

## II. The foundations of musical comedy

Goldoni began his activity as a librettist at an early age in 1730, first adapting existing texts for new musical settings, as for example *Griselda*, from a text by Apostolo Zeno (1668–1750), for Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741). Goldoni then authored texts for short comic *intermezzi*, while his first *dramma giocoso* (*La scuola moderna*) was written in 1748, ten years after *Momolo cortesan*, the comedy that, according to the author himself, marked the first steps of his theatrical reform. It is significant to note that before Goldoni, the presence and popularity of the *dramma giocoso* in Venice are difficult to trace. Surviving documents give word of very few titles, the earliest of these being from 1744: *La Libertà Nociva* and *L'ambizione delusa*, neither of which have survived. Both were by Rinaldo di Capua with libretti written or readapted by Giovanni Barlocchi, and both premiered at the *S. Cassiano* theatre, which, taking example from the already established *S. Samuele* and *S. Moisè*, began favoring comic opera in its programming given the growing popularity of this art. These remain, however, sporadic titles among a myriad of other, more prominent, musical genres: *drammi seri*, *drammi berneschi*, *drammi eroi-comici*, farces, divertimenti, and *commedie per musica* are just some of the many forms authors were experimenting with. Goldoni too, before *La scuola moderna* of 1748, essayed all of them without ascribing preference to any one genre over the others. After *La scuola moderna*, however, he would turn his attention almost exclusively to this newest form, the *dramma giocoso per musica*, and following his abundant production of these texts, examples surface throughout Europe in the work of subsequent generations, all the way to the Viennese school. These are the libretti Goldoni began writing only as a mature playwright, in other words as an established author with very clear ideas about his own artistic criteria and his agenda for the future of comic theatre. These are the libretti that went on to have a lasting impact on the history of opera.

## i. The limits of *opera seria*

In the dedication of his comedy *Terenzio* (1754), the Arcadian Polisenso Fegejo bows to the greatest man of modern theatre, Pietro Antonio Domenico Trapassi, better known as Metastasio (1698–1782):

In tutti i teatri d'Europa non si rappresentano che i Drammi vostri. Si replicano nel teatro medesimo le dodici, le venti volte. Non vi è compositore di Musica, che non le abbia sperimentate. Non vi è casa, non vi è persona, che non ne sia provveduta. Sono numerosissime le edizioni, e fortunati coloro che le hanno stampate. I Comici ancora se le sono appropriate per molto tempo, e con profitto notabile le hanno senza musica rappresentate. Da moltissime genti si fanno per la maggior parte a memoria, e pure si gustano sempre, piacciono ogni ora di più, e qualunque Dramma espongasi sulle scene, ha sempre un massimo disavvantaggio, se non è della felicissima penna del Metastasio.<sup>19</sup>

Fegejo, the 'pen name' of none other than our Carlo Goldoni, joined the *Accademia degli Arcadi* (founded in Rome in 1690 with 'colonies' throughout Italy) as Metastasio was fast becoming one of the greatest exponents of its second generation. To judge from his works, however, Goldoni seems to have appended his Arcadian name to comedies and libretti more as a stamp of prestige or an act of due homage than as a seal of fidelity to Arcadian poetic principle; the social critique and quotidian reality rendered so vividly in Goldoni's comedies and in many libretti could not be more distant from the philo-Classical and bucolic hues of Arcadian, and Metastasian, theatre.

Goldoni's Arcadian affiliation appears even more rhetorical as we recall that comedy and comic opera, while first relegated to the

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19 Carlo Goldoni, *Terenzio*, Forward. In all the theatres of Europe we find none but your plays. They are given in the same theatre twelve, even twenty times. There is no composer of Music that has not tried them. There is no home, no person that does not possess them. Numerous are the editions, and lucky are those who have printed them. The actors too have made them their own, and with notable success have staged them without music. Many people know most of them by heart, and yet they are always enjoyed, they become ever more pleasing, and whatever Dramma be presented on the stage, it always suffers major disadvantage, if it does not spring from the felicitous pen of Metastasio.

accompaniment of tragic plays or *opera seria*, began to take form as independent genres following their rejection by the Arcadian reform of Apostolo Zeno (1668–1750), consolidated by his pupil Metastasio. These poets endeavored to return *opera seria* to its ancient prestige and simplicity largely by purging it of all comic elements. *Didone abbandonata* (1724), *Alessandro nell'Indie* (1729), *L'Olimpiade* (1733), and *La Clemenza di Tito* (1734), but few in a long list of renowned titles, immediately testify how Arcadian, or better Metastasian opera (Trapassi's texts alone were the uncontested models of the *melodramma serio*), drew plots exclusively from ancient history and Classical mythology, an approach later replicated in the French *tragédie lyrique* (though for political rather than cultural reasons, as pagan gods became allegorical representatives of the reigning monarch and his court).

