



### **Three highly important libretti for Roman Carnival 1719-20**

**Amore e Maestà**, drama per musica da rappresentarsi nella Sala dell' Illmo Sig. Conte d'Alibert nel Carnevale dell' anno 1720. Dedicato Alla Maesta' di Giacomo III Re della Gran Bertagna &c. Rome: Stamperia e Bernabò, 1720. Sartori 1612.

*For carnival in Rome 1720 The First Italian opera to have a tragic ending, changed to a happy ending for carnival. Dedicated to James III*

12mo. 1 leaf of title, verso blank; 3pp. dedication signed Antonio Alibert; 2 1/2pp. argument; 1/2p. imprimatur; 1p. attori; 1p. mutazioni di scene; pp. 11-65 text; 3 leaves blank. Collation: A-B12, C9 + 3 blanks. A very good copy, nearly fine. The cast list names the actors, which is quite rare for operas of this period. Statira was played by Giovanni Ossi; Arsace by Gaetano Bernestat.

Composer: Francesco Gasparini (1661-1727) was born in Camaiore, near Lucca. He studied in Rome with Corelli and Pasquini. His first important opera, *Roderico* (1694), was produced there. In 1702, he went to Venice and became one of the leading composers in the city. Gasparini was also a teacher, the instructor of Marcello, Quantz, and Domenico Scarlatti. He was musical director of the Ospedale della Pietà, where he employed Antonio Vivaldi as a violin master. He also wrote a treatise on the harpsichord (1708).

Librettist: Antonio Salvi (1664-1724), Florentine poet. Salvi wrote 25 librettos, mainly tragedies, and many of them drawn from French classical dramas by Corneille, Racine, Capistrone, and others. His works were set by leading Italian composers of the era, including Alessandro Scarlatti, Petri, Vivaldi, and Galuppi. **Amore e Maestà** (1715) was one of his most frequently performed works, sometimes set as *Arsace*.

Set designer: Francesco Bibiena (1659-1739). The “mutazioni di Scene” describes three scenes in Act I; four in Act II, and three in Act III. In addition, the stage directions throughout describe costumes and further details of the scenery.

**Amore e Maestà** is based on the extremely popular French tragedy by Thomas Corneille *Le Comte d'Essex* (Paris: Ribou, 1678). The subject is the arrest, trial, and execution of Robert Devereux (1565-1601), 2nd Earl of Essex, a favorite of Elizabeth I. He was executed at age 34, in spite of Elizabeth's love for him, for attempting to take control of the. **Amore e Maestà** was popular all over Italy, with different settings through 1768. An important tragedy, it has been called the forerunner of *Didone*, *Aida*, and *Wozzeck*.

The libretto was written in 1715 Florence by Antonio Salvi. Instead of an English setting, the scene is transferred to Persia, as was fashionable in Italian opera at the time; however, the historical subjects remain firmly English. **Amore e Maestà** is, according to one source, “the first presentation of a tragedy with an entirely unhappy ending on the Italian musical stage” (Strohm, 171).

For the Roman Carnival production in 1720, the tragic ending is actually eliminated. The plot ends happily, rewritten by an anonymous Roman (probably an academic) poet who wished to keep within the spirit of Carnival by providing a happy ending in which Mitrane saves Arsace (Devereux) then conducts him to Statira (Elizabeth), who marries him. In spite of a happy ending to an otherwise tragic plot, the Roman librettist testifies to the libretto's reputation as a genuine and even “*nobilissima tragedia*” (Strohm, 171-3).

**Amore e Maestà** is dedicated to James Francis Edward, Prince of Wales (1688-1766), also known as James III of England—the “Old Pretender” whose ancestor, James Stuart (King James I of England) had inherited the crown from Elizabeth I in 1603, just two years after the alleged events of *Le Comte d'Essex*, “where the anticipation of the Queen's unhappy death is the main theme of the tragic ending” (Strohm, 173).

