HANDEL AND THREE PRIMA DONNAS: RECIPROCAL INFLUENCES,
A LECTURE RECITAL, TOGETHER WITH TWO RECITALS OF
SELECTED WORKS OF W. A. MOZART, F. SCHUBERT,
H. WOLF, R. STRAUSS, G. FAURE, C. DEBUSSY,
D. MOORE, AND OTHERS, AND OPERA ROLES BY
PLEYEL AND ROSSINI

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Doctor of Musical Arts

By

Mary Beth Armes, B. Mus., M. Mus.
Denton, Texas
May, 1974

The lecture recital was given April 1, 1974. Eighteenth-century accounts of the voices and performing styles of Francesca Cuzzoni, Faustina Bordoni, and Anna Strada del Pò were related to six opera arias written for them by George Frideric Handel. The arias, accompanied by harpsichord, violin, and violoncello, were performed with added original ornamentation.

In addition to the lecture recital two other public recitals and two opera roles were performed.

The first solo recital was on February 11, 1972, and included works by Mozart, Fauré, Rimsky-Korsakov, R. Strauss, Walton, Moore, and others.

The second solo recital, on October 15, 1973, included works by Porpora, Rameau, Handel, Wolf, Donizetti, Debussy, and Schubert.

The role of "Urgele" in the marionette opera Die Fee Urgele by Pleyel was performed in English on October 30 and 31, 1972, with the Collegium Musicum of North Texas State University. The role of "Clorinda" in Rossini's La Cenerentola was performed in English on November 26 and 28, 1972, with the Shreveport Symphony.
Tape recordings of all performances submitted as dissertation requirements are on deposit in the North Texas State University Library.
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**HANDEL AND THREE PRIMA DONNAS: RECIPROCAL INFLUENCES**

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Gold, Silver, and Pearls

An Evening of Song

Mary Beth Armes, Soprano

Constance Knox Carroll, Accompanist

Centenary College of Louisiana
School of Music
Faculty Recital Series

Hurley Music Building
Friday, February 11, 1972
at eight o’clock
Program

Exsultate, jubilate, K. V. 165 ........................................Mozart

Allegro: Exult, rejoice, O happy souls,
Let the heavens answer your songs with sweet music.

Recitativo: The lovely day brightens, already storms and clouds are fleeing
And a sudden calm has arisen for the just.
Dark night had been reigning everywhere
But now arise and rejoice, ye who have feared till now,
And, happy in the blessed dawn, make an offering of garlands and lilies.

Larghetto: O Crown of Virgins, grant us peace,
console the affections that make our hearts sigh.

Vivace: Alleluia!

Arpège (Albert Samain) ........................................Fauré

The soul of a flute is sighing deep in the melodious park;
Limpid is the shadow wherein one breathes your silent poem.
Languorous night, deluding night, placing the moon, jewel of the Orient
in your dreamy hair.
Sylva, Sylvie, and Sylvanire, fair ones with eyes of changing blue,
The star is mirrored in the fountains, go follow the paths of silver.
Go quickly, the hour is so short, to gather the hearts which are dying
of the dream of dying amidst your hair.

La Fée aux Chansons (Armand Silvestre) ........................Fauré

There was a fairy, extravagantly hatted with green growing things,
that ran among the bushes teaching the birds their songs in April.
When jays and linnet sang wrong notes the fairy whipped them on the wings,
to stimulate their zeal.
One morning in autumn she arrived and was surprised to see the woods deserted.
Her unfaithful friends had flown off with the swallows.
And all winter, the fairy, hatted in dead plants, and counting the moments,
composed romances in the immense forest for the next spring.

Vocalise-Etude ........................................Fauré

Notre Amour (Armand Silvestre) .................................Fauré

Our love is a light thing like the perfume that the wind
Takes from the tips of the ferns for us to breathe in dreaming.
Our love is a charming thing, like morning songs,
When there are no sorrows to lament, where there is the thrill of an uncertain hope.
Our love is a sacred thing, like the mysteries of the woods,
Where an unknown soul quivers, where the silences are eloquent.
Our love is an infinite thing, like the paths of the sunsets,
Where the sea, united to the sky, falls asleep beneath the inclining sun.
Our love is an eternal thing, as all that a victorious god
Has touched with the fire of his wing, as all that comes from the heart.

