Operatic Transvestism, Disguise Roles, and Women's Sexual Agency in Handel's Operas (1727-1741)

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation offers insights into gender-bending, *travesti*, and "disguise" roles in eighteenth-century Italian *opera seria* in London, specifically in Handel's operas. These matters have been discussed at length in regards to the controversial figure of the castrato; however my writing offers particular attention to women's bodies and voices both on stage and in the public imagination. The real or perceived gendered transgressions and excesses of eighteenth-century Italian opera, rooted in the figure of the castrato and his female counterpart, the dangerously masculinized diva, were known to have provoked paranoid conspiracy theories and anxieties circulating in a wide array of English satirical pamphlets that bear a striking resemblance to modern tabloids. This dissertation offers a survey of these gendered anxieties through a series of case studies about four different Handel operas spanning his London career. I address these issues from a variety of different angles including the aforementioned satirical pamphlets and related archival materials, a feminist critique of the Enlightenment ideology of Reason, a discussion of waning mechanistic philosophies and theories of the body and subjectivity in relation to the female singer's voice and vocal agency, as well as issues pertaining to contemporary opera production and reception.

The first two chapters of this dissertation are historicist in nature, offering discussions of Handel's *Admeto* (1727) and *Partenope* (1730) respectively through the lens of English operatic satire. Chapter Two specifically engages with Henry Fielding's paranoid notion of "petticoat government" in relation to Handel's powerful self-proclaimed "Amazon" queen and her ridiculous entourage of comically impotent suitors. These operatic satires offer a window into the gendered anxieties of the time which I trace back to the threat of the emasculating heroine, in "male disguise" or otherwise. Chapter Three presents an incisive critique of the emergent Enlightenment ideology of Reason through the lens of Handel's *Alcina* (1735), in which I argue that the conquered sorceress, Alcina, stages the narrative defeat of her "magic", at the hands of a "magical ring of reason", as an ironically triumphant spectacle of vocal virtuosity. Her cross-dressing rival, Bradamante, on the other hand, remains trapped within a mindless, mechanical musical framework, reduced to a quasi-mute mouthpiece for the patriarchal Enlightenment ideology that ultimately prevails at the end of the opera. The fourth and final chapter of this dissertation situates the post-modern discourse of camp, a discourse rooted in self-parody, deliberate excess and exaggeration, and the playful distortion and deconstruction of gender stereotypes, in the eighteenth-century notion of the effeminate fop. I explore these connections in relation to the ridiculous, frivolous, and foppish mythical "hero" Achille, of Handel's last opera *Deidamia* (1741) - a male role (in female "disguise") originally composed for a female soprano - through the lens of David Alden's self-consciously campy 2012 Netherlands production. This final chapter suggests that due to the fundamental link between eighteenth-century foppery and post-modern camp, in spite of its appearances otherwise, this ultra-controversial and radical production is actually historically informed and therefore not so radical after all.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved mother, Kathy Kleftis (1959-2012). Mom, you were my biggest cheerleader and you always trusted in my ability to succeed even when I didn't trust in myself. I know that somewhere you are smiling and celebrating my successful completion of this dissertation, and the fact that I have continued to live my life even after having lost you. To quote my favorite poet e.e. cummings, "i carry your heart with me, i carry it in my heart, i am never without it, anywhere i go you go, my dear."

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**** All Figures in **Chapter Three** are still images taken from the Morabito/Wieler staging (Stuttgart 1999/2000) of *Alcina* **(see bibliography).**
*****All Figures in **Chapter Four** are still images taken from the Alden (Amsterdam 2012) staging of *Deidamia* **(see bibliography).**

INTRODUCTION

For decades, the castrato has been one of the main focuses of eighteenth-century opera research; a figure who, cloaked in his mysterious aura, continues to inspire much fear, repulsion, and awe in contemporary audiences.[1] Fueled by the anxieties about the perceived gendered transgressions of the castrato and the masculinized women surrounding him, Charles Burney, a contemporary of Handel and a self-professed connoisseur of Italian opera, depicts opera as an effeminate luxury and potentially as a (homo)sexual vice. He explicitly anthropomorphizes Italian opera as a courtesan reduced to a common whore, writing that "[t]he opera, a tawdry, expensive, and meretricious lady, who had been accustomed to high keeping, was now [in 1740] reduced to a very humble state, and unable to support her former extravagance."[2] Evidently, even for fans of Italian opera, its extravagances and excesses, both real and perceived, have provoked much cultural anxiety and controversy throughout the eighteenth century and beyond. As a symbolic figurehead for the operatic enterprise writ large, the castrato reflects these anxieties about the dangers of immorality and decadence threatening to contaminate

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[1] See: Gary C. Thomas, "'Was George Frederic Handel Gay?': On Closet Questions and Cultural Politics," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology, 2nd Edition*. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood and Thomas, Eds. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 185. Commenting on the castrato's potentially emasculating presence on stage (and in "polite" society), Thomas observes that, "[l]ike the carnival freak, the castrato was a heavily freighted signifier prompting highly ambivalent and conflictive reactions: as an exotic spectacle it seduced and entertained; as a gender-bending image of mutilated and sodomized Italian (non)masculinity it repulsed and threatened" (185).

[2] Charles Burney, "Origin of the Italian Opera in England, and its Progress there during the present Century," in *A General History of Music: From the Earliest Ages to the Present Period (1789).* Vol. II. Frank Mercer, Ed. (New York: NY: Dover Publications, 1957), 827. Maintaining this emphasis on opera as a representation of excessive luxury and decadence; see: Suzanne Aspden, "An infinity of factions': Opera in eighteenth-century Britain and the undoing of society," in *Cambridge Opera Journal* Vol. 9 no.1 (March 1997), 13. In his day, the castrato bore the brunt of attacks leveled against Italian opera and its ostensibly perverse licentiousness and/or decadence. However, in her "An Infinity of Factions", Suzanne Aspden claims that this figure reflects a more generalized anxiety, pervasive on the continent and especially in London, about the dangerously effeminate (and effeminizing) aspects of Italian opera. According to Aspden, "it was thought that the British fascination with opera was proof that the new commercial order and its concomitant espousal of self-interest were gaining a stranglehold on British society. *Luxury was the vice that defined operatic deviance*." (13, my emphasis).

noble English society from within and has continued to be a source of much debate and controversy in opera scholarship throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Although castrati frequently took center stage overshadowing their female counterparts in the opera house and beyond, their presence elicited many anxieties about women's as well as men's sexuality and/or sexual agency. In light of this, my dissertation focuses on the anxieties provoked by women's real and perceived gender transgressions in Handel's operas. It explores the ways in which they have usurped masculine authority, especially through the practice of operatic transvestism and/or the "male disguise" role. According to Roger Freitas, powerful female characters often dominated the *seria* stage, manipulating and emasculating the male heroes; sapping them of their "vital heat" and in effect castrating them as befitting their portrayal by castrated male singers. Citing Wendy Heller, Freitas specifically claims that "in the cultural imagination, the 'absorption [by female singers and/or characters] of the male characteristics almost invariably resulted in the loss of stature—and masculinity—for the men with whom they were juxtaposed."[3] Although women rarely played heroic male roles in Handel's operas unless a castrato was unavailable, the ubiquity of weak heroes (e.g.: the title character of Handel's *Admeto*, see Chapter One), and "viraginous" or castrating heroines, occasionally donning male clothing as part of a disguise, suggests that they were considered as much, if not more of, a threat to the patriarchal status quo than their male counterparts.

My research expands upon the existing Handel literature by focusing on gender and sexuality with particular attention to women's voices and bodies. These issues have

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[3] Roger Freitas, "The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque body of the castrato," *The Journal of Musicology: A quarterly review of music history, criticism, analysis, and performance practice*, Vol. 20 No.2 (Spring 2003), 237 (quoting Wendy Heller's "Chastity, Heroism, and Allure", 26-7).

been primarily addressed up to this point in terms of the castrato's sexuality and/or sexual appeal, as well as his role in eighteenth-century *opera seria* more generally (most notably in Joke Dame and Roger Freitas' work in the early 2000s).[4] However, in her article "Female Operatic Cross-Dressing (…)", Nina Treadwell offers a rare discussion of "male disguise" roles and unconventional expressions of female sexuality in eighteenth-century opera. One of the main differences between her scholarship and mine is the fact that her article approaches this convention within the context of Leonardo Vinci's Neapolitan comic operas rather in the *seria* tradition which is the focus of my study.[5] In spite of this gap in the musicological literature which has historically focused almost exclusively on the figure of the castrato (at the expense of women in *travesti* roles), there is a rich literature addressing these issues from a much broader and general perspective outside of the field of musicology. Scholars discussing the "male disguise" role both in Shakespearean and early modern theatrical traditions have argued that it usually promotes rather than challenges conventional values. Laurence Senelick and Marjorie Garber, for instance, have argued that despite appearances, this longstanding convention ultimately upholds the patriarchal status quo. Senelick claims that female characters tend to adopt

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[4] See Freitas and Joke Dame, "Unveiled Voices: Sexual Differences and the Castrato," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, Eds. (New York., NY: Routledge, 2006), 139-53. For more literature about the castrato that I engage with in this dissertation see: Todd S. Gilman, "The Italian (Castrato) in London," in *The Work of Opera: Genre, Nationhood, and Sexual Difference*. Richard Dellamora and Daniel Fischlin, Eds. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1997), 49-70; Bonnie Gordon, "The Castrato Meets the Cyborg", *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol. 27 No.1 (Winter 2011), 94-122; Beth Kowalski-Wallace, "Shunning the Bearded Kiss: Castrati and the Definition of Female Sexuality," *Prose Studies* Vol. 15 No. 2 (August 1992), 153-70; John Rosselli,"The castrati as a professional group and a social phenomenon, 1550-1850," *Acta musicologica* Vol. 60 No. 2 (1988), 143-79; Liberty Smith "'There will be all the world there': Sexual Trouble and the Fans of Castrati in Henry Fielding's *The Historical Register*," in *The Public's Open to Us All: Essays on Women and Performance in Eighteenth-Century England*. Laura Engel, Ed. (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 55-72; and Thomas.

[5] See Nina Treadwell, "Female Operatic Cross-Dressing: Bernardo Saddumene's Libretto for Leonardo Vinci's *Li zite 'n galera* (1722)", *Cambridge Opera Journal* Vol. 10 No. 2 (July 1998), 131-56.

gender-bending disguises in order to facilitate their pursuit of straying lovers (which is the case in three of the operas I discuss, *Admeto*, *Partenope*, and *Alcina*) and/or in order to "guarantee safe travel."[6] He also notes that the masculine costume was generally quite revealing and as such was exploited to heighten the sexual appeal of women on stage; thereby contributing to the historical association of the acting profession with prostitution and the "disguise role's" underlying current of objectifying women and catering to the "male gaze."[7]

Drawing inspiration from what Martha Feldman has termed *opera seria*'s fundamental "tension between fixity and license",[8] I argue that in spite of these hyper-conventional aspects of the "male disguise" role it does have subversive potential. In other words, like the *opera seria* tradition, the "male disguise" role and transvestism in the broader sense of the term constantly vacillate between these polar extremes;

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[6] In Ibid., 135, 141. According to Treadwell, "[t]he necessity for Belluccia [in Vinci's *La zite* Neapolitan *commedia*] to cross-dress in order to undertake her journey has a non-theatrical correlative: cross-dressing enabled a woman to travel alone without jeopardising her chastity (or even her life)" (135). Reiterating this claim later in her article she argues that, "[c]rossdressing was also a practical consideration for women who travelled distances; it was virtually unthinkable for a women to travel alone *as a woman*" (141, my emphasis). For further discussion about the practical reasons for adopting a "male disguise", as well as a more generalized account of this theatrical convention, see: Jonathan Dollimore, "Early Modern: Cross-Dressing in Early Modern England," in *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), 284-306; Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992); and Laurence Senelick "Part III: The mannish and the unmanned," in *The Changing Room: Sex, drag, and theatre* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000), 143-270, etc. For a Shakespeare-oriented account of theatrical cross-dressing, see: Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann,"Cross-dressing and performance in disguise," in *Shakespeare and the Power of Performance: Stage and Page in the Elizabethan Theatre* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 117-38 and Weimann, "Textual Authority and Performative Agency: The Uses of Disguise in Shakespeare's Theater," *New Literary History* Vol. 25 No.4, 25th anniversary issue (part 2). (Autumn, 1994), 789-808.

[7] See Senelick, "Breeches Birth," 211, 212. Senelick claims that, **"**the breeches role was first and foremost an effective means of sexual display. What a Victorian commentator was to call 'the leg-itimate drama' came into its own: again and again, prologues and epilogues spoken by actresses in breeches direct the audience's attention to their nether regions" (211). More specifically he observes that, "[m]ale clothes enhanced the actress' charms, and advertised her availability…[T]he costume was always meant to transmit the actress' most womanly attributes: her breasts, hips, thighs and calves" (212).

[8] See Martha Feldman, "Evenings at the Opera," in *Opera and Sovereignty: Transforming Myths in Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 22.

simultaneously upholding and subverting traditional values and gender norms. Corroborating this notion, Lesley Ferris claims that "[t]heatrical cross-dressing has provided one way of playing with liminality and its multiple possibilities and extending that sense of the possible to the spectator/reader; a way of play, that while often reinforcing the social mores and status quo, carries with it the possibility for exposing that liminal moment, that threshold of questioning, that slippery sense of a mutable self."[9] In any case, by extending cross-dressing to the level of narrative as well as performance, I argue that the "disguise" role enables Handel's singers to self-consciously engage in an otherwise conventional practice; blurring the boundaries between performance and libretto, performer and character in dangerous and provocative ways. Evidently, the subversive gender politics and playfulness of Handel's operas extend far beyond the purview of the timeless "castrato question", warranting a far more nuanced discussion of female sexuality and/or sexual agency than has hitherto been offered in relation to his powerful sorceresses (among them, Alcina,), *travesti*, and "male disguise" roles alike.

This dissertation explores powerful expressions of female sexuality and operatic cross-dressing in four Handel operas that vary immensely in style and tone, veering from magical and mythical to ironic, campy comedy. It is structured around four case studies, specifically four operas which feature "disguise" roles, namely *Admeto* (1727), *Partenope* (1730), *Alcina* (1735), and *Deidamia* (1741), which span the length of Handel's London career. In each chapter I raise provocative questions about women's sexual and vocal agency as seen and heard in the eighteenth-century Italian operatic

[9] See Lesley Ferris, "Introduction: Current Crossings," in *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross-dressing*, Ferris, Ed. (New York, NY: Routledge 1993, repub. 2005), 9.

tradition in London. I specifically attribute the vocal agency of Handel's singers to the unique capacity of the human voice to blur boundaries between self and other, body and outside world, and performer and audience (a particularly hazy boundary in eighteenth-century theater).[10] These boundary-defying qualities of the human voice enabled Handel's divas, from Faustina Bordoni as Alceste in *Admeto* to Anna Strada del Po as Alcina (in his opera by the same name), to pose a threat to and critique of the emerging Enlightenment ideology of masculine reason. In other words, the commanding qualities of these women's extraordinarily virtuosic voices empowered them; imbuing them with an authoritative presence even as their characters' perceived gendered transgressions were contained and silenced in accordance with both longstanding *seria* conventions (e.g.: the obligatory *lieto fine*) and the reactionary, conservative demands of the time.

Shifting my attention away from this discussion of the boundary-defying qualities of the human voice, I address similar anxieties provoked by the inherently porous boundary between stage and audience in eighteenth-century theatrical and operatic traditions; traditions that are notably lacking in the relatively modern notion of the "fourth wall." For instance, an operatic satire which I discuss at length in the first chapter literalizes this collapsing of boundaries between spectator and spectacle, male and female, through its paranoid fantasy of "men turning into women, and women turning into men."[11] In this pamphlet**,** *An Epistle to the most Learned Doctor W—d---d; from a*

[10] Kristina Straub. *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 4. According to Straub, "the 'civilizing' of the eighteenth-century London theater was an ongoing process throughout most of the century, during which the boundaries between spectator and spectacle are as continually violated as they are asserted" (4).

[11] Jill Campbell, "'When Men Women Turn': Gender Reversals in Fielding's Plays," in *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross-dressing*, Leslie Ferris, Ed. (New York, NY: Routledge 1993, repub. 2005), 59-60. See below the Henry Fielding quote I have loosely paraphrased above: "For when Men Women turn – why

Prude… (1723),[12] operagoer and impressionable young woman, "Prudentia", suddenly sprouts a penis upon watching the renowned castrato, Senesino, lose his. Both "Prudentia" and her undesired "penis" serve as a cautionary tale exploiting the pervasive fear that, if gone unchecked, the emasculation of the castrati and the corresponding masculinization of singers like Faustina could all too easily spread off stage, contaminating the impressionable women (and men) in the theater. Evidently, the perceived sexual transgressions of the early eighteenth-century operatic stage were considered dangerous contagions that could easily pass from performer to spectator. Reinforcing this notion of the dangerously porous boundary between the stage and everyday life, Lisa Freeman goes so far as to say that "the extent to which an actor or actress in the eighteenth century could be said to be 'in character' at all represents a point of critical debate."[13] As evidenced by both this pamphlet and Freeman's observations about eighteenth-century conceptions of "character", any gendered transgressions occurring within the confines of a theatrical (or operatic) performance were paralleled, or at least believed to be paralleled, by similar transgressions off stage.

Each chapter of this dissertation addresses these questions about the vocal and sexual agency of Handel's heroines, both cross-dressing and otherwise, from a variety of different angles. My first two chapters maintain a historicist focus, engaging closely with

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then, May Women not be changed to Men?" (Campbell 59-60, quoting Henry Fielding's 1728 satirical play, *The Masquerade*).

[12] Prudentia, John Gay, and James Carson, *An Epistle to the Most Learned Doctor W--D----D [i.e. Woodward], from a Prude, That Was Unfortunately Metamorphos'd on Monday the 25th. Day of March, 1723.* Dublin: Printed by J. Carson, in Coghill's-Court, Dame's-Street, 1723, 4. The authorship of this pamphlet is unclear; the document was signed at the end by "Prudentia", though it was attributed to Gay in the Wrenn catalogue (without further substantiation), before being printed by Carson.

[13] Lisa A. Freeman, "Staged Identities: It's Just a Question of Character," in *Character's Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 18.

archival materials in order to explore the complicated and deeply ambivalent eighteenth-century English reception of Handel's operas. Chapter One focuses on a small sampling of widely circulating satirical pamphlets targeting the opera in order to shed light on the anxieties provoked by the masculine stage presence (and voice) of Faustina Bordoni in Handel's popular *Admeto*. Chapter Two maintains this focus on English operatic satires, exploring Handel's *Partenope* through the lens of Henry Fielding's derisive notion of "petticoat government"; yet another manifestation of the many paranoid fears provoked by women usurping masculine authority both on stage and off. In other chapters I shed light on these issues from a decidedly modern or even post-modern perspective; most notably in Chapter Four. In this concluding chapter, I bridge the gap between eighteenth-century and contemporary audiences and discourses by exploring the ways in which a recent, controversial production of Handel's final opera, *Deidamia*, sheds light on the eighteenth-century notion of the effeminate fop (similar to the late nineteenth-century, dandy) through the lens of post-modern camp.

Considering the broad scope of this dissertation, it speaks to a wide range of scholarly audiences. These audiences range from musicologists to feminist and queer theorists interested in questions of gender and power from both modern and historical perspectives, performance (and media) studies scholars interested in questions about contemporary opera production both on stage and on screen, and researchers invested in digging into the archive. The first two chapters engage with archival material, placing it in dialogue with musical analysis in order to shed light on reception history and the anxieties provoked by the powerful presence of women on the operatic stage. The third chapter, arguably the most traditional, offers an incisive critique of the Enlightenment

ideology of reason through the lens of an opera which I argue simultaneously chronicles the downfall of a dangerous sorceress and revels in the enchanting powers of her voice. The fourth chapter in particular contributes to recent shifts in musicological research, shifting even further away from text-centered approaches focused on illuminating the composer's intent than the first three chapters. This final chapter opens the musicological and operatic discourse(s) to a much more inclusive network of vocal agents and interpreters; a network of agents and interpreters that ranges from stage directors to the singers bringing these eighteenth-century operas and characters back to life for modern audiences.

Chapter One: *Admeto* (1727)

The first chapter of this dissertation explores Faustina Bordoni's cross-dressing role of Alceste, having adopted a "male disguise" in the second Act of Handel's *Admeto,* through the lens of Felicity Nussbaum's notion of eighteenth-century English actresses' "self-fashioning" practices. According to Nussbaum, through these practices (e.g. commissioning portraits and writing autobiographies) actresses and singers, like Kitty Clive, an occasional Handel collaborator, began to claim authorship of their public personas; contributing to eighteenth-century London's nascent celebrity culture.[14] This notion of women seizing ownership of their public and private personas inevitably sparked many paranoid anxieties about the threat posed by their increased agency to the patriarchal status quo. Furthermore, these paranoid anxieties surface prominently in a series of heavily circulating anonymous satirical pamphlets, all of which target (and

[14] See Felicity Nussbaum, *Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theater* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

ridicule) the dangerous gendered transgressions facilitated by Italian opera; especially its masculinized heroines and their quite literally castrated, castrato counterparts. Many of these satires explicitly mention Faustina, depicting her as aggressive, predatory, and masculine. One even goes so far as to call Faustina a prostitute or "quean", demonstrating how anxious men often dismissed women's "self-fashioning" potential in these derogatory terms in a blatant denial of their personal and professional agency. My discussion of both the satires and Handel's *Admeto* sheds light on the deep-seated anxieties, at best ambivalence, they jointly express about Faustina's (and Alceste's) ostensibly castrating vocal and stage presence as well as the threat she and Italian opera more broadly pose to the eighteenth century's crumbling sense of an English national virility.

I contend that Alceste repeatedly presents herself as a far more viable heroic figure than any of the men on stage with her, including the title character, Admeto, and his mentor, the mythical Hercules (or Ercole). Although not explicitly mentioned in the satirical pamphlets, Alceste's usurpation of masculine authority crystallizes in the opera's order-restoring final scene at which point she seizes the old-fashioned *deus ex machina* convention from the opera's comically impotent "god", Ercole; claiming this authoritative godlike presence for herself. From a musical standpoint, I attribute these dangerous, masculine aggressions to the singer, Faustina's, purportedly aggressive, "hard and piercing", deviation from traditionally soft and feminine vocal stylings (according to several vocal treatises of the time).[15] Focusing on two of Alceste's (and Faustina's)

[15] For direct quotes from the vocal treatises of Friedrich Agricola and Luigi Riccoboni regarding the reputed, masculine "hardness" and edge of Faustina's voice see page 35 of Chapter One of this dissertation.

contrasting arias, her seemingly unprovoked and out-of-place "rage" Act I aria, "Gelosia spietata, Aletto" and her equally out-of-place Act III pastoral idyll, "Là dove gli occhi io giro", I explore the ways in which Handel's musical language subtly contains Alceste's gendered transgressions while providing Faustina with a vehicle to display her inimitable virtuosity and a tamed version of her uniquely aggressive, gender-defying vocal style. Throughout this opera, much like the satirical pamphlets, Handel betrays a profound ambivalence about Alceste's usurpation of the title of "hero"; finding ways to subtly silence and subdue her character without literally depriving Faustina of her voice.

Chapter Two: *Partenope* (1730)

Continuing in the vein of the first chapter, Chapter Two similarly uses operatic satire as a lens through which to interpret Handel's *Partenope*. I specifically invoke the notion of "petticoat government" which repeatedly surfaces in Henry Fielding's many satirical plays in my discussion of the title character, Partenope. Handel's queen reigns over her court by manipulating her many, competing male suitors with seductive promises. Her ruling tactic resonates with Fielding's notion of "petticoat government" in which political concerns are reduced to domestic (or romantic) squabbles, presumably at the hands of a woman like Partenope.[16] My argument specifically focuses on an interpretation of both a recent Copenhagen staging and the music of Partenope's Act I aria, "Io ti levo l'impero dell'armi", in which she defiantly seizes command over her troops; proclaiming herself an "Amazon" and the impotent men who surround her, her "champions." Throughout this aria, the singer portraying Partenope subtly manipulates

[16] See Jill Campbell, *Natural Masques: Gender and Identity in Fielding's Plays and Novels*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).

the musical conventions which attempt but fail to contain her while only feigning to relinquish her power and authority, handing them (alongside her heart) to her suitor, Arsace. I then turn to a discussion of additional scenes and characters that solidify this opera's association with the looming threat of "petticoat government." Drawing inspiration from the buffoonish qualities of his music and the farcical battle sequence he provokes, I contend that although Partenope's seductive power as "petticoat queen" poses a threat to the patriarchal status quo, the main source of this threat is not her but rather her suitor, Emilio, one of the opera's main vehicles for comic relief.

In the second half of this chapter I explore the notion of a "male disguise" role as a means of establishing a sharp contrast between Partenope and her cross-dressing rival Rosmira's respective means of controlling and/or "commanding" men. Rosmira relies on a "male disguise" to manipulate and blackmail her straying lover; however, this masquerade ultimately fails her (its failure foreshadowed by the underlying vulnerability of her rather pompous and bold, self-aggrandizing aria that closes the first Act). Although she doesn't literally "wear the pants," I argue that Partenope, on the other hand, establishes a commanding presence in much subtler and far more effective ways. Handel's operatic adaptation of this popular eighteenth-century libretto also sets a precedent for this chapter's focus on Partenope rather than Rosmira. Whereas earlier operas, like Leonardo Vinci's Neapolitan *commedia* entitled *La Rosmira Fedele* (1725) which is based on the same Stampiglia libretto, zero in on Rosmira's character (her disguise driving the plot above anything else); Handel's *Partenope* repeatedly claims

center stage.[17] This decisive shift of focus away from Rosmira toward Partenope lends itself to both the libretto's continuous exaltation of Partenope and the music's portrayal of Partenope as a traditionally (even stereotypically) feminine woman imbued with a commanding and seductive presence. Unlike her cross-dressing rival who attempts and ultimately fails to conceal her femininity, Partenope revels in her femininity and her sex appeal; wielding both as seductive weapons in love and in the battlefield. The contrast I establish between Handel's two heroines reinforces my central claim that even in an opera that heavily features a "male disguise" role, a woman does not need to masquerade as a man in order to reclaim her agency, assert her authority, or make herself heard.

Chapter Three: *Alcina* (1737)

Chapter Three discusses one of Handel's most well-known and frequently performed operas, *Alcina* (1735). It is one of three "magic" operas, the others being *Orlando* (1733) and *Ariodante* (1734), based on episodes or "cantos" of the Renaissance epic poem *Orlando Furioso* (1516) by Ludovico Ariosto.[18] This opera stages a violent clash between magic and reason, culminating in reason ironically being reinstated via a magical ring that enables its wearer, Ruggiero, to release himself from Alcina's spell which has ensnared countless, hapless men before him. By using magic to undo another form of magic and restore reason by means of its antithesis, Handel's opera undermines the Enlightenment ideology it promotes on a surface level. In this chapter, I focus on a

[17] For a comprehensive list of Vinci operas, including his 1725 *La Rosmira Fedele*, see: Kurt Markstrom. "Vinci, Leonardo." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed February 26, 2016, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/29423.
[18] See Winton Dean, "Alcina," in *Handel's Operas: 1726-1741* (Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2006), 315.

discussion of Alcina's tour-de-force Act II aria "Ombre Pallide" in which she resigns herself to the loss of her magical powers from a narrative standpoint. From a musical standpoint, however, the sheer vocal power of the singer portraying Alcina enables her to prevail against all odds. By blurring the boundaries between "cantare" and "incantare" (to sing and to enchant)[19] and invoking Martha Feldman's notion of the *opera seria* ritual as a form of magic in its own right, Anna Strada del Po's (re)imagined performance of this aria sheds light on the irrational absurdity of one form of magic being pitted against another in the name of "Reason."

Alcina's fundamental tension between magic and reason also informs the tension and power struggle between femininity and masculinity, including female masculinity. This struggle manifests in the stark opposition of Alcina and her cross-dressed rival for Ruggiero's affections, Bradamante (disguised as her brother, Ricciardo). I contend that Alcina manages to rise above her miserable fate from a musical (and vocal) standpoint, pushing back against her character's imminent defeat in the pursuit of Enlightenment reason. Her rival, Bradamante, on the other hand, remains trapped within a mindless, exaggeratedly mechanical musical framework exemplified by her Act I "rage" aria "Vorrei Vendicarmi." The mechanical qualities of her music, which I attribute to the notion of mindless mimicry decried by Tosi in his contemporaneous vocal treatise,[20]

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[19] See Martha Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty: Transforming Myths in Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2007). For Feldman's comment about the porous boundary between "cantare" (to sing") and "incantare" (to enchant) see the following quote; "among travelers and gazetteers who reported on Italian theaters, arias were perpetually troped as magic. For these commentators, lyric singing could weave spells on distracted audiences, reflexively intertwining the arts of *cantare* and *incantare*, singing and enchanting" (25).

[20] See Pier Francesco Tosi, *Anleitung zur Singkunst*, Johann Friedrich Agricola, trans. *Introduction to the art of singing*. Julianne Baird, trans. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

endless repetition and/or singing "only…what [she] is programmed to repeat,"[21] ultimately strip her of both agency and voice. I also engage closely with recent literature about mechanism and eighteenth-century musical automata (e.g.: Kara Reilly, Minsoo Kang and especially Adelheid Voskuhl),[22] as a means of juxtaposing the Enlightenment critique of this mechanistic ideal with the exaggeratedly mechanical nature of Bradamante's music. Although Bradamante plays a central role in restoring rational order to Alcina's realm at the sorceress' expense; the mechanical nature of her music reduces her to a strangely mute mouthpiece for this insidious Enlightenment ideology; making it abundantly clear that the fantasy of "Reason" is far more dangerous than any spell that Alcina could ever cast.

Chapter Four: *Deidamia* (1741)

My final case study, Handel's last opera *Deidamia* (1741), features a "disguise" role with a unique twist. The young Greek Achille, a male role written for the soprano Miss Edwards, *en travesti*, involves an elaborate "female disguise" which functions as Achille's means of protecting himself from his prophesied death in the Trojan War. This chapter explores Achille's multi-layered gender-bending "disguise" through the lens of the post-modern discourse of camp with a specific focus on David Alden's recent, self-consciously campy Netherlands production (2012).[23] The crux of my argument centers on

[21] See Kara Reilly, "From Aristocrats to Autocrats," in *Automata and mimesis on the stage of theatre history* (New York, NY: Palgrove Macmillan, 2011), 105.
[22] See Reilly; Minsoo Kang, *Sublime Dreams of Living Machines: The Automaton in the European Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); and Adelheid Voskuhl, *Androids in the Enlightenment: Mechanics, Artisans, and Cultures of the Self* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).
[23] See David Alden, *Deidamia*, Conducted by Ivor Bolton. Waldron, Heathfield, East Sussex, U.K.: Opus Arte, 2012.

Achille's, disguised as "Pirra's", Act II aria "Si, m'appaga, si, m'aletta", which playfully highlights the contradictions between Achille's multiple levels of cross-dressing (in the libretto and in performance). During this scene, "Pirra" playfully revels in traditionally masculine pastimes like the hunt, seemingly betraying his/her "true" male identity. However, I argue that the music's light, jaunty, and dancelike qualities, which Alden capitalizes upon in his comically coquettish choreography and vision of the scene, further blur the inherently hazy boundaries between masculine and feminine, "copy" and "original." Both Handel's music and Alden's campy staging exaggerate the femininity and sex appeal of the singer, thereby contradicting the character, Achille's, surface level reclaiming of his masculinity. Additionally, this aria crystallizes the image of Achille as a narcissistic, self-absorbed, effeminate fop whose masculine posturing as "hunter" is presented as a far more ridiculous masquerade than the character's masquerade as a woman.

My discussion of Achille as an absurd caricature of the quintessential *opera seria* hero enables me to historicize camp, a phenomenon rooted in irony, self-parody, and the playful exaggeration of gender stereotypes, by recasting it as a post-modern refashioning of the notion of the eighteenth-century fop.[24] Not only is the effeminate and much-derided figure of the fop often discussed in camp-like terms of extravagance, excessive refinement, vapidity and affectation; but this connection between camp and Achille's foppery and/or comically affected masculine posturing reinforces Susan Sontag's claim

[24] For literature about camp, see: Fabio Cleto, "Introduction: Queering the Camp," in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader*, Fabio Cleto, Ed. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999, reprint 2002), 1-42. See also the following contributions to this anthology: Mark Booth,"*Campe-Toi!* On the Origins and Definitions of Camp," in Ibid., 66-79; Pamela Robertson, "What Makes the Feminist Camp?" in Ibid., 266-82.; and Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp," in ibid., 53-65.

that camp has its roots in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[25] In light of this connection, Alden's seemingly radical, "unsettling", post-modern production is actually historically informed. Further invoking David Levin's notion of the fundamentally "unsettled" or "unsettling" qualities of opera, I argue that Alden's self-consciously campy production heightens the internal contradictions built into *Deidamia*'s multiple, competing layers of signification.[26] The internal contradictions and discrepancies between stage and sound, text and music, performer and character come to a head in the convoluted gender-bending disguises of Achille which playfully contradict each other at the competing levels of narrative and performance (culminating in his aforementioned aria, "Sì, m'appaga" in praise of the hunt).

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[25] See Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp'", in Ibid., 56-7. In her thirteenth note on "Camp", Sontag writes that "[t]he dividing line seems to fall in the eighteenth century; there the origins of Camp taste are to be found (Gothic novels, Chinoiserie, caricature, artificial ruins, and so forth). But the relation to nature was quite different then. In the eighteenth century, people of taste either patronized nature…or attempted to remake it into something artificial (Versailles)…" (56-7). See also Mark Booth, "*Campe-Toi*! On the Origins and Definitions of Camp," in Ibid., 76. Booth argues that "Camp people look back on Louis XIV's Versailles as a sort of camp Eden, a self-enclosed world devoted to divertissements, to dressing-up, showing off, and scandal…" (76). For literature about eighteenth-century conceptions of effeminacy and the figure of the fop, see: Michèle Cohen and Tim Hitchcock, "Introduction", in *English Masculinities: 1660-1800*, Cohen and Hitchcock, Eds. (New York: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd, 1999), 1-22; Cohen, "Manliness, effeminacy and the French: gender and the construction of national character in eighteenth-century England," in Ibid., 44-61; Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National identity and language in the eighteenth century* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (London: Pearson Education Ltd., 2001), see especially the fourth chapter entitled "Effeminacy, foppery, and the boundaries of polite society" (Carter, 124-62); and Carter, "Men about town: representations of foppery and masculinity in early eighteenth-century urban society," in *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations, and Responsibilities*, Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus, Eds. (New York: Wesley Longman Ltd., 1997), 31-57.

[26] David Levin, "Preface" and "Dramaturgy and Mise-en-Scène," in *Unsettling Opera: Staging Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, and Zemlinsky* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), xi-xii, 1. According to Levin, "opera…is [fundamentally] unsettled, and…stage performance, at its best, clarifies this condition and brings opera in its unsettledness to life" (1). Levin expounds upon this "unsettledness" in performance, claiming that his ideal performance offers a "cogent account of excess…that does not simply alert us to but indeed clarifies an opera's specific incongruities, the precise terms of its contradictions" (xi-xii).

CHAPTER ONE

CROSS-DRESSING HEROINES AND RIVAL "QUE[A]NS": HANDEL'S *ADMETO* AND LONDON'S OPERATIC SATIRE

Introduction: Heroine as "hero": Alceste, a *deus ex machina* in "male disguise"

Towards the end of Handel's 1727 opera, *Admeto*, the cross-dressing heroine Alceste appears as a *deus ex machina*, seizing the archetypal hero Ercole/Hercules' claim to this divine act and saving her inconstant husband's life for the second time. In the opera's final scene, Alceste's entrance as savior enables her to usurp Ercole's masculine authority, making a mockery of his late arrival and his ironic claim that he has made it "just in time" to save the day only moments after she has already done so.[27] This humorously anticlimactic moment also illuminates the Venetian *seicento* influences on this opera, reinforcing its characteristic, playful and irreverent treatment of the gods.[28] However, Alceste not only irreverently mocks the godlike figure, but she claims his divine heroism as her own, flipping this outdated operatic model of heroism on its head. In *Admeto*, the libretto demonstrates how she repeatedly surpasses her male counterparts in terms of her heroic valor, reversing gender stereotypes and appearing as a knight in shining armor (via her "male disguise") to her husband's damsel in distress.

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[27] Anonymous and George Frederic Handel, "*Admeto*, Re di Tessaglia," in *The Librettos of Handel's Operas: A Collection of Seventy-One Librettos Documenting Handel's Operatic Career*, Vol.5, Ellen T. Harris, Ed. And Intro. (New York, NY: Garland Publishing Inc., 1989), 150-1. Ercole's amusing announcement of his late heroic entrance occurs as follows; "I'm hither opportunely come, and just in Season" (*Opportuno quì giungo*). Although this line is quite liberally paraphrased in this particular translation; my more literal translation confirms its/his overarching message, "fortunately, here I arrive/here I am."

[28] Regarding the eighteenth-century shift from the previous century's "playfully irreverent treatment of the gods" to a humorless pro-Absolutist depiction of the King as divinely ordained, see;
Martha Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty: Transforming Myths in Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2007), 129, 134.

On the surface Handel's opera establishes Alceste as a model of heroic virtue; however, in conjunction with satirical pamphlets of the time the music conveys anxieties about the emasculating potential of her unparalleled heroism. These satires collectively offer a glimpse into eighteenth-century English concerns about women's gendered transgressions. They offer a lens through which I view the similar concerns surfacing in Handel's *Admeto* in response to his controversial, cross-dressing heroine. Although only one of these satires explicitly references Handel's opera, all of them portray the singer, Faustina, as a dangerously aggressive and predatory figure. One in particular, *An Epistle from F----a to a Lady* (1727), penned in "Faustina's" imagined voice, offers an ironic paean to her androgynous sex appeal while comparing her to the notorious sixteenth-century pornographer, "*Aretin*[o]."[29] Via this reference, this satire engages in both a titillating fantasy and cautionary account of the diva's imagined lesbian affair with an anonymous female admirer, simultaneously reveling in and condemning the potential homoeroticism of her character's "male disguise."

These satires convey deep-seated anxieties about Faustina's presumed cultivation of an aggressive and masculine stage presence, completely disregarding the fact that she actually had very limited control over how she presented herself and was perceived by the London public. In discussing these anxieties, my chapter closely engages with

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[29] Signora F----a , *An Epistle from S-----a F------a to a Lady*, printed in the Year M.DCC.XXVII (Venice, London 1727), in the Eighteenth Century Collections Online, http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.its.virginia.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=viva_uva&tabID=T001&docId=CW111293507&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE (accessed September 18, 2014), 2.
Note the "fictitious imprint"; this document has been erroneously attributed to Signora F-----a (Faustina) but appears to have been anonymously authored like the majority of satirical pamphlets dating from this time. For more about Pietro Aretino, see: Bonnie Gordon, "The convergence of love and sex in madrigals," in *Monteverdi's Unruly Women: The Power of Song in Early Modern Italy* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 76, 97.

Felicity Nussbaum's recent theory of eighteenth-century actresses' practices of "self-fashioning" in her *Rival Queens* (2010). [30] I extrapolate her theory to an operatic context in which I argue that singers, like Faustina, cultivate unique (and, in her case, controversial) vocal styles as a musical vehicle for "self-fashioning." By expanding upon Nussbaum's theory with the added element of sound, I place this "self-fashioning" practice in the voices and bodies of the women themselves; enhancing its capacity to imbue them (e.g.: Faustina) with agency and/or an authoritative presence. According to Nussbaum, through these practices (e.g. commissioning portraits and writing autobiographies) actresses and singers, like Kitty Clive (an occasional Handel collaborator), began to claim authorship of their public personas, contributing to eighteenth-century London's nascent celebrity culture. In the conclusion of this chapter I discuss this phenomenon at greater length, arguing that by invoking the epilogue tradition of Restoration theatre, which Nussbaum posits as a common vehicle for "self-fashioning",[31] the 1727 satirical farce, *The Contre Temps*, embraces a practice which it had previously dismissed as a form of prostitution, reducing Handel's "rival queens" to "*queans*" (a pun based on an archaic term for prostitutes).[32] This satirical epilogue imbues "Senesino" with the "self-fashioning" potential which the London public

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[30] Felicity Nussbaum, *Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theater* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

[31] In Ibid., 175. See Nussbaum's her discussion of occasional Handel collaborator, Kitty Clive's, "self-fashioning" via "epilogues [offering]…audacious comic or satiric commentary, both feminist and misogynist, regarding the status of women" (175).

[32] "quean, n.". *OED Online*. September 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/156192?redirectedFrom=quean (accessed September 18, 2014). The Oxford English Dictionary defines "quean", an obsolete slur against women commonly used in the 16th-17th centuries, as, "1. Originally: a woman, a female. Later: a bold or impudent woman; a hussy; spec. a prostitute."

evidently feared in Faustina, seizing her authoritative voice and "self-fashioning" persona (e.g. as the masculine Alceste) and turning both against her.

Through the lens of the satirical pamphlets' external means of undermining Faustina's perceived "self-fashioning" as an aggressive, predatory figure, the remainder of this chapter illuminates the ways in which *Admeto* musically subdues and contains her character's gendered transgressions. My argument centers on the juxtaposition of Alceste's disruptive and seemingly unprovoked Act II rage aria, "Gelosia spietata, Aletto" with the equally out-of-context and out-of-character Act III aria, "Là dove gli occhi io giro." I argue that the latter offers a bizarre pastoral idyll in lieu of the "rage" aria which would, at this point in the *dramma*, finally be justified. That said, the aria doesn't completely dismiss her role as "hero", but rather softens it by invoking her rival's more traditionally feminine, and therefore less threatening, vocal persona. Furthermore, a comment Alceste makes in the recitative preceding the aria explicitly refers to this scene as her means of "conquering" herself and her earlier rage.[33] This comment reinforces while subtly ironizing the Metastasian notion of the "self-conquering" hero[34] promoted by Ercole in his moralizing aria just a few scenes earlier. Through my discussion of these two, mutually contradicting arias I argue that, like the satirical pamphlets, Handel's opera betrays a profound ambivalence about Alceste's usurpation of the title of "hero"; finding

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[33] Anon. and Handel, "*Admeto*, Re di Tessaglia," in *The Librettos of Handel's Operas*, 142-3.
The original Italian text is as follows; "Ah! Con ragione il Core, Da gelosia crudel vien tormentato; Ma con giusto rigore, Io schernirla saprò, Admeto amato." This is loosely paraphrased, in the original English translation of the libretto, as "Alas! No Wonder now, my Suff'ring Heart, It thus with cruel Jealousy tormented, But yet with just Resentment armed, I'll strive to conquer it." Note that this interpretation misleadingly translates "schernir(e)" as "to conquer" rather than "to mock" or "to scorn", which would be a more literal translation.

[34] For a discussion of the Metastasian notion of the "self-conquering" hero, in vogue in the 1730s-40s, see; Corbett Bazler. 2013. "Reforming Handel", in *The Comedies of Opera Seria: Handel's Post-Academy Operas, 1738-1744*. Dissertation, Columbia University, 116-61 (see especially pp. 122-7).

ways to subtly silence and subdue her character without literally depriving Faustina of her voice.

"Virtuous Prudes", pregnant castrati, and Amazonian divas: Satirical portrayals of Faustina and Italian Opera in London

London's satirical pamphlets betray many anxieties about the gender transgressions facilitated by Italian opera, which, in the case of *Admeto,* are rooted in Alceste's adoption of a "male disguise" enabling her to usurp the masculine authority of both Admeto and his heroic mentor, Ercole. On one hand, as Kristina Straub argues, the "male disguise" convention itself was not considered particularly subversive, instead serving to highlight the cross-dressing singer's feminine sexual appeal "for the arousal and/or gratification of heterosexual male desire."[35] On the other hand, the gender inversion facilitated by such "disguises", however commonplace or even cliché, raises the fear that "[t]he masculinized woman [wa]s, literally, a mirror image of the castrated man,"[36] her masculine presence sapping the already compromised virility of the men or castrati surrounding her. These anxieties about theatrical gender-bending inform the many pamphlets' depictions of Faustina, rather than the masculine-identified characters she portrays, as a sexually aggressive and predatory figure; blatantly ignoring the fact that the singer herself "was…reported to be a genteel and pleasant woman."[37] Their failure, or perhaps refusal, to distinguish between Faustina's on- and off-stage "characters" establishes a tangled web between them. This conflation of singer and character (or role)

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[35] Kristina Straub, "The Guilty Pleasures of Female Theatrical Cross-Dressing and the Autobiography of Charlotte Charke," in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity,* Julia Epstein and Straub, Eds. (New York: NY: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1991), 145.
[36] In Ibid., 153.
[37] Suzanne Aspden, "The character of the actress," in *The Rival Sirens: Performance and Identity on Handel's Operatic Stage* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 61.

sheds light on early eighteenth-century notions of a dangerously diffuse, malleable, and unstable persona which preceded the more carefully circumscribed Enlightenment subject.

In her historical account of these notions of gender and race, Dror Wahrman goes so far as to claim that identity categories at this time were "imagined as…*a matter of choice*"[38] imbuing people, both on stage and off, with an unusually high degree of agency. Although this is clearly an overstatement, the notion of "choice" certainly fueled the anxieties evinced by these satirical pamphlets about women's, especially singers', perceived capacity to "fashion" their on- and off-stage identities without any societal constraints or limits. In light of these fears, many of the pamphlets crudely caricature Faustina as someone who dangerously capitalizes on the malleability and instability of her "character"; qualities which are magnified by her characters' various disguises. In *The Rival Queens*, Felicity Nussbaum further contextualizes these fears, pointing out that throughout the eighteenth century English women, actresses in particular, indeed began claiming authorship of their public personas, helping to create a nascent celebrity culture via strategic acts of "self-fashioning."[39]

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[38] Wahrman, 40 (my emphasis).

[39] For Nussbaum's theory of "self-fashioning", see: Felicity Nussbaum, *Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theater* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). For a more nuanced account of Kitty Clive's complicated relationship with Handel and *opera seria*, see: Berta Joncus, "Handel at Drury Lane: Ballad opera and the production of Kitty Clive," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* Vol. 131 No. 2 (2006), 179-226. For more about actresses' "self-fashioning" practices and eighteenth-century London's nascent celebrity culture, see: Laura Engel, "Introduction," in *Fashioning Celebrity: Eighteenth-Century British Actresses and Strategies for Image Making* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2011), 1-25; Gill Perry, "Introduction: Painting Actresses' Lives," in *The First Actresses: Nell Gwyn to Sarah Siddons*, Perry, Joseph Roach, and Shearer West, Eds. (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2011), 9-31; and Roach, *It* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2007).

Nussbaum's theory draws inspiration from early eighteenth-century conceptions of a subjectivity linked with the emergent market economy. Expanding upon J.G.A. Pocock's notion of "identity as property"[40] she argues that early eighteenth-century processes of subject formation, both onstage and off, involved deliberate acts of self-commodification.[41] This raises the following question; were actresses and/or singers indeed commodifying themselves as a means of claiming a public voice in an increasingly commercialized society, or were they merely selling themselves, taking part in a form of "prostitution"? London's operatic satires from this time suggest the latter; indicating that singers' acts of "self-fashioning", real or imagined, were a source of much anxiety because of the threats they posed to the patriarchal social order.

The satire that most explicitly links Faustina, and her rival Cuzzoni, with prostitution is the June 1727 farce ridiculing the infamous rivalry scandal which erupted earlier that month in a performance of Bononcini's *Astianatte*.[42] *The Contre Temps or, Rival Queans,* puns on the notion of "rival queens" informing many, if not all, Royal Academy opera plots, by referring to Faustina and Cuzzoni as "queans", an archaic term for prostitutes.[43] This pamphlet's sarcastic and derogatory reference to Faustina and Cuzzoni's presumed sexual permissiveness sheds new light on Nussbaum's rather broad understanding of "prostitution" as "do[ing] anything for hire."[44] Ironically, in spite of

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[40] In Ibid., 159 (citing Pocock's *Virtue, Commerce, and History*).
[41] In Ibid., 16 (citing Macpherson's *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, pg. 3).
[42] For detailed accounts of this scandal, see: Aspden, *The Rival Sirens*, 47 and James Wierzbicki, "Dethroning the Divas: Satire Directed at Cuzzoni and Faustina," *The opera quarterly* Vol. 17 No.2 (2001), 175-196.
[43] "quean, n.". *OED Online*. September 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/156192?redirectedFrom=quean (accessed September 18, 2014). The Oxford English Dictionary defines "quean", an obsolete slur against women commonly used in the 16th-17th centuries, as, "1. Originally: a woman, a female. Later: a bold or impudent woman; a hussy; spec. a prostitute."
[44] Aspden, 36.

these widespread fears of their "self-fashioning" prowess, Faustina and Cuzzoni's lack of control over the contents of this "farce" and similar satires proves that their personas were the property of an intrigue and gossip-fueled public as much, if not more, than they were their own property. For instance, Princess Amelia, daughter of King George II, demonstrates her awareness of this issue in a song text which she includes in her heretofore unreferenced 1744 manuscript. In her handwritten lyrics for the song she identifies as sung "To ye tune of 'Oh London is a fine town'", Amelia makes abundant references to Faustina and Cuzzoni, commenting on their well-known rivalry in the third stanza:

> "And when we've ek'd out History
> And [made] them Rival Queens
> They'll warble sweetly on the stage
> And scold behind the scenes."[45]

In the original manuscript it is clear that she inserted the word "made" above the main text of the phrase, "And [made] them Rival Queens." This witty insertion suggests that Amelia was well aware of the fact that their rivalry had been invented by the scandal-seeking public and/or their competing fanbases rather than by the divas themselves.

The pamphlets' depictions of Faustina as a predatory, aggressive figure come to a head in *An Epistle from S-----a F-----a to a Lady* (1727). First and foremost, this

[45] Amelia, *Miscellaneous Poems* 1744, Lewis Walpole Library, New Haven, CT, 86. Note that this is my transcription of the original handwritten manuscript held in the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale University. Throughout the manuscript, Amelia makes several other references to Faustina and Cuzzoni and to Italian opera more broadly. For instance, the final stanza of her song entitled "To ye tune of 'Sally'" begins with the following critique of Italian opera; "The little pretty harmless Birds, With rural notes delight us, Your mystical Italien [sic.] words, Wou'd certainly affright us" (48). Not only does she continually mock Faustina, Cuzzoni, and Senesino, but she ridicules the foreign enterprise of Italian opera altogether throughout her expansive manuscript.

pamphlet presents Faustina as a modern-day "*Aretino*";[46] its invocation of this notorious sixteenth-century pornographer simultaneously masculinizing her and cementing in the readers' heads the association of "self-fashioning" with prostitution. Furthermore, this homoerotic love letter of sorts explicitly comments on Faustina's predatory nature, suggesting that she was sexually indiscriminate, "rang[ing] from Man to Man, from Fair to Fair" and "Swiss-like…fought on any Side for pay."[47] Its derisive commentary on her apparent willingness to debase herself and defame her moral "character" for money also resonates with Nussbaum's definition of "self-fashioning" as a strategic act of self-commodification. In so doing, it confirms that these practices were frequently dismissed by anxious, contemporary audiences (e.g. in operatic satires) as a form of prostitution. The "*Aretino*" reference in particular takes these anxieties to a new level, suggesting that not only were these "self-fashioning" divas prostitutes, but they also functioned as their own pimps. This dual role imbues women like Faustina, in the public imagination if not in real life, with an excess of agency even as the suggestion of prostitution demeans them, implicitly depriving them of both their agency and their sense of self-worth.

In addition to comparing Faustina to a notorious sixteenth-century pornographer, this pamphlet refers to her as the Amazon "Thalestris." Towards the end of the satire, "Faustina" playfully defends her androgynous sex appeal, asking "[a]m I in Fault [sic.], that…rival Beauties for my Love contend? That fierce Thalestris has attack'd my Heart?"[48] While this passage implicitly takes pleasure in the homoerotic implications of

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[46] Signora F----a, *An Epistle from S----a F----a to a Lady*, printed in the year M.DCC.XXVII (Venice, London 1727), in the Eighteenth Century Collections Online, http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.its.virginia.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=viva_uva&tabID=T001&docId=CW111293507&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE (accessed September 18, 2014), 2.
[47] In Ibid., 3 (both quotes appear on this page).
[48] In Ibid., 2.

Faustina's masculine stage presence, the reference to "Thalestris" ensures that this passage also accuses women, actresses and singers like Faustina, of threatening the patriarchal status quo by "lur[ing their] 'she-companions' to abandon their domestic responsibilities and 'to ride and chase/Wild beasts in deserts, *and to master men*.'"[49] Although the Amazon reference in this anonymous satirical account of Faustina's imagined homoerotic affairs is less than complimentary, the Amazonian ideal of noble womanhood was pervasive in early eighteenth-century British culture. While this satire implicitly condemns Faustina for her masculine qualities, in his 1711 "conduct book" for men, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury "suggest[s] that the firmness and manliness of Virtue – 'a martial Dame' – could be well conveyed by clothing her like an Amazon."[50] Unlike "Faustina's" *Epistle*, Shaftesbury implies that Amazonian women, like Handel's Alceste, ought to be praised and emulated for their "heroic" transgressions of feminine propriety. Offering yet another precedent for this heroic ideal, Wendy Heller claims that Alceste's operatic predecessors, like the Amazonian icon of "noble virtue", were simultaneously praised and feared for their "strong and compelling" qualities, referring to them as "perfect emblem[s] of female virtue."[51] In any case, as both a carryover from the previous century's notion of the ideal operatic heroine and this ambivalent "Amazonian" model of femininity, the *character* Alceste was held in high esteem for her heroic, masculine actions (at least on the

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[49] Nussbaum, 75 (my emphasis).
[50] Dror Wahrman, *Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 8 (citing the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper's *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 4th Ed., Vol.3, London 1722, pp. 362-3, 386).
[51] Wendy Heller, "The beloved's image: Handel's *Admeto* and the statue of Alcestis," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* Vol. 58 No. 3 (Fall 2005), 576. For a more detailed account of gender concerns in Venetian *seicento* opera, see: Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence: opera and women's voices in seventeenth-century Venice* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

surface). The satires, on the other hand, condemn Faustina for the very same qualities; reflecting an anxious public intent on policing the increasingly rigid gender boundaries at all costs.

Faustina's imagined, homoerotic *Epistle to a Lady* offers a less blatant reaction against actresses'/singers' "self-fashioning" practices. However, it too humorously illustrates the widespread anxiety about women - both on stage and in the audience - claiming ownership of their bodies and their sexuality by turning to emasculated castrati or to their masculine female counterparts (i.e.: Faustina) for sexual satisfaction.[52] These women, ironically referred to as "Prudes", first surface in *F-----a's Answer to S-----o's Epistle* in which the notion of a "violated Prude" emerges as a crude slur against young, "virtuous" women who enjoy the "safe" sexual pleasures offered by castrati, "[t]he[i]r Shape retain[ing]…Vestal[s] in the Publick Eye remain[ing]."[53] This pamphlet's sarcastically complimentary references to "violated Prudes", presumably the same women lusting after Faustina in *An Epistle from F-----a to a Lady*, demonstrate that although many of these popular pamphlets were focused on the "monstrous" figure of the castrato;[54] they were equally, if not more caught up in anxieties about the space for female sexual agency opened up by the stage presence of these "unmanned" heroes.

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[52] This is the central argument of Kowaleski-Wallace's article. See: Beth Kowaleski-Wallace, "Shunning the Bearded Kiss: Castrati and the Definition of Female Sexuality" *Prose Studies* Vol. 15 No. 2 (August 1992), 153-70.

[53] *F------a's Answer to S-----o's Epistle*, 6.

[54] Note that one satire went so far as to portray the renowned Farinelli/"Faribelly" as a pregnant woman in male disguise. See: *An Epistle to John James H-dd-g-r Esq.; On the Report of Signior F-r-n-lli's being with Child*, printed and sold by E. Hill, near St. Paul's, MDCCXXXVI (London 1736), in the Eighteenth Century Collections Online. http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.its.virginia.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=viva_uva&tabID=T001&docId=CW106208601&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE (Accessed September 18, 2014), 1-8.

An earlier pamphlet, pre-dating Faustina's 1726 arrival in London by three years, *An Epistle to the most Learned Doctor W—d---d; from a Prude…* (1723), explores these fears on a whole new level. It offers an exaggerated account of a "Prude" named "Prudentia" literally usurping the masculinity of Senesino. While she watches him lose his penis and/or phallic potency in the midst of an aria from Bononcini's 1722 opera *Crispo*[55], much to her dismay, she suddenly sprouts one of her own.[56] Although this pamphlet makes no direct references to Faustina, it resonates with later satires condemning her, among other "virtuous Prudes" both onstage and in the audience (e.g.: "Prudentia"), as an aggressive sexual predator.

Through its paranoid fantasy of "men turning into women, and women turning into men,"[57] this operatic satire not only blurs the boundaries between men and women, but those between stage and audience/spectator and spectacle, as well.[58] This seemingly paranoid fear was not completely unfounded at this time because the notion of a fluid gendered continuum presumed the inherently slippery boundaries between male and female, masculine and feminine. Thomas Laqueur's notion of the "one-sex" model of

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[55] Prudentia, John Gay, and James Carson, *An Epistle to the Most Learned Doctor W--D----D [i.e. Woodward], from a Prude, That Was Unfortunately Metamorphos'd on Monday the 25th. Day of March, 1723.* Dublin: Printed by J. Carson, in Coghill's-Court, Dame's-Street, 1723, 4.
The authorship of this pamphlet is unclear; the document was signed at the end by "Prudentia", though it was attributed to Gay in the Wrenn catalogue (without further substantiation), before being printed by Carson.

[56] In Ibid., 7. The most explicit reference to "Prudentia's" sudden anatomical change appears towards the end of the pamphlet, "Convulsions seize me at the Thoughts of Man; Yet I'm that odious thing – which I abhor…" (7).

[57] Jill Campbell, "'When Men Women Turn': Gender Reversals in Fielding's Plays," in *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross-dressing*, Leslie Ferris, Ed. (New York, NY: Routledge 1993, repub. 2005), 59-60.
See below the Henry Fielding quote I have loosely paraphrased above:
"For when Men Women turn – why then
May Women not be changed to Men?" (Campbell 59-60, quoting Henry Fielding's 1728 satirical play, *The Masquerade*).

[58] See Kristina Straub, "Introduction," in *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 4, for a detailed account of the eighteenth-century practice of blurring the boundaries between stage and audience, spectacle and spectator.

gender differentiation, giving way late in the eighteenth century to the "two-sex" model that is recognizable today, suggests that men and women were not opposing entities but rather mirror images of each other. Furthermore, according to humoral notions of the human body dating back to the ancients, the increase in a woman's "vital heat" could in fact cause her to suddenly sprout a penis; rendering "Prudentia's" transformation all the more threatening because according to this model it was within the realm of possibility.[59] Evidently, the perceived sexual transgressions of the early eighteenth-century operatic stage were considered dangerous contagions that could easily pass from performer to spectator. In other words, "Prudentia" and her undesired "penis" serve as a cautionary tale exploiting the pervasive fear that, if gone unchecked, the emasculation of the castrati and the corresponding masculinization of singers like Faustina could all too easily spread off stage, contaminating the impressionable women (and men) in the theater.

One of the most oft-cited pamphlets, *An Epistle from S----r S-----o to S----a F---a* (June 1727), explicitly references *Admeto*, caricaturing Alceste's aria "Sì caro, sì", her amorous exchange with Admeto which concludes the opera. The accompanying frontispiece engraving depicts Senesino in an extremely awkward and ungainly, splay-legged stance. More specifically, this sketch offers a visual counterpoint to the written

[59] See Thomas Laqueur, "Of Language and Flesh," in *Making Sex: Body and gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 10, 13. According to Laqueur, "at one time the dominant discourse construed the male and female bodies as hierarchically, vertically, ordered versions of one sex and at another [later] time as horizontally ordered opposites, as incommensurable" (10). Commenting on the timeline for the shift away from the "one-sex" model toward the "two-sex" model, he claims that, "the *opposite* sex…is the product of the late eighteenth century" (13, original emphasis). In the second chapter of his book, "Destiny is Anatomy," Laqueur summarizes the concept of the "one-sex" model by claiming that it operated under the assumption that "the boundaries between male and female [we]re of degree and not kind" (25). This assumption promotes the possibility of a woman becoming a man and vice versa, thereby reinforcing the paranoid fear emerging in this anonymous pamphlet about "Prudentia's" female sexual anatomy suddenly morphing into that of a man via an increase in her "vital heat."

satire's commentary on his impotence, or his "droop[ing] Head,"[60] and another satire's characterization of the castrato as "a foreign Ox, of monstrous Size."[61] The text and the image of this particular satire present Senesino as a buffoon who reaches for his lover's hand but, as a result of his castration - implicitly at Faustina's hands - is incapable of a firm or strong grasp. Furthermore, although this sketch cannot fully capture Faustina in motion, by having her lean in toward the obviously motionless, "statue"-like Senesino described in the written satire, the anonymous artist implies that she is the aggressor in the relationship, both on stage and in the opera's narrative. Alceste's final aria, invoked by this satirical engraving, also emphasizes the fact that it is she who triumphantly sings "at last, I embrace you" (*ti stringo alfin così*),[62] taking the initiative and embracing Admeto rather than the other way around. **(See Figure 1, below).**

Figure 1

[60] *An Epistle from S----r S------o to S-----a F------a*, printed for J. Roberts at the Oxford-Arms in Warwick-Lane, MDCCXXVII 6 (London 1727), in the Eighteenth Century Collections Online, http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.its.virginia.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=viva_uva&tabID=T001&docId=CW110016160&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE (accessed September 18, 2014).
[61] Henry Carey, *Faustina: or The Roman Songstress, a Satyr, on the Luxury and Effeminacy of the Age*, London: Printed for J. Roberts, at the Oxford Arms, in Warwick lane, 1726, 8.
[62] See Anon. and Handel, "*Admeto*, Re di Tessaglia," in *The Librettos of Handel's Operas*, 154-55.

Unlike the more aggressive Faustina, this sketch captures Senesino in a frozen, awkward stance, suggesting his lack of motion as an illustration of the "senseless statue" alluded to in the written satire that follows. Via this recurring trope of the motionless "statue"; Senesino's imagined *Epistle* to Faustina makes a mockery of the eighteenth century's fading mechanistic worldview and its idealized notion of "man as machine." As the eighteenth century progressed, Kara Reilly argues that this Cartesian vision of the "(hu)man machine" came to be considered increasingly flawed. Rather than serving as a model for civil humanity it began to denote a lack of agency, because "he"/it was believed to be controlled from without rather than from within, functioning like "clockwork" directed by an external, godlike force.[63] This pamphlet's many allusions to "senseless statues" and "harden'd Iv'ry"[64] contribute to these criticisms, flipping the Cartesian "man as machine" paradigm on its head and suggesting that Faustina has emasculated Senesino by depriving him of the "kindly Thaw"[65] needed to restore this mindless and sexless castrato to manly "Flesh and blood."[66] Faustina's heroic act that concludes the opera also enables her to usurp Ercole's godlike power, further destabilizing and critiquing this fading ideal. In other words, by claiming Ercole's *deus ex machina* gesture for herself, Handel's opera displaces the godlike force that controls the machine-like (hu)man subject onto a woman's body, masculinizing her and ironically overturning the "natural" social order during the final scene (the *lieto fine*) that is usually devoted to the restoration of order.

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[63] Kara Reilly, "Descartes's Mimetic Faculty," in *Automata and mimesis on the stage of theatre history* (New York, NY: Palgrove Macmillan, 2011), 55. The full quote as follows; "God had structured the natural order in the same way that a clockmaker might create a clock" (55).
[64] *An Epistle from S----r S-----o to S-----a F------a*, 7 (both quotes).
[65] In Ibid., 6.
[66] In Ibid., 7.

This pamphlet's depiction of Senesino as a "senseless statue," deprived of his manly valor by Faustina, also ironically comments on the pervasive presence of a more literal statue in Euripides original play, *Alcestis* (the distant model for Handel's 1727 opera). According to Heller, in Euripides' play Alcestis is almost entirely silent and rarely appears on stage in her human form. Instead, as Alcestis hovers between life and death, Admetus languishes after a statue commemorating her. Before she has even died she has been supplanted by "'a fetish object that replaces the missing woman entirely,' part of the series of replacements, doubling, and substitutions with which the play abounds,"[67] depriving her of both a voice and a body. The irony is that although *Admeto*, like Euripides' tragedy, explores the boundaries between "presence and absence, sound and silence, life and death, simulacra and living beings,"[68] Handel's opera reverses the gendering of these pairs. Returning to the satire in question, by reducing Senesino/Admeto to a "senseless statue," this pamphlet – whether or not the anonymous satirist was aware of the intricacies of the Euripides play - expresses a profound anxiety about the ways in which Handel's opera flips this original narrative and the gendered hierarchy it reflects on their heads, restoring vocal agency to the heroine at the expense of the castrato hero.

This sketch's portrayal of Faustina in an aggressive stance, encouraged by her character's male disguise, contradicts the opera's unfolding of events which demand that Alceste unmask herself preceding (or during) her final aria in accordance with the *lieto fine* convention. The contradiction between this satirical engraving and the actual staging

[67] Heller, 572.
[68] In Ibid., 565.

of this scene speaks to Martha Feldman's observations about variable interpretations of the *lieto fine* convention, claiming that the restoration of social order it signals was so taken for granted by eighteenth-century audiences that it was rarely taken seriously or interpreted at face value.[69] Returning to the satire in question, Aspden points out that the background painting of "Semele ascending underscores the lesson that female usurpation of male (sexual) authority ends in social disruption (and physical destruction)."[70] Evidently, like the pamphlets themselves, the engraving and the pamphlet jointly serve as a warning to women against overstepping the boundaries of polite society by emulating the predatory and sexually aggressive, masculine-identified Faustina (and/or Alceste). Ultimately, the "social disruption" visualized by this sketch, contradicting the ostensibly restorative and conservative nature of the *lieto fine* it illustrates, suggests that while on the surface the opera praises Alceste for her heroic deeds, the London public viewed both them and her as threats to the dominant social order in need of containment.

Faustina's aggressive "new style" (*stile nuovo*): Inescapable, domineering Furies and "rage" arias

According to Aspden, Faustina had a self-proclaimed predilection for masculine-identified roles like Alceste in *Admeto*. Not only do many of her roles imbue her with a masculine sensibility, sometimes "accentuated by her trouser roles" as in Handel's *Admeto* and *Siroe* (1728),[71] but Aspden points out that "[she] had…angled for another

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[69] Martha Feldman, "Evenings at the Opera," in *Opera and Sovereignty: Transforming Myths in Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2007), 24, 38. Feldman specifically claims that while on the surface *opera seria* promotes a rigidly hierarchical worldview in which "insuperable patriarchy [i]s a foregone conclusion" (24), in its time it "was a floating signifier…[People often] drew their own meanings [including potentially subversive meanings] from the highly generalizable signs that were the institution's stock-in-trade" (38).

[70] Aspden *The Rival Sirens*, 219.

[71] In Ibid., 218. Aspden specifically claims that "[a]lthough only two of her London operas (*Admeto* and *Siroe*) actually allowed Faustina to disguise herself as a man, a sense of masculine agency was nonetheless a prominent aspect of her characterization in other roles; the trouser roles only accentuated this" (218).

opera…that would have given her a cross-dressing role, Partenope'; [however] the Royal Academy rejected it."[72] Although Faustina never had the opportunity to perform this particular role, Handel finally received permission to stage *Partenope* three years later, in 1730, offering contralto Antonia Merighi an opportunity to cultivate her own, similarly masculine sensibility as the cross-dressing Rosmira who appears disguised as the fictitious Prince Eurimene.[73] Based on her apparent affinity for *travesti* roles, it is quite possible that Faustina deliberately cultivated the unique "hardness" and "strength"[74] of her voice that her contemporary critics found so threatening. In his vocal treatise, Johann Friedrich Agricola, for instance, claims that rather than being light and decorative according to longstanding tradition, her coloratura had a piercing, triumphant quality, "almost as full and strong…as the sound of the natural chest voice in others."[75] Luigi Riccoboni, on the other hand, appears to have been more threatened than impressed by Faustina's "new", quasi-instrumental style of virtuosity; he was extremely critical of Faustina's vocal excesses yet praised them when Farinelli later adopted them as a vehicle for his international renown.[76]

Based on all the publicity regarding Faustina's "masculine" and "aggressive" dramatic and vocal personas, it comes as a surprise that her controversial "new style" (*stile nuovo*) only surfaces once in Handel's *Admeto*. With the exception of her fairly

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[72] In Ibid., 218.
[73] The cross-dressing role of Rosmira in Handel's *Partenope* (1730) forms the basis of my second chapter, "An Amazon and her Champions: Handel's *Partenope* as an Operatic Representation of Henry Fielding's 'Petticoat Government'" (see pp. 61-100 of this dissertation).
[74] Aspden *The Rival Sirens*, 32-3 (quoting Riccoboni). Aspden specifically asserts that "Luigi Riccoboni's account of the displacement of the older style of Italian singing (represented by Cuzzoni) by the new (associated with Faustina) in *Réflexions historiques et critiques sur les differens theâtres de l'Europe* (1740) confirms that it was precisely those qualities of 'hardness' and 'strength' singled out above in Faustina's vocal style that were markers of the new, and that he deplored…" (32-3).
[75] In Ibid., 32 (quoting Agricola's translation of Tosi's 1723 treatise, *Anleitung zur Singkunst*, 125).
[76] In Ibid., 36.

standard, both harmonically and formally conventional, "rage" aria, "Gelosia spietata, Aletto" (Act II Scene 7), Alceste's music is notably subdued. Handel limits the majority of her music to a series of light and frivolous arias more often attributed to Cuzzoni's traditionally feminine vocal sensibility. Also, during the Act I scene in which Alceste sacrifices her life for her husband's restoration to full health, Faustina once again encroaches on her rival's territory by indulging in an appropriately melancholy *siciliano*-style aria which, according to Winton Dean, bears a striking resemblance to Cuzzoni's aria in the same style.[77] Against this backdrop of unobtrusively conventional arias, "Gelosia" sets itself apart by openly deviating from Cuzzoni's more traditional, light style. Dean's critique of this aria offers a modern parallel to the satires' paranoia about Faustina's alleged potential for "self-fashioning." By raising the possibility that she insisted on the inclusion of a "rage" aria in *Admeto,* (making a reference to the "suitcase" or "baggage aria" tradition), he suggests that "Gelosia" empowered her, enabling her to intentionally cultivate an aggressive and volatile "character" befitting Alceste's audacious "male disguise."[78] His implied acknowledgment of Faustina's (as Alceste) "self-fashioning" as an aggressive and masculine figure also resonates with Aspden's suggestion that Faustina deliberately cultivated her unconventional vocal persona which

[77] Dean, 47-8. According to Dean, "'Da tanti affanni', a *siciliano* [is] in the same key [e minor], rhythm, tempo and layout as Alceste's 'Farò così più bella.' The resemblance is perhaps too close, as if Cuzzoni had insisted on a copy of Faustina's aria" (47-8). See also Aspden regarding "the *Pathetick*" and the *siciliano* more specifically as trademarks of Cuzzoni's style: Aspden *The Rival Sirens*, 4 (regarding Tosi's discussion of Cuzzoni's unique vocal characteristics).

[78] In Ibid., 41. Dean writes that "[Handel may have] found it advisable to give Faustina a trenchant aria as different as possible from the rest of her part" (41), implicitly acknowledging both the singer's agency and her quasi-authorial role in defining Alceste's constantly evolving character. For a more nuanced discussion of singers' quasi-authorial role in Handel's early Royal Academy operas, including *Admeto*, see: C. Steven LaRue, *Handel and his Singers: The Creation of the Royal Academy Operas, 1720-1728* (New York, NY: Clarendon Press, 1995).

deviated in its "penetrating" qualities from more traditional, light, and decorative approaches to singing coloratura.[79]

In spite of its own, formal, conventionality, Dean argues that this "rage" aria occurs at a peculiar point of the opera's narrative, seemingly unprovoked, thereby making it jarring from a dramatic standpoint. He comments on the out-of-place and out-of-character nature of "Gelosia",[80] demonstrating that like the eighteenth-century satirists ridiculing Faustina (and to a lesser extent, her rival),[81] he too is threatened by the ways in which both her disguise and her "rage" aria enable her to overstep the boundaries of traditional gender roles and/or feminine propriety. However, what Dean's criticisms neglect to take into account are the nuances of eighteenth-century notions of "character" which do not lend themselves to his prized, but anachronistic, notion of a coherent narrative and/or dramatic unity.[82] Lending credence to my point, Lisa A .Freeman argues that the eighteenth-century English theater conceived of "character" as "manifold and

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[79] Aspden *The Rival Sirens*, 30, 80. Quoting Charles Burney, Aspden writes that Faustina was known for her "brilliant execution" (80 – quoting Burney's *General History of Music*, II, 736) and that her voice was both "less clear than *penetrating*" (30 – quoting Burney, 745 – my emphasis) and a representation of "*un cantar granito* – her execution [being] articulate and brilliant" (ibid., same page, same source – original emphasis).

