received permission from here."⁶¹ In London he was quite a success from the very beginning, despite his small body size and his somewhat nasal voice.⁶² In *Scipione* he pleased especially in his first aria and the terzetto.⁶³ Since Bach composed two allegro arias for him, he obviously had less faith in Adamberger's cantabile than Mozart in Vienna four years later.

Roncaglia was the only singer of the leading trio whose performance led to controversial discussions. The *Public Advertiser* praised his cantabile aria and rondò unreservedly: "That beautiful Air in the Second Act, *Frena le belle Lacrime*, sung by Signor Roncaglia, is charmingly pathetic, and well suited to his Voice; as is likewise the one in Act III,

54. *Courier de l'Europe*, 7 April 1778, 224, "l'air del Signor Coppola au second [acte]" is reckoned among the arias "regardés par les connoisseurs comme des morceaux inappréciables."

55. See Corneilson, "Danzi-Lebrun," 215–23, for contemporary descriptions of her singing.

56. "La Signora Danzi dans le rôle d'Arsinda a fait une sensation remarquable, sur-tout dans un air du premier acte, *Confusa abbandonata*, la composition de ce morceau mérite d'être distinguée." *Courier de l'Europe*, 7 April 1778, 224.

57. After the development with its modulation from C minor through D minor to A minor, the third motive serves as the most natural bridge passage to the recapitulation. It also opens a short coda, in which the canon of the second subject is heard for the fourth time.

58. Warb, 314.

59. "La Signora Danzi toujours étonnante, s'est surpassée dans l'air du second acte *Infelice in van m'affanno*, ce morceau accompagné du hautbois, du violon, du violoncelle & de la flûte obligés, exécuté par Mess. Le Brun, Cramer, Cervetto & Florio, fut redemandé avec transport." *Courier de l'Europe*, 7 April 1778, 224.

60. "Firenze 23. Settembre . . . sentiamo un Tenore di nazione Tedesco denominato il sig. Valentino Ademberg che per il garbo nel recitare, e gratissima sua voce, e bravura nel canto è un gran pezzo che non si è avuto leguale." *Gazzetta toscana* (1775), no. 38, p. 150. He stayed on in Florence to sing in church music on Saint Cecilia's Day and during Advent. *Gazzetta toscana* (1775), no. 47, p. 185; no. 48, p. 191; no. 49, p. 193; and no. 52, p. 206. His early Italian career culminated in the carnival of 1777, when he sang with Roncaglia in Rome. For further information on Adamberger's origins in Munich and his true birth date see Münster, *Herzog Clemens Franz von Paula von Bayern*, 86. About his later career see Thomas Bauman, "Mozart's Belmonte," *Early Music* 19 (November 1991), 557–63; and Dorothea Link, *The Italian Opera Singers in Mozart's Vienna* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2022), 87–89.

61. "Der kurlf. Kamer Virtuos Valentin Adamberger, welchem Eure Kurlf: Durchl. eine Reise nacher Italien machen zu dürfen gldigst erlaubet haben, hat sich seiner Schuldigkeit gemäß um die demselben bestimmte Zeit disorts nicht eingefunden, sondern er hat sich pflichtwidrig nacher London ohne von hier erhaltene Erlaubnüss auf 2. Jahre in dienst begeben." D-Msa, HR I, Fasz. 462, Nr. 64, letter from Count Seeau to Max III Joseph, Munich, 15 July 1777. The intendant Seeau recommended that his salary be discontinued, which suggestion was acted upon the following month, as seen in the resolution of the Hofzahlamt of 6 August 1777. I am grateful to Paul Corneilson for pointing out this source.

62. Le Texier reported on his musical qualities, but also on his being rather short: "Le Tenore chargé de ces rôles a dit-on, beaucoup de mérite comme chanteur, il est extrêmement bon musicien, connoit parfaitement le chant, mais sa voix nous a paru nazale & désagréable; il a d'ailleurs une bien petite figure." *Journal Étranger*, no. 10 (November 1777), 151, quoted in Woodfield, *Opera and Drama*, 284.

