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## Venice

By the early eighteenth century, when Vivaldi was just beginning his career, Venice's once considerable economic power had ebbed to a point where culture rather than trade or manufacture was her most characteristic field of activity. Like a magnet she drew visitors in huge numbers from all over Europe, who observed her institutions, admired her buildings, wondered at her ceremonies, thronged to her theatres and gaming houses, and frequently departed with a memento, perhaps a painting or a musical score. The dependence of Venetian painting and music on foreign patronage, which we can date very roughly from the beginning, around 1660, of that custom known as the Grand Tour, obviously benefited the Republic's exchequer and for a long while stimulated creativity, although eventually it was bound to devitalize the arts by cutting them off from the roots of their inspiration. Just as the favourite genres of *settecento* Venetian painters – portraits and views of the city – seem 'made for export', so too composers came to put more and more of their effort into readily exportable types of music (for example, the opera and the concerto) at the expense of genres serving local needs. For this reason it is important to view Venetian music of Vivaldi's time not merely in the perspective of a long and noble indigenous tradition but also in that of its newly acquired role as a setter of fashion for the whole of Europe.

In the later Middle Ages and Renaissance Venice had been anything but an international playground. Her wealth and power stemmed on the one hand from trade – for which her situation on the Mediterranean at the crossroads (politically if not quite geographically) of Europe and Asia ideally suited her – and on the other from manufacture, especially of textiles. Her 'military and naval power had held the Ottomans at bay in southern Europe for centuries.

The discovery of the New World and the Cape route to the Orient dealt a blow to Venice's position as a trading intermediary from which she never recovered. Even in the eastern Mediterranean English and

French merchant vessels came in time to outnumber Venetian ones. As for manufacturing, Venice underwent the same decline as the rest of Italy after 1600. Once again, it was the northern Europeans who supplanted her, producing more cheaply and selling more vigorously, even to the Turks, Venice's traditional customers. Many of her monied citizens abandoned commerce and invested in agricultural estates on the mainland.

The effect of this economic shrinkage on Venetian political life in the eighteenth century was to reduce drastically the influence of the Republic on most affairs of European importance. Her independence was rarely threatened, however, for with her considerable territories on either side of the Adriatic she formed too large an entity to be absorbed into some other state without upsetting the balance of power. Besides, Venice's history of unbroken independence since her foundation in the seventh century as a refuge from the barbarians – an absence of foreign domination almost unique in Italy – would have made annexation difficult to justify, while her republican form of government rendered her immune to dynastic squabbles in which foreign powers could have had an interest. She became in effect a neutral buffer state.

Population statistics taken from official censuses bear out these changes in the character of Venice. The territorial limits of the capital (built, as everyone knows, on a partly man-made archipelago inside a lagoon) were fixed at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Already then the population had failed to make good the losses sustained in the plague of 1575–6; its slow climb was set back once more by the plague of 1630, and by 1696 the numbers had reached only 138,067 – over 30,000 short of the 1563 figure. But for immigration from the Italian mainland the stagnation would have been even greater, for the birth rate declined. In particular the *nobili veneti*, the Republic's governing class, shrank in proportion to the other estates – the *cittadini* ('citizens', comprising merchants and members of the professions) and *popolani* (populace) – so that some dilution of their ranks became unavoidable.

The *Terraferma veneta*, or *Veneto*, as these mainland possessions of the Republic were known, formed a large wedge of territory stretching westwards below the Alps just beyond Bergamo, and southwards to Chioggia. It included the famous university city of Padua, whose celebration on 13 June of the feast of the patron saint, St Anthony, was attended by many Venetians at the start of their customary *villeggiatura*, or stay in the country. This annual exodus

from the capital helped to disseminate its culture in provincial centres such as Vicenza and Verona, where operas were often staged during the summer months by companies recruited in the main from Venice.

In cultural and economic terms Venice's eastern possessions were somewhat less significant, though hardly less extensive, for they comprised the provinces of Istria (separated from the *Veneto* by the Duchy of Carniola, an imperial territory at whose narrow opening to the sea lay the port of Trieste) and Dalmatia, further down the coast of former Yugoslavia. Venice could claim in addition innumerable islands and trading posts in the eastern Mediterranean; from the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) to that of Passarowitz (1718) she also governed the Peloponnese, or *Morea*, wrested a decade earlier from the Ottomans in what was to prove her last successful military adventure.

