Rare Libretti for operas in Spain under Farinelli’s Directions

Farinelli, original name Carlo Broschi, (born Jan. 24, 1705, Andria, Kingdom of Naples [Italy]—died July 15, 1782, Bologna), celebrated Italian castrato singer of the 18th century and one of the greatest singers in the history of opera.

Farinelli’s impact on Opera in 18th Century Spain

The importance of Farinelli’s role as “impresario” in bringing serious opera to Madrid is made clear from several sources:

During the nearly 25 years Farinelli lived at the Spanish court, he produced a “long series of sumptuously staged Italian opera. Overall, the Farinelli productions in Madrid anticipated tendencies that surfaced only later elsewhere in Europe.” His departure from Madrid ended “what was surely
the most brilliant chapter for Italian opera in eighteenth century Spain” (DelDonna and Polzonetti, 260).

“In 1747, [Farinelli] was appointed artistic director of the theatres at Buen Retiro and Aranjuez marking the beginning of a decade of extraordinary productions and extravaganzas in which he collaborated extensively with Metastasio.” Here he produced 23 operas and serenatas between 1747 and 1756. After the death of his patron Ferdinand VI in 1759, he was asked to leave Spain (Macy, 151).

“The man responsible for raising the profile of Spanish music at the courts of Philip V and Ferdinand VI was none other than Carlo Broschi (popularly known as Farinelli) perhaps the most famous castrato singer of the Baroque. . . . When Ferdinand VI succeeded to the throne, Farinelli was [made] director of the theatres at the two main royal palaces . . . in the space of 12 years Farinelli the impresario transformed Madrid from a musical backwater into one of the foremost centres of opera in Europe, attracting the finest composers, librettists and singers from Europe, whilst also encouraging the development of the home-grown, Spanish theatrical tradition” (Heighes)

http://www.classicalacarte.net/Production/Production_10_14/Archiv4792050_IRR10_14.htm.


Libretti Available


While the comedia was first created in 1699, it is here transformed into an Italian, opera-like theatrical, far from its original intent, with the addition of three musical elements suitable for the latter part of the 18th century. The three added sections are 1) Loa Heroyca. Feliz el Merito Reyna si la Dicha le Acompaña (pp. 1-17); 2) El Gallego, Intermedio primero (pp. 65-86); 3) Saynete Los Forasteros (pp. 139-158).
“From the form of the drama to that of the proper Italian opera was but a step.”

- Ticknor

Full description:

www.goldenlegend.com/pdfs/bances.pdf

2.
Metastasio, Pietro. El Siroe: opera dramatica para representarse en el Real Coliseo del Buen-Retiro por orden de Su Magestad Catholica . . . D. Fernando VI en este año MDCCCLII.

Libretto in Italian and Castilian on facing pages: Quarto (5 1/2 x 8”). Contemporary publisher’s binding for Buen Retiro libretti of this period. Worn at corners, scuffed, spine heel and crown chipped. Internally clean and fine.

Overall the Madrid 1752 El Siroe is significant for several reasons, in spite of the often used dramatic devices of lovers separated then reunited after adversary, of women disguised, and of an evil ruler who must be overthrown: First, the handsome subject matter of a heroic, Persian prince was important and popular in the 18th century. While this opera fell out of favor in the 19th century, it is now being revived with recordings and performance from different settings: Secondly, if one wants to study the impact of Farinelli on Spanish opera, El Siroe is a good place to do it: Finally, the development of opera forms in the New World, especially in Mexico and Peru in this period, was indebted to opera from Spain, which was popular among the nobility and government officials in the Spanish colonies. In the future, as more data is found as to the actual performances, operas like Siroe may find their place in the transatlantic movement of Spanish music.

Full description:

www.goldenlegend.com/pdfs/siroe.pdf

3.

This staging of Armida placada is important because of the spectacular visual effects that illuminated the theatre, which were unequaled in other operas during the entire history of the theatre at Buen Retiro.
From the libretto and from several sources we have excellent accounts of these effects. Also, we are able to understand an important change in setting and structure of the last scene, with a “Licensa” replacing the planned ending by Migliavacca (who was called “a great booby” by the original libretti Metastasio).

Full description:

www.goldenlegend.com/pdfs/armida.pdf

4. Mirandola, Giovanni Francesco Pico della and others. **Il vello d'oro conquistato.** Composicion dramatica para representarse en el real Coliseo del Buen-Retiro festefandose el feliz dia natalicio de su magestad Catholica ey Rey nuestro Señor D. Fernando VI. Replicado por order du su Magestad misma. El Año de MDCC.XLIX (1749)

**Libretto in Italian and Spanish for a Festival Opera on the Subject of Jason and the Golden Fleece, with a strong possibility of a New World connection**

**Il vello d'oro conquistato/Il Vello D’Oro** was a Christmas festival performance in 1748 and then again in 1749 for guests of Ferdinand VI of Spain (1713-1759). The opera is set in Colchis on the far side of the Black Sea, where Jason has sailed from Iolcus with his Argonauts to find the “vellon de oro” (Golden Fleece). The play features chorus plus seven characters, including Medéa and Jason with their love story. The actors are named, including the beloved Venetian singer Teresa Castellini (in the role of Calciope) who sang in the 1748 performance and also when the work was performed in the theatres of Madrid.

Full description:

www.goldenlegend.com/pdfs/jason.pdf

Each item priced individually, but, while they remain available, the four libretti for $7500.00

Golden Legend, Inc.
449 South Beverly Drive
Beverly Hills, CA 90212
310 385 1903
books@goldenlegend.com