



shows an interest in thematic unity and organization also exhibited in even the simplest binary pieces in the collection (xii). And La Font's virtuosity is definitely on display, as in 'La Dayen', with passagework that resembles Rameau's and Duphy's most challenging harpsichord writing. It appears that La Font was known in his own right for virtuoso *batteries*, for Lee identifies an intertextual reference between an arpeggio passage in 'La Dayen' with a 1761 concerto by the composer Simon Simon (1735–1788) called 'La La Font' that appears to pay tribute to the composer and the 'La Font style' (xi). Elsewhere La Font writes with more grace than bombast ('La Dillon') and a handful of *style brisé* pieces are highlights ('La Hénin', 'La Dubouset', 'La Derouflac' and 'Le Machine de Marly'). Thus the collection appeals to all manner of players, as it no doubt did in La Font's day.

Lee's edition creates a usable document by tacitly updating the notation to conform to 'modern notational practices' (55) and correcting errors in accidentals. Given what Lee describes as an idiosyncratic system in which La Font 'avoided both ledger lines and clef changes as much as possible, freely distributing his music between staves and occasionally marking *g* and *d* to indicate the left or right hand' (55), readers can feel fortunate that the edition was in the hands of an accomplished harpsichordist as well as scholar. The editorial process also called on Lee's compositional skills in completing the second couplet of the final piece, a rondeau entitled 'Le Machine de Marly', which cuts off abruptly at bar 24 in the source. Lee's completion reproduces the tendency for La Font's second couplets to feature climactic harmonic sequences (see 'La Dillon', 'La Hénin' and 'La Derouflac') and perfectly suits the programmatic depiction of the paddle wheels and pumps that brought the waters of the Seine uphill to Versailles (xiv). It seems fitting that the editor who restored La Font and his music to us should so successfully stand in for the composer in the final pages of the edition.

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BENEDETTO MARCELLO (1686–1739), ED. TALYA BERGER
 CASSANDRA

Recent Researches in Music of the Baroque Era 192
 Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2016
 pp. xxi + 45, ISBN 978 0 89579 838 1

Talya Berger's recent edition of Benedetto Marcello's dramatic cantata *Cassandra* is a very welcome addition to A-R's series *Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era*. It seems remarkable that this complex and innovative work, with its wide range of emotions and use of rhetorical effect, has remained unpublished until the present day.

Born to a noble Venetian family in 1686, Benedetto Marcello trained as a lawyer and devoted many years to public service, including serving on the *Maggior Consiglio* and holding various magistracies. From 1733 to 1735 he was *Provveditore* (governor) of Pula (Marco Bizzarini gives these dates in *Benedetto Marcello* (Palermo: L'EPOS, 2006), 79, while Berger suggests 1730–1733 in this edition, ix), with his final position being as *Camerlengo* (treasurer) of Brescia, where he died in 1739. A one-time student of Francesco Gasparini, he was a prolific composer, particularly in the field of the secular cantata. His known output in this genre comprises some 378 works, eighty-one per cent of his total compositional output (Michael Talbot, *The Chamber Cantatas of Antonio Vivaldi* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006), 1). However, in this edition, Berger suggests that there 'are more than 356 cantatas attributed to him that survive mainly in undated and nonautograph manuscripts' (ix). Marcello's talents did not stop there: while apparently not as accomplished as his brother, Alessandro, as a practical musician, he was still an able violinist, harpsichordist and singer. He was also an author, theorist and poet, often supplying his own texts.



Cassandra dates from 1727 and, like the majority of Marcello's music, was not published during his lifetime. There is no autograph manuscript, but the twenty-eight extant copies indicate that the work was popular, still being performed in the late eighteenth century and mentioned by various writers of the time – mostly, but not always, in a positive light. Bizzarini points out that this cantata falls into the *Sujetkantaten* category proposed by early twentieth-century theorist Eugen Schmitz, according to which works are based on mythology and/or history. Owing to the very nature of their subject such cantatas are considered 'extraordinary' and thus should be afforded a commensurate musical response (Marco Bizzarini, 'The "Humble" and "Sublime" Genres, the Pastoral and Heroic Styles: Rhetorical Metamorphoses in Benedetto Marcello's Cantatas', in *Aspects of the Secular Cantata in Late Baroque Italy*, ed. Michael Talbot (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 178). It is worth noting that Schmitz's work *Geschichte der weltlichen Solokantate* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1914) has remained the one study that presents a complete survey of the secular cantata.

As might be expected in a *Sujetkantate*, Berger identifies a number of particularly unusual and experimental details. First, the cantata's make-up is remarkable in terms of structure, but also in the deployment of adventurous harmonies and pictorial devices. Cantatas would usually consist of a number of arias interspersed by recitative, and would typically finish with an aria. On the odd occasion where a cantata did end with a recitative, an arioso-type ending would usually round the work off, to give a more satisfying sense of closure. *Cassandra*, however, is heavily dependent on recitative – and even more so on arioso. The resulting fluid structure reflects the nature of the poem supplied by Antonio Conti (1677–1749) with its combination of 'narration, unrhymed poetry, and canzonet-like passages' (x). There are a limited number of arias (only one of which is da capo), and the result is a flowing work that movingly projects Cassandra's narration of the final years of the Trojan War.

Also unusual is the fact that the text was deliberately conceived (on Marcello's request) for just one narrator, but was designed to embrace a wide range of emotions (rage, grief, resignation, lament, aggression, torment and so on) along similar lines to his cantata *Il Timoteo* (for two singers, text also by Conti). In this, and also in its technical demands, which include wide leaps, awkward intervals, dotted and repeated notes, and runs, the cantata proves extremely challenging for the singer.

