

# Music on Stage

## Volume III



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## Volume III

Edited by

Fiona Jane Schopf

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# INTRODUCTION

FIONA JANE SCHOPF

The sixth international, interdisciplinary Music on Stage conference at Rose Bruford College attracted numerous papers on various aspects of opera, popular music and film, some of which are represented in this volume. Started in 2006, the conference series continues to offer scholars from diverse disciplines and countries the opportunity to share and discuss in an atmosphere of mutual engagement. Several inter-continental associations and partnerships have grown from the series, furthering cultural and intellectual exchange. The papers presented here offer a sample of the essence of the conference, each delegate speaking in their own idiomatic style.

Professor Tim Carter in his keynote speech provides a fascinating study of operatic arias that have been hijacked for talent shows, sport and publicity events arguing that maybe there is a case for wanting to replace them within their original world to preserve their dramatic intent and performance style. He focuses on Handel's "Lascia ch'io pianga" from *Rinaldo* to show how, once severed from its dramatic roots and purpose, the aria has been interpreted in a variety of ways with tempi inconsistent with the original intention and meaning of the piece. He questions whether this wider appropriation of these works provides a valid pathway to understanding them.

Karl Katschthaler discusses the shift in aesthetics and politics in the twenty-first century towards political art and "an aesthetics of process" (Bennet) after 9/11. He considers the notion of corporeality as found in Walshe's *The New Discipline* before introducing Brigitta Muntendorf's "mixed reality" and transmedial composition linking contemporaneity with communication. He interrogates Muntendorf's "social composing" by considering her pocket opera *Endlich Opfer* and explores privacy and publicness regarding social media in her #Private Tweets installation and Maximilian Marcoll's *Personal Data*. He concludes that there is no single aesthetic as "[t]he diversification of the composer [...] results in a diversification of musical aesthetics."

Melissa Gerber explores the notion of *Ekphrasis*—the transmedial use of signifiers between two media—in the Metropolitan Opera’s 2010 simulcast production of Thomas’s *Hamlet*. She centres on Ophélie and her various nineteenth-century painted representations, explicitly the aspects of beauty and madness, to suggest augmented “readings” that transmedialisation offers.

Elizabeth Hoegberg’s chapter posits an engaging discussion on the subversion of *travesti* identities in Chabrier’s *L’Etoile* through the character Lazuli. She elucidates how Chabrier structured and created a conflation of theatrical traditions and musical influences, particularly Rossini’s “Largo al factotum” from *Il Barbieri*, which highlights his subversion of the well-worn traditions of opérette. Hoegberg decants Chabrier’s *L’Etoile* showing its originality as a cross-genre work of immense subtlety anchored in Lazuli.

Julia Szołtysek explores depictions of the oriental Other in Mozart’s *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* arguing that Pasha Selim’s abandonment of Christianity has a direct bearing on the interpretation of this work. She offers a fascinating interpretation of Konstanze’s aria “Martern aller Arten” suggesting Mozart was a pioneer of feminist thought and reflects on the role of Osmin. The Istanbul Summer Opera Festival production at Turkey’s Topkapı Palace and the 2000 film adaptation *Mozart in Turkey* by Elijah Moshinsky are reviewed in the light of these readings.

Russell Millard’s chapter on Ravel’s *Daphnis et Chloé* focuses on Daphnis’s “real life incarnation” Nijinsky and suggests his balletic leap and “combination of feminine-coded grace and masculine-coded action” [the seeming separation between the upper and lower body] are present in the lines of the score. He also explores links between Daphnis and the god Pan and the representation of the “primitive lurking within humanity”, as well as the decadence which surrounded some of Nijinsky’s choreography.

Kate Stringer examines Korngold’s “Pierrot Lied” in *Die tote Stadt* and the many translations it has received to conclude that the text is a cogent commentary on the contemporary politics of the time and the position of Vienna/Austria after the 1919 St Germain peace agreement. The cited versions by translators who interpolated their own understanding of the plot in their work have, Stringer argues, derailed subsequent readings causing the work to be misinterpreted as kitsch.

Maia Sigua introduces a rare Georgian opera, Otkar Taktakishvili’s *Mindia* (1960). Outlining the opera’s overall *schema*, she explains how it conforms to Aristotle’s rules for tragedy whilst at the same time subverting the requirements of the Soviet era. This latter point makes for an

interesting interface between the composer's personal values and his role as Soviet Minister of Culture.

Sergio Pisfil outlines the literature on hearing loss related to loud pop music before exploring the development of sound equipment for rock concerts from the 1960s-1970s using the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival and the 7<sup>th</sup> National Jazz and Blues Festival at Windsor as references. Initially sound engineers were not sympathetic to the demands of the new pop groups but quickly realised that they offered the opportunity to develop systems far in excess of anything required by previous jazz and studio bands.

Alejandro Postigo discusses the evolution of the Spanish song form *copla* from the Middle Ages, through Franco's regime, to the present day. He outlines the various influences on the form from the French *cuplé* and the Spanish flamenco tradition to the political demands imposed during Franco's time. He suggests that although there has been a resurgence of the form in recent years there needs to be a root and branch re-evaluation if it is to have a true resurgence in the twenty-first century.