Rather remarkably for an age in which *la carrière ouverte aux talents* was steadily winning acceptance, the Venetian state still drew its senior administrators exclusively from the ranks of the nobility. The head of state was the Doge (Venetian dialect for *Duce*), who was elected for life. He presided over the College, a kind of cabinet. Supreme legislative power was vested in the Great Council (*Maggior Consiglio*), on which 600 nobles aged over 25 served; 120 of its members were chosen by ballot to serve on the Senate, the highest executive body. Of the numerous more specialized bodies, the Council of Ten (*Dieci Savii*), appointed annually by the Great Council, deserves mention. It was from these ten 'sages' that three Inquisitors of State were chosen every month to act as watchdogs against blasphemy, indecency and subversion. One of their more routine tasks was to license theatres at the start of each new season; the inquisitors inspected the librettos of all operas, and if they were satisfied gave them their *faccio fede*, or affirmation of approval.

Next to the office of Doge, the highest honour coveted by the nobles was that of becoming one of the Procurators of St Mark. Until the nineteenth century the Basilica of S. Marco was not Venice's cathedral church, but it became early on the focal point of her ceremonial sacred music through the combination of a favoured situation, adjoining the ducal palace and looking out on to the principal square, and the attendance at services of the doges. It was the procurators' task to appoint a *Primo Maestro*, or senior musical director, whenever the post fell vacant. The director's pay was excellent, rising during Monteverdi's tenure (1613–43) from 300 to 400 ducats annually, and it remained at

that figure for over a century.<sup>1</sup> With this and other enticements the Basilica ought to have secured the services of Italy's foremost musicians, but like many a lay committee the procurators were cautious men who preferred to pick musicians they knew. Consequently, in the century following Monteverdi's death, all the *Primi Maestri* were Venetian-born men who had served in the *Cappella* previously, generally as the deputy director, or *Vice-Maestro*. Perhaps this helps to explain their lack of lustre, with the exceptions of Cavalli (1668–76), Legrenzi (1685–90) and arguably Lotti (1736–40). Of these three, however, it is notable that only the last made his principal contribution in sacred music, the others being better known as composers of opera.

The more talented musicians tended to use the *Cappella* as a stepping-stone to higher things. The outstanding example is the Venetian Antonio Caldara (1670/1–1736), who joined it on an occasional basis as a cellist in 1688, served as a contralto from 1695 to 1699, and then became in fairly rapid succession *Maestro di Cappella* to the Duke of Mantua (1700), a musician in the service of the Archduke Charles, claimant to the Spanish throne (1708), *Maestro di Cappella* to Prince Ruspoli in Rome (1709) and finally Deputy *Kapellmeister* to the same Charles, now Emperor Charles VI (1716). Even Lotti spent a three-year period (1717–19) away from the *Cappella*, organizing church music and opera in distant Dresden. Many musicians of St Mark's held other posts concurrently. Giacomo Filippo Spada (c 1640–1704), second organist from 1678 and first organist from 1690, served the Ospedale della Pietà for many years as *Maestro di Coro*; the same post at the Ospedaletto was held by Benedetto Vinaccesi (c 1666–1719), second organist from 1704; a *Vice-Maestro*, Carlo Francesco Pollarolo (1653–1723), directed music at the Incurabili, while the *Primo Maestro* himself, Antonino Biffi (c 1666–1732), occupied a like post at the Mendicanti, having as his *Maestro di Strumenti* the same Giorgio Gentili (c 1668 – after 1731) who from 1693 played the violin solos in the St Mark's orchestra.

These four *ospedali*, literally 'hospitals', were charitable institutions for orphaned, abandoned, illegitimate or indigent children. Since one of them, the Pietà, deserves our especial attention, being not only the most famous (and most thoroughly researched), but also the one with which our composer was closely associated during most of his life, it will be useful to describe it in some detail. Founded in 1346, it occupied

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<sup>1</sup> A ducat of 'current' money (as distinct from the silver, or 'effective', ducat) was worth a little over half a crown in contemporary English currency.

in Vivaldi's time a building on the site of the present *Istituto provinciale per l'infanzia* in the Riva degli Schiavoni, which faces the island of S. Giorgio Maggiore across the Canale di S. Marco. Its chapel, rebuilt on a new site between 1745 and 1760, became the Church of La Pietà. The Pietà, like its sister institutions, was supported by the state and run by a board of governors appointed by the Senate. Its population was reported in 1663 to lie between 400 and 500; by 1738 it held 1000.

