

### III. New directions

#### i. Goldoni's apprenticeship with musical texts

By the time Goldoni was a young man, *intermezzi* appeared in virtually all of Venice's thirteen theatres, with the exception of the more prestigious *Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo* (today still working as the *Teatro Malibran*) which, to offer more lavish spectacle, housed ballets and *opera seria* exclusively. Goldoni wrote his first *intermezzi* in Feltre in 1729 for a local dilettante theatre company. These were naturally intended for placement between acts of an *opera seria*. The first, *Il buon vecchio* (The Good Sage), is now lost, while the second, *La cantatrice* (The Signer), is still attributed to Goldoni but was famously plagiarized by others. Goldoni writes,

Perduto ho poscia intieramente il primo intermezzo, per la poca cura ch'io avea delle cose mie; ed avrei perduto anche il secondo ma è stato esso da qualche-dun conservato e l'ho veduto qualch'anno dopo rappresentare a Venezia col titolo della *Pelarina*...l'intermezzo riuscì in Venezia felicemente e altri se ne avea fatto merito e ne avea ricavato non poco utile...<sup>32</sup>

That 'other' discreetly mentioned by Goldoni is Antonio Gori, comic author and lawyer who openly asserted his own authorship of the *intermezzo* when it was given at the *Teatro Grimani di S. Samuele* in 1734 (the year of *La serva padrona*) under the direction of Giuseppe Imer (1700–1758), with music (now lost) by Giacomo Maccari. In the same

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32 Carlo Goldoni, *Memorie Italiane (Prefazioni ai Diciassette Tomi delle Commedie edite a Venezia da G.B. Pasquali [1761–1778])*, tomo IX. I had then completely lost my first intermezzo, for the scant care I had of my things; and I would have lost the second, too, had it not been preserved by somebody, and I saw it given in Venice a few years later under the title *La Pelarina*(...)the *intermezzo* had a good success in Venice, and someone else had taken credit and had drawn from it no small profit (...).

year, Goldoni began his important collaboration with Imer, and recalls Gori burning all bridges with the theatre company soon thereafter. To make the matter more complicated, the ubiquitous Venetian editor Antonio Groppo, in his *Catalogo purgatissimo di tutti li drammi per musica recitatasi ne' teatri di Venezia* (Purged Catalog of all of the *drammi per musica* performed in Venetian Theatres) published in 1741, credits the work in question to a third author, the Florentine Giovanni Battista Fagiuoli (1660–1742). In any case, scholarship has widely accepted *La pelarina* (The Peeler [of Money]) to be Goldoni's first surviving *intermezzo*, and it appears in various historical editions of his works, among them the Tevernin and Zatta.

*La pelarina* (we revert to this title as the original *La cantatrice*, following Goldoni's account, no longer exists) is an exemplary *intermezzo*. The three characters, Pelarina, her mother Volpiciona ('BigFox'), and the avaricious Tascadoro ('GoldPocket') each sing two or three closed *arie* over the course of the work, and come together at the end of scenes to form a trio. Volpiciona's *aria*, "Sento che tutto in lagrime," strongly suggests a parody of *opera seria*, and the work mixes Italian with Venetian dialect. In Venetian Goldoni also wrote *I sdegni amorosi tra Bettina putta de campiolo e Buleghin barcarior venezian* (The Amorous Disputes between Bettina the Venetian girl and Buleghin the Venetian boatsman, 1732), later revised as *Il gondoliere veneziano* (The Venetian Gondolier), for the *Teatro Ducale* in Milan during a brief stay in the city. Of this *intermezzo*, Goldoni writes,

(...)questo è il primo mio componimento ch'io ho lavorato pe' comici ed il primo che ho esposto al pubblico, first sulle scene e poi sulle stampe. Picciola cosa, è vero, ma come da un picciolo ruscelletto scaturisce talvolta... Scusatemi, leggitori carissimi, ho la testa calda."<sup>33</sup>

Buleghin is a gondolier with a penchant for gambling, a vice explored in more than one of Goldoni's comedies, most famously in *La Bottega del Caffè* (The Coffee Shop, 1750). To judge from his own accounts, this

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33 *ibid.*, tomo XI. This is the first composition I crafted for the comic actors and the first I presented to the public, first in the theatre and then in print. True, it is but a trifle, but just as from a small stream at times flows forth... forgive me, dear readers, I am hot-headed.

particular flaw of ‘modern’ society was looked upon by our author with a particularly sensitive eye thanks to some colorful first-hand experiences. In his autobiographical writings in fact Goldoni narrates how he was robbed at gunpoint (pistolpoint, that is) by a stranger from Padua who had cheated him at cards. This memory would stay with him, such that “nelle mie Commedie non mi sono scordato del mio Padovano, e di là ebbe origine quella collera con cui mi sono scagliato contro del gioco nella mia Commedia *Il giocatore* (The Gambler), nella *Bottega del Caffè* ed in altre, nelle quali ho avuto occasione di parlarne.”<sup>34</sup> Aside from affording an amusing biographical anecdote, Goldoni’s personal experience evoked through his theatre reveals, firstly, a young author’s innate interest in representing events and issues of contemporary relevance notwithstanding the dictates of the predominating musical fashion which largely preferred other subjects, and most importantly, the implicit belief that comic theatre, however entertaining and lighthearted, is not without the ability to target and stigmatize social problems (“mi sono scagliato contro del gioco,” etc.).

As previously mentioned, following *Il gondoliere veneziano* Goldoni begins his career as an author, in 1734 at the Venetian *Teatro Grimani*. The theatre was home to a company of actors who recited prose tragedies, comic *canovacci*, but also sang comic *intermezzi*- at what level of skill, we do not know. Goldoni became acquainted with their *capocomico*, Giuseppe Imer, through a mutual friend (Casali) whom he chanced to rediscover in Verona performing in the famous Arena. Goldoni auditioned (as an author) reading portions of his early tragedy, *Il Belisario* (1734), and this became his first work that Imer, the “direttore e quasi dispotico della Compagnia,”<sup>35</sup> put into production. The tragedy enjoyed success and was appreciated for the realism with which it was written, as Goldoni recalls,

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34 *ibid.*; tomo IX. In my comedies I never forgot my friendly Paduan, and there was the origin of the fierceness with which I hurled myself against gambling in my Comedy *Il giocatore*, in *La Bottega del Caffè*, and others, in which I had the chance of treating the subject.

35 *ibid.*; tomo XI. director and almost despot of the company.