Hymn to the Sun (The Golden Cockerel) .......................Rimsky-Korsakov

Warned of danger by the golden rooster, old king Dodon and his armies
leave to ward off the invasion. Badly beaten, his grief is interrupted by the enemy, Queen Shemaka, singing:
"Greetings, O flaming sun rising from the Orient! Have you visited my
homeland? Ah, tell me of the fresh roses and bushes of burning lilies, of
the lovely birds reposing near the iris-bordered lakes!

"Does a maid still wait at her window with trembling heart, knowing she
loves her sweetheart when at last she sees him coming?"

The entranced Dodon decides to wed Shemaka, but the golden rooster kills
him!

INTERMISSION

Four Songs, Opus 68 (Clemens Brentano) .................Richard Strauss

Süsle, liebe Myrte

Rustle, dear little myrtle tree! How quiet it is in the world.
The moon, the star shepherd, drives the cloud-sheep to the fountain of light.
Sleep, my friend, until I am near you again.
Rustle, little myrtle tree, and dream in the starlight.
The turtledove coos her brood back home.
Quietly the cloud-sheep draw to the fountain of light
Sleep, my friend, until I am near you again.
Do you hear how the fountain rustles? Do you hear how the cricket chirps?
Quietly let us eavesdrop, blissfully dying in dreams!
Sleep, dream, fly. I'll wake you soon, and be happy!

Als mir dein Lied erklang

Your song resounded! I heard it, how it drew to the moon through the roses.
The butterfly you've turned into the pious bee.
My longing is to the rose since your song resounded to me.
Your song resounded! The nightingales moan the sweet swansong of my silence.
I must bemoan to the moon, the heavens, and the stars because I heard your song.
Your song resounded! Therefore no sound that whispered love
was in vain the whole spring. As you sang, the longing stream of my life
went down like a sunset. Your song!

Ich wollt ein Striusslein binden

I wanted to bring you a little bouquet, but the dark night came,
and there was no flower to be found.
Tears fell down my cheeks and into the clover.
A flower sprang up! I wanted to pick it for you, but it started to speak:
"Ah do me no harm! Be friendly, consider your own pain,
and let me not die before my time."
And had he not spoken thus, so alone in the garden,
I would have picked it for you, but now it must not be.
My sweetheart is away, I am so alone,
In love lives sorrow, and it cannot be otherwise.

Amor

At the fire sat the child Cupid, and he was blind.
He fans the flames with his little wings and smiles,
Fans and smiles, the sly child!
Ah, the child's wing burns. Cupid runs quickly,
Oh, how the flame torments him!
Fluttering his wings, he cries loudly;
Crying for help, the sly child escapes into the shepherdess' lap
And the shepherdess comforts the child Cupid, angry and blind.

Shepherdess, beware, your heart is aflame, you did not recognize the imp.
Look, the flame is growing quickly.
Beware of the sly child! Fan, smile, sly child.

Pippa's Song (Robert Browning) ......................Ned Rorem

The year's at the spring, And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven; The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing; The snail's on the thorn;
God's in His heaven, All's right with the world.

Through Gilded Trellises (Edith Sitwell) ..................William Walton

Through gilded trellises of the heat,
Dolores, Inez, Manuccia, Isabel, Lucia, Mock Time that flies.
Lovely bird, will you stay and sing?
Flirting your sheened wing,
Peck with your beak and cling to our balconies?
They flirt their fans, flaunting
'O silence enchanting as music!'
Then slanting their eyes, like gilded or
emerald grapes,
They take mantillas, capes,
Hiding their simian shapes.
Sighs each lady, 'Our spadille's done.'
Dance the quadrille from Hell's towers to Seville;
Surprise their siesta,' Dolores said.
Through gilded trellises of the heat,
Spangles pelt down through the tangles of bell flowers;
Each dangles her castanets,
Shutters fall while the heat mutters,
with sounds like a mandoline or tinkled tambourine...
Ladies, Time dies!

Nuptial Song (Anonymous 17th c. poet) ......................Hugo Weisgall

Be nimble, quick, away! Bells are ringing, Maids are singing,
The priest for you doth stay. An holiday, a happy day, a merry day!
The last of nothing, the first of something; Be nimble, quick away!
No haste, but good, yet stay! A while of free I bound must be;
But bound to him that's bound to me; Such bondage makes me free.
The last of nothing, the first of something; With joy I come away!

