

The Book of Pasticcios

Listening to *Ormisda's* Material Texts

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Composers did not write music: printers and copyists did. The agency we are prone to assign today to composers of the early modern era was a quite intricate one: as we acknowledge the importance of assembling musical ideas for the purpose of arranging a performance, we tend to forget about the material conditions of possibility for such musical assemblages to circulate and to be performed. These musical assemblages were the result of an intricate network of labor which involved not only composers, but also copyists, printers, singers, impresarios, and so on. Printed and manuscript scores were objects of collaborative work and participated in a marketplace that was not that different from the thriving literary one. As scholars in the field of the 'History of the Book' have long noted, the purpose is to understand how "ideas were transmitted through print and how exposure to the printed word affected the thought and behavior of mankind during the last five hundred years".¹ If we transfer this same concept to the realm of musical performances and its material configurations, we can go back to our original statement: composers did not write music, printers and copyists did.²

So, what happens when we investigate a musical genre, the operatic pasticcio, which inherently requires composers to write little to no music? This article traces some of the material configurations of one of the early pasticcios in which George Frideric Handel was (to a little degree) involved in London, *Ormisda* (King's Theatre, 1730): by focusing on a variety of musical sources (printed and manuscript) produced in the years around the premiere of the pasticcio and after, I aim to provide a fresh view of the operatic culture in London during the early decades of the 18th century, in light of the role played by the social life of musical objects in the context of pasticcio-making. Moreover, by showing how copying habits of Italian music were the result of a peculiar

1 DARNTON, 1982, p. 65.

2 The sentence is a reformulation of a famous concept elaborated by CHARTIER, 1994, p. 10: "[A]uthors do not write books: they write texts that become written objects, which may be hand-written, engraved, or printed".

culture of listening, I analyze the way such musical artifacts contributed to the very process of both creating and attending a pasticcio, rethinking it as a form of listening inscription.

***Ormisda* and the culture of song printing in London**

Ormisda was produced by Handel and Johann Jacob Heidegger during their new joint venture at the King's Theatre, after the failure of the Royal Academy of Music in 1729 and after travel to Italy for the recruitment of new singers.³ First performed at the King's Theatre on 4 April 1730, *Ormisda* was an adaptation of a libretto by Apostolo Zeno that was first set to music in Vienna in 1721 by Antonio Caldara, and a year later by Giuseppe Maria Orlandini for a reprise in Bologna. According to Strohm, the London pasticcio *Ormisda* was partially assembled as a collection of Italian music that Handel and Heidegger either listened to or physically gathered during their travels, and much of the music collected during these trips was later to be used in several of the other pasticcios.⁴ Handel and Heidegger were provided with the subject and some arias already in late 1725 by their agent in Venice Owen Swiney, who in March 1726 complained to the Duke of Richmond:

“Im’e very Sorry to find that the Academy is likely to receive any damage from the opera *Ormisda*’s not arriving in London in due Time: The badness of the roads having occasioned its delay, above 35 days, more than the usual time, between Venice and Amsterdam [...]

The music is excellent: the Book [the libretto] a very good one: and Senesino’s and the Cuzzoni’s parts are very considerable ones.”⁵

The Academy initially decided not to use the music sent by Swiney at the time of its arrival in 1726. Instead, it was put on hold until 1730, when the pressure of putting on two new operas every year demanded a faster achievement, a pasticcio. John Roberts has questioned the possibility of Handel being involved in the creation of *Ormisda*, given that there is no trace of Handel’s intervention in the conducting and harpsichord scores (held respectively at the British Library and at the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek “Carl von Ossietzky” in Hamburg), nor that the style of the newly composed recitatives matches Handel’s.⁶ Whether Handel was directly involved or not, *Ormisda* was a

3 On *Ormisda*, see STROHM, 1985, pp. 170-173; ROBERTS, 2009; ROBERTS, 2016. On the early years of the new venture by Handel and Heidegger, see DEAN, 2006, pp. 125-136 and HUME, 1986.

4 STROHM, 1985, pp. 172f.

5 Owen Swiney to the Duke of Richmond, Venice, 11 (22) March 1726 (HCD, vol. 2, pp. 36f.).

6 ROBERTS, 2016. My own investigation into the primary sources for *Ormisda* has also left me with the sense that there is no trace of Handel’s handwriting in either the conduct-

prominent show for the new operatic enterprise by him and Heidegger, being even more successful than the previous pasticcio *Elpidia*, with a total of 18 performances between the first run (4 April-14 May 1730) and a reprise at the beginning of the next season (24 November-8 December 1730).⁷

The new pasticcio was widely publicized in local journals, and the presence of the royal family at most of the performances was constantly noticed.⁸ On 20 April, *The Daily Journal*'s usual advertisement for the performance of *Ormisda* on the next day featured an additional line: "*Ormisda Having Twelve Songs chang'd*".⁹ This was the sixth performance since the initial run of the show. Changing songs in the middle of a set of performances was not unusual and was part of the typical operatic instability that informed much of baroque spectacles.¹⁰ What was unusual was the advertising of the change in the newspapers, as if the actual replacement of songs was of public interest. This speaks even more to the impact that *Ormisda* likely had on the London public sphere, and its role in the development of the 'song culture' of the 1720s-30s.