La Tragedia è andata alle stelle. Piacque in essa l'interesse, la verità e la condotta. Io faceva parlare l'Imperatore ed il Capitano come parlano gli uomini, e non con linguaggio degli eroi favolosi, al quale siamo avvezzi dalle penne sublimi de' valorosi Poeti. Volendo io esprimere un sentimento, non ho mai cercato il termine più scelto, più elegante, o sublime; ma il più vero ed il più esprime. Veduto ho per esperienza che la semplicità non può mancar di piacere. Non intendo, quando dico *semplicità*, di far parlare un Imperatore come parlerebbe un pastore; ma intendo di non far parlare i Sovrani, uomini come noi, con un linguaggio inconnito alla Natura.<sup>36</sup>

Goldoni's perception of his tragedy's positive reception as connected to its realism is a conclusion drawn in later years, which however shows that, from early on, Goldoni used the established customs of contemporary theatre as a springboard to give space to his own instinct. The same instinct that refused the stiff declamatory style of tragic theatre also took issue with coeval comedy, and Goldoni, impatient and eager to prove himself in new contexts, began trying his hand at texts for music:

Correvano altresì su quelle scene d'allora alcune Commedie, dette di carattere, come il *Conte Pasticcio*, il *Don Chisciotte*, la *Maestra di Scuola*, lo *Smemorato*, il *Paroncino*, il *Prepotente*, il *Servo Sciocco* ed altre in buon numero; ma i caratteri erano falsi, fuori di natura, e sacrificati al ridicolo grossolano, senza condotta, senza verità e senza ragione. Io moriva di voglia di metter mano ai caratteri veri, e di tentar la riforma ch'io divisava; ma non era ancora venuto il tempo, e ho dovuto contentarmi di lavorare passabilmente nell'Intermezzi(...).<sup>37</sup>

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- 36 The tragedy went through the roof. It was liked for its suspense, its truth, and its pacing. I made the Emperor and the Captain speak as men speak, and not in the language of fantastical heroes, to which we are accustomed from the sublime pens of the most valorous Poets. When I wanted to express an emotion, I never sought the most recondite, the most elegant, or sublime term; but rather the most real, and the most expressive. I have seen from experience that simplicity never fails to please. By simplicity, I don't mean that I would make an Emperor speak in the manner of a shepherd; I mean to not have Sovereigns, who are men like us, speak in a language unknown to Nature.
- 37 *ibid.*; tomo XIII. In theatres in those days there were certain Comedies, so I called *di carattere*, such as *Count Pasticcio*, *Don Chisciotte*, *The Schoolteacher*, *The Forgetful*, *The Little Lord*, *The Tyrant*, *The Silly Servant*, and others in good number; but the characters were fake, divorced from nature, and sacrificed to coarse humor, without action, without truth, and without reason. I was dying to try my hand at

These words imply that, even while he was writing his first libretti, Goldoni's dramatist vein was leading him towards new ideals and a new philosophy of theatre. What is more, Goldoni's account testifies a conscious connection between his ideas for comedy and his texts for music; he works on one thing as he thinks of the other. It may be objected that Goldoni casts his *intermezzi* as a less appealing alternative to his works of greatest fame, from which one could suppose that he dedicated them less attention. Yet, we must remember that his reflections are written retrospectively, as an established playwright who has led a prolific career. In this light, it is certainly understandable that Goldoni (as he does elsewhere in his autobiographical writings) would wish to minimize his early musical production in favor of his more groundbreaking 'reformed' comedies.

We may further imagine that, if from the position of prestige and maturity from which he is writing his recollections the first *intermezzi* appear in retrospect to be of little consequence, when Goldoni was first given the opportunity to compose these texts, they were to him anything but marginal. As a young rebellious law student with great desire but no guarantee of a future career in theatre, the same *intermezzi* constituted his debut in a new field, and their quality and reception therefore were hardly inconsequential. Ultimately, Goldoni himself eliminates any doubt:

Egli è vero che avrei poi volentieri composte delle commedie di carattere ma pensai che, quantunque gli intermezzi non sieno che commedie abbozzate, sono però suscettibili di tutti i caratteri più comici e più originali, e che ciò potea servirmi di prova e di esercizio, per trattarli un giorno più distesamente e più a fondo nelle grandi commedie.<sup>38</sup>

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38 real characters, and to attempt the reform I was envisaging, but the time had not yet come, and I had to content myself by working passably at my *Intermezzi*. *ibid.*, tomo XII. It is true that I would have later gladly written 'character comedies,' but I thought that, even though the *intermezzi* are but sketched comedies, they were nonetheless susceptible to all the most comic and most original characters, and this could serve me as practice and as exercise to develop them more extensively and deeply someday in the great comedies.

The likening of *intermezzi* to ‘sketched’ comedies, capable of supporting original characters, makes clear that Goldoni did not divorce his work in the musical sphere from his instincts for comic prose theatre. It follows logically that what is only a nascent intuition in the *intermezzi* will take fuller form in Goldoni’s *drammi giocosi*, written alongside his most mature theatrical comedies.

Goldoni’s remarks are a consequence of the fact that, even with the success of *Il Belisario*, Imer preferred not to commission other tragedies from him, and instead requested texts for music. In fact, the company seemed to specialize in comic *intermezzi*, following the particular inclinations of their ‘despotic’ director:

La passione dunque che aveva l’Imer per gl’Intermezzi, ne’ quali unicamente brillava, la fece [la Compagnia] perorare in favore di cotal genere di componimenti, e le prove che di me aveva vedute ne’ due Intermezzi accennati [*La Cantatrice* and *Il Gondoliere Veneziano*], l’indussero a pregarmi a volerne per lui comporre degli altri, esibendomi con buona grazia, ed assicurandomi che mi avrebbe fatto ringraziare e ricompensare dal Cavalier suo Padrone, l’Eccellentissimo Signor Michele Grimani.<sup>39</sup>

The first *intermezzi* written expressly for Imer were therefore *La pupilla* (The Pupil) and *La birba* (The Trickster), both 1735 and set to music in “stile facile e chiaro” (‘simple and clear style,’ i.e. a low level of vocal difficulty for non-professional singers) by Giacomo Maccari, whose scores have been lost. *La pupilla* was an immediate success and secured Goldoni’s standing as a theatrical author:

“...fu ben ricevuta e applaudita; e scorgendovi il Pubblico uno stile nuovo, cercarono di sapere chi ne era l’Autore, e sapendo che la medesima mano aveva composto *La pupilla* ed il *Belisario*, fu allora che cominciai a vedermi onorato di partigiani, di protettori ed amici.”<sup>40</sup>

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39 *ibid.*, tomo XIII. The passion that Imer had for the *Intermezzi*, in which he shined like no other, made the Company an advocate in favor of this type of composition, and the proofs he had seen from me in the two *Intermezzi* I mentioned, induced him to request that I compose some others, showcasing me in good graces, and assuring me that he would have me thanked and rewarded by the Cavalier his lord, his Excellency Signor Michele Grimani.

40 *ibid.* It was well received and applauded; and the Public, seeing in it a new style, sought to discover its Author, and discovering that the same hand had written *La*

The protagonists of this first success were Giovanna Farussi Casanova, mother of the famous Giacomo, and Imer himself, who played the role of her wooer on the stage and off. Through his Italian memoirs, Goldoni has informed generations of readers that Zanetta did not sing well. She was able to compensate for her musical shortcomings by means of her beauty and manners, which did not escape Goldoni's pungent creative eye: "(...) aveva io composto *La pupilla* per lei e aveva colto assai bene nella sua abilità principale, ch'era di una scaltra malizia coperta da una studiata modestia."<sup>41</sup> The practice of modeling his characters after real acquaintances is the secret to the veracity of Goldoni's original characters. This is a practice he would cultivate throughout his career, not always to the joy of those who recognized themselves all too well in his comedies.