Seeking majesty rather than intrigue, Metastasian opera invested in arias at the expense of plot development, and was—much like Goldoni's earliest attempts—made up entirely of these solo pieces in alternation with *versi sciolti*, that is free recitative unbound by rhyme and meter, impositions that could corrupt their 'natural' quality. A central characteristic of this type of theatre is the *da capo* aria, which repeats opening text and music at its end to create a symmetrical structure, a form in other words very respectful of the then dominant neoclassical aesthetic of equilibrium and proportion.

Analysis of musical scores written on Goldoni's early *drammi giocosi* uncovers an initially substantial use of this traditional form, in alternation with recitative and little else—a surprisingly commonplace approach, but obviously expected from composers. Mozart's later operas, for that matter, use these structures as well. The point of distinction comes in the ever-decreasing proportion of traditional forms in Goldoni's more developed *drammi giocosi* and in later Mozart operas, in which ensembles, large and small, take over what was once solo recitative, and new, flexible, musical structures banish the stasis of traditional arias. The sparse use of *da capo* forms by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is proof that the very characteristics that made this musical form so desirable from an Arcadian perspective made it a hindrance for Goldoni and his successors. Goldoni, as a realist author, patiently chiseled out a more psychologically attuned theatre both in prose and in song, and the circular nature of the *da capo* form is not easily reconciled with

plot development or emotional change. Clearly, the investment of many new authors in comic rather than melodramatic works in the mid- 18<sup>th</sup> century was not only fueled by popular interest, but also and especially by critical instinct.

Goldoni's own output reflects with perfect clarity the shift from an initial effort to emulate tragic opera to an entirely opposite, personalized aesthetic and a search for new horizons. As any respectable student of law and the ancient authors, he commenced his theatrical career with high hopes of establishing himself as a tragedian of the purest Classical brand. His first texts were tragic operas, and his theatrical debut, the ill-fated *Amalásunta*, was written 'according to all the laws of Aristotle and Horace,' "per la quale," Goldoni writes, "avea spogliato bastantemente la Didone e l'Issipile di Metastasio."<sup>20</sup> Yet despite having 'borrowed' from the most prestigious sources on that occasion, Goldoni's aristocratic advisors (the Milanese Count Prata and his circle) saw a text beyond repair- one that violated too many good principles of tragic theatre. For *Amalásunta* it was a death sentence, and our author, many years later, would describe the scene in vivid tones: "Non potea più contenermi, mi levai con un movimento involontario, violento, gli chiesi scusa, lo ringraziai de' suoi amichevoli avvertimenti, e conclusi dicendo che, scandalizzato dalla *regole* del Dramma, facea proponimento di non comporne mai più."<sup>21</sup> His tragedy traveled from the hands of his Milanese readers to the fireplace of Goldoni's lodging in town, a sign that his calling lay elsewhere.

The concurrent decline of *opera seria* was gradual and by no means uniform, but already detected early in the century. Metastasio continued to produce libretti until 1740, yet *Il Teatro alla Moda*, an exquisite satire of *opera seria* by the Venetian Benedetto Marcello (1686–1739), was already in print by 1720. Marcello's commentary is a prime witness to the incompatibility of this dominant theatre with any measure

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20 Carlo Goldoni, *Memorie Italiane (Prefazioni ai Diciassette Tomi delle Commedie edite a Venezia da G.B. Pasquali [1761–1778])*, tomo X. (...) for which I had sufficiently robbed *Dido* and *Issipile* by Metastasio.

21 *ibid.*, tomo XI. I could no longer restrain myself, I stood with an involuntary, violent motion, apologized, thanked him for his friendly warnings, and concluded by saying that, scandalized by the rules of Opera, I resolved never to write any again.

of verisimilitude, Goldoni's golden standard. For instance, vocal display appears by historical accounts to have nearly bordered with sportsmanship. Audiences, who typically enjoyed food, drink, and conversation while the operas were performed, tuned in most unanimously during the *da capo* arias to marvel at a performer's vocal ability and judge his or her virtuosic ornamentations. This was the economy that gave rise to the famous *aria di baule*: 'trunk arias' tailored to vocalists' individual abilities and bluntly inserted in substitution of an original aria, often with scarce relation to the surrounding action- an indifferent divorce from scruples of dramatic coherence that lent Benedetto Marcello more fuel for his pen:

Si lamenterà sempre della Parte, dicendo *che quello non è il suo fare*, riguardo all'Azione, che l'Arie non sono per la sua abilità, etc., cantando in tal caso qualche Arietta d'altro compositore, protestando, *che questa alla tal corte, appresso il tale Gran Personaggio* (non tocca a lui dirlo) *portava tutto l'applauso, e gli è stata fatta replicare sino a diciassette volte per sera.*<sup>22</sup>

Obviously these 'trunk arias' needed to keep generic language to be less at odds with surrounding material in a plurality of contexts. The awkwardness of dense virtuosic display over thin poetic content was in fact the hallmark, for a sarcastic Marcello, of the fashionable melodramatic aria:

Dovranno formarsi tutte le Canzonette delle medesime cose, cioè di Passaggi lunghissimi, di Sincope, di Semituoni, d'alterazioni di Sillabe, di repliche di parole nulla significanti, v.g. Amore Amore, Impero Impero, Europa Europa, Furori Furori, Orgoglio Orgoglio, etc.<sup>23</sup>

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- 22 Benedetto Marcello, *Il Teatro alla Moda*, "Al Musico." He will always complain about his Part, saying that *it is not his doing* with regards to the Action, and that the Arie are not for his abilities, etc., in that case singing instead an Arietta by a different composer, protesting *that this piece, at such and such court, under such and such Great Eminency* (whom it is not his place to mention), *brought all the applause, and up to seventeen encores in a single evening were requested of him.*
- 23 *ibid.*, "Al Poeta." All the little songs must be made up of the same things, that is very long Passages, Syncopations, Semitones, alterations of Syllables, repetition of meaningless words, e.g. Love Love, Empire Empire, Europe Europe, Rage Rage, Pride Pride, etc.

In sum, the stasis of traditional melodramatic forms, together with the theatrical incongruence of decadent *opera seria*, prepared fertile ground for a more rational, socially attuned comic alternative. While Metastasio continued to acquire the fame and diffusion that we read of in Goldoni's *Terenzio*, from a critical point of view, what he sought in purity carried the risk of becoming sterile. In its development, comic opera therefore turned away from the predominating theatre and drew from vastly different sources.

## ii. Naples and the *commedia per musica*

Having glimpsed the theatrical world in which comic opera was introduced, we can now trace its evolution outside the walls of *opera seria* so as to better understand, in turn, the new direction taken by Goldoni. First, however, we must carefully weigh the notion that comic opera was but nascent after the Arcadian reform. Some scholars date the birth of comic opera to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, with *Il Cicalamento delle Donne al Bucato* (the Chatter of Women at the Wash) by Alessandro Striggio the elder (1536–1592), principal court musician under Cosimo de' Medici, whose homonymous son would later compose the libretto of Monteverdi's famous *Orfeo*. *Il Cicalamento* has been called a 'madrigal comedy,' and does not present a unified action in the manner of true opera, but rather a series of ordered madrigals that narrate a sequence of events.

The Venetian environment in particular appears to have had a preferential affiliation with comedy rooted in times far preceding Goldoni. *Il Candaule* (1679), *dramma per musica* by the librettist Adriano Morselli (dates unknown) that revisits the ancient Anatolian kingdom of Lydia; *L'Alcibiade* (1680), titled after the ancient Athenian commander and fictional protagonist of a presumed early platonic dialogue, *dramma per musica* by librettist Aurelio Aureli (~1650?–1710?) of the *Accademia degli Imperfetti*, with music by Marc'Antonio Ziani (~1650?–1715), *maestro di cappella* under Ferdinando Gonzaga in Mantua and later under Leopold I in Vienna; and *Messalina* (1680), from a text by Francesco Maria Piccoli (dates unknown) and music by Carlo Pallavicino

(1630–1688) of the Venetian *Ospedale degli Incurabili*, are all forms of ‘alternative’ musical theatre predating the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Another survivor from this period is *La Semiramide* (1671), later to reappear in Venice as *La Schiava Fortunata* (The Lucky Slave, 1674), employing traditional comic devices such as disguise and role reversal. This originally Florentine work, commissioned by prince Leopoldo de’ Medici and created by court doctor and “poeta teatrale” Giovanni Andrea Moniglia (1625–1700) with music by Antonio Cesti (1623–1669), draws comic techniques from Calderón de la Barca (1600–1681), creating intrigue from the physical resemblance of Semiramide to her son Nino, which permits character swapping and dramatic irony. In keeping with the *Seicento* tradition launched by *L’Orfeo*, all of these works are set in remote times, and feature ancient protagonists. One could hardly suppose that enlightened comic opera should draw its roots from them. Indeed, in the same decades but far south in Naples, aristocrats and workers alike were already enjoying an entirely different type of musical theatre that elected realism above exoticism.

Neapolitan comic theater of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century grew from direct contact with popular and dialectal culture, enriched by the local traditional song in *llengua napolitana*. The lyrical *canzone napoletana*, still heard today and still intimately tied to its dialectal roots, acquired a dramatic dimension. In the first decade of the 1700s, (particularly 1700–1707), the latest fashion in entertainment appears to have been the *scherzi drammatici e scenici*, staged in aristocratic homes as well as public piazzas. A hybrid between *melodramma* and popular tradition, they adapted recitative and arias to the use of dialect, and employed *buffo* and *serio* characters together. One such work, given in Naples in 1701, was *Il Mondo Abbattuto* (The World Demolished), *scherzo scenico* by Michele de Falco (~1688–~1732?) and Nicola Sabini (~1675?–1705), a composer of popular *canzoni*. He exemplifies how the musicians who wrote popular music were the same who created these more ‘refined’ *scherzi*- and not all were professional musicians or playwrights. The first known Neapolitan *commedia per musica*, *La Cilla* (premiered on 26 December 1707 at the residence of the prices of Chiusano) was written by two jurists, Francesco Antonio Tullio (1660–1737) and Michelangelo Faggiuoli (1666–1733). Their alternative professional affiliation may have lent a certain license to bend the rigid musical customs that