During the early 18th century, London was at the center of a printing boom. Both for economic and more practical reasons (the large width of the city, the insularity of the country, urban population growth), the printing and publishing markets were by far some of the largest enterprises to be found in early modern England.¹¹ After the lapse of the Printing Act in 1695, and the subsequent freedom from prepublication censorship, the efflorescence of printing was tangible throughout England, and in particular in London.¹² If newspapers undoubtedly consisted of the majority of periodical publications in Georgian Britain, it should be remembered that its "spectacular rise" was not exclusively made of news.¹³ Instead, a panoply of literary journals, scientific publications, and entertainment sheets increasingly flooded the streets of London during the first decades of the 18th century. These publications entered the modern capitalist market by relying on the placement of advertisements next to actual local news and announcements, thus giving the London newspaper its peculiar layout in which, for instance, next to the notices of the evening shows throughout the city one could find advertisements for publications related to the same shows. Newspapers, to sum up, were a periodical publication made of discrete content conceived to produce other periodical press and products.

The period from 1680 to 1720 is today considered a "revolutionary" one for music printing and publishing in London.¹⁴ Due to new copyright laws, the rise of printers and

ing score (GB-Lbl, Add.31551) or the harpsichord score (D-Hs, M A/1036), unlike what claimed by CLAUSEN, 1972, p. 184.

7 HCD, vol. 2, p. 353.

8 See the various reports on IBID., pp. 354-358.

9 *The Daily Journal*, 20 April 1730, p. 2 (HCD, vol. 2, p. 355). Emphasized in the original.

10 See BIANCONI, 1987, pp. 190-204.

11 See SUAREZ, 2009.

12 See ASTBURY, 1978.

13 PETTEGREE, 2014, p. 269.

14 HUNTER, 1989, p. 328.

growth of potential buyers of publications, the market was a flourishing and quite an exceptional one.¹⁵ Engraving and the use of pewter plates and punches soon replaced the letterpress technique, thus leading to the possibility for publishers to retain the ownership of copper and pewter plates. This meant a faster and more affordable way to reprint editions, fashioning a labor model in which the job was outsourced to freelance engravers or apprentices.¹⁶ This potential for music books to be easily reprinted, I argue, had a deep impact not only on the circulation of music, but also on its production and composition. The high degree of repeatability of these musical collections affected the musical community on different levels: for publishers, it meant not only a more efficient economic model, but also an increased interest in obtaining music to copy, possibly to be included in collections; for consumers, it directed the attention towards musical singles, in turn creating a demand for musical collections; for composers and producers of music (such as opera house impresarios, singers, and musical agents) it meant creating or obtaining music that fit this peculiar printing model. It should be remembered that this was a peculiar model of music printing, as – unlike continental Europe – the practice of printing opera songs was almost exclusively an English accomplishment. In Italy, there was no model for opera printing until the late 18th century, while in France opera was printed in full and mostly for the purpose of courtly display of magnificence.¹⁷ There was no equivalent to the flow of song collections in England during the early decades of the 18th century. I argue that the history of song collections in England is relevant to the development of the pasticcio as a format not only because of its pervasiveness, but also because of the material aspects of music transmission (copying practices, reading conventions, and collecting habits) that allowed for the pasticcio to be considered as a viable model of listening experience *through* its materiality, through this ‘single song’ culture.

To go back to *Ormisda*, only two years before its premiere, John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* inaugurated in January 1728 a tradition of ballad operas that was – among other things – one of the outgrowths of the peculiar song and print culture of early 18th-century London.¹⁸ In a way, it can be said that the new insistence on pasticcios on behalf of the new operatic venture by Handel and Heidegger was a response to the massive popularity of the ballad opera, and to the consequent spinning of song circulation through songbooks and playtexts with music. As noted by Mary Pendarves (later Mary Delany, one of Handel’s friends and a strong supporter of Italian opera)¹⁹ after she attended a rehearsal

15 HUNTER, 1991, p. 647.

16 HUNTER, 1989, p. 333.

17 “Apart from the minor exception of operas by Jean Baptiste Lully published by the Ballardards in Paris and Estienne Roger in Amsterdam, opera circulated in manuscript form. London became the site of the first significant, extended effort at printing operatic works.” HUNTER, 1991, p. 649.

18 The bibliography on ballad opera is vast and heterogeneous. For the specific relationship between ballad operas and Handel’s music, see JONCUS, 2006.