[80] Dean, 41. Dean specifically writes that, "more open to criticism [than the equally implausible and absurd 'Chinese-box system of disguises'] is the abrupt change in Alceste's character in Act II. Immediately after her rescue her thoughts are all for her husband. By her next appearance she has disguised herself as a soldier and is consumed by jealousy…Handel's impassioned response [in 'Gelosia'] is characteristic, but the aria pulls the character out of focus" (41).

[81] Aspden *The Rival Sirens*, 49. Regarding Faustina bearing the burden of the satirical attacks after her 1726 arrival in London, Aspden claims that "despite Cuzzoni's reputation for being difficult (infamously, Handel had apparently threatened to throw her the window after she refused to perform an aria in *Ottone* [1727]), it was Faustina who was consistently seen as the troublemaker in the published assessments from the 1720s. After her arrival, Faustina was singled out for attack in satirical pamphlets in a way that Cuzzoni had never been [singled out/attacked]" (49).

[82] Lisa A. Freeman, "Staged Identities: It's Just a Question of Character," in *Character's Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 18. Reflecting on the fundamentally unstable and "incongruous" notion of "character" promoted in spoken drama from this period, Freeman points out that "an actor or actress…could, and often did, step out of character during a performance. Indeed…the extent to which an actor or actress…could be said to be 'in character' at all represents a point of critical debate" (18).

incongruous";[83] reveling in rather than suppressing dramatic ruptures and inconsistencies like Alceste's "Gelosia" which Dean evidently finds threatening. In any case, considering the abundance of eighteenth-century British satires which ridicule Faustina and her vocal (and dramatic) aggressions, it is surprising that none of them explicitly reference this aria or its perceived excesses. In spite of this odd oversight, the pamphlets' overarching depiction of Faustina as dangerously masculine and aggressive very much resonates with the "character" of this aria, in terms of its abrupt, disruptive, and explosive nature.

In a more recent instance of grappling with the perceived flaws of this controversial aria, Axel Köhler's 2006 Händel-Festspiele production of *Admeto* shifts "Gelosia" from its original location mid-way through Act II to a scene mid-way through Act III.[84] This directorial decision seems to have been motivated by a desire to transfer the aria to a scene in which it unfolds more naturally from the preceding events, once again conforming to modern notions of dramatic unity and consistency which neither apply to Handel nor to the eighteenth-century *dramma per musica* more broadly. Although Köhler does not cut the aria, his decision to facilitate a seamless transition from the preceding action undercuts the, perhaps deliberately jarring and unsettling, nature of Alceste's sudden and unrestrained outburst. This transition also eliminates the stark contrast between Faustina's portrayal of an enraged queen and Senesino's characterization of a pathetic, self-pitying king illuminated by the juxtaposition of her "rage" aria with the latter's self-indulgently maudlin lament, "Ah, sì morrò."

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[83] In Ibid., 18.

[84] Matthias Rexroth, Mechtild Bach, Romelia Lichtenstein, and Axel Köhler (dir.), *Admeto, Re di Tessaglia*, Conducted by Howard Arman. Halle, Germany: ArtHaus Musik, 2006. 2009.

In this aria which follows immediately on the heels of "Gelosia" in the libretto's original order of events, Admeto threatens to kill himself over his inability to be with either of the women he loves. However, unlike his queen's "noble", self-sacrificing suicide in Act I, Admeto's suicidal threat (which is never realized) comes across as self-serving and self-pitying. Citing a "ground-bass lament" quality in this aria, Heller attributes it to an "almost neurotically repetitious accompaniment"[85] which dictates Admeto's vocal line, silencing and neutering him in the wake of Alceste's loudly vocal outburst of rage. I would argue that the mere fact that Admeto sings a lament, regardless of its neurotic and/or obsessive quality, also contributes to his feminization by linking him with a genre historically attributed to women most notably Monteverdi's lamenting "nymph" (*ninfa*) and Arianna, as well as Purcell's Dido. In any case, by maintaining the original order of scenes and having Admeto's slow-moving f minor "lament" - with its sagging tempo and plodding bass-line - follow on the heels of Alceste's sudden, furious outburst; Handel retrospectively justifies her rage and dismisses Admeto as a weak fool deserving of her anger. However, by tampering with the original order of these scenes, Köhler limits the capacity of "Gelosia" to highlight, both dramatically and musically, Admeto's emasculation at the hands (or perhaps voice) of his furious wife. The smoother transition guaranteed by the director's decision to shift this aria to a later scene serves as a means of instead taming and/or containing Alceste's rage, rendering it less explosive and jarring.

Although this aria serves as a vehicle for Faustina's inimitable virtuosity and her "aggressive" and quasi-instrumental approach to coloratura, the instrumental forces

[85] Heller, 627 (both quotes).

within work to tame and contain Alceste's "rage", thereby undermining the singer's daunting vocal power. "Gelosia" paradoxically displays Faustina's vocal power, so feared by London's critics and/or satirists, while also subtly containing, controlling, and manipulating it as a means of musically dramatizing her character's internal struggle to control her rage. More specifically, the unison violin part of this sparsely textured aria, which I argue functions as the personification of Alceste's Fury, causes her internal struggle and ultimate failure to "conquer" what at this point in the opera appears to be an unprovoked expression of jealous rage.

The beginning of "Gelosia" hints toward Faustina's controversial virtuosity - her aforementioned "*stile nuovo*" - by introducing a jagged, angular motive in the *ritornello* which is later adopted by the voice. This gesture, the aria's main motive based on a dramatically ascending fifth from tonic to dominant followed by an agitated descending four-note scale (mm. 1-2),[86] aptly captures Faustina's forceful and daunting presence even before she has begun to sing. **(See Appendix A, Example 1, pg. 188).** However, Faustina is quickly undermined by the jealous Fury plaguing her from within. As the aria progresses the aforementioned unison violin part that first appears in response to Alceste's explicit invocation of the Fury "Aletto" (mm. 16-17) appropriates an aggressive descending scalar motive initiated by the *ritornello* (mm. 2-5). **(See Appendix A, Example 1, pg. 189).** This gesture enables the violins - representing the Fury that Alceste has invoked – to contain and subdue Faustina's voice, usurping her vocal agency and

[86] George Frederic Handel, *Admeto* (*dramma per musica* in three acts), Anonymous libretto. Ed. Friedrich Chrysander (Hampshire, England: Gregg Press, 1965, reprint of 1877 ed.), 69. Note that this edition, although not ideal, is the only edition of *Admeto* that is currently available for reference. The more reputable Halle/Hallische Händel Ausgabe (HHA) series sponsored by Bärenreiter has yet to publish an edition of this particular opera. HHA has published authoritative editions of the scores of both *Alcina* and *Deidamia*, which I've referenced in Chapters Three and Four of this dissertation.

claiming it as their/its own. Additionally, the act of doubling her dramatic g-minor scalar descent, a sequenced expansion upon the *ritornello*'s opening motive on the words "with me you left hell" (*meco uscisti dall'inferno*), unambiguously links this phrase with the raging demon in question. The fact that this instance of doubling in the unison violins is a direct quotation of a passage from the turbulent opening *ritornello* suggests that not only has "Aletto" escaped alongside Alceste from hell, but even before she has begun to sing the Fury has latched onto the tormented queen and refuses to release her from her vengeful grasp.

As the aria continues, Alceste repeatedly comments on the Fury's intrusive presence, sometimes exchanging her own voice for the music associated with the Fury in order to illustrate this point. Most notably, towards the end of the first iteration of the aria's A section (a1), illustrating the message, "you entered me" (*m'entrasti*, see mm.23-28), Faustina loosely imitates the music associated with the Fury via a varied repetition of the frenzied scalar material first heard in the violin line in mm. 20-23. **(See Appendix A, Example 1, pg. 189).** In addition to denying the singer sufficient opportunities to breathe and supplying an endless array of large leaps of octaves and finally a major tenth, this coloratura passage is the epitome of Faustina's "new", quasi-instrumental, machine-like vocal style which Agricola and Riccoboni, among others, criticized in their respective vocal treatises. The lack of space and/or time for Faustina to breathe contributes to the machine-like quality of this phrase, calling to mind the eighteenth-century fascination with automata, ranging from Jacques Vaucanson's miraculous defecating duck to representations of musicians in a non-human form (e.g.: Vaucanson's flautist and drummer and Henri Louis Jacquet-droz's "Marianne" the organist dated from later in the

eighteenth century).[87] Faustina's quasi-instrumental approach to coloratura in this passage also resonates with Carolyn Abbate's much later account of the voice in which she metaphorically describes the act of singing, via a morbid image of the still-singing decapitated head of Orpheus floating down the river Styx, as a form of ventriloquism in which the singer's body (like Orpheus' head) is "breathed into" from without.[88] Like this much earlier notion of the automaton performer controlled by an invisible and external godlike force, Abbate's model reduces the singer to a mindless (or bodiless) puppet-like machine with minimal agency. Her theory of ventriloquized divas aptly describes the presence of "Aletto" in this aria; presenting this "Fury" as an oppressive, puppet master-like force who carefully circumscribes the limits of Alceste's vocal agency.

Although this passage caters to Faustina's unique (yet controversial) vocal talents it also confines and constrains her in many ways. During this elaborate melisma in which Alceste reflects on the Fury having "entered into" her (*m'entrasti*), controlling her from within, Faustina repeatedly comes up against a local pitch ceiling loosely derived from the preceding gesture in the unison violins (see mm. 23-25). Throughout this phrase, Faustina repeatedly rises to briefly sustained F's (5) against dominant (V) harmonies; a pitch that functions as a local limit imposed by the Fury plaguing her from within, which the singer, and Alceste by extension, repeatedly attempt but fails to cross. **(See Appendix**

[87] See Reilly, 81-6 (regarding Vaucanson's duck, flautist, and drummer, 1738), 89-92 (regarding Jacquet-droz's later "Marianne", the organist, shown to Marie Antoinette at Versailles in 1773).

[88] Carolyn Abbate, "Orpheus. One Last Performance," in *In Search of Opera* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 3. Invoking the uncanny, Abbate specifically writes, "[o]ne wonders how the head continues to sing. That is magic, but what sort? Anatomical magic, discharged organic electricity dying away as mindless babbling? Or is the head inspired from outside, breathed into, before it finally falls silent, like an aeolian [sic.] harp?" (3). Additionally, in her following chapter about the voice of Mozart's Queen of the Night, "Magic Flute, Nocturnal Sun" (55-106), Abbate explicitly references automaton-like technologies writing that "[h]ere, women's talk is no longer just senseless [or sense defeating] noise, but something more disquieting still: a mechanical repetition of sounds that are a priori…*Women…have been made into acoustic marionettes and sound reproduction devices*" (72, my emphasis).

A, Example 1, pg. 189). This pitch limit ironically displays Faustina's inimitable talent, highlighting her quasi-instrumental, machine-like precision in delivering coloratura, while also constraining her by ensuring that her voice does not exceed the boundaries established by the endless cycling of dominant and tonic harmonies, in various inversions, below. Although the violins drop out during this phrase they still dictate the parameters of Faustina's music, ensuring that she remains within its boundaries and under the domineering Fury's control.

Faustina's relentless struggle to move beyond this top F, mirroring Alceste's relentless struggle to move beyond her all-consuming rage, finally succeeds as she leaps up a major tenth from Eb to G and the harmony progresses to a IV chord (see mm. 26) leading toward the long-awaited cadence needed to stabilize the recent, standard modulation from g minor to its relative major (Bb major). **(See Appendix A, Example 1, pg. 189).** However, her moment of triumph is short-lived. Although in this fleeting, dramatic gesture Alceste (or at least Faustina) *seems* to have come out on top, having finally conquered her Fury; the demands of the standard *da capo* aria form call for the inevitable return of the agitated primary motive first heard in the opening *ritornello* and of the vengeful "Fury" by extension. The inescapable presence of "Aletto" throughout "Gelosia", heard even in her (the violin part's) absence, suggests that she has only offered the character, Alceste, a momentary reprieve from her torments in order to give the singer, Faustina, a passing moment in which to display her impressive vocal prowess. That said, the return of the A section that is also built into this rather rigid aria form offers Faustina, or any singer portraying this character, greater liberties to push beyond

the limits imposed by the music (and by the "Fury"); reclaiming her voice in a moment of boundary-defying, improvisatory spectacle before the music once again reins her back in.

As the aria continues, this vengeful Fury continues to master and manipulate Alceste, reducing her to a sort of powerless puppet and preventing her from mastering or controlling her turbulent emotions. In the second half of the A section (a2) when Alceste repeats the text "you entered me" (*m'entrasti*), see mm.45-48, she is no longer bounded by the constraints of the F pitch ceiling heard in the initial iteration of this phrase. However, the destabilizing harmonic progression, a series of secondary dominants (some unresolved) demonstrates that she has not managed to liberate herself from the clutches of this ruthless Fury. On the second beat of mm.44, as Alceste once again comments on how the Fury has "afflicted [her] heart" (*per affliger questo cor*), a V7/III chord (Fdom.7) fails to resolve to the expected Bb major. Although from a melodic standpoint this harmony does in fact resolve, landing on a Bb3 in the *basso continuo*, Handel plays with his listeners' expectations by replacing the anticipated III chord with a tonic g minor chord in first inversion (i6). **(Appendix A, Example 1, pg. 190).** Evidently, although its domineering presence is less immediately apparent in this half of the A section than in the first, the Fury continues to control Alceste from within, albeit with more subtlety. Additionally, the sudden appearance of Neapolitan harmonies (IIb and IIb6) in mm.40 and 50 respectively, strategically illustrate Alceste's direct invocations of the Fury and her hellish torments against words like "with me you escaped from *hell*" (meco uscisti dall'*Inferno*) and "per *affliger* questo cor" (to *afflict/torment* this/my heart). The lowered second scale degree, (2b), embedded within these passing Neapolitan chords ensures that like Alceste's furious resolve, Faustina's melodic line sags under the weight of the

oppressive "Fury." Similar to the aforementioned unresolved, or only superficially resolved, V7/Bb chord in mm.44; these Neapolitan harmonies once again offer a musical representation of the Fury and her inescapable, haunting presence. **(See Appendix A, Example 1, pg. 190).** Ultimately, by repeatedly invoking the Fury, "Aletto" at Alceste's expense, this "rage" aria minimizes the aggressive qualities displayed by Handel's cross-dressing heroine (and the "Faustina" of the pamphlets). It then displaces these dangerous qualities onto the Fury herself, perhaps in order to make both Alceste and Faustina come across as at least marginally less threatening to London's anxious male audiences.

Metastasio's "self-conquering" hero(ine):
Taming Alceste's "Fury" with a misplaced, idyllic, pastoral fantasy

In his Act III aria in which he cautions against the threats love poses to reason, "L'amor è un tiranno", the archetypal hero Ercole offers an implicit commentary on Alceste's rage; simultaneously justifying it and offering yet another means of containing or subduing it. The tonal link between these two arias, both in a key Handel associates with the torments of hell, real or imagined (first heard in Admeto's wandering g-minor hallucinations, "Orride larve," which open the opera) strengthens this connection. In the recitative immediately preceding Ercole's aria, having just informed the king of his failure to rescue Alceste from hell (a lie to test Admeto's fidelity), this iconic hero claims that Alceste finally has a reason to be jealous (*Ah, con ragion vive gelosa Alceste*),[89] retrospectively validating her unwarranted explosion of "rage" in "Gelosia."

This moralizing aria, cautioning against the dangers of blind love in favor of the pursuit of military glory, resonates with a point Ercole's Act I aria, "La gloria sola"

[89] Rolli and Handel, "*Admeto*, Re di Tessaglia," in *The Librettos of Handel's Operas,* 136-7.

(*Glory alone/only glory*) makes more explicitly. Both arias call to mind the iconic "self-conquering" hero of Metastasio's mid-century operatic reforms. According to Corbett Bazler, in the mid eighteenth century when these reforms began to take hold, Metastasian libretti placed an emphasis on duty eclipsing love; insisting upon the hero's necessary self-sacrifice, or "self-conquering" gesture, for the public good.[90] Bazler posits Hercules/Ercole as one of the most iconic heroic figures defining this reform movement, following in the vein of late Renaissance to eighteenth-century paintings which portray this Olympian demi-god as someone who "chooses virtue, and…lead[s] a glorious life of heroic pursuits."[91] This makes Ercole a particularly apt choice for Handel's mouthpiece of the very heroic ideals which Alceste in turn undermines; usurping Ercole's heroic title during the final scene in an act that implies her rejection of the rigid Metastasian values he represents. The irony lies in the fact that although Alceste, in "Gelosia", is unable to vanquish her demons (or, rather, Fury) and live up to Ercole's standard of the "self-conquering" Metastasian hero; it is she, rather than he, who is repeatedly praised for her unparalleled heroism throughout the opera.

In the recitative preceding her Act III aria, "Là dove gli occhi io giro", Alceste explicitly invokes Metastasio's (and Ercole's) "self-conquering" gesture, exclaiming:

> "Alas! No Wonder now, my Suff'ring Heart, It thus with cruel Jealousy tormented,
> But yet with just Resentment armed, *I'll strive to conquer it*."[92]

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[90] Corbett Bazler. 2013. *The Comedies of Opera Seria: Handel's Post-Academy Operas, 1738-1744*. Dissertation, Columbia University, 122. Bazler specifically writes that at this time, "the perceived conflict between duty and love, or reason and emotion, had become a central preoccupation in the…*dramma per musica*…[T]his pervasive conflict in Metastasio's dramas [manifests itself as]…the 'dilemma' [or]…'the choice between one's personal sacrifice [and] a state catastrophe'" (122 – quoting Cotticelli and Maione's, "Metastasio", 59).

[91] In Ibid., 123.

[92] Anon. and Handel, "*Admeto*, Re di Tessaglia," in *The Librettos of Handel's Operas*, 142-3. The original Italian text is as follows; "Ah! con ragione il Core, Da gelosia crudel vien tormentato;
Ma con giusto rigore, Io schernirla saprò, Admeto amato."

It is striking that only the paraphrased English version of this text provided by an anonymous eighteenth-century translator makes a direct reference to this iconic "self-conquering" heroic figure. The original Italian text uses the word "to mock" or "to scorn" (*schernire*), giving it a biting edge that contradicts the ironically insipid and saccharine quality of the pastoral-themed aria that follows. Within the aria itself, Alceste directs this "scorn" inward rather than outward toward what even she can recognize to be a more appropriate object of her "rage", her "beloved Admeto" (*Admeto amato*).[93] The irony of the scene is magnified by the fact that earlier in the opera when Alceste could not yet justify her rage she launched into a "rage" aria, "Gelosia", without a moment's hesitation. However, in conforming to the operatic imperative of subduing overly assertive (or aggressive) heroines, in this later scene she invokes Ercole's/Metastasio's "self-conquering" gesture as a means of silencing herself in the moment at which she finally has a legitimate reason to make herself heard.

The pastoral qualities, both textual and musical, of Alceste's "Là dove" associate her with her rival's lighter vocal style and her multilayered disguise(s) as shepherdess and palace gardener. These implied references to her rival contribute to the aria's role as a challenge against Faustina's aggressive masculine stage presence which was so heavily caricatured in London's mid-1720s satirical pamphlets. According to Aspden, in blurring the boundaries between the "rival queens" Handel deprives both of their individual agency and/or autonomy.[94] Expanding upon this claim in her discussion of the women's

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[93] In Ibid., 142-3.

[94] Aspden *The Rival Sirens*, 152. According to Aspden, "at the end of the opera, in Admeto's final lines embracing both women, the two symbolically '[dissolve] back into a single object of desire', the dominance of their disguisings [sic.] allowing them to seem, individually, strangely insubstantial" (Aspden 152 – quoting Heller's "The Beloved's Image", 628).

respective disguises, Aspden argues that the pastoralisms defining Antigona's character reduce her to a meek, subservient woman; minimizing her agency and ensuring that, unlike Alceste, she doesn't pose a threat to the fragile, patriarchal social order.[95] By extending these pastoral themes to Alceste's character during a scene in which she sets out to "conquer" her past demons, Handel reinterprets Metastasio's heroic *masculine* ideal of "self-conquering" as a means of taming transgressive women and forcing them to conform to more conservative models of feminine behavior. This aria's direct reference to Metastasio's heroic ideal also ensures that while *Admeto* continues to praise Alceste on a surface level for her chivalrous valor, it finds ways of subtly undermining her authority and diminishing her otherwise acclaimed heroic pursuits.

Although "Là dove" doesn't completely erase the masculine presence of Faustina's controversial "*stile nuovo*", it shrouds her trademark virtuosic gestures and "thrusting" coloratura[96] with a cloak of delicate frivolity. For instance, while the opening four bars of the *ritornello* retain the sharp angularity of Alceste's earlier "rage" aria, the second half of this periodic phrase softens the first half, setting the stage for the aria's large-scale subduing of Alceste's perceived gendered transgressions (compare mm.1-4 with mm. 5-8). **(See Appendix A, Example 2, pg. 192).** This A-major aria's *ritornello* begins with a discombobulating series of oscillating fourths and sixths jumping off of an

[95] In Ibid., 174. Aspden claims that "Antigona's entry to the court from the forest [symbolic of the untamed, unruly pastoral] is achieved via the ordered space of the garden; as she tends and regulates the plants in her role as gardener, so she also regulates her own behaviour, taming the abandoned and wrathful princess into a subservient Arcadian nymph" (174).

[96] In Ibid., 32. Citing eighteenth-century music theorist Quantz, Aspden observes that "Quantz's observation…that Faustina '*knew how to thrust* [her ornaments] *out*…with the greatest possible rapidity, as they can only be performed on an instrument', may indicate that the singer could produce ornaments supported at full volume [perhaps using an unusual head/chest voice mixture] from the diaphragm rather than having to adopt a lighter tone necessary for clear throat articulation" (32 – quoting Quantz's "Herrn Johann Joachim Quantzen's Lebenslauf", trans. Nettl, 313).

upper dominant pedal (E5) in the unison violins. However, in spite of the jagged discontinuity of this opening gesture the alternating *piano* and *forte* dynamics embedded within create a lilting echo effect that counteracts the aggressive angularity of the line while also offering a hint of the pastoral themes to come (see mm. 1-3). **(See Appendix A, Example 2, pg. 192).** The ensuing four bars of the *ritornello* further destabilize this aggressive opening gesture, devolving into a tripping, "laughing" figure which playfully establishes the octave boundaries of the E dominant before cascading into an intricate descending 16^{th} - note triplet scalar passage that further lightens the mood (see mm. 5-8). This shift to a light, fragmentary, and delicate mood in the second half of the *ritornello* against the backdrop of a fairly sedentary, repetitive bass line marked by several beats of rest and lingering pauses, creates an overarching sense of indulgent lassitude befitting of a pastoral idyll. **(See Appendix A, example 1, pg. 192).**

The *ritornello*'s settling into a mood of relaxed frivolity foreshadows the pastoral references of Alceste's aria in which she luxuriates in the gentle swaying of the grasses in the breezes evocative of her lover's intoxicating breath. Towards the beginning of the aria, referring to her lover's charms and the beauty of this imagined pastoral landscape, Faustina adopts the aforementioned "laughing" figure first heard in the second half of the *ritornello* (see mm. 5-6). On the words "more charming" and "more beautiful" (*più vaghi e più belli*) in mm.11-13 she embraces this "laughing" figure; engaging in a playful call-and-response dialogue with the violins hinted toward by the equally playful second half of the *ritornello*. **(See Appendix A, Example 2, pg. 193).** Throughout the aria's A section, Alceste repeatedly indulges in elaborate coloratura passages highlighting the explicitly pastoral text, "the grass and flowers I gaze at make themselves more charming

and beautiful because my beloved is among them, *moving the plants*." (*mosse le piante*).[97] One such passage (see mm. 28-29) tames Faustina's characteristic sixteenth-note triplet figure, which Aspden posits as one of the prime indicators of her controversial "new" style, demonstrating her "ability to 'sustain…difficult *passaggi* of six and three notes'",[98] by breaking it down into tiny, rocking figures which are tossed back and forth between voice and unison violins. The use of paired upper and lower neighbor notes, or "changing tones", within this fragmentary triplet figure (see mm.28) also contributes to the light and decorative (rather than virtuosic) nature of this gesture; calling to mind Antigona's pastoral aria which closes Act I, "S'en vola lo sparvier", in which she fashions herself as a predatory bird on the hunt.[99] **(See Appendix A, Example 2, pg. 193).** The connection between these two arias, the latter melodically based on similar neighboring figures (see, for instance, mm. 14, 18, 41-43 of the A section), is strengthened by the fact that "S'en vola" appears in the same key as "Là dove", Alceste's signature A major, further blurring the hazy boundary between these two pastoral arias and Handel's "rival queens" more generally. **(See Appendix A, Example 3, pp. 195-96).**

In spite of these softening gestures, there are several moments in "Là dove" which undermine both its Cuzzoni-inspired pastoral qualities and its role as a "self-conquering" gesture. These occasional moments permit a glimmer of Faustina's unique

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[97] Anon. and Handel, "*Admeto*, Re di Tessaglia," in *The Librettos of Handel's Operas*, 142-3 (my translation, loosely paraphrased).
[98] Aspden *The Rival Sirens*, 115 (quoting Mancini's *Riflessioni pratici*, 31-2).
[99] Note that this aria, "S'en vola lo sparvier", serves as a model for Deidamia's aria at the end of Act I from Handel's 1741 opera by the same name. This later adaptation of Antigona's aria, "Nasconde l'usignol", maintains its predecessor's avian theme, this time invoking the nightingale rather than the more aggressive sparrow hawk. However, the roles are reversed as the singer/narrator shifts from the hunter (in Antigona's aria) to the hunted (in Deidamia's aria). For a more detailed discussion of this matter, see the sub-section of Chapter Four entitled, "The hunters as the spoils of the hunt: Carnivalesque role reversals and bondage scenes," pp. 172-74.

voice to come through; giving the singer an opportunity to show off her controversial "new" approach to coloratura, and in so doing challenging the frivolous and delicate nature of her aria. Citing a specific section of "Là dove" as a representation of Faustina's "*stile nuovo*", Aspden comments on the singer's unconventional approach to trills which enables her to move away from her rival's delicate "native warble" (in Charles Burney's words)[100] toward a more technically demanding and difficult to execute style featuring "leaps onto [and] from trills".[101] The passage in question appears towards the end of the a1 section of "Là dove" as Faustina ornaments the words, "moving the plants" (*mosse le piante*) (see mm. 14-15), reinterpreting the pastoral allusions of the text within the framework of her more aggressive style of vocal production. A few measures later in mm.16-17, the unison violins imitate Faustina's signature, rapidly descending scalar passages, but conspicuously leave out her trills, leaving this trademark gesture for her voice alone. **(See Appendix A, Example 2, pg. 193).** In passages like this, "Là dove" offers Faustina an unusual degree of independence from and/or authority over the orchestral backdrop which imitates and draws inspiration from her vocal melody rather than vice versa, often functioning as her echo. Her independent voice, ironically more independent than in its predecessor in "Gelosia" (which I argue is heavily constrained by

[100] Aspden *The Rival Sirens*, 38. Quoting Burney, Aspden writes that "[a] *native warble* enabled her to execute divisions with such facility as to conceal every appearance of difficulty" (38 – quoting Burney's *General History of Music*, II, 736 – my emphasis).

[101] In Ibid., 33, 35. According to Aspden, "Handel's arias for Faustina give a fair indication of the style of singing she favoured, with much emphasis on vocal agility, demonstrated through the conjunction of different rhythmic patterns…, disjunct or arpeggiated and highly complex *passaggi*, *leaps onto or from trills*, and imitation of instrumental lines [especially her imitation of the violin lines representing the Fury, 'Aletto', in 'Gelosia']" (33 – my emphasis). See pg. 35 for Aspden's example 1.2 citing the a1 section of the A of "Là dove."

the jealous Fury within), enables Faustina to defy the pacifying role of this aria and the out-of-place pastoral fantasy it evokes.

The aria's B section offers its most explicitly pastoral reference through an invocation of bird song, however it further undermines the notion of the pastoral mode as a framing device by reframing this explicitly pastoral image through the lens of Faustina's inimitable "*stile nuovo*." The aria's B section opens with a delicate, rocking 16th – note triplet figure illustrating the "sweet breezes" and Alceste's self-professed state of "happiness" (*ogn'aura e dolce vento, a me porge contento*),[102] indicating her blissful ignorance of her husband's wayward glances. This figure, first heard in mm. 40, is motivically drawn from earlier rocking figures pervading the A section, specifically those sharing the same overall contour (albeit in the opposite direction) and set to the text "more beautiful" and "more charming" (*più belli e più vaghi*) (see mm. 24-25). **(See Appendix A, Example 2, pp. 193-94).** Although the B section's opening gesture isn't directly derived from earlier motives, this rocking figure links the two, usually contrasting, sections of the *da capo* aria, ensuring an unusual degree of continuity between them which Ellen Harris cites as a musical indicator of the pastoral mode.[103]

Suddenly abandoning the aria's predominantly light musical vocabulary, the invocation of "bird song" (*il canto degli augelli*) which follows on the heels of this rocking figure offers Faustina a vehicle for her aggressive display of virtuosity. This brief

[102] My translation of the libretto: "each breeze and sweet [or gentle] wind brings me happiness."
[103] Ellen T. Harris, *Handel and the Pastoral Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 45, 169. According to Harris, "[t]he stylistic trait which would become the most important feature of the revitalized operatic pastoral [of the seventeenth-century Arcadian Academy]…was the use of a strong melodic relationship between the two sections of the *da capo*" (45). She then specifically traces this "monothematic *da capo*" aria (see pg. 169) to Handel's pastoral-themed cantatas, arguing that it is more prominent in that setting than in his predominantly heroic, rather than pastoral, operas.

passage (see mm. 42-45) combines her quintessential "swift repetition[s] of the same tone," [104] conveniently appropriate for an illustration of bird song, with the irregular, rhythmic patterns (in this case both syncopated and tied across bar lines) and dramatic, large leaps characteristic of her "new" style. **(See Appendix A, Example 2, pg. 194).** The disjointed and discontinuous nature of this avian-themed gesture momentarily ruptures the placid surface of her pastoral fantasy, indicating that Alceste has not completely abandoned her knowledge of her husband's cruel deceit and infidelity, though the text suggests otherwise. When she goes on to explicitly praise Admeto's "constancy" (*egli è costante*) in mm. 46-48, her music once again offers a sense of her wavering uncertainty or perhaps, of Admeto's actual *in*constancy. During this phrase, the music having just modulated to c# minor, this newly established tonic undermines itself by immediately being reinterpreted as a secondary dominant chord (V#4-2/iv) in mm.46. This sudden reinterpretation of the local c# minor tonic as a third-inversion secondary dominant of its own subdominant (f # minor), albeit with the E# leading tone only implied and not directly indicated in the score, begins to weaken the B section's surprisingly stable sense of harmonic grounding. From a melodic standpoint, however, the highly repetitive nature of Faustina's vocal line is almost exaggeratedly "constant"; obsessively hovering around the newly established tonic, C#5, followed by D#5 in mm.47 in a recurring, decorative 16th-note triplet figure. **(See Appendix A, Example 2, pg. 194).** This obsessively repetitive vocal line indicates that the singer, Faustina, is desperately grasping onto her music's weakened sense of stability or "constancy" and the

[104] Aspden *The Rival Sirens*, 30 (quoting Burney). In the words of Charles Burney, "[Faustina] was doubtless the first who introduced, with success, a swift repetition of the same tone" (30 – quoting Burney's *General History of Music*, II, 745-6).

illusion of her lover's "constancy" by extension, as both are betrayed by the harmonic turbulence below. This passing phrase of the B section, becoming progressively unstable in spite of Faustina's best efforts to grasp onto its fading sense of stability in her vocal line, sheds light on both the irony of this strangely pastoral aria's placement within the opera and on Alceste's peculiar act of praising the "constancy" of her lover whom she knows to be unfaithful. In other words, although Alceste claims that her lover is constant, the *in*constancy of her music suggests otherwise.

The subtle hints of irony surfacing in the B section of this aria also resonate with the irony of invoking the pastoral as a "self-conquering" gesture in the first place. In Baroque *opere serie* the idyllic Arcadian pastoral generally appears as that which is in need of conquering rather than that which enables the hero, or in this case, the heroine to conquer him/herself. Reinhard Strohm argues that in these operas, "rulership…is contrasted with the pastoral nostalgia for personal peace and enjoyment, [with] which it is almost always incompatible."[105] Robert C. Ketterer corroborates this point, observing that

> "Pastoral oases, invested with danger and death by virtue of their relations with uncontrolled nature, also become surrogates of the underworld to which the hero must descend and return to achieve victory and the [obligatory] happy ending. Just as opera exploits the elegiac oxymoron that equates love and war in order to describe dramatic conflict, so too it exploits the tradition inherited from both Vergil [sic.] and Genesis *that paradise contains the seeds of its own destruction*."[106]

[105] Reinhard Strohm, "Rulers and states in Hasse's *drammi per musica*," in *Dramma per Musica: Italian Opera Seria of the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 279.
[106] Robert C. Ketterer, "Otho in Arcadia: Grimani/Handel *Agrippina*; Lalli/Vivaldi *Ottone in villa*," in *Ancient Rome in early opera* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 64 (my emphasis).

Therefore, even as this aria musically contains and subdues Faustina (undermining her character's heroic presence) with a few exceptions discussed above, it ultimately undermines and ridicules the very notion of the "self-conquering" hero that it invokes.

In many ways the Metastasian operatic model discussed at length by both Strohm and Ketterer does not apply to *Admeto*, an opera that is not particularly concerned with dynastic, political issues or questions of rulership, instead placing its focus (as do many Venetian *seicento* operas) on the entanglement of the hapless royal lovers. In other words, in Handel's opera the reference to Metastasio's "self-conquering" hero is uncalled for from a generic standpoint, in spite of the fact that Alceste *does* follow the narrative outlined by Ketterer of the "self-conquering hero(ine)" who descends into hell and claims victory over her demons upon her return. This lends support to my idea that while on one hand Handel invokes this self-denying heroic figure to challenge the past excesses and transgressions of his wayward hero(ine), on the other hand this out-of-place scene, in all of its pastoral absurdity, exists to poke fun at this conservative Metastasian trope and its most vocal proponent, Ercole. As Aspden argues, the pastoral qualities of "Là dove" are indeed reflective of eighteenth-century and earlier notions of the "garden" as "a symbol of chaste womanhood",[107] enabling it to retrospectively silence Alceste's/Faustina's unruly outburst of "rage. However, this aria's pastoral qualities ultimately undermine the heroic ideal Alceste invokes, foreshadowing her final act as savior which further reduces this ideal (personified by Ercole) to an object of ridicule as she brings the opera to a close.

[107] Aspden *The Rival Sirens*, 174 (referencing but not directly quoting Carol Pearson and Catherine Pope's *The Female Hero in American and British Literature*, 22).

Senesino's "self-fashioning" and the Restoration theatre "epilogue" tradition: One castrato's reclaiming of both his voice and masculinity from the emasculating "rival que[a]ns"

Handel's technique of harmonically and stylistically blurring the boundaries between these competing divas and the "rival queens/princesses" they represent is one of many methods of containing Faustina's vocal aggression. In addition to softening both her vocal and dramatic presence by musically equating her with her more traditionally feminine (perhaps exaggeratedly so) rival, many of the aforementioned satirical pamphlets proliferating at this time contribute to this taming and/or silencing of Faustina's perceived excesses. For instance, in this opera, although patriarchal order is ultimately restored via the long anticipated reunion of husband and wife, this comes to pass through the competing women's generous and/or magnanimous acts which jointly undermine and reverse the *seria* convention in which it is the benevolent king or redeemed tyrant, rather than the heroine (or her rival), who ultimately restores order.[108] Either Alceste or Antigona have the final word in all three Acts (one of Antigona's arias concluding Act I, the previously mentioned "S'en vola lo sparvier"[109], while Alceste

[108] Ivan Nagel, "Mercy and Autonomy: An Essay," in *Autonomy and Mercy: Reflections on Mozart's Operas*, Trans. Marion Faber and Nagel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 32.
In his discussion of the late eighteenth-century shift from *opera seria* to *opera buffa*, Nagel explores a much later reversal of this *seria* trope, in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786). He comments on how this opera subverts the *seria* convention of the magnanimous ruler "conquering" himself and offering mercy to his subjects; often pardoning and giving his blessing to a romantic coupling he has previously thwarted at every turn. Nagel specifically writes that "[t]he Count's hubris, just before the end, mounts to a delusion verging on madness: that he, as sovereign, has discovered a conspiracy [of his 'subordinates'] and may pass judgment on it. Were he the ruler of the *seria*, he would now, at the moment of his greatest power, have to exercise *clemenza*: forgive. The last scene [of *Figaro*]…leads to the risky finding that *His Grace, whose office should be to show mercy, is not just merciless, but is the only one in need of mercy*" (32 – my emphasis). In a much subtler way, while remaining more firmly imbedded within the bounds of the established operatic tradition, Handel's *Admeto* sets a precedent for Mozart's opera's pointed unraveling of these conventions over half a century later.

[109] Note that although Antigona has the final word in Act I, her concluding aria is frequently cut in modern performances (both filmed and audio recordings), instead bringing the first Act to a close with Trasimede's absurd paean to Antigona as Diana, goddess of the hunt, in his "Se l'arco avessi i strali."

brings both Acts II and III to a close), further contributing to Senesino's (as Admeto) silencing. However, by giving Senesino the last word in the previously discussed farce, *The Contre Temps,* this satire offers yet another means – albeit external to the opera itself – of containing both divas', but Faustina's especially, perceived vocal excesses and gendered transgressions.[110]

In the moralizing "epilogue" concluding this satirical comedy, Senesino ridicules the imagined Faustina's previous attempts to elevate her seemingly "petty" cat fight with Cuzzoni to a metaphorical battle between competing political realms. Reinforcing this pamphlet's belittling of the divas and its dismissal of their rivalry as a "cat fight", is a passage from Princess Amelia's aforementioned 1744 manuscript. Her witty, tongue-in-cheek wordplay comes to a head in the second stanza of the song entitled "To ye tune of 'Sally in our All[e]y'" in which she explicitly refers to Cuzzoni as "Catsoni". The ridiculing tone of Amelia's writing continues as this stanza comes to a close with a comment in praise of Polly Peachum; referencing a character from John Gay's contemporaneous *The Beggar's Opera* (1727). Like Amelia's "song", the ballad opera that Amelia praises makes a mockery not only of these divas and their notorious rivalry, but also of castrati and the Italian opera enterprise more generally.[111] Returning to *The Contre Temps,* throughout this satire Faustina imbues herself (though not her rival) with

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[110] See Aspden *The Rival Sirens*, 72. In this concluding section of my chapter I expand upon Aspden's interpretation of this satire through the lens of Nussbaum's theory of "self-fashioning". Aspden posits the following; "we could see *The Contre Temps* as congruent with the restriction of female self-expression – not just as an illumination of the factional strife inspired by (and expressed through) that work, but also, in its hyperbolic vision of what happens unruly women overreach themselves, [making this satire] as much an act of containment as the contrasted roles for the singers within the opera itself" (72).

[111] Amelia, *Miscellaneous Poems* 1744, Lewis Walpole Library, New Haven, CT, 89. The full text of the stanza in question (which I've transcribed from the handwritten manuscript) is as follows; "There's Madam Faustina, Catso; And the Madam Catsoni; Likewise Signior Senesino; Are *tutti Abandoni* ; Ha ha ha ha do re mi fa; Are now but farce & folly; We're ravisht [sic.] all with loll loll loll; And pretty pretty Polly" (89).

masculine, "warlike" characteristics befitting her aggressive and often overtly masculine - as in *Admeto* - stage persona. For instance, she claims that "[w]e dare/[l]ike men all dangers scorn; and thirst for war"[112] and makes an explicit, if not literal, call to arms immediately preceding Senesino's "epilogue", exclaiming, "[t]o arms, to arms...[s]ound instruments of war, revenge and blood."[113] Senesino's unflattering depiction of the "rival queans" in his concluding comment, sneering about how he has "seen two surly bull-dogs tear/[f]irm Limb from Limb...[but *t*]*he mighty cause of war was but a bone*..."[114] explicitly contradicts Faustina's earlier claims to an Amazonian warrior title befitting Alceste's character. By silencing Faustina, and characters like Alceste by extension, this "epilogue" permits the impotent and emasculated "Senesino", if only in the public imagination rather than on stage, to reclaim his voice and his heroic masculinity at her expense.

In their respective discussions of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century tradition of including "prologues" and/or "epilogues" to spoken plays, Nussbaum and Wahrman emphasize the ways in which these conventions offer actors and actresses an opportunity to voice their personal opinions about the overarching themes of a play. By shattering the already fragile or non-existent "fourth wall",[115] this gives individual actors and/or actresses the opportunity to perform short, self-authored, meta-theatrical monologues often offering controversial opinions about the central conflicts or issues at

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[112] *The contre temps*, 7.
[113] In ibid., 15.
[114] In ibid., 16 (my emphasis).
[115] Freeman, 17. Commenting on the lack of a "fourth wall" in eighteenth-century theatre (and opera, by extension), Freeman claims that "far from constructing a 'fourth wall' behind which the illusion of a 'subject' could be produced and commodified, the eighteenth-century stage highlighted its contrivances and celebrated the process of being watched" (17).

stake in a given play. Wahrman argues that "[p]rologues and epilogues effected a meta-commentary on the goings-on on-stage intertwined with a commentary on current events outside the theater…therefore [making them] especially apt vehicles for reflections on the possibilities latent in making, unmaking, and remaking of identities."[116] Furthermore, although she doesn't explicitly discuss it in these terms, Wahrman posits the prologue/epilogue tradition as a vehicle for "self-fashioning." Her more general discussion of this convention dating back to early Restoration theatre resonates with and contextualizes Nussbaum's nuanced account of Kitty Clive's "audacious" and "satiric[al] commentary"[117] on women's role in society exhibited by her self-authored meta-theatrical monologues. In any case, both argue that this tradition enables actors and actresses to continually "make" and "remake" their identities, deliberately cultivating personas which exceed the inherently hazy boundaries of the stage and further blur the boundaries between life and theater so characteristic of eighteenth-century life.

This "epilogue" provides "Senesino" with an opportunity for strategic "self-fashioning", restoring to him the masculine authority he has lost and which Faustina and Cuzzoni (as Alceste and Antigona) have jointly deprived him of in the final scene of *Admeto*. In other words, giving "Senesino" rather than the women the final word reverses the effects of the opera which comes to a close on their terms and, as illustrated by the satirical pamphlets like the frontispiece of *An Epistle from S-----r S-----o to S----a F-----a* (1727), at the expense of both his and his character's virility and noble dignity. Ultimately, the biting tone of "Senesino's" imagined "epilogue" ensures that he who has

[116] Wahrman, 56.
[117] Nussbaum, 175. The full quote is as follows; "Clive's epilogues energetically set out audacious comic or satiric commentary, both feminist and misogynist, regarding the status of women" (175).

been repeatedly reduced to an object of ridicule by the "rival queens" has the chance to ridicule them in turn. It provides him with the opportunity to dismiss them as prostitutes (queans rather than queens), making a mockery of their borderline violent competition for his affections which drives the opera's narrative. Evidently, both the satirical pamphlets, whether they explicitly reference this opera or not, and much of Handel's music, most notably the controversial "rage" aria which I have discussed at length, depict Faustina (and Alceste by extension) as a forceful and aggressive figure. However, both the pamphlets and the opera itself also set out to "tame" and/or silence Faustina, continuously blurring the boundaries between herself and her more traditionally feminine rival in order to put her back in her place. These silencing tactics serve as an attempted antidote to Faustina's (and Alceste's) dangerously "masculine" qualities and gestures which, like Italian opera more generally, were widely believed to pose a threat to the crumbling sense of an English national masculinity throughout the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER TWO

AN AMAZON AND HER CHAMPIONS: HANDEL'S *PARTENOPE* AS AN OPERATIC REPRESENTATION OF HENRY FIELDING'S "PETTICOAT GOVERNMENT"

Introduction

Handel's *Partenope* stars a powerful woman who, unlike her counterpart Rosmira masquerading as the Prince "Eurimene", refuses to resort to disguising herself as a man in order to claim a voice and be heard. Partenope repeatedly flaunts her sexual and political agency, leading her army into battle while stringing along several men; manipulating them to do her bidding and taking charge both on the battlefield and in her court. In her Act I aria "Io ti levo l'impero dell'armi" which she addresses to Rosmira's faithless fiancé, Arsace, Partenope explicitly offers him her heart but refuses to hand over to him the command of her army. Although she doesn't literally "wear the pants", her aforementioned aria (especially in Francisco Negrin's recent, 2009 staging) makes it clear that Partenope, rather than her cross-dressed counterpart Rosmira or the emasculated male figures vying for her affections, has all the control. In Handel's rendition, Partenope has come a long way from her mythical roots; transforming from the suicidal siren for whom the Italian city, Napoli, was originally named into a strong and self-assured woman reigning over a prosperous kingdom. In her program notes accompanying the DVD release of the recent Copenhagen production of this opera, Mary Beard writes, "the Siren called Partenope was said, in some later versions of the myth at least, to have been so distraught at not drawing Odysseus to his death, at failing in her musical seduction, that she threw herself into the sea and drowned. Later washed up on the coast near

Naples, she gave her name to the city."[118] Unlike her mythical predecessor, Handel's "siren" Partenope never fails in her seduction; instead she repeatedly triumphs, wielding her seduction as a weapon (and manipulative tool) against the men who surround her.

Much like Handel's earlier *Admeto*, discussed in chapter one, *Partenope* repeatedly explores the tensions between playfully indulging in the two women's self-proclaimed agency and authority and containing the threat that their joint power poses to the normative social order. In light of these tensions, I devote the first section of my chapter to a discussion of Partenope's aforementioned aria which I explore through the lens of the prolific eighteenth-century English satirist and playwright Henry Fielding's notion of "petticoat government."[119] I extrapolate this heavily circulating term, which makes many appearances in his biting critiques and parodies of Italian opera, to Handel's (and much later, Negrin's) misogynistic treatment of Partenope's character and attempted dismissal of her political authority. More specifically, in Negrin's otherwise understated 2009 Copenhagen production,[120] Partenope goes so far as to strip the masculine "costume" off of the body of one of her anonymous and insignificant male attendants during her aria, "Io ti levo", in which she unexpectedly seizes command of her own army. While provocatively reversing the convention of men objectifying women, neither Handel's opera nor Negrin's staging wholeheartedly celebrates this shift in the

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[118] Mary Beard, "QUEEN AND SIREN," in *Handel: Partenope*. Dir. Francisco Negrin (London, U.K.: DECCA 2009), 15. (Quote taken from this article in the booklet of program notes accompanying the 2009 DVD release of Negrin's Netherlands staging). See the DVD: Silvio Stampiglia, Inger Dam-Jensen, Andreas Scholl, Christophe Dumaux, Tuva Semmingsen, Bo Kristian Jensen, Palle Knudsen, et al. 2009. *Partenope*. DVD. London: Decca.

[119] Jill Campbell discusses this notion of "petticoat government" at length in her monograph about gender in Fielding plays. See: Jill Campbell, *Natural Masques: Gender and Identity in Fielding's Plays and Novels* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).

[120] Andreas Scholl, Inger Dan-Jensen, Tuva Semmingsen, and Francisco Negrin (dir.), *Handel: Partenope*, Conducted by Lars Ulrik Mortensen. London, England: DECCA, 2009.

gendered power balance. Instead, both treat Partenope's reign as frivolous and superficial in order to comment on (and contain) the threat posed by a woman wielding seduction as a weapon and a means of claiming masculine authority for herself.

Shifting attention to Partenope's cross-dressing rival for Arsace's affections, Rosmira's male disguise proves quite effective in leading her wayward lover around by the nose (and blackmailing him, for all intents and purposes). That said, in order to contain the threat that she potentially poses by adopting a masculine character, Rosmira's music subtly undermines these qualities rendering her, and her masculine masquerade by extension, "impotent" (even as she renders the men surrounding her equally, if not more, impotent). Although I've argued that Partenope's music repeatedly attempts to contain her emasculating force, dismissing it as frivolous and petty and offering an operatic representation of Fielding's simultaneously feared and ridiculed "petticoat government", she ultimately remains a far more viable and untamed threat than Rosmira. The primary reason that the title character's threat proves more viable than Rosmira's is because she remains in control of her power(s) throughout the opera. She is always assured of her sexuality (and sex appeal), relying on it rather than the unstable authority attributed to masculinity (and a male disguise) in order to attain and maintain this power**.** Furthermore, Handel's *Partenope* deviates from earlier adaptations of this extremely popular Stampiglia libretto, shifting the focus for the first time from Rosmira to Partenope herself.[121] Whereas earlier operas, like Leonardo Vinci's Neapolitan *commedia* entitled

[121] See Winton Dean, "Partenope," in *Handel's Operas: 1726-1741* (Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2006), 154. According to Dean, "[t]his libretto…written by Silvio Stampiglia for Naples in 1699…was one of the most popular librettos of the period, and inspired at least twenty-three productions before Handel's and thirty-six in the first half of the eighteenth century" (Dean, 154). Later on the same page, Dean goes on to discuss some of the changes Handel's version underwent, offering a comparison to the most similar operatic adaptation of the text by Caldara which he argues served as a model for Handel's *Partenope*. More

La Rosmira Fedele (1725) which is based on the same Stampiglia libretto, zero in on Rosmira's character (her disguise driving the plot above anything else); Handel's Partenope repeatedly claims center stage.[122]

This chapter is structured around three characters, each of whom I argue are associated with the emasculating threat posed by "petticoat government" and guilty of reducing political affairs to battles over the heart and romantic drama. I begin with my discussion of Partenope's aforementioned "Io ti levo", arguing that Handel's queen maintains control and agency in spite of the music's many attempts to silence her. Throughout this aria, the singer portraying Partenope subtly manipulates the musical conventions which attempt but fail to contain her while only feigning to relinquish her power and authority, handing them (alongside her heart) over to Arsace. Maintaining this focus on the notion of "petticoat government", I go on to discuss the insignificant and trivial character, Emilio. As one of three contenders for Partenope's heart and throne, Emilio first appears on stage as an object of comical relief, waging war against her in light of her very public rejection of his marriage proposal. I argue that the self-consciously ridiculous battle sequence which ensues in the wake of Emilio's call to war, continuing in the vein of his comically bellicose music, is provoked primarily by him rather than by Partenope herself. In other words, it is Emilio rather than Partenope who appears at the helm of the opera's ongoing threat of "petticoat government"; a crime for

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specifically, Dean comments on the ways in which (from the standpoint of numbers), Rosmira's role was drastically shortened and made secondary to that of Partenope in Handel's version which "reduced Rosmira's quota from ten arias to six…[while] Partenope's quota remained the same (eight)" (in ibid., 154).

[122] For a comprehensive list of Vinci operas, including his 1725 *La Rosmira Fedele*, see: Kurt Markstrom. "Vinci, Leonardo." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed February 26, 2016, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/29423.

which he is punished (and repeatedly ridiculed) via his shameful defeat at the hands of Handel's self-proclaimed "Amazon" queen.

Finally, I turn to Partenope's rival, Rosmira, who poses a less compelling threat to the normative social order than Handel's commanding "petticoat" queen, in spite of the emasculating potential embedded within her adoption of a male disguise. Focusing on her Act I closing aria, "Io seguo sol fiero", I argue that Rosmira continuously wields this disguise in a desperate attempt to cultivate a "mask" of impenetrable bravado that mirrors her more literal gender-bending masquerade. Despite her best efforts to armor herself, a series of recurring harmonic tensions briefly hinted toward in her aria's A section and which come to a head in its contrasting B section shed light on the underlying "feminine" vulnerability lurking beneath both her disguise and her music's exaggerated flaunting of masculine aggression. Although Rosmira's disguise ultimately fails her, she repeatedly wields it as a weapon and a source of blackmail against not one, but two of the comically impotent men surrounding her, seeking her approval and guidance. Furthermore, throughout the bulk of the opera (as seen in Emilio's aria and the absurd battle he provokes), Handel's music continually focuses on reducing these men – all under the lure of the "petticoat" queen, Partenope - to feminized objects of ridicule and comical relief. Taking into consideration that the opera's denouement involves the recoupling of formerly mismatched pairs, once again focusing on trivial romantic concerns above all else, the threat of "petticoat government" lingers. This threat continues to guide the opera's narrative even after it has supposedly been defeated and both women (the supposed agents of "petticoat government") have been put back in their rightful or

"natural" place. In other words, Fielding's worst nightmare of "henpecked husbands"[123] and domineering wives prevails against all odds and, as hinted toward in Partenope's provocative aria "Io ti levo" in which she seizes command over her troops, both women come out on top.

Handel's Manipulative Vixen and Stately Queen: An "Amazon" Ruling her "Champion(s)" by Seduction and False Promises

Towards the end of the first Act, Partenope offers Arsace command of her army, but when her three competing suitors begin to argue over who has rightfully earned this title during her aria's preceding *recitative* she abruptly removes it from all of them. Negrin's staging of this *recitative* sequence capitalizes on the notion that Partenope loves to watch her competing suitors struggle. In the aria which follows she cruelly and without warning pulls the rug out from under them, defiantly claiming this privilege and symbol of masculinity authority for herself and insisting on leading her own army into battle. The absurd spectacle that the men (including Rosmira disguised as "Eurimene") provide as they attempt to one-up each other in their quest for Partenope's approval enables Negrin to ridicule masculinity; presenting it as an unattainable ideal which reduces all men to hotheaded fools in their ill-fated pursuit. Partenope's aria, "Io ti levo l'impero dell'armi", contributes to this emasculating project from a musical standpoint, by virtue of its

[123] Campbell, "Introduction" and "'If This Was Real': Female Heroism in *Amelia*," in *Natural Masques*, 10, 209. Explicitly invoking this notion of the "henpecked husband" in her commentary about Fielding's paranoid obsession with the threat of "petticoat government", Campbell notes his constant "recurrence to certain stock figures representing the dangerous disruption of [conventional gender] roles: the…Amazonian woman, the castrato, [and] the *henpecked husband*" (10 – my emphasis). Expounding upon this recurring image of the "henpecked husband", Fielding goes on to write that "[i]n 1730, the crowds that came to show after show of *Tom Thumb* laughed not only at its cross-dressed hero but at its portraits of an overbearing queen and henpecked king" (209), "portraits" which can all too easily be mapped onto Handel's Partenope and Arsace respectively.

seductive pull on the men surrounding her which Partenope strategically uses to manipulate and control them.

Stylistically, her aria is befitting of a queen; a stately and refined *andante* march which presents a cloak of regal poise with only subtle undercurrents of coyness and teasing flirtation. As a result of these competing musical qualities or virtues, the aria simultaneously depicts Partenope as a stately queen and a manipulative vixen. The latter image resonates with Fielding's paranoid notion of "petticoat government" wherein women, rather than men, steer the ship (or rule their realms) guided by presumably frivolous and self-indulgent concerns. Like Partenope's music, Negrin's staging (which I discuss at length later in this chapter) reflects these tensions between stately queen and manipulative vixen; presenting a visual parallel to "Io ti levo's" musical commentary on the threat posed by the "petticoat" queen. In regards to Fielding's 1731 ballad opera *Grub-Street Opera*, which premiered within the year of Handel's *Partenope*, Campbell claims that "[m]ost of these scenarios of the 'misrule' of female domination involve the government of a public realm as well as of a household, superimposing a domestic onto a political hierarchy of power."[124] Partenope's claim to be an "Amazon" with her ridiculous entourage of squabbling male suitors as her "champions" also resonates with the eighteenth century's deeply ambivalent reception of this iconic woman warrior figure. The figure of the Amazon was both deeply feared and admired, much like Partenope herself; having been musically depicted as a regal monarch and a conniving dominatrix

[124] Campbell in *Crossing the Stage*, 60. See also Campbell (in *Natural Masques*), in which she mentions *Grub-Street Opera* as one of Fielding's works (a ballad opera) that was most deeply rooted in this notion of "petticoat government." Campbell writes the following, "[i]n *Grub-Street Opera*, which presents English royalty as a Welsh family of henpecked husband, domineering wife, and 'puny' son" there is an ongoing mantra stated by one of the characters, "[p]etticoat government is a very lamentable thing indeed. – But it is the fate of many an honest gentleman" (both quotes, Campbell in *Natural Masques*, 21).

guilty of reducing the men surrounding her – her self-proclaimed "champions" - to a pack of subservient fools or dogs.[125] As Campbell notes in her discussion of gender in Fielding satires (and satirical plays), the Amazon figure is inextricably linked with this notion of "petticoat government." According to Campbell, in the context of Fielding's plays the Amazon was often associated with an elaborate conspiracy theory about women's dangerously aggressive involvement in the campaign of the pretender for the throne.[126] More specifically, she asserts that the effeminacy and "affectation" displayed by the "Pretender" himself were mirrored by the "insinuations that Amazonian aggression characterizes women who support the Jacobite cause"[127] in the Whig imagination. Evidently, by adopting the role of "Amazon", however playfully, Partenope cements her character's association with Fielding's feared "petticoat government" in her audience's collective imagination. Expanding upon Campbell's observations, I contend that Handel's 1730 opera, while predating the Jacobite rising(s) of 1745 (and 1746) by fifteen years, resonates with this borderline conspiracy theory about the extreme threat posed by women's (e.g.: Partenope's) real or perceived intrusion into the masculinized political realm.

From a musical standpoint, the seemingly innocuous sensuality of Partenope's aria enables her to present a threat to the dominant social order as an "Amazon" and/or "petticoat" ruler. Her music offers a mere façade of docile respectability and queenly

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[125] See pp. 26-28 of my first chapter, "Cross-dressing Heroines and Rival 'Que[a]ns': Handel's *Admeto* and London's Operatic Satire", wherein in I discuss eighteenth-century London's highly ambivalent reception of the "Amazon" figure at greater length.

[126] Campbell in *Natural Masques*, 10-11. Campbell specifically writes that "Whig polemicists sounding the alarm against the dread consequences of a rebel victory in 1746 warned that the Jacobite ranks consisted of weak-willed men and their fierce, dominating warrior-wives" (10-11).

[127] In ibid., 144.

grace which she carefully orchestrates to conceal her tactic of wielding her sex appeal as a weapon through which she persuades her lover(s) to blindly follow her every command. From the opening *ritornello* of "Io ti levo", Partenope's music moves in a gently subdued *andante* with markedly simple and straightforward rhythmic gestures. Her aria's predominant eighth, dotted sixteenth-thirty second and eighth-note duplet patterns (see, for instance, mm.1 and its pick-up/anacrusis),[128] are befitting of a queen's regal character while also imbuing her with a sense of levity and playfulness. **(See Appendix B, Example 1, pg. 198).** In spite of its rather unthreatening and playful facade, this aria's seemingly harmless scalar melody contains the underlying threat of seductive manipulation. Partenope's music first adopts a tone of coy seduction and/or flirtation a mere three measures into the opening *ritornello,* as the harmonic rhythm begins to lag and the first violins and oboes launch into a series of repeated rocking and trilling gestures against a sustained first inversion tonic chord (see mm.3). **(See Appendix B, Example 1, pg. 198).** These recurring trills against stagnant harmonies, which hover and circle around I6 without landing directly on I until the downbeat of the following measure, playfully illustrate the queen's sly, underhanded tactic of offering to Arsace command of her heart while cruelly withholding from him command of her troops. In other words, her music's teasing emphasis on the first inversion tonic as opposed to in root position, offers a harmonic representation of Arsace's tenuous grasp on his beloved

[128] Georg Friedrich Händel, *Partenope: Opera di G.F. Händel*, Libretto by Silvio Stampiglia, Friedrich Chrysander, Ed. (Ridgewood, NJ: Gregg Press Inc., 1965), 40. Note that this Chrysander vocal score, printed for the German Handel Society based on Leipzig in the mid-1960s, has certain limitations (like all Chrysander scores) considering that it was published during the era of making radical cuts and alterations in Handel scores. Unfortunately, the Bärenreiter Ur-text (HHA: Halle/Hallische Händel Edition; https://www.baerenreiter.com/en/program/complete-editions/handel-george-frideric/series-ii/) of this particular Handel opera has yet to be published and is currently unavailable for scholarly reference. A digitized printing of this same Chrysander edition, the Gregg Press Inc. printing (sponsored by Breitkopf & Härtel) is also available; however, a more authoritative edition has yet to be published.

queen. Throughout both this aria and the opera in its entirety, I argue that Partenope strategically wields flirtation and seduction as a source of power and manipulation. The music (especially this passage) illustrates her capacity to keep herself just out of Arsace's reach while maintaining the illusion that he has her firmly within his grasp; suggesting that she withholds as much if not more than she gives. Evidently, although Arsace "commands her", or, in her own words, has an "empire over her soul" (*l'impero dell'anima mia*),[129] Handel's queen alone remains in control.

Continuing in the vein of the opening *ritornello*'s playful evasion of root position tonic harmonies in favor of teasing I6 chords, my interpretation of Partenope's aria as a whole revolves around questions of tonality and the expected harmonic shifts within a *standard* da capo aria. More specifically, I contend that Partenope strategically alters and manipulates these harmonic conventions to her own end throughout her seductive attack on Arsace's masculine authority. Three times during the aria's A section, Partenope refuses to grant Arsace title of commander-in-arms, but mitigates his disappointment by instead offering him an exclusive hold on her heart (to the dismay of his competing suitors). The phrase "Io ti levo l'impero dell'armi, non l'impero dell'anima mia" (*I remove from you the empire of my army, but not the empire of my soul*), recurs in several different guises during the scene as Partenope explores different modes of seduction in order to orchestrate the elaborate illusion that Arsace has power over her. The first time Partenope denies Arsace the title she had previously offered him, she proudly and emphatically modulates into the closely related key of D major (dominant of the G major

[129] The text of the A section (taken from the score and as heard in performance) is: **"**Io ti levo l'impero dell'armi, Non l'impero dell'anima mia." My literal translation of this text is as follows: "I remove from you the empire of my army but not of my soul."

tonic) on the downbeat of mm.12. This modulation is facilitated by a series of suspensions in the vocal line which emphasize the C# (raised 7 or leading tone of the new tonic, D major), melodically drawing attention to this shift in tonality beyond what is offered in the harmonic progression below. **(See Appendix B, Example 1, pg. 198).** Towards the end of the a1 section, just in time for its concluding cadence in mm.17, her music just as abruptly moves out of D major back into the tonic of G major via a IV/I pivot chord at the end of mm.16 (the IV chord in D major reinterpreted as I in G major). **(See Appendix B, Example 1, pg. 199).** This second, rather subtle, sly, and unexpected modulation back into the primary tonal center reinforces the tenuousness of Arsace's grasp on Partenope's "heart" (although she explicitly claims that he commands her); offering a harmonic representation of the queen's tendency to teasingly move just in and out of his reach while proving that she is really the one in charge. In her authoritative delineation of the *da capo* aria form, Ellen T. Harris argues that this shift back to the primary tonal center is generally not expected to occur until the end of the a2 phrase of a *da capo* aria.[130] In "Io ti levo", on the other hand, this modulation occurs early (at the beginning of the a2 phrase), which suggests that Partenope has anticipated the return of the tonic, manipulating it to occur on her own timeline. Expanding upon Harris' observation, I argue that this sudden, deliberately mistimed modulation does not entirely fall outside the realm of tradition, thereby ensuring that Partenope's strategic seduction tactics (as they manifest in her music) do not completely deviate from operatic

[130] Ellen T. Harris, "Harmonic Patterns in Handel's Operas," in *Eighteenth-Century Music in Theory and Practice: Essays in Honor of Alfred Mann*. Mary Ann Parker, Ed. (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1994), 82. Harris specifically claims that "[a]rias in major keys modulate at the end of A1 to the major dominant and return to the tonic by the end [rather than the beginning, as in Partenope's aria] of the A2" (82), in preparation for yet another modulation in the beginning of the B section to the relative minor of the primary tonic.

conventions of the time. Instead, this passing moment in her aria offers her leverage to subtly manipulate the standard form from within rather than to transgress it altogether much like she subtly manipulates Arsace so that he remains blissfully oblivious to her power over him.

As Partenope's aria progresses, the link between her (often subtle) manipulation of harmonic and/or formal conventions and her usurpation of power and authority from Arsace becomes increasingly transparent. In other words, I argue that she seizes control over the *da capo* aria as she unequivocally seizes command of her troops and control over Arsace. The second time that Partenope reiterates her plan to "remove" from Arsace "the empire of [her] army, but not…of [her] soul" (*io ti levo,* etc.), her vocal line willfully manipulates and slightly deviates from the harmonic progression below. This deviation in the vocal part once again suggests the queen's playful withholding of power from the rather desperate Arsace. More specifically, her music presents a carefully concealed arpeggiation of vii°, embedded within a coyly moving scalar vocal melody, which subtly extends the dominant prep. phase of the harmonic progression. This brief extension of the dominant prep. phase enables Partenope to linger on what is clearly intended to be a mere passing moment in an otherwise steadily progressing phrase. By lingering on this diminished seventh chord, the singer pushes back against the inexorable forward motion of the rapidly moving *continuo* below, subtly undermining the harmonic progression as it moves from vii° (in various inversions) to V and then to I (see mm.20).[131] **(See Appendix B, Example 1, pg. 199).** Her understated and fleeting moment of rebellion once again

[131] More specifically, the prominent seventh, second, and fourth scale degrees outlining the aforementioned vii° chord in the vocal melody subtly undermine the shift to a dominant harmony (mm.20, beat 2) in the walking bass line below.

suggests that Partenope remains in control of her "soul" as well as her "army", although she claims otherwise.

During the third and final iteration of this recurring flirtatious and seductive text, Partenope once again rebels against the demands posed by harmonic and formal conventions. This time she defiantly extends her phrase past the anticipated cadence (a cadential 6-4 which surprisingly occurs on the weak, second beat of mm.27), counteracting a gesture that normally suggests definitive closure by placing it mid-measure. Her music does eventually come to a more conclusive cadence, but rather than moving from this oddly placed cadential 6-4 immediately into the A section's closing *ritornello* as dictated by harmonic convention, her vocal line persists, adopting the coy trill gestures (against a prolonged tonic harmony) first heard in mm.3 of her aria's opening *ritornello* (see mm.27-28 for the cadential 6-4 passage). **(See Appendix B, Example 1, pp. 198 & 200).** As with her subtly rebellious melodic extension of the dissonant vii° chord during the second (of three) iterations of this recurring text, this equally understated deviation from the standard *da capo* aria form insinuates that Partenope has once again strategically manipulated musical (both harmonic and formal) conventions, molding them to her needs and desires. During these moments of Partenope's aria it becomes abundantly clear not only that her character represents Fielding's nightmare of "petticoat government" in which a conniving woman unmans her husband (or a queen her kingdom), but that she is well aware of her power and authority; an awareness that renders her and the threat she poses to the patriarchal status quo all the more dangerous.

As I mentioned earlier, my interpretation of this aria is reinforced by Negrin's staging in the Copenhagen production in which Partenope literally strips the masculine costume off of one of her anonymous male attendants (in a coy and seductive manner). Although this staging overtly sexualizes Partenope, her sexual appeal remains on her own terms, thereby demonstrating the radical reversal of traditional gendered power dynamics which I've argued is deeply embedded within Handel's opera. Negrin's vision of this scene renders transparent the aria's message that Partenope controls the men of her court, reducing them to her puppets and/or willing slaves, and seizing their masculine authority for herself while claiming to offer one of them "command of her heart." Furthermore, by treating one of Partenope's anonymous male attendants as a sexual object who is subject to her whims, Negrin's provocative staging flips the standard model of objectifying women for the pleasure of the "male gaze" on its head; catering not to men's desires but instead to those of a powerful woman.[132] On one hand, this scene contributes to the degrading titillation factor often attributed to women in drag, reducing Partenope to a male fantasy by having her strip for her audience and remove her queenly garb only to replace it with a tuxedo jacket and thigh-high boots. On the other hand, the fact that she goes on to very visibly use an unnamed and insignificant man for her own pleasure ensures that she maintains her authority throughout this sequence. Like Salome, who Abbate argues "actively fends off male gazes…[and by turning] the gaze back against itself…[she subjugates] the [male] eye that subjugates her",[133] Partenope reclaims the

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[132] Carolyn Abbate, "Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women," in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, Ruth A. Solie, Ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 241.

[133] In Ibid., 241. For a contrasting argument, see the co-authored article cited below in which Linda and Michael Hutcheon claim that instead of usurping and reclaiming the "gaze" for herself, it is the object rather than the subject of the "gaze" that is imbued with power in the first place. See Linda and Michael Hutcheon, "'Here's Lookin' at You, Kid': The Empowering Gaze in *Salome*", *Profession*, 1/1/1998, 16.

power and authority invested in the "gaze" on her own terms. In light of this notion, Negrin stages this scene in such a way that Partenope shifts from eroticized spectacle to spectator with ease and panache as an awestruck Arsace looks on in dismayed shock.[134] **(See Figures 1 and 2, below).**

Figure 1

Figure 2

This provocative staging of Partenope's "Io ti levo" calls to mind commonly accepted notions of the inherently porous boundary between spectacle and spectator in eighteenth-century English theater; capitalizing on the slippery slope between these seeming poles at the expense of the spectator who is all too often assumed to be male. Although Negrin's staging presents a shocking visualization of this scene, I argue that the shock factor is diminished by virtue of having been historically informed; rooted in the eighteenth-century tradition of blurring the boundary between spectacle and spectator.

Also note the strong summary of "the gaze" the Hutcheons provide, making references to feminist film scholar, Laura Mulvey, known for having coined this term (see Hutcheon, 15).

[134] This scene is quite challenging to capture fully in two screen shots; for a more thorough experience of this provocative staging and performance see Negrin, *Partenope*, DVD 1, 56:33-59:43.

Commenting on the lack of a clear "fourth wall" (or barrier) between stage and audience at this time, Kristina Straub writes that, "the 'civilizing' of the eighteenth-century London theater was an ongoing process throughout most of the century, during which the boundaries between spectator and spectacle are as continually violated as they are asserted."[135] Expanding upon Straub's observations, I argue that like the flamboyant eighteenth-century English actor, Colley Cibber (father of the infamous cross-dressing actress, Charlotte Charke), who also used shock tactics to garner appeal and publicity, Negrin's Partenope renders herself "not a helpless object but *a professional exhibitionist who watches even as [s]he displays [her]self*."[136] As in this shocking yet titillating visual sequence offered by Negrin, the music of Partenope's aria ensures that Handel's queen remains in control of her brazen sexuality (and her sexualized display); subtly calling the shots while presenting Arsace with the captivating illusion that he holds her within his thrall rather than vice versa.

"Domestic" Warfare as a Heated Game of Musical Chairs: The Ridiculing of the True Culprit of *Partenope*'s "Petticoat Government"

Although Partenope and her reign thoroughly embody this notion of "petticoat government", I argue that it is one of her ridiculous, feminized suitors who invites such an interpretation much more than Handel's commanding queen does herself. In his Act I Scene 10 aria "Anch'io pugnar saprò", just moments before Partenope's seductive aria discussed at length earlier in this chapter, Emilio offers a comically disjointed melody that makes a mockery of his militaristic ambitions intertwined with his pathetic attempt at wooing his enemy first into bed (and then war) with him. This rather insignificant,

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[135] Straub, "Ocular Affairs: The Gendering of Eighteenth-Century Spectacle," in *Sexual Suspects,* 4.
[136] Straub, "Colley Cibber's Butt: The Construction of Actors' Masculinity," in Ibid., 40 (my emphasis).

tertiary character, a prince from a neighboring kingdom, offers Partenope an ultimatum during his first appearance on stage. He goes so far as to threaten war against her if she refuses his marriage request, precipitating the complete collapse of political matters into trivial domestic (or romantic) concerns in the Act II battle sequence to come. Reinforcing his association with "petticoat government", rather than being emasculated at Partenope's hands as this paranoid narrative trope would suggest, Emilio appears on stage already severely lacking in masculine vigor and virility. Furthermore, this lack is concealed (or I would argue, revealed) by his music's insistent portrayal of belligerent heroic posturing rooted in a series of empty vocal aggressions.