traditional court composers would have been bound to. Together with librettists Francesco Antonio Tullio (1660–1737), Giovanni Veneziano (better known as Agasippo Mercotellis, 1683–1742), Carlo de Petris (dates unknown), Nicola Gianni (dates unknown), Bernardo Saddumene (dates unknown), and others, the composers who contributed to the new comic genres are numerous, among them Faggiuoli, Michele de Falco, Benedetto Riccio (dates unknown), Francesco Antonio Scarlatti (1666–~1741?), and Antonio Orefice (~1708?–~1734?). Orefice would become a key figure in the development of musical comedy up until the end of the 1720s, composing not only for works in dialect but also for comic, tragic, and tragicomic operas in Italian (e.g., *Chi la dura la vince* (He Who Withstands Prevails), 1721).

The most eye-catching element of affinity between this early Neapolitan musical comedy and Goldoni's later works is a renewed emphasis on the populace and on everyday life; the *commedia per musica*, unlike the few aforementioned comic operas of the *Seicento* produced in northern Italy, was a realistic musical genre. Not foreign lands or distant times but different neighborhoods of Naples are the chosen settings, and similarly, the action is not extravagant but rather sketches daily life. Castrati were excluded and performers of both sexes were used for greater realism.

Interestingly, Paolo Gallarati has suggested that the simplicity of the Neapolitan *commedia per musica* was motivated by the same anti-Baroque sentiments that gave rise to the Arcadian reform: “L'iperbole straniante del barocco viene quindi accantonata in quest'arte a misura d'uomo [la *commedia per musica*], nata dalla stessa esigenza di semplificazione che ispirava il movimento arcadico(...); un moto di rinnovamento che determinerà, pochi anni dopo, l'affermazione del teatro metastasiano.”<sup>24</sup> Clearly, this common philosophical ground, perhaps shared originally, does not produce any affinity of content between the two types of theatre- one representing an idealized past, the other anchored in the present- though some scholars have supposed

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24 *ibid.*; 109. The alienating hyperbole of the Baroque is thus put aside in this art of more human proportion, born from the same desire for simplification that inspired the Arcadian movement (...); an impulse of renewal that will determine, a few years later, the rise of Metastasian theatre.

Metastasio to have been familiar with Neapolitan comedy, and to have derived the simplicity of his language and the harmony of his verses from this model.<sup>25</sup>

A no less important element of affinity between Neapolitan and Goldoni's own musical comedies is the intended audience. While *opera seria* was still the domain of aristocratic audiences, the *commedia per musica* was appreciated by the nobility as well as by the working class. We know this from accounts of the premiere of *La Cilla*, given for a mixed audience. In those particular circumstances, changes at the governmental level may have played a key role, in particular as, in 1707, the Venetian diplomat and later cardinal Vincenzo Grimani (1652–1710) was made viceroy of Naples. An ally of the Hapsburgs, Grimani at the head of local government represented a break from Spanish domination. Coincidentally Grimani, himself a librettist, was also the owner of the *Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo* in Venice, where his operas were performed and where, most importantly, Goldoni would later serve as director (1737–41), presenting the comedy often cited as the herald of his reform, *Momolo cortesan* (Momolo the courtier).

Grimani's cultured appreciation for musical theatre likely encouraged the proliferation of the *commedia per musica* in those early years. In its first phase, the great and rapid development of the *commedia per musica* was largely stimulated by the patronage of the Neapolitan nobility. Predictably, many early *commedie per musica* that bear the names of local noblemen in dedication. Yet how can we understand the willingness of the higher class to sponsor the development of a theatre that was written outside the courts, and that was popular in content and style? The key may lie again in political context, particularly in the use of local vernacular as a means of preserving cultural identity. For Paolo Gallarati, "L'uso del vernacolo(...)non ne prova un'origine popolare, ma va piuttosto interpretato come il rifiorire di una tradizione culturale indigena opposta a quella straniera dei dominatori, prima spagnoli e poi austriaci, a partire dal 1707; tanto che gli autori appartenevano in maggioranza al cetto forense del cosiddetto popolo civile, portatore

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25 See Alberto Basso et al., *Musica e scena. Storia dello spettacolo musicale* vol. I-III (Torino: UTET, 1998), and Roberto Zanetti, *La Musica Italiana nel Settecento*, vol. 1 (Busto Arsizio: Bramante Editrice, 1978.).

delle nuove istanze della cultura preilluministica.”<sup>26</sup> The connection of *commedia* librettists to nascent Enlightenment ideals, thanks to their professional exposure as jurists- a profession shared by Goldoni himself- adds a further link (by no means the last, as we shall see) from Neapolitan comedy to our author.