19 On Mary Pendarves, see HARRIS, 2014, pp. 181f.

of *Ormisda*: “Operas are dying, to my great mortification. Yesterday I was at the Rehearsal of a new one, it is compos’d of Several Songs out of Italien [*sic*] Operas, but it is very heavy to Mr. Hendells.”²⁰ By comparing *Ormisda* to a usual “Mr. Hendell[’]s” opera, Pendarves is opposing *Ormisda* to the popular success of the ballad operas. A few months before, she confessed to Anne Granville her distaste for the phenomenon of ballad operas: “The Opera is too good for the Vile tast[e] of The Town [...] the present Opera is dislik’d because it is too much Studied and they love nothing but Minuetts and Ballads, in short the *Beggars Opera* and *Hurlothrumbo* are only worthy of applause.”²¹ Mary Pendarves’s acknowledgement that *Ormisda* was “compos’d of Several Songs *out of* Italien [*sic*] Operas” reflects the wider concern over the status of opera in relation to its materiality, that of its composition as an assemblage of songs taken “out of” something else. *Ormisda* was a “new one”, but it was already assembled to be dismantled.²² Hence, the advertisement in the *Daily Journal* highlighting the change of songs (see *supra*).

The performance of *Ormisda* on 21 April, the one featuring “twelve songs chang’d”, has been traditionally identified as a ‘benefit’ performance for the *prima donna* Anna Maria Strada del Pò.²³ Recently, this identification has been put into question, given that the only source claiming this performance as a benefit was a handwritten note found in a copy of the *Ormisda* libretto held at the British Library (on which see *infra*).²⁴ The manuscript annotation reports: “This was first performed for the Benefit of the Prima Donna Sig.a Anna Strada del Pò”.

For a genre inherently concerned with multi-authoriality such as the pasticcio, it comes as no surprise if copies of librettos of this pasticcio were annotated in various ways: users of these items were, in a way, compelled to engage with them to disentangle its work of assemblage. The pasticcio, because of its meta-theatrical nature of staging music already staged, seems to call for a direct involvement of audiences. In the case of librettos, the material traces of such reading and listening activities are to be found in manuscript annotations. And this is where we start with our investigation into the sources of *Ormisda*.

Reading the *Ormisda* librettos

So, let’s start with *Ormisda*’s libretto. More precisely, the librettos, since the presence of at least three different versions has created issues in terms of *Ormisda*’s textual status. Colin Timms’s article on the two copies of the *Ormisda* librettos at the Library of Bir-

20 Mary Pendarves, London, to Anne Granville, 4 April 1730 (HCD, vol. 2, pp. 352f.).

21 Mary Pendarves, London, to Anne Granville, 20 December 1729 (IBID., p. 333).

22 As a curiosity, a manuscript volume of Handel’s arias held at the Gerald Coke Collection (GB-Lfom, n. 317) reports the following title: “Songs out Several Operas”. The manuscript includes a song from *Ormisda*, “Se mi toglie il tuo furore” (20v-21r).

23 STROHM, 1985, p. 173; TIMMS, 1984, p. 147.

24 GB-Lbl, 11714.aa.20/1. See HCD, vol. 2, p. 391.

mingham,²⁵ while carefully attempting the reconstruction of the three different textual versions of the play based on two different sets of additional pages to be found in each copy, sometimes stumbles over the difference between “copy” and “version,” obscuring the very possibility of bibliographical stratification over time. Given that all the *Ormisda* copies of the libretto have an identical layout and content, it cannot be ruled out that only the “Additional pages” might have been printed after the first batch of performances, and later bound with the librettos by their collectors. To be more precise:

- the Birmingham copy B/44, which Timms identifies with the “original” version, is a copy with no additional pages, which does not mean it could not have included additional pages at some point in its textual life;
- the British Library copy (11714.aa.20/1) has six unnumbered pages of “Additional Songs to the Opera of *Ormisda*, both in Italian and English”; it is an identical copy to the Birmingham B/44, with twelve additional songs over eight unnumbered pages bound with it;
- the Birmingham copy B/40 has the same identical layout of the other two, but it has four pages at the end, numbered 73-76, containing different replacement songs.

In sum, all three copies seem to be the same version of the libretto, with additional pages that may refer to different versions of the play, but of which the actual textual reconstruction seems a misinterpretation of the relationship between the bibliographical status of the sources, their “social life” as objects,²⁶ and their performance textualization. Printed librettos prompt performances, of which their ‘text’ is by definition irrecoverable; the textualization of a performance is not exclusively recorded nor fixed in a printed item.