The exiled and peripatetic Stuart court of James III settled in Rome between 1719 and 1726. The Jacobite court was particularly interested in Italian opera, although very little is known about the concerts which took place between 1719 and 1726 (ibid). James III became the major patron of the new opera house, the Teatro Aliberti, where he held three boxes. He was so important a figure that operas at Aliberti could not start before he arrived. A few operas at that theatre were dedicated to him and his wife Clementina, of which **Amore e Maestà** is the first.\* It is clear that by 1726 the Stuarts had a significant impact, as Farinelli had already sung in four operas dedicated to the Stuarts in 1723 and 1724 at the Aliberti.

Not only was James III an important patron at Teatro Aliberti, he also was an influence on Italian opera that grew popular in England, with the founding of the Royal Academy of Music in London, 1719. Nine of Handel's operas from the period of 1722-37 were settings of libretti previously performed in Rome in 1719-27, seven of which had been specifically dedicated to James III and Clementina\* (Corp, 2003, pp. 78-91). The libretti of operas previously performed in Rome continued to be set to music by Handel and other composers in London, and singers with known Jacobite connections, notably Farinelli, continued to perform in the English capital (Corp, 2011, p. 275).

\*The operas at d'Aliberti dedicated to James III were Gasparini's **Amore e Maestà** (1720), Lotti and Porpora's *Artaserse* (1722); Predieri's *Sofonisba* (1722); Pollarolo's *Cosroe* (1723); and Vinci's *Farnace* (1724), *Didone abbandonata* (1726), and *Gismondo re di Polonia* (1727). Seven additional operas were dedicated to Clementina. All these editions are rare, with a few sparsely appearing in OCLC North America.

Bound in a charming, contemporary Roman binding that reflects the gaiety and brilliance of Roman carnival time itself. Brown morocco, highly decorated with gilt floral and vase designs, gilt spine and edge rules. On each cover is a crown device held up by cherubs; below them is an armorial device with five stars indicating ownership by José Ribeiro da Fonseca (1690-1752). Above the stars is a four-columned structure that may symbolize a Roman building, perhaps a library. Pink silk pastedown with gilt floral sprays that incorporate bird and wolf images. Lacking front and rear free matching endpapers. Spine darkened with small spots of decay. Back cover shows leather decay. . Small stain on armorial of upper cover, spine darkened, minor defects (worming?) top and bottom of spine.

Provenance:

José Ribeiro da Fonseca was a minister general of the O.F.M., who founded or greatly built up the Bibl. Aracelitana in Rome. He became Bishop of Porto and was received into the Franciscan Order in the convent of Ara Coeli at Rome in 1712.

References: Corp, Edward, ed. *Stuart Court in Rome: the Legacy of Exile* (2003); ---. *The Stuarts in Italy, 1719-1766: A Royal Court in Permanent Exile* (2011); Strohm, Reinhard. *Dramma per Musica* (1997).

## WITH ---

**Tito Sempronio Gracco.** Dramma per musica di Silvio Stampiglia tra gli Arcadi Palemone Licurio, Poeta di Sua Maestà cesarea, e cattolica Carlo VI, imperator de' Romani. da rappresentarsi nella sala dell'mo sign. Federico Capranica nel carnevale dell'anno 1720; dedicato all'illma., ed eccma. signora la signora D. Teresa Borromei Albani. Roma: Si vendono a Pasquino nella libreria di Pietro Leone all'insegna di S. Gio. di Dio: Nella stamperia del Bernabò, 1720. Sartori 23266. Originally staged February 1702, Naples, Teatro San Bartolomeo, with libretto by Silvio Stampiglia, music by Alessandro Scarlatti, and scenery by Ferdinando Galli-Bibiena (Sartori 23265).

***Opera for Carnival in Rome 1720. Music revised by Alessandro Gaspare Scarlatti. Scenery by "Il Canaletto". Nothing remains of his designs but this libretto***

12mo. Leaf of title, verso blank; 2pp. dedication signed Bernardo Robatti; 1p. Argomento e protesta; 2pp. Mutazioni di Scene,\* imprimatur and listing of designer and choreographer; 1p. Interlocutori; pp. 9-65 text; 2pp. corrections of text. Collation: A-B12, C10 + 2 blanks. Song lyrics last leaf. A few stains, very clean copy. Binding as above. Lacking front and rear free matching endpapers. Spine darkened with small spots of decay. Back cover show leather decay.