63. "Il Signor Ademberg a parfaitement bien rempli son rôle de Scipione, dans l'air du premier acte *alma nata in riva al Tebro*, il a fait beaucoup de plaisir." *Courier de l'Europe*, 7 April 1778, 224.

Nel partire, idolo mio."⁶⁴ On the contrary, the Paris review commented rather cruelly on his failure: "We are sorry to note that Signor Roncaglia loses every day the brilliance that distinguished his debut. He has eclipsed himself as soon as the performances of *Creso* were discontinued, he is absolutely unrecognizable."⁶⁵ While Mount Edgumbe compared him unfavorably to his predecessor Rauzzini,⁶⁶ Le Texier arrived at the opposite conclusion when comparing the two singers.⁶⁷ Burney's verdict is also a sequence of pros and cons.⁶⁸ During his whole career the enthusiasm for Roncaglia's incredibly beautiful voice and his impeccable technique was accompanied by reservations against his emotionless, disinterested performance style. Norbert Hadrava, the attaché to the Imperial embassy in Naples, in a letter to Johann Paul Schulthesius on 14 March 1786, described this contradiction in the most notable way by comparing the famous Luigi Marchesi to Roncaglia:

if Marchesi had the excellent tone of Roncaglia's voice, he could be counted among the wonders of the world. Roncaglia does not have the range of voice and that strength, but a very gentle and touching tone, and yet Roncaglia sings without feeling or art. His voice impresses every sensitive ear, and yet he sings his notes with all coldness, feeling nothing of the words he is expressing.⁶⁹

64. PA, 6 April 1778.

65. "Nous sommes fâchés de remarquer qu'il Signor Roncaglia perd tous les jours de l'éclat qui avoit distingué son début, il s'est éclipsé au moment où l'on a discontinué les représentations d'il *Creso*: il est absolument méconnoissable." *Courier de l'Europe*, 7 April 1778, 224.

66. "At the close of Rauzzini's engagement, his place was filled by Roncaglia, his inferior in every respect. His figure was good, and he was far from ill-looking; his voice sweet, and his style easy and *grazioso*: but he was languid, feeble, and insipid, and withal extremely affected." Richard, Earl of Mount Edgumbe, *Musical Reminiscences, Containing an Account of the Italian Opera in England, from 1773*, 4th ed. (London: John Andrews, 1834), 9.

67. *Journal Étranger*, no. 10 (November 1777), 150, quoted in Woodfield, *Opera and Drama*, 284.

68. "Roncaglia had an elegant face and figure; a sweet toned voice; a chaste and well disciplined style of singing; hazarded nothing, and was always in tune. The best part of his voice, which was a soprano, was from D to A, he sometimes went to C, but not easily. Both his voice and shake were feeble; and of the three great requisites of a complete stage singer, pathos, grace, and execution, which the Italians call *cantabile*, *graziosa*, and *bravura*, he was in perfect possession of only the second." Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, vol. 4 (London, 1789), 508.

69. "wenn a[ber] Marchesi den fùrtrefflichen Ton der Stimme des Roncaglia hätte, so kön[n]te man ihn unter die Wunder der Welt zählen. Roncaglia hat nicht den Umfang der Stimme und jene Stärke, allein, ein[en] sehr sanften und rührenden Ton, und dennoch singt Ron[ca]-glia ohne Gefühl und Kunst, seine Stimme macht Eindru[ck] auf jedes

Bach made the most of Roncaglia's beautiful voice when composing "Frena le belle lagrime" as a Larghetto in A major and $\frac{3}{4}$ and the slow first section of the rondò "Nel partir, bell'idol mio" as a sweet Andantino in B-flat major and $\frac{2}{4}$. The latter represents the very embodiment of Roncaglia's cantabile: noble, beautifully formed, but somewhat impersonal in expression.⁷⁰ The way in which Bach anticipated the motives of the Andantino in the preceding recitative is just as masterful as the idea to continue the motive in dotted rhythm in Arsinda's following *scena*.