If these copies acted and participated in the material life of the pasticcos (and more generally in London’s reading culture), the most important feature to focus on is the recurrence of handwriting annotations over them. The British Library copy, as a matter of fact, is extensively annotated by an anonymous “English eighteenth-century hand” who carefully marked not only the name of each singer next to the arias, but also referenced the presence of songs and even instrumental parts “in the score”.²⁷ The score referred to is the conducting score in the British Library, a manuscript copy originating in the copyist workshop of John Christopher Smith which bears traces of several adjustments, refoliation, additions, and *lacunae*.²⁸ The reader of the British Library libretto of *Ormisda* was cross-referencing with the conducting score for the presence of songs. Readers

25 GB-Bp, A782.12, Plays B/44 and Plays B/40. See TIMMS, 1984, pp. 147-149.

26 “Social life of objects” is a famous formulation by Arjun Appadurai, and it refers to the practices and values attached to objects as they circulate; see APPADURAI, 1986.

27 STROHM, 1985, p. 284. The indication of instrumental parts clearly rules out the possibility that “the score” referred to could be the compilation of songs printed as *The Favourite Songs in the Opera call’d Ormisda* (on which, see *infra*).

28 GB-Lbl, Add.31551. The manuscript has been codicologically described by CLAUSEN, 1972, pp. 184-187.

of the pasticcio librettos seem to be particularly attracted by the identification of songs, their material inscription in printed or manuscript form, and by the very act of re-reading the text by going back and forth between the available scores and the libretto. This form of visual indexing is even more explicit in this copy of the libretto, since the annotator has sequentially numbered each song, including the additional ones.

But who, in the 18th century, could have had access to the conducting score of *Ormisda*? The performing scores were in Handel's possession throughout his lifetime, only to be passed over to Smith junior after his death. This collection was then kept in the Smith family up until the 1850s, when it was sold by auction and ended up as the foundation to two important collections at the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek "Carl von Ossietzky" in Hamburg and at the British Library, the latter being the so-called "Marshall collection" offered to the Royal Music Library and hosted in the British Museum and the British Library (and which includes the score of *Ormisda*).²⁹ This means that our alleged 18th-century reader must have consulted the conducting score directly from the Smith circle. On p. 4 of the annotated copy, a long comment makes explicit reference to the various versions of the opera:

"This was first performed for the Benefit of the Prima Donna, Sig.a Anna Strada del Pò. There is neither the writer's, nor the Composer's name mentioned. It was frequently played. It came out April 4th, and on April 21st there was a change of 12 songs. The performance was under the direction of Handel. The Drama of *Ormisda*, says Burney, was written by Apostolo Zeno, and originally composed for Vienna by Caldara in 1722."

The reference to Charles Burney's *General History of Music* – where *Ormisda* is cited by the English music historiographer in connection to the rest of the season – dates this annotation no earlier than 1789, the year of the first edition of Burney's complete four volumes.³⁰ It is actually even more likely that, given the physical proximity of the annotated printed libretto and the conducting score in the British Library for comparison purposes, this annotation could only have been written while the items were already physically in the same place. Thus, it seems very unlikely that this hand could be of actual 18th-century origins. Rather, it seems as if our pasticcio reader was a 19th-century collector who was prompted to make sense of such an opera due to its intrinsic indexical nature. The same exact handwriting can be found on the partially autograph copy of Handel's *Te Deum* (RM.20.g.4), in which there is a remark: "*This is all Mr Smith's writing, except | the name of Bayly".³¹ This handwriting has been attributed to Michael Rophino Lacy (1795-1867), an English violinist and composer who helped the Handel

29 CLAUSEN, 1993, p. 22; see also SEARLE, 1985, and KING, 1997a.

30 BURNEY, 1789, vol. 4, pp. 348f.

31 This manuscript is among those digitally scanned and available to the general public on the British Library website: <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=R.M.20.g.4>, 26.11.2019.

historian Victor Schoelcher to research and identify Handel's manuscripts during the 1850s.³² More confirmation of Lacy's handwriting comes from confronting some of the manuscripts of Handel's music that Lacy had transcribed, such as Add.31555 held at the British Library (GB-Lbl, Add.31555, fol. 2r).

Finally, we can identify our pasticcio reader. A mid-19th-century musician with a passion for cataloguing, Lacy was also actively involved in the performance of Handel's music, whether organizing a series of "Handelian Operatic Concerts" in London in 1847, or by reusing Handel's music in his own operas (such as *The Israelites in Egypt*, 1833, with music by both Handel and Rossini).³³ On top of that, he helped the Handel scholar Victor Schoelcher in his research for his book *The Life of Handel* (1857), an enterprise during which Lacy had to read and confront hundreds of librettos and scores, including those of the pasticcios.³⁴ Lacy was reading, confronting, attributing, indexing, and finally re-appropriating music more than a century after the performances of the pasticcios. We do not know if any of the music from the pasticcios was performed during the 19th century, but it was certainly read and – in a way – listened to, at least in Lacy's head. The social life of an object such as the British Library copy of the *Ormisda* libretto reveals the peculiar affordance of the pasticcio as a genre, its indexicality and the demands its reading makes.