Silver Aria (The Ballad of Baby Doe) ......................Douglas Moore

Baby Doe, newly wed to the silver magnate Horace Tabor, replies to rumors
that the United States will go off the silver standard:
"Gold is a fine thing for those who admire it. Gold is like the sun
But I am a child of the moon, and silver is the metal of the moon."

Lucy's Aria (The Telephone) .............................Gian-Carlo Menotti

Ben has arrived to propose to Lucy, but finds her already in love with the telephone.
North Texas State University
School Of Music
presents
Mary Beth Armes, Soprano
Constance Knox Carroll, Accompanist
assisted by
David Pickthorn, Clarinet

MONDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1973 8:15 P.M.  RECITAL HALL
Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Musical Arts
PROGRAM

Sei mio ben (Metastasio) ........................................ Porpora
You are my joy, my comfort; because of you my heart is enchained.
I hope for rest and peace for you; I desire no other beauty.

Rossignols amoureux (Hippolyte et Aricie) ................. Rameau
Amorous nightingale, reply to our song with your sweet warbling.
Render tenderest homage to the god of the wood.

Let the bright Seraphim (Samson) ........................ Handel

Goethe–Lieder ...................................................... Wolf

Blumengruss
The bouquet that I picked greets you many thousand times!
I've clasped it to my heart about a hundred thousand times.

Frühlings über Jahr
The flower bed is loosening! Snow--white bells wave,
Crocus unfolds with a glow, primroses strut pertly,
Coy violets hide; everything stirs, spring is at work.
But blooming most richly in the garden is my sweetheart's lovely being.
Glances, inspired songs, cheering words: an open flower-heart.
Summer with its rose and lily competes vainly with my sweetheart.

Die Bekehrte
In the sunset's glow I walked quietly through the wood.
Damon sat playing the flute so it rang from the rocks.
He pulled me to him and kissed me so sweetly,
and I said, "Play again!" and he did.
My peace is now lost, my joy has flown,
and in my ears rings the old sound.

Gleich und Gleich
A bell--flower sprang up and bloomed;
Along came a bee and nibbled daintily;
They must be made for each other.

Die Spröde
On the clearest spring morning a young, lovely, carefree
shepherdess sang,
So that it rang through the fields.
Thyrsis offered her three sheep for a kiss.
She looked at him coyly, but sang and laughed away.
Another offered her ribbons, a third offered his heart,
But she made fun of these, too.
O luce di quest'anima (Linda di Chamounix) .......................... Donizetti

Ah, I am too late to meet my dear Carlo!
He has left me these flowers, the tender heart.
We are poor, but one day when he is a famous painter,
I shall be his bride.

O light of my being, our fate will be united on earth and in heaven.
Come, rest on this loving heart which sighs for you.

INTERMISSION

Quatre Chansons de Jeunesse ................................. Debussy

Pantomine (Verlaine)

Pierrot empties a bottle promptly and cuts the first piece of pie.
Cassandre sheds a tear for his disinherited nephew.
Harlequin, the rascal, kidnaps Colombine with four pirouettes.
Colombine dreams, surprised to feel a heart in the breeze.

Clair de lune (Verlaine)

Your heart is a chosen landscape to which masqueraders bring delight,
Playing the lute and dancing, almost sad in their fanciful disguises.
Singing in a minor key of victorious love and the good life,
They don’t seem to believe in their happiness, and their song
mingles with the moonlight.

With the calm, sad, beautiful moonlight which brings dreams to the birds
And makes the tall fountains sob with ecstasy among the marble statues.

Pierrot (Th. de Banville)

Good Pierrot, done with the play of Harlequin’s wedding,
Dreamily follows the boulevard.
A girl vainly provokes him with her roguish eye.
While, mysterious and sleek, the white moon casts a glance
Toward its friend Jean Gaspard Debureau.

Apparition (Mallarmé)

The moon became sad. Weeping seraphs drew sobs from dying viols.
It was the blessed day of your first kiss.
My dream intoxicated itself with the perfume of sadness,
When you appeared with sun on your hair in the evening,
And I imagined I saw the smiling fairy of my childhood,
With her white bouquets of perfumed stars.