Simon Bell interrogates the controversial avant-garde rock-and-roll group Laibach's aesthetic strategy of "Retrogardism" which attempts to heal the past by revisiting its traumas. Laibach aims to resurrect the art-power connection which the capitalist West has white-washed by taking the utopian iconography and tropes associated with the Nazi regime and Soviet Socialist Realism and recoding them "within the aesthetics of the Retro-avant-garde spectacle". However, Bell concludes there exists a central void here as there is no alignment to any ideological structure. He points out the misalignment of Western post-modernist discourse and Eastern European praxis and the need for Marina Gržinić's neologism, *Easthetics*, as Laibach's Retrogarde actions are not a "postmodern parody or pastiche but reflect an active traumatic historical."

Fiona Jane Schopf discusses the deep and unique level of representation in Tony Palmer's bio-pic *Wagner* (1983) arguing that the so-called "randomness" of certain images throughout the film are a transmedialisation of Wagner's leitmotif technique. She further posits that the script of the film exhibits a transcoding of Wagner's *Stabreim* technique as found in *The Ring* and that the whole film transcends the customary bounds of bio-pics.

Hansjörg Schmidt explains why lighting techniques in opera since Wagner have generally remained static compared with straight theatre. He draws on examples from conceptual art (James Turrell's "Roden Crater") and theatre (the Young Vic's *Kursk* and Heiner Goebbels' *Stifter's Dinge*) to explain the possibilities and function of lighting. He highlights two

recent opera productions by Kosky and Grünberg that seek to break the mould: *Die Zauberflöte* at the Komische Oper, Berlin, and *The Nose* at Covent Garden.

Bernd and Daniela Willimek argue their theory of Musical Equilibration gives insight into our emotional responses to musical sounds and cite the consistent results from their extensive research with over two thousand children in this field. They offer examples of chords in distinct harmonic progressions to illustrate the emotional difference each has on audiences.

# CHAPTER ONE

## OPERA ARIAS ON AND OFF THE STAGE: THE STRANGE CASE OF HANDEL'S “LASCIA CH'IO PIANGA”<sup>\*</sup>

TIM CARTER

In May 2016, U.S. television audiences were thrilled by a young teenager auditioning for a place in the popular television show *America's Got Talent*.<sup>1</sup> Singer Laura Bretan of Chicago, Illinois, was thirteen years old (going on fourteen), and she played the part with a perfectly calibrated mixture of cuteness, nervousness, and humility. One of the judges, Howie Mandel, reassured her: “All you gotta do is sing the song that you picked out, OK?” The cameras then milked her performance for all it was worth, panning across the awestruck audience—“Oh my God!” mouths one observer, hand on heart—and then focusing on the judges as their stern gazes shifted into something close to rapture: “Oh... my... God!” said Mandel. Even the normally reserved Simon Cowell—the figurehead of the ...*Got Talent* franchise on both sides of the Atlantic—cocked his ear in amazement (“She’s thirteen!...”). A nervous mother offering an encouraging thumbs-up in the wings added to the carefully contrived scene. The outcome was inevitable: another judge, Mel B. (formerly of the Spice

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\* This text stems from the keynote address presented at the 6th International “Music on Stage” Conference, Rose Bruford College (Sidcup, Kent), 22–23 October 2016. I am grateful both to Fiona Jane Schopf (Rose Bruford College) for her invitation to speak, and to Amanda Eubanks Winkler (Syracuse University) for her generous comments on my text, on which I have drawn significantly. In keeping with the genre, my address sought to be both provocative and entertaining, and it was richly supplied with video examples. It is presented here in a similar rhetorical spirit: sufficient footnotes are provided to guide the reader to pertinent sources (and to relevant YouTube clips), although I have not sought to provide a fully comprehensive scholarly apparatus.

<sup>1</sup> Accessed 14 February 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCoxGV7j71c>.

Girls), pressed the “golden buzzer” giving the young singer an instant pass into the competition itself, and the auditorium erupted in applause.

Of course, Laura Bretan was an old hand at this game: she started singing in church at the age of four and had already been touted around a number of talent shows in the manner of a contestant in tweenie beauty pageants. For example, less than a month after the broadcast of her audition, she won the first prize of 120,000 euros in *Romania’s Got Talent*. Her song of choice in Romania was the aria “Vissi d’arte” from Puccini’s *Tosca*, but when she entered the American version of the franchise, she sang a different Puccini aria, “Nessun dorma” from *Turandot*. As many singing teachers noted at the time, such repertory is problematic, to say the least, and not only in terms of the potential damage to as yet untrained voices. In one sense (but not in others, we shall see), the choice of “Nessun dorma” is troublesome in other ways as well. In the opera, the aria is sung by the character Prince Calaf as he spends the night anticipating his likely victory over Princess Turandot regardless of the death threats she has made to the people of Peking: it is not a particularly sympathetic dramatic moment.<sup>2</sup> An offstage chorus is also heard in mid-stream, forcing an awkward cut (or substitution) in any concert performance. But now the aria stands alone devoid of its context; none of this would have bothered Laura Bretan, who probably learned the words phonetically (so it would seem from her performance) and was concerned only to reach the aria’s stirring conclusion—“Vincerò, vin-CE...-ro!”