Musically, Emilio's aria reinforces Negrin's staging decisions, being both harmonically and rhythmically simple and repetitive to the point of collapsing into an expression of childlike regression and naiveté. His vocal line continuously moves in short bursts of failed bravado; fits and starts (most of his phrases comprised of disjointed two-measure chunks) suggesting that this pompous figure is all talk and little to no action.[137] The exaggeratedly emphatic phrase that begins the aria, marked by large leaps – first up a fourth and then down a sixth - serves as his means of drawing attention to himself and his overly-inflated ego (see mm.11). **(See Appendix B, Example 2, pg. 203).** This opening gesture, set to the central text "anch'io pugnar saprò" (*I too know how to fight*),[138] quickly devolves into a ridiculous display of masculine posturing and/or comically impotent aggression. In the second iteration of this rather pompous and self-aggrandizing claim, Emilio's vocal line continues to embrace a melodic contour constructed around disjunct motion. However, rather than expanding upon the bombastic opening phrase, this passage

[137] See, for instance, the first phrase of the A section (mm.11-21).
[138] Text taken from the vocal score; my translation.

demands that he adopt a jagged and discombobulating series of large vocal leaps, first down an octave and then failing to reach the octave, instead going up a dissonant minor seventh on the way back up (from F#-F# and back up to E). Not only does the second vocal leap fail to reach the octave, but these gestures feed off of each other like Emilio's rage, offering a jarring and somewhat taunting variation of the opening figure heard in mm.11 (see mm.14-16). In conjunction with these repetitive large leaps in rapid succession, which offer a musical representation of immature and childish behavior, the octave doubling in the *basso continuo* contributes to the music's scorning of Emilio's character. Together, these disparate musical qualities convey a sense of comical absurdity that can easily be traced back to his tenor voice (and, I argue, to low voices and strings more broadly). **(See Appendix B, Example 2, pg. 203).** Taking into consideration that the tenor voice was often reserved for trivial characters during this period, this connotation is aptly invoked by the music of Handel's blustering fool, Emilio. Furthermore, dating back to the heyday of the *commedia dell'arte* tradition, the tenor voice was often exploited for comic effect, manifesting in the "stock" role of the comically lecherous old woman in pursuit of a young boy.[139] In any case, by reducing Emilio's aggressively self-aggrandizing opening gesture into a series of disjointed

[139] Dorothy Keyser, "Cross-sexual casting in Baroque opera: Musical and theatrical conventions," *The opera quarterly* Vol.5 No.4 (Winter 1988), 56 - see endnote#20). Describing this phenomenon, Keyser writes that tenors were often cast as a "man-hungry older woman [usually a nurse] in pursuit of a flirtatious but elusive young boy" (in ibid., 53-4). She goes on to remark that "[t]hese…stock [*commedia*] figures disappear from opera libretti during the Metastasian reform movement" (53). However, I would argue that this restriction doesn't apply to Handel who rarely adhered to Metastasian principles/reforms and only composed three, poorly received operas based on Metastasian libretti. Handel's three operas based on Metastasio libretti include *Siroe re di Persia* (1728), *Alessandro nell'Indie* retitled *Poro* (1731), and *Ezio* (1732). See Dean, "Siroe, Re di Persia," 101. As Dean notes in his comprehensive study of Handel operas, *Siroe* was especially poor received, partially due to the sudden popularity of ballad operas like "*The Beggar's Opera* which undoubtedly damaged the reception of *Siroe*" (101). Dean at least partially attributes the failure of *Siroe* to the contemporaneous emergence of ballad operas which took so much glee in lampooning the archaic Metastasian model(s) upon which this opera is based.

repetitions of just one tiny motivic fragment, rendered vulnerable and exposed outside of its original context, Handel makes it abundantly clear that although Emilio does so himself, neither his character nor his aggressions were ever intended to be taken very seriously.

These blundering and foolish qualities of Emilio's aria lend themselves to his character's ultimate degradation, groveling at Partenope's feet in chains at the end of the battle which he has waged against her (and lost). Much like Emilio's aforementioned aria, the Act II battle sequence he provokes comes to a head with a similarly exaggerated bombastic call-to-arms, cloaked in the piercing sound of the triumphant trumpet which immediately takes central stage. As such, the battle that crystallizes Partenope's association with Fielding's "petticoat government" at its worst, actually presents itself as an extension not of her character's outrageous actions but those of Emilio. Following in this vein, the Copenhagen production stages the battle sequence as a complete farce. This scene begins with a ridiculous sequence of militant choreography that dramatizes the exaggerated vocal (and aggressive) posturing heard in Emilio's aforementioned aria. As they enter the stage, Partenope and her troops (wearing absurd paper cut-out crowns), threaten to conquer Emilio before an abrupt change in the music is used to cue a game of musical chairs. This heated round of musical chairs is itself followed by a "battle" of rock-paper-scissors gone awry in a chaotically out-of-hand, violent, and childish scuffle. **(See Figures 3-5, pg. 80).**

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Throughout the "Sinfonia" which serves as the backbone of this sequence of events, the music presents a fragile veneer of virility and militaristic dominance; qualities that it shares with Emilio's previously discussed aria and which are brought to life by Negrin's self-consciously absurd staging. In its opening measures, the unified orchestra and solo trumpet loudly proclaim the D major tonal center, jointly presenting a prolonged arpeggiation (lasting nearly five measures) of the tonic harmony to the point of self-parody (see mm.1-5). **(See Appendix B, Example 3, pg. 206).** Ironically, in spite of this firm and emphatic first appearance of the D major tonic, which opens rather than closes

the “Sinfonia” with a strikingly climactic gesture, it fails to firmly establish itself. Instead, it is playfully destabilized by a variety of figures which collectively ensure that, like Emilio and his empty claims of unparalleled military prowess, this hyper-aggressive and potent musical gesture never comes to fruition beyond a superficial level.

After such a long passage of static harmonies, unmoving from the D major tonic during a phrase that culminates in a sustained A6 (dominant) in the solo trumpet, the music suddenly adopts a rapid and constantly changing harmonic rhythm. More specifically, in mm.8, the harmonies repeatedly shift back and forth between I in various inversions and IV in preparation for the expected modulation into the dominant key of A major in mm. 10 against the backdrop of another sustained dominant (now E6) in the solo trumpet part. **(See Appendix B, Example 3, pg. 206).** Considering that this continuation of the phrase maintains closely interrelated and consonant harmonies, the tonic and subdominant respectively, it does not overtly destabilize the comically overstated tonic of the first five measures. However, the abrupt shift in the harmonic rhythm mid-way through the phrase does suggest a break in the music’s single-minded and intense focus on building up the tonic. At this point in the “Sinfonia”, this intense focus begins to unravel from within, suggesting that both the musical (and dramatic) aggression of the battling troops are mere façades.

In the wake of this bombastic opening phrase which devotes itself to loudly proclaiming the D major tonic, the harmonic rhythm once again picks up as the music prepares for the expected modulation into the dominant key. In mm.10, the secondary dominant of V (E6) sustains itself across the bar line in the solo trumpet part as the music modulates into the dominant key of A major via a standard pivot chord. **(See Appendix**

B, Example 3, pg. 206). This V6-5/3 of V (secondary dominant) pivot chord precipitates a nearly verbatim repetition of the exaggeratedly bombastic exclamation of the tonic key which opens the "Sinfonia," However, this time the tonic arpeggiation that follows is cut short without warning as the music modulates once again, destabilizing the new tonal center before it has had sufficient time to establish itself. More specifically, Handel's abrupt transformation of the local tonic into a third-inversion secondary dominant seventh literally flips the A major harmony on its head. The emphasis on the unstable and ungrounded seventh (G) which appears prominently at the base of this V4-2/IV chord in mm.14, serving as the pivot chord back into the primary tonic of D major, further weakens the "Sinfonia's" already fragile sense of a stable tonal center. **(See Appendix B, Example 3, pg. 206).** In light of these constant and rather abrupt tonal shifts, this radically abbreviated rendition of the excessively triumphant opening figure conveys a sense of empty posturing that hearkens back to Emilio's aria which I've argued similarly provides an elaborate spectacle devoid of substance.

These destabilizing harmonies continue as the "Sinfonia" progresses. Towards the end of the movement after the primary tonal center has reestablished itself in anticipation of the "Sinfonia's" final cadence in an emphatic D major, this D major tonic is itself reinterpreted as a secondary dominant (V4-2/IV or G major) in mm.16. In this fleeting moment, its own identity as tonic is questioned much like the local A major tonic had been a mere two measures earlier (see mm.14). However, also recalling this earlier passage, the music quickly re-stabilizes itself in preparation for the expected cadential figure; once again resuming harmonic normality and drawing the "Sinfonia" to an unambiguous close. **(See Appendix B, Example 3, pg. 206).** Overall, both of these

sudden and unexpected harmonic shifts, which follow each other in rapid succession, convey the fundamental instability that lurks beneath the surface of the bombastic and overly-confident arpeggiated motive infusing the "Sinfonia." I contend that these qualities of harmonic instability lend themselves to Negrin's staging of the battle scene as a farce. Furthermore, they contribute to the "Sinfonia's" musical dramatization of Emilio's (and also Partenope's, though to a lesser extent) comically exaggerated hubris, overly-inflated ego, and empty militant posturing which ultimately collapse into a ridiculous spectacle at his expense.

In the Copenhagen production, not only the staging but the orchestra contributes to the absurdity of the battle sequence. The conductor, Lars Ulrik Mortensen, capitalizes on the inherent comedy of Handel's music during this scene, in one particularly notable instance which brings these musical and staging interpretations together via an unexpected - but extremely effective - musical twist. During the battle scene's first iteration of the "Sinfonia", which Negrin stages as the battling regents' first ridiculous prong of attack (presented as a comically aggressive bout of musical chairs), Mortensen and his orchestra unexpectedly halt mid-cadence (see mm.11 into 12). **(See Appendix B, Example 3, pg. 206).** By pausing between V and I and prolonging the heavily anticipated cadence, Mortensen not only enhances the realism of this "musical chairs" game by offering a moment of silence, but heightens the listener's sense of anticipation for the expected return of the "Sinfonia's" bombastic opening figure (this time in the dominant key of A major). The fact that this modulated repetition of the opening phrase is itself abruptly cut short as the "Sinfonia" lurches back into D major with little to no warning offers even more fodder for Mortensen's decision to abruptly silence the orchestra in the

midst of this childish game. Evidently, Mortensen's conducting decision contributes to the "Sinfonia's" musical qualities of constant interruption (and/or self-disruption) as well as its lack of a clear sense of direction. In conjunction with Negrin's staging, this comical grand pause, literalizing the battling troops' game of "musical chairs", renders the scene ridiculous in light of the music's exaggeratedly decisive opening gesture. Ultimately, the musical qualities in both Emilio's aria and the "Sinfonia" discussed above promote the notion that it is he, rather than Partenope, who is guilty of setting the stage for the complete absurdity of the "battle" sequence which I've argued firmly embeds Handel's opera within the contemporaneous discourse of "petticoat government." Quite appropriately, Emilio's punishment for these gendered transgressions culminates in the image of him groveling at the still powerful Partenope's feet after having been defeated by her; appearing more thoroughly emasculated than any of the literally castrated singers with whom he shares the stage.

A Woman Masquerading as Manly Mentor for the Sensitive Armindo: Rosmira's Failed "Mask" of Heroic Bravado and Masculine Aggression

Like Partenope, Rosmira continually manipulates the men surrounding her (using them to her own end); however she does so much less effectively in spite of the commonplace assumption that her male disguise would grant her increased access to power and authority. From a superficial standpoint she is able to utilize her masculine persona, the Prince "Eurimene", as a means of blackmailing the man who has wronged her, Arsace, and using his knowledge of her disguise to her advantage. As the opera progresses Rosmira – as "Eurimene" - also serves as the ironically more manly mentor of the comically effeminate, Armindo, who follows "him" around like a lovesick pup, wounded by Partenope's constant rejection and desperately seeking "his" advice. The

irony of a man seeking a woman's advice on how to adopt a more masculine and virile persona is not immediately apparent, considering that the role of Armindo was originally intended for another women *en travesti*. In fact, the singer, Francesca Bertolli, who played Armindo in the premiere run in January of 1730 eventually (in the 1737 revival) took the role of Rosmira, suggesting that these two roles were somewhat interchangeable given their similarities in voice type.[140] However, in the Copenhagen performance, Armindo is performed by a man (French countertenor, Cristophe Dumaux), thereby presenting a casting choice which renders his character's implied emasculation at Rosmira's hands even more compelling and subversive. In his discussion of yet another contemporary production of *Partenope* (dir. David Alden) that features a countertenor in the role of Armindo, blogger Nick Terrell raises a very similar point. According to Terrell, "[t]here are plenty of women courting women while dressed or acting as men, so why not ratchet up the interrogation of gender stereotypes by reassigning the meekest male part to … a man."[141] Drawing inspiration from the earlier scene in Act I in which "Eurimene" coaches Armindo on how to successfully woo Partenope (albeit without success), the Copenhagen production stages Rosmira's powerful Act I closing aria, another aria which she directs toward Armindo, in the same vein.[142] Thinking that

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[140] Dean, "Partenope," 162-63. See the cast billing for the premiere performance on pg. 162 citing Bertolli as Armindo. Dean goes on to comment that in "Handel's second and last revival…at Covent Garden on 29 January 1737…there w[as]…a new cast except for Strada [continuing in the role of Partenope] and Bertolli, who was promoted from Armindo to Rosmira" (163).

[141] Quote taken from a blog review. See: Nick Terrell, "Alden's Style Offensive," *The Ember* Blog, entry posted March 2011, http://theember.com.au/?p=1491 (accessed January 28, 2014).

[142] In Act I Scene IV, during the *recit*. dialogue preceding Armindo's first aria, "Voglio dire (al mio Tesoro)", Rosmira, in her guise as "Eurimene," attempts to coach Armindo on how to seduce and court Partenope, claiming "si non ti sai spiegar, lagnati sol di te, pace se vuoi trovar, sappi cercar mercé" (*if you do not know how to explain [how to tell her], complain only to yourself, peace you can find, if you know where to look for mercy*). The above translation, in parentheses, is my own (loosely translated from the original Italian text provided in the score). Evidently, Rosmira thinks that she has the inner knowledge that Armindo needs, which she will pass on to him "man to man", in order to aid him in his rather desperate cause.

"Eurimene" poses a threat to him in his pursuit of the disdainful and haughty queen, Armindo corners his mentor and questions "him" about "his" intentions toward Partenope. In the *recit.* dialogue preceding "his" aria, "Io seguo sol fiero," "Eurimene" reassures Armindo that "he" has no desire to court Partenope; claiming that the divine mistress "he" serves is Diana, goddess of the hunt, and that "he" alone is immune to Cupid's deadly arrows.

In "Io seguo", Rosmira meticulously cultivates a "mask" of impenetrable bravado and courage; however, this thin veneer of bravado gradually crumbles from within as the aria progresses. I invoke the word "mask" here in order to highlight the parallels between this aria's metaphorical "mask" of self-assured courage, which I attribute to its exaggeratedly straightforward and direct tone, and Rosmira's gender-bending masquerade that plays out on the level of narrative. The music's gradual peeling away of its own "mask" ensures that this scene foreshadows her character's more literal unmasking which brings the opera to a close, restoring to Partenope's court the (hetero)normative social order. Befitting the multiple references to "the hunt", the music of "Io seguo" is dominated by a horn and oboe duo (the former an instrument traditionally associated with this decidedly aristocratic recreational activity). The horns (and oboes) serve to bolster Rosmira's vocal line, often doubling her at the unison or offering a complementary melody like the one that begins in parallel thirds (see mm.27-29),[143] in both cases imbuing her character with an increased sense of power and vocal

[143] Again take note of the fact that this score is not an ideal representation of Handel's *Partenope*, however until the Bärenreiter (HHA) edition becomes available, hopefully within the next 5-10 years, it is the best (and only) option. One of the weaknesses and oddities of this Chrysander edition, which surfaces in Rosmira's aria, "Io ti seguo," is that her vocal line appears not in the treble clef as expected but instead is notated in the alto clef.

authority**. (See Appendix B, Example 4, pp. 209-10).** When not paired with the horns (and oboes), Rosmira's part is often doubled (see mm. 6-7) and at times punctuated or echoed (see mm. 10-11) by the strings (violins and violas) which, if lacking in the piercing quality of the latter instrument, also serve the purpose of granting her a more powerful vocal presence. **(See Appendix B, Example 4, pg. 208).** On one hand, these qualities reinforce Rosmira's sense of unparalleled valor and defiant self-reliance; on the other hand, the exaggerated simplicity of her music works against its commanding portrayal of her character. More specifically, Rosmira's ultra-straightforward vocal melodies, her aria's main motive often repeated sequentially and marked by an abundance of recurring neighbor and passing tones, convey the naïve simplicity of her character. The rhythmically plodding bass line, befitting of a triumphant march but lacking in subtlety or sophistication, also poses a challenge to her character's deliberate and aggressive act of self-fashioning. "Io seguo" imbues the singer portraying Rosmira with qualities that undermine the character's courageous (yet futile) attempt to adopt a commanding stage presence. Although Rosmira's music is ultra-straightforward and direct, these qualities ultimately backfire; rendering her character comically trivial and one-dimensional like Emilio whose music I've argued similarly conveys a sense of empty aggression and masculine posturing.

The A section of Rosmira's "hunting" aria, in particular, showcases her defiant attempt to present an impenetrable and courageous façade in the face of her continuing love for the backstabbing, Arsace. She wishes to appear invulnerable to the pangs of the heart (especially heartbreak), unlike the effeminate and fragile, Armindo, who repeatedly comes to her seeking advice. As she (in her disguise as "Eurimene") rather pompously

proclaims her inner strength and will power, fueled by the aggressive music of the horns (and oboes) which support and enhance her vocal melody, Rosmira implicitly taunts Armindo for his failure to live up to her model of a commanding masculine presence. Negrin stages the first iteration of the aria's A section as Rosmira's/"Eurimene's" playfully violent yet borderline abusive attack on Armindo who represents the dangerous trap of lovesick desperation for Handel's embittered and hardened heroine. Throughout this section of her aria the singer, Tuva Semmingsen, chases Armindo (countertenor, Cristophe Dumaux) around the stage and cruelly leaves him in a headlock, making a mockery of him and his failed masculinity. **(See Figure 6, below).**

Figure 6

However, I argue that she is actually making a mockery of her own failures to fully embrace her disguise and the capacity for a strategic reinvention of her suffering character that it offers her. The latter becomes increasingly apparent in the aria's contrasting B section which presents Rosmira's internal struggle between retaliating against and forgiving the wayward Arsace.

Rosmira's internal struggle to either punish or forgive Arsace musically manifests in a prolonged harmonic conflict between the B section's anticipated key of a minor and its relative major (C major); a conflict which is reflective of her entire aria's overarching quality of harmonic instability. Furthermore, I argue that these persistent harmonic tensions offer a parallel to similar tensions plaguing the "male disguise" role from within. More specifically, the transgressive potential of the "male disguise" role is often in direct conflict with the historical practice of exploiting theatrical cross-dressing in order to heighten the sexual appeal of a scantily clad actress (or singer). Returning to the music of Rosmira's aria, the contrasting B section of "Io seguo" begins in the key of d minor (vi of the primary tonic, F major) as dictated by convention; however, the music quickly becomes harmonically unstable. Within a mere measure and a half of its opening phrase, the music abruptly shifts into C major (the lowered VII of d minor) before the initial key of d minor has had sufficient time to establish itself. Like the opening key of d minor, C major ends up being extremely short-lived, once again modulating without warning in mm.48 to the key of a minor[144] (the tonal center expected in the B section of an F major *da capo* aria in accordance with both harmonic and formal conventions).[145] **(See Appendix B, Example 4, pg. 211).** The sudden shift into the key of a minor ought to be heard as a point of arrival in this context, considering the expectation that this key (as iii of the aria's primary tonic, F major) be the local tonic of the B section of Rosmira's *dal segno* aria. However, like its predecessors, it too fails to present itself on a firm and solid

[144] This modulation transpires via a IV (reinterpreted as VI) pivot chord (F major chord), shifting from C major to a minor, just two measures after C major had claimed pride of place (see mm.48).
[145] Harris, 82. According to Harris, "[t]he B section usually begins in the relative minor and cadences to the minor mediant key" (82). In the case of Rosmira's "Io seguo," the B section does begin in d minor (the minor submediant, or vi), but as I've noted above it almost immediately shifts to C major (the major dominant) before settling into the expected minor mediant (a minor) which continues to be plagued by hints toward C major as the aria progresses.

footing. Just two beats after the mid-measure pivot chord which shifts the harmony into the realm of a minor, Rosmira's music suddenly moves from an implied, passing V# (dominant) chord into a bizarre and unexpected retrogression against the text "piagate" (*wounds*). This shift from a dominant harmony into a measure that hovers back and forth between iv and i6 (and the even weaker i 6-4/tonic in second inversion) (see mm.48-49), musically illustrates the internal chaos and confusion which relentlessly plagues Rosmira. **(See Appendix B, Example 4, pg. 211).** Furthermore, the harmonic retrogression in this passage suggests the gradual peeling back of the layers of her disguise, rendering Handel's seemingly invulnerable cross-dressed heroine vulnerable to "Cupid" and his "darts" although she stubbornly maintains otherwise.

Although the key of a minor is extremely weak in these opening measures of "Io seguo's" B section, a descending tonic arpeggio appears in the violins and violas on off beats in mm. 49-50 in an attempt to pin down the wavering harmony and provide even the tiniest hint of stability. **(See Appendix B, Example 4, pg. 211).** This suggests Rosmira's desperate yet futile attempt to maintain even a tenuous grasp on the "mask" of bravado and masculine aggression she had so meticulously cultivated in the first section of her aria by presenting an equally desperate and tenuous grasp on this new, local tonic. In the ensuing phrase, Rosmira sings the following; "e sempre umiliate io vedo al mio pie" (*and [those whom Cupid wounds] and humiliates I see fall at my feet*).[146] The irony lies in the fact that the highly unstable harmonic backbone of her music implies that it is she herself whom she "see[s] fall at [her] feet" rather than the lovesick fool, Armindo,

[146] See Silvio Stampiglia, Inger Dam-Jensen, Andreas Scholl, Christophe Dumaux, Tuva Semmingsen, Bo Kristian Jensen, Palle Knudsen, et al. 2009. *Partenope*. DVD. London: Decca. This translation of Rosmira's aria text appears in the subtitles provided in the DVD release of this 2009 Copenhagen production (English subtitles by Kenneth Chalmers).

whom she so vocally disdains (and whom she physically assaults in the Copenhagen staging of the first half of her aria). The "wounding" presence of Cupid and his darts could also be intended for the unfaithful Arsace; however, once again the clever use of harmonic instability in this passage makes it clear that Cupid has managed to "wound" and unsettle Rosmira herself rather than any of her male opponents. In other words, these sudden and unexpected harmonic shifts suggest the music's interference in her vengeful plan against Arsace. The pain she claims to have inflicted on him backfires and instead inflicts itself on her in an ironic reversal and twist of fate.

Throughout the harmonically unstable B section of "Io seguo" the threat of C major lingers and persists, coming to a head in an unresolved secondary seventh chord (vii˚6/III or C maj.) which momentarily disrupts the final cadence of the B section (at the *adagio* marking in mm.64). **(See Appendix B, Example 4, pg. 212).** The music sets the tone for this out-of-place tonicization of C major by preceding it with a deceptive cadence (see mm. 63) and an abrupt, nearly two-beat pause in the music. The deceptive cadence and this sudden pause jointly contribute to the striking lack of resolution presented by a seemingly conclusive gesture. Like the aria's earlier moments of harmonic stability, this fleeting interference in the cadence expected to bring this section (and the aria as a whole) to a close, firmly cements in the listener's ear the sense of Rosmira's ever-increasing vulnerability. **(See Appendix B, Example 4, pg. 212).** A passing phrase within the otherwise stable, exaggeratedly straightforward, and triumphant A section of "Io seguo" sets a precedent for the sense of harmonic instability which pervades the second half of the aria. After having briefly modulated from F major into its dominant, C major, the a1 section of "Io seguo" draws to a close with a half cadence which settles

back in the primary tonal center (F major) (see mm.19). **(See Appendix B, Example 4, pg. 209).** Although the key of F major appears to have been re-established in preparation for the a2 section of Rosmira's aria, the ensuing passage begins with a series of secondary seventh and dominant chords which tonicize the distant supertonic (specifically, vii˚6/ii and V#6/ii, or g minor). These unusual and out-of-place hints toward g minor hearken back to the previous key of C major, suggesting its minor dominant (v of C major) and thereby destabilizing the F major tonic which had only just been re-established moments earlier (see mm.19-21). **(See Appendix B, Example 4, pg. 209).** In light of the many harmonic confusions and instability that follow in the aria's B section, this momentary gesture of harmonic unrest at the opening of the a2 phrase plants the seed in the listener's mind that Rosmira's aria is nothing more than a fragile veneer or "mask" of bravado. In other words, the ongoing tension between the relative keys of a minor and C major (and by extension, g minor), first hinted toward in the aria's A section and coming to a head in the B section, aptly conveys Rosmira's many failed attempts to rid herself of all feelings but loathing for her unfaithful fiancé, Arsace.

These recurring moments of harmonic instability ensure that Rosmira's aria aptly represents the tensions that define and plague the "male disguise" role from within as a result of societal constraints and the many anxieties female transvestism has historically provoked. While the "disguise" convention was rarely considered dangerous and subversive even in its heyday, on occasion a woman was so compelling in her masculine-identified role that she was deemed an emasculating threat to the anatomical men surrounding her (both on stage and off). For instance, the renowned English actress, Peg Woffington, was especially known and even revered for her iconic role of Sir Harry

Wildair from George Farquhar's 1699 play *The Constant Couple; or, a Trip to the Jubilee,*[147] among others. According to Felicity Nussbaum in her study of gender in eighteenth-century English theater, "[Woffington's inimitable] ability [to emulate aristocratic men on stage]…was so extraordinary that male actors playing roles as fine gentlemen were enjoined to mimic th[is] actress's elevated bearing as a cross-dressed man.[148] The fact that she was often deemed more manly than many of her male counterparts playing opposite her resonates strongly with a surface-level reading of Rosmira's/ "Eurimene's" gender-bending interactions with both of her male counterparts, Armindo and the literally castrated Arsace (a role originally composed for the castrato, Antonio Bernacchi).[149] On the surface level, Rosmira does succeed in emasculating the men who surround her; repeatedly wielding her disguise as a weapon and using it to blackmail Arsace while manipulating Armindo as a pawn in her rather elaborate plot to thwart her straying fiance's affair with Partenope. However, her disguise ultimately fails her in her attempt to use it as means of concealing the vulnerability rooted in her conflicted sense of devotion and fidelity to the decidedly *un*faithful Arsace. The conflicting emotions that "Io seguo" presents between Rosmira's commanding masculine persona (her disguise) and her unswerving devotion to Arsace, also call to mind what

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[147] Felicity Nussbaum, "The Actress, Travesty, and Nation: Margaret Woffington," in *Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 217. According to Nussbaum, "Woffington initiated the transformation of Sir Harry Wildair into a travesty role, though the lead part was first created for the Irish actor and manager Robert Wilks. Farquhar's *The Constant Couple; or, a Trip to the Jubilee* was almost certainly the most popular new play in the early eighteenth century until the *Beggar's Opera* in 1728" (Nussbaum 217). Note that although this play premiered in 1699, Woffington's debut in the role of Sir Harry Wildair was not until a 1740 revival.

[148] See in Ibid., 199, 208. More specifically discussing the reception of Woffington as the title character and hero(ine) of *The Female Volunteer: Or, an Attempt to Make Our Men Stand* (1746), Nussbaum also claims that, "[h]er performance implies that women may ironically perform masculinity better than men themselves…Though a *female* volunteer, she claims that she accepts a man's duty to fight more readily than her fellow countrymen" (Nussbaum 208).

[149] Dean, 161.

theater scholar, Laurence Senelick, has described as the fundamental paradox defining the "male disguise" role. He raises the observation that "the female transvestite often demonstrates a kind of constancy to her man or integrity to herself at odds with the notion of duplicity inherent in wearing a disguise."[150] Resonating with this paradox, I've argued that Rosmira's Act I concluding aria exploits the tensions between closely related keys (C major and a minor) as a means of musically dramatizing her internal struggle to reconcile her contradictory impulses to remain faithful to the faithless Arsace with her desire to punish him for his cruelty. The instrumentation of "Io seguo" also contributes to the out-of-place quality of fidelity by prominently displaying the horn (and oboe) duo, the former which, while most obviously attributed to the tradition of the hunt, has also historically been considered a symbol of fidelity. Due to this sense of a powerful internal struggle, Handel's opera and this scene in particular only flirt with the notion of the dangerous cross-dressing actress who appears more believable as a man than any of the actual men on stage with her. This image and the threat it poses to the patriarchal status quo, aptly embodied by Peg Woffington (as Sir Harry Wildair) a mere ten years later, is quickly negated by the harmonic instability of Rosmira's seemingly triumphant aria.

In the Copenhagen staging of this scene, Handel's deeply conflicted heroine wields her "disguise" as a means of violently lashing out against Armindo who has the misfortune of posing an unwelcome reminder of her softer and more stereotypically feminine side. Armindo's "impotence", exaggerated for a laugh throughout the majority of the opera, reminds her of her own "impotence" and her many failures to conceal it beneath the aggressive masculine persona she has so meticulously cultivated. In other

[150] Senelick, "Breeches birth" in *The Changing Room,* 214-15.

words, Armindo's "impotence", implicitly at Rosmira's hands, rebounds on her, resonating with Straub's claim that "[t]he cross-dressed actress must be marked as impotent lest she imply, by cultural association, the impotence of the 'real thing.'"[151] Straub goes on to say that "paradoxically, [the cross-dressed actress'] impotence mirrors back the newly constructed nature of what was coming to be the age's [eighteenth century's] dominant masculinity.'"[152] In the case of Handel's opera, the opposite is true; Armindo's impotence bounces back onto Rosmira, rather than vice versa, thereby undermining her desperate attempt to adopt a compelling male persona as part of her elaborate plot to retaliate against her wayward lover. The fact that the role of Armindo was originated by the singer, contralto Francesca Bertolli, who I've already noted went on to portray Rosmira in the first revival of Handel's *Partenope*, adds another layer to these characters' complex relationship. In this production, Rosmira cruelly bullies and taunts Armindo, however the complex intersection of their characters sets the stage for my conclusion that it is actually Rosmira herself whom she is bullying (in the guise of her male alter ego "Eurimene"). In spite of her insistence in the opening phrases of "Io seguo" that she has conquered herself, denying Cupid's hold on her heart, by the aria's B section it has become abundantly clear that Rosmira is punishing no one but herself for having failed to harden her heart against both her wayward lover and love altogether,

By mapping it onto the more literal unveiling of her character's gender-bending masquerade, Negrin's staging of the repeat of the A section presents a visual parallel to the music's gradual unveiling of Rosmira's failed "mask" of bravado and impenetrable

[151] Straub "The Guilty Pleasures of Female Theatrical Cross-dressing…" in *Sexual Suspects*, 138.
[152] In Ibid., 138.

armor. In his vision of this scene the singer, Tuva Semmingsen, methodically strips herself of her masculine clothing, resonating with my interpretation of this aria in which I argue that Rosmira's music facilitates the gradual lowering of her defenses. Furthermore, this staging decision adds an ironic twist to the anticipated return of the aria's triumphant A section which on the surface level drives home Rosmira's claim that she alone has the capacity to shield herself from Cupid's poisoned darts. This removal of Rosmira's disguise (anticipating her more official unveiling in the final scene of the opera) hints toward her failure to embody the unattainable masculine ideal she has presented for herself and for Armindo. Negrin's staging decision also brings this production firmly in line with eighteenth-century norms and conventions which scholars like Senelick claim often promoted the fundamentally suggestive nature of the "male disguise" role.[153] Senelick specifically argues that in terms of the visual appearance of the cross-dressed actress/singer, "the costume was always meant to transmit [her] most womanly attributes: her breasts, hips, thighs and calves."[154] By the end of Negrin's vision of this scene, Rosmira has been forced not only to face her fears (of love) and her vulnerability to the very forces from which she attempts to shield herself via her disguise, but she is forced to succumb to them in spite of her best efforts towards self-protection. In this final tableau of Rosmira stripping off her disguise in a fit of desperation, Negrin's staging confirms the notion that the cross-dressing woman first and foremost caters to the "male gaze"; thereby challenging and even negating any threat she (and her "disguise") could have potentially posed to the patriarchal status quo.

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[153] Senelick "Breeches Birth" in *The Changing Room*, 211. According to Senelick, "the breeches role [on the Restoration stage] was first and foremost an effective means of sexual display" (Senelick 211).
[154] In Ibid., 212.

Conclusion:
Arsace's Nightmare of Female Solidarity and the Unexpected Triumph of "Petticoat Government"

Ultimately, the most viable threat to the patriarchal social order is posed by both Partenope and Rosmira who band together in the third Act and plot vengeance against the helpless Arsace (at least in his dreams). The recurring threat of "petticoat government" comes to a head in the Act III *terzetto*, "Un cor infedele", during which Arsace sleeps tormented by horrific visions of the two women whom he has wronged joining forces against him. This image of a vulnerable, sleeping "hero", calls to mind Handel's slightly earlier opera *Admeto* which forms the basis of my first chapter. In her discussion of this opera, Wendy Heller comments on the ways in which it "invert[s] the common classical and early-modern trope whereby the male hero sings to the sleeping vulnerable heroine"[155] by having the ill king bedridden throughout the majority of the first Act. This scene from Handel's later opera, *Partenope*, playfully tropes on this already heavily distorted convention; while Admeto "lies in bed…tormented by specters bearing bloody knives"[156], Arsace "lies in bed tormented" by phantom versions of Rosmira (still in her disguise) and Partenope "bearing" swords and planning to avenge themselves against him for his cruelty and deception. The Copenhagen staging of this scene makes it clear that the sleeping Arsace has been visibly rendered vulnerable by the phantom presence of Partenope and Rosmira (both armed). Throughout the *terzetto*, the singer portraying Arsace, countertenor Andreas Scholl, lies curled up in the fetal position voicing the rather paranoid thoughts (and desperate pleas for mercy) of the silenced character who has been

[155] Wendy Heller, "The beloved's image: Handel's *Admeto* and the statue of Alcestis." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* Vol. 58 No. 3 (Fall 2005), 606.
[156] In ibid., 600.

silenced by the two women starring in his "nightmare" of female solidarity enacted at his expense. **(See Figure 7, below).**

Figure 7

From a musical standpoint, the *terzetto* concludes with Arsace musing to himself "che fiero dolere, tacer[e] e penar!" (*what fierce pain, silence and suffering!),*[157] evidently bitter about the fact that he has lost his voice to these two women who've united against him to punish him for his many misbehaviors and deceptions made at their expense.

At one point early in this staging of the *terzetto*, a tower door opens to show Partenope playfully pleasuring herself using the body of the very same anonymous male attendant she had stripped in her earlier Act I aria ("Io ti levo l'impero dell'armi") directed at Arsace. By tormenting the sleeping Arsace with this image (not once but twice), Negrin forces a reminder upon Handel's sleeping "hero" of the ongoing threat of emasculation which relentlessly pursues him throughout the opera. By this scene it has become abundantly clear that Arsace has extremely limited agency, having been

[157] Original Italian text taken from score: See Händel *Partenope* (score), 110; my translation.

gradually stripped of it by these two women, first one by one and then together as they join forces against him. The message this scene carries about Arsace's loss of power and masculine authority is driven home by the recurring image of this anonymous male figure who was earlier quite literally stripped of his masculine "costume" by the queen. In this moment it becomes abundantly clear that both this anonymous man and Arsace are continually suffering under the lingering threat of "petticoat government." Like Fielding's notion of "petticoat government", the worst nightmare for the highly unstable English monarchy of this period, this scene (which appears on the heels of the opera's close) suggests the worst for Arsace. However, at least in Arsace's case, the worst is kept at bay and presented as nothing but a dream – rather than reality – setting the stage for the *lieto fine* which follows on its heels and the restoration of the normative social order which occurs upon his awakening.

Ironically, a hint of "petticoat government" lingers even as the normative social order is restored in the opera's *lieto fine* by the re-coupling of the jumbled and confused pairs on stage, with the exception of the ridiculous buffoon Emilio who resigns himself to his defeat and exits the stage alone. In other words, by staging this obligatory restoration of social order as a romantic (read feminine) as opposed to political (read masculine) concern – via the re-coupling of mismatched couples – Handel's opera makes it clear that at least on some level Partenope's realm remains under the grasp of the dreaded "petticoat government." This dangerously feminized form of reign persists in spite of the fact that it has ostensibly been conquered upon Arsace's awakening from his nightmare and by the long-anticipated unveiling of Rosmira's gender-bending disguise. On one hand by pairing Partenope with the meek Armindo, Handel subdues (and contains) her

character's dangerous excesses, and by bringing Arsace and Rosmira back together he reinforces her unswerving fidelity to an unfaithful man at the expense of her thirst for vengeance. On the other hand, by focusing the final scene on such trivial concerns as who ends up with whom (foreshadowing Mozartian *opere buffe* from later in the century which normally end with a wedding scene),[158] Handel's *Partenope* ensures that at least a hint of the seemingly contained and conquered "petticoat government" remains; continuing to plague from within the male-defined social order which has presumably conquered it.

[158] Regarding the later eighteenth-century convention of ending *opere buffe* with a wedding scene, see: Mary Hunter, "*Così fan tutte* and Convention," in *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna: A Poetics of Entertainment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 283. According to Hunter, "[t]he end of *Così*…uses the ending conventions of the genre – the wedding, the return to a presumed social norm, and the final joining of the couples by an authoritative figure – but it also calls them into question" (283). Note that several of Mozart's operas, among them *Le Nozze di Figaro* (1786) and the aforementioned *Così fan tutte* (1790), are largely driven by narrative concerns like marriage. Returning to Handel, his operas regularly blur the boundaries between Metastasian *opera seria*, which is generally focused on more mythical concerns, and the more realist comic vein of eighteenth-century opera which emerged in Naples and was later adopted by composers like Mozart. Evidently, Handel's tendency to collapse the boundaries between these mutually opposed genres lends itself to the *opera buffa*-like ending of *Partenope*, which is often recognized as one of his most comically-inclined operas alongside his later *Serse* (1738).

CHAPTER THREE

"MAGIC RINGS" AND ENCHANTING SORCERESSES: HANDEL'S *ALCINA* AS A GENDERED CRITIQUE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Introduction

Magic and reason repeatedly clash throughout Handel's 1737 opera, *Alcina,* one of many operatic adaptations of Ludovico Ariosto's well-known sixteenth-century epic, *Orlando Furioso*.[159] The opera opens when a man and a woman disguised as a man (Bradamante, the fiancée of Alcina's latest "victim", Ruggiero) invade the sorceress' enchanted realm. They invade Alcina's Arcadian paradise invoking magic that will shatter her seductive spell and restore humanity and reason to her deluded and dehumanized victims. By using magic to undo another form of magic and restore reason by means of its antithesis, Handel's opera undermines the Enlightenment ideology it promotes on a surface level. These complicated entanglements of magic and reason culminate in the opera's final scene which restores the normative, patriarchal social order at Alcina's expense. More specifically, the "magic ring", the magical device used for this purpose which was drawn from the Ariosto epic, explicitly resonates with Enlightenment ideals. At face value it operates as a symbol of the "light of reason" in its capacity to

[159] Handel's *Alcina* is loosely-based on Cantos 6-8/VI – VII of Ariosto's 46-Canto epic, the distant source of his opera. See: Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso: An English Prose Translation*, Guido Waldman, Tr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 50-81; Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso (The Frenzy of Orlando): A Romantic Epic by Ludovico Ariosto, Part One*, Barbara Reynolds, Tr. and Intro. (Baltimore: Penguin Classics, 1975), 221-86. Drawing further inspiration from this Renaissance source, Handel himself composed two other operas based upon different episodes or *cantos* (namely *Orlando* and *Ariodante*), firmly establishing himself in a long lineage of composers (most notably Francesca Caccini in 1625, Vivaldi, first in 1714 and again in 1727, and Farinelli's composer brother, Riccardo Broschi in 1728) who had previously adapted the Alcina story. See also Winton Dean "Alcina" in *Handel's Operas, 1726-1741* (Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2006), 315. Dean notes that "Handel's immediate source [for *Alcina*] was a libretto by an unknown author, *L'isola di Alcina*, set by Riccardo Broschi, brother of the great castrato Farinelli, for Rome in the carnival season of 1728" (315).

magically enhance its wearer's powers of sight and/or vision.[160] It enables those who wield it to see through all sorts of enchantments, disguises, and deceptions; however, because its power repeatedly fails before its eventual triumph in the concluding scene(s), Handel's operatic adaptation ensures that this triumph *rings* (pun intended) false.

Through the lens of this enchanted "ring", which I argue causes confusion and disorder rather than the expected order; this chapter explores the multiple, inevitable failures of magic to defeat itself and restore reason. I listen especially to Alcina's rival Bradamante's Act II vengeance aria, "Vorrei Vendicarmi" and the preceding *recitative* (a scene in which the magic of the ring is mistaken for the sorceress' magic by an easily confused and manipulated, Ruggiero); using this scene as a point of departure for my discussion of the ring's many failures. The moment of narrative confusion staged by this aria, ironically cloaked in a musical expression of hyper-"rationalism" (marked by its exaggeratedly mechanical qualities), illuminates the inherently hazy boundary between these seemingly opposed entities. The collapse of boundaries between magic and reason, rooted in the stark juxtaposition of ultra-rational and formally-contained music with a narrative moment of sheer magically-induced confusion, betrays the illusion of a pure, uncorrupted Reason. In other words, the music challenges the fantasy of pure reason espoused by Enlightenment ideology while also displaying its fundamental instability. Drawing on recent discussions of the Descartes mechanistic philosophy which was

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[160] Ariosto (Waldman, Tr.). In his prose translation of the *Furioso*, Waldman's description of the "ring' and its powers appears as follows: "[t]hose of us who possessed Angelica's ring – I mean the Ring of Reason – could descry each person's true face, undisguised by cunning artifice" (70, *Canto VIII*, stanza 2). Reynold's translation which honors the original poetic form offers the following: "He who the ring of fair Angelica/Or, better, who the Ring of Reason had/Could see all countenances as they are/Not in an artificial beauty clad/Or masked as virtuous phenomena/Which ugly are beneath the paint, and bad/So, for Ruggiero it's a lucky thing/That he has seen the truth, thanks to the ring" (263, *Canto VIII*, Stanza 2). The irony is that in Handel's opera once Ruggiero puts on the "ring" he actually fails "to see the truth", instead seeing more deceptions and trickery (*inganni*) than he had without it.

beginning to fade around the time of *Alcina*'s premiere,[161] I interrogate the similarly mechanical qualities embedded within this characteristic aria. From a musical standpoint I attribute the mechanical nature of Bradamante's aria to its near constant state of melodic repetition which borders on the mindless and robotic. The mechanical qualities of Handel's music, and of early eighteenth-century operatic music more generally, can be traced back to a number of factors ranging from the eighteenth century's broader obsession with taxonomies in conjunction with the continuing influence of the earlier "doctrine of affections" (a sort of taxonomy, offering a strict categorization of emotions) to slightly later notions of the sentimental subject which has also been described in explicitly mechanical terms.[162]

The second half of my chapter illuminates the ways in which Handel's opera fleshes out the character of Alcina who plays a fairly trivial and insignificant role in Ariosto's *Furioso* as an enchantress archetype. Unlike its literary predecessor, Handel's

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[161] For a discussion of the "mechanistic" philosophy dating back to Descartes and its fading popularity throughout the mid-late eighteenth century, see: Kara Reilly, "Descartes's Mimetic Faculty" in *Automata and mimesis on the stage of theatre history* (New York: Palgrove McMillan, 2011), 48-72 and "From Aristocrats to Autocrats: The Elite as Automata" in Ibid., 73-110. See also: Minsoo Kang, "The Man-machine in the World-machine, 1637-1748" in *Sublime Dreams of Living Machines: The Automaton in the European Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 103-45 and "From the Man-machine to the Automaton-man, 1748-1793" in Ibid., 146-84. For one final source pertaining to this phenomenon, see; Adelheid Voskuhl "Introduction: Androids, Enlightenment, and the Human-Machine Boundary," in *Androids in the Enlightenment: Mechanics, Artisans, and Cultures of the Self* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 1-36 and "The Design of the Mechanics; or, Sentiments Replicated in Clockwork," in Ibid., 128-69.

[162] Regarding the influence of the "doctrine of affections" on Handel's compositional style and his musical characterizations, see: Nathan Link, 2002, *Story and Representation in Handel's Operas*, Dissertation, Yale University. Arguing that Descartes' Baroque "doctrine of affections" reduces Handel's characters to puppets controlled by abstract "affects" (animate entities in their own right), Link writes that they are therefore rendered devoid of human agency. Quoting Kerman, he specifically writes that "'[t]he Baroque composer could strike a single feeling with wonderful intensity; but he did not have the means to handle psychological complexity'" (319 (citing Kerman's *Opera as Drama*, 62)), arguably because he relied so heavily on Descartes' "doctrine." See also Jed Wentz, "The passions dissected, or, On the dangers of boiling down Alexander the Great," in *Early music* Vol. 37 No. 1 (Feb. 2009), 101-10, who offers a more positive perspective on the capacity of the "doctrine of affections" to portray rich human emotions rather than reducing people to abstract representations of narrowly defined emotional states.

opera presents this inhuman sorceress in a shockingly human light. I argue that by embodying these human(istic), as opposed to more mechanical and formulaic qualities, in a manner of speaking Alcina does, in fact, steal her opponents' subjectivity and/or humanity from them but not by transforming them into woodland creatures and trees. She instead does something far more dangerous. Her all-too-human musical character (and not her "evil" magic) enables her to reveal the fantasy of the Enlightenment subject to be just that: *a fantasy*. In regards to her music, the unusually rich and harmonically complex nature of her later (Act II and III) arias[163], both for Handel and for other (often rival) composers of his time, befits her role as *prima donna*. These musically and emotionally rich arias, my focus being on her Act II "Ombre Pallide", also offer a potent musical representation of the powerfully enchanting and seductive qualities of this fantastic creature.

The rich musical portrayal of Ariosto's seductress and sorceress, gaining momentum as the opera progresses into the Second and Third Acts, ensures that her music presents her as the most fully fleshed out human subject in an opera full of one-dimensional figures. These one-dimensional figures, one of them being Bradamante in her "male disguise", represent the stereotypical, carefully circumscribed Enlightenment subject invading her realm with the intent of restoring order to it. By provocatively presenting Alcina as the most human and sympathetic figure in the opera (and refusing to

[163] Ellen T. Harris, "Harmonic Patterns in Handel's Operas," in *Eighteenth-Century Theory and Practice: Essays in Honor of Alfred Mann*, Mary Ann Parker, Ed. (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1994), 77-118. Harris specifically argues that although Alcina's music remains within the bounds of the standard *da capo* aria form it (and she) pushes against these constraints from a harmonic perspective. In other words, "[t]he growing tension in her role is illustrated in part by the growing tension of the A/B relation [harmonic relation between A and B sections of her arias], which becomes more and more unusual [as the opera progresses into Acts II and III]" (86).

demonize her), I argue that Handel's opera offers a space in which her magic, even in its eventual moment of presumed failure (her failed invocation aria, "Ombre pallide", and the fiendishly difficult preceding *recit. accomp*. which bring Act II to a close), prevails against all odds. In my discussion of this expansive *recit*.-aria sequence I explore the ways in which this *tour-de-force* scene provides a vehicle for Alcina to loudly and virtuosically push back against the masculine reason which threatens to consume and silence her. While superficially praising the inevitable triumph of reason over magic and promoting the Enlightenment's supposed "disenchantment of the world"[164], *Alcina* (and the singer portraying the character of Alcina) go out with a bang, proving that there is nothing disembodied or disenchanted about the notion of Enlightenment "reason."

"Magic Rings" and Mechanical Divas: The Dark and Dehumanizing Underside of the Enlightenment

The magical ring of reason, the only enchanted device that makes an appearance in Handel's operatic adaptation of Ariosto's renaissance epic replete with spells and magically enhanced weapons, is presented not only in the opera but in the epic as well as fundamentally unstable. Although supposedly emblematic of rational order and/or reason, the ring ends up sowing more disorder and confusion than anything else, especially for its wearer, Ruggiero. Ariosto's treatment of this magical device and of magical devices in

[164] For a recent scholarly critique of the shortsighted notion of the Enlightenment's "disenchantment of the world" see: Sarah Tindal Kareem, "Introduction: Wonder and the Rise of Fiction," in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1-34. In the sub-section of this introductory chapter entitled "Enchanted Enlightenment", Kareem posits the following; "[e]ver since Max Weber first articulated his so-called disenchantment thesis, with its implied necessary opposition between rationalization and enchantment, critics have refuted his thesis on various grounds…Historians and critics responding to Weber have argued that supernatural forms of enchantment never really died out in the Enlightenment; that enchantment vanishes from the natural world only to take up residence covertly in other spheres; and that enchantment becomes thoroughly and explicitly secularized" (14). She goes on to claim that "wonder", the central theme of her study, simultaneously embodies "credulity and skepticism" (2), a theory which resonates with the opera's "magic ring" and its simultaneously dis- and re-enchanting qualities.

general sets a strong precedent for the ring's fundamental instability in Handel's opera. Not only is Ariosto's version of the ring extremely changeable and mutable, but throughout the long, meandering narrative of his epic poem he attributes contradictory powers to it. On the surface level, this ring, which in some cases offers its wearer an enhanced sense of vision, enabling him or her to "see through disguises and deceptions", falls in line with the later Enlightenment values that similarly utilize this metaphor of "light" (the concept of "seeing the light") for reason. However, Ariosto's ring not only enhances its wearer's power of sight but in some cases does the exact opposite; instead rendering its wearer invisible and impeding rather than enhancing the vision (if not of its wearer, but of those on the receiving end of its powers). This internal contradiction built into the ring and the powers it carries illuminates similar internal contradictions which underlie (and complicate) the notion of magic being used against itself as a source of reason in the first place. In other words, the many, contradictory attributes of the ring complicate and ultimately challenge the Enlightenment fantasy of a purely rational world it presents on a surface level. The ring offers a subtle critique of this fantasy by virtue of its mere existence in the opera (and in the epic before it) in which it serves both to enchant and disenchant, or, paradoxically, to disenchant by enchanting.

Expanding upon Julie Kisacky's recent observation in *Magic in Boiardo and Ariosto* that the ring serves a different purpose for male than female wearers and extrapolating it to my interpretation of Handel's opera, I argue that one of the most prominent factors contributing to the changeability and instability of the ring's powers is the gender (or presumed gender) of its wearer. Kisacky points out that when wielded by men, like Ruggiero, the ring *does* function as a source of reason and Enlightenment.

However, when wielded by women like Bradamante and Angelica it instead reverts to its less "rational" form of magic, offering them a defense mechanism by making them invisible.[165] This gender distinction ultimately reinforces the long-standing association of reason and rationality with men, upholding the problematic gender imbalance built into the patriarchal, male-dominated Western society which the epic promotes (through the idolized figure of Charlemagne). Through the lens of this ring, Ariosto's *Furioso* envisions a world in which women not only play a small part but are literally rendered invisible (albeit through their own powers). Although Handel's Bradamante at no point is rendered invisible by the ring, nor does she ever wear it herself, the crux of my argument relies upon Ruggiero's continuing failure(s) to see through her masculine disguise and recognize her as his fiancée. Drawing inspiration from Kisacky's discussion of the ring's self-contradictory powers, I argue that this failure sheds light on its capacity to obscure rather than to illuminate and enlighten. In other words, the constantly changing presentations of the ring and its powers reduce it to a source of confusion; further undermining its reputed powers of restoring order and reason to Alcina's chaotically disordered and irrational fantasy world.

Several times throughout the opera, Ruggiero fails to recognize both Melisso and Bradamante, his would-be rescuers, proving himself unable to see through their respective disguises in spite of (or, I argue) *because of* the presence of this supposedly enlightening and disenchanting magical ring. During the Act II scene in which Ruggiero

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[165] Julia M. Kisacky "Ariosto's Marvelous Artifacts," in *Magic in Boiardo and Ariosto* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 71-2. See pg. 71 regarding Bradamante using the ring's powers of invisibility. Most notably, Kisacky points out that "[w]e have seen than in both [Boiardo's] *Innamorato* and the *Furioso* the ring's spell-breaking power is used by both men and women characters, but usually for the benefit of men…In contrast, the power of invisibility is especially important to women; the men who briefly possess the ring have no need to hide" (72).

first encounters Bradamante while wearing the ring, despite her protests, he once again fails to recognize her and, in response she launches into a stereotypical vengeance aria as a means of expressing her anger and dismay. The stark contrast between Ruggiero's harmonically wandering *recitative* and Bradamante's ultra-straightforward rage aria that follows solidifies the music's portrayal of the confusion provoked by this supposedly reason-restoring ring. During the *recit.* dialogue that precedes her aria, "Vorrei Vendicarmi" (*I would like to avenge myself*), Ruggiero's confusion is expressed by a seemingly endless series of secondary dominant chords which prevent the music from establishing a clear, stable tonal center. This string of secondary dominant chords begins with a tonicization of A major (via a V#/V chord) in mm.14, before subtly destabilizing itself by instead landing on the minor dominant (v), a minor, of the local d minor tonic.[166] The cycle continues in mm.15-17, tonicizing e minor via a V – V4-2/ii progression, followed by a tonicization of B major in mm. 18 (a V#7/V chord) after having modulated to e minor in the previous measure (mm.17). **(See Appendix C, Example 1, pg. 214 & 222).**[167] This standard circle of fifths progression (tonicizing first A major/a minor

[166] For an overview of the tonal structure of this *recit.*, see the following: This *recitative* begins in the key of a minor before slipping into the distant key of Bb major on beat three of mm.6; a modulation that follows on the heels of a brief tonicization of g minor earlier in the same measure. By mm. 11 this new key of Bb major itself gives way to d minor, the modulation lasting 3 measures (between mm.11 and 13) and concluding with an unambiguous V6-5 – i progression in d minor which solidifies this modulation on the downbeat of mm.13. At this point in the *recit.*, its fundamentally weak sense of tonality further crumbles from within as the music launches into the series of secondary dominant chords discussed at length above beginning in mm.14.

[167] For an authoritative edition of the vocal score see: Georg Friedrich Händel, *Alcina: dramma per musica in tre atti: HWV 34*, anonymous libretto, Michael Töpel and Olga Kroupova, piano reduction, Hallische Händel-Ausgabe. Serie II, Opern (New York: Bärenreiter, 1997). For an authoritative edition of the full score, see: Georg Friedrich Händel, *Alcina: opera in tre atti, HWV 34*, anonymous libretto, ed. by Siegfried Flesch, Hallische Händel-Ausgabe. Serie II, Opern; Bd. 33 (New York: Bärenreiter, 2009). Note that I have included in Appendix C excerpts from both the vocal and full score editions of Alcina, both published by Bärenreiter as part of the Halle/Hallische Händel Ausgabe (HHA) series. The vocal score includes a more fully realized *continuo* part, whereas the full score offers information about instrumentation that is lacking from the vocal edition. Each time I've indicated the following text above (See Appendix C, Example 1a, pp. X and Y) the first page number refers to the vocal score and the second refers to the full score.

followed by e minor and B major) does give a degree of structure and logical shape to this passage. However, the fact that it persists throughout the majority of this tonally wandering *recit*. prevents the music from ever landing on stable ground (at least not for longer than a measure or two at a time). Furthermore, just as abruptly as the circle of fifths progression has begun in mm.14, it suddenly reverses direction in mm.20, moving from E major to A major, D major, and then G major (or g minor) in its inverse: the circle of fourths.[168] The sudden change in direction is initiated by the reinterpretation of the only recently established e minor tonic as a first inversion E major secondary dominant chord (of A major) in mm.20; the prominent G# in the *basso continuo* drawing attention to this unexpected side slip out of e minor and challenging the *recit*.'s already fragile sense of tonal stability. **(See Appendix C, Example 1a, pg. 214 & 222).** Shortly after this abrupt change in direction, the music loses its sense of coherence altogether, collapsing into a series of strikingly unresolved secondary dominants in mm.24 (V/A major to V/d minor to V6/f# minor). **(See Appendix C, Example 1a, pg. 215 & 222).** This unexpected V6/f# minor harmony breaks the *recit*.'s seemingly endless circle of fifths/fourths progression, moving first in one direction and then the other, thereby suggesting that Ruggiero has finally succumbed to his state of confusion shortly before Bradamante's ensuing "rage" aria. Ultimately, the underlying sense of confusion caused by this meandering progression resonates with the notion that although Ruggiero wears the reason-inducing ring, he is still searching (in a long and fruitless quest) for an answer

[168] Considering that the V6/G major chord doesn't resolve, instead shifting to another secondary dominant chord (V/A major) in the following measure (mm.24), it could easily be reinterpreted, especially within the framework of the recently destabilized and weak e minor tonic, as V6/g minor. The tonal ambiguity embedded within this unresolved secondary dominant chord contributes to the harmonic instability that pervades the entire *recit.* in spite of the small degree of logic and structure provided by the circle of fifths progression.

to his questions. Like the music's ongoing and seemingly futile quest for a stable tonic, the answers to the bewildered Ruggiero's questions continually remain just outside of his reach.

The wandering and harmonically unstable qualities of this *recit*. first appear shortly after Bradamante has aptly commented on Ruggiero's failure to recognize her, singing "Ruggiero, don't you know/recognize me?" (*Ruggier non mi conosci?*) (see mm.13-14). **(See Appendix C, Example 1a, pg. 214 & 222).** As if offering a response to this rhetorical question, the ensuing music makes it clear that Ariosto's ring has failed in its purpose of enabling its wearer to see through disguises like Bradamante's gender-bending masquerade as her brother. Ruggiero has failed to recognize her within the context of the opera's narrative, as seen (or heard) by her dismayed comment to that effect. This failure is mirrored by the music in the sense that the Ruggiero fails to pin her down (or recognize her) in the same way that his music fails to pin down a firmly established local tonic. Musically, this *recitative* passage conveys the message that Ruggiero remains incapable of identifying his fiancée's "true" identity in spite of the fact that he wears the ring and in spite of its purported powers to facilitate the moment of recognition that it actually prevents. Most importantly, in this scene it becomes clear that Ruggiero has been duped and deceived *not* by Alcina's magic as he mistakenly believes to be the case,[169] but instead by the flawed and unreliable, confusion-inducing, magical device that he now holds in his possession.

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[169] See; George Frederic Handel, *Alcina HWV 34, Opera in three acts*, Alan Curtis and Il Complesso Barocco, Deutsche Grammophon GmbH, Hamburg CD, 2009. (CD booklet, 77). Libretto trans. By Peggie Cochrane. In the preceding *recit*. of Bradamante's "Vorrei Vendicarmi", Ruggiero sings the following, making it abundantly clear that he has mistaken Bradamante for yet another spell of Alcina's: "Ye gods, is that so? Bradamante! Bradamante, no! How could that be? This must be some new sorcery of

The stark contrast between this lost and confused *recit.* and Bradamante's exaggeratedly straightforward and simple vengeance aria, "Vorrei Vendicarmi", exemplifies the absurdity of a magical device being used as a weapon against magic and as a source of reason in the first place. Unlike the previous *recitative* which never manages to establish a stable tonal center, the formerly subdued orchestra makes its presence known at the beginning of Bradamante's aria by playing a solid, dramatic block D major chord. This key, which had been hinted toward repeatedly in the previous, wandering *recit.*, immediately establishes itself as tonic on the downbeat of the aria's opening measure. **(See Appendix C, Example 1b, pg. 215 & 223).** The almost comical simplicity and clarity of Bradamante's aria, in light of the chaos and confusion that precedes it, renders it a crude caricature of the quintessentially Enlightenment values of clear and transparent musical textures. This juxtaposition of the confused chaos which surrounds the reason-inducing ring and Bradamante's hyper-rationalistic explosion of rage in "Vorrei Vendicarmi" (conveyed through a rigid, mechanical delivery of her text) suggests that neither the ring nor the Enlightenment values it represents ought to be taken very seriously. Rather than following in the vein of Ruggiero's lost and confused music, Bradamante's aria is almost exaggeratedly straightforward, making it even more striking that her lover fails to recognize her (she who presents herself in such a direct and straightforward manner). By extension, this commentary on Ruggiero's inability to recognize her in spite of her very direct and transparent self-presentation, enables Bradamante's aria to offer a tongue-in-cheek critique of the magical ring Ruggiero wears;

Alcina's…Go, insidious sorceress, you would counterfeit the form and speech of my beloved" (*Numi! è ver? Bradamante? e come? Un nuovo incanto si, che d'Alcina è questo…Va', insidiosa maga, della mia donna amata tu mentir vuoi la forma, e la favela*).

rendering both it and the Enlightenment values it represents objects of ridicule by making a joke about its (and their) failure.

This aria sets up a jarring contrast between Ruggiero's ring-induced confusion and bewilderment and Bradamante's embodiment of the very qualities that the ring is said to (but routinely fails to) impart to its wearer. The aria goes on to set up a similar contrast between Bradamante's musical character and that of her rival for Ruggiero's love, Alcina. On one hand, resonating with the failure and breaking down of her magical powers in this later scene, Alcina's music in her searing lament "Ombre Pallide" suggests that by breaking free from the mechanical style of her coloratura passages she has been rendered a broken doll or automaton; destroyed by her inability to embody the rationalistic, mechanical style associated with the opera's harbingers of Reason (especially Bradamante). On the other hand, this breaking free suggests not the breakdown of her powers but instead her liberation from this dehumanizing model of (wo)man as machine which Bradamante is repeatedly forced to embody. Although recent scholars have argued that the Enlightenment increasingly rejected this mechanistic vision of the inner workings of the human body, associating them with "absolutist values and political tyranny,"[170] I argue that the association of Bradamante, the opera's embodiment of Enlightenment values and the mouthpiece of the patriarchy, with this waning mechanistic ideal suggests the inherent corruption of the "Age of Reason." Furthermore, Bradamante's music continually reduces her (and by extension, these Enlightenment ideals) to an object of ridicule, setting the stage for later, nineteenth-century parodies and/or musical caricatures of the automaton performer like Offenbach's ridiculous doll,

[170] Kang, "From the Man-machine to the Automaton-man", 174.

Olympia, from his *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (1881).[171] By limiting her character to one-dimensional, exaggeratedly mechanical, comically simple and straightforward music, Bradamante serves as an early model for these later representations of the automaton performer as comic relief.

The highly repetitive and fragmentary nature of this music, from harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic standpoints alike, serves to reinforce (while also parodying through comical exaggeration) the glorified notion of the automaton-musician. Like the automaton-musician, Bradamante appears to have been programmed to mindlessly repeat short, simple gestures with minimal to no variation over and over again, and without fail. From the opening *ritornello* of her aria, she adopts an exaggeratedly mechanical tone and qualities that render her character so one-dimensional as to be ridiculous. I specifically trace the mechanical qualities of Bradamante's aria back to its ultra-repetitive nature, which suggests that she has been wired like clockwork to reproduce a series of pre-programmed sounds. Another quality that contributes to the mechanical nature of "Vorrei Vendicarmi" is the extremely limited palette of emotions her music offers her, confining her to the expression of a singular affect: rage. Expanding upon Adelheid Voskuhl's discussion of the late eighteenth-century ideal of the sentimental subject, I argue that this idealized figure offers an embodied expression of similarly narrowly-defined emotions or emotional states. According to Voskuhl, the sentimental subject passes these physicalized affects from one person to another (e.g.: from performer to listener and/or spectator) via the mechanical mimicry of carefully defined, legible body language or "bodily

[171] Andrew Lamb and Robert J. Dennis. "Contes d'Hoffmann, Les." *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*.*Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed March 1, 2016, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O008963.

motions…corresponding [to the] states of their souls."[172] In light of the prevailing notion that these mechanistic and sentimental ideals deprive the human subject of agency and control over his or her own physical and emotional state, I argue that this mechanistic ideal (and the Enlightenment more broadly) actually dehumanizes its human subjects like Bradamante, in spite of its ostensibly humanizing purpose. This renders it and its ideology more of a dehumanizing villain than its scapegoat, Alcina, who, in the opera's narrative literally strips her victims of their humanity, reducing them to objects (trees, rocks, animals, etc.), and claiming it as her own.

Returning to Bradamante's aria, its highly repetitive and fragmentary musical gestures, especially its proliferation of alternating inverted 16th-note patterns, ensure that both she and the mechanistic fantasy she represents come across as absurdly *non*-human (reduced to caricatures of themselves). The opening *ritornello* of "Vorrei Vendicarmi" immediately adopts this blatantly mechanical quality as it launches into a sequenced three-note gesture which leaps up by thirds, fifths, and fourths before repeating this rather unimaginative three-note scalar fragment in the opposite direction. The music toys with this upwardly sequenced figure for the opening two measures before launching into a faster recurring rhythmic and melodic pattern (alternating 16th-note scalar figures that are inversions and/or mirror images of each other) beginning in the second half of mm. 2.[173] **(See Appendix C, Example 1b, pg. 215 & 223).** The cyclical, repetitive nature of this passage is magnified by the exact repetition of the underlying walking bass line (momentarily shifting from bass clef into treble in the vocal score) which repeats itself

[172] Voskuhl, "The Design of the Mechanics", 150.

[173] During this phrase, these alternating 16th-note scalar gestures imitate the opening gesture of the *rit.* by first moving in descending motion (3-2-1-3) before shifting to the opposite, upward direction (2-4-3-2), suggesting a cycling, wave-like motion as one 16th-note figure gives way to the other.

twice verbatim - with no variation – against a standard I - vii˚ - V - (I) progression (see mm.3). **(See Appendix C, Example 1b, pg. 215 & 223).**

The blatantly mechanical set-up of Bradamante's aria in the opening *ritornello* prepares the listener for her ensuing vocal style which follows in the same vein during the first iteration of the A section theme. Most notably, during the first melismatic passage of the aria's A section, Bradamante adopts this alternating, mirror image 16th-note figure first heard in the opening *ritornello* as she sings about her desire to "avenge…[her]self" (*vendicar…mi*) (see mm.8-11). She performs alternating (3-2-1-3, 2-4-3-2) scalar passages against a similarly repetitive bass line which once again repeats itself verbatim (offering a short, descending scalar I - V6-5/3 progression in the lower strings) while the upper strings play block chords reinforcing these predictably simple, recurring harmonies. The punctuating block chords in the upper strings first drop an octave and then rise back up a major ninth (after having descended a semitone) in mm.9-10, which creates a slight variation on the mirroring effect that is built into the aria's overarching tone of (hyper)stylized, mechanical repetition. **(See Appendix C, Example 1b, pg. 216 & 223).** By distorting the mirror effect through a sudden downward half-step slip (from A to G#) indicated in the vocal score that disrupts these rocking octaves, shifting back and forth between A5 to A4, this passage injects yet another parodic undertone to Bradamante's aria.[174] The music here exaggerates its mechanical qualities, enabling them to be read as comedy rather than blindly embracing them as the embodiment of quintessentially Enlightenment ideals of musical clarity and transparency. Resonating

[174] Note that this subtle distortion of the rocking A4-A5 octaves *is* indicated in the vocal score, but not in the full score. In the vocal score, the descent from A to G# serves as an embellished harmonization of the vii˚6/V (g# dim.) chord below.

with this parody of Enlightenment ideals, from its first appearance in Act II Scene 1, the magical ring is depicted by music that offers similarly distorted (or exaggeratedly simple and comically naïve) versions of these Enlightenment qualities. Throughout the Act II Scene 1 *arioso*, "Qual portento", in which Ruggiero first encounters the ring, repeatedly asking what magical "portent" (*portento*) has returned him to his senses, his highly fragmentary music, interrupted by nearly constant rests (appearing every couple of measures) as he shifts back and forth between generic and simple chords, closely resembles these later musical representations of the ring. It too lacks a clear sense of direction and the implied progress or forward motion built into the concept of a harmonic *progression*.[175] **(See Appendix C, Example 2, pp. 228-29 & 230).** While the almost hyperbolic simplicity of his music's harmonic content (similar to Bradamante's aria) resonates with Enlightenment ideals of clarity and transparency, the failure of these "clear" and "transparent" harmonies to cohere into a logical progression throughout the course of the *arioso* suggests that the ring has only managed to present an illusion or fragile veneer of the rational order and reason it is supposedly imbued with the powers to invoke.

Returning to Bradamante's "Vorrei vendicarmi", during the second melismatic passage which closes the first phrase (a1) of the aria's A section, embellishing the word "fury" (*furor*), the singer adopts an even simpler melodic gesture (an undulating 5-6-5-6-5-6 figure against a similarly repetitive and simplistic harmonic framework of V6 - vi6 – V- I in the dominant key of A major) in mm.15-16. Once again, this comically

[175] The constantly interrupted and fragmentary nature of Ruggiero's wandering *arioso* is especially apparent in the opening phrase before it repeats (see mm.5-11).

mechanical music repeats itself verbatim for an entire measure (mm.15) until a slight variation in the following measure, mm.16, as the melismatic passage comes to a close via a V6 - 5/3 - I cadence. **(See Appendix C, Example 1b, pg. 217 & 224).** Although Bradamante is singing of her "fury" and of her thirst for "vengeance" in these two highly repetitive and rather mundane, mechanical passages, her music ensures that she is in no way empowered by these emotions. Instead, these passages offer pale and subdued expressions of static and contained emotional states typical of the restrained and decorous automaton performer envisioned by Enlightenment philosophers (and artisans) alike. In effect, the music of this aria reduces her to a sort of mindless, agency-less puppet on an endless loop; trapped by her repetitive, mechanical melismas rather than liberated by them like her rival, Alcina. In its stark simplicity and endless repetitions, Bradamante's music also reinforces commonplace associations of coloratura virtuosity with mindless, mechanical singing. This critique was frequently leveled against singers, especially less well-trained female singers as opposed to their castrato counterparts, in many eighteenth-century vocal treatises like those of Tosi (in Agricola's 1757 German translation of Tosi's 1723 treatise). Tosi specifically argues that singers rely too heavily on imitation, especially women who he claims can only mimic, or mindlessly parrot, the voice of the composing "male genius" (and all too often do so poorly). He specifically writes, "I do not know who deserves greater scorn: the singer who cannot imitate one who sings well without exaggeration, or the singer who cannot imitate anyone well except one who sings badly."[176] Evidently Tosi was very critical of the Baroque model of mimicry and

[176] Pier Francesco Tosi, "Concerning Cadenzas," in *Anleitung zur Singkunst*, Johann Friedrich Agricola, trans. *Introduction to the art of singing*, Julianne Baird, trans. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 222.

imitation in singing (and in the study of voice); his treatise attacking both of these negative qualities which surface repeatedly throughout Bradamante's ultra-mechanical rage aria.

Unlike Bradamante, the singer portraying Alcina adopts fiendishly difficult coloratura passages as the opera progresses, defying the exaggeratedly mechanical qualities associated with her rival's style. The singer portraying Alcina refuses to be limited to her counterpart, Bradamante's, mechanical model; instead vocally reclaiming her powers in an act of defiance against her character's defeat in the narrative. In sum, these hyper-mechanical musical passages of Bradamante's characteristic "Vorrei Vendicarmi", reduce her to a crude caricature of the idealized automaton-musician of this period and deprive her of her human agency. Bradamante's aria, which offers an exaggeratedly straightforward and direct musical characterization, also renders Ruggiero's ring-induced failure "to see through her disguise" (instead adding another layer to her gender-bending disguise as her brother by having him mistake her for Alcina) all the more ludicrous. The music's tongue-in-cheek representation of this comically one-dimensional figure offers a subtle critique of the Enlightenment values which both she and the ring represent. Furthermore, the parodic undertones of this ultra-mechanical aria enable Bradamante to subtly push back against her musical characterization as the puppet-like mouthpiece for the one and only Father figure, Melisso, of this decidedly woman-centric opera devoted to the restoration of patriarchal order at all costs.

The Voice as an Enchanting Weapon: Alcina's Spectacular Failure and Virtuosic Defeat

During the moment in which the character, Alcina, accepts her defeat, commenting on the failure of her "deadly wand" (*verga fatal*), the singer portraying her

defiantly performs a treacherous passage marked by abrupt and challenging upward leaps and large intervals. This suggests that although the sorceress' weapon of choice has been defeated, the powers embedded in the voice of the singer portraying Alcina have not abandoned her. In this section I explore the notion that the singer's voice can be considered a form of magic in its own right, expanding upon Martha Feldman's collapsing of the boundaries between "cantare" (*to sing*) and "incantare" (*to enchant*) in her discussion of eighteenth-century opera as ritual. Feldman specifically argues that although often rejecting overtly magical narrative tropes that were commonplace in earlier *seicento* opera, eighteenth-century *opera seria* routinely staged its own quasi-mythical pro-Absolutist spectacle as a less literal form of magic which can be traced back to the mystical and ecstasy-inducing qualities of the human voice and its virtuosic, super-human feats.[177] By linking the inimitable powers of the human voice to another form of magic (one that is less rooted in trickery or *inganni*, deceptions and spells), I suggest that Alcina manages to hold onto her powers of enchantment in spite of their ostensible loss at this point in the opera.