Der Hirt auf dem Felsen (Müller-Chézy) ........................ Schubert

When I stand on the mountop and sing, out of the deep valley comes an echo.
My love lives so far away, I long so ardently for her.
In deep grief I pine, joy and hope have left me, I am so lonesome.
So longingly my song resounded through the night, that it drew
the hearts which heard it to heaven with wonderful power.

Spring is coming, spring my joy, and I’ll get ready to travel.

(with Mr. Pickthorn)

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Itinerary 1972

30 October  
8:00 PM  
Recital Hall, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas

31 October  
8:00 PM  
Recital Hall, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas

2 November  
8:00 PM  
National convention of the American Musicological Society, Adolphus Hotel, Dallas, Texas

3 November  
8:00 PM  
National convention of the American Musicological Society, Adolphus Hotel, Dallas, Texas

8 November  
8:00 PM  
Austin College, Sherman, Texas

9 November  
8:00 PM  
Baylor University, Waco, Texas

10 November  
8:15 PM  
Lone Star Puppet Guild, University of Dallas, Dallas, Texas
PERSONNEL

Marton
Die Fee Urgele
Robinette, Marton's maid
The Knight Lisuart

Pedrillo, groom to Lisuart
Lisuart's horse
Queen Bertha

Master of the Hunt
Anne, a farm woman
An Old Woman

Attorney General of the Court
of Love and Beauty
Bailiff
Licidas, a farmer
Philint, another farmer
Therese, a farm girl
Lieschen, another farm girl

Advisors to the Court of Love
Sundry farm folk
Cherubim

OF THE
Voice

Mary Beth Armes
Becky Bloomer
William Hazelbauer
Arden Hopkin
Gale Johnson
Mary Banks
Becky Bloomer
Barbara Gilbert
Hoyt Neal
William Hazelbauer
Gale Johnson
Becky Bloomer
Richard Cole
Alan E. Koester
Tim Lowrance
Joel West

OPERATION
Marionette

Eileen McDaniel
Gary Adams
Roy Bynum Petty
Keith Peterson
Jack Bevil
Ralph Roberts
Jack Bevil
Eileen McDaniel
Benjamin W. Thomas
Donna Arnold
Dyke Kiel
John C. Strombeck
James H. Richards
Dana Behne
The Company
and the Company
Program

CINDERELLA (LA CENERENTOLA)
by Gioacchino Rossini

A comic opera in three acts
Libretto by Jacopo Ferretti, Based on Perrault's Fairy Tale, Cendrillon
English Version — Ruth and Thomas Martin (By special arrangement with Franco Colombo, Inc.)

THE CAST, in order of appearance:

ALIDORO, Court Magician and Philosopher, Master of Disguises,
   Tutor to the Prince ................................................................. Rafael de Acha
CINDERELLA, A daughter of Don Magnifico from his first marriage ........................................ Ann Peters
CLORINDA, Don Magnifico's oldest daughter ................................................................. Mary Beth Armes
TISRE, Don Magnifico's other daughter .................................................................................... Diane Moncure
DON RAMIRO, the Prince, disguised as Dandini ................................................................. Thomas Dwyer
DANDINI, the Prince's valet, disguised as the Prince ............................................................ Cody Garner
DON MAGNIFICO, a Baron in debt ........................................................................................ George Gibson

CHORUS:
M. S. Holland, Jr., David Upton, Robert Peyton, Wayne Hall, Monas Harlan, Lawrence Snyder, Ginny Cunningham, Dolores Perkins, Marie Stanley, Anna Vaughn, Marilyn Watkins, Virginia Tooraen and Connie Thompson — members of the SYM-PHONY CHORALE, directed by Norman Fisher.

Gene Kelsey, David Green, Rickie Murphy and Gary Glasgow — members of the Southern State College Chorus, directed by Mr. Kelsey.