In sum, Lacy is not to be considered a reliable first-hand source for attribution. Yet, Clausen, Strohm, Timms, have all used his annotations to reconstruct the hypothetical three versions of the text of *Ormisda* that should correspond to the premiere, to the new version of 21 April, and to the next season reprise. I propose a different hypothesis: the "Additional Songs" printed at the end of the copy in the British Library, without any page number, seem more likely to have been printed in a rush during the April 1730 performances, and they actually contain twelve songs, as the advertisement makes clear. The four, numbered pages of substituted arias found in the Birmingham libretto (B/40) might have been printed for a new issue of the libretto for the following season. Timms's main point about identifying the British Library's "Additional Songs" with the November 1730 performances is that three arias were from Orlandini's *Adelaide*, an opera in which Senesino was originally cast.³⁵ But the score of *Adelaide* could have been available to Handel, Heidegger, and Smith even without the help of Senesino. Instead, one of the arias included in the Birmingham substitution pages, "Parto, non ho costanza," was an aria from Capelli's *Venceslao* (Parma, 1724). This aria was mentioned by Owen Swiney in the same 11 March 1726 letter to the Duke of Richmond quoted before: "Nothing is lost by bringing on *Venceslao* first: the Faustina has her part and will be ready to go on the stage, as soon as her cloaths can be made: Senesino has two of the

32 See BURROWS, 1994, p. 177. For a biography of Lacy, see KING, 2001.

33 IBID.

34 SCHOELCHER, 1857, p. xxii, acknowledged that "he [Lacy] was who made those musical examinations of the manuscripts at Buckingham Palace, and of the scores which Handel himself used when he conducted his own works". See also KING, 1997b.

35 TIMMS, 1984, p. 147.

finest Songs I ever heard: viz. Parto non ho costanza &c of Capelli — & Date parto &c. of Orlandini.”³⁶

This letter makes clear how Swiney was already assembling music while in Venice, putting together the best music he could find in Italy, and then sending his musical proposals to the academy. Roberts believes that this is how three pasticcios (*Elpidia*, *Ormisda*, *Venceslao*) were devised, possibly with little or no intervention by Handel.³⁷ In any case, it seems clear that *Ormisda* featured a song that was initially conceived for *Venceslao*, “Parto non ho costanza,” to be sung by Senesino (as prescribed by Swiney) but not originally sung by him. Capelli’s *Venceslao*, in fact, was never performed by Senesino. When Swiney writes that he has “heard” the song, we probably do not have to take him literally, as he was likely referring to the act of hearing while copying the song for the Academy, with the voice of Senesino in his mind. The pasticcio came into existence as the product of an encounter between the aural imagination and the act of copying and transcribing.

Listening to *Ormisda*’s musical sources

One of the questions that has arisen from the present discussion is the relationship between musical performances and their material reconfigurations. Musicologists tend to apply the same language, philological methods, and degree of reliability to both realms. Musical sources themselves call for different evaluation and treatment depending on whether they are printed or manuscript items. The role of these sources in the production and reception of the baroque repertoire stems from different apparatuses of technological knowledge; they involved different people, skills, and labor practices; and their agency in building the text’s affordance was different. In sum, a printed libretto and a manuscript score contribute to our understanding of the ‘opera text’ and the ‘performance text’ in different ways, and they should be treated as such,³⁸ keeping in mind that “dramatic writing and stage performance are modeled by the relationship between tools and technologies [...] suggesting a mobile, reciprocal relationship between the work writing might perform as *symbolic action* and the scene of its affordance, as *equipment for living* in the changing technology of the stage.”³⁹

36 Owen Swiney to the Duke of Richmond, Venice, 11 (22) March 1726 (HCD, vol. 2, p. 37). This letter implies that Orlandini was responsible for composing a *Venceslao*, too, but there is no trace of any *Venceslao* with his name in repertoires or contemporary commentaries.

37 ROBERTS, 2016, pp. 174f.

38 The terms refer to David Levin’s differentiation between “opera’s agitated and multiple signifying systems – for instance, the score, the libretto, stage directions – prior to performance” (the “opera text”) and “opera in performance [...] as it] takes up a position relative to the opera text.” LEVIN, 2007, p. 11.