If *La pupilla* found realism in its two protagonists, *La birba* was no less effective. "Birbi," as Goldoni explains, were those people who dealt with money in less than limpid ways, who sang and danced and begged for coins in Piazza San Marco, and who sing in his *intermezzo* in simple verse in evocation of street music of popular level. Again, Goldoni drew the efficacy of his text from the observation of daily scenes:

Trattenendomi di quando in quando nella Piazza San Marco, in quella parte che dicesi la *Piazzetta*, e veggendo ed attentamente osservando quella prodigiosa quantità di vagabondi, che cantando, suonando o elemosinando, vivono del soave mestier della *birba*, mi venne in mente di trar da coloro il soggetto di un *Intermezzo* giocoso; e mi riuscì a meraviglia.<sup>42</sup>

The result was that *La birba* surpassed *La pupilla* in its success, confirming Goldoni's career as a librettist. At this point, Goldoni's name began to grow in public notoriety, as did his own consciousness of his

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*pupilla* and *Il Belisario*, it was then that I began to see myself honored by supporters, protectors, and friends.

41 *ibid.* I had written *La Pupilla* for her, and I had hit the target very well in her greatest ability, an astute malice covered by studied modesty.

42 *ibid.* Lingered from time to time in Piazza San Marco, in that part called the *Piazzetta*, and seeing and attentively observing that prodigious quantity of vagabonds, who singing, playing, and begging, live by the sublime trade of the 'birba,' I had the idea of drawing from them the subject of an *Intermezzo*, and I succeeded marvelously.

vocation, and at times, as the author himself admits, his ‘hot head.’ In the same year as the two *intermezzi* with Imer, Goldoni was also asked to arrange a *libretto* for Antonio Vivaldi. Even if not directly related to his comic production, this episode is worth recalling not only for the memorable image of our author vexed and provoked by the ‘red priest,’ but also because it serves perfectly to give a sense of who Goldoni was as a man, his own comic personality just as original as that of his staged characters.

Here then is a page from the *Prefazioni ai Diciassette Tomi delle Commedie edite a Venezia da G.B. Pasquali* of 1761 (Prefaces to the Seventeen Volumes of Comedies published in Venice by G.B. Pasquali), later published as *Memorie Italiane*:

Era il compositor della musica di quell’anno per l’Opera dell’Ascensione il Signor Abbate Vivaldi, detto il *Prete Rosso*, per il colore de’ suoi capegli, e malamente da alcuni chiamato il Rossi, credendolo il nome della sua famiglia.

Questo famosissimo suonator di violino, quest’uomo celebre per le sue Suonate, specialmente per quelle intitolate le *Quattro Stagioni*, componeva altresì delle Opere in musica; e quantunque dicessero i buoni conoscitori ch’egli mancava nel contrappunto, e che non metteva i *bassi* a dovere, faceva cantar bene le parti, e il più delle volte le Opere sue hanno avuto fortuna....

Premeva estremamente al Vivaldi un Poeta per accomodare o impasticciare il Dramma a suo gusto...ed io, che ero destinato a tale incombenza, mi presentai al compositore...Mi ricevette assai freddamente. Mi prese per un novizio, e non s’ingannò, e non trovandomi bene al fatto nella scienza degli stroppiatori de’ Drammi, si vedea ch’egli avea gran voglia di rimandarmi.

Goldoni’s first task is to adjust an *aria*, and, vexed and stricken in his honor for being treated as a ‘novice’ by a composer of ‘scarce’ counterpoint, he demands pen and paper and a chair and begins to write there in the room with Vivaldi. In little time, the deed is done:

Gliela porto, gliela faccio vedere, tiene colla dritta il breviario, colla sinistra il mio foglio, legge piano; e finito di leggere, getta il breviario in un canto, si leva mi abbraccia, corre alla porta, chiama la Signorina Annina [la protagonista cantante]. Viene la Signorina Annina, e la Signora Paolina sorella: legge loro l’arietta, gridando forte “l’ha fatta qui, qui l’ha fatta, l’ha fatta qui”; e nuovamente mi abbraccia, e mi dice bravo, e sono diventato il suo caro, il suo poeta, il



suo confidente, e non mi ha più abbandonato. Ho poi assassinato il Dramma del Zeno quanto e come ha voluto.<sup>43</sup>

Remarkable, stylistically speaking, is the way Goldoni uses the present tense to narrate events in detailed sequence. His description of every gesture allows the reader to visualize the scene as if it were performed on a stage. Indeed, the most memorable episodes of Goldoni's autobiography are always narrated in a theatrical style of prose.

In the year following his first works for Imer and *Griselda*, Goldoni continued to develop the *intermezzo* with *L'ipocondriaco* (The Hypochondriac) and *Il filosofo* (The Philosopher) in 1735, followed by *Monsieur Petiton*, *La bottega da caffè*, and *L'amante cabala* (The Lying Lover) the next year. The original music for these works has not survived, but from the texts we can spot arias in vivacious polymeter, and recitative in a mix of Venetian dialect and Italian, along with a few foreign languages in parody. Most importantly, Goldoni continues to form his characters in the likeness of real-life acquaintances. Stiffoni has attributed the success of these works precisely to their distinct characterizations, that is to a type of "gioco scenico, appoggiato non solo

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43 *ibid.* The composer of music in that year for the Opera of the Ascension was the Abbot Antonio Vivaldi, called the *Red Priest* for the color of his hair, and erroneously by some called Rossi, believing that to be his family name. This very famous violinist, this man so famous for his Sonate, especially those titled *The Four Seasons*, also composed musical Operas; and though the connoisseurs were saying that he was lacking in counterpoint, and that he didn't place his bass lines as he should, he made his parts sing well, and more often than not his Operas met with good success(...) It was very pressing for Vivaldi to find a Poet to accommodate or mess up the Dramma to his liking... and I, the intended for this chore, introduced myself to the composer... He received me quite coldly. He took me for a novice, and he was not wrong, and finding that I was not experienced in the art of mangling Drammi, it was evident he had great desire to send me away. (...) I bring it to him, I let him see it, he holds a prayer book in his right hand, in his left my sheet of paper, he reads slowly; and, finished reading, tosses his prayer book away, springs up and hugs me, runs to the door, calls Mlle. Annina. Here comes Mlle. Annina, and Mme. Paolina her sister: he reads them the arietta, yelling loudly "he wrote it here, here he wrote it, he wrote it here;" and once again he embraces me, he says bravo, and I have become his dearest, his poet, his confidant, and he never left me after that. I then assassinated Zeno's drama as much and however he wished.

alla battuta comica ma anche sulla definizione dei singoli personaggi, nella maggior parte dei casi disegnati in maniera assai efficace.”<sup>44</sup>

This we see, for example, in *L'ipocondriaco* and *Il filosofo*, which delve more deeply into the psychological musings of their protagonists, as Goldoni will continue to do in the 1740s with his first complete comedies. The counterpart female roles remain less developed, and the action is still quite simple in its structure. In terms of content, both works are satirical, and as such offer light-hearted but scathing commentary on their respective subjects, *L'ipocondriaco* a parody of false medicine, and *Il filosofo* a parody of scholasticism and false literature. It is likely that both were loosely drawn from very early pre-existing *intermezzi*, *Erighetta e don Chilone* (1707), and *Pollastrella e Parpagnacco* (1708), respectively.