STAFF:
Musical Director ......................................................................................... John Shenaut
Staging Director ......................................................................................... Rafael de Acha
Scenery and Lighting ................................................................................... C. L. Holloway
Costumes .................................................................................................... Betty Jones, Susan Rogers and Linda Rogers
Stage Properties ............................................................................................ Barton Wilder
Make-Up ........................................................................................................ Caroline Walters
Rehearsal Pianist .......................................................................................... James Johnson

Next Concert — Sunday, December 17, 1972 and Monday, December 18, 1972
Ballet — "The Nutcracker"
Symphony Ballet Company
North Texas State University
School of Music

presents

Mary Beth Armes
Soprano

in a

Lecture Recital

"Handel and Three Prima Donnas"

assisted by

Leonard Karcenjar, Violin
Charles Baker, Violoncello
Charles Brown, Harpsichord

Monday, April 1, 1974  5:00 P.M.  Recital Hall

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree Doctor of Musical Arts
Ho perduto il caro sposo (Rodelinda) ......................... Handel

I have lost my dear husband, and left here alone to misfortune, my suffering increases.
What shall I do? I do not dare to die with my son still remaining and peril the only hope.

L'armi implora dal tuo figlio (Alessandro) (excerpt) .............. Handel
Weapons for my lips and my eyes implore from your son, pretty Goddess of beauty.

Quel cor che mi donasti (Lotario) (excerpt) ....................... Handel
That heart that you gave to me, take back again, my good one, so with two hearts you may have hope in battle.

Da tanti affanni oppressa (Admeto) ............................... Handel
Overwhelmed by so many sorrows, sometimes I tell myself, “You cannot live”, poor lover.
Frugal is love’s assurance that grief will depart.

Alla sua gabbia d'oro (Alessandro) ................................. Handel
To his golden cage returns that little songbird who was flying so rapidly.
Do you know why he returns? His prison is more dear to him than liberty.
Do you know why he likes the golden prison? His master knows well why he will return.

L'amor ed el destin (Partenope) .................................. Handel
Love and fate will fight for me.
I shall have a crown on my hair, and no chains on my feet.
Charles Burney, in his eighteenth-century General History of Music, mentions a memorable opera performance in Venice in the year 1719, starring two sopranos who were both then about nineteen years old, Faustina and Cuzzoni, "two sirens gifted with different enchanting powers, which they exercised afterwards in England to the destruction of theatrical tranquillity, and, indeed, of good neighborhood among the adherents of the contending parties."¹ The London Journal's account of the high point of their rivalry was published on June 10, 1727:

A great disturbance happened at the opera, occasioned by the partizans of the two celebrated rival ladies, Cuzzoni and Faustina. The contention at first was only carried on by hissing on one side, and clapping on the other; but proceeded at length, to the melodious use of catcalls, and other accompaniments, which manifested the zeal and politeness of that illustrious assembly. The Princess Caroline was there, but neither her Royal Highness's presence, nor the laws of decorum, could restrain the glorious ardor of the combatants.²

The combatants, Francesca Cuzzoni and Faustina Bordoni, were the first women singers to achieve international fame, in an era when the castrati held the public attention. The London opera company in which they were starring in 1727 was

²Ibid., p. 750.
the Royal Academy of Music, whose musical director was George
Frideric Handel. The German-born Handel was doing his best
to assure that London become an important Italian opera cen-
ter in which audience acclaim anddsalary were both worth the
contention. The rivalry between the two prima donnas, al-
though real, had been carefully planned for the sake of
publicity.

Handel had hired Cuzzoni in 1723. Horace Walpole, who
saw her in Rodelinda, described her as "short and squat,
with a doughy cross face." She was "silly and fantastical." Nonetheless, her singing made such a fine impression that
the company's two veteran leading ladies, Durastante and
Anastasia Robinson, left the following season. A composer's
rivalry between Handel and Bononcini, who was also writing
operas for the Royal Academy, prompted Handel and the com-
pany's manager, Heidegger, to secure the beautiful and
gracious Faustina. After her London debut in 1726, Bononcini
was unable to withstand Handel's competition, but the ensuing
ill feeling between the two ladies became so ridiculous that
it helped to precipitate the downfall of the Academy.