The girls were divided into two categories: the *figlie di comun*, or commoners, who received a general education, and the *figlie di coro*, whose education was specifically musical. Not all in the latter group served regularly in the chapel choir and orchestra, as one might have thought from the description *di coro*; for one thing, there was too little room in the chapel, although the addition in 1724 of two *choretti* on either side of the main choirstalls relieved the congestion a little.<sup>2</sup> Exactly how large a minority the *figlie di coro* were is hard to establish, but whatever their proportion one is justified in calling the Pietà a conservatory, by analogy with the four conservatories of Naples (where, in contrast, only boys were admitted), on account of the primacy accorded to music. One almost suspects the good faith of the Pietà's governors when they speak, in a resolution concerning the *figlie di coro*, of the need to avoid harming the amenities of the *figlie di comun*,<sup>3</sup> for in the eyes of the general public the non-musicians might as well not have existed.

According to a set of regulations dating from 1745 or a little later the active members (*attive*) of the *coro* comprised 18 singers, eight string players, two organists, two soloists (presumably vocal) and a *maestra* (director) for each of the sections, vocal and instrumental. Fourteen 'initiates' (*iniziate*), some as young as nine years old, acted as their assistants and deputies.<sup>4</sup> The performers must often have been reinforced, especially by wind instruments, if Charles de Brosse's statement that they numbered around 40 is reliable.<sup>5</sup> A decision of 1 March 1705 permitted *figlie di coro* not belonging to the *coro* proper

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<sup>2</sup> Remo Giazotto, *Antonio Vivaldi* (Turin, 1973), pp. 374 and 375, gives brief details of two entries in the governors' minutes book (*Notatorio*) dated 4 June 1723 and 27 January 1724, which refer to the decision to have these additional stalls built and to the execution of the work: Venice, *Archivio di Stato Veneto* (ASV), Ospedali e Luoghi Pii Diversi (Osp.), Busta 691 (N.I), ff. 177 and 216.

<sup>3</sup> ASV, Osp., Busta 688 (G), f. 181 (5 June 1707; transcribed in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 354f.

<sup>4</sup> ASV, Provveditori sopra Ospedali, Busta 48. Articles 45–99 ('Del Coro') are transcribed in Giazotto, op. cit., pp. 384ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Le président De Brosse en Italie: lettres familières écrites d'Italie en 1739 et 1740*, ed. R. Colomb, vol. i (Paris, 1858), p. 194 (letter to M. De Blancey of 29 August 1739).

to take an occasional solo part if deemed worthy.<sup>6</sup> Another privilege, restricted to a dozen of the girls, was that of taking one female, fee-paying pupil from outside the Pietà. Originally, as laid down in the governors' resolution of 5 June 1707, these pupils could belong to either the noble or the citizen estate, but later – perhaps in response to the competition for places – girls from the citizenry were excluded.<sup>7</sup> The senior girls and in particular the various *maestre*, who were responsible within their designated spheres of competence (such as singing or playing stringed instruments) for maintaining discipline as well as teaching, organizing and directing performances, enjoyed other privileges. Some of them took part in musical activities outside the Pietà's walls and even outside Venice.

Tuition at the Pietà in singing, theory (*solfeggio*) and instrumental playing was organized on a pyramidal basis, the advanced girls teaching the less advanced, and the less advanced the beginners. Although the Pietà's inmates are always referred to in documents as *figlie* or *figliole* (both meaning 'girls'), the really proficient musicians among them who were loath to retire into the anonymity of marriage or the nunnery at the onset of adulthood had no option, given the exclusion of their sex (singers excepted) from the world of performing musicians, but to remain at the Pietà into middle age, to the delight of the audiences which flocked to its frequent services open to visitors and which contributed handsomely to its – and, incidentally, to the girls' – income. The 'stars' of the Pietà and the other *ospedali* ranked with the foremost virtuosi of their time in the opinion of connoisseurs. De Brosse averred of the Pietà, whose orchestra he praised above those of the other *ospedali* and even that of the Paris opera for the perfection of its ensemble, that in a certain Chiaretta it would surely possess the best violinist in all of Italy, if she were not surpassed by Anna Maria of the Ospedaletto.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, not a few of the girls must have outdone the average virtuoso in versatility. The celebrated Anna Maria of the Pietà (not her namesake just mentioned), who appears in that institution's records in 1712, 1720 (by which time she was already a *maestro*) and 1722, is claimed, in an anonymous manuscript poem on the subject of the Pietà's girls, datable at shortly before 1740, to be proficient on the harpsichord, violin, cello, viola d'amore, lute, theorbo and mandolin.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> ASV, Osp., Busta 688 (G), f. 138v; transcribed in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 352f.