Simon Cowell played the game as well. Despite his purported surprise, he had often heard “Nessun dorma” on various national versions of the ...*Got Talent* franchise: for example, the tenor Paul Robert Potts sang it to win the 2007 finale of the British edition of the show. Here Potts was drawing on the popularity of the aria created by Luciano Pavarotti’s rendition that was taken as the theme song of the 1990 FIFA World Cup, cemented by a celebrated performance by the so-called Three Tenors at a concert on the eve of that soccer tournament’s final match. Those three tenors—Pavarotti, Placido Domingo, and José Carreras—then used “Nessun dorma” as the showpiece of a long series of concerts that followed, imitated by a great number of “three tenor” (or more...) ensembles. At least the voice-type here matched Puccini’s original intentions: Prince Calaf is, of course, a tenor. What is more surprising, however, is how “Nessun

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<sup>2</sup> We can also argue over whether the aria actually begins with the words “Nessun dorma” or whether they belong with the previous “recitative”. This is a common problem with extracts from Puccini: “Mi chiamano Mimi” from *La Bohème* is another case in point (it does not begin with “Si”, which is a response to Rodolfo’s previous question).

dorma” has crossed gender and other lines to become the go-to piece for a number of very young female performers in recent talent shows, including the American eleven-year-old, Jackie Evancho, in *Britain’s Got Talent* and *America’s Got Talent* in June and September 2011; the Dutch nine-year old, Amira Willighagen, on *Holland’s Got Talent* in December 2013; and more recently, the fifteen-year-old Sislena Caparossa in the Italian *Tú sí que vales* in February 2016.

Various role-models clearly exert their influence here: Sislena Caparossa is Pavarotti’s granddaughter. They may include the prominent female figure-skating champions (e.g., the South Korean Kim Yuna) or gymnasts (the Italian Vanessa Ferrari) who have created famous routines to “Nessun dorma”. In terms of female singers, Aretha Franklin (“Queen of Soul”) has the aria in her repertory: she substituted for an indisposed Pavarotti at the 1998 Grammy Awards ceremony, and sang it again for Pope Francis at the Festival of Families in Philadelphia in September 2015. But the most obvious model is probably the cross-over artist Sarah Brightman, who released a recording of “Nessun dorma” in 2001,<sup>3</sup> and who regularly performs the aria on her concert tours. Laura Bretan, like her peers, takes a number of Brightman’s standard repertory pieces to her various competitions: in the semi-finals of *America’s Got Talent*, she sang another Brightman favourite—the “Pie Jesu” from Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *Requiem*—and for the grand finale, she chose a different Puccini aria on Brightman’s 2001 album, “O mio babbino caro” from *Gianni Schicchi*.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps one should not grumble too much about these mangled renditions of Puccini classics: audiences enraptured by them tend to focus on the grain of the voice—enhanced by the allure of the child prodigy—rather than on the words that are supposedly being delivered, or the dramatic contexts from which they come. Likewise, it is useless to complain about taking operatic arias out of context. This has been going on since the beginning of the genre: even in the case of the earliest operas by Jacopo Peri and Claudio Monteverdi, extracts survive in manuscript collections in ways suggesting that they were performed as chamber songs or in the repertory of the star singers of the time.<sup>5</sup> In the late seventeenth

<sup>3</sup> In the album entitled *Classics*.

<sup>4</sup> Brightman was, of course, closely associated with Lloyd Webber and his own early cross-over musicals. For some of the broader issues, see Amanda Eubanks Winkler, “Politics and the Reception of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *The Phantom of the Opera*” in *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol. 26 (2014), 271–87.

<sup>5</sup> The obvious example (but there are several others) is Monteverdi’s *Lamento d’Arianna* from his now-lost opera, *Arianna* (Mantua, 1608); see Tim Carter,

and early eighteenth centuries, so-called “suitcase arias” were transplanted from one opera to another—or piled together in *pasticcio* operas—at the behest of singers who had music to suit their particular voices. And by the nineteenth century, opera arias were often treated as concert items by singers taking a break from the stage.

One such singer, the great Pauline Viardot, provides an example that leads to the heart of my present essay. In London on Wednesday 21 April 1841, she gave a recital of so-called “ancient music” that included arias from operas by Purcell, Handel, Bononcini, Haydn, Cimarosa, Paisiello, and Mozart, among others.<sup>6</sup> These were all “ancient” composers by the mid nineteenth century, but Viardot’s program reminds us that “old” music had a surprising currency in a period that we tend to assume valued the new. Some of these arias had modern accompaniments provided by Henry Rowley Bishop—who was also famous for adapting Mozart operas to London tastes.<sup>7</sup> But Viardot herself was praised for singing them in “the purest style” and for “entering into the spirit” of the composer in ways that proved her to be an “excellent musician”. One of her extracts was the aria “Lascia ch’io pianga” from Handel’s opera *Rinaldo* of 1711, and my aim here is to trace the curious history of that piece over time.

*Rinaldo* was Handel’s first opera written for London. The initiative for it came from Aaron Hill, newly (if briefly) appointed manager of the Queen’s Theatre, Haymarket, who created a scenario drawing on an episode from Torquato Tasso’s epic poem *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581). Hill then gave that scenario to the poet Giacomo Rossi, who wrote the Italian libretto (though we shall see, below, that matters may have been more complicated than that). “Lascia ch’io pianga” occurs in Act 2 and is for the female character Almirena, who is betrothed to Rinaldo but has been kidnapped by the wicked sorceress, Armida.<sup>8</sup> Pauline Viardot

*Monteverdi’s Musical Theatre*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 202–11.

<sup>6</sup> I draw on the report in *The Examiner* (London), 25 April 1841, 262.

<sup>7</sup> Tim Carter, “Mozart in a ‘Land without Music’: Henry Bishop’s *The Marriage of Figaro*”, in *Musik Konzepte—Konzepte der Musikwissenschaft: Bericht über den Internationalen Kongress der Gesellschaft für Musikforschung, Halle (Saale) 1998*, edited by Kathrin Eberl and Wolfgang Ruf, (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2000), Vol. 1, 196–206.