Although this particular competition got out of hand,
the singers working for Handel did not reign as supreme as
elsewhere. Eighteenth-century singers were collaborators
with the composers. The notated music was, in Burney's

words, "a canevas which a great singer only can color."\textsuperscript{4} Operas were written for a specific theater, cast, and production. Handel assembled his cast in London before writing an opera, and was directly inspired by the vocal and musical abilities of each singer. The styling was worked out in rehearsal, where he was able to keep a firm hold on the amount and type of improvisation; he was often at the harpsichord for performances. His power to offer the contracts further strengthened his position. When Cuzzoni refused to sing the aria "Falsa imagine" in \textit{Ottone}, her first London opera, the strong-willed Handel threatened to throw her out of the window.\textsuperscript{5} She sang it, and that aria "fixed her reputation as an expressive and pathetic singer."\textsuperscript{6}

She performed, of course, in all styles and tempos, as was expected of an artist. She had been well trained by Lanzi, a noted castrato. Burney states that she was "endowed by nature with a voice that was equally clear, sweet, and flexible." He continues:

It was difficult for the hearer to determine whether she most excelled in slow or rapid airs. A native warble enabled her to execute divisions with such facility as to conceal every appearance of difficulty and so grateful and touching was the natural tone of her voice, that she rendered pathetic whatever she

\textsuperscript{4}Burney, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 752.


\textsuperscript{6}Burney, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 722.
sung, in which she had leisure to unfold its whole volume. The art of conducting, sustaining, increasing, and diminishing her tones by minute degrees, acquired her, among professors, the title of complete mistress of her art. In a cantabile air, though the notes she added were few, she never lost a favourable opportunity of enriching the cantilena with all the refinements and embellishments of the time. Her shake was perfect, she had a creative fancy, and the power of occasionally accelerating and retarding the measure in the most artificial and able manner, by what the Italians call tempo rubato. Her high notes were so just and fixed, that it seemed as if it was not in her power to sing out of tune.  

The expressive powers of a singer were judged as much by his individual taste in embellishment as by his control of dynamics, rubato, and his projection of an Affekt, or mood. The standard da capo aria gave ample opportunity for ornamentation and individualistic passage-work during the repeat of the A section. The B section was also ornamented slightly, and the cadences at the end of each section required a trill and often a cadenza.

The aria "Ho perduto il caro sposo," which opens Handel's very successful opera of 1725, Rodelinda, is a fine example of this composer writing under the influence of Cuzzoni. The mood of intense pathos occasioned by reports that Rodelinda's husband has been killed, the slow, stately sarabande-rhythm, which gives time for ornamentation, and exploitation of high notes, all showed Cuzzoni at her best. She was probably the first great singer with the characteristics of the true lyric soprano. Most of the successful voice teachers were

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7Burney, op. cit., p. 736.
castrati, and their vocal technique evidently produced a range and sound closer to the mezzo-soprano of today.  

Handel again showed Cuzzoni's high register in the siciliano "Da tanti affanni oppressa" from the opera Admeto of 1727. According to Burney, who was always much admired in these slow 12/8 movements. The eighteenth-century voice teacher Tosi instructs us that in a siciliano "Divisions [passage-work] and Shakes [trills] are faults, and Glidings [portamento] and Draggs [glissando] are Beauties." In the aria "Da tanti affanni oppressa," the singer can use these ornaments over the many wide leaps. The written score does not show the over-dotting which was expected, and which increases the poignancy of a siciliano.

Faustina was hired in 1726. Burney says of her:

She in a manner invented a new kind of singing, by running divisions with a neatness and velocity which astonished all who heard her. She had the art of sustaining a note longer, in the opinion of the public, than any other singer, by taking her breath imperceptibly. Her beats and trills were strong and rapid; her intonation perfect; and her professional perfections were enhanced by a beautiful face, a symmetric figure, though of small stature, and a countenance and gesture on the stage, which indicated an entire intelligence and possession of the several parts she had to represent.

Alessandro was the first of five operas that Handel wrote for the two prima donnas, with an equal amount of singing for

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10 Burney, op. cit., p. 738.
each, and with emphasis on their best qualities. The neatness and quickness of Faustina's ornamentation can be inferred from the aria "L'armi implora dal tuo figlio." Chrysander has printed two versions of this aria in the complete works of Handel, the difference being a passage near the beginning which, in the second version, is extended and varied. Violin obbligato and a fermata for a cadenza is also found only in the second version. A comparison of the two passages suggests the improvisatory nature of Handel's composition.

After the premier of *Alessandro*, Cuzzoni and Faustina were being constantly compared. Quantz disagreed with Burney regarding Cuzzoni's flexibility. He said of Cuzzoni that she did not execute rapid passages very well, but that she had a roundness and smoothness which were neat and pleasing. Her acting was cold and her figure "not advantageous for the stage," but he agreed that her voice was clear and her intonation and trill excellent. He mentions a range of two octaves up from middle G.