In the closing *recit*. and aria of the second Act, Alcina accepts but then bemoans her miserable fate, having been abandoned first by Ruggiero then by the Furies she attempts and fails to invoke with her magic which has similarly abandoned her. From a harmonic standpoint, the opening *recitativo accompagnato* is extremely turbulent and unsettled, moving through a series of constantly shifting local tonalities after having established tensions between b minor, the key underscoring Alcina's initial outcry of

[177] Martha Feldman, "Magic and Myth", in *Opera and Sovereignty: Transforming Myths in Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), 22-33.

despair, and its relative major (D major). This tension ultimately collapses in favor of b minor (and/or B major) which is firmly established in the final measures of the *recit.* (mm.36-39) as the dominant of the ensuing e minor lament in a moment that illustrates the crumbling of her magic from within. **(See Appendix C, Examples 3a-b, pp. 234-35 & 245).** Like the fragile D major which inevitably gives way to b minor at the end of the *recit. accompagnato*, Alcina's powers collapse as she moves farther and farther away from a stable tonal base (especially this prominent but precarious D major). The D major tonality is never fully established, but Alcina attempts to latch onto it in much the same way that she attempts to latch onto and maintain control over her powers upon realizing that they no longer lie under her control (see mm.24-27). **(See Appendix C, Example 3a, pg. 236 & 244).** The relentless presence of this much darker b minor lurking in the shadows of Alcina's accompanied *recit*. also sets the tone for the ensuing aria's relentless 7-6 suspensions, which similarly suggest that there is no escape for her. By the end of this *recit*. passage and Alcina's despairing aria, "Ombre Pallide", that follows it becomes extremely clear that she whom Ariosto's epic portrays as a wicked deceiver in turn has been deceived by her own magic(s) and trapped within a magic-induced hell of her own making.

The sparsely textured mid-section of this opening *recit. accompagnato* illustrates the fundamental instability of Alcina's magical powers which I argue are rooted in the harmonic instability of her music. Not only is her music unsupported by the orchestra, reduced for measures at a time to violins doubling the vocal melody in unison, but it constantly and abruptly shifts tonal centers creating a vertiginous web of flat keys collapsing into distant sharp keys and vice versa. As the character of Alcina reflects on

the unexpected silence of the Furies whom she has attempted to call to her aid, her music wanders first from an unresolved secondary dominant chord tonicizing F# major (V7/V of the local b minor tonic) to an implied E major chord in mm.29-30. Following a dramatic pause in the orchestra, the sudden upward leap of a major tenth from E4 to G#5 in Alcina's vocal line heightens this dramatic shift; rendering her music's blatant failure to resolve the previous secondary dominant chord (of F# major) even more jarring. The harmonically meandering but not completely illogical music of this passage continues, suddenly giving way to A major, reinterpreting the preceding E major as a local dominant, in mm.31. This passing tonicization is in turn followed by a descending f# minor triad (relative minor of the preceding A major). This f# minor triad retrospectively resolves the aforementioned, unresolved V7/F# major chord, albeit in the minor rather than the expected major mode; however it too is immediately followed by another distant tonal shift. The ensuing a minor chord in mm. 33 negates the interrelated, heavily sharp keys of f# minor and A major heard a mere two measures earlier. **(See Appendix C, Example 3a, pg. 234 & 244**). As Alcina sings "I seek you…and you abandon me? I command you…and you are silent?" (*Vi cerco, e v'ascondete? Vi commando, e tacete?*), these strangely wandering harmonies in conjunction with her increasingly agitated calls punctuated with dramatic silences, offer a musical representation of her fruitless search for the Furies. She finally settles into what appears to be the beginning of a descending scalar sequential pattern by repeating her inquisitive melody a step lower, moving from a minor to g minor in mm.34. However, once again she immediately disrupts this sense of a logical and at least semi-coherent progression by moving without warning from g minor to an arpeggiated c# diminished triad (a discordant tritone away from this passing flat

key) in mm.35. This striking dissonance drives home the sense of Alcina's complete lack of stability which pervades the accompanied *recit.* in its entirety. **(See Appendix C, Example 3a, pg. 234 & 244).**

The unintuitive and near constant harmonic shifts within this turbulent section reinforce the overarching fragmentary nature of her melody. Alcina's melody moves in fits and starts in an extremely jagged and discontinuous array of dramatic leaps and fleeting scalar passages which simultaneously betray the character's lost and confused state while offering the singer a vehicle for displaying her impressive vocal prowess. This contradiction between the levels of narrative and music suggests the triumph of Handel's sorceress from a vocal standpoint; a vocal triumph that sets itself in defiant opposition to the unambiguous failure of her magic and the imminent shattering of her dangerous spell. In other words, although her invocation spectacularly fails from a narrative perspective, in a more literal sense of the term this invocation appears at its most powerful in the very moment in which Alcina accepts both its and her inevitable failure.

The very fact that Alcina's failed invocation is dramatized and vocalized in such spectacular terms suggests that in spite of her ostensible defeat at this point in the opera, her magic continues to prevail. Once again drawing inspiration from Feldman, I argue that this unexpected prevailing of Alcina's powers which live on in the singer's virtuosic and commanding voice resonates with the notion that operatic spectacles of this time were considered a form of enchantment in their own right. In *Opera and Sovereignty*, Feldman, explicitly defines eighteenth-century *opera seria* as a sort of spectacular ritual fostering a dynamic exchange between singers and listeners, spectacles and spectators. This elaborate ritualized spectacle served the purpose of (re)creating a collective identity

drawn from a mythicized idealization (or idolization) of the absolutist reign of royal tyrants turned generous and magnanimous rulers. Because of this genre's emphasis on the "enchanting powers of song" at the expense of narrative concerns, often catering to the demands of singers, *opera seria* has been subject to much criticism over the years. This criticism exposes the anxieties that both its irrational qualities and its related power to "enchant" listeners have provoked for historical and contemporary audiences alike. Feldman specifically argues that, "among travelers and gazetteers who reported on Italian theaters, arias were perpetually troped as magic. For these commentators, lyric singing could weave spells on distracted audiences, reflexively intertwining the arts of *cantare* and *incantare*, singing and enchanting."[178] Drawing inspiration from her argument, I contend that this collapsing of boundaries between singing and enchanting takes on a more literal quality in Alcina's "Ombre Pallide" and the preceding recitative. I argue that they jointly stage a "failed invocation" on one level (in terms of the narrative) juxtaposed with an extraordinarily powerful invocation and/or enchantment on another level (on the level of performance). Due to what Feldman deems *seria*'s emphasis on spectacle and performance, often at the expense of narrative and drama, Alcina's failure to control her magic within the opera's narrative is eclipsed by her power to subdue and "enchant" listeners in performance via the quasi-mystical feats of her voice. Ultimately, as a result of the magical powers of Strada del Po's (and any other Alcina's) entrancing voice in performance, this scene provocatively stages the sorceress' imminent defeat as the singer's triumph.

[178] Feldman, 25.

Returning to the accompanied *recit*. in question, although Alcina's music adopts conventional sequential patterns in this section, these sequential gestures are not ordered in a logical or rational way as convention would demand. Instead her voice meanders as she attempts and fails to locate the source of her powers attributed to the absent Furies who, like a more traditional and ordered structure of her music, have abandoned her. The irony lies in the fact that the aforementioned, striking and vocally commanding gesture, marked by the sudden upward leap of a major tenth which initiates this turbulent and unstable passage, cloaks Alcina's unambiguous recognition of her loss of power within a blatant display of vocal power. Furthermore, at the end of this harmonically wandering middle section of the *recit*., she proudly pro- and re-claims her "power" (*possanza*) from a vocal standpoint against a prominent, unexpected D major triad in mm.36 (a tonal center which I've argued the *recit*. continuously flirts with but fails to establish as a representation of her power/her control over her powers). Alcina's defiant embrace of her power embedded within this fleeting but dramatic hint of D major is immediately and unequivocally negated by a D# (the third of the V6-5/e minor chord) in the *continuo* part in mm.37. At this moment the orchestral backdrop of her music returns which, in conjunction with the stubborn silence of the Furies, poses a harmonic answer to her rhetorical question: "[my wand] has no powers?" (*non ha possanza?*) (mm.36-37). **(See Appendix C, Example 3a, pp. 234-35 & 245).** Indeed, from a harmonic standpoint her magic has failed her; a failure to which the character (if not the singer) finally resigns herself as her harmonic progression ceases to wander. At this point, the lingering threat of b minor transforms itself into a B major dominant (V), before inexorably settling into the lamenting e minor key of the ensuing aria (see mm. 39). **(See Appendix C, Example 3a,**

pp. 235 & 245). However doomed to failure her magic(s) may be, this moment (marked by yet another dramatic upward leap of a major tenth from D4 to F#5 in mm.36) empowers the singer to reclaim Alcina's voice and to seize it as a weapon in lieu of her weapon of choice: her "deadly wand" (*verga fatal*). Although her "invocation" of the Furies has unequivocally failed, her voice itself (an "invocation" on an entirely different – more material - level) does not and will not fail her.

This failed invocation aria in which Alcina laments the loss of her powers subtly deviates from the conventional model of operatic women's laments in the sense that her music offers the singer several moments in which she can draw attention to her vocal prowess. By doing so, the singer portraying Alcina momentarily reclaims the powers Handel's sorceress has lost; rendering her enraged lament the singer's vehicle of protest against the subjugation of her character within the opera's narrative. Specifically commenting on the oppressive forces embedded within and enacted by the conventional operatic lament, Jean Starobinski posits Alcina's "Ombre Pallide", and the many lament arias which he argues define and constrain Alcina's music throughout the remainder of the opera, as the source of her steady and unremitting loss of agency.[179] Considering that as the opera progresses she loses everything from her love to her magical powers, from a narrative standpoint he is correct in pointing out Alcina's increasing lack of agency.

[179] Jean Starobinski, "The Magic of Alcina", in *Enchantment: The Seductress in Opera*, C. Jon Delogu, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 138-43. According to Starobinski, although joining the ranks of her similarly abandoned and lamenting predecessors, Alcina fails to conform to the standard model of the lamenting, abandoned heroine in that unlike these women her immortality denies her even the right to put an end to her suffering. In other words, as a result of her supernatural presence (guaranteeing her immortality), she has no escape from her miserable plight and she is refused even this tiny vestige of agency which is offered the more conventional "abandoned woman" and/or lamenting heroine. I would argue the opposite; claiming that her suffering does not render her powerless (although it may from a narrative standpoint). On the level of performance, the singer reclaims Alcina's voice in very potent and dramatic arias, among them "Ombre Pallide", which enable her to put up a very vocal fight against her demise and the demise of her magic.

However, he fails to recognize that the one thing she (or, at least the singer portraying her) does not lose is her voice.

Many lament arias are, as Starobinski (and others) claim, structured to deny the lamenting woman agency rather than to provide a space in which she can give voice to her suffering and complaints.[180] This becomes immediately apparent in Monteverdi's prototypical laments in which the lamenting woman appears surrounded by a chorus of men offering commentary on (and in effect, silencing) her anguish. In regards to Monteverdi's prototypical "Lamento della ninfa", Susan McClary explicitly comments on these masculinized framing devices which she claims work to contain the lamenting woman's expression of her pain; thereby ensuring that her hysterical suffering does not contaminate her listeners. McClary specifically claims that "the mediating filter of masculinity creates something like the grilles that used to be put over the windows of asylums at the time when gentlefolk liked to witness the spectacle of insanity for entertainment."[181] On one hand, Alcina's "Ombre pallide" is similarly built around this notion of patriarchal containment (and the musical "frame") as her lament is embedded within a standard *da capo* aria whose head motive endlessly cycles back on itself, ensuring that she is effectively trapped by her own torments. However, within this rather dismal and forcefully contained expression of a conquered woman's suffering and quite literal loss of power, the singer portraying Alcina manages to retain her vocal agency by

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[180] See, for instance, Suzanne G. Cusick, "'There Was Not One Lady Who Failed to Shed a Tear': Arianna's Lament and the Construction of Modern Womanhood." *Early Music* 22, no. 1 (February 1994), 21-43 and her later article in which she revisits the same issues (the agency, or lack thereof, of the lamenting heroine). See: Cusick "Re-Voicing Arianna (And Laments): Two Women Respond." *Early Music* 27, no. 3 (August 1999), 437-49.

[181] Susan McClary, "Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation of Madwomen," in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002 (orig. 1991)), 89.

pushing against (without fully overstepping) the rigid boundaries of this formulaic aria form. The notion of a singer capitalizing upon her vocal powers as a form of resistance against the harmonic and formal "frames" that work to silence and contain her character's suffering, also resonates with McClary's discussion of the tensions between (vocal) excess and the musical "frame" which she explores through the lens of Lucia's infamous mad scene. In this chapter of *Feminine Endings*, McClary illuminates the ways in which the diva can embrace her vocal excess, specifically by exceeding the harmonic frame in a climactic moment, as a means of pushing back against (if not toppling) these oppressive and silencing forces.[182] As described by McClary in relation to Lucia's iconic mad scene, many times throughout Alcina's aria the orchestra drops out in a series of melismatic passages that enable the singer to exceed the formal and generic boundaries (of both the *da capo* aria and of the lament). Her vocal excesses appear in the form of striking dissonances and jagged discontinuities that hearken back to the commanding gestures of the aria's preceding r*ecit*., which I argue ironically present Alcina's failure as a sort of triumph. As a result, the singer, or "voice-Alcina" (to invoke Abbate),[183] reclaims her powers and exploits this disempowering lament on her own terms in the very moment in which "character-Alcina" has been reduced to Starobinski's pathetic shadow of the classic abandoned woman. Rather than silencing her and stripping her of her agency, I argue that the profound sense of humanity embedded in Alcina's music (and so praised

[182] In Ibid., 98-99.

[183] Carolyn Abbate, "Brünnhilde Walks by Night," in *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 206-49. In this concluding chapter of her book, Abbate establishes a distinction between plot and performance, character and singer, using the terms "voice" versus "plot-Brünnhilde", as a means of illuminating how the singer pushes back against the narrative's silencing of her character. (See especially pages 212-13, and 242 for explicit references to and more detailed discussions of these terms).

by critics like Dean and Starobinski)[184] enables this defeated sorceress to rise above her dehumanizing plight. In spite of her defeat, unlike characters like Bradamante, she manages to avoid succumbing to the demand that she embody the ideal Enlightenment subject constrained and ultimately dehumanized (reduced to compliant and mechanical puppet-like figures) by this far more dangerous fantasy of "reason."

The many melismatic passages built into the A section of Alcina's melancholy "Ombre Pallide", provide a vehicle for the singer's display of her inimitable virtuosity. These melismatic passages enable her to temporarily push back against the boundaries of this traditional lament aria without overstepping them completely; stretching conventions without abandoning them altogether. This stretching of conventions can also be heard on a macro level in terms of the overall expansiveness of the aria whose A section is prolonged by an unusual third iteration of its central statement (a1, a2, and the unconventional a3, an extended version of the norm). However, rather than offering a window of opportunity for greater expression, the expansion of the aria's A section works to reinforce the cyclical nature that is built into the *da capo* form. By virtue of moving from e minor to b minor and back to e minor, cycling back on itself both harmonically and formally, this expansion of the A section suggests that Alcina has been trapped by her despair and has no way of moving forward as the music inevitably cycles back to where it started. Furthermore, like the aria as a whole, the later melismas, concluding the a3 statement of the A section (mm.28-31), are more rigidly structured and controlled than

[184] See Dean, "Magic Operas," in *Handel and the Opera Seria (Ernest Bloch Lectures)* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 82. Although not explicitly referencing Alcina in his discussion of the sorceress' humanity, Dean claims that, "[t]he male victims escape the snare and pair off happily, as the convention requires; but it is the fate of the sorceress – the spider, not the fly – that moves Handel…It is the sorceress…who capture[s] our sympathy, and whose emotions we recognize (through the paradox of art) as the most human" (82).

the earlier ones (mm.9-10, 18-19), becoming increasingly contained from a harmonic standpoint even as they offer the singer a vehicle for showcasing her vocal prowess. **(See Appendix C, Example 3b, pp. 236-38 & 246-48).** Unlike the first two versions of this melisma, this melody is much less jagged and dissonant than its predecessors. More specifically, it moves in a long series of descending minor thirds which overshadows the fleeting diminished fourth that momentarily breaks this otherwise stable and straightforward downward melodic spiral in mm.31. **(See Appendix C, Example 3b, pg. 238 & 248).** The irony lies in the fact that this later melisma actually becomes less restrictive from a formal standpoint by adopting a more expansive phrasing which mirrors the large-scale expansion of the A section. By virtue of its increasing expansiveness (like the increasing expansiveness of the A section as a whole), this passage imbues the singer with more space to express the rage contained within her grief even as it restrains her by placing her vocal outcry within an increasingly rigid and conventional harmonic progression.

In light of their seemingly endless strings of descending minor thirds, all three of these recurring melismatic passages appear blatantly mechanical to the extent that mechanical music is defined by mindless repetition. However, midway through each of these mechanical passages, they are suddenly interrupted by striking diminished fourths and an abrupt reversal in the melodic direction. These jarring dissonances indicate that in these moments Alcina has rejected the demand for mechanical singing and the mechanization of the human body which the aria attempts to impose upon her. The values which these momentary dissonances enable Alcina to reject are deeply embedded within the Enlightenment ideology and its rather bizarre infatuation with automata. There are,

however, moments in these passages that suggest the music's attempt to silence her and stifle her vocal authority. For instance, she sings her final melisma for the first time against an orchestral backdrop rather than virtually *a cappella,* which suggests that Alcina's vocal power has finally been (re)contained within its orchestral framework. However, the appearance of yet another dissonant diminished fourth towards the end of this melisma ensures that her music maintains at least a vestige of its jarring and off-putting tone. Furthermore, midway through this more restrained iteration of the recurring melismatic passage, the orchestra once again drops out (see mm.30-31); suddenly limited to a unison doubling in the violins of her vocal melody. **(See Appendix C, Example 3b, pg. 238 & 248).** Overall, the cyclical nature of her aria serves as one of many attempts to contain Alcina's enraged outburst of vocal magic; trapping her within her music's inescapable and relentless 7-6 suspensions and confining her, like the enraged Bradamante of "Vorrei Vendicarmi", within the expression of a singular emotional state. In spite of this, the jarring moments of melodic discontinuity offered by these diminished fourths rupture an otherwise mechanical, quasi-instrumental melodic line. Furthermore, these fleeting dissonances present the singer with the means of at least momentarily breaking free from the disempowering Enlightenment fantasy of the female musician (usually harpsichordists and keyboard players, but singers as well) as a mindless robot. From the perspective of the narrative, these moments also foreground the notion that Alcina is taunting the Furies whom she knows are there even if they refuse to heed her call. She defiantly insists that they are "hovering around her" (*d'intorno errate*), employing these unexpected dissonances as a means of forcing her audience, if the not Furies themselves, to listen. While the Furies she has attempted and failed to invoke may

not hear her or simply refuse to listen, we as her audience have no choice but to heed her explicit call to listen to her powerful invocation.

As Alcina's musical language becomes increasingly profound in Acts II and III, her music enables her to push the boundaries of the Enlightenment ideal of the sentimental subject. While she does inspire sympathetic (even visceral) responses from her listeners, a central value of the eighteenth-century ideal of sentimentality; her music offers her a psychological complexity that it denies the majority of the other characters. Alcina ultimately rejects the mimetic and mechanical nature of emotional expression that this model entails in favor of reclaiming her emotions as her own. Her music makes it abundantly clear that her emotions remain under her control rather than being dictated by standardized emotive gestures. As I mentioned earlier, in Voskuhl's *Androids in the Enlightenment*, he observes that throughout the eighteenth century sentiments were expressed physically and passed from one person to another (e.g.: from performer to listener and/or spectator) through the mimicry of carefully defined, legible body language which was thought to translate directly to emotions.[185] In spite of the embodied nature of this emotional language, these affects and the gestures with which they were associated were structured and categorized in taxonomies, thereby rendering the eighteenth-century notion of the sentimental subject "mechanical" and depriving the human subject of agency and control over his or her body. Voskuhl makes the observation that Enlightenment-era automata depicting musicians, for instance the famous dulcimer player created for and modeled after Marie Antoinette (by Peter Kintzing and David Roentgen

[185] Voskuhl, "The Design of the Mechanics", 150.

in 1784),[186] were designed not only to go through the motions of playing the music they were programmed to play, but also to breathe and move their arms and upper bodies in decorous and sensible ways, much like their human counterparts.[187] As a result of the fundamentally mechanical nature of sentimentality reflected by these musicking automata, Voskuhl argues that they blur the inherently porous boundaries between humans and machines. Thus blurring of boundaries suggests that the ideal human subject of this period was little more than a glorified machine him/herself.

As the opera progresses, Alcina manages to reclaim both her voice and her body from the clutches of this dehumanizing Enlightenment ideal of the sentimental subject. In the aforementioned dissonant moments of the otherwise mechanical melismatic passages of "Ombre Pallide" she disrupts the descending third sequences and the emotionally-laden physical gestures they require from the singer, refusing to be limited, like the eighteenth-century automaton and/or sentimental musician, to singing "only…what [she] is programmed to repeat."[188] Ironically, during the early decades of the Enlightenment, mid-eighteenth century, Kara Reilly claims that the automaton craze was juxtaposed with an increasing rejection of Cartesian models of the "man as machine" which had dominated the previous century. Although dismissed as emblematic of Absolutist tyranny, these automata (considered on some level to be relics of an earlier age) were

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[186] In Ibid, "Introduction: Androids, Enlightenment, and the Human-Machine Boundary," 2. According to Voskuhl, the dulcimer player "purportedly represents Marie-Antoinette [sic.] herself, who was thirty years old when the automaton was made" (2).

[187] In Ibid., 7. Voskuhl notes that "[t]he automata's bodily motions correspond to eighteenth-century performance techniques, as musicians at the time were expected to move their bodies while playing music to communicate affects and sentiments to the audience – affects and sentiments that they were meant to generate in themselves first, according to the program set forth by the musical piece" (7).

[188] Reilly, "From Aristocrats to Autocrats," 105.

reduced in eighteenth-century Enlightenment society to "luxurious commodities."[189] These mechanical curiosities often served as gifts exchanged between "princely rulers"[190] or the very same Absolutist tyrants that they supposedly represented and which the Age of Enlightenment increasingly reviled. This blatant hypocrisy demonstrates the eighteenth century's conflicted position on the human-machine boundary; simultaneously embracing and striving to resist the increasing mechanization of the human body as society moved inexorably forward into the industrial age of the nineteenth century. In many respects Alcina's character embodies this conflict, by offering mechanical singing like many of her more one-dimensional counterparts (e.g.: Bradamante). However, the singer portraying this sorceress also seizes the opportunity to at least momentarily break free from its restrictive boundaries; reclaiming her humanity from this Enlightenment fantasy of the sentimental subject as a machine deprived of human agency. As a result, Handel's Alcina manages to shed light on the dark, dehumanizing undertones of this Enlightenment fantasy (a far more dangerous fantasy than the one she imposes upon her victims). This in turn guarantees her demise as a punishment for having overstepped boundaries and having the audacity to pose a critique of these quintessentially Enlightenment values.

In sum, this tumultuous and troubled aria demonstrates how Alcina's invocation of the vengeful Furies has failed for many reasons, including her failure to adhere to the standard poetic meters and/or metric schemes defining the "invocation aria."[191] Rather

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[189] Voskuhl, "Introduction", 27.
[190] In Ibid., 26.
[191] Nathan Link, 2002, "Discontinuity of Expression," in *Story and representation in Handel's operas*, Dissertation, Yale University, 151.

than continuing to try to invoke the spirits, Handel's Alcina mourns the loss of her powers; however, the singer who brings this enchantress to life holds onto her spectacularly fading powers against all odds. This paradoxical moment of simultaneous failure and triumph resonates strongly with Suzanne Cusick's interpretation of Francesca Caccini's seventeenth-century court production of *La liberazione di Ruggiero*; also based on the Ariosto epic and staged in honor of a female patron and shockingly pro-woman in its rhetoric.[192] In the Caccini version of these scenes from the *Furioso*, Cusick claims that Alcina seizes control over her own destruction and/or the destruction of her realm in spectacularly masculine and militaristic terms.[193] In other words, although on some level resigning herself to her subjugation by the masculine, patriarchal realm of "order", this Alcina usurps masculine authority as she alone wields the power to destroy her own magic. As such, this much earlier embodiment of Ariosto's sorceress provides a model for Handel's equally captivating (anti)-heroine, or at least the singer performing the role who, I argue, similarly pushes back against her violent containment by the patriarchal order, albeit in a more subdued, subtle, and less transparent way.

The paradoxical nature of this climactic aria also resonates with the striking changes in Alcina's characterization from the Ariosto epic to Handel's operatic adaptation thereof. Ariosto's Alcina makes few appearances in the measly three *cantos* conveying her tale, overshadowed by the heroic Bradamante and even by her sister, Logistilla, the benevolent sorceress who is absent in Handel's opera. Handel, on the other

[192] Suzanne Cusick, "*La liberazione di Ruggiero* amid the Politics of Regency," in *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court: Music and the Circulation of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 191-212.
[193] See in Ibid., 205-6 for Cusick's more detailed discussion of Alcina's moment of ironically triumphant self-destruction.

hand, seizes upon Alcina and her plight as a vehicle for his music's expression of a complex woman's very human emotions and suffering. He recasts her (rather than Logistilla) as the sorceress with a heart and a streak of humanity, thereby complicating and undermining her unambiguous position as villain in the original epic. As argued by scholars like Starobinski and Dean, Alcina's humanity comes through in arias like her Act II "Ombre Pallide" which on one hand works to contain her rage within the stereotypical framework of the abandoned woman's lament, depriving her of agency. On the other hand, I argue that these very same arias open up a space in which she openly defies the rigid and formulaic strictures of the conventional eighteenth-century *da capo* (or in this case, *dal segno*) aria. More specifically, she rejects and exceeds the expected depiction of a limited palette of emotional states as well as its mechanistic qualities which I've argued reduce the singer to a kind of glorified machine befitting the "Age of Reason's" obsession with automata. By refusing to be reduced to a heartless machine like Ariosto's Alcina, Handel's Alcina refuses to submit to both the misogynistic and dehumanizing aspects of Enlightenment ideology and the one-dimensional and dehumanized representation of her character offered by Ariosto. In other words, by reclaiming her humanity *this* Alcina (from the perspective of the singer) very vocally pushes back against the vicious double-edged sword embedded within Ariosto's representation of the sorceress. Handel's Alcina refuses to follow in the footsteps of her predecessor who is first deprived of her humanity and then demonized and punished for her lack.

Conclusion

Throughout Handel's *Alcina* the foregone conclusion of restored social order and reason embedded within the *opera seria* convention becomes increasingly ridiculous; undermined from within by one highly unreliable magic being used as a weapon against another. This opera's subtle critique of the Enlightenment ideology that it promotes on a surface level becomes much more transparent and much less subtle in the heavily criticized 1999/2000 Stuttgart production of *Alcina* by the directing duo Morabito and Wieler.[194] In this production's staging of the opera's final scene, the obligatory *lieto fine*, mass chaos in the form of orgiastic revelry ensues. While this may be one of many scenes that has resulted in this production being outright dismissed as an egregious instance of "Eurotrash",[195] an epithet used to denigrate the recent German *Regieoper* movement, it does productively and rather provocatively illustrate the inherently corrupt nature of the eighteenth-century fantasy of (the) Enlightenment. During this final scene, having been finally released from Alcina's spell, the full ensemble basks in its collective triumph in terms of the restoration of Alcina's literally dehumanized victims to their rational human selves. Towards the end of the first of two choruses which bring the opera to a close, "Dall'orror di note cieca" (*From night's blind horror*), Alcina's former victims ask;

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[194] Catherine Naglestad, Alice Coote, Jossi Wieler, and Sergio Morabito (dirs..), *Alcina: Dramma per music in tre atti (1735)*, DVD, Conducted by Alan Hacker, Munich, Germany: ArtHaus Musik, 2000. (Recorded performance from 1999).

[195] William (pseud.), "Separating Art from 'Eurotrash': S.F.'s 'Rodelinda' & Stuttgart's 'Alcina'", *Opera Warhorses: An appreciation and analysis of 'Standard Repertory' of Opera* blog, entry posted January 13, 2006, http://www.operawarhorses.com/2006/01/13/separating-art-from-eurotrash-sfs-rodelinda-stuttgarts-alcina/ (accessed October 22, 2015). "William" explicitly labels the Stuttgart *Alcina* "Eurotrash"; criticizing it on the grounds of its self-consciously "gratuitous sex scenes", belittling the staging by describing it as "Ariosto meets Almodovar." The pseudonymous author "William" specifically writes; "[t]he 'Alcina' principals begin to relate to each other in inexplicable ways, as if a half dozen or so randomly selected characters from two decades of Pedro Almodovar films have taken over the bodies of the Ariosto characters."

"Who has restored our human intellect? Who has stripped away our bestial nature?" (*Chi ne ha resa umana voglia? Chi ne spoglia la già appressa ferità?*).[196] This text offers an obvious parallel to Ruggiero's aforementioned *arioso,* briefly discussed earlier in this chapter, in which he too marvels at the abrupt restoration of his reason by means of Ariosto's magic ring. As was the case with Ruggiero and his awestruck musings on the restoration of his "human will", Morabito and Wieler play this concluding scene as a joke. The humorous tone of their staging ensures that both the ring and the Enlightenment ideology it promotes are not taken seriously by the audience even if these values *are* taken seriously by the characters themselves.

Morabito/Wieler's staging of this scene as an over-the-top parody of the *lieto fine* convention takes *Alcina*'s subtle critique of the Enlightenment values it seemingly promotes to a whole new level. This collaborative production reduces the climactic moment in praise of the "Age of Reason" to a delightfully ridiculous farce; rendering the directors' stance on this problematic Enlightenment ideology comically transparent. During the second chorus which brings this *lieto fine* to an end, "Dopo tante amare pene" (*after such bitter suffering*), the onstage ensemble revels in their triumphant joy and their release from bondage. However, rather than embodying the Enlightenment ideals they claim to have just restored to themselves (by magic), they enact a wild, animalistic quasi-orgy; throwing their clothes around the stage and gallivanting and cavorting. Furthermore, in the final moments of the opera an unmasked Bradamante appears lewdly astride Melisso's lap. This staging choice makes her role as an easily manipulated puppet of the patriarchy, or the mouthpiece for the opera's lone Father figure, Melisso, explicit

[196] Handel, *Alcina* (CD Liner notes), 127.

while transforming their acknowledged connection within the libretto into a vulgar and corrupt spectacle. **(See Figures 1-2, below).** Morabito and Wieler have staged this scene in such a way that the newly enlightened characters adopt more animalistic behaviors than they did when they had been literally reduced to beasts by Alcina. This bizarre and out-of-place outburst of their animalistic impulses suggests that the notion of "Pure Reason" or a complete "disenchantment of the world" is a dangerous and corrupt fantasy on par with, or actually far worse than, any enchantment that Alcina could ever cast.

Figure 1

Figure 2

This production has been criticized, mostly by opera purists, as ridiculous, heavy-handed, and over-the-top as a result of its abundance of unnecessary, deliberately shocking stage business which they claim distracts from the music.[197] Contrary to the assumptions made by many of these opera purists, Morabito/Wieler's production capitalizes upon these moments of sheer comical absurdity in order to shed light on the fundamentally base and corrupt nature of the Enlightenment and the supposedly rational

[197] James Sohre, "Stuttgart: Too Hot to Handel", in *Opera Today* (February 17, 2013), http://www.operatoday.com/content/2013/02/stuttgart_too_h.php (accessed October 22, 2015). Sohre disdainfully comment, "[a]las, what we got was confusing blocking and unmotivated stage business that led us even further from honest confrontations and down a garden path to bewilderment."

values which the narrative restores at Alcina's expense. In this chapter, I've argued that this corruption can be traced back to the inherently hazy boundaries and inevitable slippage between magic and reason embedded within the opera's (and Ariosto's epic's) narrative. In other words, Handel's opera constantly entangles what appear to be mutually opposed qualities, suggesting that the notion of "pure Reason" which his narrative superficially promotes can be nothing more than a fantasy or illusion (much more so than the more literal fantasy or illusion in the form of Alcina's enticing but dangerous enchantment). The deliberately absurd nature of Morabito/Wieler's staging also resonates with Feldman's claims about the fundamentally ridiculous nature of the *lieto fine* which she argues was rarely taken seriously even in the heyday or prime of *opera seria*.[198] During an intervening triumphal march, an instrumental interlude between these choral numbers marked *entrée* and *tamburino* in the score, the characters begin to wander about the stage looking lost and confused and oblivious to the vanquished Alcina's sudden reappearance. In spite of her defeat, the conquered (anti)heroine has abruptly returned to the stage looking confident in her surroundings and sneering at those who have supposedly defeated her. Her silent and unnoticed presence in this scene contributes to the joke that this production appears to be making about the fact that Alcina's victims once again cannot see her in spite of the presence of Ruggiero's purportedly "all-seeing", illuminating, and enlightening "ring" which has brought about her demise. Perhaps Ruggiero's wielding of this ring as a defense mechanism (and/or weapon) against Alcina

[198] Feldman, "Evenings at the Opera", 24, 38. According to Feldman, while at face value *opera seria* promotes a rigidly hierarchical worldview and ostensibly upholds the status quo, it "was a floating signifier…[people often] drew their own meanings [including potentially subversive meanings] from the highly generalizable signs that were the institution's stock-in-trade" (38) and "[d]iscontinuous listening…was possible precisely because endless, insuperable patriarchy was a foregone conclusion, one that excused spectators from affirming narratives by hearing them through" (24).

has backfired. Instead of enabling him to see through her spell as expected it has reverted to its other powers, presenting the vanquished sorceress with the same cloak of invisibility it has presented to other characters in other contexts (namely Orlando's beloved Angelica and the Bradamante of Ariosto's original epic). Throughout this production it is Alcina herself who is presented as "all-seeing", coming across as far more enlightened and self-aware than any of her victims who have at this point in the opera supposedly achieved Enlightenment by means of destroying first her and then her powers. **(See Figure 3, below).**

Figure 3

As seen through my discussion of this highly controversial production, as well as the sharp contrast I establish between Alcina's paradoxically empowering aria of defeat ("Ombre Pallide") and her rival, Bradamante's, confinement to an exaggeratedly mechanical, and "rational" style of singing (at the expense of her vocal agency) in "Vorrei Vendicarmi"; Handel's opera repeatedly undercuts its own mission, ironically presenting the Enlightenment values it represents as extremely *un*enlightened.

CHAPTER FOUR

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FOPS AND POST-MODERN CAMP IN *DEIDAMIA*: REINVENTING HANDEL'S LAST OPERA

Introduction

At the end of the second act of Handel's final opera, *Deidamia* (1741), the hero, Achille, disguised as one of the title character's ladies-in-waiting, "Pirra", alerts his onstage audience to his rather obvious gender-bending masquerade by betraying his passion for stereotypically masculine pursuits like the hunt. This particular scene, "Sì, m'appaga, sì, m'alletta", functions in the opera's narrative as the point at which his disguise begins to unravel and his "true" masculine nature creeps out from beneath his artificial feminine façade. However, the delicate and tripping frivolity of Achille's music calls to mind the first Act's more explicit parody of stereotypical femininity, the aria "Di lusinghe", in which Deidamia's confidante offers an exaggerated and distorted depiction of women's "native charms." Like this earlier aria, discussed at length in the concluding pages of this chapter, Achille's music feminizes him rather than restoring to him his compromised masculinity as indicated by the narrative. "Sì, m'appaga", while ostensibly in praise of the masculine pursuit of the hunt, ironically causes Achille to embody the qualities he very vocally (and repeatedly) rejects about women and life at Deidamia's court. Through the lens of David Alden's recent controversial production,[199] this chapter explores the ways in which the campy excesses and absurdities of his modern staging exaggerate the ironic and self-parodying tone of Handel's opera. These inherently campy qualities are epitomized by the decidedly anti-heroic "hero", Achille, whose masculine, rather than feminine, posturing is reduced to a farce in the very moment at which his

[199] David Alden, *Deidamia*. Conducted by Ivor Bolton. Waldron, Heathfield, East Sussex, U.K.: Opus Arte, 2012.

heroic valor has begun to come to light. Especially in scenes like this Act II aria, I argue that Alden's staging playfully exploits Handel's opera's multiple, contradictory levels of cross-dressing which center around a young female soprano, originally one "Miss Edwards" (and in this production, Olga Pasichnyk), portraying a male character in a comically exaggerated disguise as a woman.[200]

Achille's lack of depth, his character having been frequently dismissed as trivial, or as the least developed and least significant of Handel's opera in spite of his role as "hero", resonates with both post-modern accounts of camp and eighteenth-century notions of foppery. Drawing inspiration from these two temporally distant phenomena, my interpretation of Handel's final opera suggests that Achille is the epitome of its gleeful replacement of character with caricature and (human) nature with artifice. Camp has often been defined in terms of "exaggeration, artifice, and extremity"[201] as well as by its playfully self-conscious "irony, theatrical frivolity, parody [or self-parody], effeminacy, and sexual transgression."[202] Furthermore, contemporary authority on camp, Susan Sontag, and Mark Booth trace its roots to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, most prominently the court of Louis XIV, suggesting a fundamental compatibility between the aesthetic values of this time period and this arguably post-

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[200] Winton Dean, "*Deidamia*", in *Handel's Operas: 1726-1741* (Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2006), 480. In his brief discussion of the early reception of *Deidamia*, Dean writes that "[Charles Jennens] wrote to James Harris on 29 December 1740 [approximately two months later, but appearing to refer to the opera in advance of its premiere]: '[Handel] has a fine opera to come out on Saturday sev'nnight, called *Deidamia*, which might perhaps have tolerable success, but that it will be turn'd into farce by Miss Edwards, a little girl representing Achilles'" (Dean 480, quoting Jennens' letter as cited in Burrows and Dunhill's *Music and Theatre in Handel's World. The Family Papers of James Harris 1732-1780* (Oxford, 2002), 110.

[201] Fabio Cleto, "Introduction: Queering the Camp", in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader*, Cleto, Ed. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999, reprint 2002), 4 (quoting David Bergman's *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality* (1993), 4-5).

[202] In Ibid., 9.

modern sensibility.[203] Much like camp, the eighteenth-century notion of the fop exaggerates stereotypes of femininity to the point of absurdity. However, camp deviates from this much earlier caricature of effeminacy by reveling in and reclaiming these debased qualities rather than using them as a means of expressing deep-seated anxieties about men's (and women's) perceived social and sexual transgressions.[204] In spite of these fundamental differences, the much-derided figure of the fop is often discussed in camp-like terms of extravagance, excessive refinement, vapidity and affectation. For instance, in Thomas Dyche's 1735 *A New General English Dictionary*, he pejoratively defines the fop in accordance with these qualities, dismissing him as "a whimsical empty fellow whose mind is totally taken up with modes and fashions."[205] While Handel's Achille is hardly "taken up with modes and fashions" in the traditional sense of the term, I argue that his single-minded and frivolous obsession with hunting prevents his character from being more fully developed. In light of Achille's ongoing obsession with the "hunt",

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[203] See Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp'", in Ibid., 56-7. In her thirteenth note on "Camp", Sontag writes that "[t]he dividing line seems to fall in the eighteenth century; there the origins of Camp taste are to be found (Gothic novels, Chinoiserie, caricature, artificial ruins, and so forth). But the relation to nature was quite different then. In the eighteenth century, people of taste either patronized nature…or attempted to remake it into something artificial (Versailles)…" (56-7). See also Mark Booth, "*Campe-Toi*! On the Origins and Definitions of Camp," in Ibid., 76. Booth argues that "Camp people look back on Louis XIV's Versailles as a sort of camp Eden, a self-enclosed world devoted to divertissements, to dressing-up, showing off, and scandal…" (76).

[204] For literature regarding the fop and/or foppery, see: Michèle Cohen and Tim Hitchcock, "Introduction", in *English Masculinities: 1660-1800*, Cohen and Hitchcock, Eds. (New York: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd, 1999), 1-22; Cohen, "Manliness, effeminacy and the French: gender and the construction of national character in eighteenth-century England," in Ibid., 44-61; Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National identity and language in the eighteenth century* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (London: Pearson Education Ltd., 2001), see especially the fourth chapter entitled "Effeminacy, foppery, and the boundaries of polite society" (Carter, 124-62); and Carter, "Men about town: representations of foppery and masculinity in early eighteenth-century urban society," in *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations, and Responsibilities*, Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus, Eds. (New York: Wesley Longman Ltd., 1997), 31-57.

[205] Carter, "Effeminacy, Foppery and the Boundaries of Polite Society" (2001), 141 (quoting Thomas Dyche's "fop" in *A New General English Dictionary* (1735)).

this opera offers a representation of his foppish vapidity and vanity in other, less transparent and/or overtly feminine, ways.

Through the lens of camp, I argue that Alden's production not only illuminates the foppishness of Achille but also offers an ironic commentary on the gendered role reversal between this humorously "failed hero" and his lover Deidamia. Expanding upon Corbett Bazler's recent discussion of the ironic and self-parodying qualities of this opera,[206] I explore the sharp contrast between Achille and Deidamia whose climactic Act III lament functions as her means of rising above the derogatory, dismissive stereotypes of feminine vanity and frivolity which define (and constrain) her character earlier in the opera. I also establish a sharp contrast between Achille and the more genuine heroic figure, Ulisse, whose music, like Deidamia's, adopts a much more serious, grandiose, and stately tone befitting a character imbued with masculine authority and power. Throughout the third Act it becomes increasingly apparent that Achille is merely a crude caricature or pale shadow of this heroic archetype more aptly embodied by Ulisse; the same man who has prompted the unveiling of his gender-bending disguise and set him on the path toward his unlikely destiny as war hero. Unlike both Deidamia and Ulisse, the simpleminded Achille never manages to reach this level of psychological nuance and depth, his music instead remaining confined to shallow and superficial, one-dimensional arias. Two of his arias in particular, both in praise of the "hunt", appear as truncated or "failed" versions of the standard *da capo* form which mirror Achille's many "failed" attempts to reclaim his threatened masculinity by promoting himself as the virile, war

[206] See Corbett Bazler's recent dissertation, especially the penultimate chapter in which he discusses the wit and irony of *Deidamia* and one of Handel's other last operas in great detail. Corbett Bazler, "Reforming Handel," in 2013, *The Comedies of Opera Seria: Handel's Post-Academy Operas, 1738-1744*, Dissertation, Columbia University.

hero he is expected to embody. Even after having unveiled his disguise, Achille increasingly embodies the same "feminized" and degraded qualities of frivolous vanity (à la fop) which Deidamia has cast aside.

This chapter interrogates the multiple ways in which Alden and the singers in his production capitalize on the fundamental link between the simultaneously post-modern and eighteenth-century sensibility of camp and the exaggerated excesses of 1740s London's declining operatic culture. In other words, this production sheds light on this opera's existing commentary on eighteenth-century English perceptions of (and anxieties about) gender fluidity, using camp as a vehicle for rendering its tongue-in-cheek wit and irony more relevant and timely for modern audiences. Although Alden's *Deidamia* could hardly be considered a period production in the traditional sense of the term, I argue that his invocation of a camp sensibility enables his interpretation of Handel's opera to be historically-informed in a much subtler, and ultimately more insightful, way. Resonating with David Levin's idealized vision of a successful opera production, this staging reflects what he refers to as the fundamentally "unsettled" qualities of opera (and of *Deidamia* in particular), heightening the internal contradictions built into operas' multiple, competing layers of signification.[207] In *Deidamia* specifically, these internal contradictions and discrepancies between stage and sound, text and music, performer and character come to a head in the convoluted gender-bending disguises of Achille which playfully contradict each other at the competing levels of narrative and performance. The complicated

[207] David Levin, "Preface" and "Dramaturgy and Mise-en-Scène," in *Unsettling Opera: Staging Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, and Zemlinsky* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), xi-xii, 1. According to Levin, "opera…is [fundamentally] unsettled, and…stage performance, at its best, clarifies this condition and brings opera in its unsettledness to life" (1). Levin expounds upon this "unsettledness" in performance, claiming that his ideal performance offers a "cogent account of excess…that does not simply alert us to but indeed clarifies an opera's specific incongruities, the precise terms of its contradictions" (xi-xii).

gender-bending chaos of the opera's plot, as well as the existing discourse about the frivolous and self-indulgent emasculated gentleman (or fop) – whose foppishness I claim that Achille ironically embodies during the very scenes in which he attempts and fails to reclaim his compromised masculinity – work together to situate the campy excesses of this provocative staging firmly in the eighteenth century. Ultimately, the many resonances of post-modern camp with the extravagant, ironic, and carnivalesque sensibility of the eighteenth century (prominent in operatic settings as well as in the popular London masquerade)[208] suggest that Alden's radical interpretation of Handel's opera is not so radical after all.

Achille as fop:
A juvenile and frivolous caricature of the Metastasian hero

Achille's multiple levels of travesty, tongue-in-cheek homoerotic flirtations with his competition for title of hero, Ulisse, and his trivial and one-dimensional music reduce his character to an ironic caricature of ancient Greek hero. These gender-bending aspects of his character collectively lend themselves to a camp-inspired modern interpretation of Handel's opera. As Bazler points out in his discussion of *Deidamia*, the opera was controversial in its time because it so gleefully ridicules itself. He specifically argues that "[w]hat Handel's audiences were not accustomed to seeing…was the ridicule of Italian opera *because* of its heroism, its rationality, and its masculinity."[209] According to Bazler, rather than being reactionary and overly-defensive of increasingly obsolete *seria* conventions, *Deidamia* offers a positive reinforcement of the satirical popular ballad

[208] For more about the eighteenth-century English masquerade culture and its roots in the carnivalesque, see: Terry Castle, "The Masquerade and Eighteenth-Century England", in *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 1-51.
[209] Bazler, 160, original emphasis.

opera tradition which had begun to take its place. In other words, inspired rather than infuriated by these witty, comical attacks on Metastasian ideals, Handel's final contribution to the *seria* tradition engages in an ironic, self-parodying tone similar to that of John Gay's contemporaneous ballad operas, including one based on the same myth which premiered seven years earlier in 1733.[210] Evidently, *Deidamia* resonates not only with the modern sensibility of camp through its tendency towards self-parody inspired by the ballad opera tradition, but also with eighteenth-century notions of effeminacy (embodied by the fop) and the pervasive masquerade culture of its time. As a result of these many interconnected resonances, Handel's opera playfully and ironically exaggerates gender stereotypes and operatic conventions; in so doing reducing them, and the entire *seria* enterprise, to objects of lighthearted ridicule.

In addition to camp's tendency to revel in its own excesses and gendered/sexual transgressions, in the words of Susan Sontag, "for Camp[,] art is often decorative art, emphasizing texture, sensuous surface, and style at the expense of content."[211] Most closely aligned with the self-conscious artifice, extravagance, and celebrated superficiality of camp is the fop, eighteenth-century predecessor of the dandy. Both the fop and the dandy are known for their reputations as focused exclusively on outward appearances and for making ornate and flamboyant spectacles of themselves at the

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[210] Bazler, 121. Here I am referring to John Gay's more explicitly satirical "ballad opera" Achilles composed eight years prior in 1733, with which it is likely Handel was at least somewhat familiar according to Bazler. Bazler claims that "Metastasio's *Achilles* [1736] was not the first to be set to music. Several versions predated it, including Sacrati's *La finta pazza* (1641, libretto by Giulio Strozzi)…and John Gay's ballad opera, *Achilles* (1733), the last of which would have probably been the only version Handel had known" (Bazler, 121). For further references to the Gay ballad opera based on the same Achilles in Scyros myth, see: Winton Dean, *Handel's Operas: 1726-1741* (Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2006), 473 and Laurence Senelick, "Part III: The mannish and the unmanned," in *The Changing Room: Sex, drag, and theatre* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000), 191.

[211] Sontag in *Camp*, 55.

expense of genuine sensibility or "feeling."[212] According to Sontag, both are also notorious for their "affected" behavior, "excessive social polish" and/or refinement, self-indulgent "luxury", and delicate frailty. Vain men like Achille, who is comfortably ensconced at the court of Deidamia despite his many feeble protests, strip themselves of their masculinity by ingratiating themselves in women's circles. As a result, they often end up contaminated by their female company's supposedly affected and frivolous social graces. On one hand, Handel's feminized hero, Achille, outwardly rejects the vanity, luxury, and "affectations" of the women surrounding him. He very vocally (and misogynistically) condemns these flaws in his Act I aria, "Se pensi, Amor", in which he deflects Deidamia's amorous advances in an attempt to distance himself from what he perceives to be a dangerous feminine contagion.[213] However, his "gay and pleasing ballad[s]",[214] citing Burney's dismissive description of Achille's musical style, ironically cause him to come across as "affected", self-indulgent, and frivolous in his own right in spite of his protest(s) and his single-minded pursuit of more traditionally masculine recreations like the "hunt."

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[212] See Carter, "Men about town…" (1997), 29 and 32. Carter posits the late eighteenth-century cult of "sensibility" as an antidote to the "potential artifice of polite living" (29) and the threat of foppishness (and emasculation) rooted in the earlier emphasis on "politeness" and refinement that marks the first half of the century. He later expands upon this claim arguing that "[t]o its proponents [i.e.: Hume], sensibility emerged as an alternative, and superior, discourse in which genuine fellow feeling prevented the artifice and duplicity that was now thought of as an inherent feature of politeness" (32).

[213] Ellen T. Harris, "Deidamia (London, 1741)," in *The Librettos of Handel's Operas: A Collection of Seventy-One Librettos Documenting Handel's Operatic Career* Vol.8, Harris, Ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), 345. In this aria Achille sings, "if you think, my love, that with your charm(s) and your beauty you rule my heart, you are mistaken/you are deceiving yourself" (*se pensi Amor tu solo, per vezzo e per Beltà, regnare in questo sen; Amor, t'inganni*). [Note: My slightly paraphrased translation].

[214] Charles Burney, "Origin of the Italian Opera in England, and its Progress there during the present Century", in *A General History of Music: From the Earliest Ages to the Present Period (1789).* Vol. II. Frank Mercer, Ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1957), 830.

Although Achille does not resemble the heavily-ridiculed fop in the most obvious terms of excessive refinement and/or a delicacy of social graces, his foppish self-indulgence, narcissism, and delicacy, manifest in the two frivolous arias he sings (his Act I entrance aria and the aria concluding Act II) in praise of the "hunt." Susan Shapiro claims that the fop poses a threat to the "natural" order of things because his "affected" presence suggests that "if virility is so at the mercy of fashion, then 'nature' is weaker than artifice; perhaps 'nature' is in fact merely artifice, since 'nature' is only clothes-deep."[215] By aligning Achille's foppishness most closely with his failed "heroic" attempts at reclaiming, and even flaunting, his masculinity rather than with more straightforward expressions of stereotypical femininity, Handel's opera reduces the naturalized masculine ideal (which it promotes on the surface level) to even more of an object of ridicule than the feminine "contagion" from which Achille strives to distance himself. The irony is that although Achille outright rejects the feminine wiles playfully embodied by the women of Deidamia's court, both Handel and Alden present his character in a similar light to these women and their "charms", reducing him to pure artifice as a crude, one-dimensional caricature of this ancient mythological hero.

Throughout his controversial production, Alden exploits Achille's juvenile, early adolescent masculinity to an absurd level, suggesting that he is hardly the idealized Metastasian "hero" Deidamia raptly envisions but is rather a self-absorbed little boy attempting to mimic the masculine ideals he sees reflected around him. These ideals are most apparent in the character of Ulisse who repeatedly usurps the disguised "hero's"

[215] Susan C. Shapiro, "'Yon Plumed Dandebrat': Male 'Effeminacy' in English Satire and Criticism", *The Review of English Studies, New Series,* Vol. 39, No. 155 (Aug., 1988), 412.

virility as well as his voice. As noted by Bazler, Ulisse most egregiously steals the final duet normally reserved for heroine (*prima donna*) and *primo uomo* (usually a role for castrato rather than a woman) which concludes the opera.[216] In any case, before the soprano portraying this "hero" has even opened her mouth to sing her opening *arioso*, Achille's costuming in this production immediately establishes him as a violent clash of gender stereotypes. Towards the beginning of the opera, Achille remains wrapped up in himself ignoring Deidamia's naïve fantasies of her/their first love; his foppish self-absorption and narcissism made abundantly apparent by Alden's staging choices. As Deidamia launches into her first full-length *da capo* aria pleading with Achille to remember her upon having accomplished his highly anticipated "heroic deeds", the camera focuses on the androgynous soprano, Pasichnyk, portraying Achille/"Pirra." Pasichnyk appears in the background practicing football drills, stuffing "his" face with sweets, and drinking milk straight out of the carton, essentially oblivious to Deidamia's impassioned pleas. **(See Figure 1, below).**

Figure 1

[216] See Bazler, 156.

Only during the B section of Deidamia's aria does Achille momentarily abandon the "heroic deeds" (or self-indulgent, youthful male pleasures) she sings of as he tries all the textbook seduction moves on her. Alden's staging of this scene successfully avoids feminizing Achille as befitting his foppish qualities, instead going out of its way to exaggerate his masculinity in a desperate attempt to counteract the plausibility of his "female disguise." However, in spite of his best efforts, Achille's comically infantilizing and juvenile actions challenge this idealized notion of his heroic masculinity in other, much subtler ways. His campy masculine posturing, to invoke the original French use of the word "camp" in verb form (*se camper*),[217] manifests as an immature teen boy's attempt to embrace an idealized model of masculinity. However, Achille takes his performance of masculinity to a hyperbolic and over-the-top level in his failed attempt to embody this unrealistic and overly-inflated ideal.

The inherently dramatic juxtaposition of contrasting musical images in Deidamia's aria, "Quando accenderan quel petto", offers a sonic counterpoint to the equally striking visual contrasts Alden offers between Deidamia's exaggeratedly girly court and Achille's absurdly caricaturesque representation of a laughable, pre-adolescent and/or juvenile masculinity. The title character's aria is built around a bipartite theme which exaggerates her and Achille's clashing ideals; the lightly yearning, rising melody which begins the *ritornello* is placed in stark contrast with the aggressive and propulsive, quasi-*sturm und drang*, figure associated with the delirious passion for "valorous deeds"

[217] Mark Booth, "*Campe-Toi!*: On the Origins and Definitions of Camp," in *Camp*, 75. Booth specifically writes that "*[s]e camper* is to present oneself in an expansive but flimsy manner…with overtones of theatricality, vanity, dressiness, and provocation" (75).

(*i trasporti di valor*)[218] she anticipates Achille succumbing to with increasing dread.[219] The repeated engulfing of the soft and pliable initial half of the *ritornello*'s main theme by its hardened, and ostensibly more masculine, second half sonically illustrates Deidamia's worst nightmare. Throughout this musically turbulent passage, she reflects on her fears that Achille's heroic valor will harden his heart, quenching his youthful exuberance for love (or rather, lust) and taking him away from her. **(See Appendix D, Example 1, pg. 251).** During the closing *ritornello* preceding the aria's B section, Achille impetuously tears off his pink dress to the accompaniment of the aggressive music reflective of these "valorous deeds." This staging choice reinforces Deidamia's fears and anticipates his eventual abandonment of his female disguise in the opera's third Act. However, the fact that Achille's foolish and juvenile masculine posturing is played for laughs in this scene also foreshadows the concluding events of the opera which further trivialize his heroic pursuits while superficially praising them and placing him on an ironic pedestal.

Achille's doubly-failed "heroics": Abbreviated *da capo* arias and pregnant women disguised as castrato heroes

Reinforcing this modern staging's characterization of Achille as naïve, self-indulgent, and juvenile, Handel's music trivializes this seemingly central role. Several of Achille's arias dramatize his constant failures to live up to the Metastasian model of heroism and idealized masculine virtues which he only manages to reflect at a superficial

[218] Ellen T. Harris, "Deidamia (London, 1741)," in *The Librettos of Handel's Operas: A Collection of Seventy-One Librettos Documenting Handel's Operatic Career* Vol.8, Harris, Ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), 345. The translation Harris includes in this compilation of Handel libretti takes many liberties, so the translation above is my own.

[219] Georg Friedrich Händel, *Deidamia: opera in tre atti, HWV 42*, Libretto by Paolo Rolli. Terence Best, Ed. (New York: Bärenreiter, 2001).

level. As Bazler points out in his discussion of *Deidamia*, "Achilles [is] almost [an] insignificant role" composed for a woman rather than the expected castrato, and his "five very short arias pale in comparison to the six grand numbers given to the *primo uomo* [playing the role of the more genuinely heroic figure, Ulisse]."[220] Handel simultaneously places this heroic ideal on a pedestal, quite literally in Alden's staging of the opera's final scene, and mocks him/it, diminishing the importance of Achille's character and reducing him to a one-dimensional figure with an extremely limited and simple musical palette. Much of Achille's music loosely follows the rather rigid formal conventions of Metastasian *opera seria*; adhering to the model enough to make the reference clear while deviating from it in ways suggestive of his failure to live up to its musical representation of operatic heroism. Not only is Handel's portrayal of this timeless ancient Greek hero extremely single-minded in his pursuit of juvenile pleasures and devoid of complex feelings or motives, as Bazler points out, "for much of the opera [speaking] of nothing but hunting";[221] but both of his arias in praise of "the hunt" suggest his "failed heroics"[222] from a musical standpoint by offering "failed" versions of the standard *da capo* form.

Offering a precedent for this musical depiction of "failed heroics", Handel's *Deidamia* falls in the midst of what Suzanne Aspden has described as a mid-century crisis of heroic masculinity. During this period the definition of heroic masculinity was in a massive upheaval which I argue lent itself to this sudden insurgence of "failed heroes", like Achille, on the operatic stage. In her discussion of renowned castrato, Senesino's,

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[220] Both quotes, Bazler, 130.
[221] In Ibid., 142.
[222] In Ibid., 156. According to Bazler, "Handel in his final operas seems to resist the [Metastasian] reforms that had swept the European continent. Rather, they stage a kind of *failed heroics*, mocking the warlike [and other supposedly masculine] impulses of courageous men" (156 – my emphasis).

suspect masculinity, Aspden attributes this crisis to two competing models of heroic masculinity. She describes the older model as deeply embedded in both J.G.A. Pocock's notions of civic humanism and rationalism; specifically invoking qualities that promote the choice of duty over pleasure (a choice that resonates with Metastasio's classic "self-conquest" narrative). The newer model, on the other hand, is aligned with the emergent discourse of sensibility, instead promoting "refined sentiment…inaction and indecision."[223] Expanding upon this point, Aspden asserts that this new ideal of sensibility often backfired, leading to "heroic inaction [being] widely criticised…for apparently encouraging emotional narcissism (tears being the end in themselves), rather than strengthening social engagement, as its proponents claimed."[224] While Handel's Achille is far too thick-headed and self-absorbed to be deemed sensitive by any stretch of the imagination, his "hunt"-obsessed character does resonate with the purportedly inactive, self-indulgent, and "narcissistic" qualities Aspden attributes to this questionable heroic ideal. Furthermore, his self-indulgent infatuation with the "hunt" also ensures that he fails to embody the earlier ideal of self-conquest and/or self-abnegation which she claims defines the eighteenth century's alternative vision of heroic "masculinity." By failing to adhere to either of these two competing models of heroic masculinity I argue that Achille comes across as a doubly-failed "hero." Furthermore, his double failure offers a comical exaggeration of this mid-century crisis of heroic masculinity which

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[223] Suzanne Aspden, "Senesino and the crisis of heroic masculinity," in *The Rival Sirens: Performance and Identity on Handel's Operatic Stage* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 215. Regarding this earlier model of heroism rooted in J.G.A. Pocock's notion of "civic humanism", Aspden claims that "[t]he civic-humanist ethos of public virtue required an individual to eschew unnecessary private gain or personal pleasure – both of which led to corruption – in the interests of responsibility to his country" (Aspden 211). This notion of denying oneself "personal pleasure" that "le[a]d[s] to corruption" calls to mind the Metastasian ideal of the "self-conquering" hero which I discuss at length (and playfully deconstruct) in the first chapter of this dissertation (see Chapter One of this dissertation, pp. 45-56).
[224] In Ibid., 216.

provocatively resonates with the philosophy of camp; a philosophy that is similarly rooted in the practices of ironic exaggeration and self-parody.

Returning to Achille's music, both his Act I entrance *arioso*, "Seguir di selva in selva", and his aria bringing Act II and its elaborate hunt sequence to a close, "Sì, m'appaga, sì, m'aletta", offer radically truncated and/or miniature forms of the standard *da capo* aria. By truncating this conventional form, the music suggests that Achille is neither meant to be taken very seriously nor does he take himself very seriously (given his inability to follow through on formal expectations). The former, Achille's opening *arioso,* is essentially a banal and plodding *da capo* aria in miniature, lasting a meager 25 bars (before the *da capo*) and offering a fleeting, humorous distraction from the light and frivolous antics of the women of Deidamia's court which consume the bulk of this first Act. The aria's minimal orchestration, with the *basso continuo* routinely dropping out for entire vocal phrases at a time and the upper strings and oboe doubling the voice and each other in unison further limit Achille's musical vocabulary. A specific moment in this brief *arioso* pointedly comments on Achille's lacking heroic qualities, ironically twisting his words and, in effect, turning him into an object of ridicule. When he claims that there is no "equal delight" (*diletto egual non ha*) to the pleasures of hunting wild animals in the forest (see mm.6-7), the absurdly simple, rocking V-I gestures in the voice suggest a child's game or chant. These rocking figures echo each other in octave displacement, seeming to mock him (and each other) while lacking any sort of harmonic context to ground them beyond what is implied by the vocal melody. Ultimately, they turn the joke on Achille by emphasizing that there truly is nothing (*non ha…non ha*) to either his music or his character. **(See Appendix D, Example 2, pg. 253).**

The culminating scene of the Act II "hunt" sequence, "Sì, m'appaga," while significantly longer, deviates even further from the standard *da capo* form. Its opening *ritornello* returns at the end of the B section, hinting towards a *da capo*, but instead trails off, coming to an abrupt close rather than launching into the highly anticipated repeat of the A section. **(See Appendix D, Example 3, pp. 259-60).** While the return of the *ritornello* thematically frames the music and offers a degree of closure built into the repetitive structure of the *da capo*, the lack of follow-through clearly presents this aria as a truncated or "failed" version of its model. Turning to Alden's campy staging, he toys with and manipulates gender stereotypes much like the music toys with and manipulates formal conventions. More specifically, he takes the conflicting gender stereotypes that Achille embodies both sonically and visually to a hyperbolic level; ridiculing stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity by exaggerating and ironically conflating them. **(See Figure 2, below).**

Figure 2

This is especially apparent in Achille's first costume which combines a frilly pink cotillion dress with a youth's football uniform. This bizarre combination takes his gender-conforming performance of adolescent masculinity, which manifests as a

meticulously choreographed sequence of cliché football drills, to an extreme level. I argue that this visual clash of conflicting gender stereotypes causes them to ultimately cancel each other out; however, Handel's music in these two radically truncated *da capo* arias does the opposite with Metastasio's operatic reforms. These arias join forces to make a mockery of Metastasio's increasingly formulaic and ridiculed conventions and the heroic ideals they promote, not by blowing them out of proportion as Alden's staging does but instead by reducing them to pale shadows of themselves.

These failures to adhere to conventional musical forms that I've attributed to Achille's impotence (or "failed" masculinity) also resonate with widely-circulating anxieties of the time about gendered transgressions in Italian opera. These anxieties surface most frequently in relation to cross-dressing divas and their mirror images; the literally emasculated men, castrati, known for their portrayals of ultra-virile yet sensitive heroes.[225] Handel's final opera further complicates these interrelated gendered anxieties which he had explored in his earlier *Admeto* (see Chapter One of this dissertation); in this case conflating the literally castrated hero with the cross-dressing woman and uniting

[225] See Aspden, "Senesino and the crisis of heroic masculinity," in *The Rival Sirens,* 207-244. In this chapter of her recent monograph about gendered concerns in Handel operas, Aspden discusses the eighteenth-century notion of the sentimental hero, embodied by the renowned castrato, Senesino. She reflects on the tensions between this heroic ideal and the potential threat it poses to men, like Senesino, whose masculinity was already compromised by virtue of their quite literal castration. Aspden concludes that, "[t]he satirical attacks on Senesino and other castrati, as well as fops and other effete men, demonstrate that it was all too easy to cast them not as men of sentiment but as the men who had since medieval times played the ritual carnivalesque role of female grotesque, symbols of a disordered, irrational society" (244). In other words, it was a slippery slope from the realm of masculine sensibility to weepy, irrational, "feminine" excess, especially for castrati who didn't have a strong grasp on their masculinity in the first place. Expanding upon this point, I argue that these anxieties provoked by the shift from a heroic to a sensitive masculine ideal mirror the large-scale shift toward the realm of sensibility well into the late eighteenth century which has been discussed at length by Carter in his *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (London: Pearson Education Ltd., 2001). In this book, Carter reflects on the ways in which the discourse of sensibility offered an antidote to the "potential artifice of polite living" (29), curbing the superficial displays of manners (a spectacle of politeness) associated with the fop and/or foppishness. However, like Aspden he comments on the dangers of sensibility which all too easily slipped into the dangerously feminized realm of maudlin sentimentality.

these figures in one comically flawed character. Although Roger Freitas makes a compelling case for the castrato (in all his effeminate and boyish qualities) embodying the heroic masculine ideal of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,[226] any heroic qualities the castrato may have possessed dissolve when he completely disappears into the body of a woman (marking his castration complete). Rather than offering a critique of this commonly-accepted convention of castrato as hero by ridiculing it in the voice and body of the expected castrato, the role of Achille takes the "hero's" emasculation (and/or castration) a step further by displacing these qualities onto a woman's body.

The heavily feared collapsing of boundaries between masculine woman and emasculated or feminized man, which I argue are concentrated in the laughable figure of Achille, also speaks to Thomas Laqueur's fading early modern conception of gender difference(s) known as the "one-sex model." According to Laqueur's somewhat over-simplified and oft-critiqued account of pre-modern gender and/or sexual identities, until the mid-eighteenth century gender was conceived of in terms of varying degrees of maleness and femaleness which were each determined by an individual's balance of hot and cold, wet and dry humors.[227] As these slippery humors were in constant flux, the

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[226] Roger Freitas, "The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque body of the castrato," *The journal of musicology: A quarterly review of music history, criticism, analysis, and performance practice*, Vol. 20 No. 2 (Spring 2003), 208. Freitas specifically claims that, "[f]ar from the virile specimen the name Adonis might invoke today, Marino's paragon of male beauty is still waiting for puberty, with just the first hints of fuzz on his face" (208).

[227] See, Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: body and gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). See also Freitas, 203-4. Here Freitas offers a concise overview of Laqueur's theorization of the early modern "one-sex model" of gender difference, writing that while "we continue to speak of the sexes as 'opposite'…in the earlier period, difference in sex was more a quantitative than a qualitative matter, and a well-populated middle ground between the sexes was broadly acknowledged: Tales abounded, many treated by physicians as factual case studies, of weak men who began to lactate and strong women who suddenly grew a penis" (203-4, citing Laqueur, 106, 126-30). For a critique of Laqueur, see; Katharine Park and Robert A. Nye, "Destiny is Anatomy," *The New Republic* 55 (February 18, 1991), 53-7. Park and Nye argue that Laqueur oversimplifies the shift from a pre-modern/early modern to a modern way of thinking, especially in terms of the distinctions society makes between male and female, masculine and feminine. They contradict his central argument, claiming that

gender identities they defined were also deemed dangerously malleable and unstable.[228] Laqueur's "one-sex model", which serves as the foundation for Freitas' argument in support of the castrato's capacity for heroism, suggests that Achille's complicated interweaving of masculine and feminine qualities is actually quite plausible, and even "natural." In other words, according to this waning theory of gender difference, the multiple, seemingly contradictory layers of gendered disguise embedded in this role (and capitalized upon by Alden in his self-consciously campy staging) are easily accounted for regardless of the threats they pose to the normative social order and in spite of their being played for laughs throughout the opera**.**

The magnified level of "castration" in the role of Achille also resonates with an anonymous satirical pamphlet circulating just a few years earlier in 1736 that envisions an elaborate scandal in which the renowned Farinelli is revealed to be a pregnant diva disguised as a castrato hero.[229] The role of Achille was not written for a pregnant soprano, which would have only fueled these ridiculous paranoid fantasies. However, it *was* written for a female singer thereby highlighting the misogynistic undertones of

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"[t]here is…no single early Western model of sex and sexual difference. Laqueur's 'one-sex' model is a hybrid of individual and sometimes mutually contradictory features assembled from the two dominant and fundamentally incompatible traditions of early [e.g.: ancient] writing on the subject, the Aristotelian and the Hippocratic/Galenic" (54, middle column).

[228] See Park/Nye, "Destiny is Anatomy," 56. Furthermore, Nye/Park also critique Laqueur on the grounds of his failure to honor the feminist impulse underlying his project, insisting that his vision of an early modern "one-sex" model of gender difference (according to Laqueur persisting to the decade of 1750), "reads in some respects like a male fantasy of a womanless world" (in ibid., 56, right column). In other words, they argue that by failing to acknowledge the potentially liberating instability and/or fluidity of male as well as female bodies, Laqueur unintentionally re-inscribes the dominant patriarchal discourse he has set out to deconstruct.

[229] *An Epistle to John James H-dd-g-r Esq.; On the Report of Signior F-r-n-lli's being with Child*, printed and sold by E. Hill, near St. Paul's, MDCCXXXVI (London 1736), in the *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.its.virginia.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=viva_uva&tabID=T001&docId=CW106208601&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE (Accessed September 18, 2014), 1-8.

Handel's operatic adaptation of the myth and suggesting that Achilles' "heel" (his weakness) lay in his being a woman. This pamphlet, printed a mere five years before the short-lived run of Handel's *Deidamia*, lampoons the notion of the castrato as hero, shedding light on the fears sparked by the dangerously porous boundaries between male and female bodies embedded within the waning "one-sex" model. The pamphlet transforms the revered Farinelli to "Faribelly" (a pregnant woman masquerading as a castrato), making a mockery of him and his heroic conceits. This rather outlandish notion of the pregnant castrato was surprisingly not limited to this anonymous satire, having also made an appearance in Henry Fielding's more well-known satirical play *Pasquin* (1736). According to Jill Campbell;

> "In *Pasquin*…the country mayor's daughter shows off her taste and her knowledge of London by describing what she expects to see in town: '…and then we shall see Faribelly, the strange man-woman that they say is with child'… Miss Mayoress only reveals, of course, her appetite for low entertainments, and she garbles Farinelli's name, but she does so in a way coherent with her version of the miracle of a castrato parenting a child."[230]

Both satires, dated from the same year, heighten the comic relief embedded within their shared narrative(s) by capitalizing on the ironic nature of a "half" man who cannot impregnate a woman himself being "with child." The anonymous pamphlet ends with the pregnant "Faribelly" giving birth to a "Child" who "in Tune will squall",[231] further debasing the castrato and undermining his inimitable vocal prowess by dismissing it (and Italian opera by extension) to a series of infantile shrieks and wails. In any case, the naïve simplicity and trite inconsequentiality of Achille's music supports this dismissive and misogynistic interpretation of his character which flies in the face of productions like

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[230] Jill Campbell, "'When Men Women Turn': Gender Reversals in Fielding's Plays," in *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross-dressing*. Leslie Ferris, Ed. (New York, NY: Routledge 1993, repub. 2005), 66.

[231] Anonymous, *An Epistle to John James H-dd-g-r Esq.*, 8.

Alden's (and performances like Pasichnyk's Achille) that take pleasure in reducing both masculine and feminine stereotypes to objects of ridicule through campy hyperbole and excess. By embracing "drag" (a common camp technique) as a means of playfully deconstructing gender stereotypes, exaggerating them to the point that they cancel each other out, Alden's staging refutes the music's implicitly misogynistic characterization of the feminized Achille as weak and impotent.

Achille as "hunter": Alden's homoerotic orgies and dancing deer/hunters *en travesti*

There are many points of dissonance between the music and staging of *Deidamia* that surface throughout Alden's production. Most notably are the tensions between the banality of Achille's music, the resultant dismissal of his heroic valor, and the modern staging's campy celebration of the chaotic, topsy-turvy universe facilitated by his disguise. By heightening these dissonances, Alden's production illuminates what Levin has referred to as the fundamentally "unsettled" aspects of opera which he contends are rooted in the contradictions between its many signifying layers.[232] For instance, the music of Achille's Act II hunting aria, "Sì, m'appaga", is comically simple and straightforward leaving little room for a "queer" and implicitly homoerotic reading like Alden's. However, its failure to adhere to the formal model invoked by the final return of the *ritornello* does lend itself to such an interpretation on some level. From a textual standpoint this aria's indulgence in the seductive allure of the hunt is even more inviting of a "queer" reading. The erotic undertones of this aria are especially warranted when

[232] Levin, "Dramaturgy and Mise-en-Scène," in *Unsettled Opera* (2007), 3. Levin reflects on opera's fundamentally "unsettled" qualities, writing that "[r]econceived as a text (and, as I will argue here, as a text *in performance*, opera has emerged as an agitated or unsettled site of signification, one that encompasses multiple modes of expression and necessitates new modes of reading" (3 – original emphasis).

taking into consideration Achille's repeated claims that the hunt, rather than Deidamia (or any woman for that matter) "satisfies and entices him" (*sì, m'appaga, sì, m'alletta*). His outright rejection of women's sexual attentions also associates him with the much-derided figure of the fop whose perceived sexual deviancy and/or transgressions portray him as self-absorbed, anti-social, and even asexual in spite of his fragile veneer of sociability, grace, and refined manners. According to Carter, "[i]t was a common assumption that fops were not aroused by the opposite sex because of an infatuation with themselves"[233] suggesting their profound self-absorption and narcissism which are perfectly embodied by Achille. Unlike the quintessential fop, Achille is feminized not by his addiction to traditionally feminine pursuits like love, as he is neither "a slave to love"[234] nor to his sexual appetite(s). Instead, his vanity and his self-indulgent infatuation with ostensibly masculine pursuits like "the hunt" feminize, and also "queer", his character as indicated by Alden's campy staging.