<sup>7</sup> ASV, Osp., Busta 688 (G), f. 181 (5 June 1707) and Busta 691 (N.I.), f. 169 (30 April 1723).

<sup>8</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>9</sup> Venice, Museo Correr, Ms. Cicogna 1178, ff. 206–12. The poem, entitled *Sopra le putte della Pietà di coro*, is transcribed in Giazotto, op. cit., pp. 389ff.

Many girls were both expert singers and instrumentalists, a combination more common in the Baroque period (among composers, Henry Purcell, Tomaso Albinoni and Domenico Alberti possessed this double aptitude) than it became later. The range of instruments played aroused comment. De Broses wrote: '[They] play the violin, the recorder, the organ, the oboe, the cello, the bassoon; in short, there is no instrument large enough to frighten them'.<sup>10</sup> In fact, the Pietà made a speciality of unusual instruments, perhaps with the aim of attracting the curious to its services (in addition to keeping its girls from idleness). Besides those played by Anna Maria or mentioned by de Broses one can cite the chalumeau, the *viola all'inglese* and the psaltery, all of which were employed during Vivaldi's period of service, which stretched, with some breaks, from 1703 to 1740. As for other, more familiar instruments, the clarinet was introduced by 1716, the transverse flute by 1728, the horn in 1747 and timpani in 1750.<sup>11</sup> Several works by Vivaldi suggest that the trumpet was also played, although it is possible that trumpets were brought in from outside. (If they were always available, it is difficult to see why so many of Vivaldi's compositions for the Pietà simulate the sound of trumpets on oboes, clarinets and even violins.) There are a number of reasons why brass instruments were at first little favoured at the Pietà. Until the establishment of the modern orchestra later in the eighteenth century their use, unlike that of oboes and bassoons, was restricted to solo parts. Because of their specialized technique it was unlikely that a teacher of woodwind instruments could instruct the girls in them, hence the expense of a new teacher would be entailed. The governors may have considered them unladylike if not profane, for although the trumpet had long been used in sacred music as well as in pageantry, the horn was still associated with the worldly culture of courts and their favourite pastime of hunting.\*

The Pietà seems to have regarded its small staff of male teachers and instrument keepers as a necessary evil. They were required when new instruments were introduced and the girls had not yet acquired the necessary expertise, when a drop in performing standards had occurred, or when instruments had to be purchased or serviced. It has

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<sup>10</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>11</sup> Denis Arnold, 'Instruments and Instrumental Teaching in the Early Italian Conservatoires', *Galpin Society journal*, vol. xviii (1965), p. 78f, records the repair of two clarinets in 1740 (they had been used as early as 1716 in Vivaldi's *Juditha triumphans*, however) and the purchase of two horns in 1747 and two timpani in 1750. *ASV, Osp.*, Reg. 1009 (13 March 1740 and 7 December 1747) and Busta 693 (T. II), f. 42. In 1728 the Pietà reappointed Ignazio Sieber as a flute (rather than oboe) master.

been shown by Denis Arnold how eager the governors were to terminate the contract of the timpani teacher once the girls were deemed able to manage on their own;<sup>12</sup> the same must have been true of the other teachers. Between 1703 and 1740 a violin or cello master and an oboe or flute master (who between them would have supervised tuition in all the stringed and woodwind instruments), a singing master, a teacher of *solfeggio*, and two men, one to maintain the organ and the other the harpsichords, were engaged with varying degrees of continuity. An appointment, even of the *Maestro di Coro*, was tenable for one year, at the end of which it was renewed only if the incumbent obtained two-thirds of the votes cast at a meeting of the governors. As a violin teacher Vivaldi was in a disadvantageous position, for the tradition of string playing was firmly established; as a *Maestro de Concerti* (leader-cum-conductor of the orchestra) or as house composer he was less dispensable, indeed a bright feather in the Pietà's cap.