39 WORTHEN, 2010, pp. 21 and 23.

Ormisda reveals the problematic relationship between opera text and performance text when one attempts to reconstruct its different versions with the aid of different sources. For example, *Ormisda* had a single aria that was printed separately from the usual *Favourite collection of songs*. This was not unusual in London at the time, as arias from operas recently performed circulated, in a few cases, as individual items. Many copies of a collection of eleven songs from *Ormisda* survive today,⁴⁰ but what has gone unnoticed by Handel scholars (but reported by Smith in his catalogue of Walsh's editions)⁴¹ is the presence of *An Additional Song. Sung by Sig.r Senesino in Ormisda* bound with the rest of the song collection in a single copy preserved at the National Library of Scotland.⁴² The aria is "È quella la bella" from Act II, a song that was inserted at a later time in the score and that is part of the "Additional Songs" listed in the copy of the libretto at the British Library. If my previous hypothesis of the three different versions is correct, it means that this aria should be one of those included during the 21 April 1730 version with twelve songs changed. The title of this print, though, makes clear that the song was interpreted by Senesino, and not Bernacchi (the singer of the 21 April performance). Yet, given that this aria is the only one among the four for the character of Cosroe that does not feature a substitution in the Birmingham libretto (referring to the November 1730 performances with Senesino), it could still be that the song print of "È quella la bella" refers to Senesino's performance, with the aria being first introduced and sung by Bernacchi and only later interpreted by Senesino.

In other words, we can consider this single print as a sort of 'song request' to inscribe the memory of Senesino's performances of such arias, even though it was initially inserted in the production prior to his arrival. Walsh must have worked *in tandem* with John Christopher Smith to obtain the permission and the manuscript from which to copy and prepare the print of the aria "È quella la bella." "Sung by," in this case, is not only a way to refer to a recent performance of a singer – somehow inscribing his voice over the printed page – but also a way to point in the direction of previous performances (that of *Adelaide*, in which this song was sung by Senesino).

In this sense, *Ormisda* faces 'intertheatricality' as its own mode of being.⁴³ Not only does it reference previous Italian performances of Orlandini's *Adelaide*, but also recent performances of Handel's own *Lotario* (premiere 2 December 1729). The libretto of this

40 *The Favourite Songs in the Opera call'd Ormisda* (London: Printed for and Sold by I. Walsh servant to his Majesty an ye Harp and Hoboy in Catharine Street in the Strand. and Ioseph Hare at the Viol & Flute in Cornhill near the Royal Exchange, [1730]). Copies consulted in GB-Lbl, Music Collections I.49.(2); GB-Lfom, nn. 1085, 1087, 1088.

41 SMITH, 1970, p. 42.

42 GB-En, BH.72.

43 "Intertheatrical" is a term coined by William West to refer to the "shared memories of actions that can be called up to thicken present performances. [...] By evoking another performance, intertheatrical moments in early modern plays call on their audiences to witness for them, making the audiences, as it were, responsible for elaborations or explanations that the plays omit" (WEST, 2013, pp. 155 and 161).

play, in fact, was based on Antonio Salvi's *Adelaide* (1722), which was also the one set to music by Orlandini.⁴⁴ The arias taken from *Adelaide*, though, had their text changed, possibly to avoid a direct connection between the two operas. But the assemblage of such similar productions constitutes a true case of intertheatricality that was exploited through its material interlacing. Even more explicitly – and something that has not been noticed by Handel scholars – the *Ormisda* aria “Sì sì lasciatemi” contains the same music as the aria “Amor deh lasciami” in *Elpidia*, the pasticcio mounted by the Royal Academy of Music five years earlier.⁴⁵ The two arias are musically identical, both being scored for tenor voice (in *Elpidia* for Luigi Antinori, in *Ormisda*, Annibale Pio Fabri). The text of “Amor deh lasciami” has to be determined from the score, though, as the aria was inserted at a later stage than the premiere on 11 May 1725 (and so it does not appear in the printed libretto), possibly for the November 1725 reprises, given that it appeared in print as part of *The Quarterly Collection of Vocal Musick Containing the Choicest Songs for the last Three Months October November & December [1725] being the Additional Songs in Elpidia*. There, the song was published with the title “Sung by Sigr Tenori [*sic*] in Elpedia [*sic*]”.⁴⁶ The appearance of the same aria (albeit with different wording) in *Ormisda*, which was initially prepared around the same time as *Elpidia* (only to be dropped due to the late arrival of Faustina Bordoni in London in 1726),⁴⁷ means that the producers of the two pasticcios had initially planned to have an identical song (with only the textual incipit modified) to be heard by the same audience at a distance of only a few months. The history of the pasticcios went in a different direction, and *Ormisda* would only see the light in 1730. Would audiences have been aware of such a return of the same music? And, if so, what meaning would have been attributed to it? No answer can be given with certainty. The interesting fact about this aria is that the textual incipit, although slightly different (“Amor deh lasciami” vs. “Sì sì lasciatemi”) still contains words that sound very similar (“lasciami” “lasciatemi”). In a way, it was as if the producers were at the same time trying to cover the possibility of recognizing the song while making it even more obvious by using similar words over exactly the same music. Considering this, and the fact that “Amor deh lasciami” was printed as part of the *Additional Songs in Elpidia*, thus circulating among the London elites (the song

44 See DEAN, 2006, p. 140.

45 *Ormisda*'s conducting score (GB-Lbl, Add.31551) features the aria at 86v-89r, while *Elpidia*'s conducting score (GB-Lbl, Add.31606) has it at 22r-24v. This aria was originally featured in the 1718 version of Orlandini's *Lucio Papirio* in Bologna in a scene where the protagonist is addressing the Senators in the form of a political speech (in terms of the music, this *Lucio Papirio* had nothing to do with the one used by Handel for the Royal Academy performances in 1732). The music for both Orlandini's Bolognese setting and the London pasticcio *Ormisda* was the same: a manuscript copy of the aria preserved at the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles gives the header “Aria S.r Orlandini” and contains the same music as the conducting score of the pasticcio (B-Bc, ms.4448).