To this we add that just as the composers of *commedie per musica* were also creators of traditional Neapolitan song, and infused one music with the style of the other, the librettists of these musical works were often authors of dialectal prose comedies (*commedie d'intreccio e di carattere*, or ‘character comedies’), fully imbued in the native tradition that boasted *novelle* (short stories), *poemi* (epic poems), and *drammi pastorali* (pastoral plays). A similar interconnection characterizes the entirety of Goldoni’s output, and is the foundation of the present study. The close relationship of opera texts to prose comedy is exemplified by *Patrò Calienno de la Costa* (by Mercotellis and Antonio Orefice), a musical comedy drawn closely from *La Perna*, prose comedy in dialect written by the attorney Nicola Corvo. *Patrò Calienno* launched the first season of the public *Teatro dei Fiorentini* in 1709, marking a turning point in history. Written in Neapolitan dialect, *Patrò Calienno* is the earliest known psychological comedy that puts the world of its spectators onto the stage. From a technical point of view, too, it foreshadows future Goldonian traits. In particular, the *commedia per musica* refused the tendency of tragic opera to separate arias from the rest of the action, placing them centrally within scenes, unlike the traditional *aria d’uscita* (exit aria).

A final, and fundamental commonality between this Neapolitan genre and Goldoni’s later works is an increasing reliance on ensemble pieces, which undergo significant development with respect to *opera seria*. The greater dramatic space occupied by ensemble scenes, especially in music but also at times in prose comedy, is the product of a

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26 Paolo Gallarati, *Musica e Maschera*; 108. The use of the vernacular (...) does not prove its popular origin, but should be interpreted as the renaissance of the local culture, in opposition to that of foreign domination, first Spanish then Austrian, beginning in 1707; so much so that the authors were in large part members of the judiciary class of the so-called civil society, harbinger of the new demands of pre-Enlightenment thought.

new criteria for imitative, realistic theatre, that can depict social interaction with vivid color and veracity. In the early *commedia per musica*, polyphonic ensembles were often used, for example, to evoke the bustling and chatter of crowded public spaces, such as a town piazza. In other words, these pieces did not affect the main action, but served an evocative role. Yet, it is from this foundation that Goldoni would later develop ensembles that carry intrigue, employing four or more characters simultaneously no longer as functional background but center stage. An attractive asset of mature ensemble pieces is their ability to juxtapose different emotions (rage, hope, sadness, surprise, tenderness), a hallmark of Goldoni's *drammi giocosi* as of later Mozartean opera. Interestingly, the so-called "ensemble finale," appears in his best prose comedies as well.

To return to the *commedia per musica* at the *Teatro dei Fiorentini*, it is important to know that while this venue initially offered a mix of musical comedies and more traditional *melodrammi* (by minor authors, however, rather than by Metastasio), the same impresario- a certain Nicola Serino- would, at a later stage, decide to specialize the theatre exclusively in *commedie per musica*. This theatre therefore became the first center of what would later be opera buffa, opening to an even broader audience after 1714 (following a damaging fire and rebuilding) with old and new works by Nicola Corvo (dates unknown; *Patrò Calienno de la Costa*, *Lo 'mbruoglio de li nomme*, 1711, *Patrò Tonno d'Isca*, 1714), Nicola Gianni (dates unknown; *L'alloggiamentare*, premiered 1710), and by Francesco Antonio Tullio (dates unknown; *Li vecchie coffejate*, 1710, *La Cianna*, 1711, and *Lo finto Armenejo* 1717), among others.

The success of the *commedia per musica* at the *Teatro dei Fiorentini* encouraged other theatres in Naples to present these works, and within a few years these musical comedies arrived at the *Teatro Nuovo* and the *Teatro della Pace*, ever more appreciated by audiences. An opera worthy of note that belongs to this second phase of the *commedia per musica* is *Li zite 'n galera* (The Spouses in Prison), by Bernardo Saddumene (dates unknown), given at the *Teatro dei Fiorentini* in 1722 with music by Leonardo Vinci (1690–1730), then modified and represented at the *Teatro della Pace* in 1724, newly opened thanks to growing public interest in comic opera. This work is particularly relevant to a study of

Goldoni's musical texts because it bears clear signs of evolution with respect to earlier musical *commedie*. In particular, in *Li zite 'n galera* we find ensemble arias both within scenes as well as at the end of acts, a dramatic technique that will soon become the signature of Goldoni's *libretti* and of fully formed *opera buffa*. To cite only one example, the second act contains a famous trio that presents pert dialogue, not in declamatory style, but in an almost conversational (and given the romantic rivalries, sparring) tone, yet not without pathetic accents:

BELLUCCIA. Fortuna cana, o Dio,  
dimme che te facc'io!  
CARLO. Amore tradetore,  
che buò da chisto core?  
CIOMMA. Destino mio teranno,  
levame da st'affanno.  
A TRE. Quanno la vuò scompì!  
CARLO. Bellezza de sto core.  
BELLUCCIA. Facce de tradetore.  
CIOMMA. Tu sì la morte mia.  
CARLO. Che t'aggio fatto.  
CIOMMA. Abbia.  
BELLUCCIA. Carlo non te parti.  
CIOMMA. E lassannillo ì.  
CARLO. Tu mme vuò fa' impazzì.<sup>27</sup>

With *Li zite 'n galera*, we begin to perceive a measure of distinction between character types which will later evolve into *parti buffe*, *parti serie*, and *mezzi caratteri*. The differences in style and content brought by this division of roles, expanded and fully established by Goldoni, will become his single greatest contribution to comic opera, along with a clear progress towards the inclusion of sentimental strains. Zanetti has perceptively suggested that in Neapolitan opera (but not later comic opera), sentimentalism is derived from the nostalgic vein of traditional

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27 Bernardo Saddumene, *Li zite 'n galera*, Act II. (Belluccia: Oh Fortune, o God, tell me, what have I done to you? Carlo: Traitorous love, what do you want from this heart? Ciomma: Tyrannous destiny, release me from this torment. Tutti: How I wish I could prevail! Carlo: Beauty of this heart. B: Traitor-face. Ciomma: You are the death of me. Carlo: What have I done to you? Ciomma: Go away. B: Carlo, don't go. Ciomma: Let him go. Carlo: you want to drive me out of my mind.

folk songs that formed other aspects of the genre.<sup>28</sup> Undoubtedly, sentimental depth is developed more extensively as differences between *buffo* and *serio* roles become more affirmed; often, in mature comic opera, the entire intrigue will develop from the social disparities between characters alone. In testimony of the dramatic potential afforded by the contrast of roles, we must recall that it was not uncommon for comic and *serio* roles of the same work to be set to music by different composers, a practice applied to some of Goldoni's texts as well.

As the *commedia per musica* established itself with success in the major theatres in Naples, it began to engage visiting actors from other regions of Italy (initially professional actors also performed in musical roles, while professional vocalists reserved their talents for *opera seria*), and its fame began to spread north. With the arrival of Italian actors from outside Naples, librettists such as Bernardo Saddumene, Niccolò Corvo, and Francesco Antonio Tullio were among the first to begin to soften the strong dialectal stamp of their works, alternating local speech with parts in Italian, or better, Tuscan, performed by the visiting actors. A universal or 'standard' Italian, quite measured in comparison to the quick cadences of dialect, and untainted by local color, lent itself more credibly to roles of a certain gravity, and gradually became the expected mode of expression for characters of higher social status. As this tendency consolidated into common practice, the use of dialect was in turn limited to characters of popular extraction, the most spontaneous source of comic play (and the most concrete link to the *Commedia dell'Arte*). Without doubt, this linguistic division contributed significantly to the explicit distinction between *serio* and *buffo* roles, increasingly apparent in the libretti of Gennaro Antonio Federico (birth unknown-1744), Pietro Trinchera (1707–1755), and Antonio Palomba (1705–1769).

The 'contamination' of Neapolitan dialect with Tuscan properly began in the 1718 season, with the staging of *Il gemino amore* (The

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28 Roberto Zanetti, "La commedia musicale" in *La Musica Italiana nel Settecento*, vol. 1 (Busto Arsizio: Bramante Editrice, 1978.); 283. "Il nucleo originario di questa disposizione, dovuta a una naturale vena elegiaca e di soffusa malinconia, deriva alla commedia direttamente dal mondo della canzone popolare." (The original nucleus of this disposition, owed to a natural elegiac vein and delicate melancholy, derives to comedy directly from the world of popular folk song).

Twin Love) and of *Il trionfo dell'onore* (The Triumph of Honor; texts by Tullio, music by Orefice and Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725; *Il trionfo* is in fact his only comic opera)). Their Italianate titles alone indicate a significant change from works such as *Lo 'mbruoglio de li nomme* (The Mix-up of Names) or *Li zite 'n galera*, and are indicative of a new outlook, and a new envisioned role for the *commedia per musica*. Essentially, the Italianized *commedia per musica* was opening to a broader bourgeois audience in anticipation of circulation beyond Naples, and well before the mid 18<sup>th</sup>-century consolidated into an enticing alternative to *opera seria* well beyond its hometown.

Its first arrival in Venice can be precisely dated to 1711, when a visiting Neapolitan poet, Domenico Lalli (1679–1741; known by the pen name Sebastiano Biancardi), brought materials from home to stage in theatres on the lagoon. His musical comedy *L'Elisa*, based on an earlier text from 1699 and set to music by the Veronese Giovan Maria Ruggieri (~1665?–~1725?), was given at the same *Teatro S. Angelo* where Goldoni would later stage his own comedies.