It has been suggested that the Pietà's male staff were drafted into the choir to sing tenor and bass. The idea is a little naive, for the teachers would surely have wished to maintain a social distance from their pupils. Little can be said for the other common proposition, that singers from St Mark's or other churches were brought in, for they would have been expensive to hire and probably unavailable on the main feast-days, when their services would have been needed. The records so far made available indicate that the girls themselves supplied the tenor and bass voices. In contexts where a reference to instruments is excluded one sees girls listed as 'Paulina dal Tenor' or 'Anneta dal Basso' (since nearly all the residents lacked surnames, it was logical to identify them by a combination of christian name and voice or instrument). The roll of new entrants to the *coro* dated 4 December 1707, from which the above names are taken, contains two sopranos, four contraltos, three tenors and one bass.<sup>13</sup> The tenors will have sung their parts at notated pitch,<sup>14</sup> the basses probably in the higher octave like violins or violas reading from the bass clef. Since the instrumental bass could supply the eight-foot and sixteen-foot registers (unaccompanied choral writing is hardly found in Vivaldi's church music), the result would not have been displeasing.\*

Women singing tenor and bass may have been a novelty, but men

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<sup>12</sup> Op. cit., p. 79f. *ASV*, Osp., Busta 693 (T.II), f. 50.

<sup>13</sup> *ASV*, Osp., Busta 688 (G), f. 195v; transcribed in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 357f.

<sup>14</sup> The poem cited above unflatteringly describes a certain Ambrosina as 'un tenor che contralteggia'. In fact, the aria 'Esurientes' designated for Ambrosina in one version (RV 611) of Vivaldi's *Magnificat* has her part written in the tenor clef.



singing soprano and alto were commonplace in Vivaldi's Venice, not only in churches but also in the many opera houses. (The sopranos were invariably, the altos very often, *castrati*.) Since opera was in those days Venice's main tourist attraction, the city could sustain a level of operatic activity far beyond the capability of other major centres of opera in Italy such as Naples, Bologna, Rome and Milan. The number of theatres offering opera varied from season to season, as houses burned down or were rebuilt, closed or reopened, or switched between opera and comedy, but one may gain a good idea from the statement of Luigi Riccoboni, a contemporary observer of the European operatic scene, that 'at certain seasons they play every day, and in six theatres at the same time'.<sup>15</sup> The length of an operatic run depended on the work's popularity and the place it occupied within the season's repertoire. Perhaps a record was established by G.A. Ristori's *Orlando furioso*, which ran for between 40 and 50 nights at the S. Angelo theatre during the Autumn of 1713 and had to be repeated the following Autumn.<sup>16</sup>

Venice had pioneered the opening of opera, hitherto the preserve of courts, to the general public. In 1637 the world's first public opera house, S. Cassiano, opened its doors, to be followed within a few years by those of SS. Giovanni e Paolo (1639), S. Moisè (1639), S. Angelo (1677) and S. Giovanni Grisostomo (1678), to name only those theatres which continued to accommodate operas in the next century. In most cases the name of the parish in which the theatre was situated served to identify it (the Venetians, oddly, canonized certain Old Testament prophets, hence S. Moisè, S. Samuele and S. Giobbe).

The proprietor of each theatre was a noble or group of nobles. Members of the Grimani family actually owned three theatres: SS. Giovanni e Paolo, S. Giovanni Grisostomo and S. Samuele. The proprietor normally appointed a director to take charge of the day-to-day running of the theatre, or sometimes leased it to an independent entrepreneur. The economics of opera were precarious at the best of times. An anonymous French pamphleteer wrote:

The [Italian] entrepreneurs hardly ever manage to recoup their outlay. These entrepreneurs are usually people of rank – rich people who, banding together, bring honour on themselves by making sacrifices for their com-

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<sup>15</sup> Lewis (Luigi) Riccoboni, *An Historical and Critical Account of the Theatres in Europe* (London, 1741), p. 74; translated from *Réflexions historiques et critiques sur les différens théâtres de l'Europe* (Paris, 1738).