The three *intermezzi* of 1736 are especially significant on the path to comic opera, because they begin to display not only original content but also structural elements that will characterize the later *dramma giocoso*. *Monsieur Petiton*, whose protagonist is a narcissistic ‘dandy,’ is novel in its employment of four principal actors, brought together at the end of each act in what would later be canonized as the ensemble finale. In *La bottega da caffè* and *L'amante cabala*, Stiffoni sees the “stato embrionale del dramma giocoso.”<sup>45</sup> These works are expanded from the original two acts and are articulated in three. *La bottega da caffè* is decidedly more complex in its design than previous *intermezzi*. Narciso, owner of the coffee shop, intends to marry Dorilla, his beloved. To better bring this about, both employ art and subterfuge to strip wealth from the older, gullible Zanetto. This tale is as old as time, and will reappear in Goldoni’s first *dramma giocoso*, *La scuola moderna* (1748), in which the protagonist, coincidentally, is named Drusilla. According to their strategy, Dorilla flirts with Zanetto compelling him to give her gifts, and Narciso interrupts each scene at just the right moment so that she does not have the chance to refuse or return them, as honesty would dictate. This type of plot, in which the element of surprise is key, affords

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44 Gian Giacomo Stiffoni, “Introduzione” in Carlo Goldoni, *Intermezzi e farsette per musica*, a cura di Anna Vencato (Venezia: Marsilio, 2008); 20. Stage play, supported not only by the witty line but also by the definition of each single character, in most cases portrayed with great efficacy.

45 The embryonic state of the *dramma giocoso*, *ibid.*, 26.

rapid exchanges in dialogue, another element Goldoni will preserve in the *drammi giocosi*. The real novelty of this *intermezzo* however is the opening of the third act, which does not begin with *recitativo* but immediately with an ensemble, Dorilla and Narciso sharing the aria, “Cara man che me consola.”

*L'amante cabala* begins similarly with a duet between principal characters Lilla and Filiberto. Filiberto is the “cabalon,” or spinner of lies, who tries to court both Lilla and Catina at the same time, telling each that the other has lost her wits. Filiberto has much in common with the Don Giovanni figure, whom Goldoni certainly had fresh in his mind, for in the same year (1736) he also authored his own *Don Giovanni Tenorio*, a comedy in verse that contains interesting departures from the original by Tirso de Molina. At the end of the *intermezzo* the transgressor is defeated, and the moral of the story is announced directly to the public, “Imparino tutti,/ da sì bell’empio/ che l’arte d’un empio/ trionfar non può.”<sup>46</sup> Goldoni will often close his *drammi giocosi* in this sententious manner, a practice Mozart and Da Ponte will continue in their masterworks. Also worthy of note is the character Lilla, who speaks in a more elevated register than the others, almost in reminiscence of *opera seria* (Stiffoni identifies Metastasian influence in her part). Her role within the work marks the beginning of a differentiation of tone and role between characters, and the first shades of pathos in a comic plot.

While Goldoni establishes himself as a promising librettist under Imer, he is also invited, from 1735, to create musical comedies for another Venetian theatre, the *San Samuele*, also owned by the Grimani family. These works are of sundry nature, but nonetheless merit mention as they constitute a link between Goldoni’s *intermezzi*, suspended after 1736, and a different and more complete kind of musical theatre, the *dramma comico*, which in retrospect appears the final step before the *dramma giocoso*. The texts written for the *Teatro S. Samuele* testify the absence of a unifying comic opera tradition: *Aristide* (1735) is a *dramma eroia comico*, *La Fondazione de Venezia* (The Founding of Venice, 1736) a *divertimento per musica*, *Lugrezia romana in Costantinopoli* (Lucretia of Rome in Constantinople, 1737) a *dramma per musica*, and finally, *La Contessina*

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46 Carlo Goldoni, *L'Amante Cabala*, scena ultima. May all draw a lesson from such an example, the art of a villain can never succeed.

(The Little Countess, 1743), *commedia per musica*. The musical scores that first accompanied these works have been lost, but were likely composed by the roman Giacomo Maccari. Anna Vencato has suggested that the scarce homogeneity of these works is also a product of the author's efforts to provide the best comic fit for the varied company of actors of the *S. Samuele*.<sup>47</sup>

While *Lugrezia Romana* is an exemplary parody of *opera seria*, other works among those listed above reveal new elements that will remain in the *dramma giocoso*. The *Prologo* to *La Fondazione di Venezia*, for example, is an allegorical dialogue between *Musica* and *Commedia* that reveals Goldoni's philosophy of comic theatre, and heralds the presence of *serio* elements in comic opera. Personified Music, who hearkens from the timeless depths of archaic opera, represents the noble sphere of tragic theatre, while Comedy draws her merits not only from her ancient past but especially from her present glory in the city of the lagoon ("Quanto l'itala scena/ Di me si pregi,/e quanto in questi lidi"<sup>48</sup>). The higher power of Comedy appears to draw from the Horatian metaphor of *utile* and *dilettevole* united in art; as a remedy against vice, she provides sweet laughter to soften the bitter medicine of self-realization:

La Commedia son io: Quella che su le scene Dà lode alla virtù, biasmo agli errori, Mostrando in varie guise "Le donne, i cavalier, l'arme e gli amori;" Quella per cui sovente Di sé mirando il vergognoso esempio, Detesta il vizio, e divien giusto un empio. A chi crede un vago volto Posseder senza difetto, Quel cristallo parla schietto, E gli dice: «Mira, o stolto, Quanti errori ha tua beltà. Così appunto a chi non crede Reo di colpe il suo costume, Io presento un chiaro lume Onde poi se stesso vede, e l'error scoprendo va.»<sup>49</sup>

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47 "Introduzione" in Carlo Goldoni, *Dramma musicali per i comici del San Samuele*, a cura di A. Vencato (Venezia: Marsilio, 2009); 3.

48 Carlo Goldoni, *La Fondazione di Venezia*, Prologo. How much the Italian stage/ is honored by me/ and how these very shores.

49 *ibid.* I am Comedy/she who on the stage/gives praise to virtue, and reprimands the errors/showing in different guises/"Le donne, i cavalier, l'arme e gli amori" [Note also the citation from Ariosto]/she by whom often/seeing of oneself the shameful example/the villain detests his vice, and becomes righteous. To who believes to have a countenance/ beautiful and without flaw/ that mirror does speak plainly/ saying: 'Look, fool/ See how many flaws your beauty holds'/ In the same way, to

The chosen metaphor of Comedy as a mirror implies a reflection of the individual made possible only through realism and honest social characterization. In these few verses, we find the essence of two of Goldoni's core convictions: first, that comedy must reflect the realities of society and its members, and second, that it has the ability to fulfill a higher calling of social commentary and moral instruction.