Authors were far from the only conduits of Neapolitan musical comedy, however. Musicians and visiting composers also become conduits of this new alternative theatre, and the uncontested dominance of the Neapolitan school in composition is clearly reflected in the long list of notable exponents who set Goldoni's *drammi giocosi*, Goldoni collaborated with a long list of Neapolitan composers. Gioacchino Cocchi (1720–1804), with whom Goldoni wrote *La mascherata* (The Masked Lady) and *Le donne vendicate* (The Avenged Women) in 1751, for example, returned to Naples immediately following this collaboration in Venice and composed for the *Teatro Nuovo*, his operas soon an international success. Vincenzo Legrenzio Ciampi (1719–1762), who set to music Goldoni's first *dramma giocoso*, *La scuola moderna* (The Modern School, 1748), along with *Bertoldo*, *Bertoldino*, e *Cacasenno* (1748), *Il negligente* (The Negligent, 1749), and *Amore in caricatura* (Love in Caricature, 1761), was not Neapolitan by birth but pursued his studies there from a young age, and therefore was also fully formed in that tradition. Niccolò Piccinni (1728–1800), who would become one of Goldoni's principal composers after the retirement of Baldassare Galuppi (from 1766 onwards), was also from Naples. The list of Neapolitan contemporaries continues with Giuseppe Scarlatti (~1718?–1777), born and

trained in Naples, who wrote music for *I portentosi effetti della Madre Natura* (The Prodigious Effects of Mother Nature) given at the *Teatro San Samuele* in 1752, and later *De gustibus non est disputandum* (No Dispute About Taste (from a Latin proverb) premiered at the *Teatro San Cassiano*, 1753), *Il mercato di Malmantile* (The Market of Malmantile, premiered at the Vienna *Burgtheatre*, 1757), and *L'isola disabitata* (The Deserted Island, *Teatro San Samuele*, 1757); with Domenico Fischietti (1725–1810), also Neapolitan and an imitator of Galuppi's style, and first composer (now overshadowed by Franz Joseph Haydn) for *Lo speziale* (The Apothecary, 1768), *La ritornata di Londra* (The Returned from London, 1756), *Il mercato di Malmantile* (collaborator, 1757), *Il signor dottore* (The Doctor, 1758), *La fiera di Sinigaglia* (The Fair of Sinigaglia, 1760), and *La donna di governo* (The governess, 1763); and finally with Giuseppe Scolari (~1720?~1774?), collaborator from 1756–58 for *La cascina* (The farmstead, 1756), a second rendition of *Il Conte Caramella* (Count Caramella, 1756), *Le nozze* (The Wedding, 1757), *Le donne vendicate* (1757), *Il viaggiatore ridicolo* (The Risible Traveler, 1762), *Il ciarlatano* (The charlatan, 1759), and a second production of *La buona figliuola maritata* (The Good Girl Married, 1762), originally set to music by Piccinni, and revised for the theatre in Murano. Composers of Neapolitan origin are important figures in the transmission of the *commedia per musica* not only because of their musical experience, but most importantly because, during their time in Naples, they partnered with Neapolitan comic librettists and worked on productions for the same theatres in which comic opera first claimed attention. The level of interaction between Goldoni and these composers is not documented, but being all contemporaries of the author, one can assume at the very least that they were familiar with each other's work.

In 1743, Venetian theaters presented two famous Neapolitan operas: *La finta cameriera* (libretto by Giovanni Barlocchi) given at the *Teatro S. Angelo* during the *Fiera dell'Ascensione*, and shortly thereafter *Madama Ciana* (libretto by the same Barlocchi). Both were set to music by the Neapolitan Gaetano Latilla (1711–1788, uncle of Piccinni), who, interestingly, also set many Metastasian tragedies. The latter, *Madama Ciana*, was modified from its original setting by Baldassare Galuppi, Goldoni's first collaborator. Galuppi, affectionately

known as “Il Buranello” because he was born and raised on the Venetian island of Burano, is one of few composers Goldoni interacted with to have studied in Venice and not in Naples. Notwithstanding, it is clear that Galuppi, too, was quite familiar with the styles and structures of Neapolitan opera. We thus begin to understand how dense and numerous are the interconnections between the theatrical and musical worlds of Naples and Venice.

### iii. Venice and the *intermezzo*

The *commedia per musica* did not, however, constitute the Venetian spectator’s only choice. In the years following the arrival of Neapolitan works in Venice, theatres also produced a myriad of *drammi comici*, *divertimenti giocosi*, *opere bernesche*, and other ephemeral forms. Only with Goldoni are these variants compounded and canonized into a universal operatic genre, a ‘unifying model on a national scale’<sup>29</sup> that will endure through the next generations and far outside of Italy. Furthermore, the manifold documented connections between Goldoni and Neapolitan composers, and the popularity of the *commedia per musica* in Venetian theatres, do not imply that Goldoni’s *drammi giocosi* developed from this tradition alone. Part of Goldoni’s achievements in musical theatre must also be understood as the product of his expansion of the *intermezzo*, a genre in origin quite opposite to the Neapolitan *commedia*, with which Goldoni began his musical career.