<sup>16</sup> The librettist, Grazio Braccioli, speaks in his next libretto, *Orlando finto pazzo* (set by Vivaldi), of nearly 50 performances, while Giovanni Carlo Bonlini, *Le glorie della poesia e della musica* (Venice, 1730), p. 169, reports that the opera ran for over 40 evenings.

patriots' entertainment. If they recover their expenses, it is most often because games of chance in which they keep the bank, and which are at present tolerated, make good the deficits of the enterprise.<sup>17</sup>

Stage properties, scenery and the elaborate machinery were the least of the impresario's financial worries for, being interchangeable in large part between opera and opera, they could be regarded as fixed assets. The engaging for a season of the half-dozen or so principal singers required in every opera would prove the most expensive item in the budget, for the fees demanded by singers, particularly the pampered *castrati*, grew ever more exorbitant. If a chorus, a *corps de ballet* or extra singers for the intermezzos were required in addition, the burden would be increased in proportion. The income from ticket sales was often inadequate, since competition between the theatres kept down the price of tickets. When S. Cassiano opened in 1637, the price of a ticket of admission to an opera was four *lire*.<sup>18</sup> This price remained in force throughout the theatres until 1674, when Francesco Santurini, an impresario holding the lease of S. Moisè, lowered the price to a quarter ducat, little more than one and a half *lire*. Santurini soon ran into opposition and had to give up the lease, but in 1676 he erected an opera house of his own on a site owned by the Marcello and Cappello families. When this theatre, S. Angelo, opened one year later, the same low price was introduced. Within a few years the other theatres, with the exception of S. Giovanni Grisostomo, the largest and most magnificent of them, followed suit. By Riccoboni's time the price had climbed to only three *lire*. This sum covered admission only; an additional sum had to be paid for a seat in the pit or in a box. Many of the boxes were rented for the season, while others were virtually the property of a single family, passing from generation to generation.

The principal operatic season (in other cities generally the only season) was Carnival, which stretched from St Stephen's Day (26 December) to Shrove Tuesday. This festive season was marked by the wearing of masks by the whole of Venetian society, clergy included. A theatre would normally mount two, sometimes three, operas during Carnival. Since the season straddled two years, there was some confusion as to which year it belonged to. It was most common (and we shall follow this practice here) to take the date from the year in which the bulk of the season occurred. A work performed on 26 December 1709 would thus belong to the Carnival of 1710. Some preferred,

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<sup>17</sup> *Reflexions d'un patriote sur l'opera françois et sur l'opera italien* (Lausanne, 1754), p. 6f.

<sup>18</sup> The *ducato corrente* was equivalent to six *lire* and four *soldi* (20 *soldi* made up one *lira*).

however, to identify the season by the year in which it began; in Venice this practice was encouraged by the peculiarity of a local calendar used in legal and ecclesiastical documents, in which the start of the new year was delayed until 1 March, so that, *more veneto*, 1 January to 28 February 1709 was the same as 1 January to 28 February 1710 according to the normal calendar.

The Autumn season opened in the first week of October and continued until mid December. It was primarily a season for comedy, but from November onwards many theatres put on an opera as a foretaste of Carnival. Indeed, until the Council of Ten in 1699 decreed the closing of theatres over Christmas, the Autumn and Carnival seasons were virtually one. For purposes of identifying works by their order of performance within the season (when one sees in a score, for example, that an aria is taken from the ‘third’ work performed at S. Angelo in a given year) the Autumn opera is often to be regarded as the first work of Carnival. Since the cast lists of operas performed in the Autumn and the following Carnival seasons at the same theatre so often have a majority of names in common, it seems that where possible singers were engaged for a ‘combined’ season.

By permission of the Council of Ten one or two theatres were allowed each year to present an opera during the 15 days of the Ascensiontide Fair, a practice begun in 1720.

Although public opera was performed within well-defined seasons, dramatic works sung privately in the palaces and gardens of the nobility carried on all the year round. These works, generally of the small-scale type requiring a mere handful of singers and known as *serenata* on account of its performance under a clear sky (*sereno*), commonly celebrated the success of, or extolled the virtues of, some high-born person in whose honour they were presented. Foreign ambassadors to Venice often commissioned serenatas from local poets and composers to mark the birthday or name-day of their monarch or a member of his family.