From a musical standpoint, this aria offers a parallel to Alden's "queer" vision of Achille and his visceral pleasures; its recurring motives conveying his obsessive nature and his insistence on reveling in a self-indulgent, borderline autoerotic, infatuation with this supposedly masculine pastime. More specifically, two interrelated motives cycle throughout the aria, continuously feeding off of each other and sonically illustrating the hero's growing, feverish excitement. The ongoing interplay between these motives ensures that Achille isn't given even a moment's rest suggesting that he either cannot (or has chosen not to) escape from the endless sensual pleasures offered by the hunt.

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[233] Carter, "Effeminacy, foppery and the boundaries of polite society" (2001), 146.
[234] Susan C. Shapiro, "'Yon Plumed Dandebrat': Male 'Effeminacy' in English Satire and Criticism", *The Review of English Studies, New Series,* Vol. 39, No. 155 (Aug., 1988), 402.

Regarding the two motives in question, "Sì, m'appaga" begins with a brief "hopping" figure which employs a downward leap of an octave before repeating at a unison in a delicate and mannered tone. This "hopping" figure appears early in the opening *ritornello* and recurs throughout the aria in both its original and a slightly varied form (the second of the two motives). The immediate variation of this gesture within a mere two measures of its initial appearance (first heard in mm.3-6 and repeated in expanded form, mm.9-16) develops the "hopping" figure by sequence; heightening its intensity with a sweeping 32nd-note sextuplet (first heard in mm.10). **(See Appendix D, Example 3, pg. 256).** The intertwining of these light and delicate "hopping" and "sweeping" figures, following closely on each other's heels, invites a staging like Alden's which overtly physicalizes the dance-like qualities of Achille's aria. The continuous repetition of fragmentary motives characterizing Achille's jaunty and buoyant aria also ensures that neither he, nor his music, are elegant or refined like the overly-refined fop. However, the banal repetitiveness of his musical style ultimately reduces this iconic, mythical hero to a caricature, resonating with both the eighteenth-century notion of fop and the much later discourse of camp. Like both the fop and camp, "Sì, m'appaga" places an emphasis on surface features at the expense of an expression of inner depth which Achille lacks. Evidently, while this exaggeratedly simple and superficial aria is in no way inherently "queer"; the lighthearted frivolity of the music both trivializes and feminizes Achille by aligning him, in spite of his self-proclaimed masculinity, with the effeminate fop. Alden's ironic and whimsical, campy staging of this aria as a (homo)erotically-charged dance of the hunters and the hunted in turn offers a self-consciously "queer" vision of Achille's character.

In addition to these interrelated "hopping" and "sweeping" figures, a humorously delicate ascending scalar passage recurs throughout the aria in explicitly pastoral moments (see mm.5-6 of the *rit*. and mm.25-26). **(See Appendix D, Example 3, pg. 256).** These musical pastoralisms, which decorate the tonic over relatively static I and IV harmonies in various inversions, further ground Achille's supposedly masculinity-reaffirming scene within the realm of the feminine. This scalar figure's strategic alignment with two overtly pastoral images associates Handel's "hero" more with the image of a frolicking nymph or shepherdess than with a virile hunter. The first time this motive is heard after its initial iteration in the opening *ritornello*, the unison violins' light echo of Achille's voice, repeating his vocal line verbatim, illustrate him gaily tripping up the "charming little hill" (*quella vaga collinetta*) of which he sings (see mm. 27-28). **(See Appendix D, Example 3, pg. 256).** During the aria's B section,[235] Handel links this delicate scalar figure with "the timid little doe" (*di cervetta timidetta*) (see mm.65-66) that "pleases" and "entices" his heavily-ridiculed "hero." **(See Appendix D, Example 3, pg. 258).** By drawing attention to these alluring, pastoral images in both sections of the aria, this motive suggests the sexual nature of Achille's obsession with the pleasures of the hunt. The erotic tinge of his infatuation with hunting flies in the face of Handel's decidedly *un*heroic "hero's" self-proclaimed desire to "conquer" himself in this scene; like a true Metastasian hero, rejecting sexual vice(s) altogether in favor of more manly endeavors. Instead, the music's girlish delicacy, rooted in the "hopping" dance-like

[235] The B section of "Sì, m'appaga," is thematically derived from its predecessor from which it deviates very little. This lack of a contrast between the aria's A and B sections once again suggests the naïve simplicity of Achille's character.

gestures that begin the aria as well as its abundance of eroticized pastoral images, associates him and the supposedly masculine enterprise of the "hunt" with foppishness.

The many pastoral references of "Sì, m'appaga", suggestive of rustic revelry in the English countryside, lend themselves to Alden's campy staging in which he exploits absurdly choreographed dancing to make a mockery of Achille and his self-proclaimed virility. From a costuming standpoint, Alden playfully exaggerates Achille's feminine disguise by attiring him in an extremely revealing breastplate which accentuates rather than conceals "his"/her (the singer's) natural curves. **(See Figure 3, below).** On the other hand, considering that this curvaceous armor is presented as one of the central components of "Pirra's" gendered disguise, it portrays femininity (and even the female body) as pure artifice rather than as organic or inborn traits/expressions of sexual difference. Achille's costume in this scene playfully collapses the boundaries between "artifice" and "nature", identity and disguise, original and copy, further confounding the "true" gendered identity of the character (and of the singer) and rendering it nearly impossible to determine to which sex (s)he belongs. In other words, this provocative breastplate exaggerates "his" female disguise to an absurd level, ironically suggesting that in spite of the singer's innate femininity, her (male) character's "female disguise" has been taken to such extremes that it is no longer convincing at all.

Figure 3

Alden's parodic eroticization of the hunt through his self-consciously ludicrous choreography also undermines Achille's central message. From a visual standpoint alone, this scene draws attention to Achille's failed attempt to masculinize himself by adopting the metaphorical armor of valor and virility as a defense against the softening vices of love and/or lust epitomized by Deidamia and her female attendants. While Achille's aria is ostensibly about how he rejects feminizing sensual pleasures in favor of more masculine pursuits, Alden's staging makes it clear that he "lusts" after the hunt and the "timid little does" whom he pursues over "charming little hills." Rather than hunting the deer he appears to find so enchanting, Achille often joins them in their lighthearted and rather inelegant dance; his bow and arrow appearing to be merely decorative and suggestive of his impotence. Additionally, the "does" (*cervette*) in this staging appear as the male warriors in pursuit of Achille wearing bizarre red and black geometric military garb with only faux-antlers to suggest that they have momentarily shifted roles from the "hunters" to the "hunted." This dance also offers a comical homoerotic layer to what Alden stages as an implied mating ritual between (wo)man and beast, Achille and Ulisse's army (reinterpreted as dancing deer). Another scene in the Act II "hunt" sequence provides Alden with ample fodder for his playfully (homo)erotic re-envisioning of this manly pastime. During the repeat of the A section of Ulisse's earlier aria "Nò, nò, nò, quella beltà non amo", in which he pretends to seduce "Pirra" (whom he suspects is truly Achille in disguise and as such will deflect his advances), Alden foregrounds Ulisse's feigned seduction with an intricately choreographed battle-turned-orgy for the production's dancing ensemble. This comically exaggerated and hyper-stylized orgy ensues between the emasculated male warriors under Ulisse's command and the women

of Deidamia's court who have temporarily been transformed into wild Amazons. This implied reference to the eighteenth century's simultaneously reviled and revered figure of the Amazon, a figure that I have discussed at length in both the first and second chapters of this dissertation, further suggests a radical if only temporary overturning of the "natural" gendered order.[236] **(See Figures 4 & 5, below).** Ultimately, the sexual innuendo that is pervasive throughout Alden's production insinuates that in Achille's infatuation with the hunt, he is no better than the "many foolish lovers" (*tanti folli amanti*) he very vocally disdains; implying that he is one such "foolish lover" himself in spite of his many protests.

Figure 4

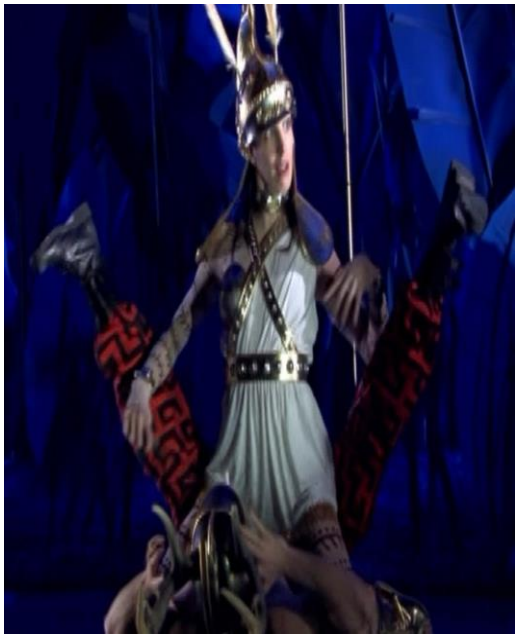

Figure 5

During Alden's staging of this scene, Pasichnyk (as Achille) and Silvia Tro Santafé, the travestied mezzo soprano portraying Ulisse, fight over the latter's phallic

[236] I discuss the "threat" of the Amazon figure in both Chapters One and Two of this dissertation about *Admeto* and *Partenope* respectively. See Chapter One (pp. 26-28) and Chapter Two (pp. 67-68).

spear. This staging imbues their struggle for dominant masculinity with a degree of homoeroticism which is bolstered by the aria's (and preceding recitative's) innuendo-laden text.[237] **(See Figures 6 & 7, pg. 170).** Although the opera's text would suggest that Ulisse is the seducer in this exchange, this production implies that Achille has usurped this role while also usurping Ulisse's masculinity; seductively unmanning him by stealing his spear and claiming it as his own. Both homoerotic references, one made explicit in the libretto, the other only implied by Alden's choreography, assume eighteenth-century audiences' previous knowledge about the Achilles myth and his purported relationship/affair with Patroclus, another "hero" of the Trojan War. According to Wendy Heller, while effeminacy and homosexuality were not necessarily linked in the early modern mind, "[t]he issue of Achilles' effeminacy…is somewhat complicated by another strand of the myth – his relationship with Patroclus, in which Achilles has indeed been associated with homosexuality." [238] It is generally accepted that the eighteenth century

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[237] See Bazler, 143. According to Bazler, "Rolli's [Handel's librettist] Achilles…treats Ulysses with almost juvenile contempt, and at times, irreverent mockery. During their longest scene together, Act II, Scene 8 of Handel's *Deidamia*, Ulysses attempts to uncover Achilles's disguise by pretending to flirt with the young man, thinking it will shake his resolve. Achilles, however, in a moment of pure comedy, does what both Ulysses and most eighteenth-century dramatists would have considered unthinkable. *He flirts back*" (143 – my emphasis).

[238] Heller, "Reforming Achilles…", 580 (endnote #14). Note, however, that counterarguments have also been made suggesting that there is insufficient evidence to support a homoerotic interpretation of Achilles' and Patroclus' relationship. See for instance; Marco Fantuzzi, "Comrades in Love," in *Achilles in Love: Intertextual Studies* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2012), 187-265. In his recent monograph Fantuzzi claims that although "[s]cholars discussing the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus usually begin by stating that Homer is not explicit about its nature; we understand beyond any doubt that they were very good 'companions'…we find no evidence in the *Iliad* whether their relationship was erotic or not" (187). He goes on to argue that "not unreasonably but undemonstratedly [sic.]…ancient and modern commentators who considered Achilles' remembrances [of Patroclus] as homoerotic took the initiative of labelling as erotic what the text presents only as an extraordinary sentimental intensity" (212). Fantuzzi *does* acknowledge that regardless of Homer's original intent interpreters of his tale going as far back as Aeschylus have promoted an explicitly homoerotic reading of the complex and "intense" relationship between these two men. However, he also suggests that this was their prerogative, claiming that Aeschylus, who is generally considered "the first to rewrite the story of Achilles and Patroclus as a clear love-story" (226), offered this interpretation because he was "a member of the fifth-century Athenian upper class that was then engaged in elaborating the ideology of pederasty" (217-18). Evidently, there is no consensus about the potentially homoerotic nature of Achilles' connection with Patroclus. However, the fact that there

more often aligned effeminacy with excessive heterosexuality than with homosexuality (or homoeroticism). During this period, effeminacy was considered most aptly embodied by the figure of the fop in light of his exclusive focus on appearances, his extravagance, his narcissism, and his proclivity for traditionally feminine pursuits. However, drawing inspiration from Heller's observations to the contrary, I argue that the multiple erotically-tinged exchanges between Achille, Ulisse, and the anonymous hunters masquerading as deer provocatively link Achille's particular version of effeminacy with homoeroticism.

Furthermore, the self-consciously tongue-in-cheek wit and irony pervading Alden's staging of the entire Act II hunt sequence undermines older versions of the myth, especially those of Ovid, which depict Achilles as a dangerous, aggressive, and violent man who uses his female disguise to facilitate his rape of Deidamia.[239] Neither Handel's (nor Alden's) Achille ever appears as violent or aggressive in *Deidamia*; the delicate frivolity and banal simplicity of his music instead reducing him to a blustering fool rather than a hyper-virile man to be contended with. The fact that Alden's staging of this scene exploits his hunting tools, his bow and arrow, as decorative objects rather than weapons further emasculates him, stripping him of the aggressive, or even borderline barbaric or savage, qualities attributed to him in these earlier versions of the myth. Evidently the aria's dance-like qualities have served as an inspiration for Alden's staging which visually reinforces the music's ironic characterization of Achille as a light-hearted (and light-footed) nymph. This characterization of Achille as fop defiantly contradicts the

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is even the remote possibility of such a reading lends itself to interpretations like Alden's contemporary staging of *Deidamia* which repeatedly flirt with the notion of homoeroticism without ever making it explicit.

[239] In Ibid., 577 (endnote #1).

aggressive, virile man he professes to be (and which he had been, e.g.: in Ovid) as he indulges himself in the self-gratifying pleasures of the “manly” pastime of the "hunt."

Figure 6

Figure 7

The hunters as the spoils of the hunt:
Carnivalesque role reversals and bondage scenes

In the second Act’s concluding “chorus” in praise of the “hunt”, framing the opening choral sequence which expresses the same sentiment, the warriors who had danced with Achille while masquerading as the “timid little does” from his aria “Sì, m’appaga”, sip cocktails at their leisure. Meanwhile, the hunters – Deidamia, Achille, and company - are all ensnared in the production’s psychedelic blue ivy, ironically reduced to the spoils of the hunt. **(See Figure 8, pg. 171).** Alden’s tongue-in-cheek, parodic staging of this scene continues in the vein of his staging of the preceding aria, dismissing the entire enterprise as something ridiculous and frivolous rather than something ultra-masculine and virile. This interpretation resonates with the opera’s recurring suggestion that the foppish Achille has more in common with the ultra-feminine frivolities and extravagances of Deidamia’s court (themselves parodied in an earlier aria which I discuss at greater length in the

concluding section of this chapter)[240] than he is willing to admit. Overall, I argue that Alden exploits this rather trivial concluding chorus, which functions dramaturgically as a framing device, as a means of making the opera's carnivalesque universe *more* rather than less topsy-turvy.

Figure 8

This campy spectacle's visual flirtation with bondage also suggests the dangerous consequences of foppish men relinquishing their masculine sexual prowess and political authority by engaging too closely with and even imitating women. In spite of the emasculating threat women supposedly pose to men like Achille, during this scene it is the male hunters (disguised as deer, the objects of the hunt) rather than the women on stage who are imbued with sexual power. That said, in Alden's provocative staging of Ulisse's aforementioned homoerotic seduction aria from a few scenes earlier, roles once again are

[240] I discuss this at length in the concluding section of this chapter entitled, "Conclusion: Camp blurring the boundaries between artifice ('Toil and Labor') and women's 'Native Charms'" (pp. 182-87).

reversed as the women of Deidamia's court transform themselves into Amazons engaged in an elaborate quasi-orgy through which they dominate the male warriors in question. By imbuing these women with an excess of power and/or agency this earlier scene provocatively revels in the dangers of sexual (and social) inversion which were a source of widespread fear and paranoia in eighteenth-century London; anxieties that repeatedly surfaced in various widely-circulating operatic satires of the time attacking castrati and travestied divas alike on the grounds of their perceived gendered transgressions. Although no longer in explicitly gendered terms, the bondage imagery from the second Act's final scene once again strips the "hunters" of their power and displaces it onto the "hunted"; this time flipping the (hetero)normative social order on its head with an added queer element. Ultimately, this staging's exaggerated role reversal shreds the fragile veneer of virility that "Sì, m'appaga" has superficially restored to Achille in the very moment at which Ulisse's (and his sidekick, Fenice's) suspicions have been aroused about his/"her" gender-bending disguise. In other words, with its over-the-top allusions to bondage and similar erotic power plays, this contemporary re-envisioning of the scene ironically maintains disorder, ensuring that while Achille's disguise has begun to unravel at this point in the *dramma,* the normative social order has in no way fallen back into place.

In another case of foreshadowing, Deidamia's lighthearted "simile" aria, "Nasconde l'usignol", which brings the previous Act (Act I) to a close, sets the stage for this scene's ironic reversal of the "hunters" and the "hunted". Her aria is an adaptation of an aria Handel had composed for the notorious Francesca Cuzzoni in one of his earlier operas, *Admeto* (1727), the opera which forms the basis of my first chapter. While the music remains entirely unchanged, Handel's librettist, Rolli, radically altered the text,

albeit maintaining the avian theme of the original. In spite of the many similarities between these two versions of the aria, Cuzzoni's character in *Admeto,* a princess disguised as a shepherdess, compares herself to the predatory "sparrow-hawk" of the original aria's title. Deidamia, on the other hand, aligns herself with the fragile and endangered "nightingale", reversing the roles of predator and prey as they appeared in the original. In Deidamia's version of the aria, she invokes this mythical bird in a desperate, and ultimately futile, attempt to protect herself and her lover, Achille, from "the snake and the hunter" (*nasconde l'usignol in alti rami il nido al serpe e al cacciator*) who are lying in wait to capture him and unmask his disguise.

The reversal of the "hunters" and the "hunted" marked by this instance of self-borrowing (a technique commonly employed by Handel and other composers from his time),[241] reinforces the notion that this fragile boundary between the "hunter" and the "hunted" is one of the opera's most prominent themes. Alden's interpretation of this scene ignores the implications of the "nightingale" metaphor, instead using it as a vehicle for the soprano diva, Sally Matthews, to playfully gallivant about the stage in a revealing bathing suit. During this scene, Alden's Deidamia revels in her youthful sex appeal while appearing to be completely oblivious to her self-proclaimed role as Achille's protector and the dangers (the "hunters") surrounding them both. Although this delightfully campy interpretation disregards the text's explicit pastoral references, it resonates with Donna

[241] Regarding Handel's frequent self-borrowing practices, see John E. Sawyer, "Irony and borrowing in Handel's *Agrippina*," in *Opera remade (1700–1750).* Charles Dill, Ed. (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2010), 395-423. The premise of Sawyer's article is that Handel often engaged in (self)borrowing practices ironically, using his pre-London opera *Agrippina* (1709) as a case study. Although it is extremely unlikely that Handel deliberately employed irony in his repurposing of Cuzzoni's aria from his 1727 *Admeto* to Deidamia's "Nasconde l'usignol", the role reversal of "predator" and "prey", "hunter" and "hunted" from one version to the other does offer a microcosm of the later opera's evident focus on this issue.

Leon's commentary in *Handel's Bestiary* on the fatal irony of the "nightingale" (a.k.a. Deidamia) failing in her protective endeavor, because in "flying back and forth to the nest, [she] often leads hunters right to [her eggs]."[242] Evidently, even from a textual standpoint, the tenuous boundaries between "predator" and "prey", "hunter" and "hunted", are pervasive themes in Handel's final opera, surfacing for the first time in this rather trivial "simile" aria and in turn exaggerated and intensified by Alden's campy staging of the "hunt" sequence. This staging makes it clear that rather than being the hunter Achille claims to be, unbeknownst to him and in spite of Deidamia's many halfhearted attempts to shield him from himself (and the likelihood of him betraying his true identity), this mythological "hero" spends the majority of the opera occupying the precarious and impotent position of the hunt*ed*.

Achille's "failed heroics" revisited: An (anti)-climactic "call-to-arms" and a voiceless, motionless statue as "hero"

From the moment he unmasks his disguise towards the beginning of Act III, Achille is increasingly silenced. In shedding his lady-in-waiting persona (as "Pirra"), he is reduced to a mute and ironic caricature of Metastasio's iconic "self-conquering hero" whose masculinity (and voice) are repeatedly usurped by the more genuine hero, Ulisse. Although Achille's representation as a mute caricature of a hero in many ways reduces this opera to a farce, albeit a self-conscious one, the increasing emotional depth of Deidamia's character offers a contrasting impulse to imbue this farce with a degree of gravity and seriousness merited by its mythical roots. In the words of camp expert, Sontag, "[t]he whole point of

[242] Donna Leon, "Nightingale," in *Handel's Bestiary: In Search of Animals in Handel's Operas* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2010), 43.

Camp is to dethrone the serious. Camp is playful, anti-serious. More precisely, Camp involves a new, more complex relation to 'the serious'. *One can be serious about the frivolous, frivolous about the serious*."[243] On one level, this campy vision of Handel's opera sets up conventions and stereotypes that are all too often taken for granted only to mock them, most prominently in the figure of Achille. However, on another level this staging periodically diverts itself from its own tongue-in-cheek humor to honor the increasing integrity and seriousness of Deidamia's character.

As Bazler notes in his recent discussion of this opera's rather bitter ending, "[i]n the closing moments… after the heroine's father 'comforts' his daughter by telling her that Achilles is fated to die, the lovers are reunited but denied a final duet. *Instead, what follows is a long duet between Deidamia and Ulysses…from which Achilles is conspicuously absent*."[244] While Achille's Act III "bravura" aria, "Ai Greci questa spada", functions dramatically as the opera's turning point, *Deidamia*'s true climactic moment comes to the fore in the title character's exponentially more developed explosion of rage and despair which follows immediately on its heels. Bazler briefly discusses the aria in question, "M'hai resi infelice," which he associates with Cleopatra's similarly pathos-laden lament, "Piangerò la sorte mia"; citing musical commonalities between Deidamia's aria and this much more well-known piece from Handel's earlier opera, *Giulio Cesare* (1724).[245]

[243] Sontag in *Camp*, 62 (my emphasis, "note" on "Camp" #41).
[244] Bazler, 156 (my emphasis).
[245] In Ibid., 155-6. According to Bazler, "[a]lthough this is not a case of true borrowing, the two arias have many similarities: both begin with lament bass descents, both feature rapid, vengeful rage motifs in their [highly contrasting] B sections [note that Achille, on the other hand, is so simple that his arias' B sections are rarely contrasting, making him come across as even more one-dimensional], and both appear during a climactic moment in each opera…Even more noteworthy about [Deidamia's] aria is that…we see Handel choosing to tie a crucial tragic scene from his late operas to an earlier work dating well before the Metastasian reforms" (155-6).

Expanding upon Bazler's claim, I argue that as the opera progresses Deidamia's character moves away from her earlier depiction as a naïve, self-indulgent young woman whose musical palette is limited to frivolous and light arias like the aforementioned "Nasconde l'usignol." Achille, on the other hand, more fully embodies these degraded feminine stereotypes after having abandoned his disguise and supposedly having embraced his "true" masculine identity. The consequences of Achille's failure to adopt more masculine qualities, beyond the exaggerated juvenile behaviors he exudes in the opening scenes of Act I, include him being stripped not only of his masculinity but of his vocal presence altogether. In addition to Bazler's observation that Achille is denied his expected role in the opera's concluding duet, Deidamia tellingly addresses her climactic aria not to him but instead to the same man, Ulisse, who has successfully lured Achille (as "Pirra") into the trap of revealing himself and abandoning his disguise.

Early in Act III, Achille's true masculine identity is unveiled in a humorously anti-climactic moment which manifests in his comically not-so-"bravura", "bravura" aria, "Ai Greci questa spada." This aria's music suggests that Achille has the impulse to be a war hero but that he cannot fully live up to his naïve fantasy of what being a warrior entails and can only embrace the virile qualities with which he has supposedly been endowed in a superficial and highly constrained manner. The aria's musical qualities very much resonate with Alden's staging of Achille's opening scenes in Act I in which he portrays Handel's comically "failed hero" as an impetuous and impulsive young man who can offer nothing but an immature imitation of adult masculinity. In addition to the harmonic simplicity of "Ai Greci questa spada", which cycles through endless series of basic (I – IV – V - I –type progressions with minimal variations), its defining "call-to-arms" motive, figuring as a sort

of stabbing gesture, recurs throughout the piece remaining largely undeveloped. This dramatic gesture begins with a promising sequence of increasingly intensified ascending arpeggiations of IV - V followed by vii˚6-4 - I6 harmonies (see mm.4-5 of the opening *ritornello*). However, just a few short measures later it runs out of steam; dropping to a low rumble in the opposite registral extreme before fading to complete silence in anticipation of (and deference to) Achille's opening vocal line (see mm.7-8). **(See Appendix D, Example 4, pg. 261).** This impotent motive, which appears in an increasingly fragmented form as a means of punctuating Achille's vow to vanquish his enemies, functions as sort of bellicose "call-to-arms" throughout the scene. It also aptly illustrates Achille's "failed heroics" because his "call" remains unanswered as he revels in his juvenile fantasy of slaying the Trojans without musically displaying any considerable follow through.

In sharp contrast with Ovid's aforementioned brutally violent vision of the same mythological hero, the comical impotence of Handel's Achille becomes especially apparent as the aria progresses. Underlying abruptly static tonic harmonies with the harmonic rhythm having slowed nearly to a stop (at least for the ensuing two and a half to three measures), Achille emphatically verbalizes his intent to kill during his aria's a2 sub-section. He triumphantly exclaims that his enemies "will perish" (*perirà*) three times in the wake of a rather tedious and methodical melisma emphasizing the same word. Each time he repeats the word "perish" one of the three accompanying solo strings (Violins 1, 2, and Violas) echoes his emphatic claim. However, for the majority of this passage, rather than the strings responding to and repeating Achille's battle cry, he follows their lead; mindlessly parroting them instead of the other way around. In other words, each time this fragmentary figure repeats itself by sequence, it is heard first in the strings rather than in

Achille's part, making it clear that they (rather than he) are in command. Also, underscoring this passage is a sudden period of harmonic inactivity (see mm.28-29) which further contributes to the aria's ironic commentary on Achille's inability to move beyond the level of heroic fantasy into action. **(See Appendix D, Example 4, pp. 263-64).** As a whole, the aria fits the impulsive, impetuous, and juvenile nature made transparent by Alden's campy production. The music of "Ai Greci questa spada" sets out to undermine the heroic valor Achille claims to embody during the very moment at which he supposedly (and very vocally) embraces his long-concealed masculinity. On one hand, the extreme dynamics and tempo of this aria render the climactic scene appropriately intense, befitting its "bravura" purpose. However, on the other hand it comes across as comically trivial in its naïve simplicity and utter lack of depth; having been justifiably dismissed by Bazler as a "light and frivolous aria about [Achille's] future posterity and the glory of Greece"[246] which never comes to fruition.

The sheer magnitude of Ulisse's dramatic and grandiose aria that follows shortly on the heels of Achille's "Ai Greci questa spada", the latter appearing as yet another in a long line of silly, frivolous da *capo arias* in miniature with naively simple accompaniments, further cuts this mythological "hero" down to size. Ulisse's blatantly self-aggrandizing aria, "Come all'urto aggressor d'un torrente," honors the integrity of his heroic mission at Achille's expense. His music offers a much more serious depiction of masculinity with its comparatively complex contrapuntal and imitative accompaniment (see the aria's unusually long and expansive opening *ritornello,* mm. 1-25). **(See Appendix D, Example 5, pp. 267-69).** As with the contrast between Achille and Deidamia's arias

[246] Bazler, 151.

from this scene, the contrast between Achille and Ulisse's musical styles offers yet another perspective on the contradictory notion of "camp" being simultaneously serious and a farce. Ultimately, by imbuing him with a more grandiose and stately (if equally self-aggrandizing) musical character, Handel depicts Ulisse as a man much more worthy of the heroic title he has superficially granted to Achille. While, on one hand elevating Ulisse to the title of hero all but in name, Handel (and Alden's production by extension) exploit Achille's overly-inflated ego in juxtaposition with his foppish vapidity as a means of ridiculing the overly-inflated Metastasian model of heroism altogether.

This production offers a visual parallel to the musical triviality of the comically (anti)-climactic "call-to-arms" scene by concluding it with Achille standing frozen like a statue on the stairs. This sudden transformation anticipates Alden's staging of the final duet at which point the "hero" has been stripped of his human agency and literally reduced to a mute and motionless statue (albeit one that is highly praised on the surface). Rather than immediately exiting after his "Ai Greci questa spada" in order for Deidamia to claim the stage "as convention dictates",[247] Achille remains onstage in the background, immobile and in this "statuesque" form which both defines and constrains his innate manly character which has finally been unveiled. **(See Figure 9, pg. 180).** He then disappears for the remainder of the Act, with the exception of one brief scene in which he promises to love and marry Deidamia but refuses to relinquish his claim to fame and glory as war hero, only to reappear during the final duet once more in this mute and motionless statuesque form. In this duet, while Deidamia and Ulisse put forth competing arguments in terms of the respective merits of "love" and "war", Achille is carried on stage on the shoulders of

[247] Bazler, 151.

Ulisse's similarly silent band of soldiers in full military attire. **(See Figure 10, below).** At this point in the opera, Alden's production crystallizes Achille's role as a one-dimensional abstraction and/or caricature of a "hero" who ironically can neither speak nor act for himself, although he is showered with accolades for his prophesied courageous acts**.**

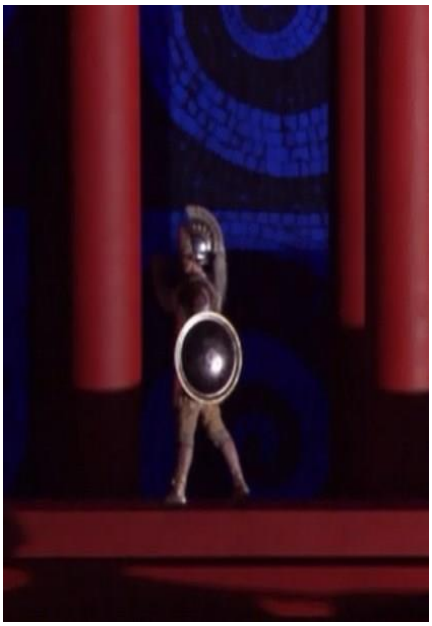

Figure 9

Figure 10

Alden's depiction of Achille as a mute and motionless "statue" also resonates with my discussion in my first chapter about an anonymous satirical pamphlet entitled *An Epistle from S----r S-----o to S-----a F------a.*[248] This 1727 pamphlet dismisses the renowned castrato, Senesino, as a "senseless statue" who is easily manipulated and dominated by the aggressive, Faustina, whom the satire in turn vilifies for her masculine-

[248] *An Epistle from S----r S------o to S-----a F------a. Printed for J. Roberts at the Oxford-Arms in Warwick-Lane, MDCCXXVII 6 (London 1727)*, In the Eighteenth Century Collections Online. http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.its.virginia.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=viva_uva&tabID=T001&docId=CW110016160&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE (Accessed September 18, 2014), 1-8.

identified role(s) in operas like *Admeto* (1727).[249] In this chapter I argue that the satire's "statue" metaphor, albeit from nearly one-and-a-half decades earlier, presents an anxious critique of the mid-eighteenth century's increasing fears about the emasculating potential of the "man as machine" paradigm. This critique suggests that the mechanistic worldview reduces men (and women) to shells of themselves, transforming them into puppets controlled by an external, omnipotent, and/or god-like force. In other words, this Cartesian model of mind-body relations potentially reduces masculinity to artifice, stripping masculinity (and men) of their natural and/or organic qualities, and thereby threatening men's "natural" right to patriarchal authority. It is extremely unlikely that Alden modeled his interpretation of Achille based on this relatively obscure eighteenth-century English satire about a much earlier Handel opera. In spite of this, his invocation of a "senseless statue" is very similar to that which surfaces in the pamphlet and the image he invokes resonates with the gendered anxieties built-into Achille's vapid, vacuous, and rather empty-headed puppet-like character. Like this anonymous satire which offers a critique of the waning mechanistic worldview, transforming it from an ideal to an object of ridicule, I've argued that Handel's *Deidamia* makes a similar critique of the dangers of emasculation. In this case, these emasculating threats result in the increasingly "senseless" and silenced body of the foppish Achille, which the singer, Pasichnyk, plays for wry laughs in her performance throughout Alden's self-consciously campy production.

[249] I discuss this notion of the castrato hero as "mute statue" in Chapter One of this dissertation. See the following pages of the section entitled, "'Virtuous Prudes', pregnant castrati, and Amazonian divas: Satirical portrayals of Faustina and Italian opera in London" (pp. 30-33).

Conclusion:
Camp blurring the boundaries between artifice ("Toil and Labor") and women's "Native Charms"

Alden's controversial production of *Deidamia* abounds with exaggerated, campy representations of gender stereotypes alluded to in the libretto, both in reference to Achille's character and to the women of the court surrounding him. Early in Act I preceding Achille's first appearance on stage, Deidamia and her ladies-in-waiting engage in the stereotypically feminine leisure activities (e.g.: reading novels) from which Handel's "hero" continually strives but fails to distance himself. This scene comes across as trivial and inconsequential from a musical standpoint, reminiscent of many of Achille's previously discussed arias. However, in this concluding section of my chapter I explore the ways in which Alden's staging capitalizes upon this triviality; once again wielding the discourse of camp as a means of ridiculing (by over-inflating) gender stereotypes, this time in the voices and bodies of the women themselves. The radical transformation and deconstruction of feminine stereotypes experienced through the women's own bodies and voices empowers them to reclaim their agency, making a mockery of the same tools and/or images that are often used to degrade and trivialize them.

During this scene, Deidamia's mentor and confidante, Nerea, sings an aria, "Di lusinghe, di dolcezza", which is simultaneously in praise of and cautioning against the seductive power of women's "charms." Alden's use of an abstract modern dance choreography in this scene, functioning as a Brechtian alienation technique,[250] heightens Nerea's implicit commentary on the artifice of women's gender performance in which

[250] Joy Calico, *Brecht at the opera* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

she ironically "schools" her charges in their supposedly "native" or natural feminine wiles. In her recent *Brecht at the Opera*, Joy Calico defines "alienation" and/or "estrangement" as "disillusion followed by understanding."[251] She goes on to argue that "[t[he…disorientation, confusion, or outrage is not the endgame of estrangement for the spectating audience member."[252] Instead, this "estrangement" serves as a means of fostering the spectator's active engagement with the play/opera in performance, imbuing him/her with agency. By re-envisioning "spectator" as "spect-actor", Brechtian theatre resonates with eighteenth-century theatrical practices as defined by Lisa A. Freeman which regularly blur the boundaries between spectacle and spectator, performer and audience much like Achille's disguise blurs the boundaries between male and female, original and copy.[253] Ultimately, by removing traditionally feminine pursuits from their original contexts, distorting them and placing them alongside bizarre acrobatic sequences, Alden's choreography of this scene illuminates and camp-ily exaggerates the *un*natural and learned qualities of the vain and frivolous "charms" which are often presumed to be inherent in women's "nature" and which he has repeatedly ridiculed in Achille's character. This staging choice invites the audience to partake in his Brechtian de-familiarization or operatic "unsettling" (to invoke Levin) of derogatory feminine stereotypes. In other words, in this scene in particular, Alden encourages his spectators to become "spect-actors", joining him and the women onstage in posing a laughter-infused

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[251] In Ibid., 14.
[252] In Ibid., 140.
[253] For the notion of "spectator as spect-actor" see in Ibid., 7. Regarding the audience's/spectator's agency specifically in eighteenth-century English theater, see: Lisa A. Freeman, "Introduction: A Prologue," in *Character's Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 5. Freeman claims that, "[t]his was not a theater of absorption in character…but a theater of interaction in which *the audience was as much a part of the performance as the players*. No single controlling gaze regulated the space of performance in the eighteenth century; *the power of performance was routinely shared and exchanged between audience and performers*" (5, my emphases).

challenge to the patriarchal status quo and the rigid stratification of gender roles that it upholds.

Nerea's aria is also reflective of the eighteenth century's mechanistic worldview and its ongoing obsession with automata and living dolls, a philosophical construct which, like camp, provocatively collapses the boundaries between nature and artifice, (wo)man and machine. This philosophy, which was increasingly under attack throughout the 1740s (the decade during which *Deidamia* premiered and *opera seria* came to a halt in London),[254] informs the aria's implicit and rather derogatory claim that woman's very nature is to be artificial; a claim that Alden's staging sets out to critique in the form of campy parody. The text of Nerea's aria explicitly presents "nature" as an intricate fantasy which is actually the product of deliberate, calculated efforts (the "toil and labor" alluded to in the text) in order to create an illusion of naturalness that conceals the calculated deception and quite literal performance that has brought it into play. Alden's production of *Deidamia* utilizes the discourse of camp as a means of staging a critique of the notion that in mid-eighteenth-century England "artifice" had become a feminine flaw rather than a masculine ideal (as had been the case with the earlier, waning notion of the "man as machine"). More specifically, the camp sensibility pervading Alden's staging intensifies

[254] See, Minsoo Kang, "The Man-machine in the World-machine, 1637-1748 ", in *Sublime Dreams of Living Machine: The Automaton in the European Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 112, and "From the Man-machine to the Automaton-man, 1748-1793," in Ibid., 174. Kang argues that the mechanistic worldview became increasingly obsolete beginning in the mid eighteenth century, writing that "the intellectual golden age of automata…began in 1637, with the publication of Descartes's *Discourse on the Method* and ended in 1748 [only seven years after Handel's *Deidamia*] with La Mettrie's *Man as Machine*" (112). She then argues that the mechanistic worldview came increasingly under attack due to its association with antiquated, absolutist values and political tyranny, claiming that "the Enlightenment legacy [of the later eighteenth century] can be discerned…in the association of mechanical behavior with that of monarchical absolutism, the description of a state without liberty, and the vision of a society of unoriginal conformists going through the motions of tedious social rituals" (174), quite literally reduced to "cogs in a machine" according to this increasingly outmoded philosophy.

the existing blurring of boundaries between "nature" and "artifice" embedded in this mechanistic philosophy, using it as a vehicle for the women onstage to reclaim their agency, exerting control over their own bodies and self-presentation by self-consciously performing their "artificial" femininity as artifice.

In Alden's staging, a series of dancers comprise the women of Deidamia's court, including a nerdy-looking young woman who never parts with her book, a young girl who sits on the sofa eating popcorn as if watching an entertaining spectacle rather than being part of the spectacle herself (resonating with eighteenth-century theater's common play with the boundaries, or lack thereof, between stage and audience),[255] twin acrobats who contort themselves into a variety of bizarre and ungainly positions, and a dancer who mimes the bass lines (played either by viola da gamba or cello, depending on the production) of Handel's *continuo* from the stage. Alden's choreography for the repeat of the aria's A section begins in a traditional, aesthetically pleasing manner, involving all of the dancers in a series of symmetrical and carefully synchronized movements; however as the dance progresses it becomes increasingly exaggerated and distorted. At one point, the scene devolves into '50s-style calisthenics exercises (e.g.: the women doing the stationary bicycle on their backs) and concludes with all of them stretching in strangely cat-like postures, arching and bowing their backs in time with/synchronized with the music. **(See Figures 11 & 12, pg. 186).**

[255] Kristina Straub, "Ocular Affairs: The Gendering of Eighteenth-Century Spectacle," in *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 4. According to Straub, "Leo Hughes and Judith Milhous provide copious evidence that the 'civilizing' of the eighteenth-century London theater was an ongoing process throughout most of the century, during which the boundaries between spectator and spectacle are as continually violated as they are asserted" (4).

Figure 11

Figure 12

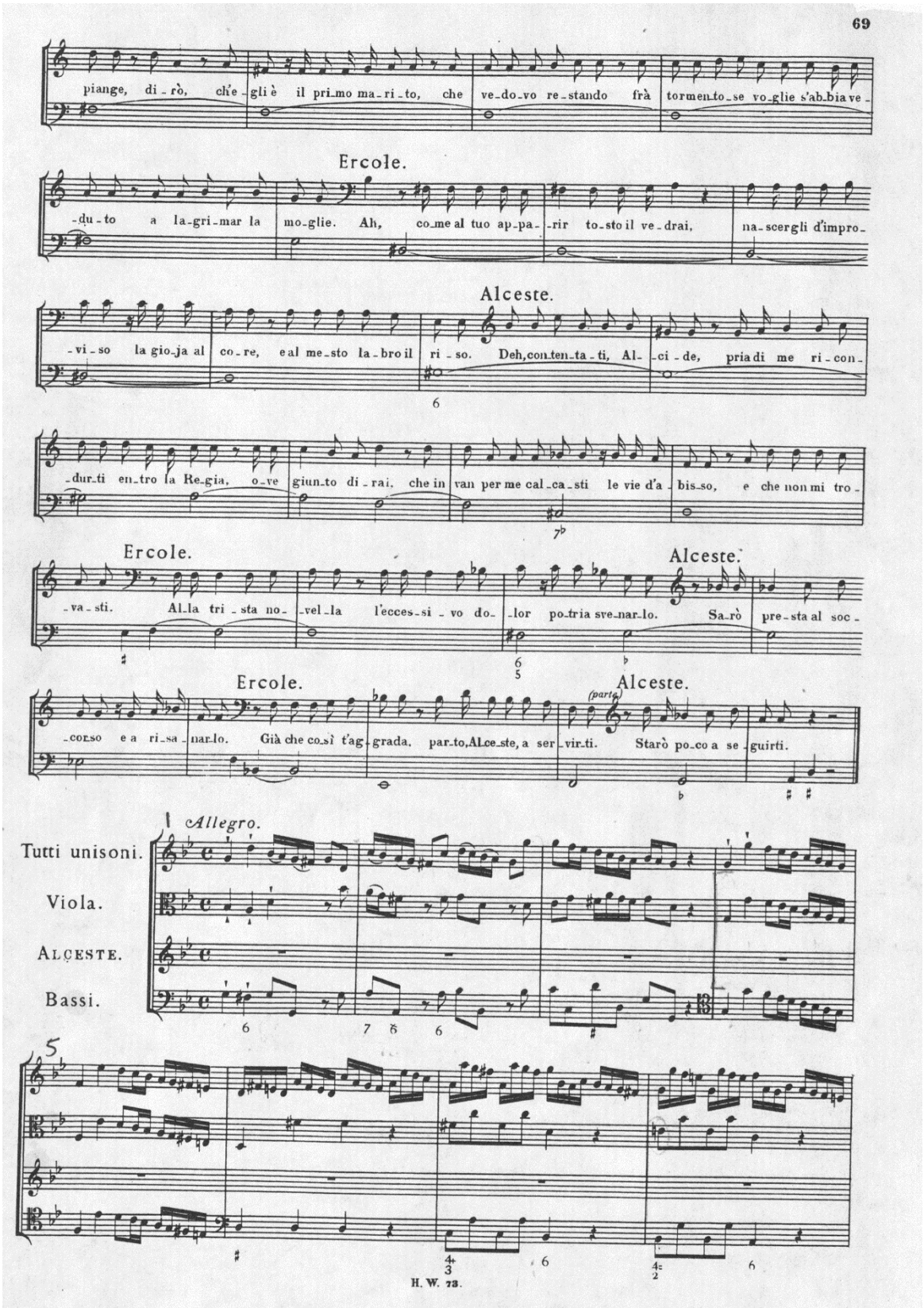
All of this meticulously synchronized "dancing" exaggerates femininity to the point of absurdity as if the women of Deidamia's court were engaged in a female-on-female drag performance led by Nerea. Additionally, the exaggerated synchronization of these women's bodies invokes Brecht's alienating technique of "gestus", which Calico defines as a series of "stylized behaviors designed to reveal the socially constructed nature of human interaction."[256] The invocation of Brecht's "gestus" ensures that this production's campy practice of exaggerating stereotypes de-familiarizes them by presenting them as meticulously choreographed and blatantly artificial rather than natural behaviors.

By having women rather than men self-consciously and ironically perform an exaggerated version of femininity in this scene, Deidamia's ladies-in-waiting masquerade as the very norm and/or gender stereotype they are believed to naturally embody. This staging reinforces the aria's seemingly self-contradictory message that women's charms are simultaneously "natural" and learned through much "toil and labor." Via this ridiculous, hyper-stylized dance of stereotypical femininity, Alden's vision of this scene provocatively blurs the boundaries between "copy" and "original" and dismisses the

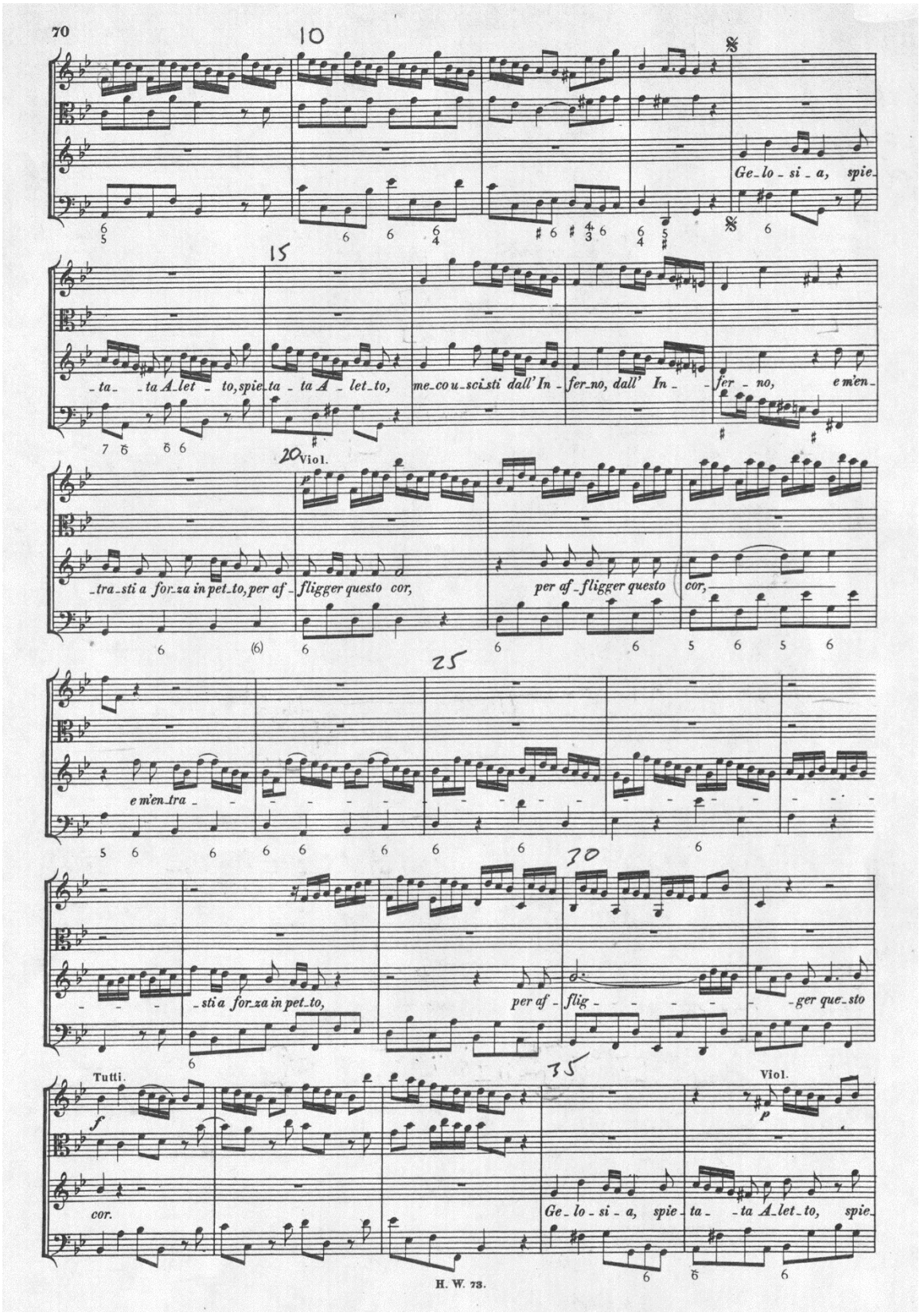
[256] Calico, 44.

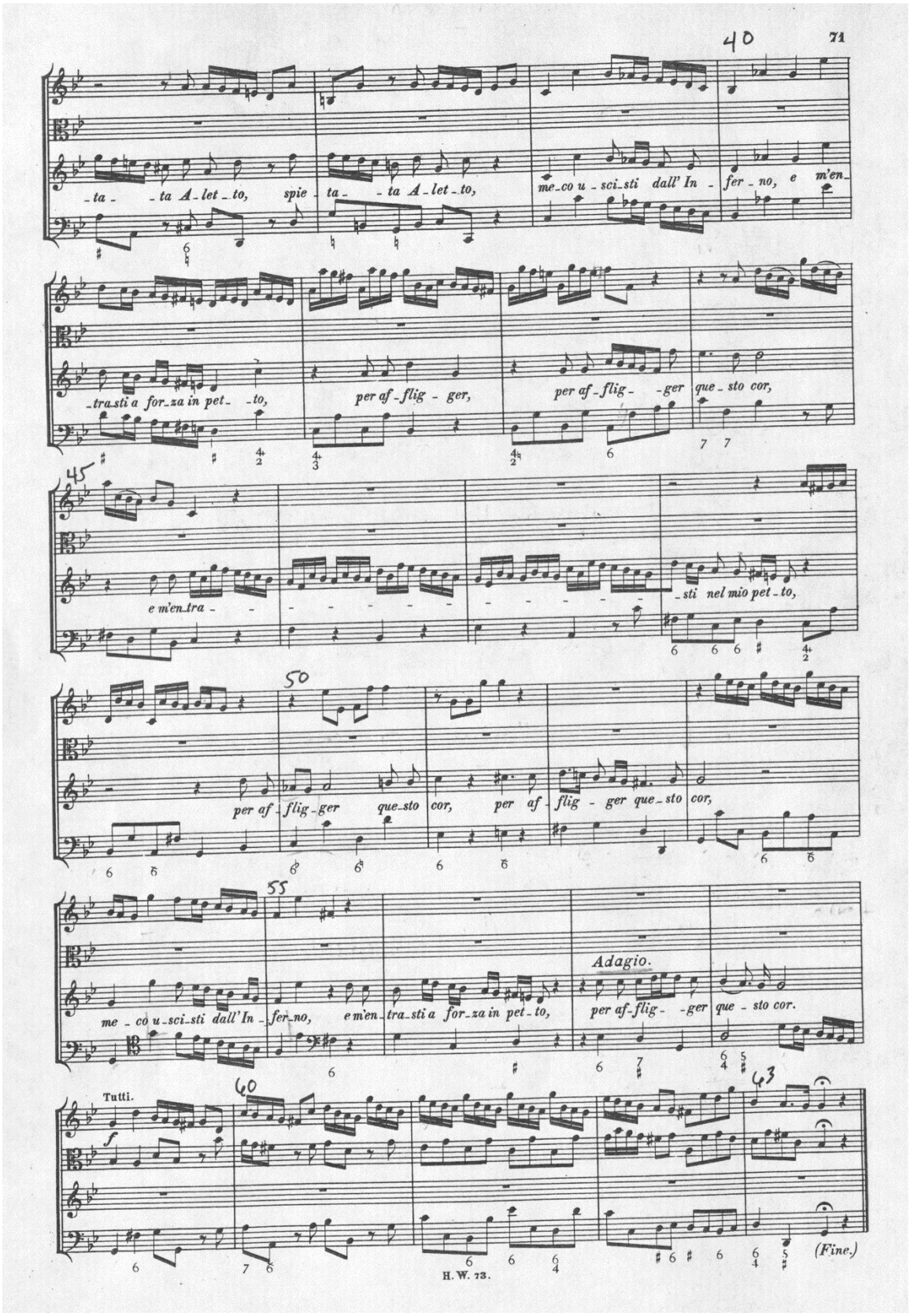
myth of a stable, "original" identity by reducing it to an absurd "copy" of itself. Citing Mary Ann Doane's notion of "double mimesis" or the "feminine masquerade", Pamela Robertson offers an account of the radical, subversive potential of this practice within the context of camp, writing that "the concept of the masquerade allows us to see that what gender parody takes as its object is not the image of the woman, but the idea – which, in camp, becomes a joke – than an essential feminine identity exists prior to the image."[257] The women of Deidamia's court, unlike Achille who remains trapped within his foppish burlesquing of "heroic" masculinity, exploit the fundamental artifice attributed to femininity (and to men's effeminacy or foppery) to their advantage; reclaiming and self-consciously parodying everything effeminate, frivolous, and narcissistic on their own terms. This scene encapsulates the liberating message of Alden's *Deidamia* in which he wields the complex layers of gender-bending (e.g.: in Achille's character) as a vehicle for playfully manipulating and ultimately dismissing derogatory gender stereotypes through the lens of campy excess and hyperbole.

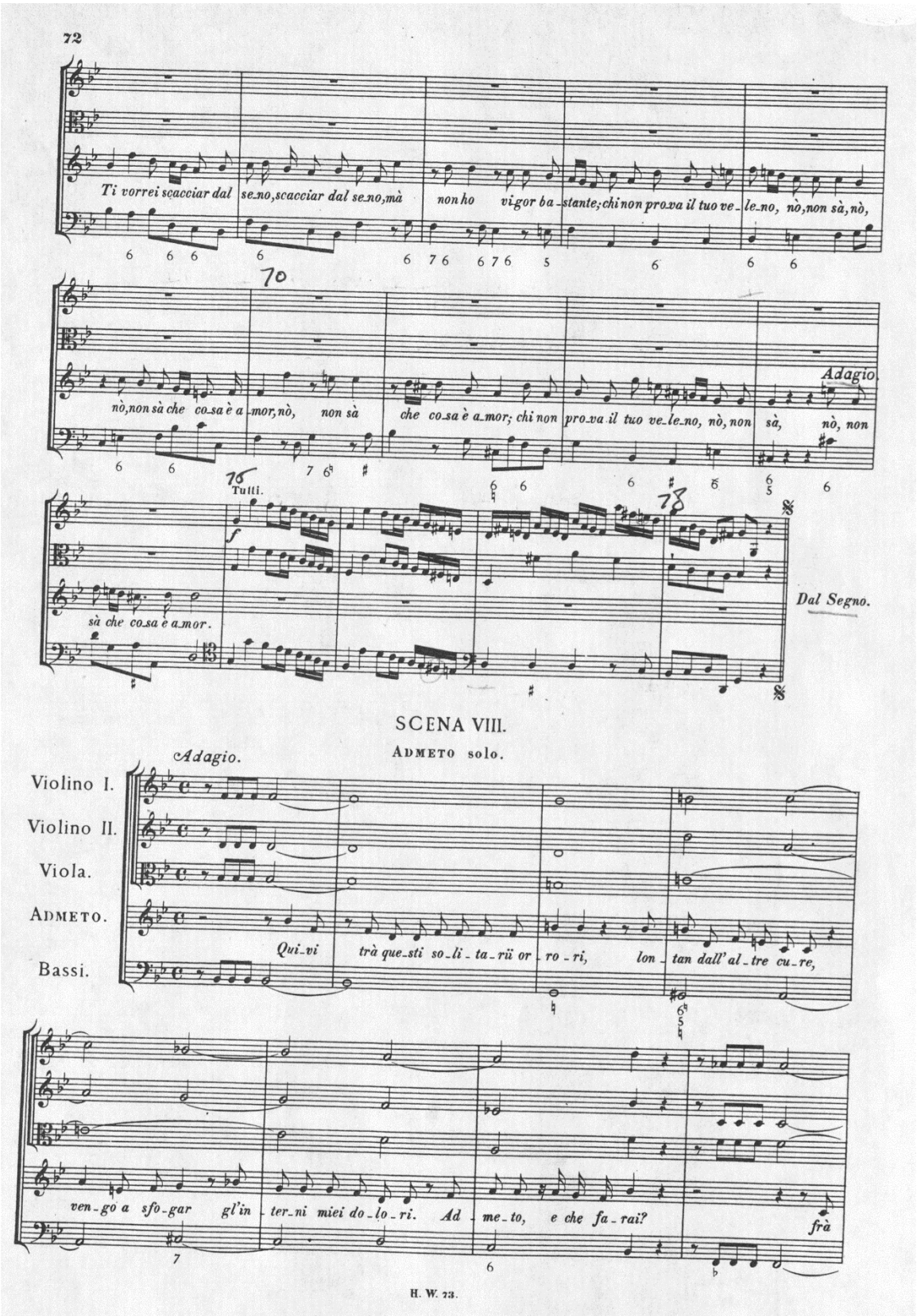
[257] Pamela Robertson, "What Makes the Feminist Camp?", in *Camp*, 274 (citing Mary Ann Doane's *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Films of the 1940s*, 1987).

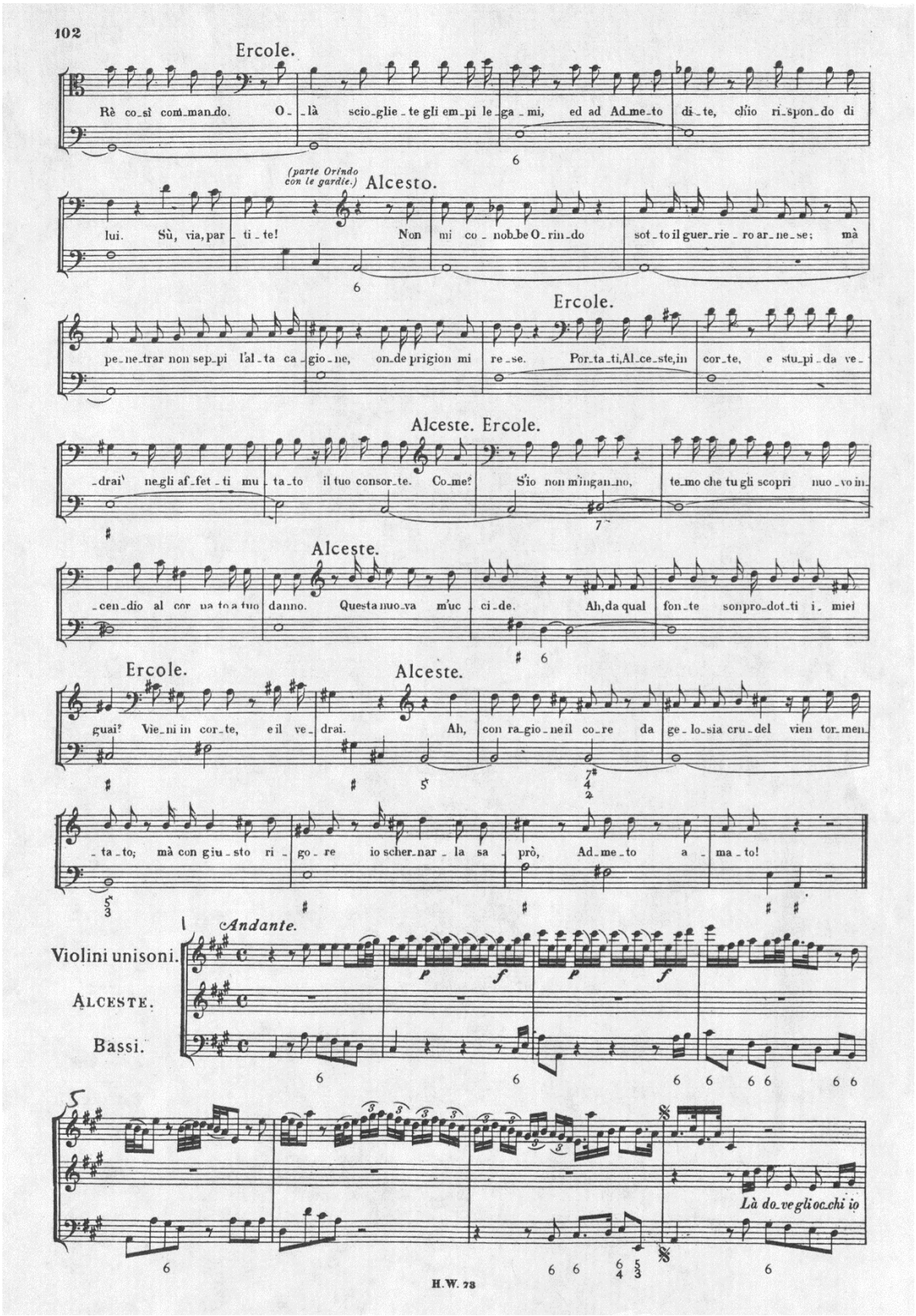


Appendix A, Example 1

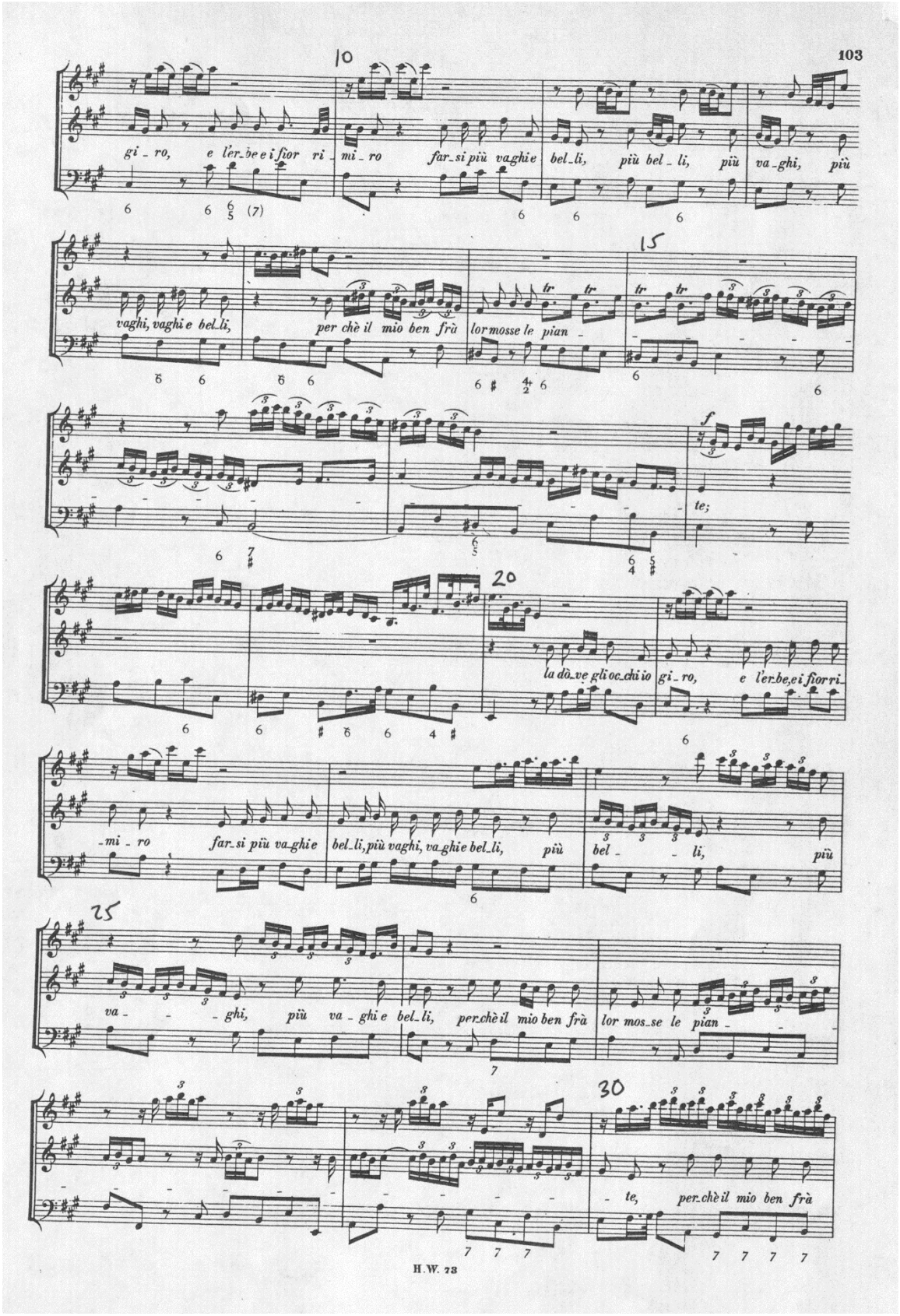

70
10
Ge_lo_si_a, spie_
15
_ta_ _ta A_let_to, spie_ta_ta A_let_to, me_co u_sci_sti dall' In_fer_no, dall' In_ _fer_no, e m'en_
20 Viol.
_tra_sti a for_za in pet_to, per af_fligger questo cor, per af_fligger questo cor,
25
e m'en_tra_
30
_sti a for_za in pet_to, per af_flig_ _ger que_sto
Tutti.
35
Viol.
cor.
Ge_lo_si_a, spie_ta_ _ta A_let_to, spie_
H. W. 73.

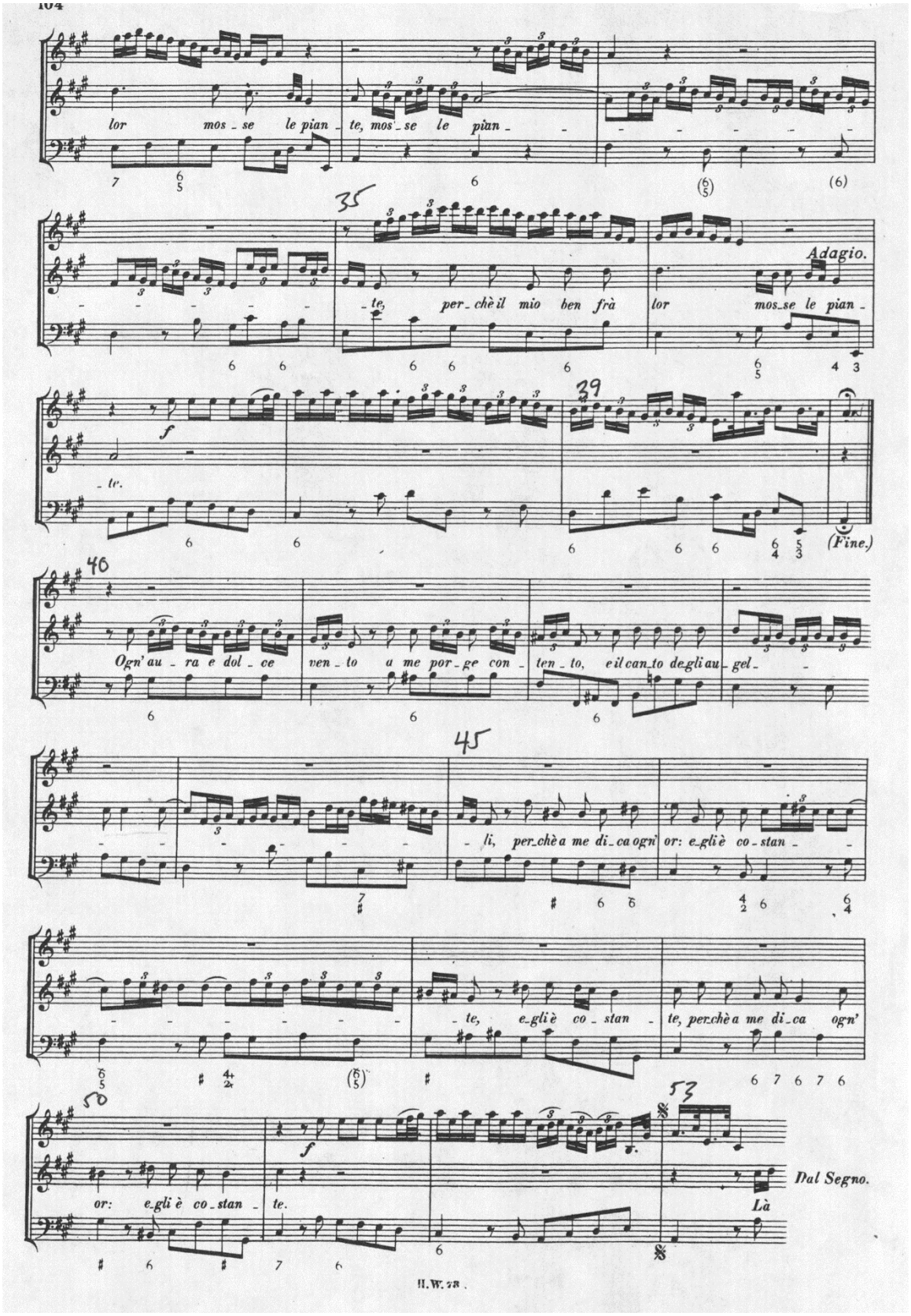

40
71
-ta - -ta A-let-to, spie-ta - -ta A-let-to, me-co u-sci-sti dall' In - fer-no, e m'en-
-tra-sti a for-za in pet- -to, per af-flig - ger, per af-flig- -ger que-sto cor,
45
e m'en-tra- - - - - - - - - - - - -sti nel mio pet-to,
50
per af-flig-ger que-sto cor, per af-flig - ger que-sto cor,
55
me-co u-sci-sti dall' In-fer-no, e m'en-tra-sti a for-za in pet-to,
Adagio.
per af-flig- -ger que-sto cor.
Tutti.
60
63
(Fine.)
H. W. 73.