Libretto by Silvio Stampiglia. Music by Alessandro Scarlatti. In this version, there are supplementary arias (in Act III, scene 2) and replacement duet (in Act III, scene 4), [2]pp. at end. Scenery by Bernardo Canale and sons. Choreography by Antonio Franceschini; Giuseppe and Euberto Ignatio L'Oyselet, maestro di ballo dell'ecc.ma Casa Colonna. L'Oysele also choreographed *Turno Aricino*, the other opera for 1720 Carnival at Teatro Capranica.

Opera seria in three acts. The play recounts the military episode during the second Punic War (212 BC), in which Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus (consul 215 and 213 BC; killed in ambush in 212 BC) attacks allies of Carthage. After resting a few days in Cumae, Gracchus leads a surprise attack on Carthaginian allies camped in Cumae and then advances to Hama a few miles away while the enemy is participating in a festival. Over 2000 of Gracchus's enemies are killed. Along with the loosely historical fact based on Livy, by adding women from the vanquished cities, the opera weaves a "tale of intrigue and filled with lyricism, gallantry and love much like French tragedies of the last century" (Signorelli, 333).

**Tito Sempronio Gracco** is dedicated to Don Carlo Albani (a nephew of the pope) and his wife Donna Teresa Borromei Albini. This, along with the other opera featured during the 1720 Carnival *Turno Aricino* (L. Stampiglia; M. Scarlatti; S. Canale) show different aspects of Roman republican virtue and celebrates the Albani clan with its ancient lineage (Dill, 42-3).

Librettist Silvio Stampiglia (1664-1725) was an Italian poet, librettist, and founding member of the Accademia dell'Arcadia under the pen name of Palemone Licurio. Stampiglia was born in Civita Lavinia and died in Naples. Both Stampiglia and Apostolo Zeno are considered proponents of a modernized libretto based on a dignified use of language and rules of classical rhetoric.

Composer: Pietro Alessandro Gaspare Scarlatti (1660-1725). Known especially for his operas and chamber cantatas, Scrlatti is considered the founder of the Neapolitan School of opera. He was the father of two other influential composers: Domenico Scarlatti and Pietro Filippo Scarlatti.

Strohm notes, “Of particular interest must be the (duets and quartets) in Scarlatti’s scores . . . The original version of *Tito Sempronio Gracco* (1702) had contained one quartet and four duets; the 1720 version adds another quartet . . . and transforms one duet into yet another quartet.” Strohm further adds that these are “splendid ensembles” (53).

According to Dent, “it was at the Teatro Capranica in Rome that produced some of Scarlatti’s finest operas . . . among which *Tito Sempronio Gracco* and *Turno Aricino* were revived in 1720 with so much new music that they may be counted as new operas” (65).

### Scenery and “Il Canaletto”

Bernardo Canale and his two sons Giovanni Antonio and Cristoforo worked between 1716 and 1718 as scenographers for the Venetian theatres of San Cassiano and Sant’Angelo where they designed works composed by Pollarolo, Chelleri, and Vivaldi. Then Bernardo and his young son Antonio (1697-1768) went to Rome in 1719-20 to produce sets for Alessandro Scarlatti’s *Turno Aricino* and *Tito Sempronio Gracco* performed at the Teatro Capranica.

Because Antonio (soon known as “Il Canaletto”) became the most important landscape and view painter of the period (perhaps of any period). He had started off his professional career as a theatre artist. It would be interesting and revealing to study his early theatre designs (if only we could!). However, according to several sources that drawings or written records of the theatre work of Antonio (who shortly thereafter turned away from stage work) is non-existent. Pedrocco laments, “Little else is known about the activity of Bernardo [Canale] and his sons for the theatre. Especially lamentable is the fact that no drawings survive to testify to their work in the field, nor any literary descriptions of their designs, nor any literary descriptions of their designs for the stage” (73). Reinhard Strohm confirms this lack of original artifact. “Too little is known about these, or about the style and significance of costume designs” (11).