Music of a more intimate kind was heard at ‘academies’ (*accademie*), which we should today term musical soirées or private concerts. De Brosses tells us not only that these musical occasions were frequent but also that they were eagerly overheard by the uninvited: ‘There is hardly an evening when there is not an academy somewhere. The populace rushes out onto the canal to listen to it with as much keenness as if it were for the first time.’<sup>19</sup> Used in a rather different sense, the

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<sup>19</sup> Op. cit., vol. i, p. 193.

word ‘academy’ also meant a learned society like the Accademia degli Animosi founded by the Venetian dramatist and historian Apostolo Zeno in 1691, which in 1698 became affiliated to the famous Arcadian Academy of Rome. Such academies concerned themselves mainly with literary, aesthetic and philosophical matters but did not neglect music entirely. Two of Venice’s musically most gifted dilettanti (in eighteenth-century usage the term was one of commendation rather than disparagement), the Marcello brothers Alessandro (1669–1747) and Benedetto (1686–1739), belonged to the Arcadian Academy, as did many of Italy’s best-known opera librettists.

Our far from exhaustive review of Venice’s musical life must end with an examination of how, and in what form, music was circulated. At least until the middle of the eighteenth century a musician was much more likely to perform from a manuscript than a printed copy. In Italy (perhaps less in northern Europe) music printing was a luxury industry whose products were more expensive, note for note, than the same music written out by a professional copyist. Further, the medium of print presupposed, by the very act of replicating one score or one set of parts, a uniformity of performing resources that simply did not yet exist in many areas of music. This explains in part why the genres in which the performing resources were most standardized – notably the violin sonata and concerto – were the ones favoured by music publishers. An opera house or a *cappella*, however, needed a version of a work tailored exactly to its immediate resources. The copyists employed by establishments of this kind (the Pietà retained two *figlie* for this purpose) performed a valuable service by adapting their exemplars as their instructions or experience dictated. A copyist would often be called upon to piece together an ostensibly new work (a *pasticcio*) from fragments of earlier works, not necessarily by the same composer.

Composers often employed copyists on their own behalf. One thinks of the father and son, both named John Christopher Smith, in Handel’s service. It is clear that Vivaldi worked in close association with several copyists (among them perhaps two nephews of his who belonged to the profession), for partly autograph manuscripts containing other hands besides his and non-autograph manuscripts with additions and corrections by the composer are very common.

Copyists also worked on a freelance basis, supplying their customers (who in Venice were often visiting foreigners) with the latest music. The libraries of Europe and America are full of collections of operatic arias acquired in this way; they are often in short score, shorn of

their instrumental accompaniment. Undoubtedly, most of the buyers acquiesced in these mutilations, though a real connoisseur like Charles Jennens was moved to protest when his friend Edward Holdsworth brought him some ‘songs’ in this form from Italy.

Insist on the whole scores being copied [he wrote], that if they deserve it we may have them performed on the English stage. I must therefore have the overture, songs, symphonies and recitatives entire in all their parts. I mention this so particularly, because some songs of Porpora which you brought over with you the last time you was [sic] abroad were of no use to me, the symphonies being omitted, and nothing copied but the voice part and the bass.<sup>20</sup>

The two firms which dominated Venetian music printing in Vivaldi’s lifetime were those of Giuseppe Sala and Antonio Bortoli. Sala’s period of activity runs from 1676 to 1715, that of the much less productive Bortoli from 1705 to 1764.<sup>21</sup> With rare exceptions, the Italian music-publishing industry was technically and commercially backward. Sala, Bortoli and their colleagues in other cities still employed the technique of movable type introduced by Attaignant in the early sixteenth century and, moreover, kept a fount which had remained basically unchanged ever since. In this cumbersome method each section of stave line, each note-head, each stem and each tail occupied a separate piece of type, which gave the music a broken, untidy appearance. When groups of shorter note values (increasingly common in the eighteenth century) were employed, clarity was difficult to achieve, as each note had a separate stem. The accurate placing of ties and slurs was another problem.

There is no evidence that Italian publishers sought sales outlets north of the Alps, and few of them, in their role as retailers, seem to have stocked music in any quantity published by their confrères elsewhere in Italy. This lethargy cannot have depressed their sales appreciably so long as northern Europeans (and Italians from other cities) were willing to travel to the point of production, but the rise at the end of the seventeenth century of a vigorous music-publishing industry in the north-west of the continent transformed the situation.