Where Comedy is direct, Music's verses are allusive. Her greatest power is described in these terms: "Io sol posso tener gli animi intenti/ Al dolce suon de' miei canori accenti,"<sup>50</sup> a clear echo of the Platonic belief in Music's power to move the affections, and a logical connection of this art to the ennobled, contemplative virtues of tragic opera. She underlines her connection to tragedy by evoking Metastasian theatre, "Ora per la virtù risorto è il zelo,/ Ed io sono virtù che vien dal cielo," the new 'zeal for virtue' a clear reference to the Arcadian reform. In sum, Music and Comedy personified represent not only two different artistic spheres, but more subtly the interplay of comedy and tragedy (represented by Music's ancient origins) within a single work. The challenge is striking the most natural equilibrium between these two elements. As both arts assert their primacy and their dispute degenerates into increasingly violent tones, order is restored by the mystical *Genio dell'Adria* (who we may understand to be a local demi-god or genie, guardian of the Adriatic sea), who delivers the final sentence:

Olà donne fermate Qual ira vi trasporta? Qual inganno vi spinge a gara ostile?  
 Non vi recate a vile Vivere in buona union, se pur può darsi, 'Ve la Commedia  
 giace, Che Concordia si trovi, e regni pace. Oggi l'una di voi non è bastante Senza  
 l'altra piacer su queste scene. Se non ha la Commedia L'ornamento del canto,  
 Spera invan riportar applauso e vanto; E la Musica stessa, Se non ha ne' suoi  
 drammi oltre ragione Qualche comica azione, Se conserva il rigor della Tragedia,  
 Anzi che dar piacer, suo canto attedia. Eguualmente ad entrambe La stessa sorte  
 arride: Così il Genio dell'Adria oggi decide.<sup>51</sup>

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who does not believe/ their conduct to be at fault/ I bring a bright light/so then he  
 sees himself/ and discovers his mistake.

50 ibid. I alone have the power to keep souls attentive/ With the sweet sound of my  
 song (...) Now the zeal for virtue has risen again/ And I am that virtue that comes  
 from the heavens.

51 ibid, Hold, women, cease./What fury moves you?/ What treachery spurs you to  
 such hostile contest?/Do not disdain/ to live in happy union, if that is possible/

In sum, on the modern stage one art can no longer succeed without the other; song cannot live without words, comedy and tragedy cannot succeed without some aspects of the other. As Anna Vencato has noted, Goldoni's mediated resolution is strongly reminiscent of an earlier Venetian text published for the actors of the same theatre: *Introduzione alle recite della truppa dei comici nel teatro Grimani a S. Samuele, per l'Autunno di quest'anno 1726, posta in musica dal Sig. Gio. Battista Pescetti* (Introduction to the Performances of the Actors' Troupe of the Grimani Theatre in S. Samuele, for the Fall of this year 1726, set to music by G. B. Pescetti) is its full title on the frontispiece. Here too a lofty prologue precedes the actors' entrance, an exchange between the familiar Adria, in this case a goddess, and Neptune. The curtain rises to give a view of the sea, populated with playful water creatures, in the midst of whom we find "Adria sopra d'una Conchiglia tirata da due Mostri Marini, poi Nettuno sopra d'un'altra."<sup>52</sup> Adria pronounces these words, clear presage of a new preference:

Ma già che l'ora è presso,  
 In cui debbon gl'Attori  
 Far di se stessi una pomposa mostra,  
 E del loro valor darne l'assaggio;  
 Vanne, tutti gl'invia In questa spiaggia, e dille,  
 Ch'io vo veder in questa prima impresa  
 Misto al serio il giocoso,  
 Il ridicolo al grave, e ogn'un s'adopri  
 Che dall'alto mio Soglio,  
 Il merito d'ogn'un pesar io voglio.<sup>53</sup>

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that where Comedy lies/ we find concord, and that peace reign./ Today, each one of you is not enough/ pleasure without the other on the stage./ If Comedy does not have/ the ornament of song,/ she may hope in vain to win applause and fame/ And Music herself/ if in her *drammi*, along with reason/ she does not hold some comic action/ if she preserves the rigor of Tragedy,/ instead of giving pleasure, her song will bore./ Equally on both/ the same fate smiles/ this I rule today.

- 52 *Introduzione alle recite della truppa dei comici nel teatro Grimani a' S. Samuele, per l'Autunno di quest'anno 1726, posta in musica dal Sig. Gio. Battista Pescetti* (Venezia: Valvasense editore, 1726); 3. Adria atop a seashell drawn by two sea monsters, then Neptune atop another.
- 53 *ibid*; 5. But since the hour is near, in which the actors must/ make of themselves a magnificent show/ and give us proof of their worth;/ Go, and send them all/ to

The auspice of a coexistence of *serio* and *giocoso*, *ridicolo* and *grave*, recaptured in Goldoni's *divertimento*, foreshadows a change in the aesthetic of theatre, fertile ground for Goldoni's first experimentation and for the *dramma giocoso*.

## ii. New directions for comedy

While opening his texts to new dramatic possibilities in the field of music, Goldoni was also making strides as a comic playwright. Just as he ameliorated the *intermezzi* into more realistic, and self-sufficient works, he likewise soon felt constrained by the fixed practices of the *Commedia dell'Arte* and compelled to expand and diversify his *canovacci*. The criteria that animated his innovations, the essence of his later "reform," was the same desire for realism, originality, and novelty that he could more freely pursue in his texts for music.

Before we approach Goldoni's innovations in prose comedy and their rapport with his musical output, it is essential to first understand the true nature of the *Commedia dell'Arte* from which these stem, as this tradition is often misrepresented and misunderstood. The origins of the *Commedia dell'Arte* are quite ancient. Some scholars identify a first manifestation in the works of the Paduan Angelo Beolco, known as Ruzante (~1502?~1542?), though it was also cultivated in the south of Italy. Ruzante's comedies were among those performed at the first Venetian public theatres in the *Seicento*. Some of these, written in Paduan and Venetian dialect, use recurring figures and farcical action that for some scholars appear to foreshadow the *Commedia* masks and character types. His comedy *L'Anconitana* (The Girl from Ancona, 1530), for example, in which Ruzante himself performed the role of a humble farmer, features a duet between servant (Ruzante) and master (Sior

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this shore, and tell them/that I wish to see in this first work/the comic mixed with tragic/ the ridiculous mixed with the weighty, and that everyone make an effort/ for, from my high throne/ I wish to weigh the merit of each.

Tomà) in which we may see prototypes of the boisterous *Arlecchino* and his master *Pantalone*, old, wise, and frugal.

Ruzante as creator and performer exemplifies the diffused custom among early modern authors to double as actors in their works. The practice is largely lost today, but it was habitual for Shakespeare, Molière, and others. In this respect, Goldoni appears one of the first *letterati* amidst other icons of theatre who had direct experience in recitation. The common source of authorship and acting is particularly critical to the *Commedia dell'Arte*, which draws its name from *arte* as “artisanal,” a trade of skill. While often dismissed as theatre of ‘stock comedy,’ the *Commedia* in origin was fruit of the ingenuity of men of great culture and skill who not only performed but created their roles. Its allowance for improvisation, later to become a hindrance to the development of plot, in origin blossomed entirely from the wit and captivating personality of its first actors, who just as Ruzante were men of letters and authors in their own right. The first generations of *Commedia* actors were respectable and prominent figures, such as Antonio Sacchi (1708–1788), born one year after Goldoni in Vienna to a Neapolitan family of comic actors.<sup>54</sup> A true *uomo di mondo*, Sacchi ventured far and wide through Europe and Russia, and died at sea. He was one of Goldoni’s principal actors but also performed for Carlo Gozzi and Pietro Chiari, Goldoni’s fiercest competitors. Accounts testify that Sacchi was a man of great wit who specialized in the mask of *Arlecchino* (or *Truffaldino*), no doubt excelling in the *lazzi* (episodes of free improvisation, both linguistic and physical) so typical of that mask. That Sacchi was a man of high culture is testified by his correspondence with diplomats and ambassadors, and Giacomo Casanova refers to him as a model of political eloquence. The original *Commedia dell'Arte*, therefore, was clearly the opposite of the repetitive, unoriginal, and economic trade it is often interpreted as from a post 18th century perspective.