<sup>8</sup> In the original London cast, Almirena was played by Isabella Girardeau. For *Rinaldo*, see Reinhold Kubik, *Händels “Rinaldo”: Geschichte, Werk, Wirkung*, (Neuhäusen-Stuttgart: Hänsler, 1982); Winton Dean and John Merrill Knapp, *Handel’s Operas, 1704–1726*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 168–205; John Merrill Knapp, “Aaron Hill and the London Theater of his Time”, in *Handel-Jahrbuch*, Vol. 37 (1991), 177–85.

probably did not know much about the plot when she performed “*Lascia ch’io pianga*” in London in 1841. Likewise, by the second half of the nineteenth century, the aria was well and truly divorced from Handel’s opera: instead it was a staple of favourite “Italian songs” anthologized for domestic consumption, presumably because it has a fairly simple melody with a narrow vocal range—indeed, it still performs that role nowadays as one of several Handelian arias that voice students often learn early on in their lessons. In such anthologies, the piece would usually be printed with its text in Italian and also translations into other languages (English, French, German) in versions that might or might not be close to the original words: in an 1876 collection, the English translation read “*Chide not my weeping, / In sighs I languish*” which makes some sense; but in an 1878 edition, the melody was sung to “*Here let my tears flow! / Let hope my soul know...*” which moves still further away from the original.<sup>9</sup> In both these cases, however, “*Lascia ch’io pianga*” is construed as some kind of typical female lament, even though this is not at all the role of the aria in Handel’s *Rinaldo* itself. Thus we might plausibly ask how “*Lascia ch’io pianga*” became viewed as a lament, and what the consequences might be for performances of the aria even today.

Given its evident popularity, something happened to “*Lascia ch’io pianga*” similar to the much later treatment of “*Nessun dorma*” noted above: it switched gender, this time from female to male. True, the text itself—taken on its own—is not gendered by way of feminine pronouns or adjectives. But it would be highly unusual to find a male character delivering it in any Baroque opera given that men are meant to be made of sterner stuff. Nevertheless, the great Italian baritone Giuseppe de Luca (1876–1950) did not care much about that when he included the aria in his concert repertory and then made a very early recording of it.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, a performance of “*Lascia ch’io pianga*” formed a key moment in the 1994 film about the life of the castrato singer Carlo Broschi, nicknamed Farinelli,<sup>11</sup> dealing in rather prurient detail with the career of perhaps the most famous castrato of the early eighteenth century who wowed audiences in opera houses across Europe, including in Handel’s London.<sup>12</sup> The film

<sup>9</sup> Peters’ Standard Edition of Italian Songs: First Series, (New York: J. L. Peters, 1876); “*Lascia ch’io pianga*” (*Here Let My Tears Flow*): Recit. ed Aria da G. F. Händel, (New York: G. Schirmer, 1878). The latter was labelled on the title page “The only authentic and correct edition”.

<sup>10</sup> Accessed February 2017, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_VZ8o9dZs3E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_VZ8o9dZs3E).

<sup>11</sup> Gérard Corbiau (Dir.), *Farinelli*, Sony Pictures Classics, 1994.

<sup>12</sup> See Ellen T. Harris, “Twentieth-Century Farinelli”, in *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 81 (1997), 180–89.

also involved a certain amount of sonic trickery to recreate the imagined sound of a castrato voice by digitally merging performances by Polish soprano, Ewa Malas-Godlewska, and the African American countertenor Derek Lee Ragin. In one scene, we see Farinelli on stage singing “Lascia ch’io pianga” as women watch in aroused delight, and as Handel himself becomes increasingly moved to the point of fainting; this also cuts away in midstream to a flashback of the singer undergoing castration.<sup>13</sup> But director Gérard Corbier clearly wanted to capture something of the power and the sexual frisson that Farinelli and those of his kind were reportedly able to incite particularly in the female members of their audiences. And for him, these effects were due entirely to the music and its envoicing: the viewer of the film is not provided with any translations of the texts being sung.

*Farinelli* does not score high on historical accuracy, but it did start a fashion for concert performances of that relatively rarefied repertory of Baroque *opera seria*. The film included arias not just by Handel but also by Johann Adolph Hasse, Nicola Porpora, and Farinelli’s brother, Riccardo Broschi. The well-known soprano Cecilia Bartoli took similar pieces—and sometimes the same arias—for her 2009 CD *Sacrificium* that was also linked to an extensive and highly successful concert tour. Countertenor Philippe Jaroussky has also made something of a specialty of uncovering the castrato repertory, although perhaps sadly, it is often the same arias that keep recurring in all these recordings: thus Jaroussky includes “Lascia ch’io pianga” in his regular concert schedule. As we shall see, the performance of that aria in the 1994 *Farinelli* also seems to have established another trend as well: “Lascia ch’io pianga” carries a high erotic charge. But it took the aria far away from its original function in Handel’s opera *Rinaldo*, not just by re-gendering the role from female to male—or perhaps better, by shifting it into some liminal, transgendered (even “queer”) space—but also by misreading its function.