46 *The Quarterly Collection*, pp. 13f.

47 ROBERTS, 2016, p. 175.

even made it into a keyboard commonplace book),⁴⁸ it must be taken into consideration the possibility that there was a deliberate choice on behalf of the producers to have the audience recognize a song that was still being played and in circulation.⁴⁹

The interdependence between recent and contemporary productions was reflected in the way *Ormisda*'s music circulated either in printed or manuscript form. In some cases, songs from *Ormisda* would be physically bound or at least associated with operas at the King's Theatre. *Partenope*, the opera with which *Ormisda* shared the cast for the 1730 season, was an obvious candidate. If the printing of songs was a matter of inscribing the singer's voices, then putting together *Partenope* and *Ormisda* was a way of remembering the sound of an entire cast. The desire for collecting and indexing the music of Handel led an anonymous copyist to assemble two manuscript volumes of the almost-complete arias from six operas by Handel (*Radamisto*, *Flavio*, *Sosarme*, *Teseo*, *Poro*, and *Partenope*). These two volumes, today held at the Gerald Coke Collection in London (ms. n. 388), are visually and formally extraordinary. The transcriber has managed to fit six operas into 286 pages, sometimes adding English lyrics (the kind one could find in ballad operas) in red ink.⁵⁰ Each volume has a careful and vertiginous index on the front end-paper, with the name of the singers listed for each song. The volume referring to *Partenope* has a small section dedicated to the "Additional Songs". These additional songs, though, are not all from *Partenope*, as some are taken from *Ormisda*. They comprise a small selection of four arias ("Pupilette vezzosette," "Infelice abbandonata," "Timido pellegrin," and "Se mi toglie il tuo furore") that were already circulating in printed form as part of the *Favourite Songs* collection. *Ormisda* is here clearly appended as subsidiary, an appendix to *Partenope* of which there was no need to signal its different provenience. The songs, copied with miniscule handwriting, are amassed over each other, carefully including every single detail of the print from which they were copied. The songs were not copied for the purpose of future performances, but exclusively with the aim of collecting what was perceived as Handel's output (*Ormisda* included, evidently). Once again, the pasticcio participated in the indexing of the sounds of the operatic enterprise at the King's Theatre.

Walsh and Hare did not limit themselves to the printing of song collections. After the first release of the *Favourite Songs*, *The Country Journal* announced, on 11 July 1730, the printing of *Partenope*'s songs in a reduction for flute "[t]o which is added, the most favourite Songs in the Opera of Ormisda; the whole fairly engraven and carefully corrected".⁵¹ The publication clearly states Handel's paternity over *Partenope*'s music,

48 GB-Lgc, G.Mus.362, vol. III, fols. 81v-82v.

49 ROBERTS, 2016, p. 179, also points out that a few musical numbers in *Ormisda* were taken from the 1709 pasticcio *Clotilda*: these pieces had "enjoyed some continuing popularity" thanks to their publications in print.

50 This copyist has been described by DEAN/KNAPP, 1987, p. 257; see also BURROWS/KEYNES, 2012.

51 *The Country Journal*, 11 July 1730, p. 2 (HCD, vol. 2, p. 370). The complete title of the publication is *Parthenope for a Flute. The Ariets with their Symphonys for a single Flute*

but leaves *Ormisda* as a sort of separate musical surplus. The volume has a clear index, “A Table of the Song Tunes contain’d in this Book,” at the bottom of which is included “A List of all Mr. Handel’s Operas Transpos’d for a Flute which may be had where these are sold”. The list is completed with most of Handel’s operas performed up until 1730. Flute transcriptions of opera songs were a popular item for music publishers in the 1720s and the 1730s and song collections from a specific drama would usually have flute transcriptions at the end of each aria. But in the 1730s there seems to have been a new desire for publications exclusively devoted to flute transcriptions, the song culture being so pervasive that users wanted to play tunes without the burden of Italian words.⁵² And the struggle with transcribing a foreign language was evident in the way the titles of songs were printed in these kinds of publications, where words were used only for the sake of indexing rather than performing. A look at the index of *Parthenope for a Flute* highlights two different approaches to the transcription of songs from *Partenope* and from *Ormisda*: the latter, in fact, are mostly misspelled, while the ‘real’ opera has carefully transcribed titles. Even more problematically, the titles at the top of the musical renditions (mostly transposed to keys that would suit the flute) are misspelled in a way that reveals a sort of copying habit. The first song from *Ormisda*, “Pupillette vezzosette”, transcribes the title as “Pupil-lette vezzosette,” adding a hyphen exactly where it would be found as a syllable divider in the printed version of the aria in the *Favourite Songs*. “La speranza lusinghiera” becomes “Lasperanza lusinghiera”, “Infelice abbandonata” becomes simply “Infe lice”, while “Tacerò se tu lo brami” becomes “Tacero setulo”.