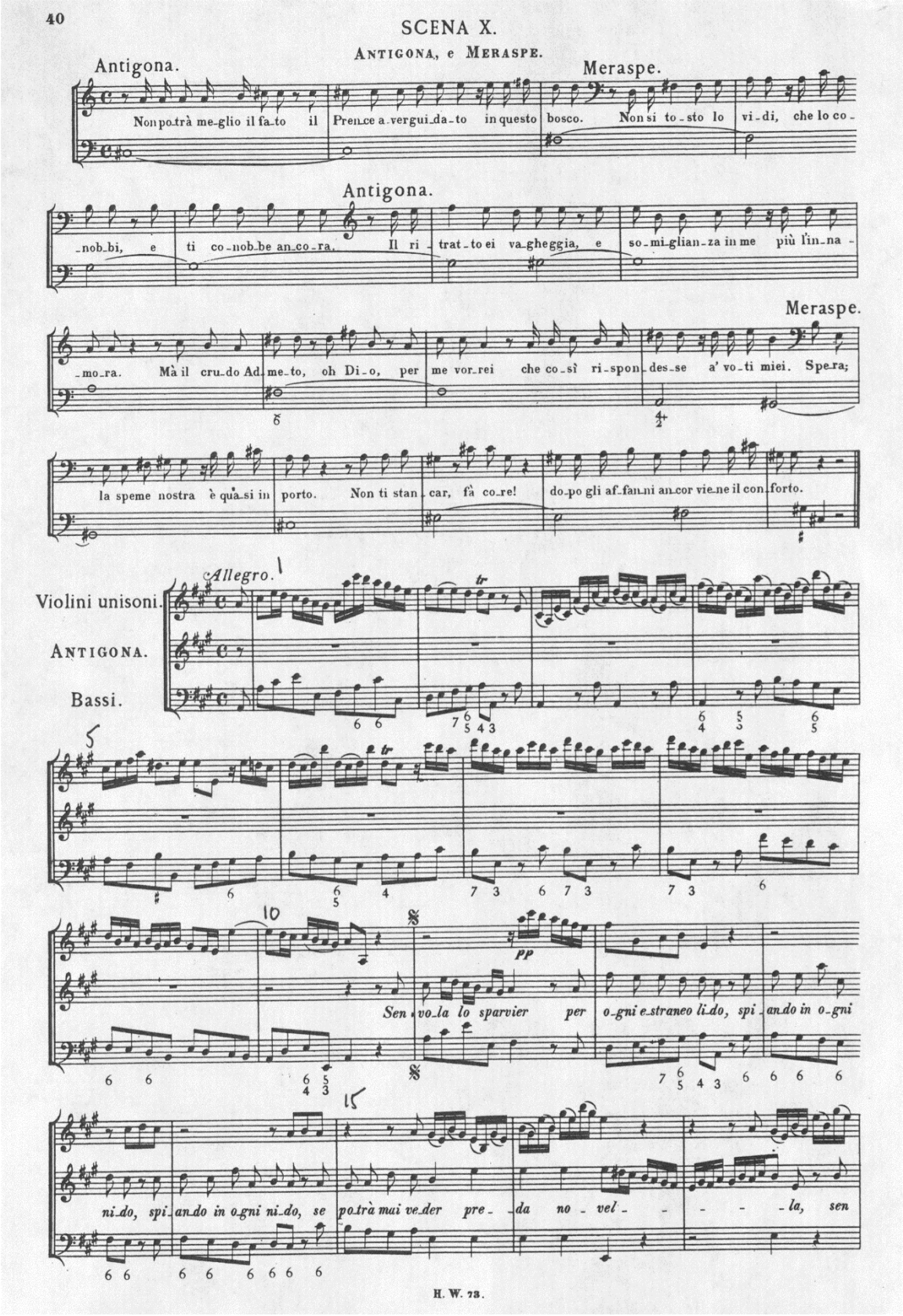

72
Ti vorrei scacciar dal se_no, scacciar dal se_no, mà non ho vigor ba_stante; chi non pro_va il tuo ve_le_no, nò, non sà, nò,
70
nò, non sà che co_sa è a_mor, nò, non sà che co_sa è a_mor; chi non pro_va il tuo ve_le_no, nò, non sà, nò, non
Adagio.
75
Tutti.
78
sà che co_sa è a_mor.
Dal Segno.
SCENA VIII.
ADMETO solo.
Adagio.
Violino I.
Violino II.
Viola.
ADMETO.
Bassi.
Qui_vi trà que_sti so_li_ta_rii or_ro_ri, lon_tan dall' al_tre cu_re,
ven_go a sfo_gar gl'in_ter_ni miei do_lo_ri. Ad_me_to, e che fa_rai? frà



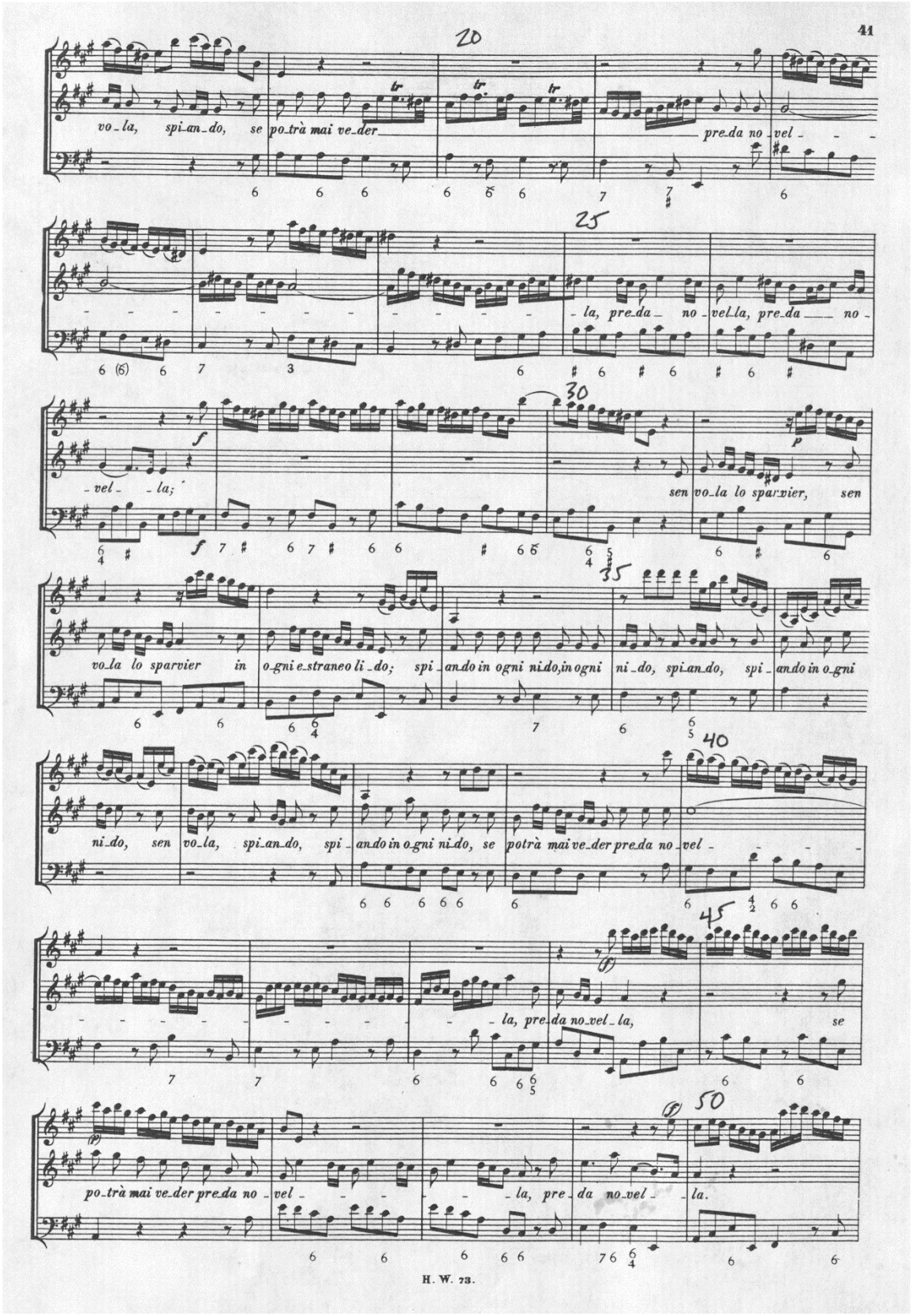
Appendix A, Example 2

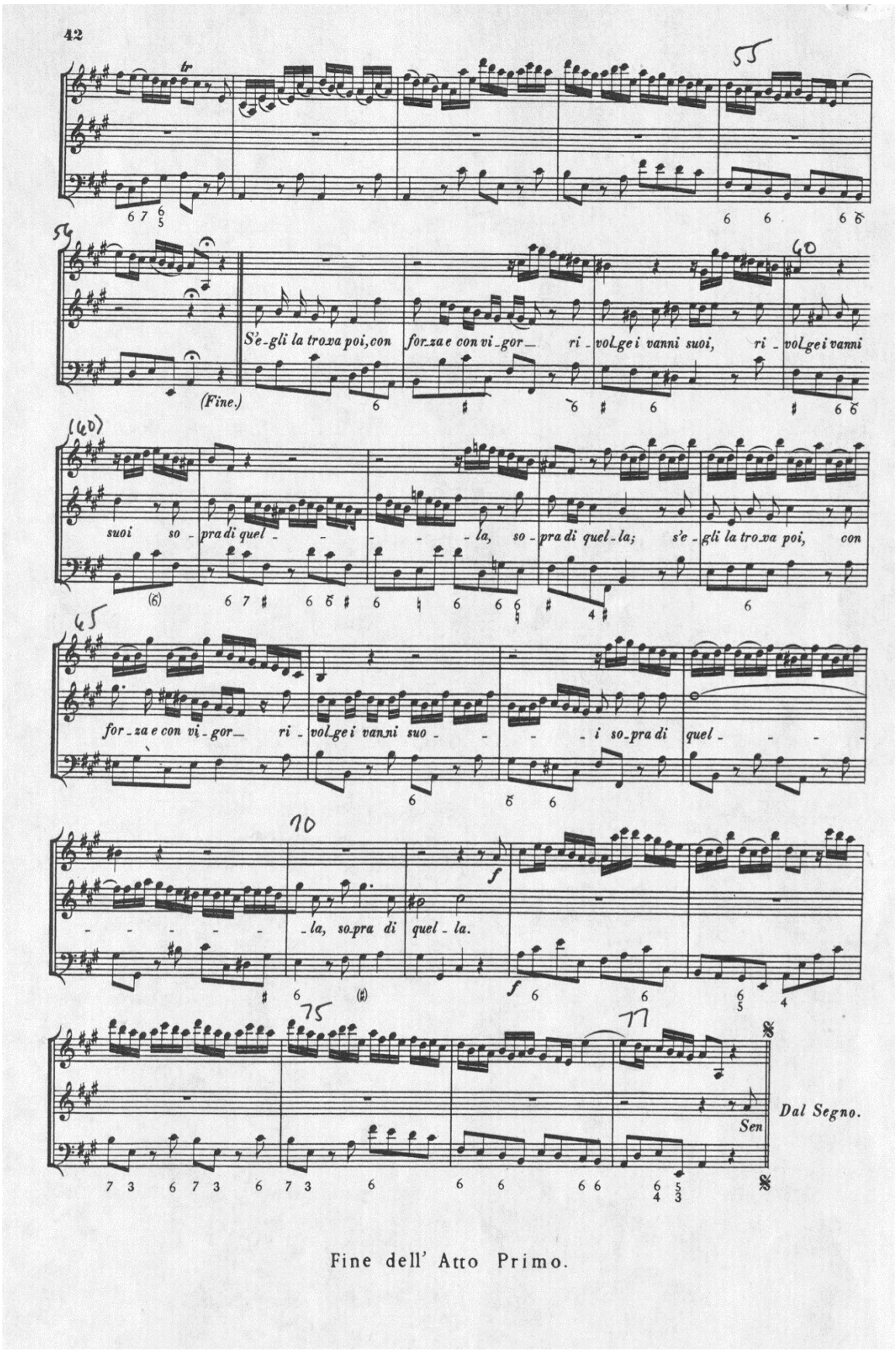

103
10
15
20
25
30
gi_ro, e l'er_be e i fior ri_ mi_ro far_si più vaghi e bel_li, più bel_li, più va_ghi, più
vaghi, vaghi e bel_li, per chè il mio ben frà lor mosse le pian_
te;
la dò_ve gli oc_chi io gi_ro, e l'er_be, e i fior ri_
mi_ro far_si più va_ghi e bel_li, più vaghi, va_ghi e bel_li, più bel_li, più
va_ghi, più va_ghi e bel_li, per_chè il mio ben frà lor mos_se le pian_
te, per_chè il mio ben frà
H.W. 23


104
lor mos - se le pian - te, mos - se le pian -
35
te, per - chè il mio ben frà lor mos - se le pian -
Adagio.
39
f
te.
(Fine.)
40
Ogn' au - ra e dol - ce ven - to a me por - ge con - ten - to, e il can - to de - gli au - gel -
45
- li, per - chè a me di - ca ogn' or: e - gli è co - stan -
- te, e - gli è co - stan - te, per - chè a me di - ca ogn'
50
f
or: e - gli è co - stan - te.
53
Dal Segno.
Là

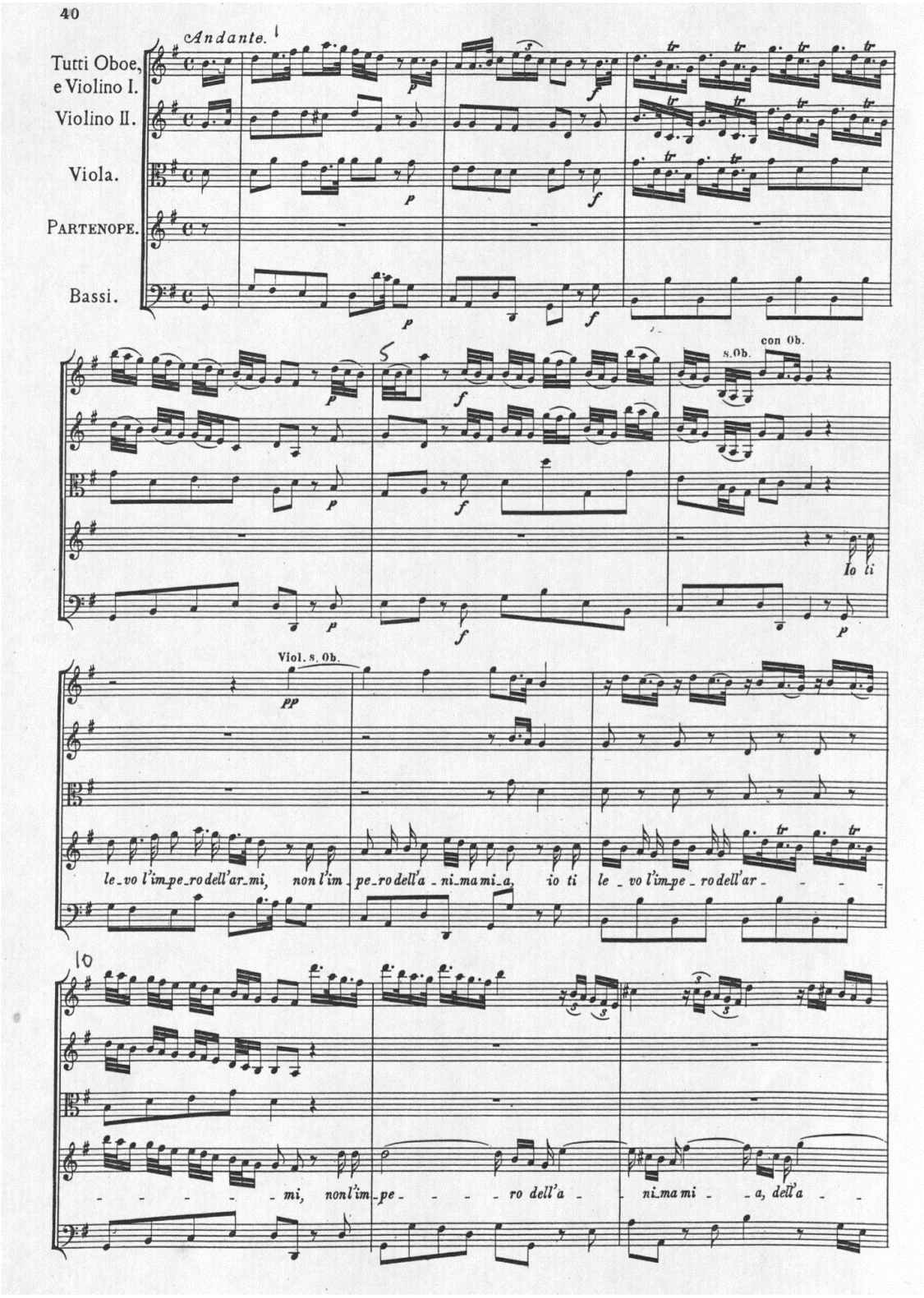


Appendix A, Example 3

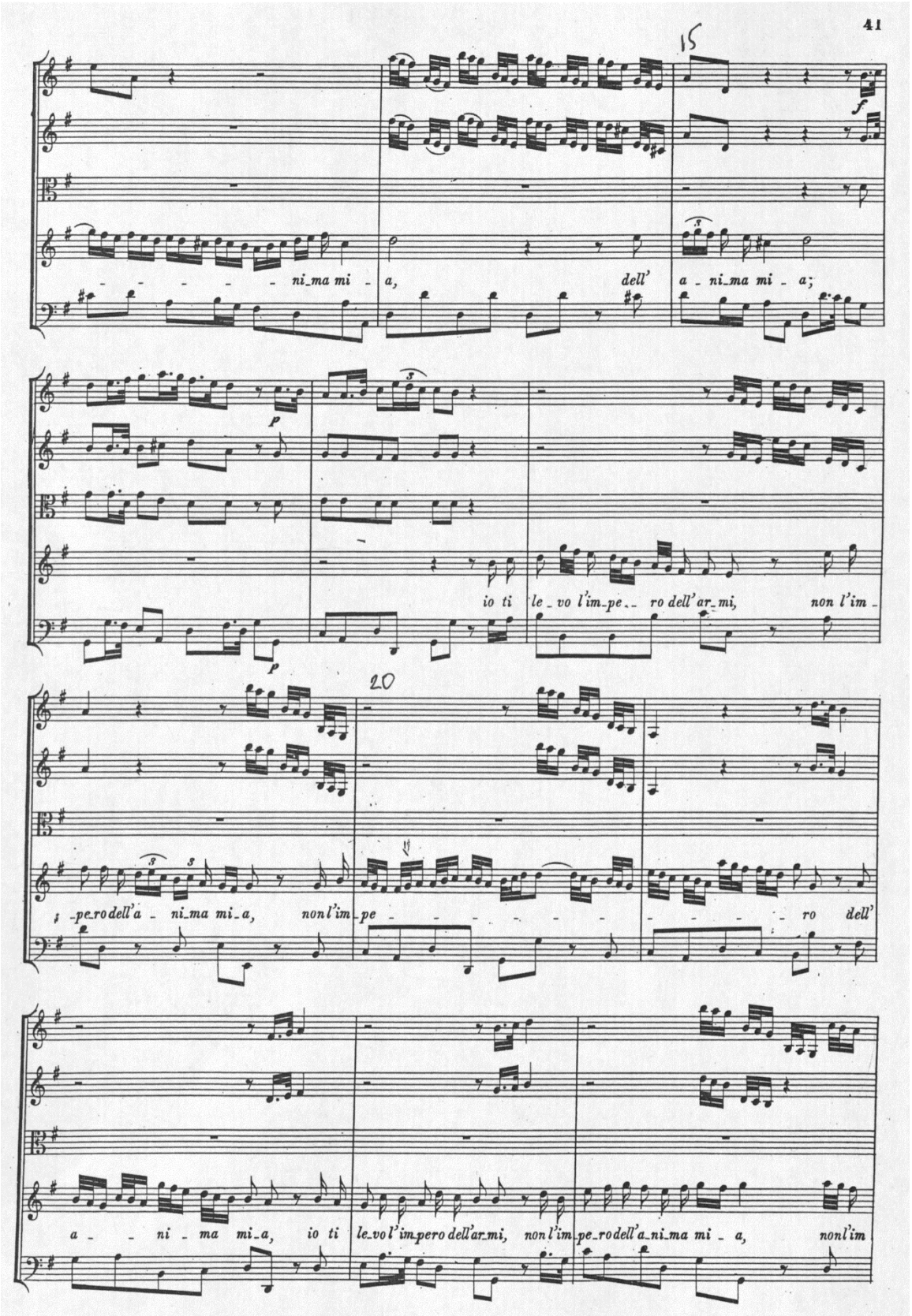

41
20
vo_la, spi_an_do, se po_trà mai ve_der pre_da no_vel
25
la, pre_da no_vel_la, pre_da no
30
vel la;
sen vo_la lo spar_vier, sen
35
vo_la lo sparvier in o_gni e_straneo li_do; spi_an_do in ogni ni_do, in ogni ni_do, spi_an_do, spi_an_do in o_gni
40
ni_do, sen vo_la, spi_an_do, spi_an_do in o_gni ni_do, se potrà mai ve_der pre_da no_vel
45
la, pre_da no_vel_la, se
50
po_trà mai ve_der pre_da no_vel la, pre_da no_vel la.
H. W. 23.

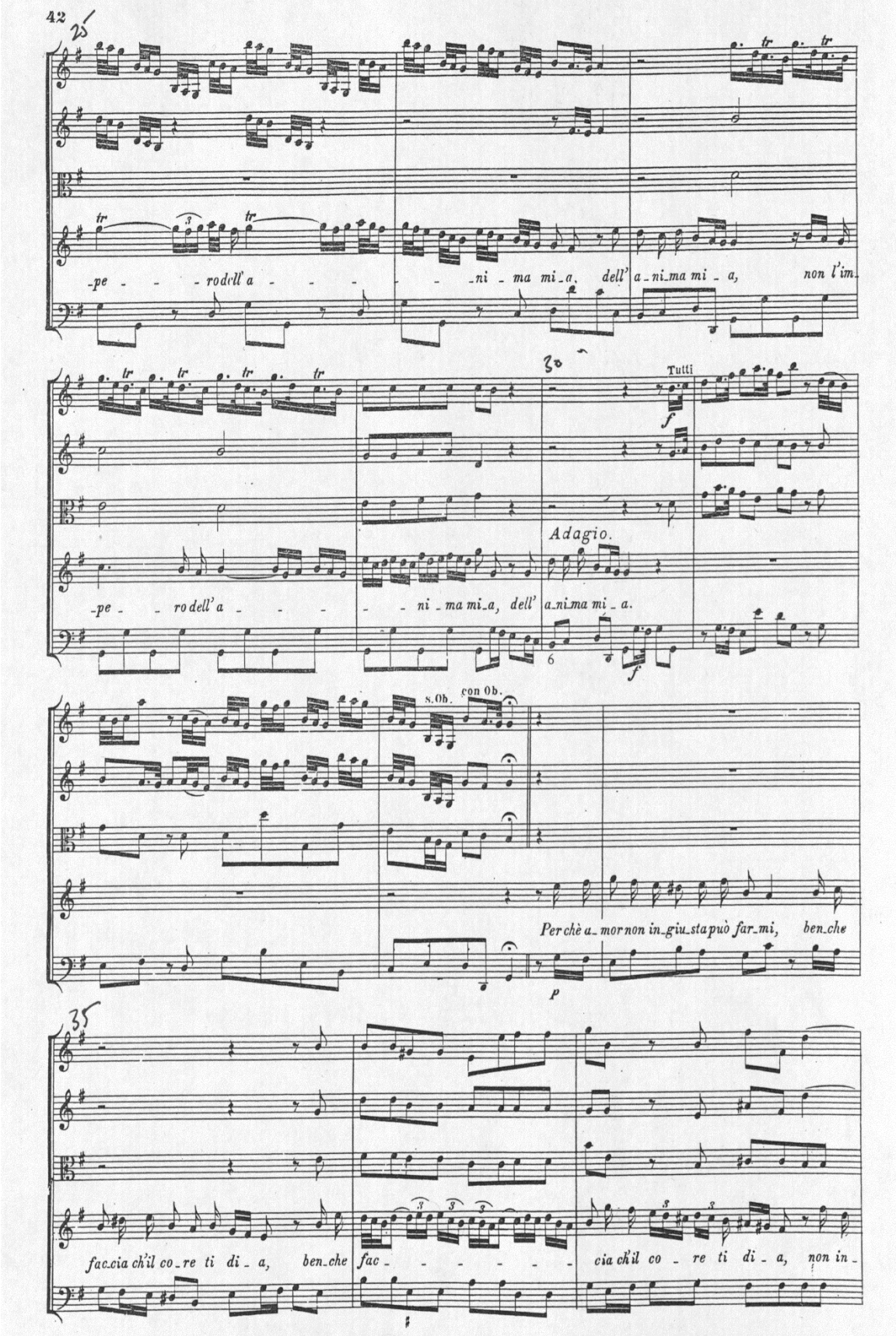


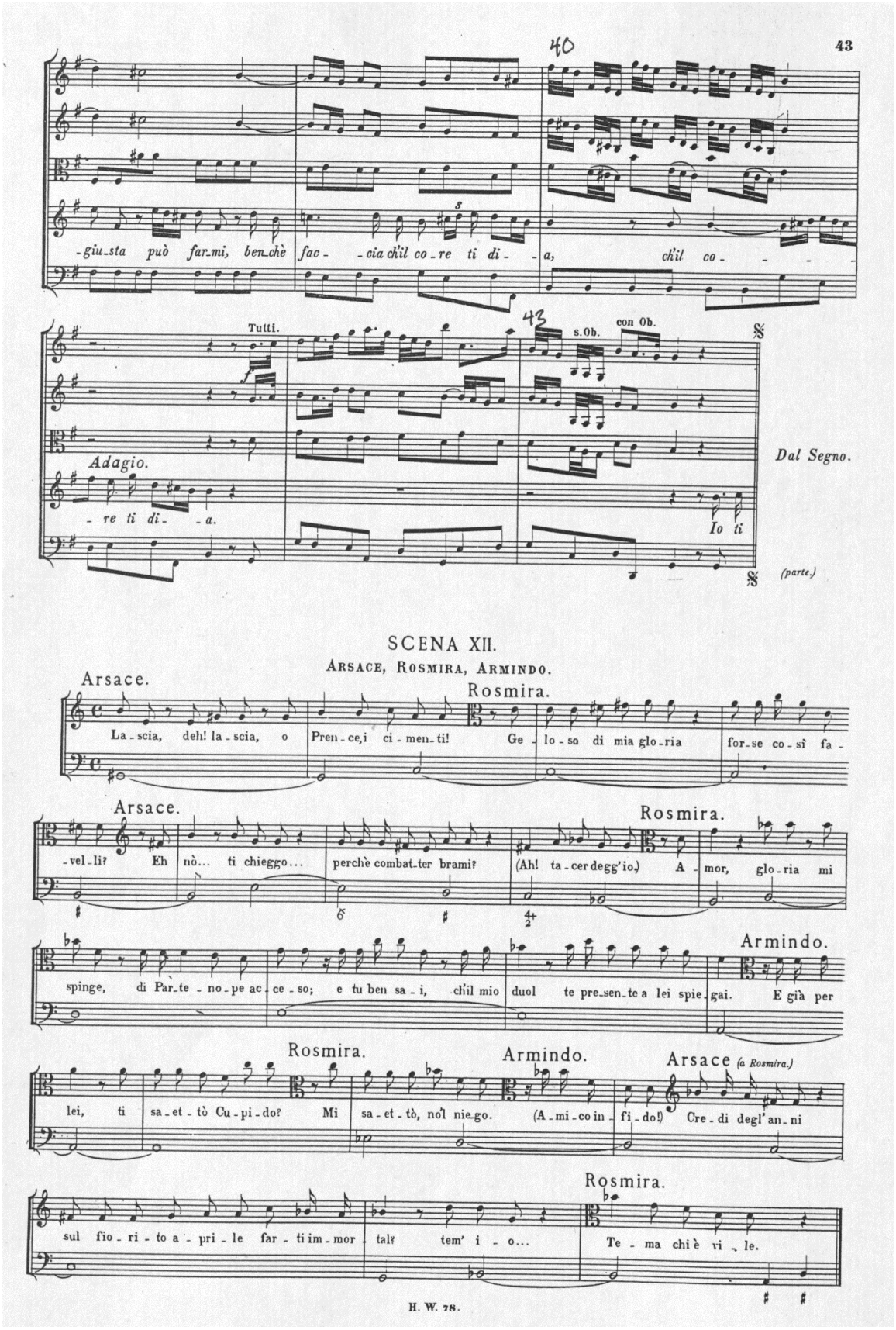
Fine dell' Atto Primo.

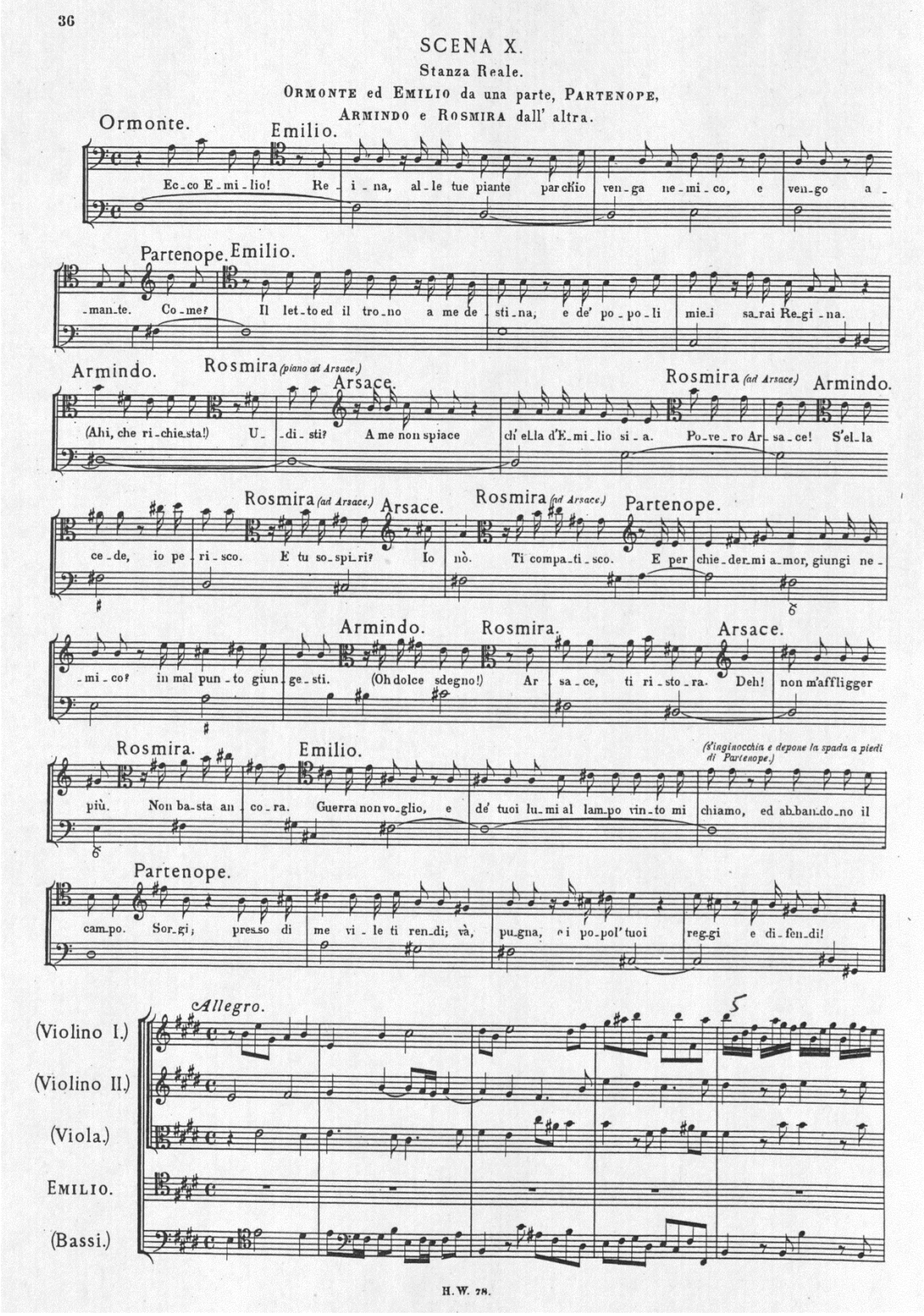


Appendix B, Example 1


41
15
ni_ma mi - a, dell' a - ni_ma mi - a;
io ti le_vo l'im_pe_ro dell'ar_mi, non l'im -
20
pe_ro dell'a - ni_ma mi_a, non l'im_pe - - - - - - - - ro dell'
a - - ni - ma mi_a, io ti le_vo l'im_pero dell'ar_mi, non l'im_pe_ro dell'a_ni_ma mi - a, non l'im


42
25
-pe - - - rodell'a - - - - - - ni - ma mi_a, dell' a_ni_ma mi - a, non l'im
30
Tutti
f
Adagio.
-pe - - rodell'a - - - - - ni_ma mi_a, dell' a_ni_ma mi_a.
6
f
s.Ob.
con Ob.
Perchè a_mor non in_giu_sta può far_mi, ben_che
p
35
fac_cia ch'il co_re ti di_a, ben_che fac - - - - - - cia ch'il co - re ti di - a, non in_


40
43
-giu-sta può far-mi, ben-chè fac- -cia ch'il co-re ti di- -a, ch'il co- - - -
Tutti.
43
s.Ob.
con Ob.
Adagio.
-re ti di- -a.
Io ti
Dal Segno.
(parte.)
SCENA XII.
ARSACE, ROSMIRA, ARMINDO.
Arsace.
La-scia, deh! la-scia, o
Rosmira.
Pren-ce,i ci-men-ti! Ge-lo-so di mia glo-ria for-se co-sì fa-
Arsace.
-vel-li? Eh nò... ti chieggo... perchè combat-ter brami?
Rosmira.
(Ah! ta-cer degg'io,) A-mor, glo-ria mi
spinge, di Par-te-no pe ac-ce-so; e tu ben sa-i, ch'il mio duol te pre-sen-te a lei spie-gai.
Armindo.
E già per
Rosmira.
lei, ti sa-et-tò Cu-pi-do? Mi
Armindo.
sa-et-tò, no'l nie-go.
Arsace (a Rosmira.)
(A-mi-co in-fi-do!) Cre-di degl'an-ni
Rosmira.
sul fio-ri-to a-pri-le far-ti im-mor-tal? tem' i-o... Te-ma chi è vi-le.
H. W. 78.



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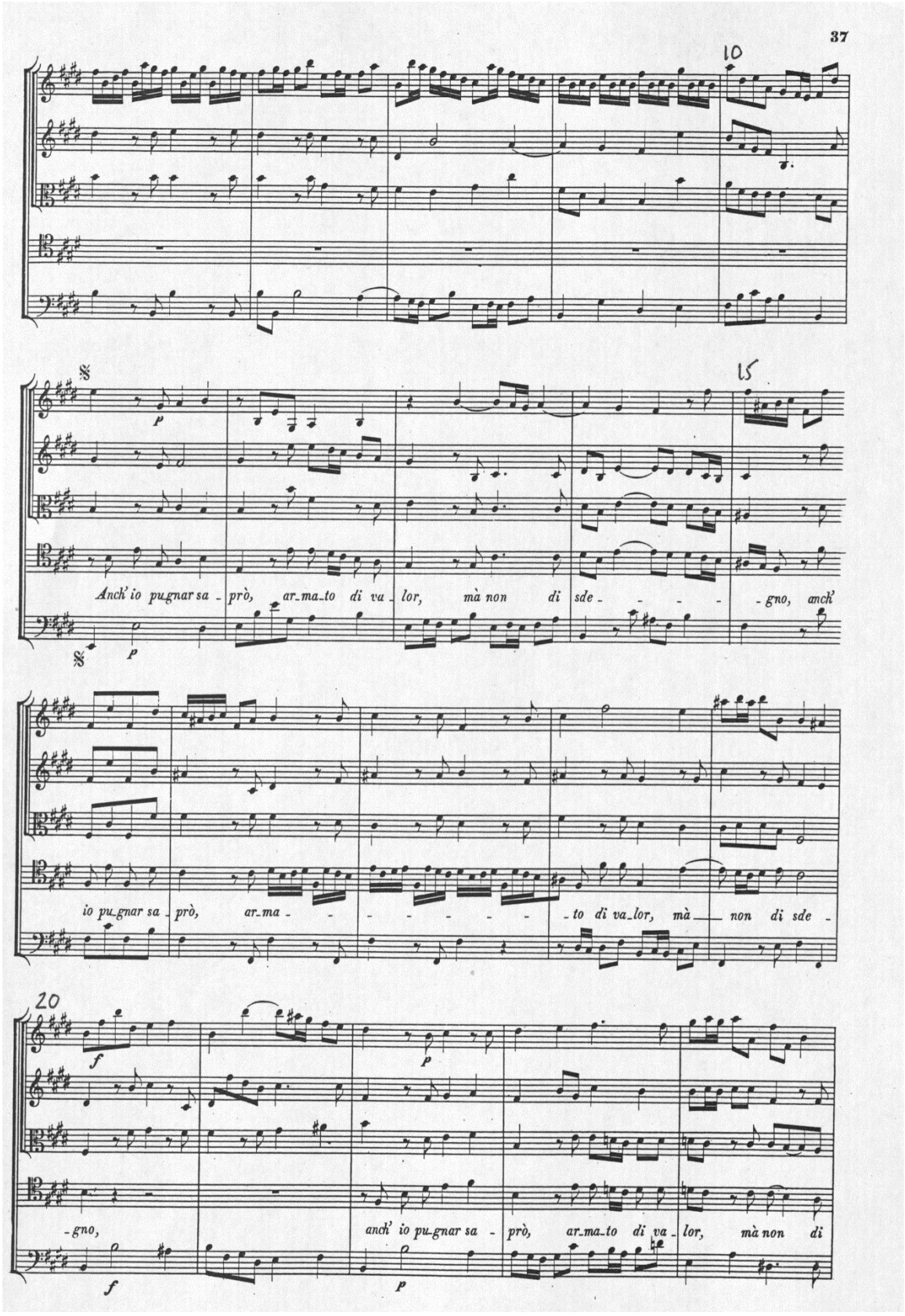
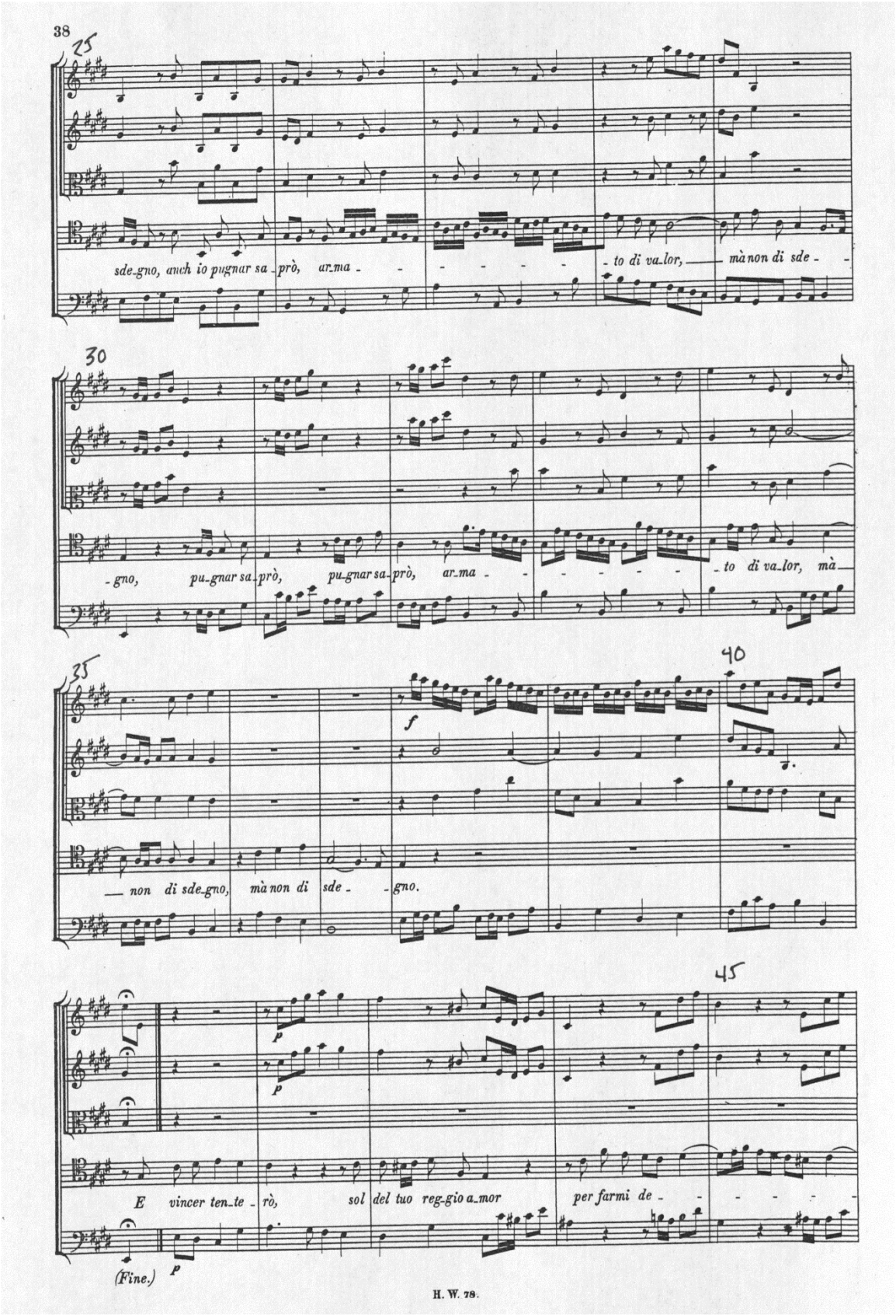
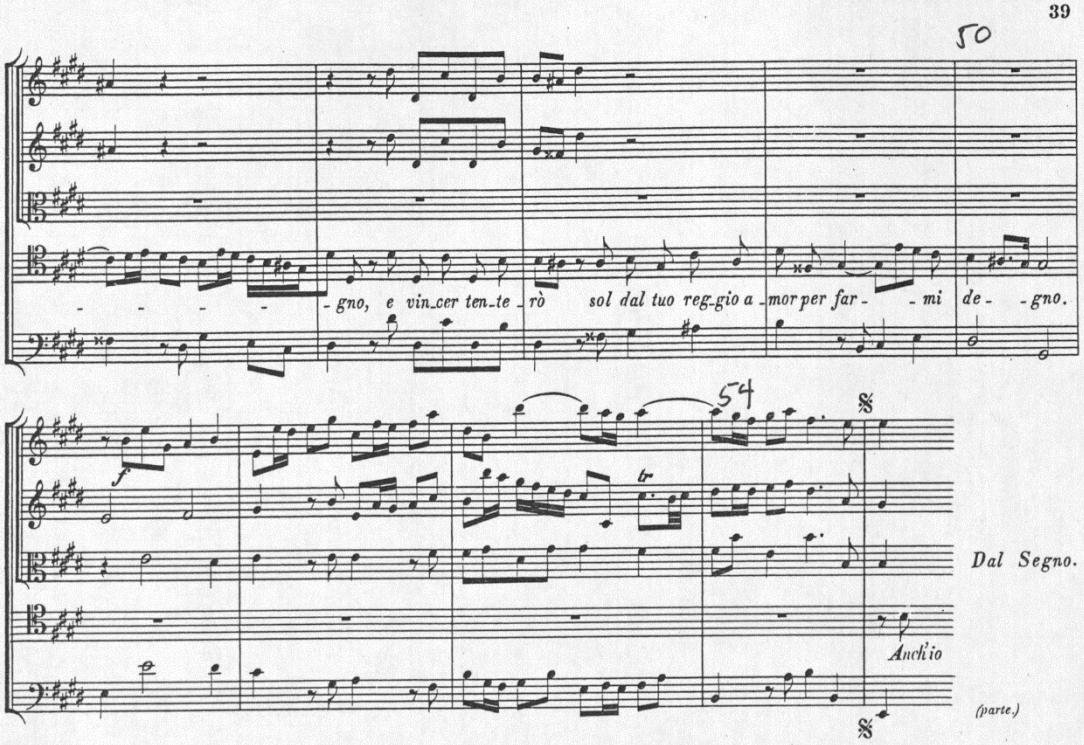
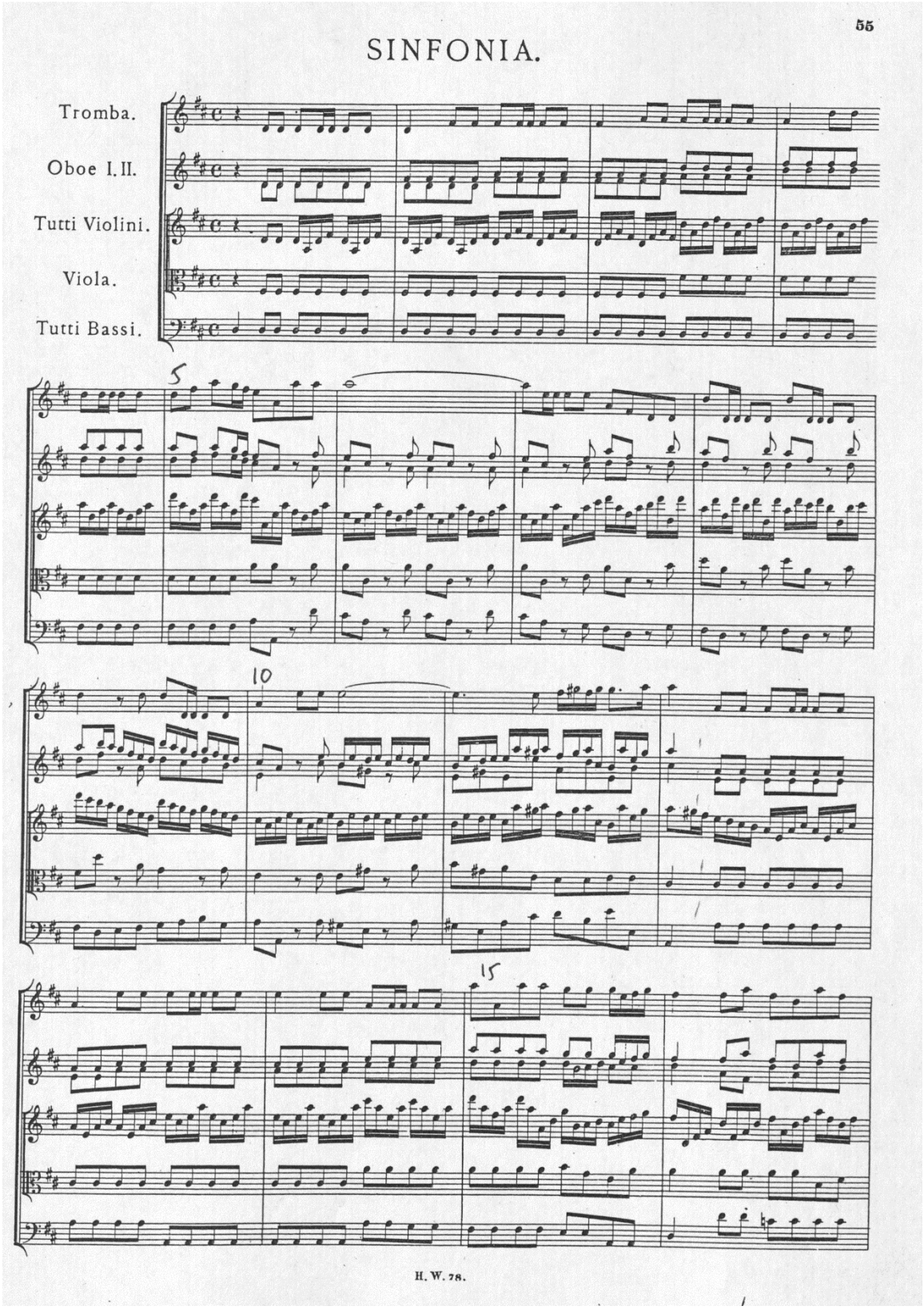

37
10
15
20
Anch' io pugnar sa - prò, ar_ma_to di va_lor, mà non di sde - - - - gno, anch'
io pu_gnar sa - prò, ar_ma - - - - - - to di va_lor, mà non di sde -
- gno, anch' io pu_gnar sa - prò, ar_ma_to di va_lor, mà non di


38
25
sde_gno, anch io pugnar sa_prò, ar_ma - - - - - to di va_lor, — mà non di sde - -
30
- gno, pu_gnar sa_prò, pu_gnar sa_prò, ar_ma - - - - - to di va_lor, mà
35
40
f
— non di sde_gno, mà non di sde - - gno.
45
p
p
E vincer ten_te_ - rò, sol del tuo reg_gio a_mor per farmi de - - - - -
(Fine.)
p
H. W. 78.



SCENA XI.

PARTENOPE, ARSACE, ROSMIRA, ARMINDO, ed ORMONTE.



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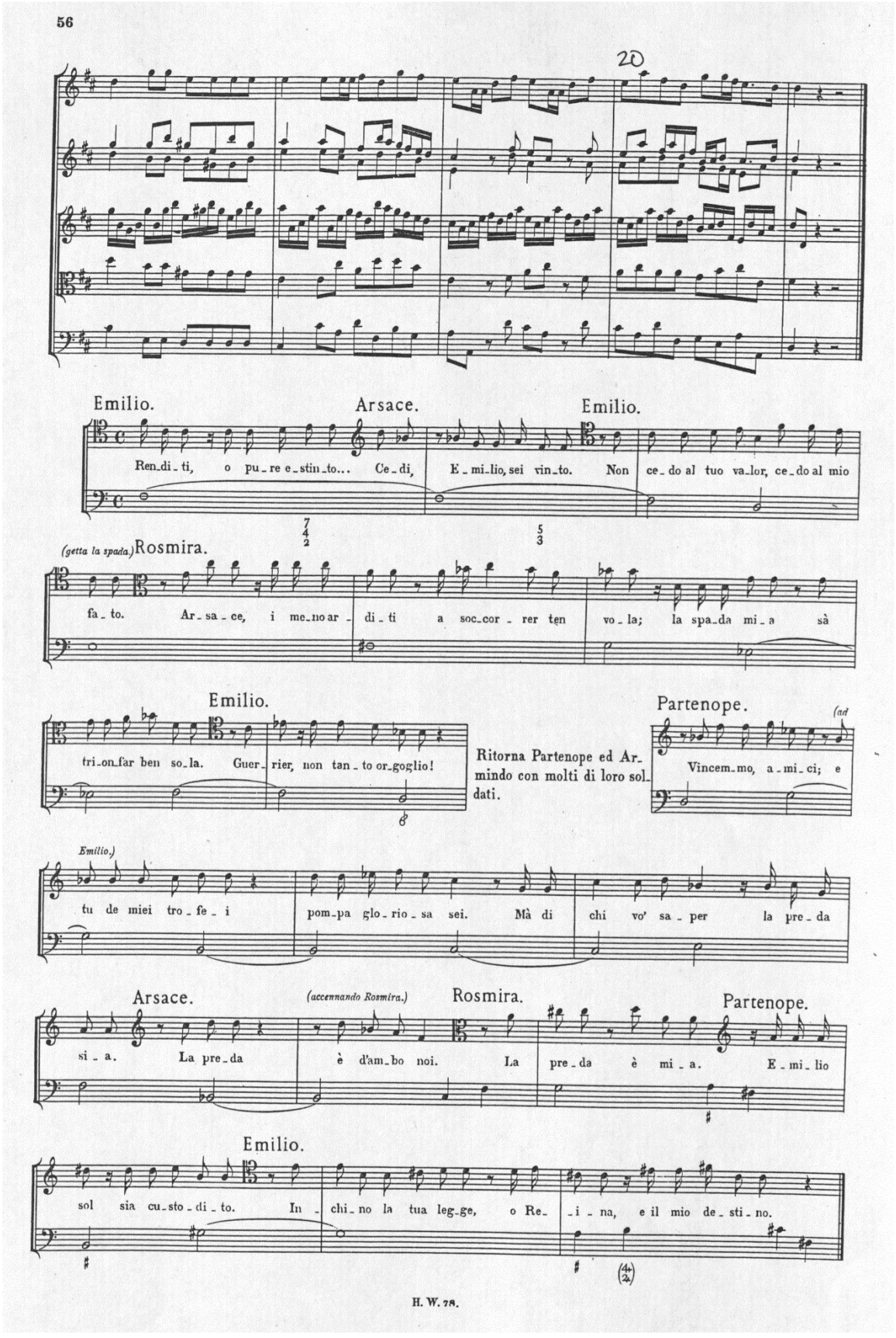
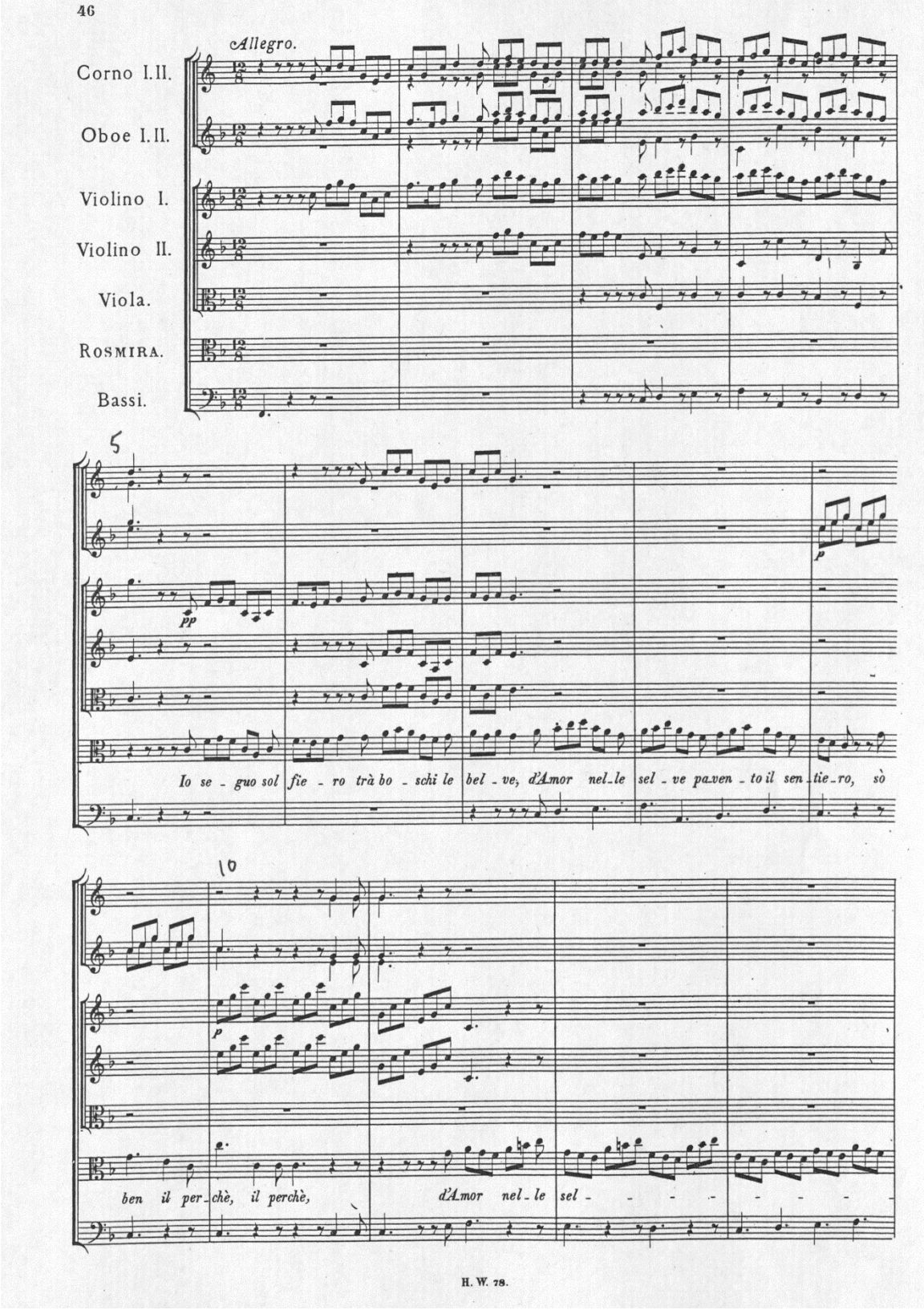
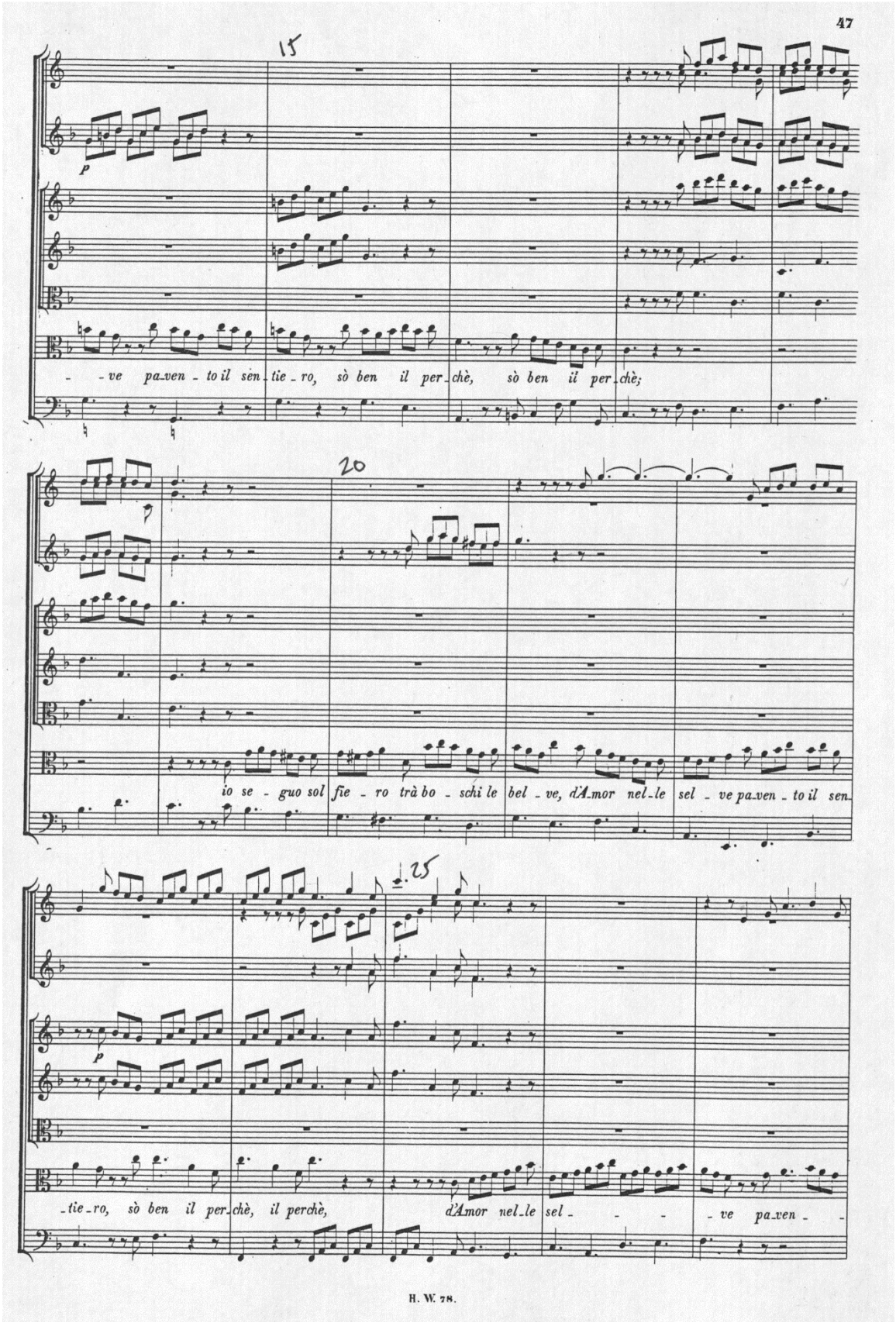
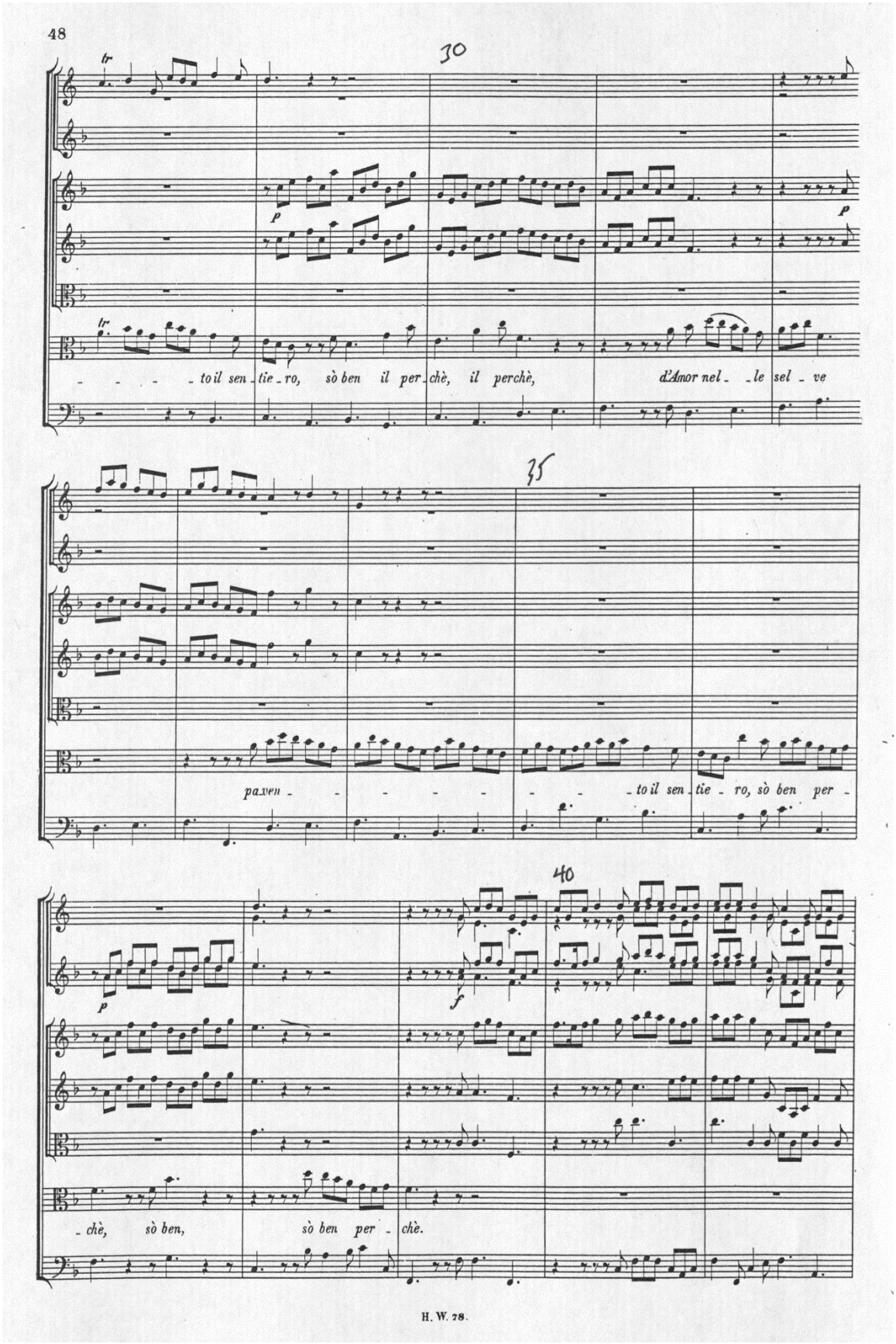
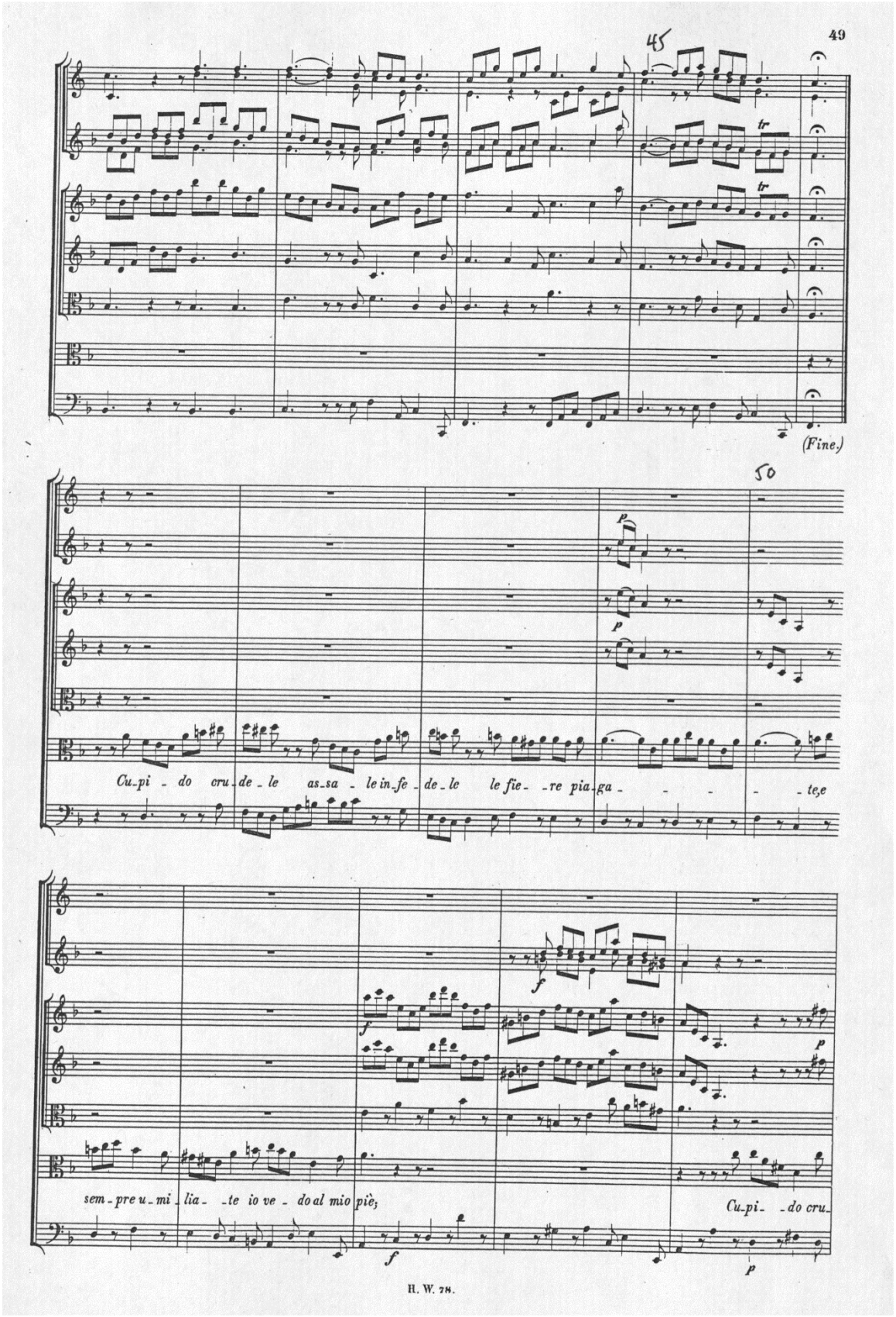

56
20
Emilio.
Arsace.
Emilio.
Ren_di_ti, o pu_re e_stin_to... Ce_di, E_mi_lio, sei vin_to. Non ce_do al tuo va_lor, ce_do al mio
(getta la spada.) Rosmira.
fa_to. Ar_sa_ce, i me_no ar_di_ti a soc_cor_rer ten vo_la; la spa_da mi_a sà
Emilio.
tri_on_far ben so_la. Guer_rier, non tan_to or_goglio!
Ritorna Partenope ed Armindo con molti di loro soldati.
Partenope.
(ad
Vincem_mo, a_mi_ci; e
Emilio.)
tu de miei tro_fe_i pom_pa glo_rio_sa sei. Mà di chi vo' sa_per la pre_da
Arsace.
(accennando Rosmira.)
Rosmira.
Partenope.
si_a. La pre_da è d'am_bo noi. La pre_da è mi_a. E_mi_lio
Emilio.
sol sia cu_sto_di_to. In_chi_no la tua leg_ge, o Re_i_na, e il mio de_sti_no.
H. W. 78.

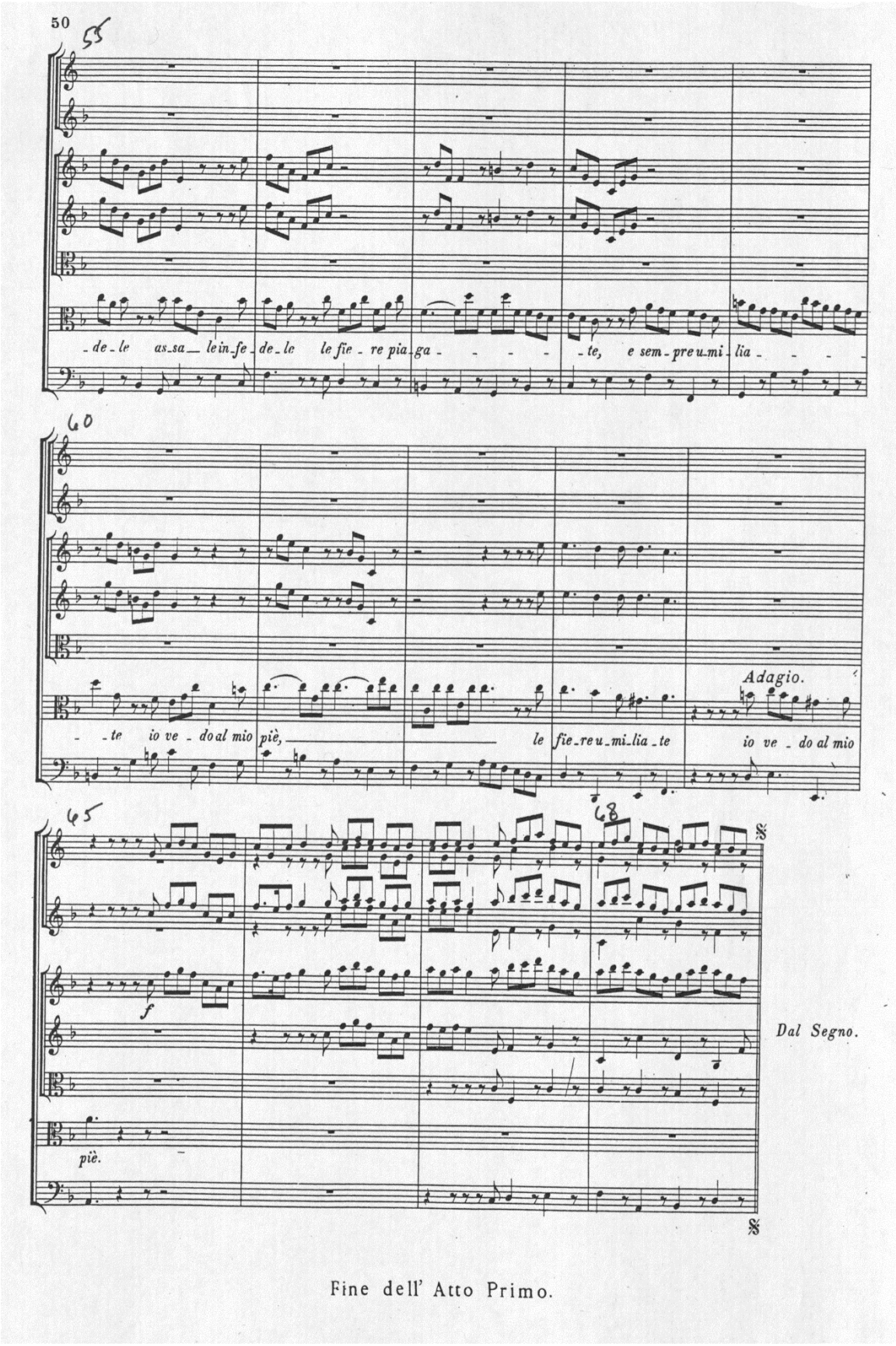


Appendix B, Example 4

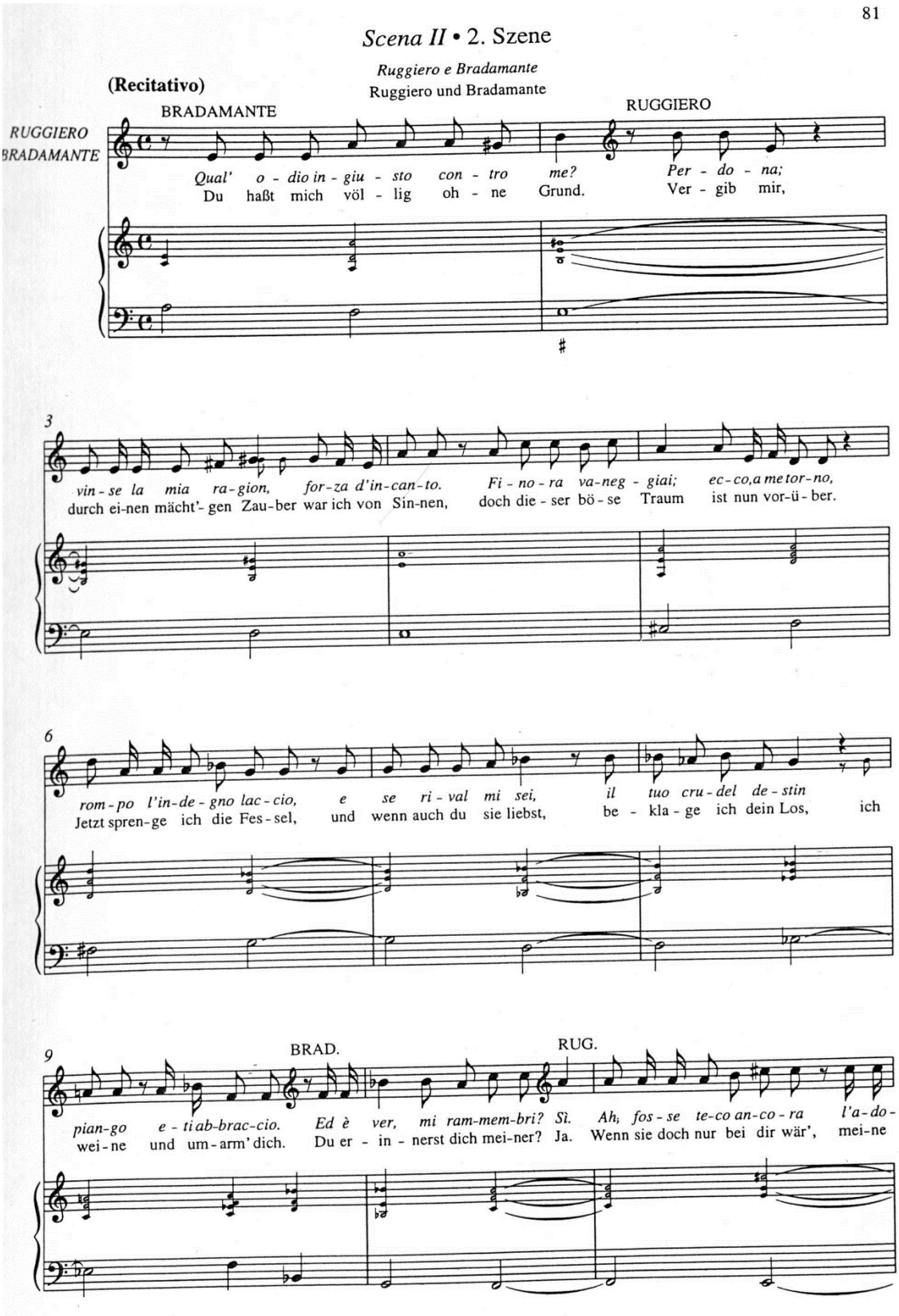

47
15
P
- - ve pa-ven - to il sen - tie - ro, sò ben il per - chè, sò ben il per - chè;
20
io se - guo sol fie - ro trà bo - schi le bel - ve, d'Amor nel - le sel - ve pa-ven - to il sen
25
P
- tie - ro, sò ben il per - chè, il perchè, d'Amor nel - le sel - - - - ve pa-ven - -
H. W. 78.


