



EDITIONS

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GIOVANNI DE GAMERRA (1742–1803), ED. LUCIO TUFANO
LUCIO SILLA, LUCIO CORNELIO SILLA DITTATORE

Treviso: Diastema, 2013

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Despite chronic funding shortages in opera houses in Italy, and a fairly dismal academic job market there, one can take encouragement from the high quality of work still being done by Italian scholars in the field of 'librettology', whether in publications aimed at specialists or in essays in programme books. While much of this work has centred on Pietro Metastasio, imperial court poet in Vienna from 1730 to his death in 1782, other important eighteenth-century librettists are also receiving attention. Another operatic author with Habsburg connections, Giovanni De Gamerra, is the recipient of a series devoted to the publication of some of his more significant operatic texts, both set and not set to music, of which the volume under review is the latest to appear. The books in the series (with general editors Anna Laura Bellina, Bruno Brizi and Federico Marra) have been issued by three different publishers, but the project as a whole is under the aegis of the Istituto Superiore di Studi Musicali Pietro Mascagni in Livorno, the Tuscan birthplace of the poet.

If the modern anglophone opera-goer has heard of De Gamerra at all, it is likely to be in connection with Mozart's setting of his *Lucio Silla*, which received its premiere in Milan's Regio Ducal Teatro on 26 December 1772. This was the poet's first wholly original libretto to reach the stage – as opposed to various lyric texts that he had published during a determined campaign (ultimately successful) to be named the house poet for that theatre. On account of the sombre tone of this text (and others) – as at the end of Act 1, set in a 'very dark burial ground with monuments to the heroes of Rome' (stage designs for the opera by Fabrizio Galliani survive) – De Gamerra became known as the 'poeta lagrimoso' of the operatic stage. This libretto provoked music of remarkable emotional maturity from the still teenaged Mozart; on the strength of his score, and performances by such celebrated singers as Anna de Amicis (Giunia) and the soprano castrato Venanzio Rauzzini (Cecilio) – for whom Mozart composed the motet 'Exsultate, jubilate' during the opera's run – *Lucio Silla* achieved an impressive total of twenty-six performances, helping inspire further settings of De Gamerra's text.

The first half (roughly) of the volume contains Lucio Tufano's critical editions of the libretto set by Mozart and of De Gamerra's 1802 reworking of it as *Lucio Cornelio Silla dittatore*, from the second of the poet's two sojourns in Vienna, where he served as house poet for the court's Italian opera company. During this second stay (the first was in the mid-1770s) De Gamerra was part of the artistic coterie around Empress Marie Therese, the second wife of Franz II (later Franz I), and the librettist may have hoped she would use her influence in order to bring *Lucio Cornelio Silla dittatore* to the stage. (On the poet's dealings with the empress see John A. Rice, *Empress Marie Therese and Music at the Viennese Court, 1792–1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 180–184.) It is certainly good to have the later *Silla* text available, so as to see how it differs from De Gamerra's initial treatment of this subject, in terms of structure, dramaturgy and style. But one may fairly ask what is to be gained from publishing a critical edition of his libretto for Mozart, the original of which is available digitally (for example, from the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense in Milan and the Museo internazionale e biblioteca della musica di Bologna) and in facsimile (in *The Librettos of Mozart's Operas*, ed. Ernest Warburton, volume 1: *The Works for Salzburg and Milan* (New York: Garland, 1992)), not to mention transcriptions in CD booklets. Naturally the format here is poetic, as opposed to textual underlay in a musical score, and accordingly, Tufano does not privilege Mozart's sometimes divergent readings (or their idiosyncratic punctuation) in his autograph score, as did Kathleen Kuzmick Hansell, the opera's editor for the *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe* (II:7 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1986)). But in other respects their approaches to the text are similar, as in retaining some archaic spellings which, if modernized, would not correspond to the



sounds produced by the original singers. Tufano's edition really comes into its own as a point of reference for the librettos of later resettings of *Lucio Silla* by other composers: Pasquale Anfossi (Venice, 1774), Johann Christian Bach (Mannheim, 1774), Michele Mortellari (Turin, 1779) and as a pasticcio (London, 1783); in each case, De Gamerra's text was adapted to some extent by local poets, whether named or anonymous. These librettos, just as scrupulously edited by Tufano, are included as PDF files (as are also the two librettos in the book) on the accompanying CD-ROM. Tufano's rigorous philological treatment of these texts, with verses numbered (every five) in the right margin, and changes and variants accounted for by means of a complicated but clearly explained system of annotation, allows him to compare their structure, vocabulary and other features in a wide-ranging and insightful essay in the main volume.

Tufano lays out his aims in the 'Nota ai testi' that follows the two librettos in the main volume:

La presente edizione si fonda sul fermo convincimento che ciascuna delle epifanie appena descritte rappresenti un oggetto storico significativo, derivante da uno specifico sforzo creativo e produttivo e meritevole perciò di essere conosciuto nella sua integrità (126).

The present edition is founded on the firm conviction that each of the manifestations [of the libretto] just described represents a meaningful historical object, deriving from a specific creative and productive force and therefore worthy of being known in its entirety. (My translation)

His meticulous scrutiny of the librettos in question permits him to identify lines of transmission (which are not always the expected ones), and to trace, line by line, the relationship between a given version of *Lucio Silla* and its *antigrafo* (model text). In the PDF files this layer of commentary is printed on a coloured background, while in another layer Tufano accounts for variants in the musical sources (and for the London pasticcio, also the manuscript submitted to the censor). For *Lucio Cornelio Silla dittatore* he is able to follow quite precisely the order of revisions among the three (complete or partial) manuscript drafts, for instance when De Gamerra rejects a reading only to reinstate it later.