When composing *Rinaldo* for London, Handel typically reused some music from works previously written in Germany and Italy. An early version of what became “Lascia ch’io pianga” had in fact appeared in his very first opera *Almira* (Hamburg, 1705), produced when Handel was nineteen years old. The plot concerns who will marry Queen Almira, and at the beginning of Act 3, three suitors stage a court masque allegorically representing Europe, Asia, and Africa: for Asia, the courtly dance is a Sarabande, and its music is an early version of what became Almirena’s aria in *Rinaldo*, with the typical rhythmic pattern associated with that

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<sup>13</sup> Accessed February 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuSiuMuBLhM>.

dance type. Handel clearly thought this a good tune. He then reused it in his oratorio *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* written for Rome in 1707. This is a moral allegory where the characters Time (Tempo) and Truth (Disinganno) triumph over the worldly blandishments offered by Pleasure (Piacere). Here the instrumental sarabande from *Almira* forms the basis of an aria for Piacere as she seeks to encourage Tempo to pluck the rose, seize the day, and pay no care to the consequences for tomorrow (“Lascia la spina, / cogli la rosa”): there is no point worrying about the future, or about death, because it will creep up unexpectedly anyway.

Thus Handel uses versions of the same music on three separate occasions: once as an instrumental sarabande, and twice as an aria. The roots of both vocal settings within an instrumental piece explain why it is rather strange in terms of the typical form of an aria: the words get distributed oddly and are repeated in all the wrong places. The fact that the two arias each begin with the imperative “Lascia” is, of course, significant, even if the word is used with two different meanings (“Leave the thorn, pluck the rose”; “Let me lament my harsh fate”). Presumably when it came to *Rinaldo*, Handel asked his librettist, Giacomo Rossi, to come up with a new text that had a similar rhetorical, grammatical, and metrical structure, if with a different content to suit the new dramatic situation (see Table 1).

Lascia la spina, cogli la rosa; tu vai cercando il tuo dolor.	Lascia ch’io pianga mia dura sorte, e che sospiri la libertà.
Canuta brina per mano ascosa giungerà quando nol crede il cuor.	Il duolo infranga queste ritorte de’ miei martiri sol per pietà.
Leave the thorn, / pluck the rose; / you go searching / for your pain. // Grey frost / by hidden hand / will come when / your heart does not expect it. <sup>14</sup>	Let me lament / my harsh fate / and breathe freedom. // May grief break / these chains / of my suffering / only out of pity. <sup>15</sup>

That “Lascia” is probably the key to the aria as a whole. But how one reads, or misreads, it raises a number of issues, not least concerning tempo. “Lascia la spina” in *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* is not at all a lament: nay, Piacere is trying to jolly Tempo along, quite literally

<sup>14</sup> “Lascia la spina” (*Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno*; 1707)

<sup>15</sup> “Lascia ch’io pianga” (*Rinaldo*; 1711)

seducing him with the thought of pleasures to come. Here Handel draws on the somewhat louche overtones of the sarabande, which in the early eighteenth century was often associated with lasciviousness of an exotic and even erotic kind. Modern singers such as Cecilia Bartoli, however, tend to take “*Lascia la spina*” at a very slow tempo indeed (roughly *minim* = 48).<sup>16</sup> Presumably they are influenced by the common reading of, and the increasingly common tempo for, its successor, “*Lascia ch’io pianga*”. But this is implausible not just because of the text but also given the roots of the music in a sarabande, i.e., a dance that involves a typical sequence of particular kinds of steps and gestures. As such, the plausible tempo of any slow sarabande (as distinct from the faster version) come in at around *minim* = 72.<sup>17</sup> We might wish to argue over whether, in the case of Baroque music, dance tempos should determine the performance speed of non-dance numbers that are nevertheless based on dance rhythms: other issues surely come into play, including, of course, the text being set. But to repeat, there is no textual reason for a particularly slow reading of “*Lascia la spina*” either.

The same is true of “*Lascia ch’io pianga*” for all that it, too, seems to have been getting slower and slower over recent years: an extreme example is provided by Joyce DiDonato’s version on her 2016 album, *In War and Peace*, which falls off the bottom end of the metronome (*minim* = 40, and slower at times).<sup>18</sup> One can see why the “slow lament” reading of the aria has gained ground: the verb *piangere* appears to demand it, as do the text’s references to harsh fate, grief, and suffering. However, matters are quite complicated here in Handel’s opera. Almirena has been captured by Armida and is chained up in the witch’s magic garden. Rinaldo has come to rescue her, but he, too, is caught in Armida’s snares, this time seduced by her charms. Armida’s former lover, Argante—the Saracen king of Jerusalem—reacts jealously to Armida’s fickleness. But he comes across Almirena and is immediately attracted to her. He offers to

<sup>16</sup> Compare, for example, accessed February 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhNRWduBPmY>, from a performance in 1998. There are other, later examples on YouTube.

<sup>17</sup> Rebecca Harris-Warrick, “Interpreting Pendulum Markings for French Baroque Dances”, in *Historical Performance*, Vol. 6 (1993), 9–22.

<sup>18</sup> Accessed February 2017, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrJTmpt\\_43hg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrJTmpt_43hg). One modern singer who seems to get closer to the right tempo is Barbra Streisand (accessed February 2017, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X\\_cs9-pfSPI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_cs9-pfSPI)) for all that her voice is clearly lacking in other respects—which of course may be one reason why she takes it faster than the norm, though I am inclined also to trust Streisand’s impeccable dramatic and musical instincts.

free her from her bonds if she will reciprocate his affection. Almirena resists: she wants to be left alone, or if Argante releases her it should be out of pity, not love. Here, then, the operative word, at least at the beginning of the aria, is not *pianga* but, rather, the imperative: *Lascia*.