This libretto then become a strategic document that can be studied, not only for the brief descriptions of sets and costumes that provide what little we actually know of the sets, but also for actions and speech that incorporates location and hints of mood. The importance of the libretto was recognized by the organizers of the Canaletto exhibition in Rome in 2005: None of the “beautiful designs for the scenarios” is preserved, the “mutations of scenes”\* alone allow us to imagine the painting of the backdrops (Kowalczyk, 42).

\*The Mutazioni di Scene (p. 6) lists the settings for the three-act opera:

Act I: Set in a remote part of Hama where a “fiera solenne illuminata di notte con Cielo stellato e Tempio in un lato.”

Act II: The first scene is set in Sala Giardino con Tavola imbandita.  
The second in a Garden room

Act III: A room within a courtyard of a prison with four gates of four separate cells.  
In addition, there are further descriptions of the sets within the play:

III.iv: Cortile di Carceri con quattro Cancelli di ferro, dentro de quali separatamente stanno in maniera, che niuno di loro puo veder l'altro.

*[Courtyard of prison with four Iron Gates, inside the actors stand separately, so that none of them can see each other.]*

Provenance: José Ribeiro da Fonseca (see above)

References: Dent, Edward J. *Alessandro Scarlatti: His Life and Works* (London: Edward Arnold, 1905); Dill, Charles. *Opera Remade, 1700-1750* (Routledge, 2017); Kowalczyk, Bożena Anna (curator). *Canaletto: il trionfo della veduta* (Silvana, 2005) (catalog) (the Rome exhibition held at Palazzo Giustiniani in 2005 presented the most important period of Canaletto's career: the twenty years between 1726-1746); Livy. *The History of Rome 1*, ed. George Baker. (London: Derby and Jackson, 1859), ch. XXXV-VIII; Pedrocco, Filippo. *Visions of Venice: Paintings of the 18th Century*. (I. B. Tauris, 2002); Signorelli, Pietro Napoli. *Storia critica de' teatri antichi et moderni libri III*. (Naples: Stamperia Simoniana, 1777); Strohn, op. cit.

## WITH --

Zeno, Apostolo. **Lucio Vero**, drama per musica, da rappresentarsi nel teatro dell'ill. sig. conte d'Alibert nel carnevale dell'anno 1719. Dedicata all'illustriss., et eccellentiss. signora d. Teresa Borromei. Rome: Gaetano Zenobj stampatore, e intagliatore si sua santità, 1719. Sartori 14501.

### ***Opera for Carnival in Rome 1719. With sumptuous sets by Ferdinando Galli-Bibiena, some drawings still exist***

12mo. 1p. title with emblem of lion holding a globe; 1p. imprimatur; 2pp. dedication signed Antonio d'Alibert; 1p. attori; 1p. mutazioni; 2pp. Argomento; pp. 9-70 text; 1p. correction. Collation: A-C12. Dampstains lower right corner first 5 leaves. Actors are identified: Lucio Vero: Francesco de Grandis; Lucilla: Giacinto Fontana; Vologases: Gaetano Berenstadt. Binding as above: very fresh except for some darkening to spine. Marbled pastedowns, lacking matching free endpapers.

Original production was Firenze, 1700 with music by Pollarolo and scenery by Giuseppe Orsoni (Sartori 14491). Our setting is based on the Napoli: Michele Luigi Mutio, 1707 libretti "con varianti e arie mutate." The text by Zeno was popular during most of the 18th century.\*

Opera seria with 19 arias in three acts performed for carnival in Rome, 1719. Lucius Verus emperor of Rome (130-169 AD) is made emperor on his promise to marry Lucilla, daughter of Marcus Aurelius. On campaign against the Parthians (164-5), Verus defeats Vologases IV, King of Parthia (d. 191) and attempts to marry Berenice who is wife of Vologases, instead of Lucilla. Lucilla follows Verus to Edessa. With the assistance of Flavius, ambassador of Marcus Aurelius, a rebellion is led to restore the kingdom to Vologases and then shame Verus from his amorous adventure.