These mis-transcriptions were the result of copying practices that attempted to recreate a much-too-faithful copy of the ‘original’ inscription, the one to be found in the printed *Favourite Collection*. Even though assembled in the same workshop – Walsh’s printing shop – the pasticcio songs (unlike the ones that were officially branded as being Handel’s) were treated in their copying process as being copies that attempted not only to reproduce the content, but also the sound of their performance. The flute transcriptions carried the Italian language as a form of listening inscription, because they did not have to be sung again. This is even clearer by looking at how a song such as “Tacerò se tu lo brami” is reproduced in various printed and manuscript collections. Already misspelled as “Tacero setulo” in both the index and the content of the *Parthenope for a Flute* collection, the song is also to be found in another publication which included flute transcriptions, *The Modern Musick-Master or the Universal Musician* by Peter Prel-

and the Duet for two Flutes of that Celebrated Opera Compos’d by M.r Handel. To which is added the most Favourite Songs in the Opera of Ormisda. The Whole Fairly Engraven and carefully Corrected. Price 2s (London: Printed for and Sold by John Walsh Musick Printer and Instrument maker to his Majesty at the Harp and Hoboy in Catharine Street in the Strand. and may be had at Ioseph Hare’s at the Viol and Hoboy in Cornhill near the Royal Exchange, [1730]). Copy consulted in GB-Lfom, n. 2521.

52 On such publications, see DELLA LIBERA/LOPRIORE, 1994.

leur.⁵³ This collection of treatises on various musical subjects, printed in 1731, includes a few tunes to be used for practicing on instruments such as the flute, the German flute, and the harpsichord. The section on the German flute contains several songs transcribed from Handel hits, including three from *Ormisda*. In the index of the music contained in all the volumes, “Tacerò se tu lo brami” is listed as “Tacero tacero setulo”. The page with the musical transcription will have the song transposed a tone higher than the version in *Parthenope for a Flute*, given the different instrument, but without the textual incipit at the top (only “A Favourite Air in Ormisda”). The double repetition of the first word (“Tacero tacero”) creates a linguistic conundrum that makes no sense in Italian. Yet, these are the words as they are sung in the aria and printed in the *Favourite Songs*, as a sort of photocopy *ante litteram*. The circulation of Italian music in London reflected the printing practices of people who were not trained in the Italian language and whose primary purpose was to “carefully engrave” every detail of the songs, including the sonic transcription of Italian words as a form of re-materialization. As part of this process, private collectors would then replicate in their own manuscripts the same printing features. A miscellany titled *German Flute / June 27th, 1734*, part of the Gerald Coke Collection in London, contains some of the same songs to be found in the flute treatises previously described:⁵⁴ among the various songs, “Tacero tacero setulo” makes its appearance as an exact reproduction of the one to be found in *The Musick-Master*.

The copyists, here, have basically attempted to create a facsimile prior to the actual development of facsimiles. In the context of baroque opera, this makes even more sense if we think of the very act of copying as a condition of possibility for opera itself, with the pasticcio as a form of externalization, of self-referential unveiling of such listening-inscription practices. But if baroque opera, especially Handel’s and those created around his circle, was already a form of repetition (by borrowing and self-borrowing previous music), it follows that all baroque opera was a sort of pasticcio, and its production was the result of a multitude of tendencies, the material aspects of which were among the predominant ones. In 18th-century England, copying was not only a form of reading, but also a form of knowledge production. Moreover, by positioning the pasticcio music as being outside the realm of normative operatic production, the circulation of Italian arias affected the way Handel himself was perceived not only as a composer, but also as an arranger and producer of other people’s music.⁵⁵ In a way, Handel became a ‘composer’ (in the literal sense of ‘composing’ as putting together) after experiencing writing and reading practices, copying techniques, and listening habits through the peculiar genre of the pasticcio.

53 PRELLEUR, 1731. The edition was advertised as early as 14 November 1730 on the *Fog’s Weekly Journal* (HCD, vol. 2, p. 388), only ten days before the reprise of *Ormisda*. Copy consulted in GB-Lbl, Music Collections d.40.

54 GB-Lfom, n. 1598.

55 Ellen Harris has noticed how “the active circulation of Handel’s music in print and in manuscript, among both performers and collectors, was not just an effect of his fame, but also to some extent its cause” (HARRIS, 2013, p. 112).

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