From the newly uncovered papers of Carlo Gozzi, it has emerged that Sacchi, an admirer of Caldéron de la Barca, also liked to recite without a mask and in verse. Goldoni, like Sacchi, gradually steered

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54 More information on this topic has been provided by the work of Siro Ferrone and Ferdinando Taviani, among others.



away from the masks of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, beginning with his comedy *Momolo cortesan* (1738). For scholarship, this comedy marks the beginning of his “reform,” a veritable hybrid between *Commedia* and new, non-improvised comedy. *Momolo*, the protagonist, for the first time in the history of comic theatre, recites from a part entirely written out from beginning to end, while the actors around him continue to improvise in the traditional manner. The success of this work was such that it prompted two sequels (likewise made up of written and improvised parts), *Il Momolo sulla Brenta* (Momolo on the River Brenta, 1739), and *Momolo mercante fallito* (Momolo the Bankrupt Merchant, 1740). The three works would later be purged of their masked characters and published under the new titles *L'uomo di mondo* (The Man of the World), *Il prodigo* (The Prodigal), and *La bancarotta* (Bankruptcy).<sup>55</sup> From their new titles alone it is easy to infer that not unlike Goldoni's other musical or spoken theatre, these works contain a healthy dose of social critique, targeting in this case the figure of the profligate.

The same is true of *La contessina* (1743), no longer an *intermezzo* but a *commedia per musica* that represents a delicate point of transition from Goldoni's early musical texts to the definitive confirmation of his philosophy of theatre and his output as an established librettist. Regarding early *intermezzi*, Paolo Gallarati rightly observes “L'atteggiamento caricaturale degli *intermezzi* impediva al pubblico l'immedesimazione nei personaggi ed una eventuale partecipazione affettiva ed emotiva alle loro vicende,”<sup>56</sup> a notion clearly confronted, resolved, and definitively surpassed by Goldoni with *La contessina*. The social critique embedded in this work (in essence the incompatibility of the aristocratic class structure with new rationalistic, Enlightened perspectives on the

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- 55 It is very important to recognize that revisions for publications were, in Goldoni's first stage, largely responsible for the apparent ‘disappearance’ of the *Commedia dell'Arte* masks. In reality, despite a few exceptions as for example *La Pamela*, most of Goldoni's ‘new’ comedies given at the *S. Angelo* were still largely improvised- a practice dictated by necessity more than by tradition, given the extremely limited time available for rehearsals before each new premiere. The parts acquired a definitive, fixed setting when they went into press, but realistically not before.
- 56 Paolo Gallarati, *Musica e Maschera*, (Torino, EDT, 1984); 100. The caricatural approach of the *intermezzi* prevented the public from empathizing with characters and experiencing emotional involvement in their affairs.

individual) is more direct and audacious than ever before, and is made possible by the realistic portrayal of a diversified class structure. Linguistic differences accentuate deeper differences in social philosophy, and unequivocally anchor this work in its own time, reason perhaps for its success.

The few years following saw Goldoni leave Venice for a time due to financial difficulties. He consequently also left his ‘official’ job of consul of the Republic of Genoa in Venice (held since 1740), and suspended the creation of new libretti. The next years saw him in Bologna, Modena, Rimini, Firenze, Siena, and finally Pisa, where he remained until 1748 and obtained inclusion in the *Accademia degli Arcadi*, taking the pseudonym Polisseno Fegejo that is occasionally appended to his later libretti. During these years, Goldoni continued to practice law and write for the theatre, mainly *scenari* (*canovacci*) but also his first comedy, *La donna di garbo* (The Well-Mannered Lady, dated 1743 but premiered some years later).

It was during these travels, and in particular thanks to a famous *Pantalone*, Cesare Arbes (1710–1778), that Goldoni was introduced to Girolamo Medebach, whose wife Teodora would play the first *donna di garbo*. Medebach was *capocomico* of the *Teatro S. Angelo* in Venice, and in 1748 offered Goldoni a four-year contract for eight new comedies and two new operas each season. Though Goldoni would not renew his contract after 1752 because of fierce copyright disputes, Medebach would still prove to be perhaps the single most important figure in his career. In particular, it was during Goldoni’s span of collaboration with Medebach that he was able to write and produce the most important comedies that would launch his “reform.”

The *Teatro S. Angelo* was a unique venue, the only theatre in Venice not owned by an aristocratic family, therefore Medebach, who was renting it for his company after Carlo Gozzi (Goldoni’s future rival) had moved out, was able to keep his troupe’s playbills open to Goldoni’s new ideas. In this small theatre, our author found fertile ground for experimentation that elsewhere would not have been accepted. Naturally, Goldoni continued to tailor the characters of his works to the personalities of his actors, and opened the 1748 season with *La vedova scaltra* (The Shrewd Widow), created for Teodora Medebach (for whom

Goldoni's *Memorie Italiane* betray a certain fondness), followed by a great number of original- and innovative- comedies.

Goldoni's demanding collaboration with Medebach did not however keep him from writing for other theatres at the same time, most notably the *Teatro Giustinian*. This small theatre, better known as the *Teatro San Moisè* because of its vicinity to that church, was inaugurated in 1640 with Monteverdi's *Arianna*, and would go on become one of the city's leading opera houses (though it housed comedy as well), closing with Rossini's operas in the early 19th century. In the latter 1740's, it gave home to Goldoni's first developing musical comedies under the auspices of impresario Angelo Mingotti. For production at the *Teatro San Moisè* between 1748–49, Goldoni wrote *La scuola moderna*, *Bertoldo, Bertoldino e Cacasenno*, and *La favola dei tre gobbi* (The Fable of the Three Hunchbacks), all set to music by Vincenzo Ciampi (1719–1762). This season marks a point of arrival for Goldoni, for *La scuola moderna* is his first *dramma giocoso*, and Goldoni, now an author who has tested and proven his intuitions, is ever more determined to pursue new, realistic, and socially relevant theatre.