The doyen of north-European music publishing, Estienne Roger,

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<sup>20</sup> Letter of 10 July 1741. By ‘symphonies’ Jennens meant all the purely instrumental movements or sections.

<sup>21</sup> Dates from Claudio Sartori, *Dizionario degli editori musicali italiani (tipografi, incisori, librai-editori)* (Florence, 1958), pp. 137 and 32. On Sala’s life and career see Richard A. McGowan, ‘The Venetian Printer Giuseppe Sala: New Information based upon Archival Documents’, *Fontes artis musicae*, vol. xxxvi (1989), pp. 102–8.

who opened his firm in Amsterdam around 1697, made a practice from the very start of ‘pirating’ works published in Italy, sometimes within a year of their appearance.<sup>22</sup> Neither the composer, who had often paid for the first edition out of his own pocket (and, with luck, recouped his expenses from the dedicatee), nor the original publisher was protected by copyright legislation (save, in certain circumstances, in France and England), so there was no impediment to piracy if the publisher thought it worth while. Since the new publisher bore all the production costs, however, it was essential to achieve large sales. To this end Roger established a network of agents in the principal commercial centres of northern Europe: London, Paris, Rotterdam, Liège, Brussels, Hamburg, Cologne and Berlin. It became possible for customers to order his publications by post, identifying a work by its number quoted in his regularly updated catalogue and stamped on the plate of the respective title-page.

After Roger died in 1722, his son-in-law, Michel Charles Le Cène, carried on the business until 1743. Meanwhile, several competitors sprang up in neighbouring countries and even in Amsterdam itself, sometimes pirating works from Roger in their turn. Chief among these was John Walsh of London, who, working with a succession of associates, cornered the largest share of the British market between 1695 and 1760; but one should also mention Pierre Mortier of Amsterdam, who conducted a furious sales war with Roger between 1708 and 1711, Gerhard Fredrik Witvogel, active in Amsterdam after 1731, the younger Le Clerc in Paris and Leopold in Augsburg.

All these men used the new technique (not literally new, but applied to music for the first time on a mass scale) of engraving. This process reproduced the features of contemporary copyists’ hands (see Plate 5), including the use of beams for groups of quavers or shorter values. Neat, round note-heads replaced the ungainly lozenges. In the years following 1700 engraving was made quicker and cheaper by the substitution of pewter (a softer metal) for copper and the use, where possible, of a punch in place of a graver. One great economic advantage of having music engraved was that new issues could be drawn at will from the original set of plates without extra cost. In contrast, a printer using movable type would distribute his type after running off the first edition; the type would have to be reset for any subsequent edition of a popular work (as occurred, for example, when Albinoni’s *Sinfonie*

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<sup>22</sup> François Lesure, *Bibliographie des éditions musicales publiées par Estienne Roger et Michel-Charles Le Cène* (Paris, 1969), is the standard work on the Amsterdam publishing house.

*e concerti a cinque*, op. 2, first brought out by Sala in 1700, were republished in 1702 and 1707).

In the opening two decades of the eighteenth century Italian music publishers suffered a double blow from which they never recovered. First, the availability of the latest Italian music in northern European editions made it possible for the transalpine purchaser to satisfy his needs without setting foot in the 'land of music'. Second, Italian composers began after about 1710 to send their music directly to Amsterdam (after about 1730 to Paris), bypassing their native publishers. Hence Albinoni's op. 5 (1707) was entrusted to Sala, but his op. 6 (before 1712) to Roger. On his way back to England from Italy in 1733 Edward Holdsworth acquired for Charles Jennens in Le Cène's shop the newest collection (op. 2) of Tartini – a work probably unobtainable in the composer's own town of Padua.

The musical consequences of this shift to Amsterdam are interesting. Since those Italian composers who published abroad (primarily composers of instrumental music) had the transalpine market in mind from the beginning, a streak of cosmopolitanism – elements, for example, of the French style – crept into their music, contributing to the breakdown of barriers between the French and Italian idioms and preparing the way for the emergence of the international early classical style. But composers working in branches of music such as opera, on which publishing impinged only marginally, felt no need to broaden their style. Here, perhaps, one glimpses the beginning of the rift between Italian instrumental and vocal music, which was to lead to the attenuation of one and the provincialism of the other in the next century.