There is a strong possibility that Marcello intended the voice to be accompanied only by solo harpsichord, meaning that the instrument takes on a central role 'whether accompanying the voice, mimicking it, or doubling it in unison' (xii). Berger bases this 'likely' recommendation on two sources. She refers first to Charles Burney's 1770 description of a performance 'without accompaniment other than harpsichord' and second, to correspondence of 1727 in which Conti states that *Il Timoteo* 'is difficult to perform because it is for two voices without any other instrument besides the harpsichord. Monsieur Marcello is convinced that violins overpower the voice and that it is barely possible to accompany a tender song with such dazzling sounds' (xii). For practical reasons alone, harpsichord-only accompaniment was probably the most common option for such works (especially in self-accompanied performances). But at the same time, the use of bass-line instruments would also have been a matter of pragmatism, or, indeed, a matter of local custom. It would have been nice had the discussion of the continuo-line instrument been expanded, and a less prescriptive stance adopted, especially in the light of the second source cited, which actually refers to the earlier sister cantata and seems to be referring to obbligato rather than continuo instruments.

If taken at face value, the vocal range of the cantata spans three octaves. In most sources the vocal part is written in the alto clef, but there exists just one aria which is notated in bass clef for the character of Priam, effectively extending the range from F to a² (if this aria were to be left out, the range would be from f to a²). The editor surmises that the bass clef is 'solely an indicator that the character speaking at this point, Priam, is an old man' (xi) – adopting Colin Timms's suggestion that the aria may have simply been sung an octave higher following the practice used with choral bass parts at the Pio Ospedale della Pietà in Venice – and that therefore the bass clef is symbolic rather than functional ('The "Cassandra" Cantata of Conti and Marcello', in *Benedetto Marcello: la sua opera e il suo tempo*, ed. Claudio Madicardo and Franco Rossi (Florence: Olschki, 1988), 147). Indeed, Michael Talbot notes that both the Pietà and Mendicanti had (female) singers who were able to read from the bass clef. Sometimes there were singers who were able to perform the parts at pitch,



but the option to read them up an octave was always a viable one, given that the instrumental bass, together with contrabass reinforcement, would remain at pitch and thus eliminate any unwelcome chord inversions ('Tenors and Bases at the Venetian Ospedali', *Acta Musicologica* 66 (1994), 123–138). It would have been helpful to know how Priam's bass-clef aria is notated in all extant copies – or even just the eight sources that Berger has used as the basis for comparison. For instance, it would have further supported Berger's view if she had mentioned that certainly in one copy (the source that is in fact her *codex optimus*), this particular aria is marked first with an alto clef, but is immediately followed by a bass clef (I-Nc, MS 187). This may lend weight to the symbolic bass-clef argument, though it may simply have been the case that the copyist had already marked up the alto clef on 'autopilot', before realizing that this was actually a bass aria.

It is interesting to note that in the 2010 recording of this cantata, Kai Wessel explores other possibilities, some already raised by Timms in his mission to find his own performance solution (Kai Wessel/David Blunden, notes to *Benedetto Marcello, Cassandra* (Aeon: AECD 1087, 2010)). Wessel suggests that Marcello, given the performing forces available to him, may have revised his original idea of having one voice perform the entire cantata, bringing in a bass for that one aria. He also explores the idea that the bass aria could be performed up the octave, but then proposes that the reverse was also possible (taking the recitatives down an octave, to be performed by a lower voice throughout). Berger does note that Charles Burney heard *Cassandra* performed in 1770 by a 'very good base voice', which might support this hypothesis (x). But Wessel questions whether the bass singers of the time were in such command of their falsetto register that they could have taken on the entire cantata, relying on the chest and head registers to enable them to produce the required range. Timms, on the other hand, suggests that the use of a bass for a mere sixteen bars out of 866 was unlikely and that 'furthermore, since Marcello specifically asked Conti for a text for solo voice it would have been discourteous of him, to say the least, to set it for two' ('The "Cassandra" Cantata of Conti and Marcello', 128). Again, it would have been helpful to have broadened the discussion on this particular aspect of performance.

In practical terms, the score is well laid out, with generous spacing, making it visually attractive and easy to read. From the overwrought emotional vocal part that has the listeners hanging by a thread, to the intricate virtuosic continuo writing that meshes with and supports the voice so beautifully, from the complex harmonic language to the open-ended conclusion in the dominant, and to the words 'and Troy reduced to dust', there is much to be admired and explored in this stunning composition. Berger and A-R editions are to be complimented on making this mercurial work readily accessible.

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RECORDINGS

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THOMAS AUGUSTINE ARNE (1710–1778), JOHANN CHRISTIAN BACH (1735–1782), JOHN BLOW (1648/1649–1708), JEREMIAH CLARKE (c1674–1707), WILLIAM CROFT (1677/1678–1727), MAURICE GREENE (1696–1755), RICHARD JONES (unknown–1744)

THE PLEASURES OF THE IMAGINATION

Sophie Yates (harpsichord)

Chandos o814, 2016; one disc, 75 minutes

With *The Pleasures of the Imagination* harpsichordist Sophie Yates offers, according to her own liner notes, 'an overview of English keyboard music during the course of the eighteenth century' (9). The recording, even at a generous seventy-five minutes long, cannot make claims to encyclopedic coverage. There are chronological