### iii. A new art for a new society: the *dramma giocoso* takes shape in Venice

The earliest known *drammi giocosi* ever performed in Venice were given in 1744: *La libertà nociva* (The perils of freedom) and *L'ambizion delusa* (Disappointed ambitions), both composed by Rinaldo di Capua on texts written or readapted by Giovanni Barlocchi. They were given at the S. Cassiano theatre, which, taking example from the already successful S. Samuele and S. Moisè, was giving more and more space to comic opera, given its growing popularity. These are, however, sporadic titles among a myriad of other genres in circulation, including *opere bernesche*, *commedie per musica*, *divertimenti*, *farsette* among others. Then again Goldoni too tried his hand at opera seria, *intermezzi*, *drammi eroi-comici*, *divertimenti*, and others still without ascribing to any one genre in particular- until his first *dramma giocoso*, *La scuola*

*moderna* of 1748. After 1748, Goldoni will instead write almost exclusively *drammi giocosi*, and these will gain notoriety internationally.

Bearing a sarcastic alternate title of *La maestra di buon gusto* (The Teacher of Good Taste), Goldoni's *scuola moderna* (The Modern School) displays all of the characteristics of the genre in embryonic state. It was set to music by Gioacchino Cocchi (1712–1796), soon thereafter to become director of music at the Venetian *Ospedale degli Incurabili*, but his score has been lost. In reality it is not wholly original but a *pasticcio*: the author inserted new comic material around pre-existing text- a practice then quite common but which Goldoni would never replicate. Antonio Groppo, a contemporary of Goldoni who kept catalog of the works performed in various Venetian theatres, identifies *La semplice spiritosa* (The Witty Naïve Girl) as the source, while recent studies suggest in addition a Neapolitan opera, *La maestra* (1747), by A. Palomba.<sup>57</sup> In any event, the real discovery in this work is what Goldoni himself writes in the preface:

Non avendo servito il tempo per mutar tutta l'opera, come erasi divisato, si è mutata tutta la materia buffa, la quale, se non parerà bene intrecciata colla seria, ciò è provenuto per la necessaria brevità; e vivi felice.<sup>58</sup>

The *dramma giocoso*, as a genre, is precisely defined as 'comic material...interwoven with tragic.' And notwithstanding the fact that this first, however rushed, attempt draws its 'tragic' parts from an existing text, all of Goldoni's subsequent- and entirely original- libretti confirm the novelty: comedy and tragedy in a new coexistence within the same work, even if- at this early stage- in parallel plot lines.

The possibilities granted by this combination will make the *dramma giocoso*, and later on *opera buffa*, one of the most popular products of 18<sup>th</sup> century musical culture, and a pillar of our opera tradition to this

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57 See Anna Laura Bellina, "La 'Maestra' esaminata," introduction to G. Cocchi, *La maestra*, (Milano: Ricordi, 1987); and Eleanor Selfridge1 Field, A New Chronology of Venetian opera and related genres, Stanford University Press, 2007; 514.

58 Carlo Goldoni, *La Scuola Moderna*, Forward. Not having had the time to rewrite the whole work, as was originally devised, all of the *buffo* material has been modified, which, if it should not appear well1 connected to the *serio*, this is the result of necessary brevity; and may you live happily [so be it].

day. But what exactly can the coexistence of *buffo* and *serio* bring to musical comedy? Perhaps some of that same realism that was the harbinger of modern theatre. When Goldoni writes his *Il Teatro Comico* (The Comic Theatre, 1751), the comedy that, retrospectively, formalizes his ideals for a renewed, socially relevant theatre, his characters convey a very important point on his behalf:

PLACIDA. Perché dunque vogliamo fare una farsa, e non più tosto una delle migliori commedie?

ORAZIO. Cara signora, sapete pure, che ci mancano due parti serie, un uomo, ed una donna. Questi si aspettano, e se non giungono, non si potranno fare commedie di carattere.

PLACIDA. Se facciamo le Commedie dell'Arte, vogliamo star bene. Il mondo si è annoiato di veder sempre le cose istesse, di sentir sempre le parole medesime, e gli uditori sanno cosa deve dir l'Arlecchino, prima ch'egli apra la bocca. Per me, vi protesto signor Orazio, che in pochissime commedie antiche reciterò; sono invaghita del nuovo stile, e questo sol mi piace...etc.<sup>59</sup>

These brief exchanges lay out a fundamental principle of goldonian realism: *parti serie* are essential to modern comedy too, not just to modern musical theatre. And who better to voice these convictions but Placida, stage-name of Teodora Medebach (wife of the impresario who employed Goldoni, who left quite an impression in the playwright's life), who, as Ginette Herry wrote, "(...) non ha eguali nelle parti patetiche con le quali, come nessun'altra, riesce a rendere umidi gli occhi degli spettatori (...) diventa quindi la colonna della riforma"<sup>60</sup>; an actress, in other words, who excelled in *parti serie* and sentimentalism. Naturally, in the libretti the tragic elements, initially at least, owe their existence as much to the standing tradition of *opera seria* as they do to Goldoni, just as it is true that *serio* characters (or *amorosi*) were not extraneous to the *Commedia dell'Arte* either. Yet the juxtaposition of comic and tragic is a dichotomy that Goldoni's texts for music will gradually attenuate,

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59 Carlo Goldoni, *Il Teatro Comico*; I, ii.

60 Ginette Herry, "Carlo Goldoni e la Marliani ossia l'impossibile romanzo" in *Studi Goldoniani quaderno 8*, (Venezia: Casa di Goldoni e Istituto di Studi Teatrali dei Musei Civici Veneziani, 1988); 141 ...had no equals in playing sentimental roles, with which, like no other, she could wet the eyes of her listeners...she became therefore a pillar of the reform.

and eventually eclipse. The end result yields no resemblance to the *serio* styles of tragic opera, ushering in a modern, calibrated, psychologically intimate approach to characters and plot; a synthesis that is perhaps the greatest legacy of 18<sup>th</sup> century musical theatre.

*La scuola moderna* does not- and logically cannot, being the first 'prototype'- display the seamless homogeneity of later works. The preface already makes net distinction between *buffo* and *serio*, a division carried out faithfully through characters and plot lines. This work does, however, carry all the elements essential to the evolved *dramma giocoso*, including Goldoni's compulsive pricks and prods at contemporary mores. We are, after all, in the 'modern school', and the cardinal rule of modernity appears to be self-interest.

Drusilla, the 'teacher of good taste', sings an opening *aria* that says it all:

Io li vedo a tutte l'ore  
tutti ricci e incipriati,  
far la ronda alle signore  
far con esse i spasimati,  
ma che cavino un quattrino  
dall'afflitto borsellino  
lo credete?  
oh questo no.  
Se vogliamo de' sospiri,  
gran promesse e gran parole,  
lor ne danno a chi ne vuole,  
ma regali non si può.<sup>61</sup>

Notwithstanding the flaws and materiality of her character, Drusilla alludes to themes that ring true. Through the image of gentlemen with perfected hair, powdered complexions, and empty promises, Goldoni returns to a deep-rooted issue confronted nearly ubiquitously in his theatre: appearance and reality ever more at odds. As the aristocracy begins

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61 *ibid.*, Act I, iii. I see them at all hours/ their hair curled and their skin powdered/  
tailing 'round the ladies/ acting so in love,/ but do they ever take a dime/ out of  
their afflicted purse/ would you think? no, certainly not./ If we want sighs/ grand  
promises and lofty words/ these they give to whoever may desire them/ but gifts  
are not possible.

to weaken financially, many go to great lengths to maintain a façade of grandeur and influence, though with little means to do so. There is, consequently, an exteriority, and vanity, that finds no real foundation in truth.