48
30
tr
p
tr
- - - - to il sen - tie - ro, sò ben il per - chè, il perchè, d'Amor nel - - le sel - ve
35
pa-ven - - - - - - to il sen - tie - ro, sò ben per -
40
p
f
- chè, sò ben, sò ben per - chè.
H. W. 78.

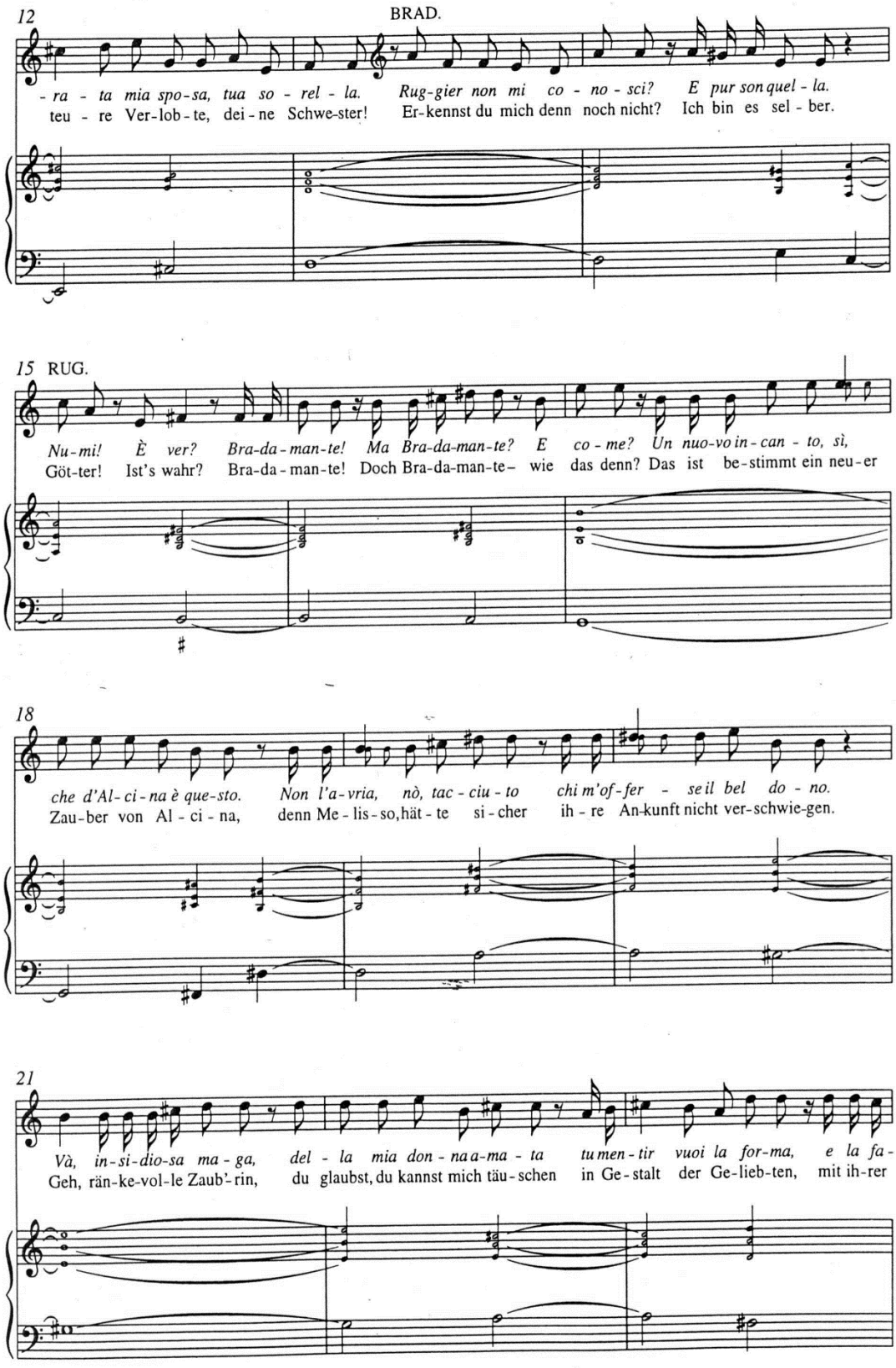

45
49
tr
tr
(Fine.)
50
p
p
Cu-pi - do cru-de - le as-sa - le in-fe - de - le le fie - re pia-ga - - - - te,e
f
f
p
sem - pre u - mi - lia - te io ve - do al mio piè;
Cu-pi - do cru-
f
p
H. W. 78.

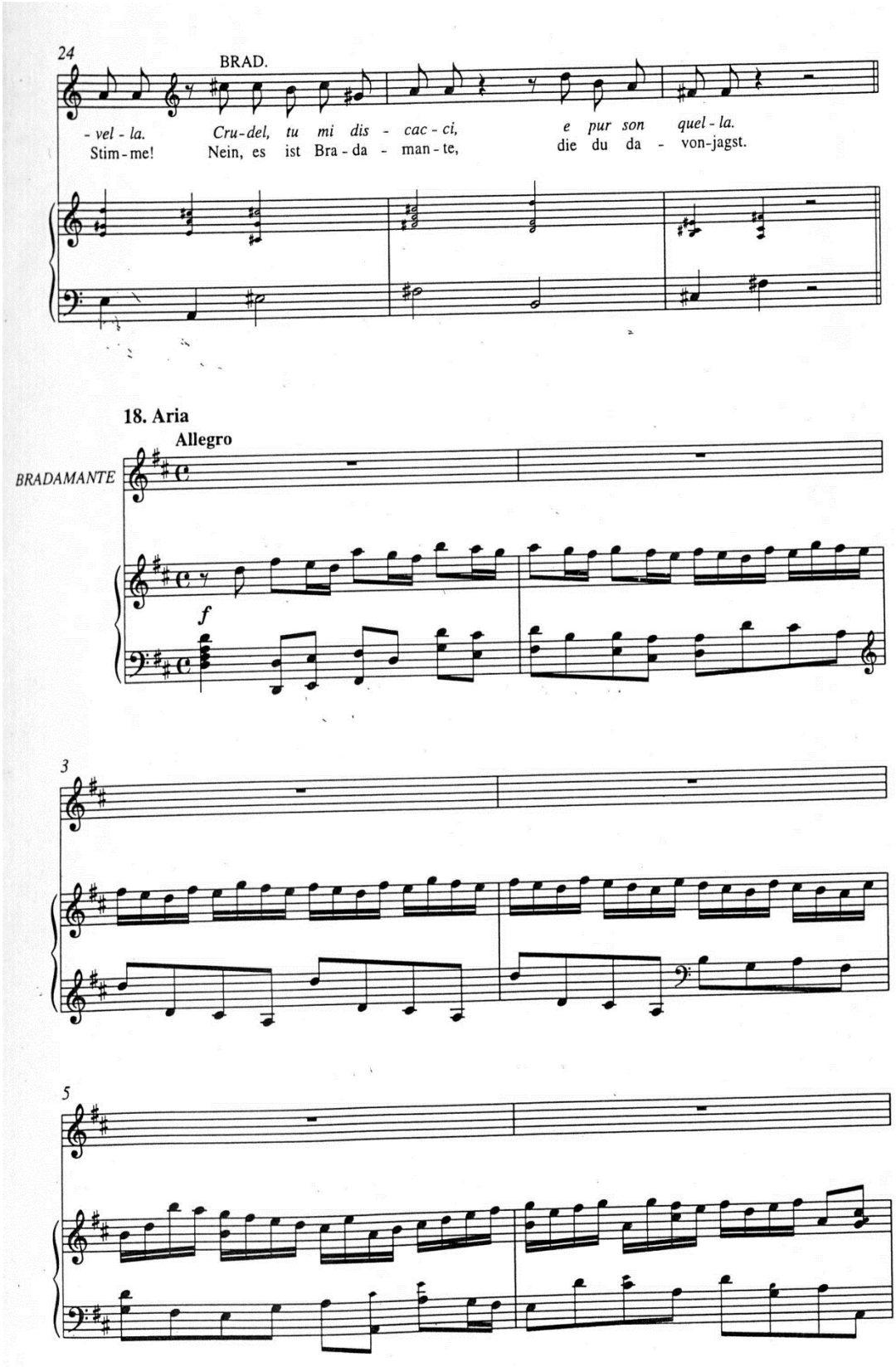


Fine dell' Atto Primo.

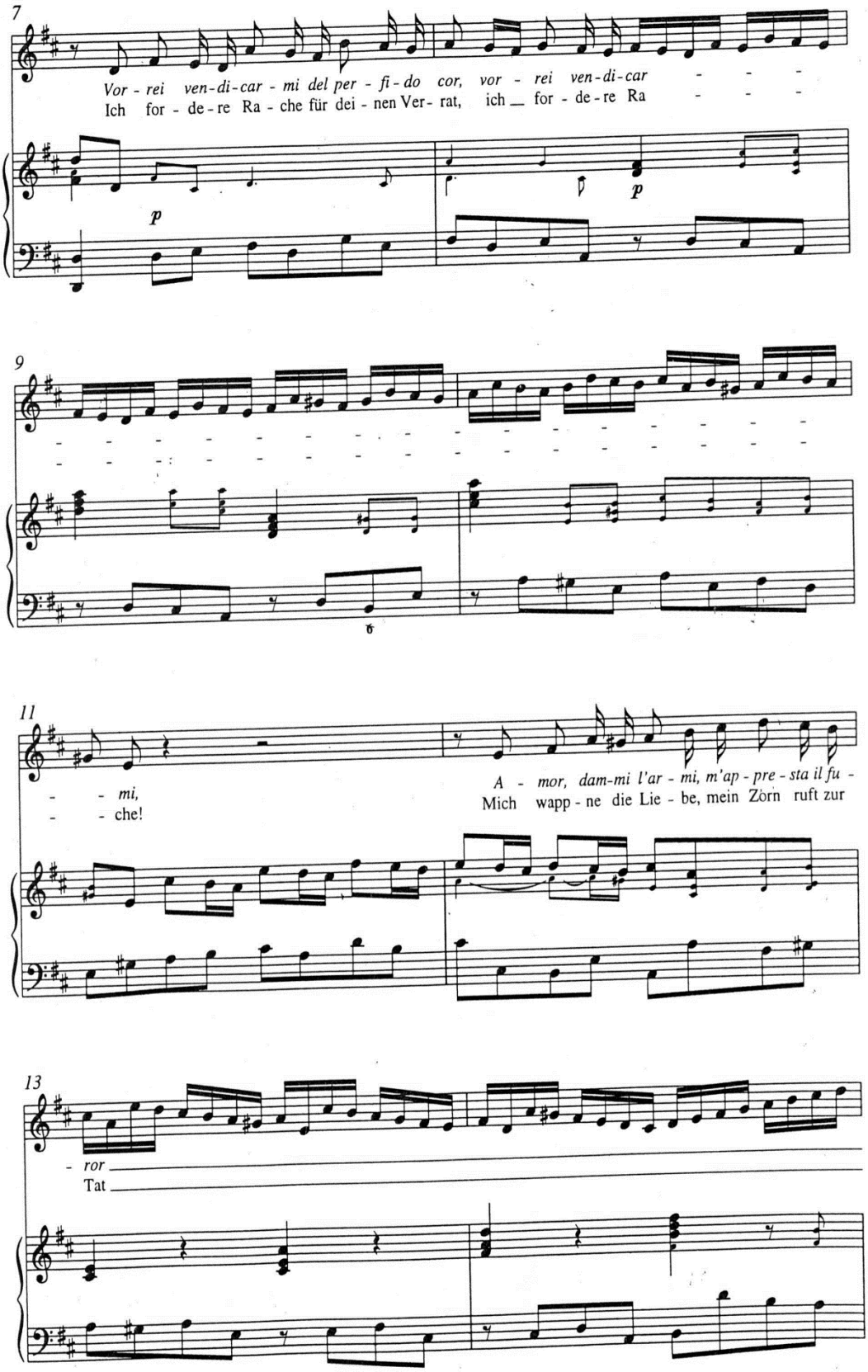


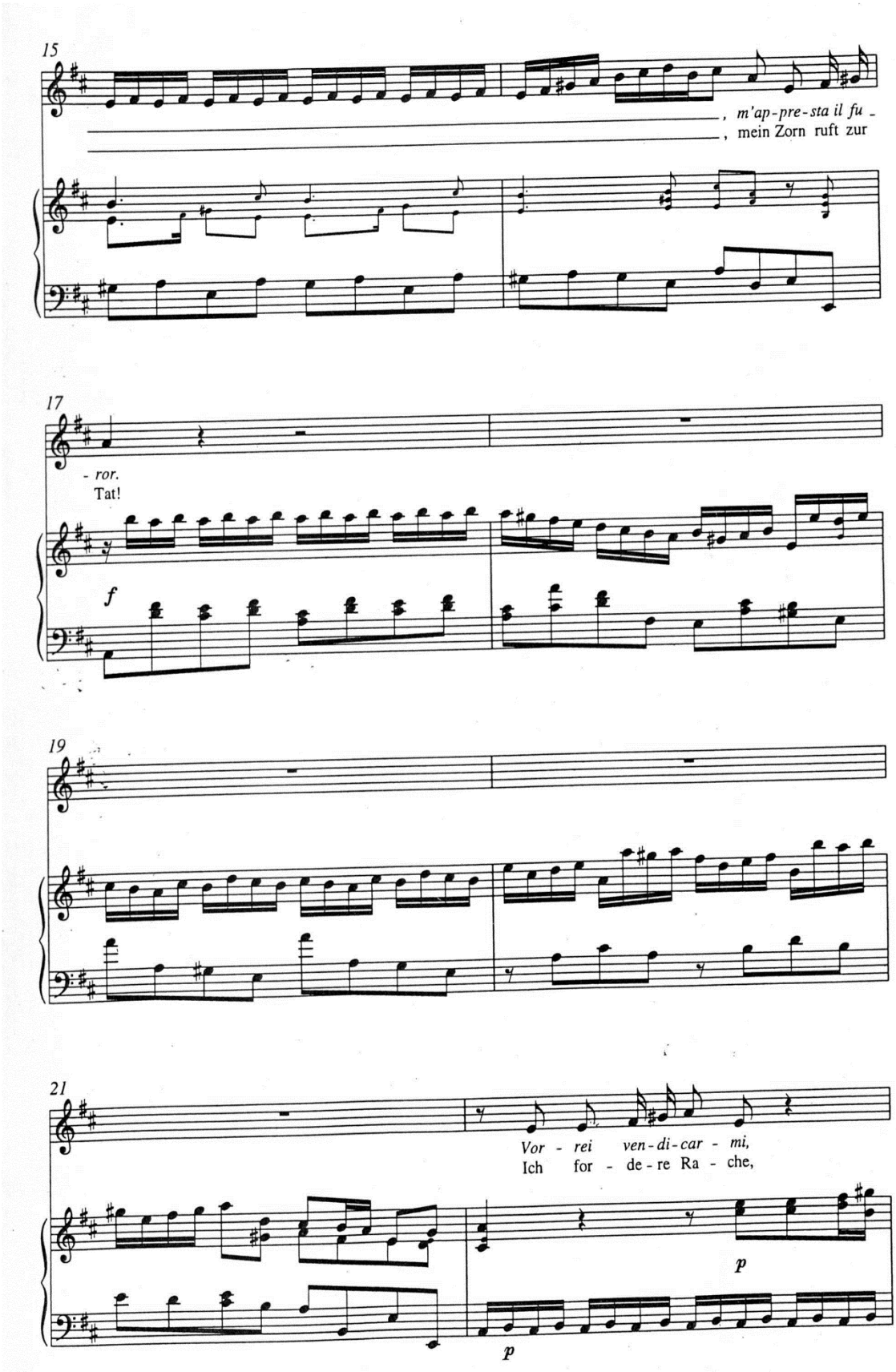
Appendix C, Example 1a (Vocal score)

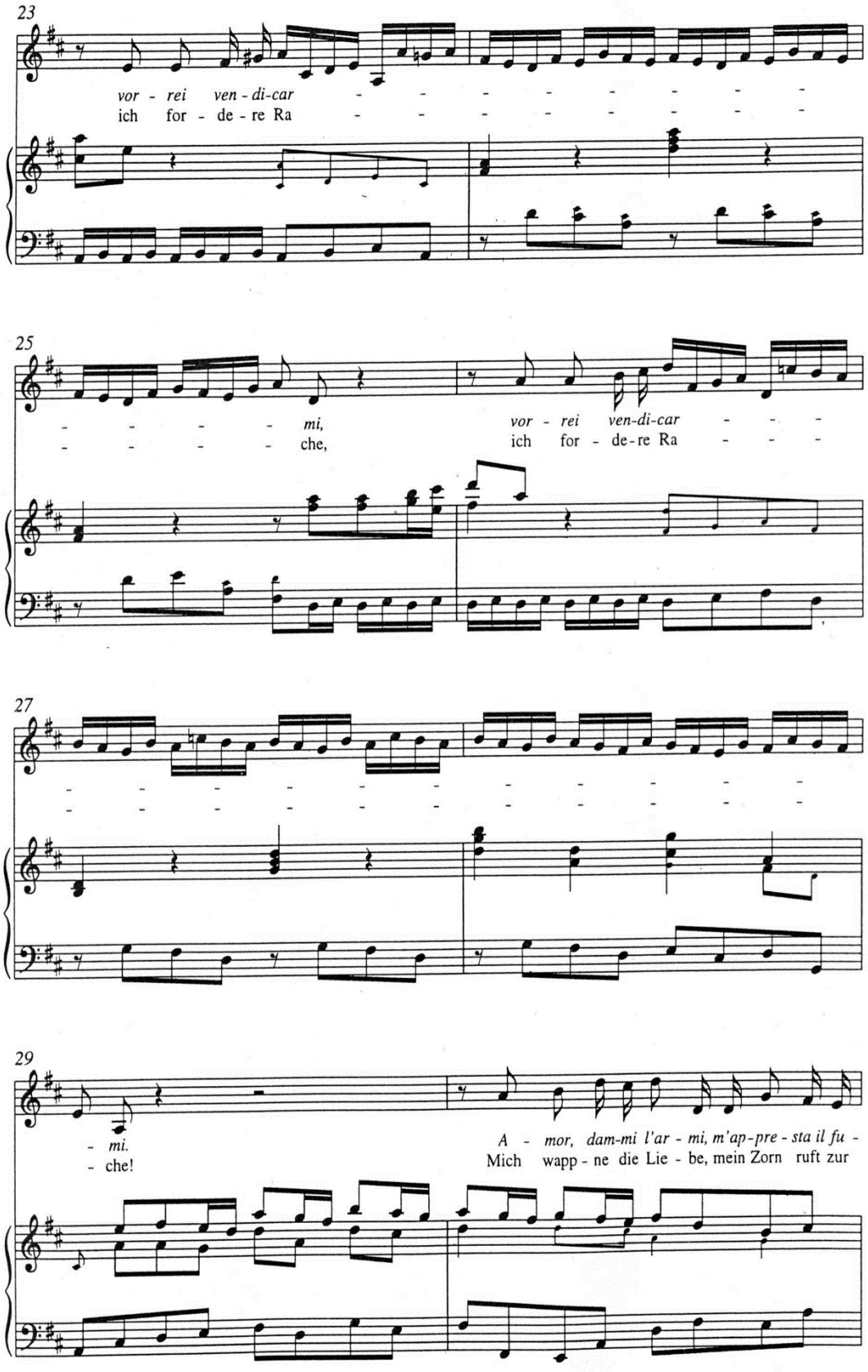

12
BRAD.
- ra - ta mia spo-sa, tua so - rel - la. Rug-gier non mi co - no - sci? E pur son quel - la.
teu - re Ver-lob-te, dei-ne Schwe-ster! Er-kennst du mich denn noch nicht? Ich bin es sel - ber.
15 RUG.
Nu-mi! È ver? Bra-da-man-te! Ma Bra-da-man-te? E co-me? Un nuo-vo in-can - to, sì,
Göt-ter! Ist's wahr? Bra-da-man-te! Doch Bra-da-man-te- wie das denn? Das ist be-stimmt ein neu-er
18
che d'Al-ci-na è que-sto. Non l'a-vria, nò, tac-ciu-to chi m'of-fer - se il bel do - no.
Zau-ber von Al - ci - na, denn Me-lis-so, hät-te si-cher ih - re An-kunft nicht ver-schwie-gen.
21
Và, in-si-dio-sa ma - ga, del - la mia don - na a-ma - ta tu men-tir vuoi la for-ma, e la fa-
Geh, rän-ke-vol-le Zaub'-rin, du glaubst, du kannst mich täu-schen in Ge-stalt der Ge-lieb-ten, mit ih-rer

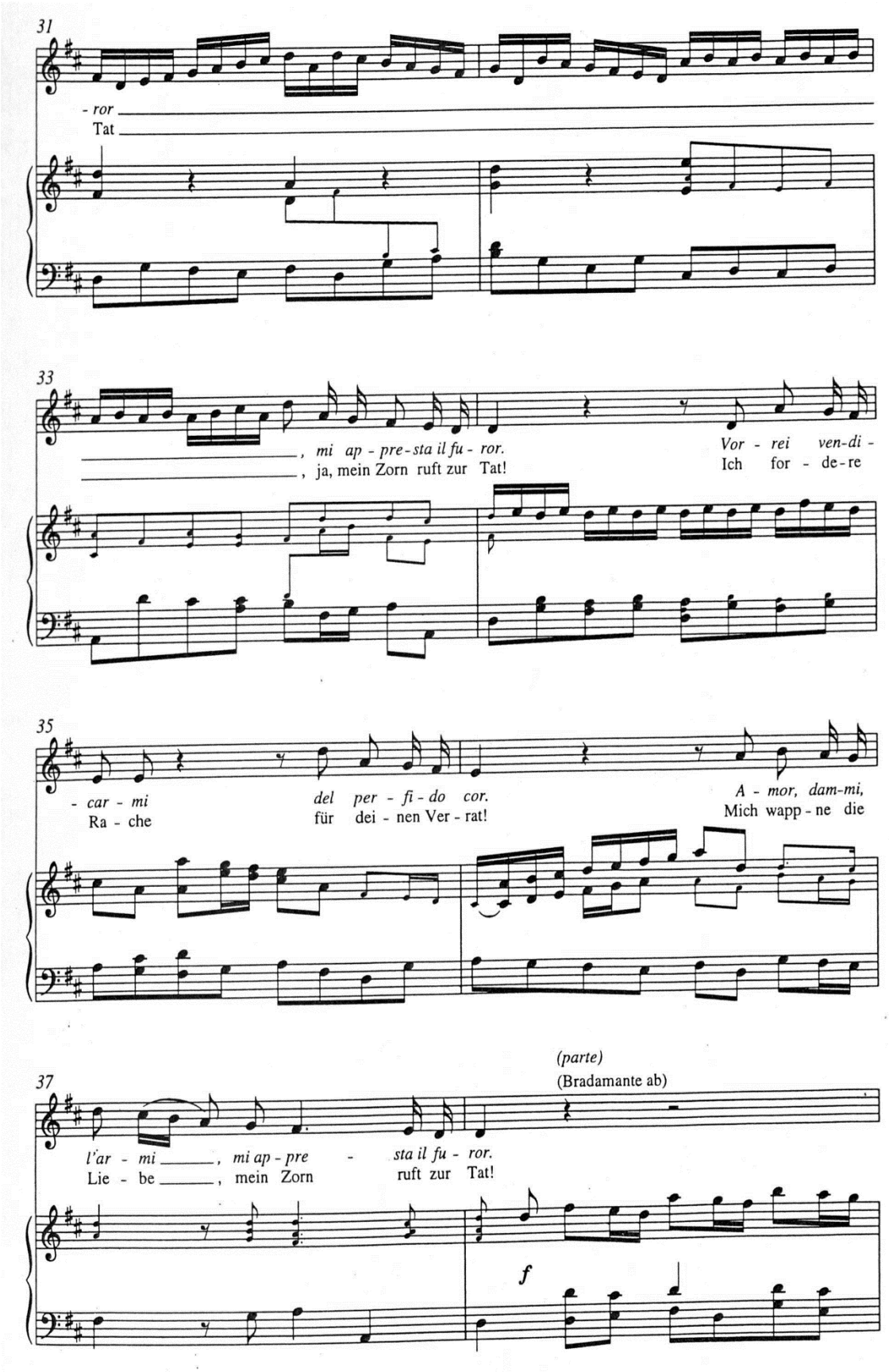


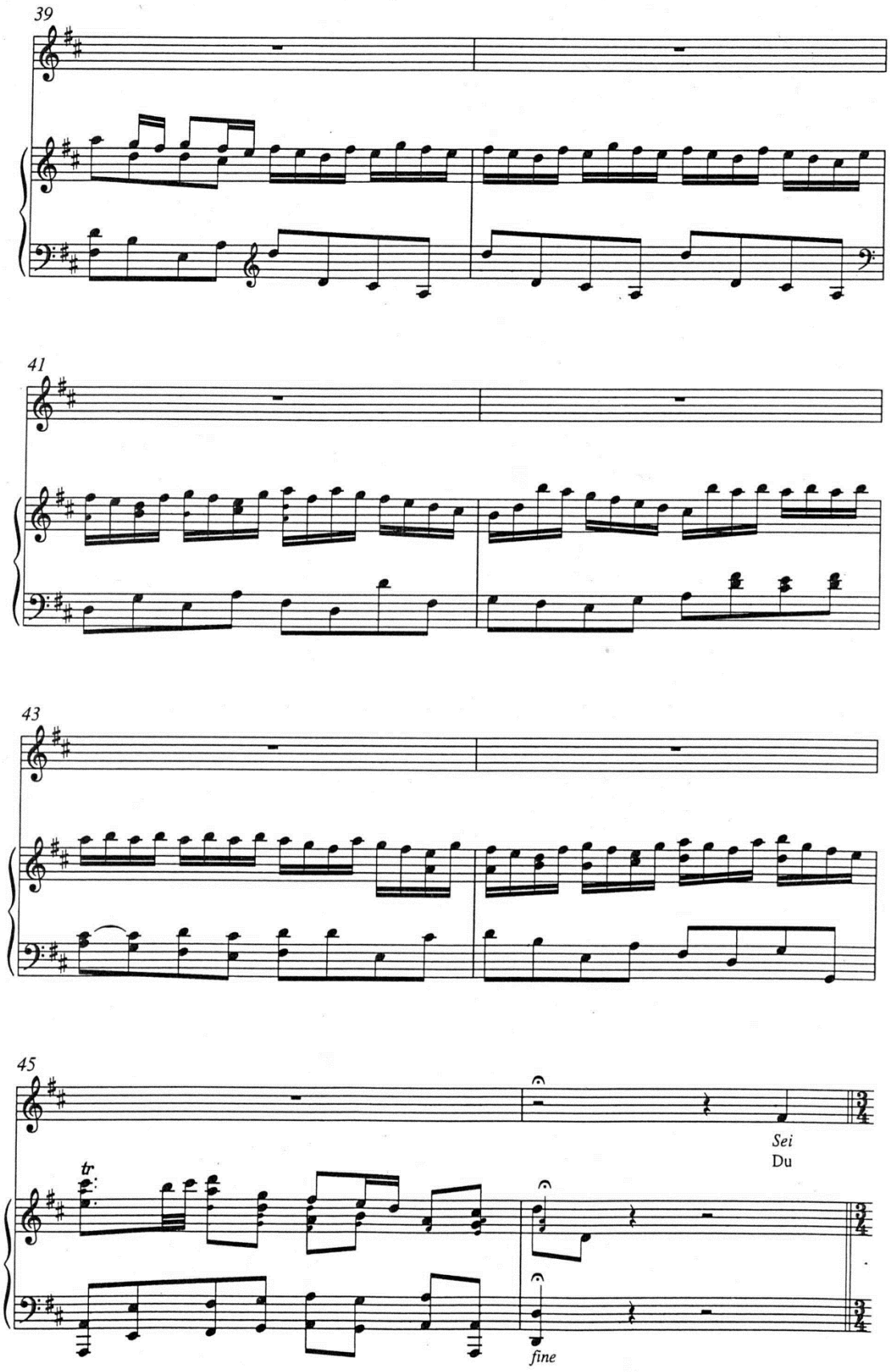
Appendix C, Example 1b (Vocal score)

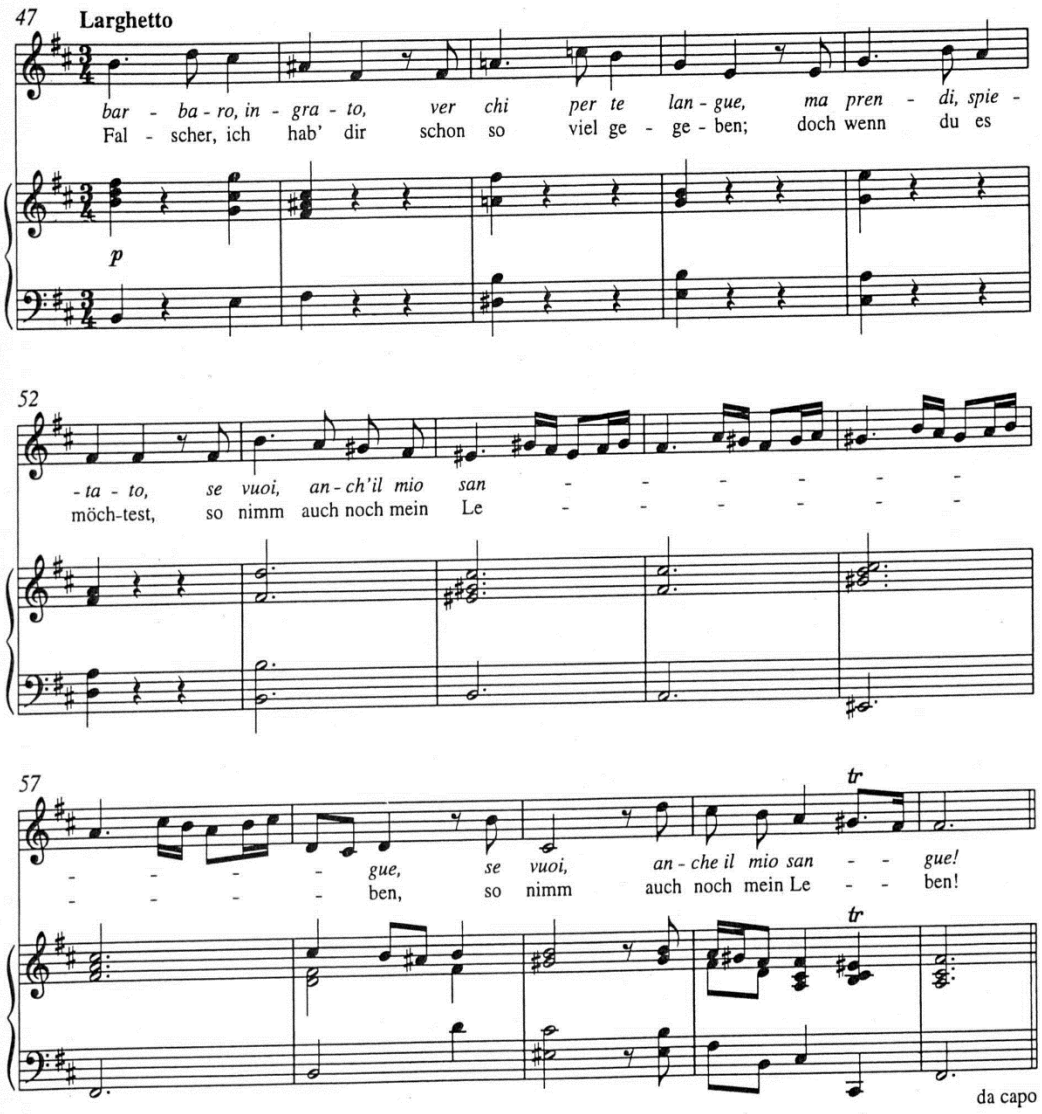

7
Vor - rei ven-di-car - mi del per - fi-do cor, vor - rei ven-di-car - - -
Ich for - de-re Ra - che für dei - nen Ver- rat, ich _ for - de-re Ra - - -
p
p
9
11
- - mi,
- - che!
A - mor, dam-mi l'ar - mi, m'ap - pre - sta il fu -
Mich wapp - ne die Lie - be, mein Zorn ruft zur
13
- ror
Tat


15
, m'ap-pre-sta il fu -
, mein Zorn ruft zur
17
- ror.
Tat!
f
19
21
Vor - rei ven-di-car - mi,
Ich for - de-re Ra - che,
p
p


23
vor - rei ven - di-car
ich for - de - re Ra
25
mi,
che,
vor - rei ven-di-car
ich for - de-re Ra
27
29
- mi.
- che!
A - mor, dam-mi l'ar - mi, m'ap-pre - sta il fu -
Mich wapp - ne die Lie - be, mein Zorn ruft zur


31
- ror
Tat
33
, mi ap - pre - sta il fu - ror.
, ja, mein Zorn ruft zur Tat!
Vor - rei ven-di -
Ich for - de - re
35
- car - mi
Ra - che
del per - fi - do cor.
für dei - nen Ver - rat!
A - mor, dam-mi,
Mich wapp - ne die
(parte)
(Bradamante ab)
37
l'ar - mi _____, mi ap - pre - sta il fu - ror.
Lie - be _____, mein Zorn ruft zur Tat!
f


39
41
43
45
tr
Sei
Du
fine

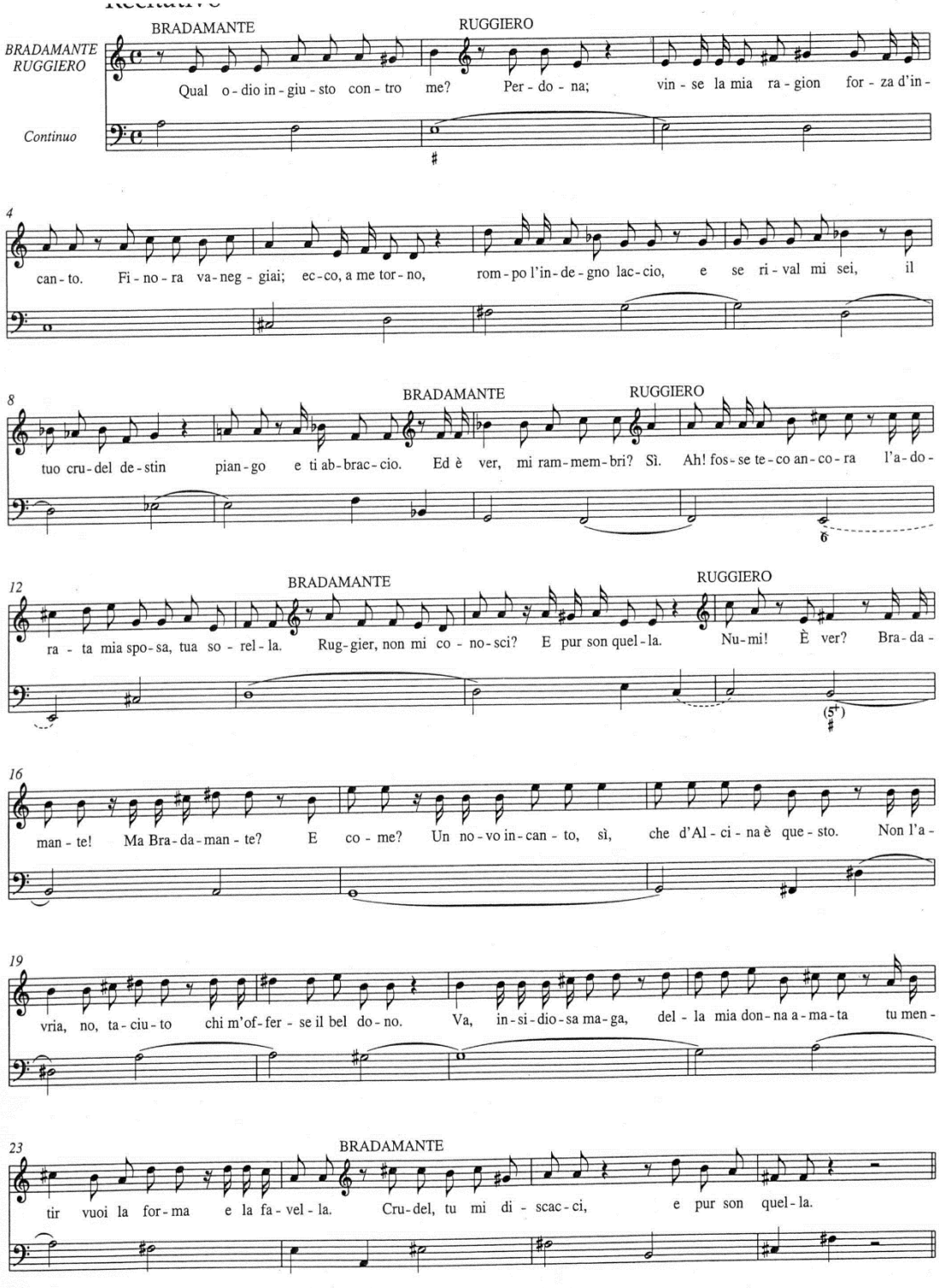


Scena III • 3. Szene

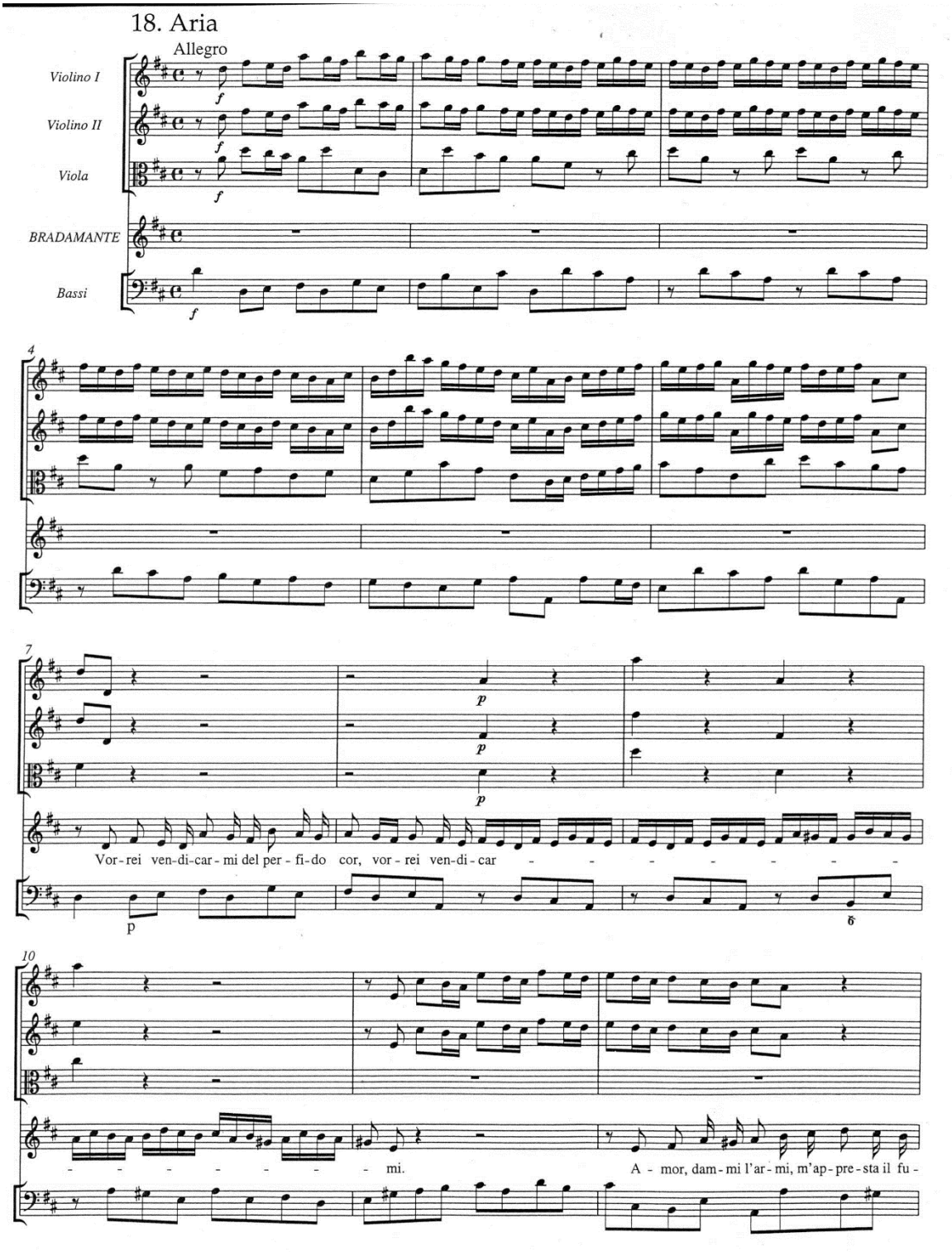
Ruggiero solo

Ruggiero allein

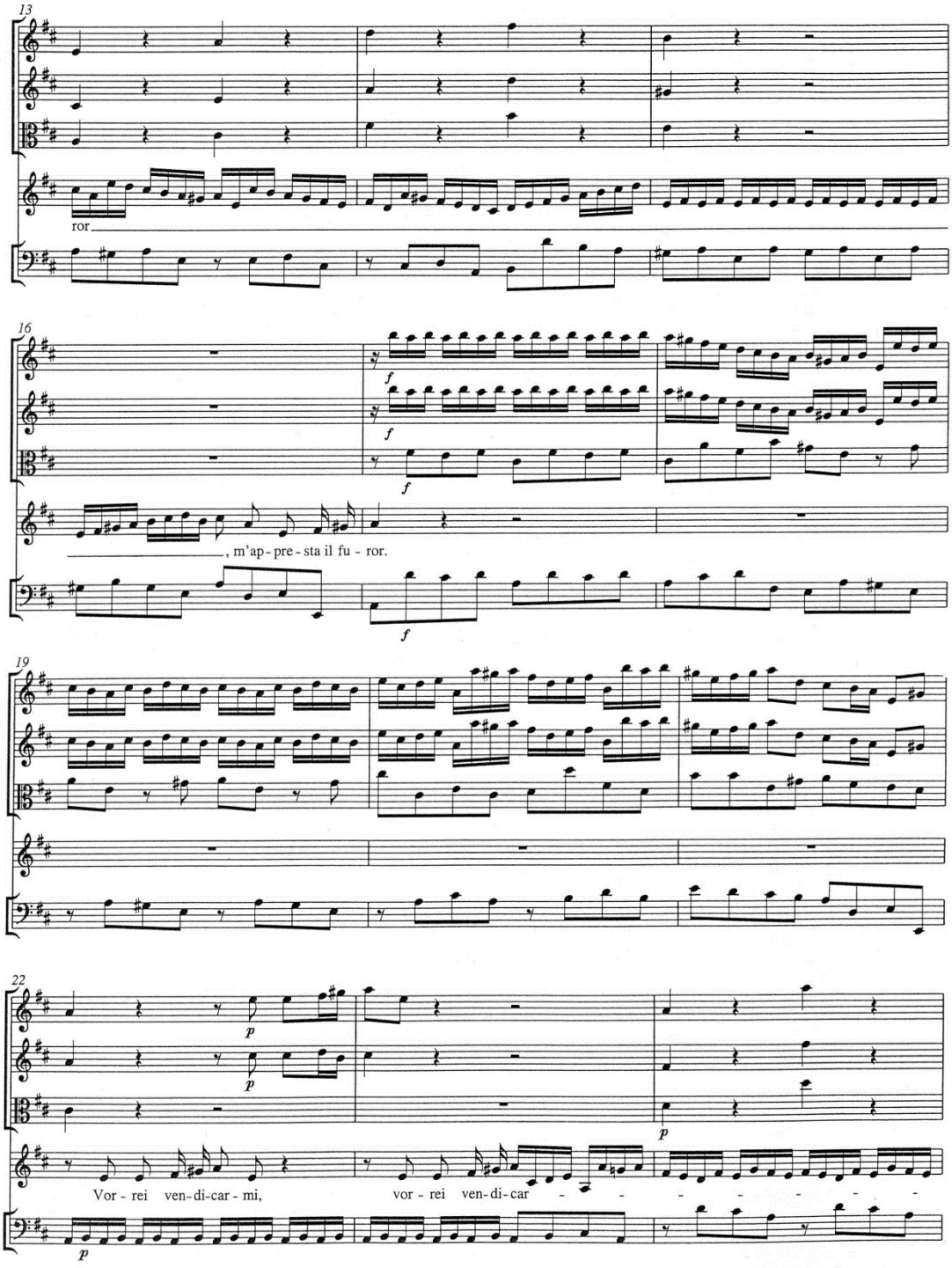
Recitativo

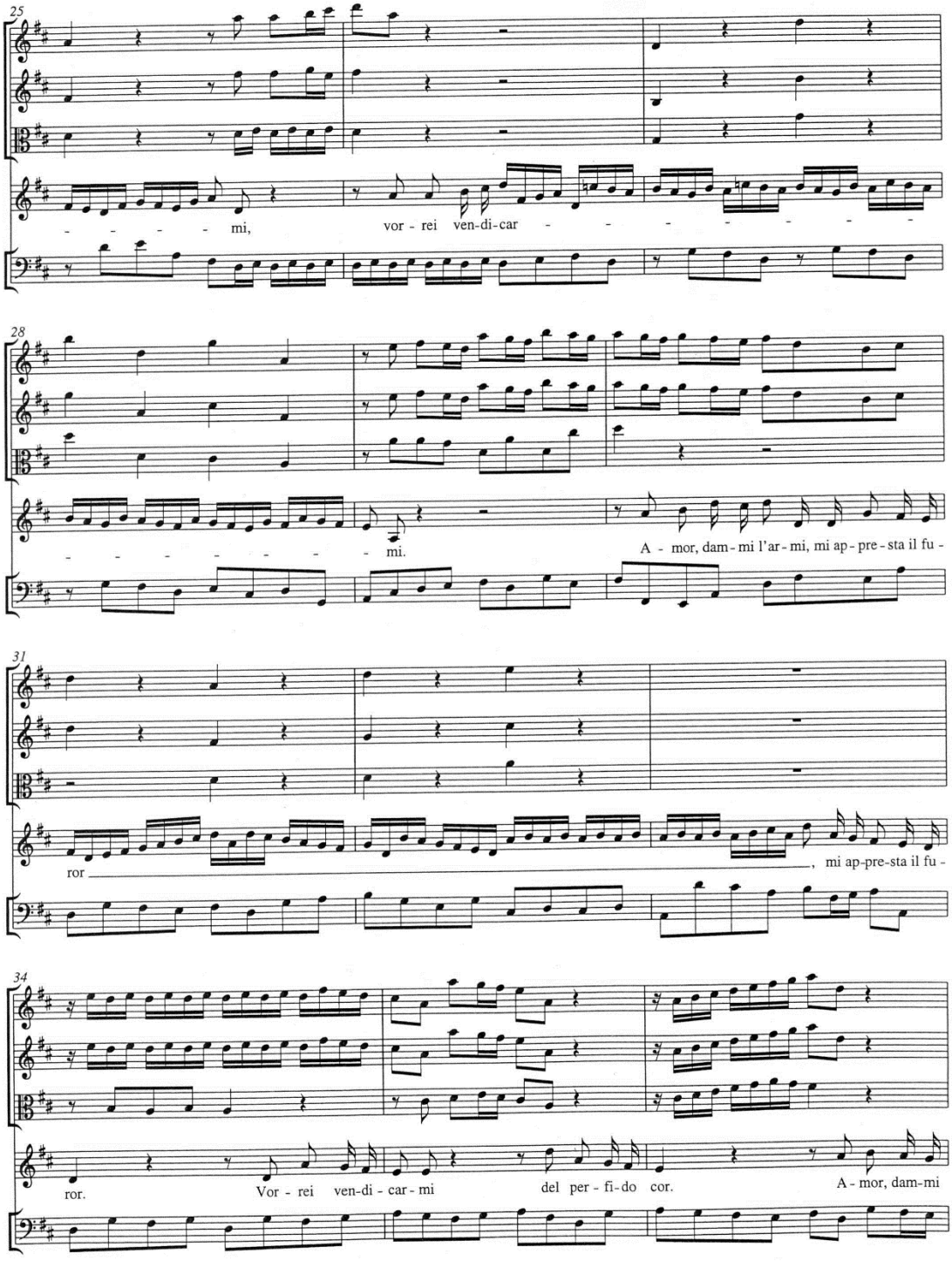


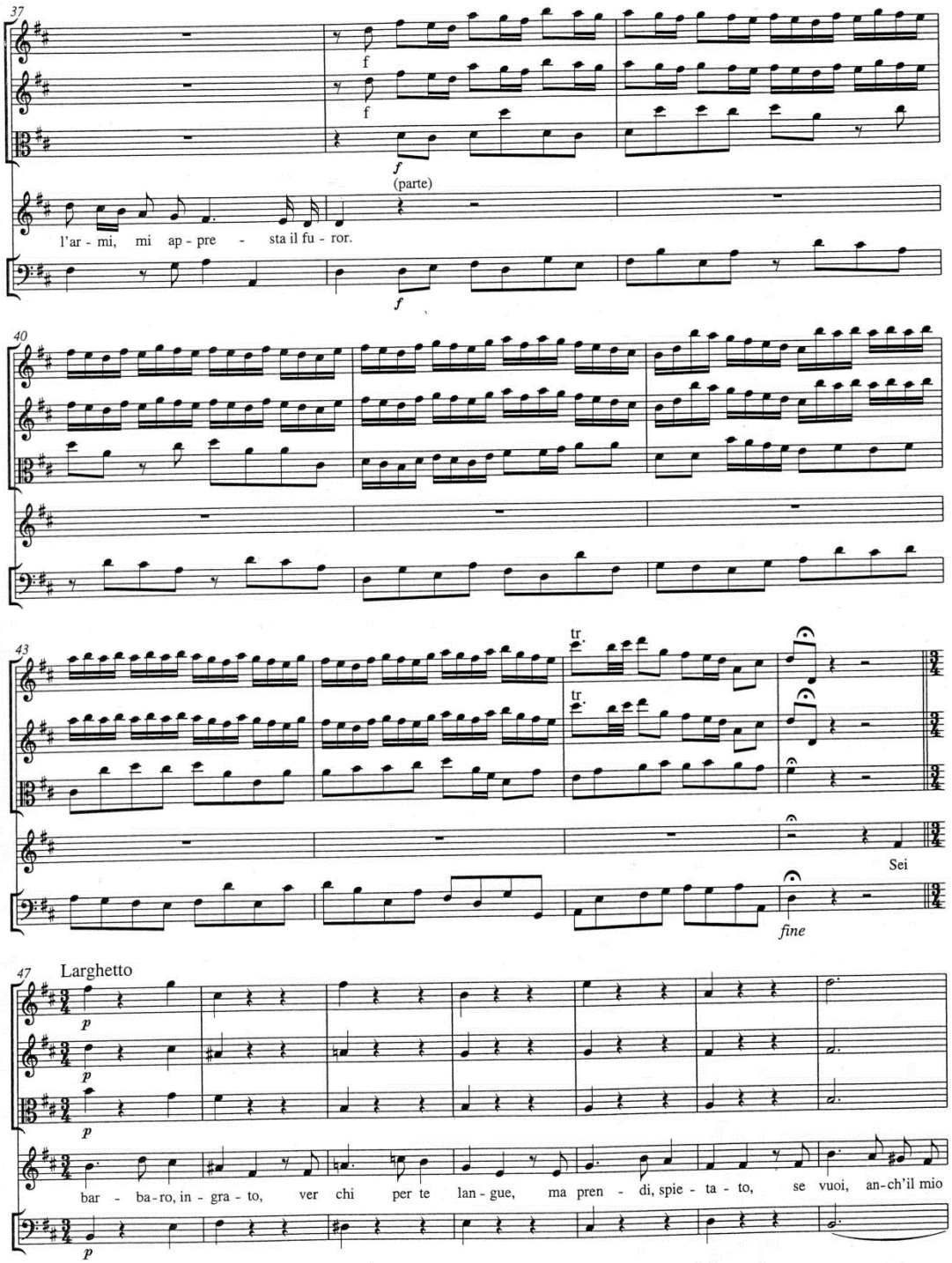
Appendix C, Example 1a (Full score)

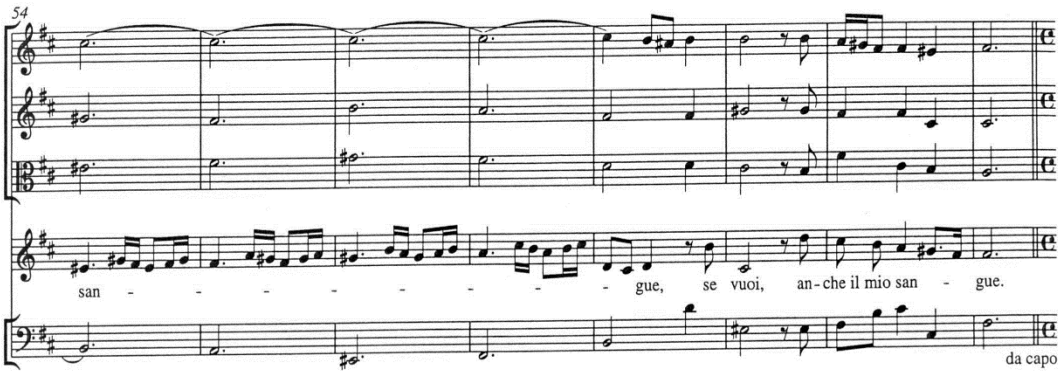


Appendix C, Example 1b (Full score)


13
ror
16
f
, m'ap - pre - sta il fu - ror.
19
22
p
Vor - rei ven - di - car - mi,
vor - rei ven - di - car


25
mi,
vor - rei ven-di-car
28
mi.
A - mor, dam - mi l'ar - mi, mi ap - pre - sta il fu -
31
ror
, mi ap-pre-sta il fu -
34
ror.
Vor - rei ven-di - car - mi
del per - fi-do cor.
A - mor, dam-mi

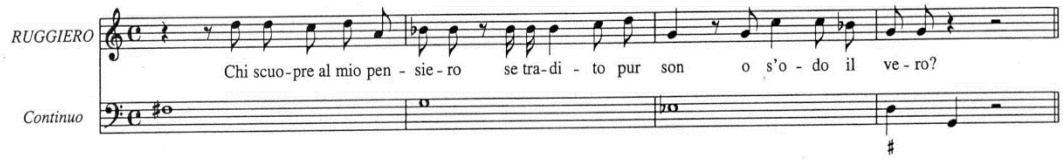

37
f
f
f
(parte)
l'ar - mi, mi ap - pre - sta il fu - ror.
f
40
43
tr.
tr.
Sei
fine
47
Larghetto
p
p
p
bar - ba-ro, in - gra - to, ver chi per te lan - gue, ma pren - di, spie - ta - to, se vuoi, an-ch'il mio
p



Scena III

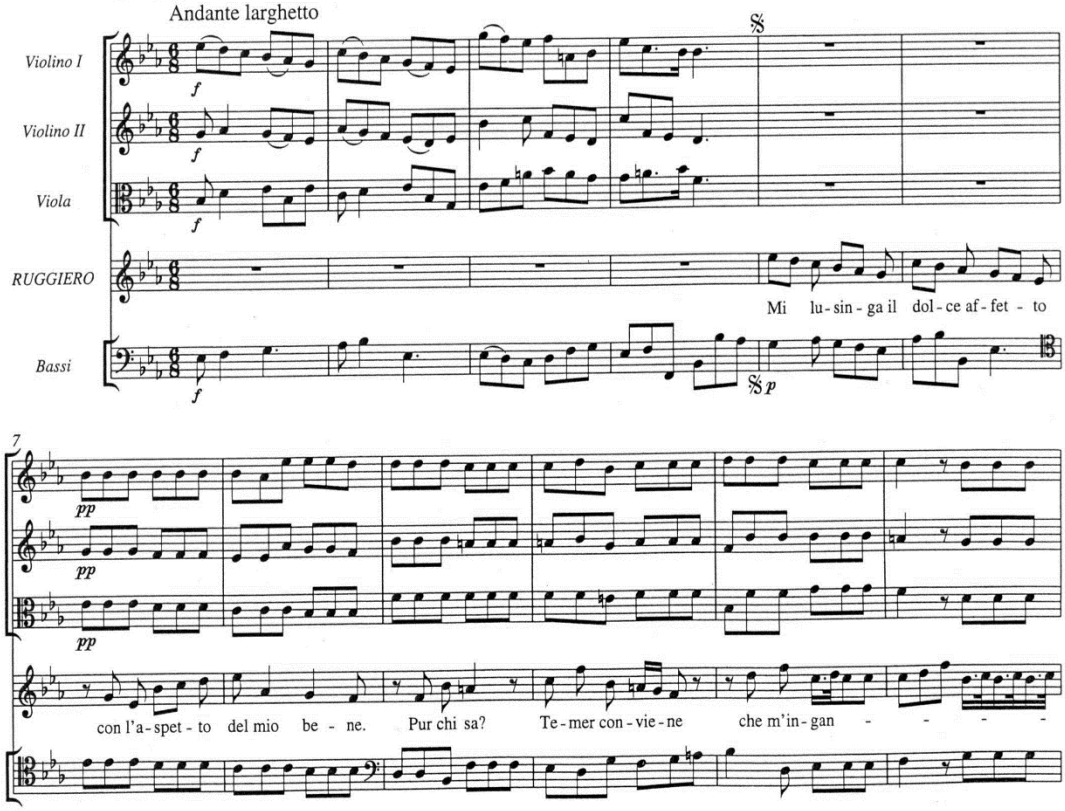
Ruggiero solo

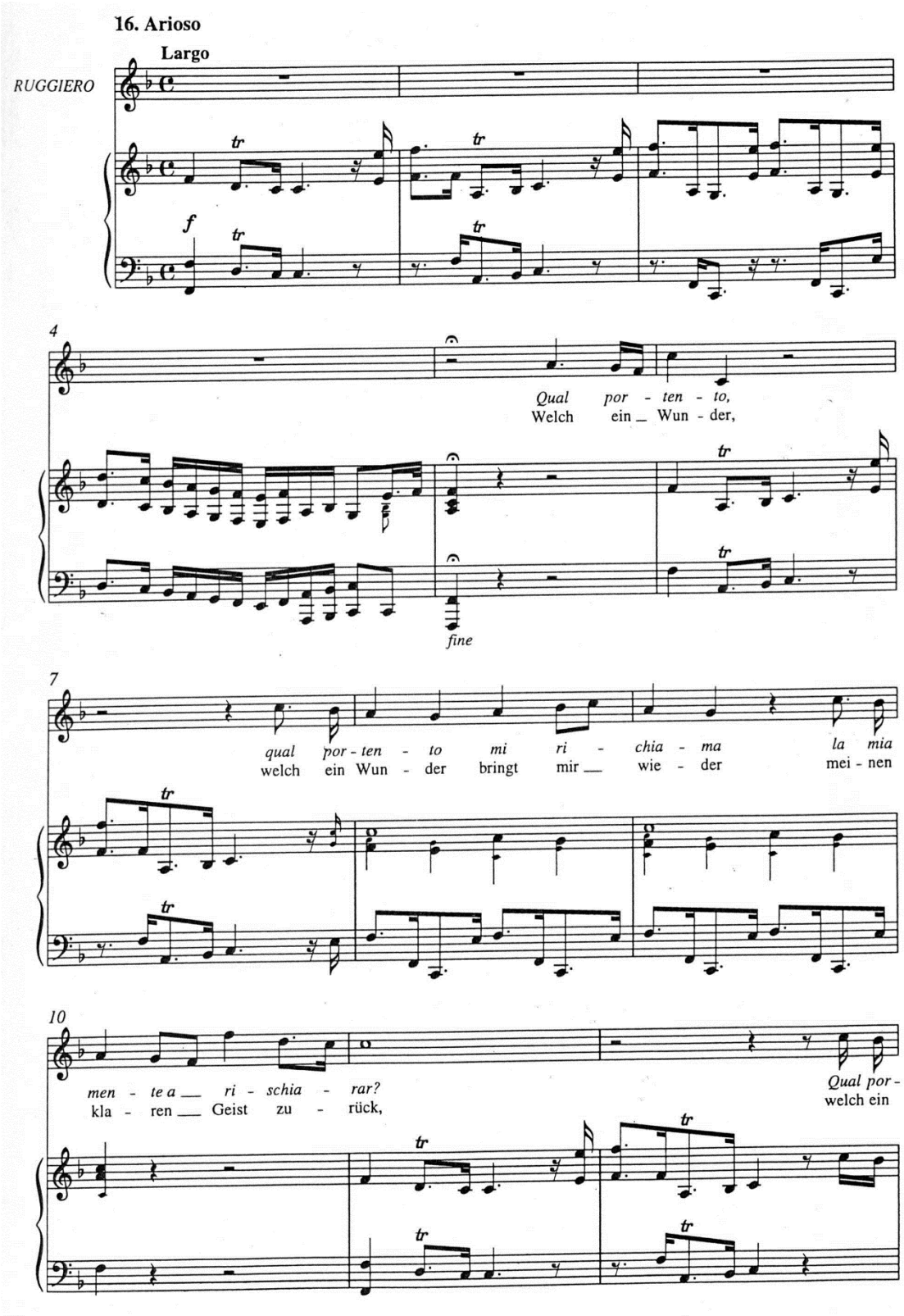
Recitativo



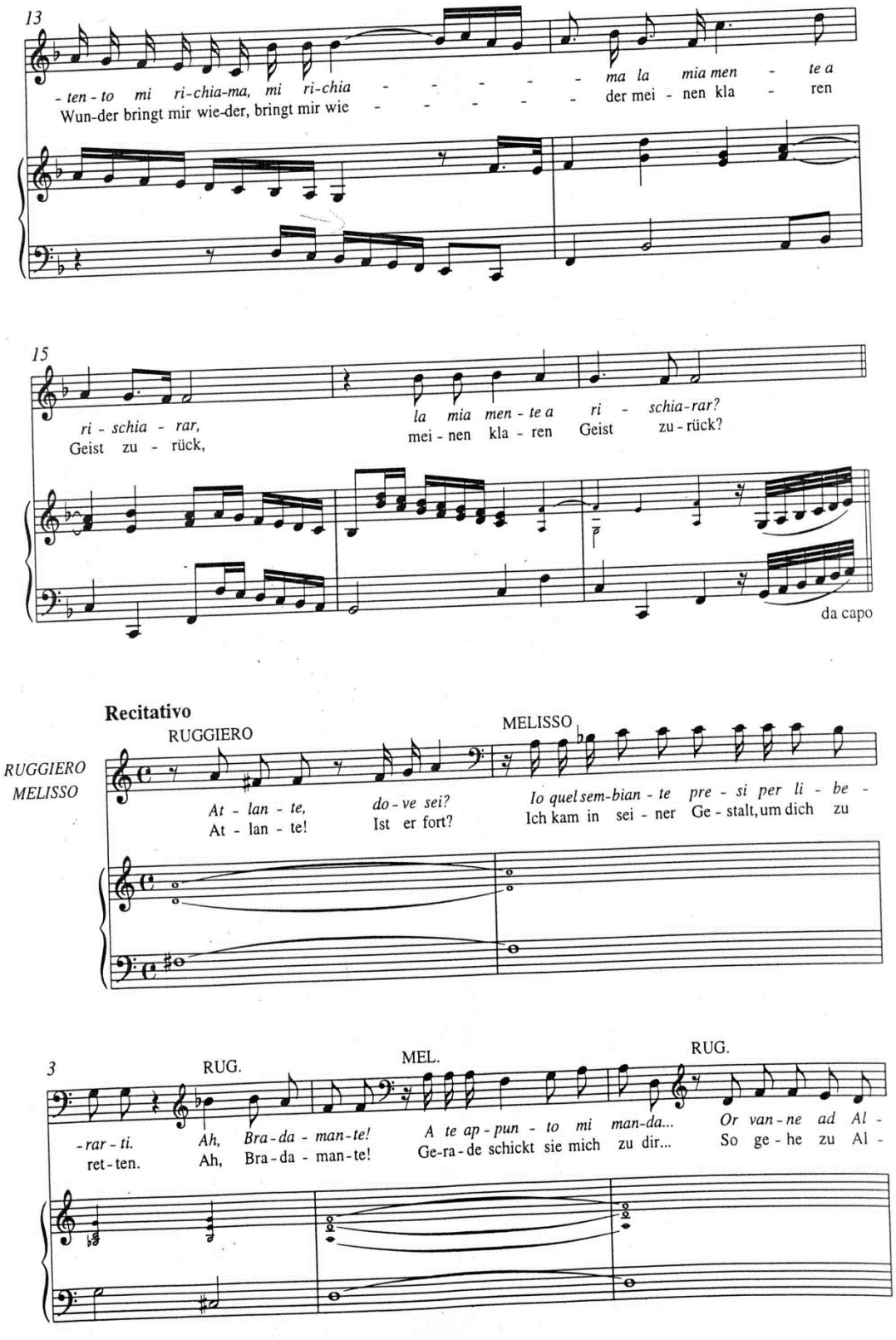
19. Aria

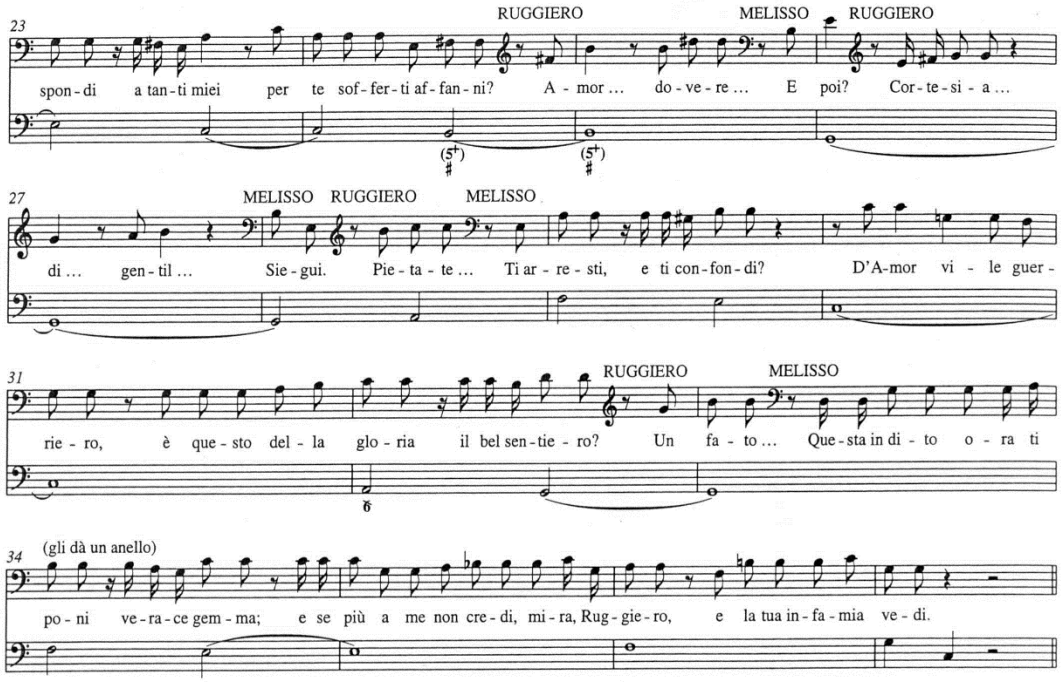
Andante larghetto



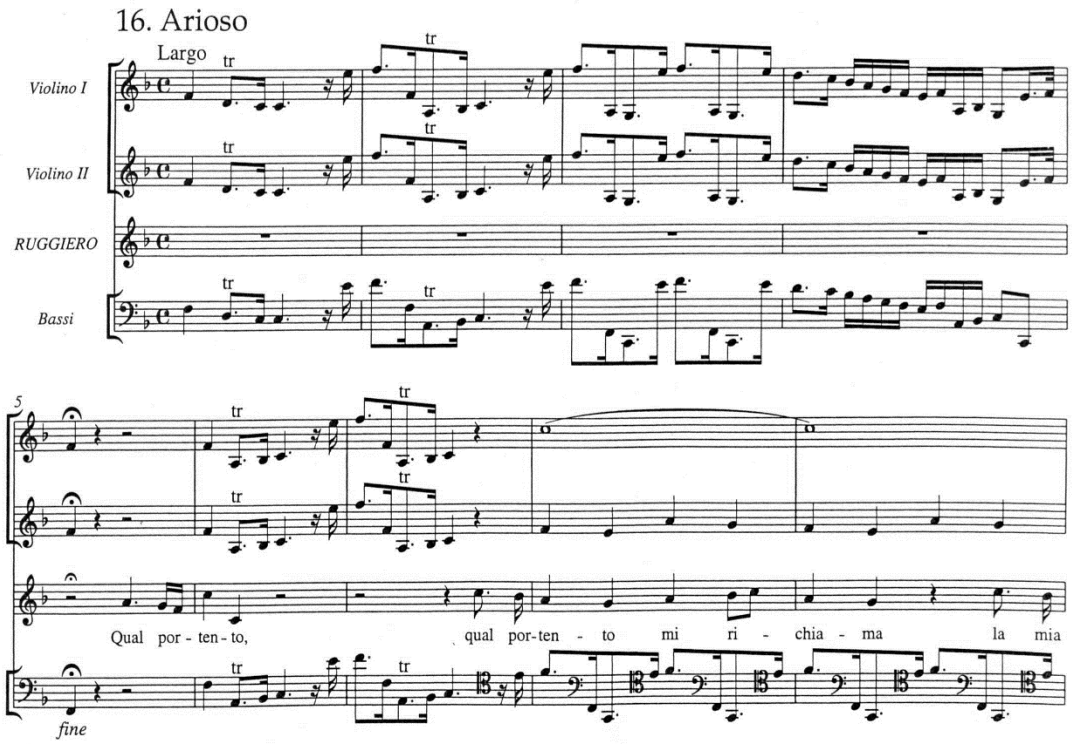


Appendix C, Example 2 (Vocal score)

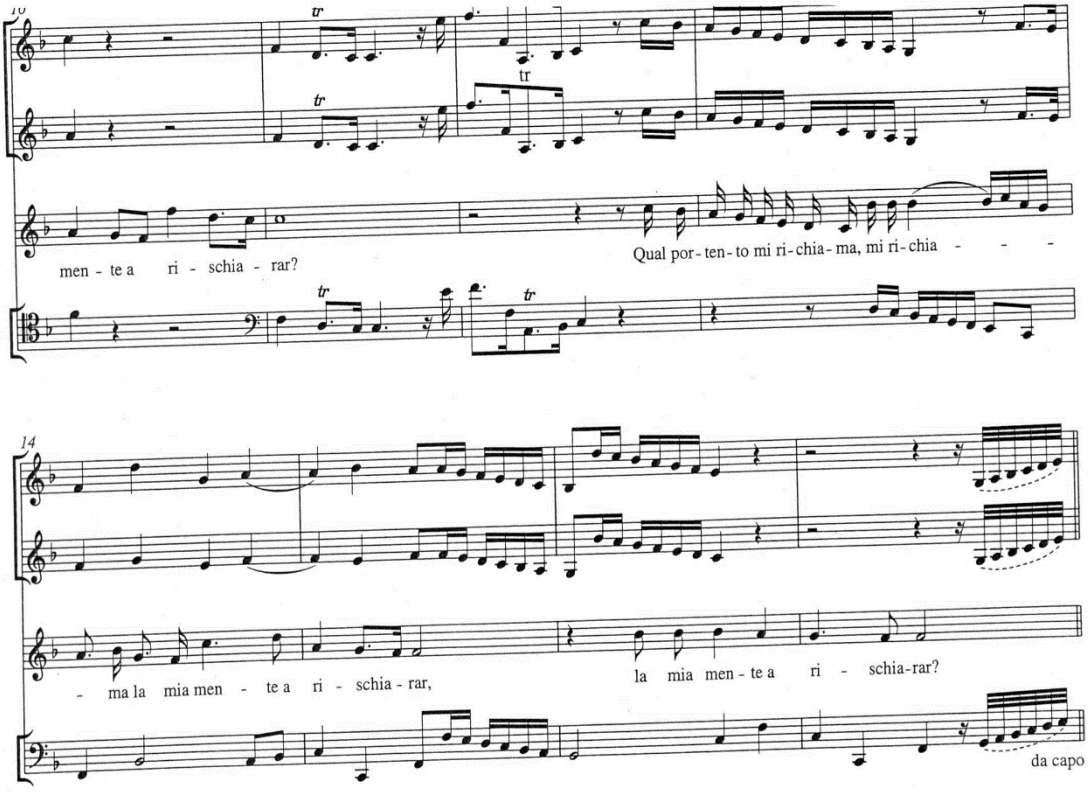

13
- ten - to mi ri-chia-ma, mi ri-chia - - - - - ma la mia men - te a
Wun-der bringt mir wie-der, bringt mir wie - - - - - der mei - nen kla - ren
15
ri - schia - rar,
Geist zu - rück,
la mia men - te a ri - schia-rar?
mei - nen kla - ren Geist zu-rück?
da capo
Recitativo
RUGGIERO
MELISSO
RUGGIERO
MELISSO
At - lan - te,
At - lan - te!
do - ve sei?
Ist er fort?
Io quel sem-bian - te pre - si per li - be -
Ich kam in sei - ner Ge - stalt, um dich zu
3
RUG.
MEL.
RUG.
- rar - ti.
ret - ten.
Ah, Bra - da - man - te!
Ah, Bra - da - man - te!
A te ap - pun - to mi man-da...
Ge-ra-de schickt sie mich zu dir...
Or van - ne ad Al -
So ge - he zu Al -

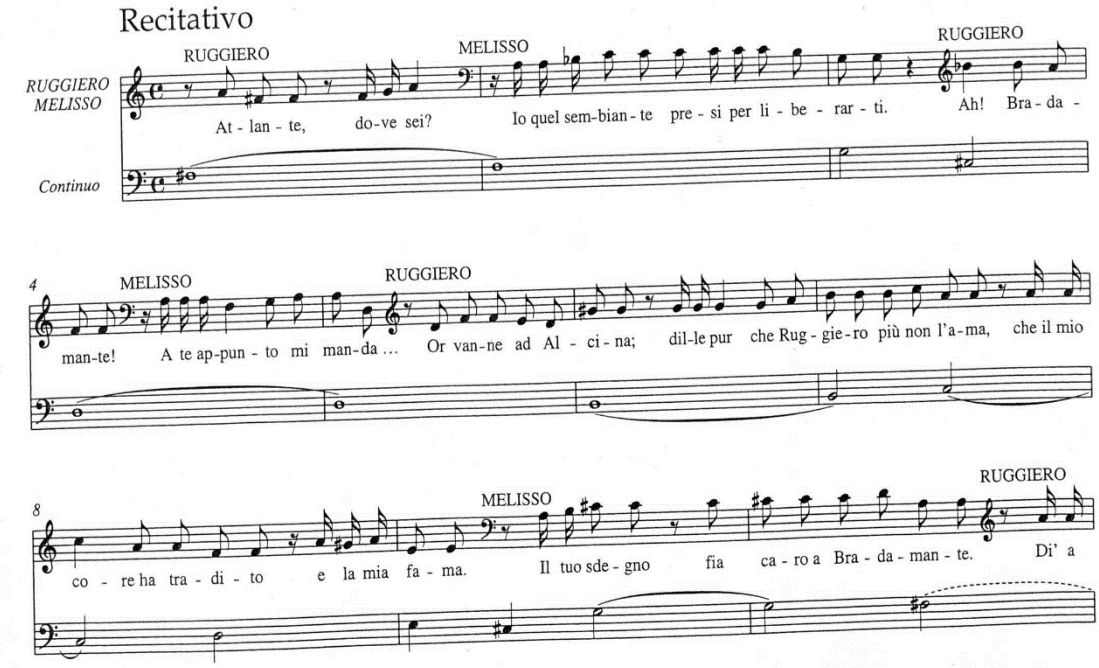


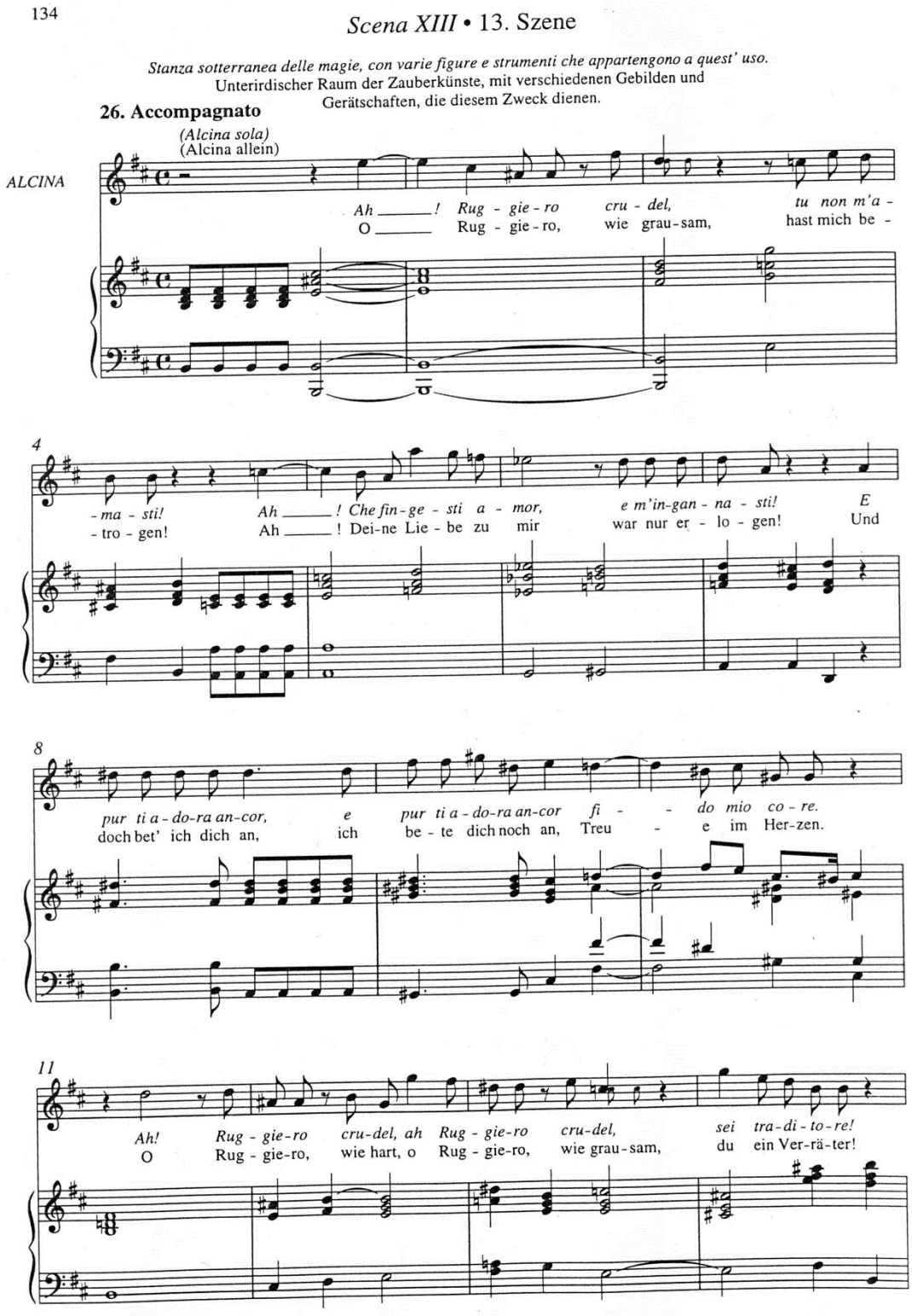
Non così tosto Melisso porge a Ruggiero l'anello stato già d'Angelica, che la sala tutta si cangia in luogo orrido e deserto.
Melisso intanto riprende la sua prima forma.