The plot dynamics deal with the constancy of Lucilla's love in the face of great obstacles, a serious but happy theme suitable for carnival. The early-modern antecedents of this plot are unclear. Strohm suggests a French basis. We do know that another Zeno opera, *Ormisda* (1721), was based on Jean de Rotrou's last tragedy *Cosroè* (1624) (Lancaster II, 550-51).

The libretto is by Apostolo Zeno (1669-1750). Zeno is considered to be the most illustrious librettist of the period along with Metastasio (pseud. of Pietro Antonio Trapassi; 1698-1782), who became his successor as poet laureate to the imperial court of Vienna in 1718.\*\*

Music composed by Francesco Gasparini (1661-1727). Gasparini was a teacher whose students included Domenico Scarlatti. He was musical director of the Ospedale della Pietà, where he employed Antonio Vivaldi as a violin master. Ballets choreographed by Sebastiano di Scio (fl. 1720-40s), Maestro di Ballo del Elettore Palatino (worked at Manheim).

With sumptuous sets by Ferdinando Galli-Bibiena (1657-1743) that were begun in 1716 at the Molza theatre in Modena (Matroviti). The mutazioni di Scene describes in Act I: three scenes;

Act II: three scenes; Act III: five scenes. Plus stage placements in texte that elaborate on the costuming.

Some of the original preparatory scene drawings by Galli-Bibiena still exist, one in the Museu Nacional de art Antiga in Lisbon, executed in 1719, which is catalogued as "Amphitheater pompously decorated of the opera **Lucio Vero or the Vologeso** (first act, third scene)." The museum notes: "In the spectacular drawings produced by the Galli-Bibiena family, particularly those relating to the scenery created for operas, the magnificence and fantasy of the different elements, together with the complex spatial relationships, planes and structures, are organized into an ephemeral world of architectural capricci, which were greatly appreciated in the baroque period"

(<http://www.museudearteantiga.pt/collections/drawings-and-prints/magnificently-ornate-amphitheatre>).

A variation of the drawing is located in Milan: "Eseguito nel 1719 da Francesco Galli Bibiena in preparazione della scenografia con 'Anfiteatro pomposamente ornato' dell'opera **Lucio Vero** . . . (primo atto, scena terza)"

(<http://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/opere-arte/schede/4y010-27430/#>).

\***Lucio Vero** (1700), with music by C.F. Pollarolo, was Zeno's first major success at the Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo. It remained popular for most of the 18th century with numerous settings, but all based on Zeno's text. The best-known version, and the only one to be revived and recorded in the modern era, is *Il Vologeso* (1766), an opera with music by Niccolò Jommelli. The same libretto was also set by many other composers, including Antonio Sacchini and Davide Perez. It was set at least fifteen times under the title **Lucio Vero** and at least five under the title *Il Vologeso*. It was also set by Ariosti under the title *Lucio Vero, imperator di Roma* (1727), by Reinhard Keiser under the title *Lucius Verus* (1728), and by Davide Perez under the title *Berenice* (1762). In England, Handel composed *Lucio Vero imperator di Roma* based in part on Zeno's libretto on January 7, 1727.

\*\*Apostolo Zeno was a nobleman and scholar and a most important reformer of Italian literature. Zeno was among the very first reformers of the melodrama. He was followed by librettists from Metastasio onwards. His libretti were still being performed in the early 19th century and "the aesthetic system he devised conditioned Italian opera for fully a century after his death in 1750." (Brand and Pertile, 363). For a full discussion of Zeno's reforms see "Apostolo Zeon's *Teuzzone* and its French Models" in *Dramma per Musica: Italian Opera Seria of the Eighteenth Century* by Reinhard Strohm (1997) (121-133).

References: Brand, Peter and Lino Pertile, eds. *Cambridge History of Italian Literature* (1996); Matroviti, Anna Caccioli. *Biographical Dictionary of Italians* 51 (1998), [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/francesco-galli-bibiena\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/francesco-galli-bibiena_(Dizionario-Biografico)).

Price for the three items: \$8,000.00