An Echo of Bach's Opera in Italy: Sarti's *Scipione* from October 1778

Of all the performers in *Scipione*, Roncaglia was the fondest admirer of Bach's music and the drama. When he returned to Italy in June 1778,⁷¹ he took Bach's opera with him and persuaded his compatriot Giuseppe Sarti to write a new version of *Scipione* on the basis of both Bottarelli's libretto and Bach's score. Sarti's *Scipione* was first performed as the inaugural opera of the new Teatro Balbi in Mestre on 15 October 1778, with Roncaglia in the role of Luceio.⁷² The libretto was based on Bottarelli's text from London,

gefühlvolles Ohr, und er singt seine Noten mit aller Kälte, fühlt nichts im Inneren von den Worten, die er ausdrückt." Giuliana Gialdroni, "La musica a Napoli alla fine del XXVIII secolo nelle lettere di Norbert Hadrava," *Fonti musicali italiane* 1 (1996): 110.

70. The popularity of the rondò is documented in a number of copies: complete performance material in D-Wa, 46 Alt 675; a score transposed to G major in US-CAT, M1505.A148 T5 1756; a piano score in an aria collection in B-Bc, 5155 MSM; and a short score with the title "Air de John Bach. Chanté par Sigr Roncaglia. Clemenzia [sic] di Scipione" in CH-Gc, X 5 (Ms. 10475). After Marie Chanu had sung the aria in Rauzzini's concert series in Bath, it was printed in full score: *Nel partir bell'idol mio. A Favorite Italian Air, Sung by Miss Chanu at Bath* (London: J. Dale, [1785]).

71. Roncaglia left London between the two letters Burney wrote to Padre Martini on 22 and 29 June 1778 (I-Bc, I.001.028–029). *The Letters of Charles Burney. Volume I. 1751–1784*, ed. Alvaro Ribeiro, SJ (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 248–50, with commentary. Burney wrote directly to Roncaglia on 6 October 1778, *ibid.*, 255–56. Roncaglia carried with him Bach's portrait by Gainsborough, which the composer announced in his last letter to Padre Martini on 28 July 1778 (I-Bc, I.024.086). Anne Schnoebelen, *Padre Martini's Collection of Letters in the Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale in Bologna: An Annotated Index* (New York: Pendragon, 1979), nos. 876, 877, and 334. Riccardo Allorto, *Gli anni milanesi di Giovanni Cristiano Bach e le sue composizioni sacre* (Milan: Ricordi, 1992), 134 (letter no. 40); also Roe, DL 48. For scans of Martini's correspondence see I-Bc's website.

72. *Scipione. Dramma per musica. Da rappresentarsi. Nel nuovissimo, e Nobilissimo Teatro. Dell'Eccellentissima Casa Balbi, In Mestre. L'Autunno dell'Anno 1778. In Venezia, MDCCLXXVIII* (Venice: Modesto Fenzo, 1778).

but reinstated several original aria texts by Giunti as well as the role of Massinissa, which proves that Roncaglia took both the Munich and London libretti with him to Italy. Sarti's score, on the other hand, contains so many allusions to Bach's music that the latter obviously served as the model for the former. This is not only true of Arsinda's aria in act 2 conceived by Sarti as an *aria concertata* with obbligato oboe, bassoon, and violoncello, but also of the three main arias of Luceio. The aria in act 1 is clearly an answer to Bach's two-tempo structure and his very special coloratura for Roncaglia. The rondò in act 3 starts with a short motive in dotted rhythm, taken directly from Bach's

rondò. And the aria in act 2 is nothing else but Sarti's re-modeling of Bach's "Frena le belle lagrime," as Sarti took all the motives from Bach's aria and rearranged them by simply inverting their melodic lines. Thus, Sarti's *Scipione* is a document testifying to the lasting influence of Bach's music on one of the leading Italian masters of opera seria around 1780. This close relation is all the more valuable, since Sarti's opera is preserved in three complete scores in Paris, Florence, and Münster.⁷³ All of them contain the complete recitatives, based on a libretto very close to the London version.

Karl Böhmer

73. All three scores obviously came from the same Venetian copy shop, bearing identical titles: "Il Scipione. Del Sig.^r Giuseppe Sarti. In Mestre. L'autunno dell'anno 1778." D-MÜs, SANT Hs 3833; F-Pn, D-13751; and I-Fc, Accademia D.I.641-642-643.