The main title of Tufano's essay, 'La clemenza di Silla: paradossi della tirannide e mutamenti del gusto sulla scena musicale europea, 1772–1802' (The Clemency of Sulla: Paradoxes of Tyranny and Changes of Taste on the European Musical Stage, 1772–1802, 143–211), alludes to affinities between the (Roman) title characters of De Gamerra's drama and Metastasio's *La clemenza di Tito*: both the general-turned-dictator and the emperor experience a change of heart late in the work, the one granting clemency to his enemies and renouncing his amorous designs on his defeated rival's daughter, the other pardoning the friend who had made an attempt on his life. The novice librettist in fact submitted a draft of his text to the imperial poet, who (as De Gamerra proudly states in the libretto) 's'è degnato d'onorare il presente drammatico componimento d'una pienissima approvazione' (deigned to honour [it] with his full approval); Leopold Mozart reported further (letter of 14 November 1772) that Metastasio had made numerous corrections and added an entire scene in Act 2. Tufano sheds new light on the question, adducing De Gamerra's previously unpublished quotation of an otherwise lost letter of praise from the *poeta cesareo*, and questioning the logic behind Hansell's attempts to use emendations in the text underlay in Mozart's score in order to identify Metastasian content in the opera. 'Più interessante', he writes, 'sono i luoghi nei quali la partitura autografa (PK) tramanda una lezione diversa da quella fissata nel libretto stampato ma del tutto plausibile e accettabile' (150) (More interesting are the places in which the autograph score (PK) transmits a reading different from that established in the printed libretto, yet one that is wholly plausible and acceptable). These variants probably represent texts as set by Mozart before Metastasio's intervention, and not corrected afterward. Tufano also analyses passages with longer textual discrepancies, convincingly distinguishing between revisions prompted by Metastasio and later refinements carried out by De Gamerra and the composer. More broadly, Tufano points out the librettist's considerable stylistic debt to Metastasio, while noting his different handling of poetic metre. Tufano's insights extend also to Mozart's music, as when (following Friedrich Lippmann) he notes how the young composer clearly modelled one of Giunio's arias on Niccolò Jommelli's recent setting of a text in Metastasio's *Armida abbandonata*. (See Friedrich Lippmann, 'Mozart e Paisiello: sulla collocazione stilistica



del “Lucio Silla”, in *Mozart e i musicisti italiani del suo tempo*, atti del convegno (Roma, 21–22 ottobre 1991), ed. Annalisa Bina (Lucca: LIM, 1994), 21–41, and ‘Mozart und Paisiello: Zur stilistischen Position des “Lucio Silla”’, *Mozart-Jahrbuch* (1991), 580–593.)

Tufano discusses the later avatars of *Lucio Silla* more succinctly, but perceptively. He provides statistics, act by act, on the degree to which each libretto was shortened with respect to the Milanese original, as well as cogently explicated diagrams showing the adaptors’ redistribution of scenes. As the essay’s subtitle implies, the various incarnations of the opera afford a convenient overview of the changing nature of late eighteenth-century *dramma per musica*, as with the inclusion in the London pasticcio and the 1802 libretto of finales in the manner of opera buffa. With regard to *Silla dittatore*, Tufano notes that ‘the addition of the qualification *dictator* announces the greater weight given to the political dimension in the late reworking’ from the Napoleonic era (‘l’aggiunta della qualifica *dittatore* annuncia il maggior peso della dimensione politica nella rielaborazione tarda’) (202). In this version the number of arias was drastically reduced in favour of choruses and ensembles, yet the Metastasian echoes in the dénouement were even stronger than in 1772.

In this exhaustively researched and neatly produced volume there is scarcely anything to criticize, except perhaps the conflicting paginations in the otherwise identical hard-copy and PDF editions of the Milanese libretto. The book is a timely demonstration of the continued utility of philological work for the history and criticism of eighteenth-century opera.

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JOSEPH LEOPOLD EYBLER (1765–1846), ED. KARL MICHAEL WALTL

DIE HIRTEN BEI DER KRIPPE ZU BETHLEHEM

Stuttgart: Carus, 2015

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Founded in 1771, Vienna’s Tonkünstler-Societät was responsible for the creation and public performance of many works that today are known primarily to specialists in the field of eighteenth-century music. Although the Tonkünstler-Societät is perhaps best recognized for its involvement with the works of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, its ensemble consistently programmed a wide range of music composed by its capable members. During its heyday, the society sponsored on average four concerts a year: two during Lent and two in Advent, just before Christmas. Although these concerts typically included a variety of chamber and orchestral works, the performance of large-scale oratorios attracted the greatest audience. On 22 December 1794 the Tonkünstler-Societät premiered a new oratorio, *Die Hirten bei der Krippe zu Bethlehem* (The Shepherds at the Crib in Bethlehem), composed especially for its winter concert by Joseph Leopold Eybler (1765–1846).

Eybler is one of the many composers active in the society who has been largely – and undeservedly – forgotten by the passage of time. Yet he enjoyed a long and distinguished career in Vienna. A distant cousin of the Haydn brothers, Eybler was well connected, maintaining personal and professional relationships with both Joseph Haydn and Mozart. He studied music in Vienna under Johann Georg Albrechtsberger (1736–1809), court organist and Kapellmeister of St Stephen’s Cathedral. Eybler’s first post was choirmaster at the Carmelite Church and later at the Schottenkloster. In 1804, roughly a decade after these appointments, he was engaged as Vice-Kapellmeister of the Habsburg court, where he replaced Antonio Salieri as Kapellmeister twenty years later. Despite his demanding official responsibilities to the Schottenkloster and the court, Eybler remained an active member of the Tonkünstler-Societät throughout his career.