It is not unusual for aria texts to begin with strong grammatical constructions starting with verbal imperatives or their nominal equivalents: vocatives. They create a rhetorical change of register to be matched by the move from recitative into a more forceful musical mode. But “*Lascia ch’io pianga*” is a little odd in other ways because the aria comes in the middle of the scene rather than at its end. This seems unusual in terms of what we regard as the exit-aria convention typical of *opera seria*, though it is not uncommon in earlier Baroque opera, and Handel’s *Rinaldo* sits on the cusp between older and newer forms of operatic design.<sup>19</sup> Its position within the scene rather than at its end, however, emphasizes still more its rhetorical function over any apparent emotional one: rather than collapsing into inarticulate floods of tears, Almirena continues to argue quite rationally with Argante against his protestations of love.

If this were not complicated enough, another layer is added by the English translation included in the printed libretto of *Rinaldo* issued for its premiere in London in 1711. For “*Lascia ch’io pianga*” the translation reads:<sup>20</sup>

Permit the wretched to complain  
Of their unhappy fate;  
The loss of liberty’s a pain  
That shou’d our sighs create;  
When you wou’d comfort an afflicted mind,  
Pity not Love, shou’d make you kind.

Publishing dual-language librettos (with Italian and English on facing pages) was standard practice for opera in London in this period, allowing audiences that did not understand Italian to follow the action: the verse for recitative tended to be translated into free-rhymed iambic pentameters, whereas the arias would be set apart by being in regular rhyme and mixed meters—in the present case, two tetrameter-plus-trimeter pairs, then a pentameter plus a tetrameter (rhyming *ababcc*). This preserves poetic distinctions that are also present in the Italian, with the recitative in free-

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<sup>19</sup> When Handel revised *Rinaldo* for performance in London in 1731, he did indeed switch the text around to make “*Lascia ch’io pianga*” an exit aria.

<sup>20</sup> *Rinaldo: An Opera As It Is Performed at the Queen’s Theatre in London*, (London: Tho. Howlatt, 1711), 28–29 (I standardized the orthography).

rhyming *versi sciolti* (mixing eleven- and seven-syllable lines) and the arias in some more regular meter and rhyme: thus “*Lascia ch’io pianga*” is in two stanzas of five-syllable lines, each stanza ending with typical *verso tronco*.<sup>21</sup> But the evident mismatch between the Italian (see Table 1) and this translation requires some explanation.

The sporadic course of Italian, or Italian-style, opera in London prior to Handel’s arrival there did not run smooth: the failures outnumbered the successes, and its financial circumstances remained precarious for those investing in the theatre.<sup>22</sup> Mounting Handel’s *Rinaldo* was clearly a matter of some anxiety for Aaron Hill in terms of catering to a market at least part of which was ambivalent over accepting the foreign product. Hill used the preface to the libretto to explain his strategy in what he described as a “hazardous” undertaking, identifying two particular deficiencies that, he felt, had inhibited the success of Italian opera in England:

First; That they had been compos’d for Tastes and Voices, different from those who were to sing and hear them on the English Stage; And Secondly, That wanting [i.e., lacking] the Machines and Decorations, which bestow so great a Beauty on their Appearance, they have been heard and seen to very considerable Disadvantage.

Therefore Hill sought to kill two birds with one stone:

At once to remedy both these Misfortunes, I resolv’d to frame some Dramma [*sic*], that, by different Incidents and Passions, might afford the Musick Scope to vary and display its Excellence, and fill the Eye with more delightful Prospects, so at once to give Two Senses equal Pleasure.

But Hill also did something more. In addition to providing the scenario (or more) for the opera which the Italian poet Giacomo Rossi then turned into a libretto, he also did what was presented as an English translation of Rossi’s text published for the benefit of his audience. At times he did so literally enough, but at others his text deviated significantly from it.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> For these typical poetic structures, see Tim Carter, *Understanding Italian Opera*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 8–11.

<sup>22</sup> Dean and Knapp, *Handel’s Operas, 1704–1726*, 140–50. Amy Dunagin, “Secularization, National Identity, and the Baroque: Italian Music in England, 1660–1711” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2014), 181–237, provides a more recent overview, also citing the main literature.

<sup>23</sup> Hill acknowledged in his preface to the libretto the deviations of his English text from the Italian, but here he blamed them on Rossi’s choice of words being “so sounding and so rich in sense” that Hill lacked the “power to reach the force of his

Hill's handling of "Lascia ch'io pianga" is one of several examples of such deviation. The Italian text is written in the first-person—"Lascia ch'io pianga"—even as Almirena addresses Argante (the recipient of the imperative: *Lascia*). Throughout the aria, Almirena also speaks about her own condition: in chains and wishing to be freed out of pity. But Hill's English translation turns Almirena's request into a more generic moral about appropriate male behaviour when confronting "wretched" women (a plural "their") in distress, also directed at a "you" who is both specific (Argante) and general (the audience): "When you wou'd comfort an afflicted mind / Pity not Love, shou'd make you kind." As a result, for any reader of the English translation in the opera house "Lascia ch'io pianga" would not have been read as a personal statement from an afflicted Almirena: instead it was a maxim for how good men should behave in a given circumstance.

This forced re-reading prompts a number of important questions about the moral, didactic, and political purposes of opera in early eighteenth-century London as designed specifically for English audiences. More to my present point, however, it also reflects the aforementioned anxieties over the genre as it was imported from Italy. They were not just a matter of language, but also involved the canons of verisimilitude and dramatic propriety that still held sway in English drama, and which were clearly violated by operas that, among other things, involved singing from beginning to end.<sup>24</sup> However, songs did have various acceptable functions in English plays and, still more, in what we now call semi-operas: one of them was, precisely, to emphasize generic maxims of the kind created by the translation (but not the original) of "Lascia ch'io pianga". The terms of that translation also seem to move away from an emotional commonplace in favour of what English audiences appear to have preferred in their dramas: something approaching the sublime. Scholars have already noted that in designing *Rinaldo*, Aaron Hill drew significantly on English dramatic traditions, in particular by way of George Granville's *The British Enchanters, or No Magick Like Love*, staged at the Haymarket Theatre in

original". In fact, there is some debate as to whether Hill translated Rossi or Rossini; see Curtis Price, "English Traditions in Handel's *Rinaldo*", in *Handel: Tercentenary Collection*, edited by Stanley Sadie and Anthony Hicks, (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1987), 120–35. However, the differences between the two versions are most unlikely to stem from mere matters of translation, and my guess is that the English one quite clearly re-reads the Italian rather than vice versa.