In a future ever more uncertain, the laws of self-interest appear the most pragmatic approach to security. At ‘the modern school’ - set in Venice, no less- the pupils, young men and women at the shores of marriage and independence, don’t study grammar or geometry but rather how best to manipulate their parents, tutors, or guardians to their own advantage. By Goldoni’s jesting account, modernity is apparently the era of falsehood:

Tutti fingono, tutti.  
I mercadanti, per mantener i vizi e le gran spese,  
fingon la roba di lontan paese;  
gli orefici, vendendo la tombacca per oro,  
guadagnano un tesoro.  
Gli avvocati fingono che il cliente abbia ragione,  
sol per mangiargli il fegato e il polmone;  
e i medici, fingendo la malattia mortale,  
traggon il proprio ben dall’altrui male;  
fingon gli uomini affetto, ed è interesse;  
fingon le donne anch’esse:  
vedrai un bel visin, ma quello è finto,  
con la biacca e il carmin coperto e tinto.<sup>62</sup>

The scene is clearly comic, but in this sweeping panorama of corruption that brings to mind Goldoni’s model, Molière, humor takes second place to truth.

In net contrast to the tone, pacing, and broader social commentary of Goldoni’s comic roles, the *serio* material of this *pasticcio*, which the author chose to preserve from its original version, is a return to the realm of Metastasian opera, and without any hint of parody. Rosmira, a young noblewoman, is prevented from marrying Ergasto, whom

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62 *ibid.*, Act I, vii. Everyone pretends, everyone. Merchants/ to support their vices and large expenses/ pretend their goods come from distant lands/ goldsmiths, selling copper for gold/ rake up a fortune. Lawyers/ pretend their clients are in the right/ only to strip them of liver and lungs/ and doctors, feigning/ the illness to be lethal/ draw their profit from others’ misfortunes;/ men feign affection, but it is interest/ and women pretend too:/ you see a pretty face, but it’s fake/ covered up and colored with flour and blush.

she loves, because he is desired by her aunt. Rosmira, continually mistreated, and Ergasto, grieved by his own suffering and hers, sing in measured verse, stylistically miles away from the rapid exchanges, puns, and wit of the comic parts. Their language carries generic tragic *leitmotifs*, as for example Ergasto's first solo aria,

L'alma gelar mi sento  
sento mancarmi il cor  
oh che crudel momento!  
che sfortunato amor! etc.<sup>63</sup>

or his beloved's, accordingly:

Tropo è crudel tormento  
questo che in cor mi sento.  
Un giorno intero senza veder l'amante,  
è pena da morir.<sup>64</sup>

This is the tone, quite stiff by our standards, held exclusively by characters of noble birth. Both examples are fragments of exit arias which, in the manner of *opera seria*, expound upon a single emotion or state of mind without advancing the plot.

While still underdeveloped at this stage, and a bit clumsy at that, the coexistence of *buffo* and *serio* clearly visible in this first *dramma giocoso* undeniably opens a much ampler spectrum of dramatic registers, and demonstrates high potential for greater intricacy through the structure of a double plot.

The final important feature of *La scuola moderna*, and part of the blueprint for future *drammi giocosi*, is Goldoni's manner of closing acts with ensembles, as in his *intermezzi*. This practice is by no means unique him- on the contrary its origins are quite ancient- but Goldoni will make an original and lasting contribution here too, by later adapting the

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63 Carlo Goldoni, *La Scuola Moderna*, Act I, vi. I feel my soul freezing/ my heart giving way/ oh, what a cruel moment! /what ill-fated love!

64 *ibid.*, Act I, x. Too cruel is the torture/ that I feel in my heart. An entire day/ without seeing my love/ is a deathly pain.



so-called 'ensemble finale' to the ends of internal scenes, and eventually even within scenes as part of the action.

At this primary stage we see ensembles at the ends of acts only, but even within the well-worn custom Goldoni introduces new life by juxtaposing parallel conversations between couples (caught in the inevitable love-triangle). The conclusion of Act I, for example, is strongly reminiscent of the lively quickness of the Neapolitan *commedia per musica*:

BELFIORE. Cara, cara.

DRUSILLA. Caro, caro.

LINDORO (*a Belfiore*). Senta, senta, mio padrone.

BELFIORE (*a Lindoro*). Bernardone, bernardone.

BELFIORE (*a Drusilla*). Mia sarete?

DRUSILLA. Se vorrete.

LINDORO (*a Belfiore*). domandato è in verità.

BELFIORE. Va in malora, via di qua.

DRUSILLA. Zitto, zitto, taci là.

BELFIORE. Per te cara, io vivo in pene.

DRUSILLA. Io vi voglio tanto bene.

LINDORO. (*verso la scena*). Si signore, viene, viene.

BELFIORE. Con chi parli?

DRUSILLA. E' domandato.

LINDORO. (*a Drusilla*). Traditora!

DRUSILLA (*a Lindoro*). Sconsigliato!

BELFIORE. Bernardone, mi hai beffato.

LINDORO. No, davvero, ve lo giuro.

DRUSILLA. È innocente, v'assicuro.

LINDORO. La mia fede a voi prometto.

DRUSILLA. Io vi tengo stretto stretto.

BELFIORE. Oh che gioia, oh che diletto!

DRUSILLA, BELFIORE e LINDORO. Che piacere amor mi da!

Viva viva la bontà!<sup>65</sup>

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65 *ibid.*, Act I Finale. Belfiore: My dear! Drusilla: My dear! Lindoro: Listen, sir, listen B: dimwit! [to Drusilla]: Will you be mine? D: If you so wish L: Sir, they are asking for you B: Go to hell, get out of here. D: Oh, hush, quiet now. B: For you, my sweet, I live in pain D: and I love you very much L. (looking out): Yes sir, he's on his way! He'll be right there! B: Whom are you speaking to? D: They are asking for you L: Traitor! D: Imprudent! B: Dimwit, you've tricked me. L: No, in truth, I swear. D: He is innocent, I assure you. L: I promise you my faithfulness

This comic *concertato* features quick shifts in meaning, and in the disposition of the characters involved. Two young lovers travel from complicity through mistrust to final reconciliation in the span of a few concise lines, and the old and amorous Belfiore, one minute denouncing trickery, in the next is newly blinded by infatuation. The entire discourse is laden with dramatic irony and traversed by double meanings in constant variation that testify Goldoni's particular comic talent.

In sum, *La scuola moderna* represents the beginning of Goldoni's work in the *dramma giocoso* genre, and, however hastily compiled, demonstrates significant dramatic potential that will find fulfillment in later works. Thanks to the clear coexistence of *buffo* and *serio*, this work, while of simple design, is able to provide an ample spectrum of dramatic registers and a variety of scenarios, supplemented in their efficacy by the realism and fluidity of action that are a universal priority for Goldoni. From its roots in the *intermezzi* and the influences of the Neapolitan *commedia per musica*, the *dramma giocoso* can now begin to evolve in new directions, guided by the critical instinct and reformist convictions of Carlo Goldoni in mid-century Venice.

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D: And I will keep you close to me. B: Oh what joy! what bliss! ALL: What joys love gives me! Long live goodness!