Goldoni was a practical connoisseur of both the Venetian *intermezzo* and the Neapolitan *commedia* traditions. His contributions to comic opera, therefore, cannot be credited to any single influence, but to a combination of complementary trends, of which the *commedia per musica* is perhaps the least well-known (and for this reason we have traced its history in some detail). These are the premises that will push

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29 Paolo Gallarati, *Musica e Maschera*; 127. “un modello unificante su scala nazionale.”

Goldoni to experiment and expand his texts for music up to the achievement of the *dramma giocoso*.

With respect to the similar currents that shaped the development of art forms in both northern and southern Italy, it is worth recalling that, by the 1730s, the two most important Italian pioneers of comic musical theatre were Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710–1736) from Iesi (then part of the papal states), composer of the famous *La Serva Padrona* (The Servant Master, an *intermezzo* no less) that traveled to the corners of the world, and our Venetian Goldoni, who in the same years created the *intermezzi* we will now examine. At different ends of the Italian peninsula, both authors were drawn to complementary ideals of realism and of bourgeois society, and each gave form to these as he knew best.

According to Gian Giacomo Stiffoni,<sup>30</sup> *intermezzi* existed in Venice a good twenty years before Goldoni began to write his own. These rather peculiar vocal divertissements began to take shape in their own right following the famous reform of Zeno and Metastasio. In the effort to restore *il buon gusto* (good taste) to opera seria through a process of purification, comic elements were exiled and relegated to the *intermezzo*, a simple, separate plot given between acts of the main work, as a breath of comic relief.

The first official recognition of the *intermezzo* as an emancipated type of musical theatre comes in 1706, when, for the first time, a pamphlet entitled *Nuovi intermedi per musica* circulates a collection of texts without the *opera seria* libretti they would have usually accompanied. Pietro Pariati (1665–1733) is the best known author of *intermezzi* in their first Venetian season of 1706–1709, and his libretti, set to music by notable composers such as Francesco Gasparini (1668–1727), Antonio Lotti (1667–1740), and Tommaso Albinoni (1671–1751), were among the first to be printed. For Reinhard Strohm, the 1706 edition is a clear sign of the ‘social emancipation of the comic genre in opera.’<sup>31</sup> Among Pariati’s first known titles are *Erighetta e don Chilone* (1707) and *Pimpinone*

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30 Gian Giacomo Stiffoni, “Introduzione” in Carlo Goldoni, *Intermezzi e farsette per musica*, a cura di Anna Vencato (Venezia: Marsilio, 2008).

31 *ibid.*; 11. (...) “l’emancipazione sociale del genere comico nell’opera.”

(1708). Unfortunately, large part of this early production, given at the *Teatro S. Angelo* and the *Teatro S. Cassiano*, has since been lost.

General characteristics of the *intermezzi* are their structural simplicity and- all-important quality- the economy of means they require to be performed. Typically formed in two acts (rarely three), the entire action is spun from the conflict between two characters, usually a soprano and bass, *serva* and *padrone* (servant and master). From the few musical scores of early *intermezzi* that have survived we know the instrumental ensemble was also quite basic, a small group of string players being sufficient to support the whole work. These musical spoofs are most readily associated with a caricatured type of funniness, with disguises, verbal absurdities and neologisms, bizarre foreign characters, and racy gesturing; verisimilitude was never a primary concern of the *intermezzo*. Musically, these works are very simple in both construction and style: simple recitative and a solo *aria* for each character in each act, culminating in an 'ensemble finale' of two. Language and terms could be quite quotidian, but the structure of the arias hailed back to the closed forms of *opera seria*, using the tripartite *da capo* structure (ABA') or an expanded variant (pentapartite AA'BAA').

For their simplicity, and for their economy, *intermezzi* were soon exported. For example, the *Raccolta copiosa d'intermedi, parte da rappresentarsi col canto, alcuni senza musica con altri in fine lingua Milanese* (Copus Collection of Intermezzi, some to be performed with song, some without music, and some in fine Milanese) printed in Milan in 1723, lists fifty-four different titles. Research has dated their arrival in Naples to around 1715, and this southern capital, notwithstanding its own comic musical tradition, soon became a center of diffusion and exportation in turn. As previously mentioned, the most famous *intermezzo* of all time, *La serva padrona* (1733), originally created to accompany a tragic opera, *Il prigioner superbo* (The Proud Prisoner), but soon a stand-alone piece, was composed by Pergolesi, an eminent exponent of the Neapolitan school.