<sup>24</sup> Compare James A. Winn, "Heroic Song: A Proposal for a Revised History of English Theater and Opera, 1656–1711", in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Winter 1996–97), 113–37.

1706.<sup>25</sup> But he seems to have continued by playing a neat double-game in the printed libretto: audiences following the Italian would view the work as something approaching a straightforward opera in the Continental manner, whereas those reading the English translation would see it as somehow closer to a particularly English dramatic genre. Hill could thereby continue his appeal to both sides of a market that might find common ground to approve of Italian opera, if for quite different reasons. There were not the same constraints when Handel revised *Rinaldo* for performance in London in 1731: Samuel Humphreys provided a new English translation of the libretto that was far more faithful to the Italian.<sup>26</sup>

None of this has much bearing on the current slowed-down versions of “*Lascia ch’io pianga*”. They have made their impact felt, however, in perhaps the strangest aspect of the reception of Handel’s aria: in art-house cinema, often erotic in kind.<sup>27</sup> In his *Antichrist* of 2009, the Danish director Lars von Trier used a very slow version (sung by Tuva Semmingsen with the Barokksolistene) for the film’s prologue. Here a husband and wife are making love in a shower while their young toddler son, left unattended, escapes his cot and falls out of a window to a tragic death that sets in train the horror story of the main film: the protagonists descend into guilt-ridden psychiatric disorder manifested in sadomasochistic fetishism. Von Trier was clearly fascinated with this scene and its music: he made explicit reference to it in the second “volume” of his mammoth *Nymphomaniac* (2013), which created scandals at the 2014 Venice and Berlin Film Festivals for its explicit sex scenes. A similar erotic charge—if in a slightly less R-rated context—is clear in Bo Widerberg’s Swedish film *All*

<sup>25</sup> This is the argument in Price, “English Traditions in Handel’s *Rinaldo*”; see also Amanda Eubanks Winkler, “Music and Politics in George Granville’s *The British Enchanters*”, in *Queen Anne and the Arts*, edited by Cedric Reverand, (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2014), 187–204.

<sup>26</sup> *Rinaldo: opera da rappresentarsi nel Regio Teatro di Hay-Market; Revised, with Many Additions, by the Author, and Newly Done into English by Mr. Humphreys*, (London: Tho. Wood, 1731). ‘*Lascia ch’io pianga*’ is translated (pp. 28–29) as “Ah! Leave me to the last relief / Of tears, to utter all my grief, / And let me, thus by Fortune crost, / Lament the liberty I’ve lost. // Compassion only can propose / The remedy for all my woes, / And this regret, you utter here, / Should prove by pity ’tis sincere.”

<sup>27</sup> A rough list includes *Sex, Lies and Renaissance* (originally titled *Fanny Hill*; Gerry O’Hara, 1983); *All Things Fair* (Bo Widerberg, 1995); *L.I.E.* (Michael Cuesta, 2001); *Antichrist* (Lars von Trier, 2009); *Nymphomaniac* (Lars von Trier, 2013); *The Waiting Game* (Timothy David Mitchell, 2014); *The Brand New Testament* (Jaco Van Dormael, 2015); and the Golden Raspberry-nominated parody, *Fifty Shades of Black* (Michael Tiddes, 2016).

*Things Fair* of 1995. Here “Lascia ch’io pianga” (sung by Lesley Garrett) underscores the burgeoning of an illicit relationship between a schoolteacher and her teenage student, and one that will lead to a tragic end.<sup>28</sup>

Bo Widerberg’s treatment of “Lascia ch’io pianga” clearly sought to capture some presumed sensuality within the piece. The film *Farinelli*, released the year before, shifted that sensuality back into Handel’s time, and even suggested that it somehow conformed to the intention of the composer. It was a wholly anachronistic gesture in historical terms, and also in musical ones given that the aria must have sounded very differently on the London stage in 1711. Some might wish to celebrate the aria’s semiotic polyvalency much as we can revel in those performances of “Nessun dorma” in talent shows across the world: opera has moved out of its supposedly elitist niche to become a part of broad-based popular culture.<sup>29</sup> Certainly, musicologists wagging stern fingers in some manner of reproach are unlikely to stem the tide, and they probably would not wish to do so. My own historical and even musical instincts do rebel at times, however: I am left with a lingering feeling that we really should argue the benefits of putting these arias detached from time, place, and purpose back where they belong.

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<sup>28</sup> Accessed February 2017, <https://youtu.be/igyZORnkNAk>.