Faustina's range was from b^b to g^2, and she eventually extended it downwards. Her acting was equally fine in "furious, amorous, and tender parts." Adagios she sang with great passion and expression, but she was not as successful as Cuzzoni when deep sorrow required portamento, syncopation, and tempo rubato. However, "Her execution was articulate and brilliant. She had a fluent tongue for pronouncing words"

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rapidly and distinctly, and a flexible throat for divisions, with so beautiful a trill that she could put it in motion upon short notice just when she would." Quantz classified her voice as a mezzo-soprano that was less clear than penetrating.\(^1\) Tosi speculated on the beautiful mixture that would result if the "Pathetick of the one and the Allegro of the other" could be united in one person.\(^2\)

Cuzzoni's voice had evidently been considered quite flexible, until she was placed beside Faustina. Typical of the coloratura that Handel wrote for Cuzzoni is the aria "Da tempesta" from Giulio Cesare. However, the fioratura for Faustina was the most fanciful that Handel ever wrote.

It was unusual in this period to write out the ornamentation as thoroughly as Handel did; only Bach surpassed him in detail of written graces. For example, the passage in measure twenty of "L'armi implora dal tuo figlio" is varied eight measures later, demonstrating how the simgers handled phrase repetitions. Also, the sequence in measure eight of "Alla sua gabbia" from Alessandro would have been written down as simple chord tones without note-repetition, trills, and turns. Whether Handel was notating what Faustina sang in rehearsal, or suggesting ornamentation in her style, his score has the appearance of frozen improvisation. The bird-song "Alla sua gabbia d'oro" demonstrates the articulate

\(^1\)Burney, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 745.

\(^2\)Tosi, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 171.
execution, instant trills, iterations of the same note, and low tessitura that Quantz heard, but the written range extends a half-step higher than the $E$ he said she could sing.

Following the "disturbance of theatrical tranquillity" of 1727, which was lampooned in Gay's The Beggar's Opera, Cuzzoni was offered one guinea a year less than Faustina. She did not accept the contract and returned to Italy. Faustina remained in England a short time; then she also went to Italy, where she married the composer Hasse in 1730. They lived and worked in Dresden from 1731 to 1763, when they moved to Vienna. After 1775 they retired to Venice. Cuzzoni sang again in London in 1734 with the Opera of the Nobility, a company which was in competition with Handel's. Her extravagance forced her into debtor's prison in Holland in her later years. She was singing benefit concerts to repay her debts even when her voice had been reduced to a shred of its former glory. She died in Italy, where her final occupation was covering silk buttons in the workhouse.

When the Royal Academy was dissolved because of lack of support, Handel took a season off to reorganize and engage new singers. He returned from a recruiting trip to Italy with a new prima donna, Anna Strada del Pò, whom he described as "a coarse singer with a fine voice." She was not a pretty woman; London promptly nicknamed her "The Pig," but Handel

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wrote carefully for her to train her voice, and she eventually became one of the foremost sopranos of Europe. Before her debut in Lotario in 1729, Handel's librettist, Paolo Rolli, wrote of her:

They say that little Strada has all the rapid execution of Faustina and all the sweetness of Cuzzoni, and so on above all the others! We shall see how it turns out. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, as the English proverb says. The truth is that Strada is simply a copy of Faustina with a better voice and better intonation, but without her charm and brio.  

The first aria that Handel wrote for her to sing in London was obviously to display her best feature, which was a fine shake. There are trills indicated in the violin part which suggest where the singer should trill. The bouree-style aria "L'amor ed il destin" from the parody opera Partenope of 1730 shows that Strada must have had a lighter, higher, more flexible voice than Cuzzoni, rather like today's lyric coloratura soprano. Handel wrote high G in this piece, a note which is not found in the music he wrote for Cuzzoni, although she may well have used it in her ornamentation. "L'amor ed il destin requires the voice to imitate virtuosic violin string-crossing figuration. Perhaps Handel was challenging Strada's vocal technique.

Strada remained loyal to Handel even when his other singers joined the rival opera company. She premiered many of his Italian operas and several of his English oratorios, before she left England in 1738.

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