<sup>29</sup> Compare Marcia J. Citron, *When Opera Meets Film*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

# CHAPTER TWO

## POCKET OPERA, THE NEW DISCIPLINE AND PUBLIC SPACE: THE INTERMEDIA COMPOSER BRIGITTA MUNTENDORF AND “PRACTICAL AESTHETICS” KARL KATSCHTHALER

The first decade of the twenty-first century has seen a resurgence of the debate on art’s complex relationship with society and politics. Involvement within the worlds of art and culture and similarly within practice, prove aesthetics and politics are no longer seen as distinct areas but rather linked in a comprehensive concept of political art; for example, Jacques Rancière’s *The Politics of Aesthetics*.<sup>1</sup> In the visual arts this practical turn of aesthetics was triggered by the traumatic event that we refer to with the three digits: “9/11”—an historical event that for Jill Bennett “manifested [in art and writing] as a phenomenological shift: a watershed.”<sup>2</sup> This watershed was a shift away from the aesthetics of the “great work” representing the event, towards “an aesthetics of process”<sup>3</sup> and relations. Bennett condenses this idea of “practical aesthetics” into three principles: contemporaneity, transdisciplinarity and desmology. Contemporaneity means “privileging the event” which is conceived as “an indeterminate entity in formation.”<sup>4</sup> Transdisciplinarity because the aesthetic process is

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, (London; New York: Continuum, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Jill Bennett, *Practical Aesthetics: Events, Affects and Art after 9/11*, (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 18.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 27.

to be studied “in an inherently unbounded global field.”<sup>5</sup> Finally, desmology, a notion borrowed from Michel Serres, covers the shift of emphasis “away from the object *per se* to its dynamic relations: to process and method - to the means of connecting.”<sup>6</sup>

In the field of music, several concepts of contemporaneity have been developed since 2000; some are still controversially discussed today. New Conceptualism was promoted first of all by the composer Johannes Kreidler (during a lecture held at Darmstädter Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in 2012), and is associated with the idea of the digital revolution by philosopher Harry Lehmann.<sup>7</sup> Lehmann also describes *New Conceptualism* using notions of “relational music”<sup>8</sup> and “Gehalt-aesthetic turn”<sup>9</sup> for a kind of music that in contrast to “absolute” music preserves its reference to the “extra-musical” world. The highlighting of music’s relatedness to the extra-musical world surrounding both the composer and the recipient has been discussed under the heading *Diesseitigkeit* [worldliness] by musicologists and composers; particularly by members of the composers’ collective *stock11* like Michael Maierhof, who also uses the notion of “aesthetics of the everyday”,<sup>10</sup> Maximilian Marcoll, Hannes Seidl, and Martin Schüttler.<sup>11</sup> Recently *stock11*’s Jennifer Walshe published a manifesto for what she calls “*The New Discipline*”. The German New Music journal *MusikTexte* republished it, along with contributions by several other composers and an editorial by Walshe herself.<sup>12</sup> In this editorial, a threefold awareness is expressed.

One is an awareness of the relation between the actions of musicians in the concert situation, and social structures and roles, in particular those of gender and race:

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>7</sup> Harry Lehmann, *Die digitale Revolution der Musik: eine Musikphilosophie*, (Mainz: Schott, 2012), 8.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 115–126.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 90–94.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Maierhof, “Die Würde einer Tupperdose,” in *Positionen: Texte zur aktuellen Musik*, 76 (2008), 28–30.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Schüttler, “Diesseitigkeit,” *Positionen: Texte zur aktuellen Musik*, 93 (2012): 6–9; Gisela Nauck, “Dekonstruktion und Gegenentwurf: Zum Konzept der Diesseitigkeit in der Musik von Martin Schüttler,” *Positionen: Texte zur aktuellen Musik*, 101 (2014), 29–32.

<sup>12</sup> Jennifer Walshe, “The New Discipline,” *MusikTexte: Zeitschrift für Neue Musik*, 149 (2016): 3–25. The original English versions of the contributions can be downloaded from the journal’s website, accessed 7.10.2016, <http://musiktexte.de/MusikTexte-149/en>.

An oboist playing *forte* against a violin playing *piano* is not the same as a male performer singing loudly over a female performer, or a white female performer talking loudly over a performer of colour. Different people, with their different bodies, mean vastly different things, are read in vastly different ways.<sup>13</sup>

The medium of connection between the world of the concert and the social world are the bodies of the musicians. Hence awareness of the performativity of musical actions in relation to social structures results in awareness of corporeality. Walshe concludes her manifesto-like statement with a call that corporeality be taken into account as an intrinsic part of music:

Perhaps we are finally willing to accept that the bodies playing the music are part of the music, that they're present, they're valid and they inform our listening whether subconsciously or consciously. That it's not too late for us to have bodies.<sup>14</sup>

This valorisation of corporeality in music is shared by several contributors discussing Walshe's *New Discipline*. Uwe Rasch writes about "music as physical exercise" and makes the case for the recognition of physical movements as parameters of musical composition.<sup>15</sup> Both the awareness of corporeality and the awareness of social performativity combine in the awareness of the theatricality of musical action. Matthew Shlomowitz describes the consequence of this awareness of theatricality in musical thinking:

I think most interesting performative compositions expand musical thinking into the domains of the visual, choreographic and theatrical through bringing out performative qualities already inherent in music making (as in the silent movement from [Mauricio Kagel's] *Sonant*)<sup>16</sup>

The valorisation of the visual and the theatrical in music is of course not totally new in music history, yet it goes beyond the example of Mauricio Kagel's work, which is recognised by Walshe. Additionally, her editorial credits *Dada*, *Fluxus*, and *Situationism* as precursors of *The New*

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Uwe Rasch, "Musik als Leibesübung," *MusikTexte: Zeitschrift für Neue Musik*, 149 (2016), 9–10.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew Shlomowitz, "Der Spieler als Automat", ibid, 16–17, 17.