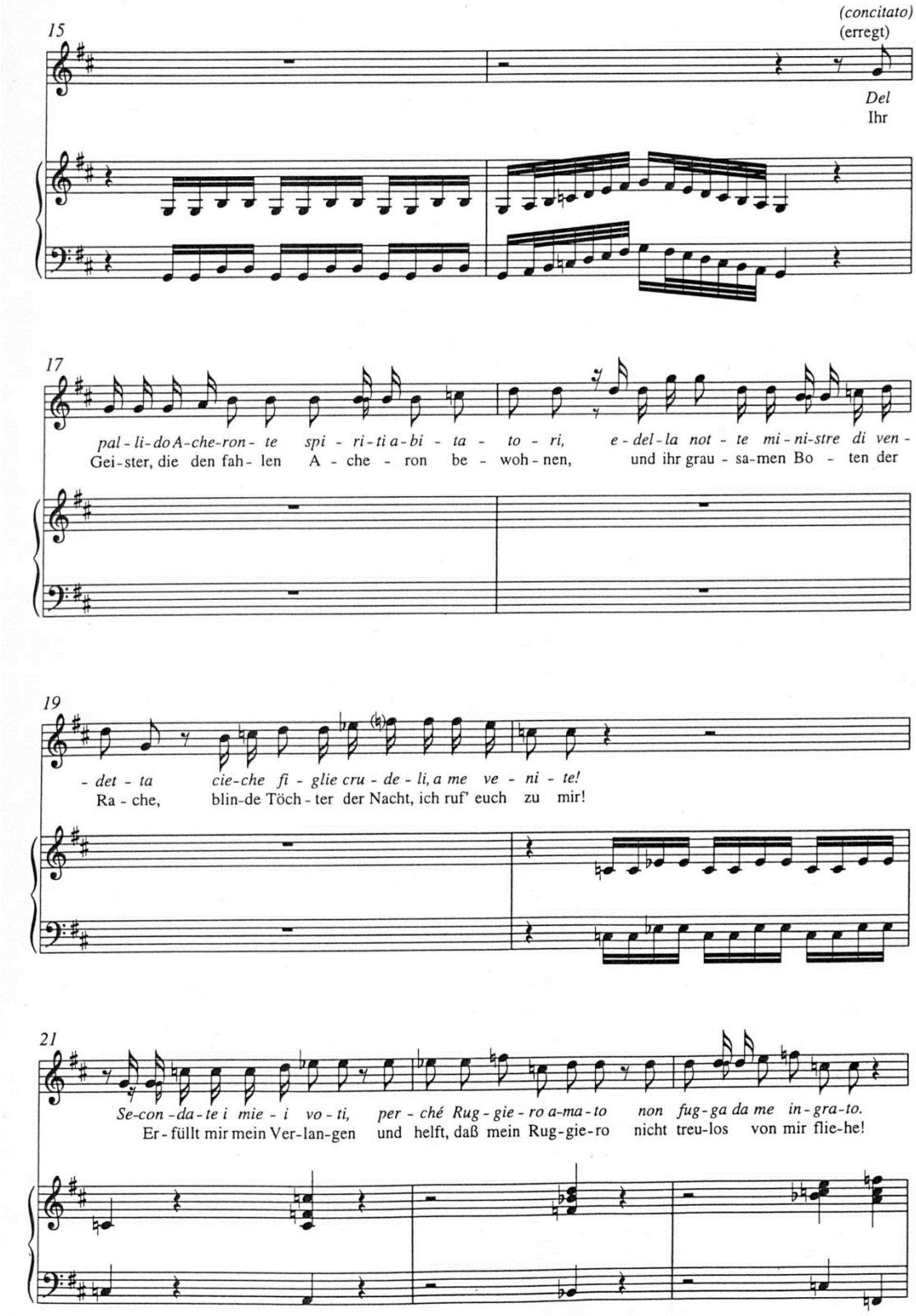
Appendix C, Example 2 (Full score)

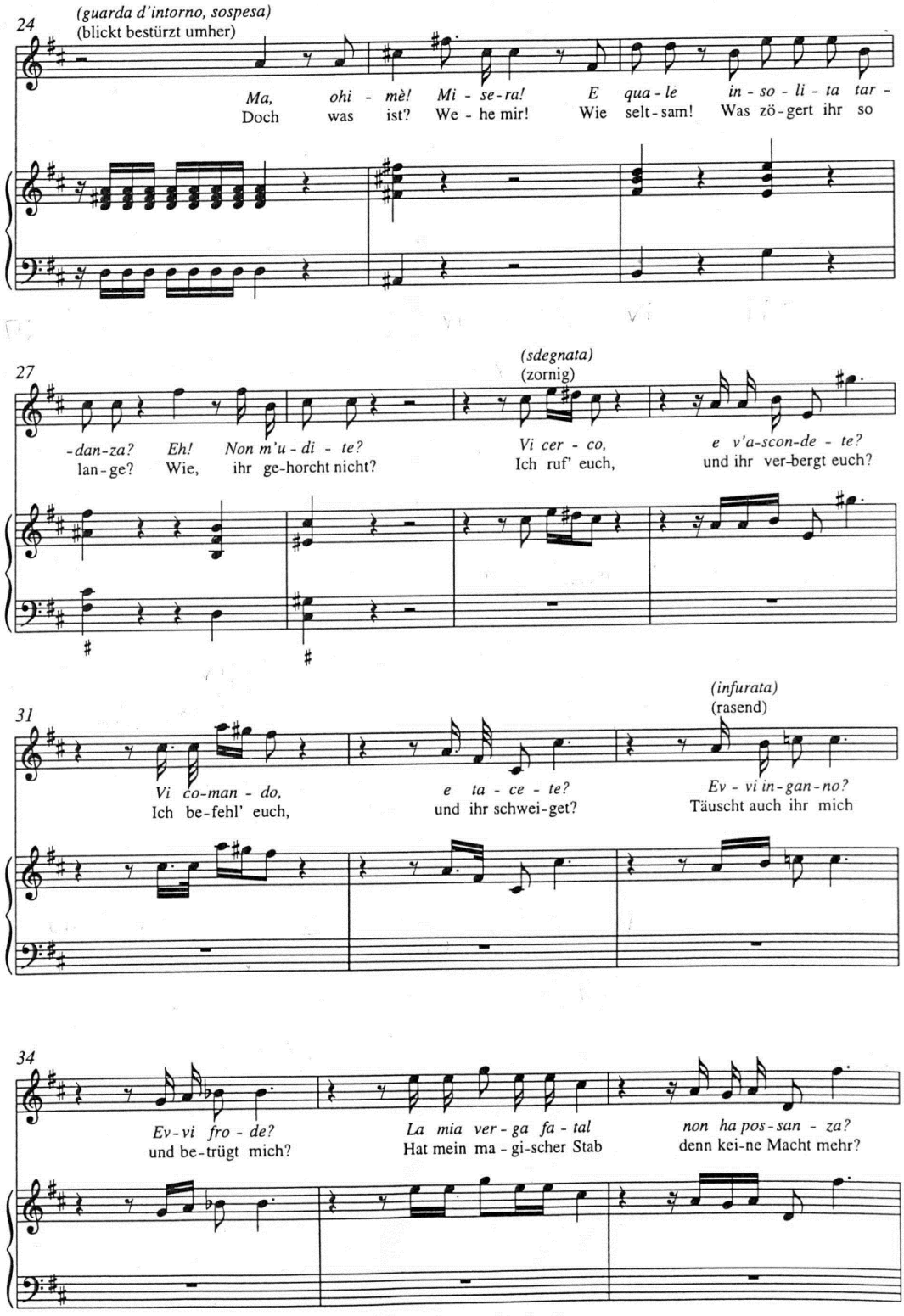

men - te a ri - schia - rar?
Qual por - ten - to mi ri - chia - ma, mi ri - chia - - -
- ma la mia men - te a ri - schia - rar,
la mia men - te a ri - schia-rar?
da capo

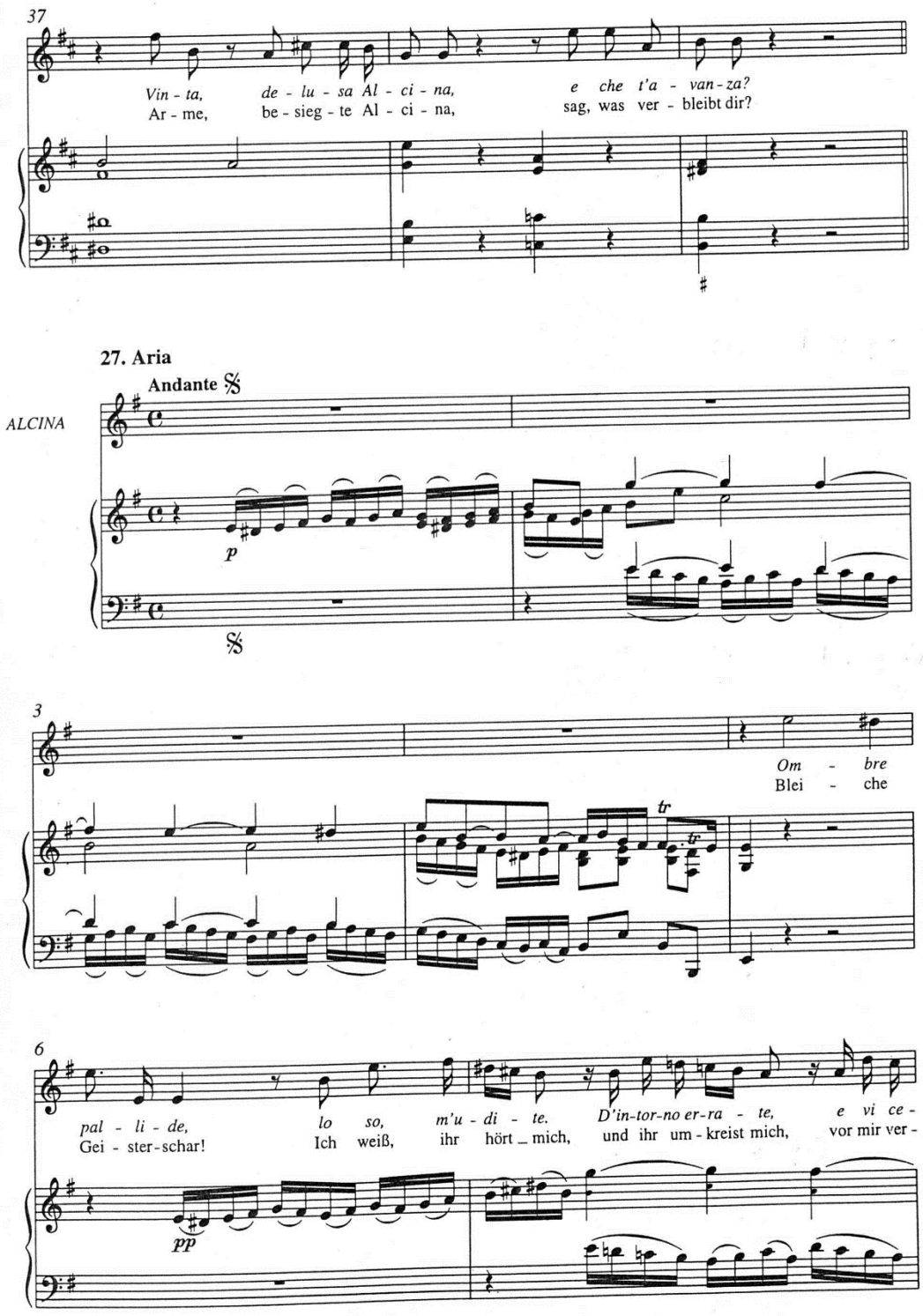

Recitativo
RUGGIERO
MELISSO
RUGGIERO
RUGGIERO
MELISSO
Continuo
At - lan - te, do-ve sei?
Io quel sem-bian - te pre - si per li - be - rar - ti.
Ah! Bra - da -
MELISSO
RUGGIERO
man-te! A te ap-pun - to mi man-da ... Or van-ne ad Al - ci - na; dil-le pur che Rug - gie - ro più non l'a-ma, che il mio
RUGGIERO
MELISSO
co - re ha tra - di - to e la mia fa - ma. Il tuo sde - gno fia ca - ro a Bra - da - man - te. Di' a



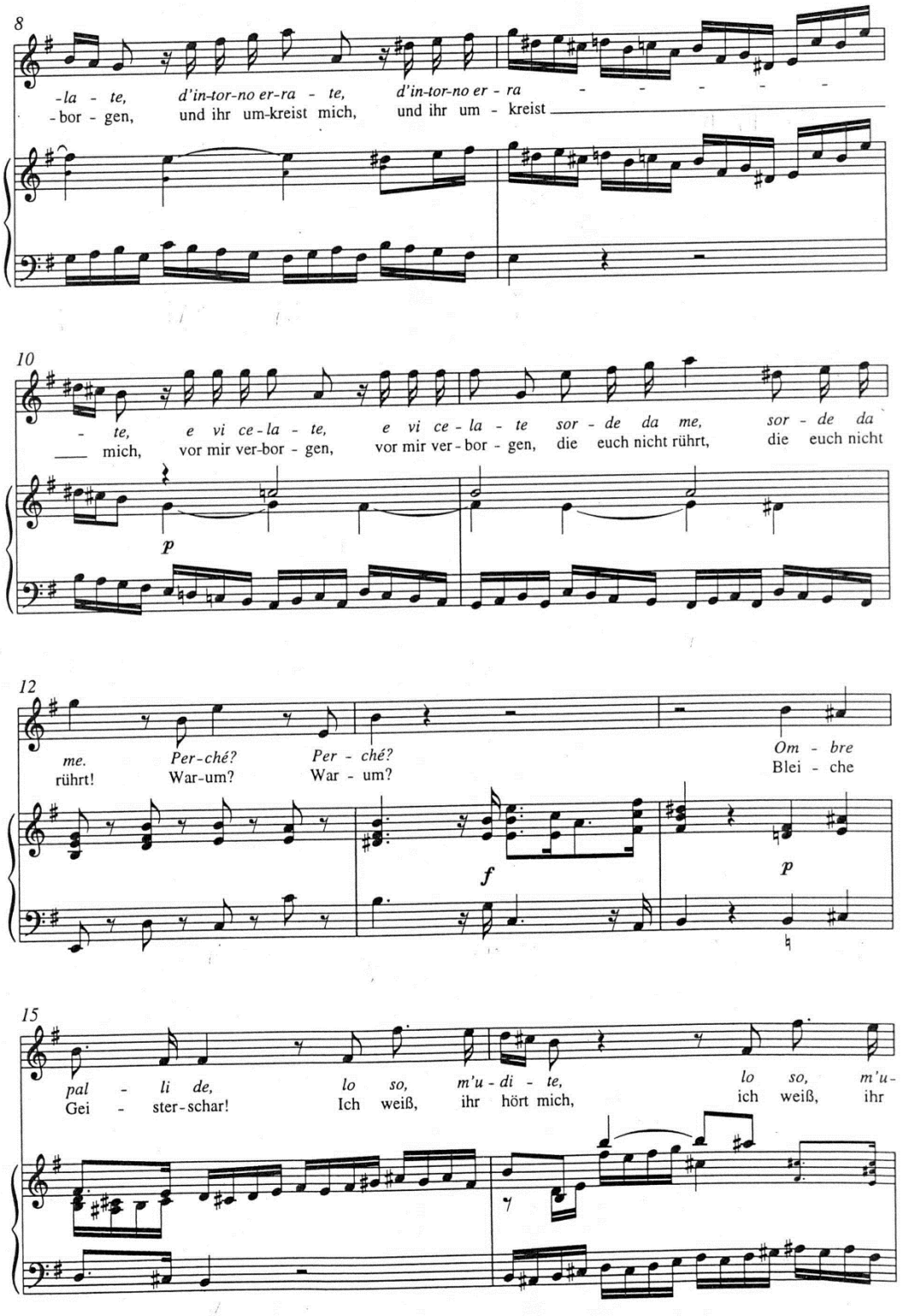
Appendix C, Example 3a (Vocal score)

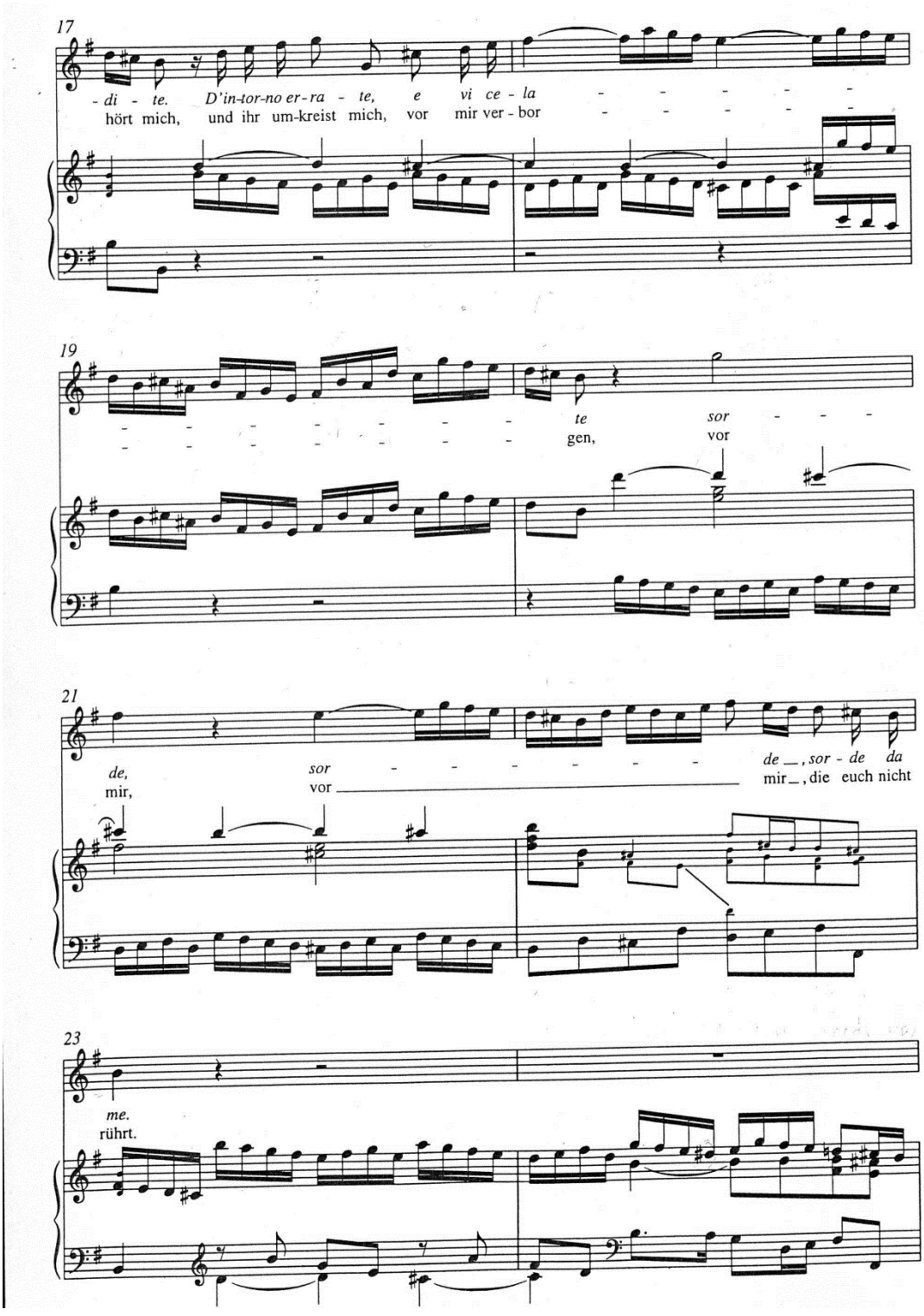

15
(concitato)
(erregt)
Del
Ihr
17
pal - li - do A - che - ron - te spi - ri - ti a - bi - ta - to - ri, e - del - la not - te mi - ni - stre di ven -
Gei - ster, die den fah - len A - che - ron be - woh - nen, und ihr grau - sa - men Bo - ten der
19
- det - ta cie - che fi - glie cru - de - li, a me ve - ni - te!
Ra - che, blin - de Töch - ter der Nacht, ich ruf' euch zu mir!
21
Se - con - da - te i mie - i vo - ti, per - ché Rug - gie - ro a - ma - to non fug - ga da me in - gra - to.
Er - füllt mir mein Ver - lan - gen und helft, daß mein Rug - gie - ro nicht treu - los von mir flie - he!

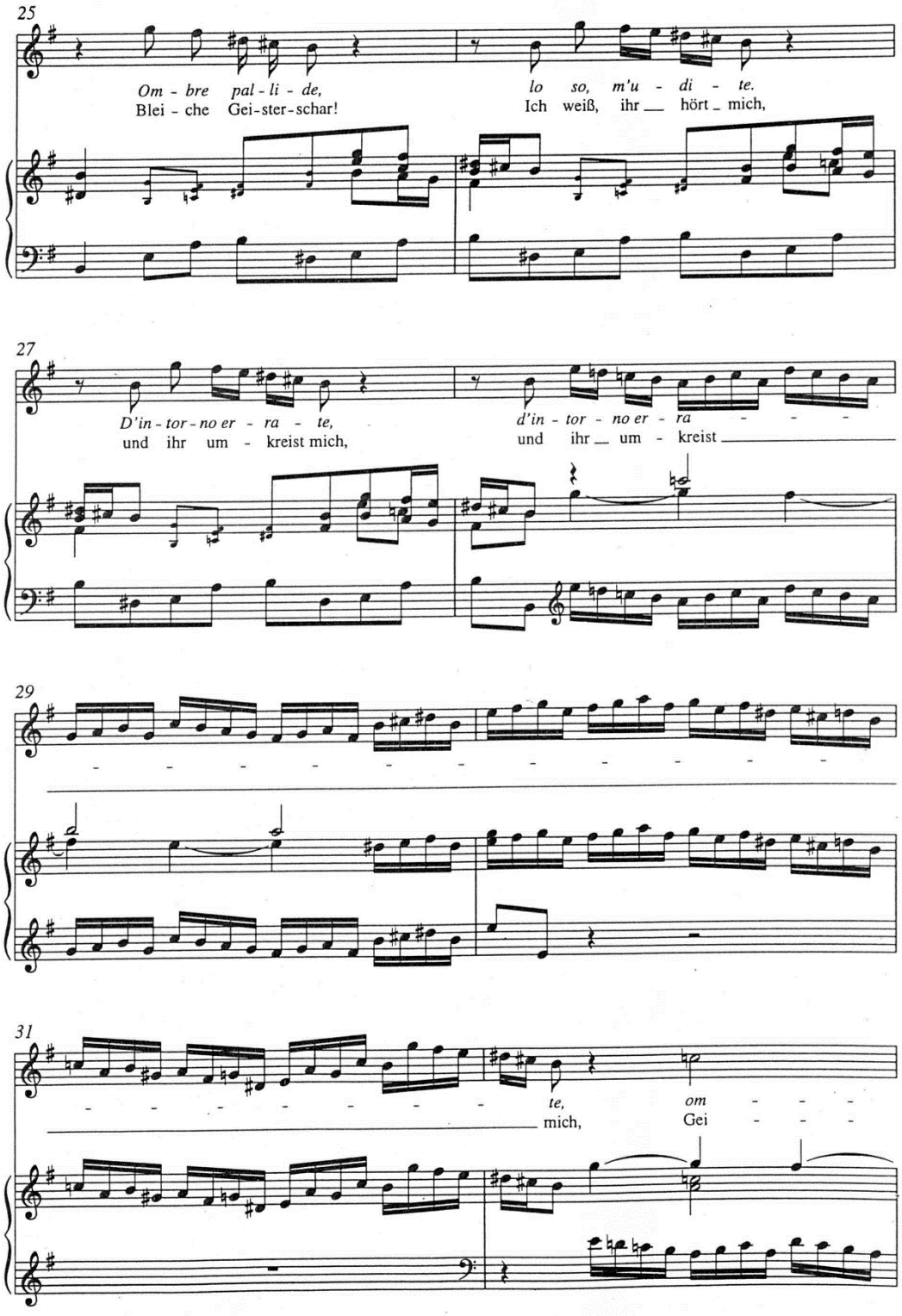

24
(guarda d'intorno, sospesa)
(blickt bestürzt umher)
Ma, ohi - mè! Mi - se-ra! E qua - le in - so - li - ta tar -
Doch was ist? We - he mir! Wie selt - sam! Was zö - gert ihr so
27
(sdegnata)
(zornig)
-dan-za? Eh! Non m'u - di - te? Vi cer - co, e v'a-scon-de - te?
lan - ge? Wie, ihr ge-horcht nicht? Ich ruf' euch, und ihr ver-bergt euch?
31
(infurata)
(rasend)
Vi co-man - do, e ta - ce - te? Ev - vi in-gan-no?
Ich be-fehl' euch, und ihr schwei-get? Täuscht auch ihr mich
34
Ev-vi fro - de? La mia ver - ga fa - tal non ha pos-san - za?
und be-trügt mich? Hat mein ma - gi-scher Stab denn kei-ne Macht mehr?

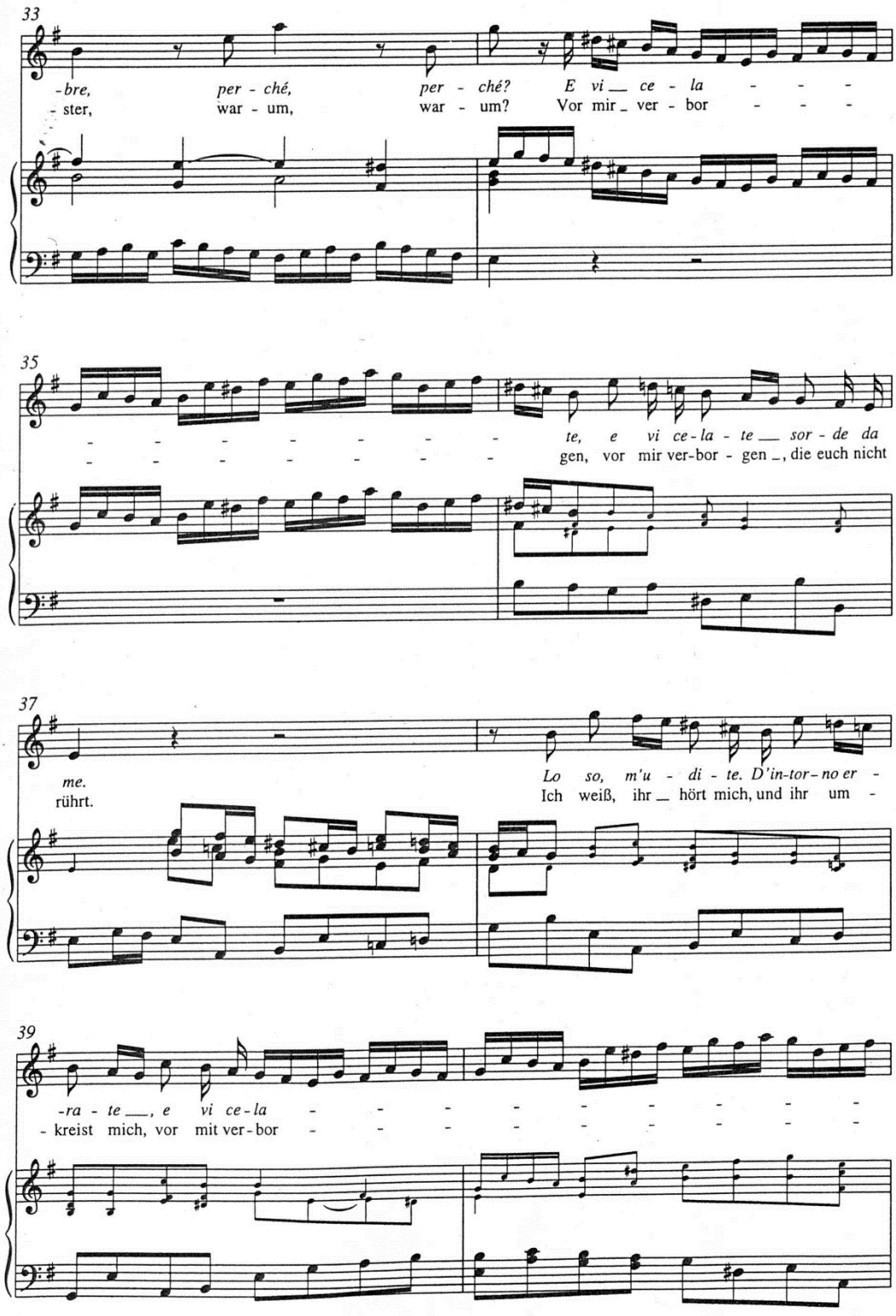


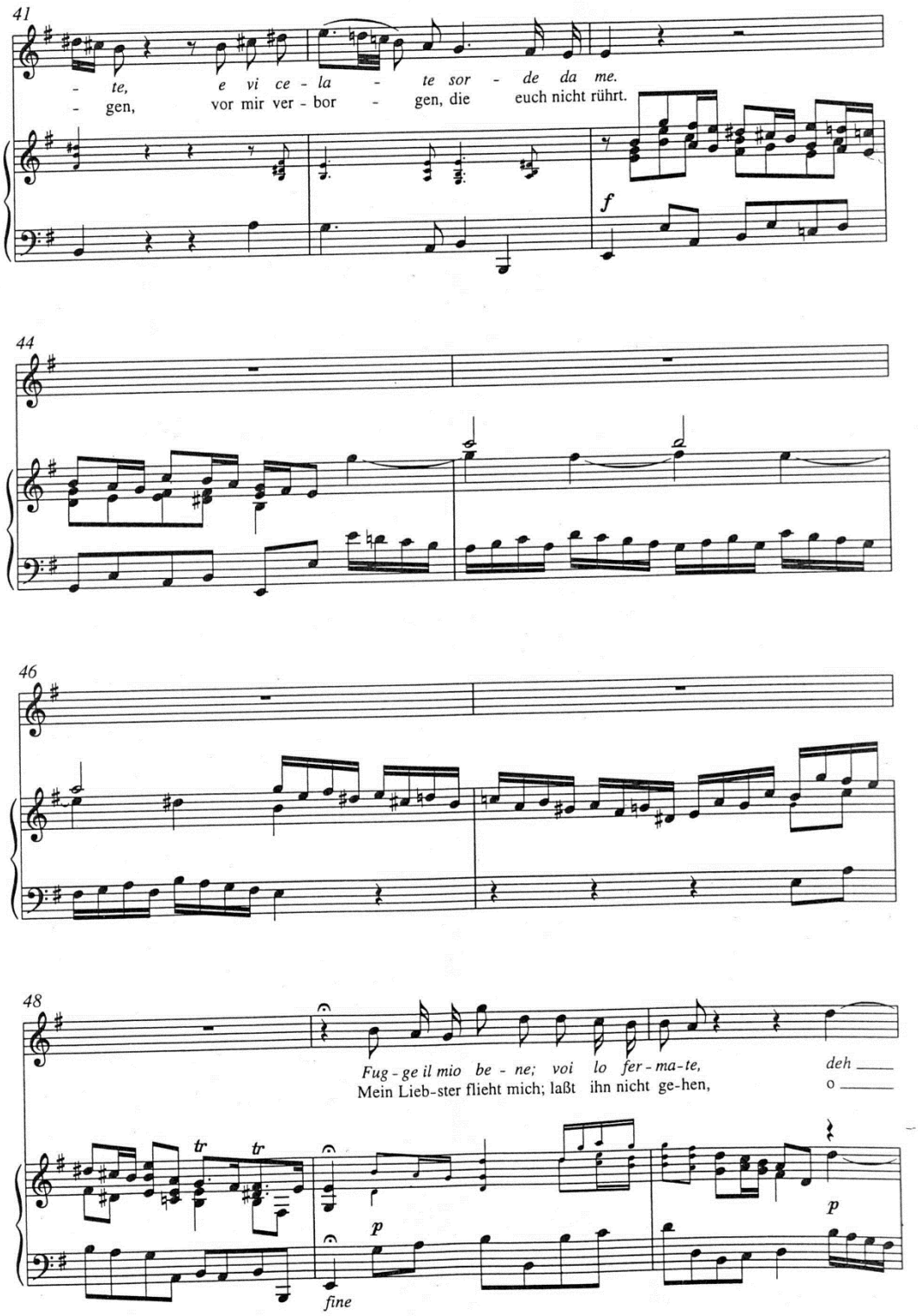
Appendix C, Example 3b (Vocal score)

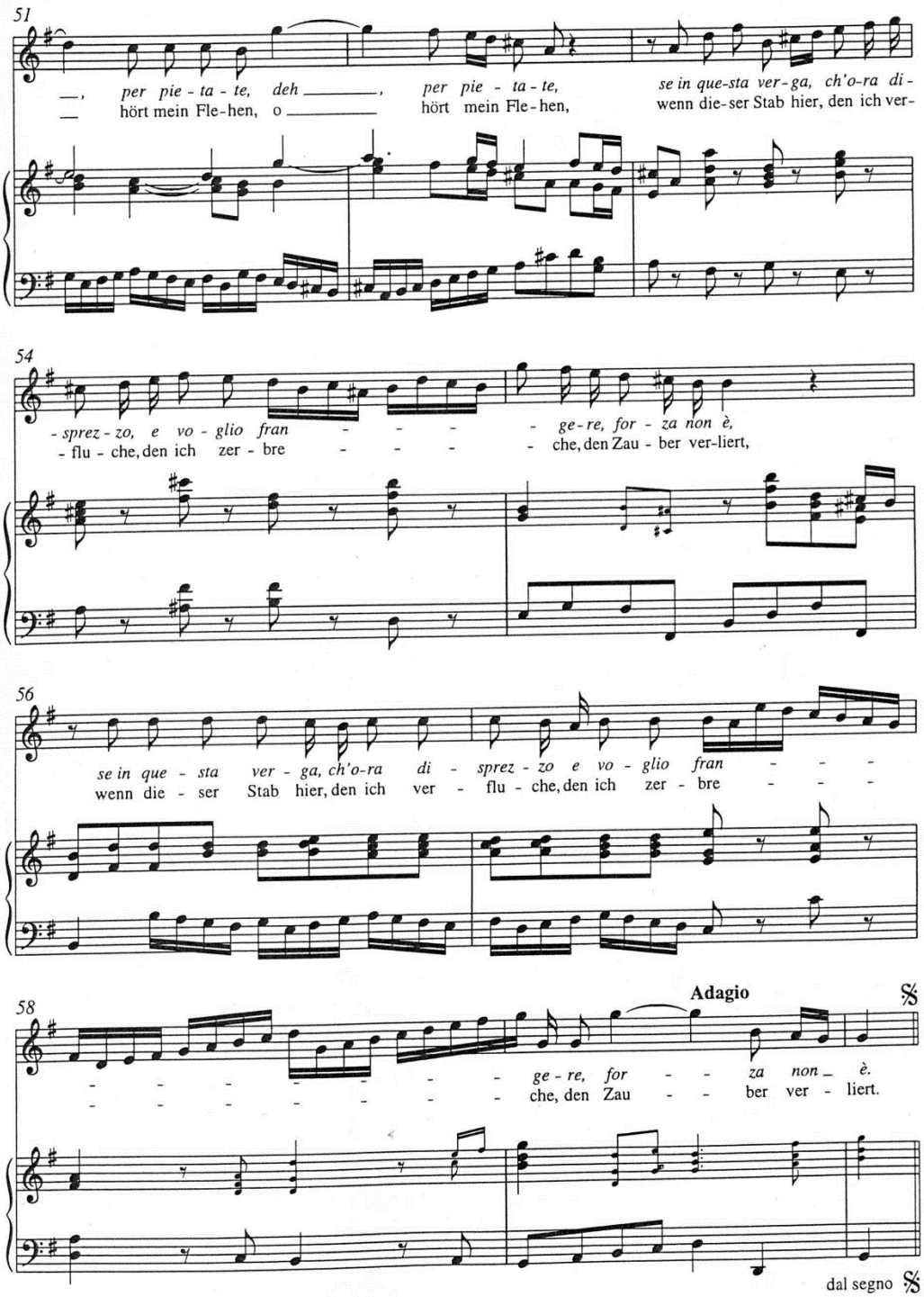

8
-la - te, d'in-tor-no er-ra - te, d'in-tor-no er - ra - - - - -
-bor - gen, und ihr um-kreist mich, und ihr um - kreist
10
- te, e vi ce - la - te, e vi ce - la - te sor - de da me, sor - de da
mich, vor mir ver-bor - gen, vor mir ver - bor - gen, die euch nicht rührt, die euch nicht
p
12
me. Per-ché? Per - ché? Om - bre
rührt! War-um? War - um? Blei - che
f
p
15
pal - li de, lo so, m'u - di - te, lo so, m'u-
Gei - ster-schar! Ich weiß, ihr hört mich, ich weiß, ihr


17
- di - te. D'in-tor-no er-ra - te, e vi ce - la - - - - -
hört mich, und ihr um-kreist mich, vor mir ver - bor - - - - -
19
te sor - - -
gen, vor
21
de, sor - - - - - - - de _ , sor - de da
mir, vor _____ mir _ , die euch nicht
23
me.
rührt.


25
Om - bre pal - li - de,
Blei - che Gei-ster-schar!
lo so, m'u - di - te.
Ich weiß, ihr hört mich,
27
D'in - tor - no er - ra - te,
und ihr um - kreist mich,
d'in - tor - no er - ra
und ihr um - kreist
29
31
te,
mich,
om
Gei

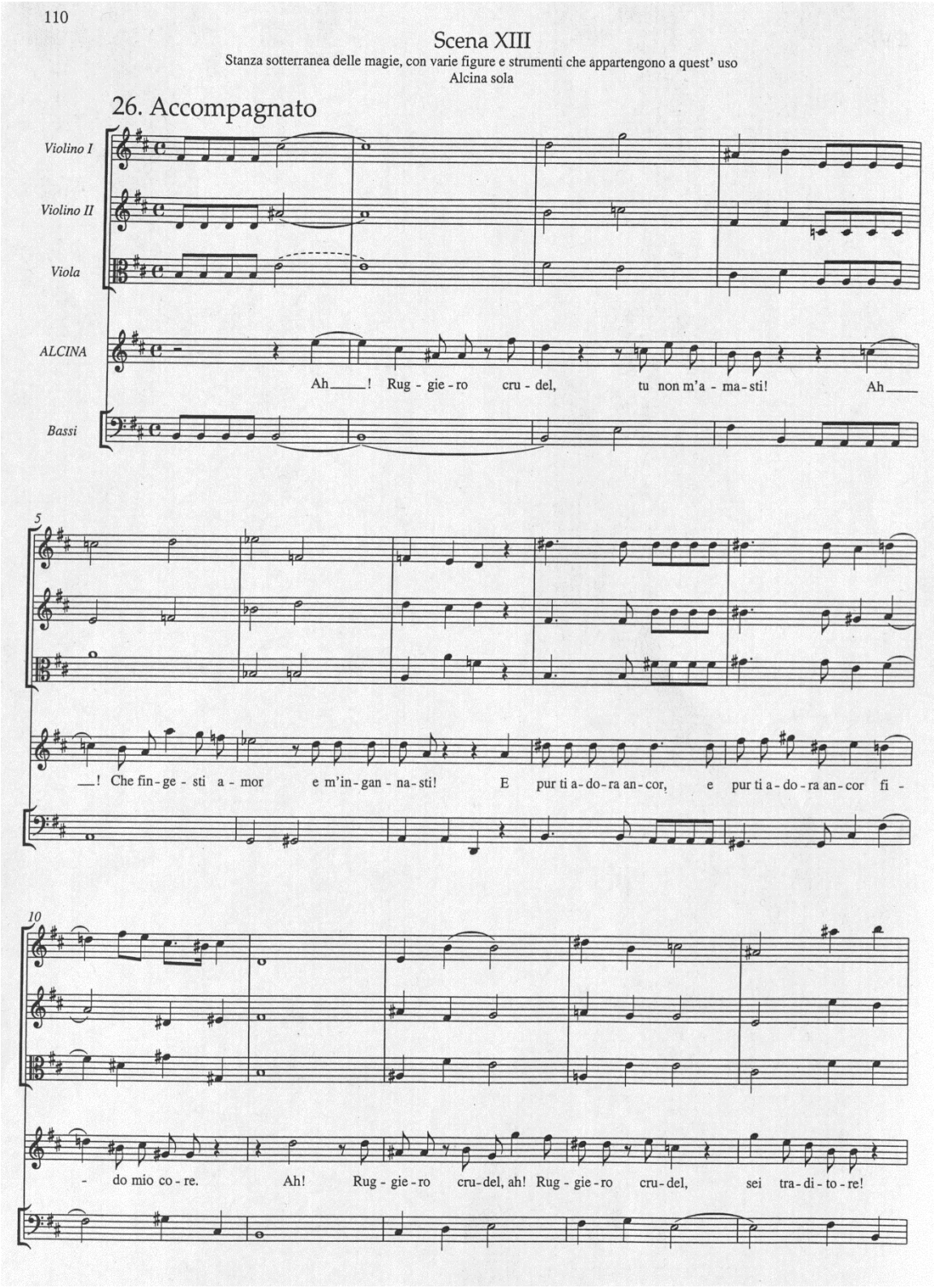

33
-bre, per - ché, per - ché? E vi ce - la - - -
- ster, war - um, war - um? Vor mir ver - bor - - -
35
te, e vi ce - la - te sor - de da
gen, vor mir ver-bor - gen, die euch nicht
37
me.
rührt.
Lo so, m'u - di - te. D'in-tor-no er -
Ich weiß, ihr hört mich, und ihr um -
39
-ra - te, e vi ce - la - - - - - - - -
- kreist mich, vor mit ver - bor - - - - - - - -


41
- te, e vi ce - la - te sor - de da me.
- gen, vor mir ver - bor - gen, die euch nicht rührt.
f
44
46
48
Fug - ge il mio be - ne; voi lo fer - ma-te, deh
Mein Lieb-ster flieht mich; laßt ihn nicht ge-hen, o
tr
tr
p
p
fine

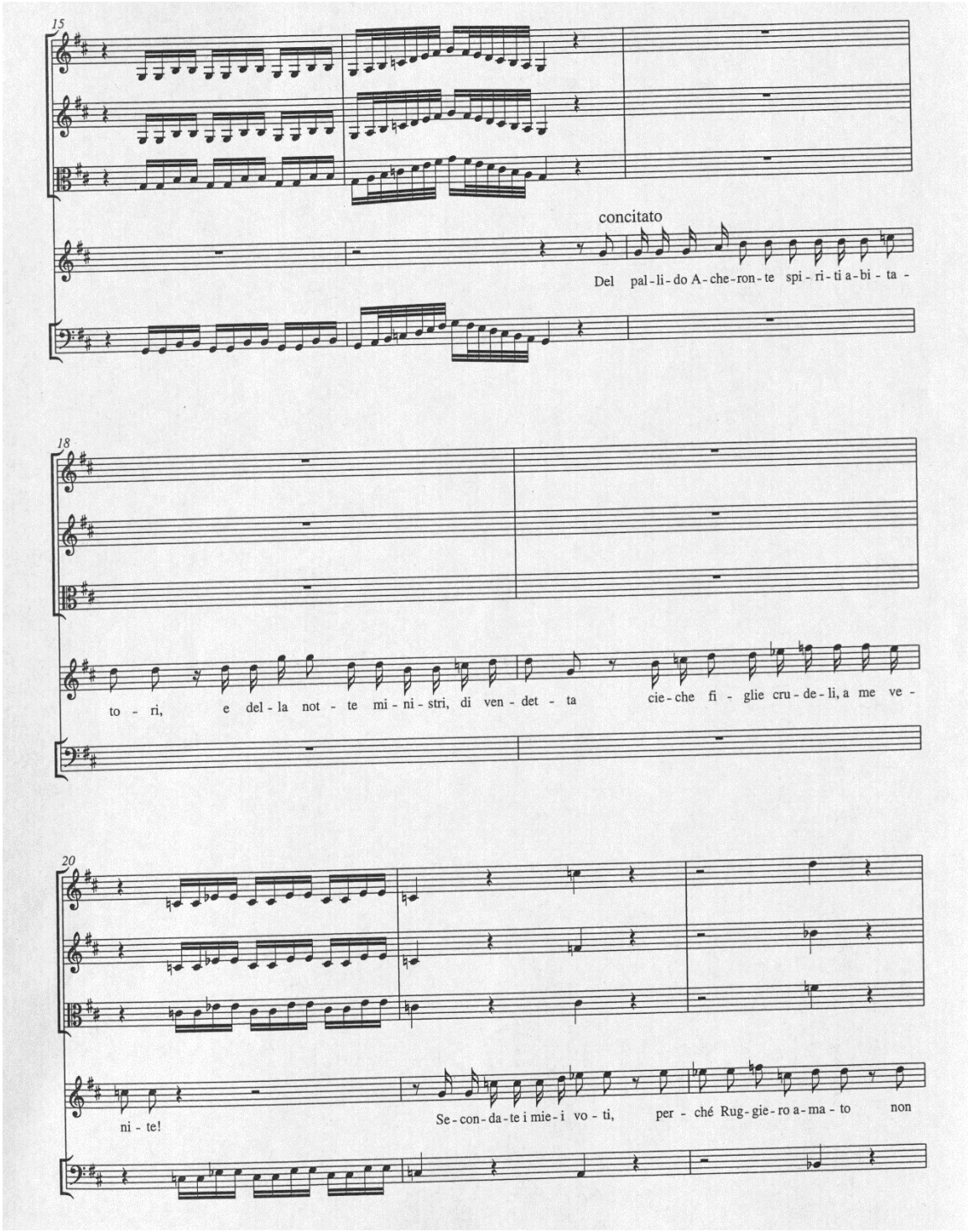


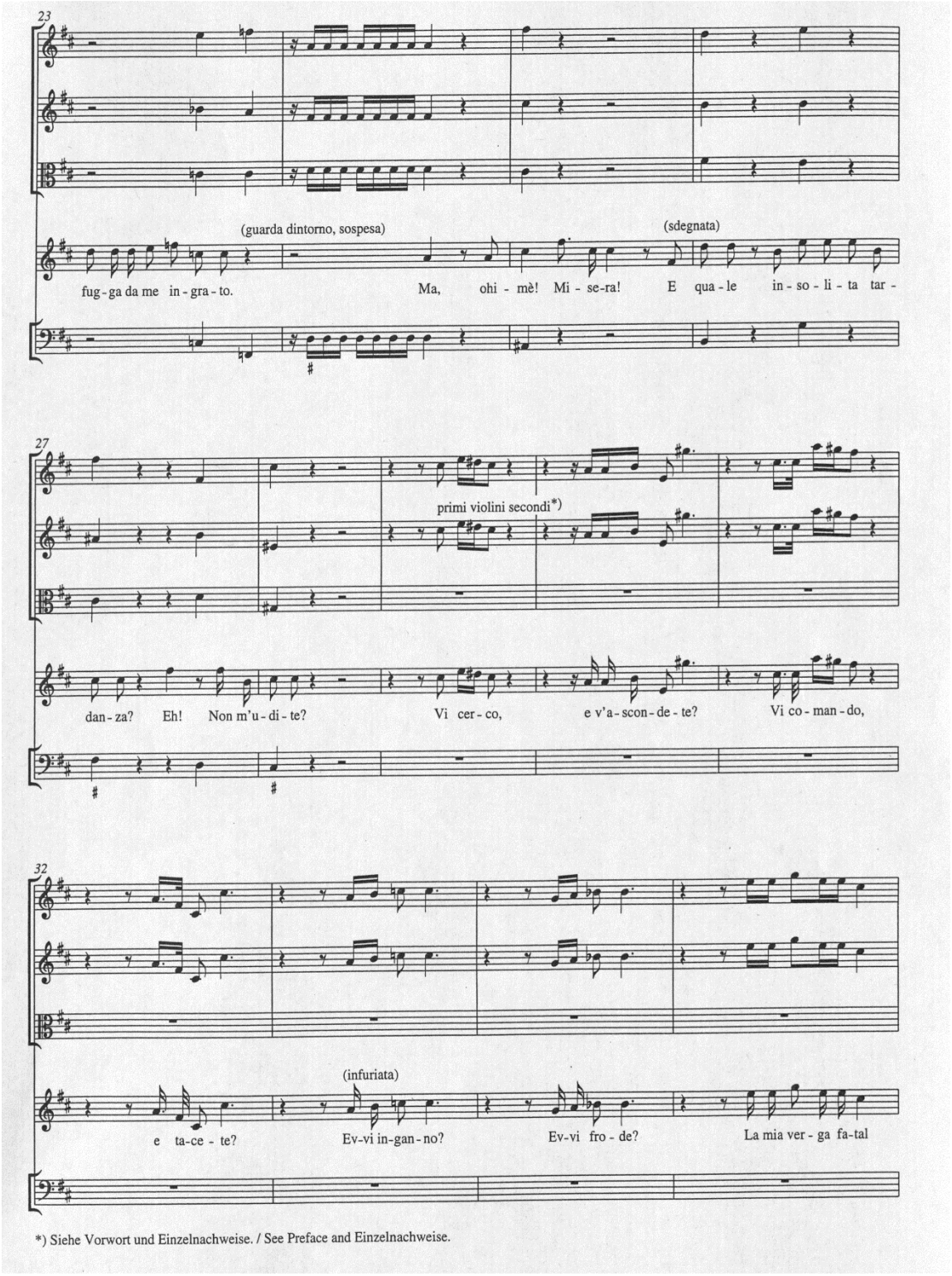
Parte con impeto gittando via la verga magica, ed allora manifestandosi diversi spiriti e fantasmi; questi formano il ballo.

Geht in heftiger Bewegung ab, den Zauberstab fortschleudernd, und nun zeigen sich verschiedene Geister und Trugbilder und beginnen zu tanzen.

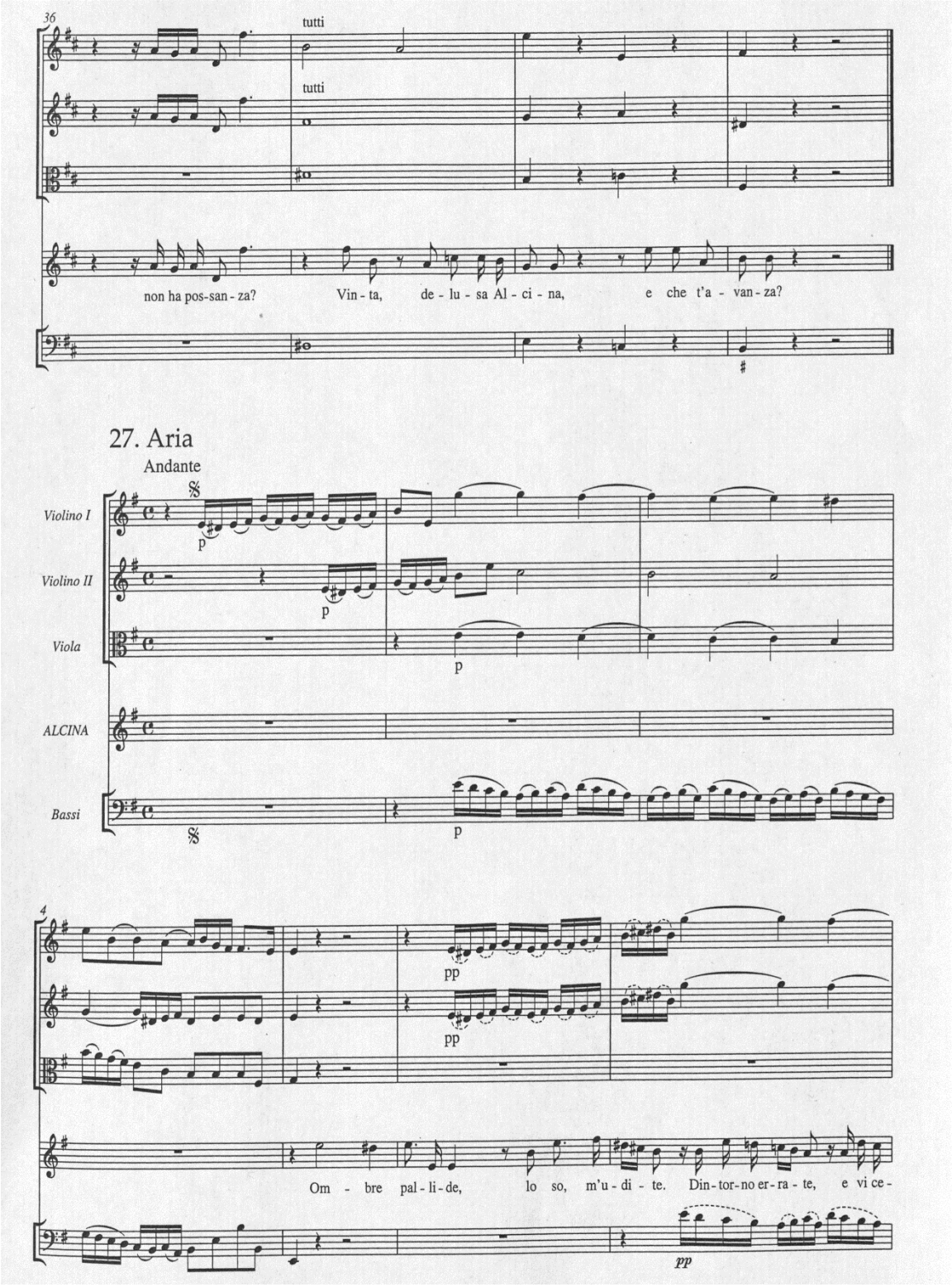


Appendix C, Example 3a (Full score)

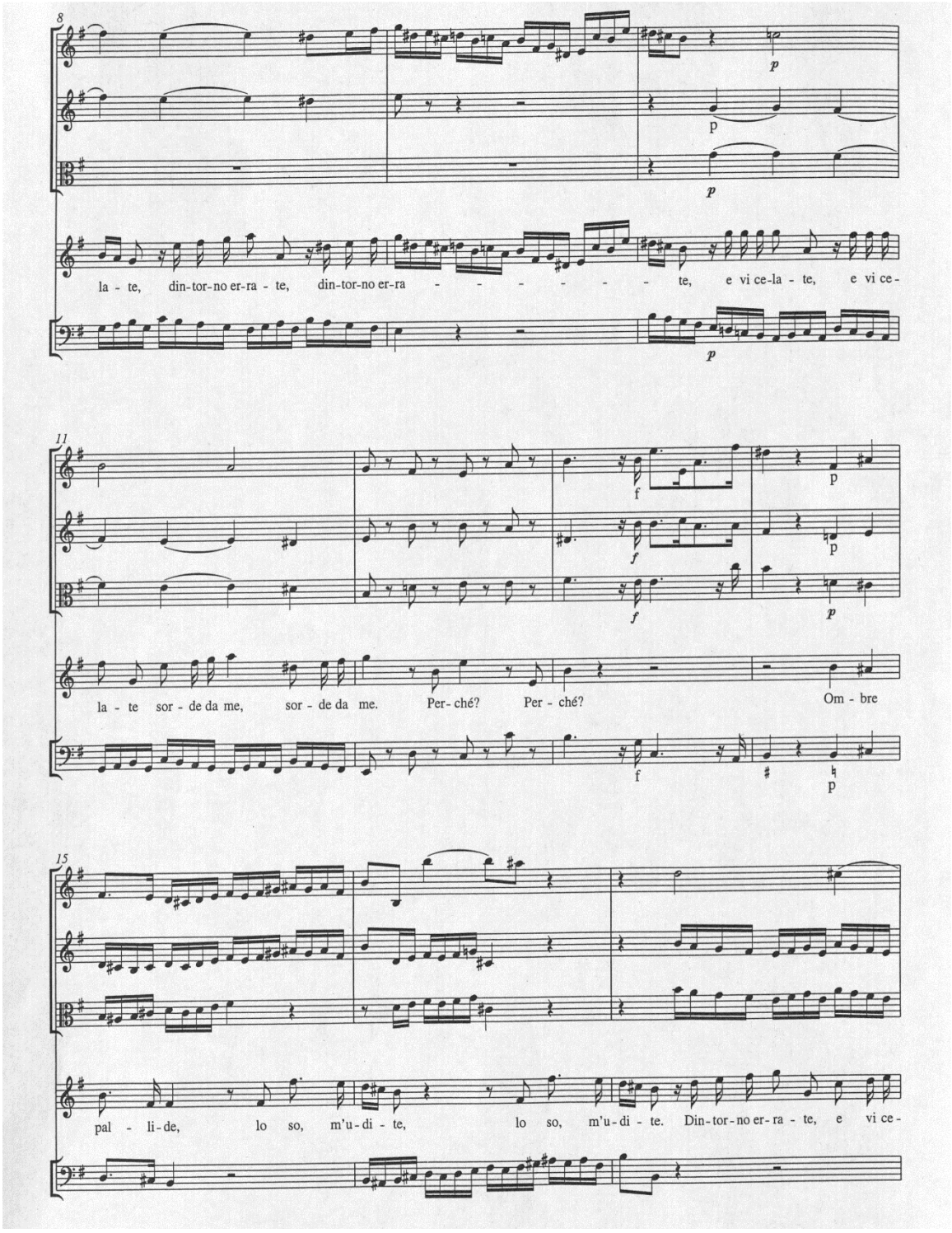

15
concitato
Del pal-li-do A-che-ron-te spi-ri-ti a-bi-ta-
18
to-ri, e del-la not-te mi-ni-stri, di ven-det-ta cie-che fi-glie cru-de-li, a me ve-
20
ni-te!
Se-con-da-te i mie-i vo-ti, per-ché Rug-gie-ro a-ma-to non

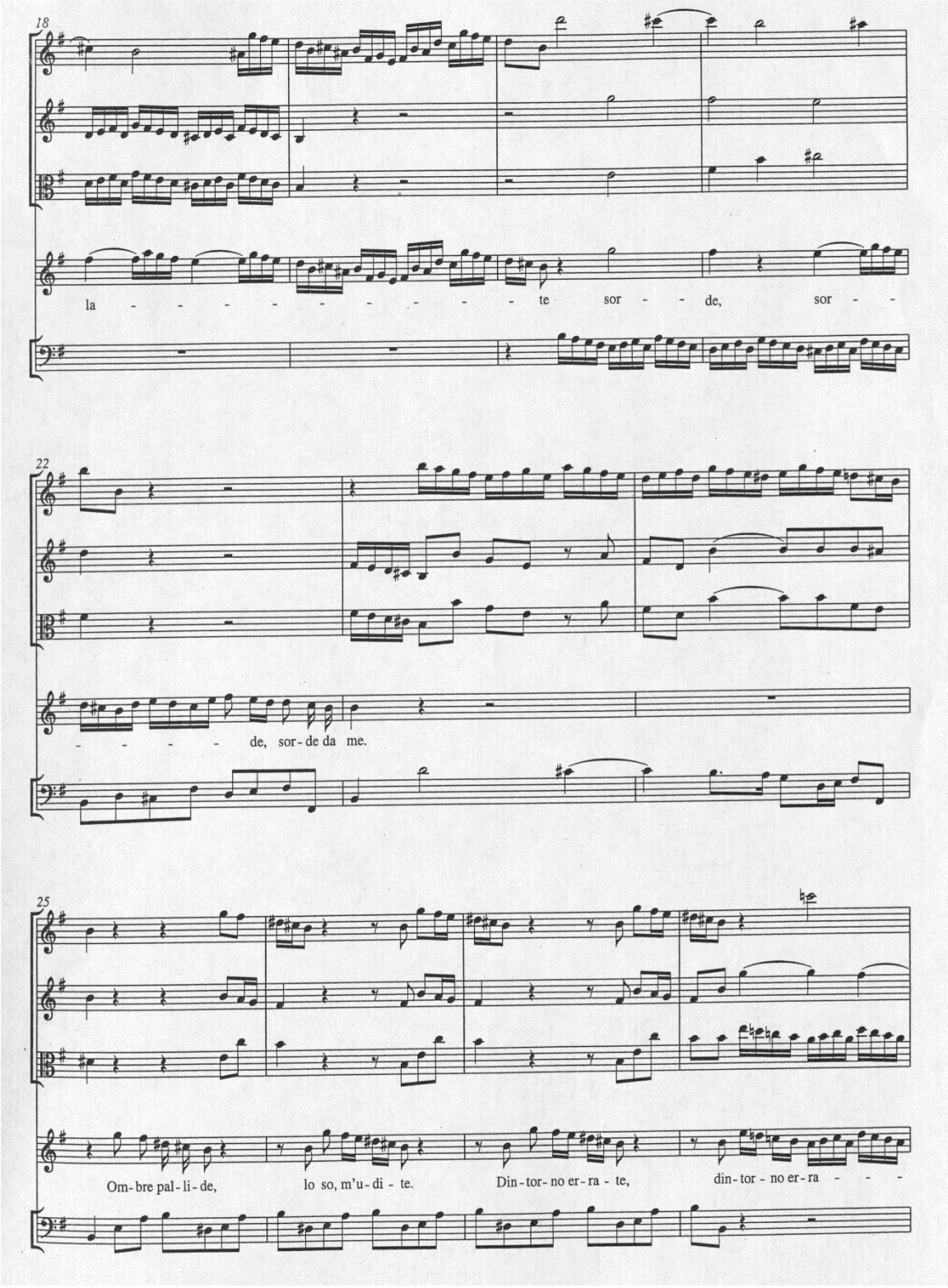


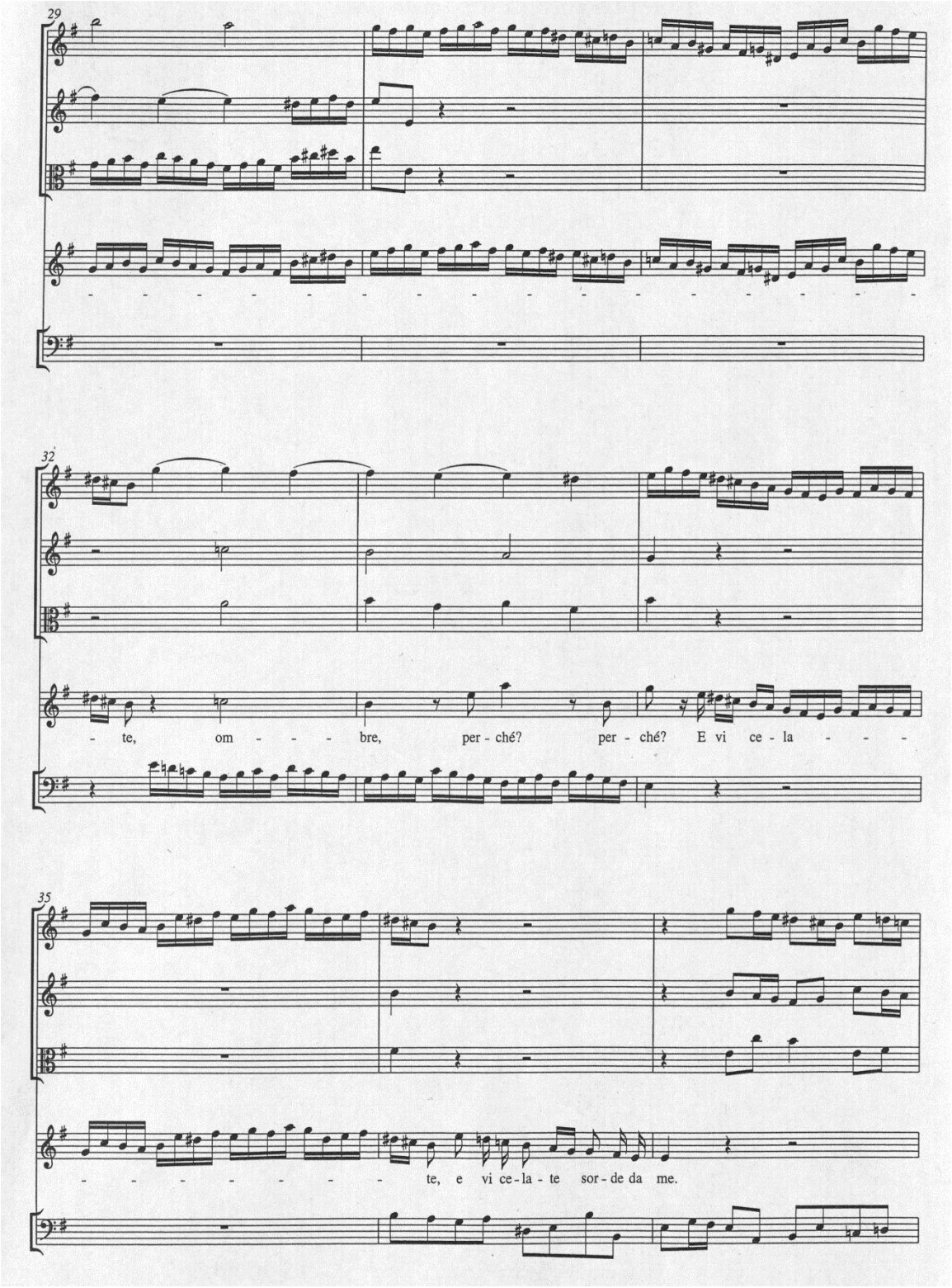
*) Siehe Vorwort und Einzelnachweise. / See Preface and Einzelnachweise.

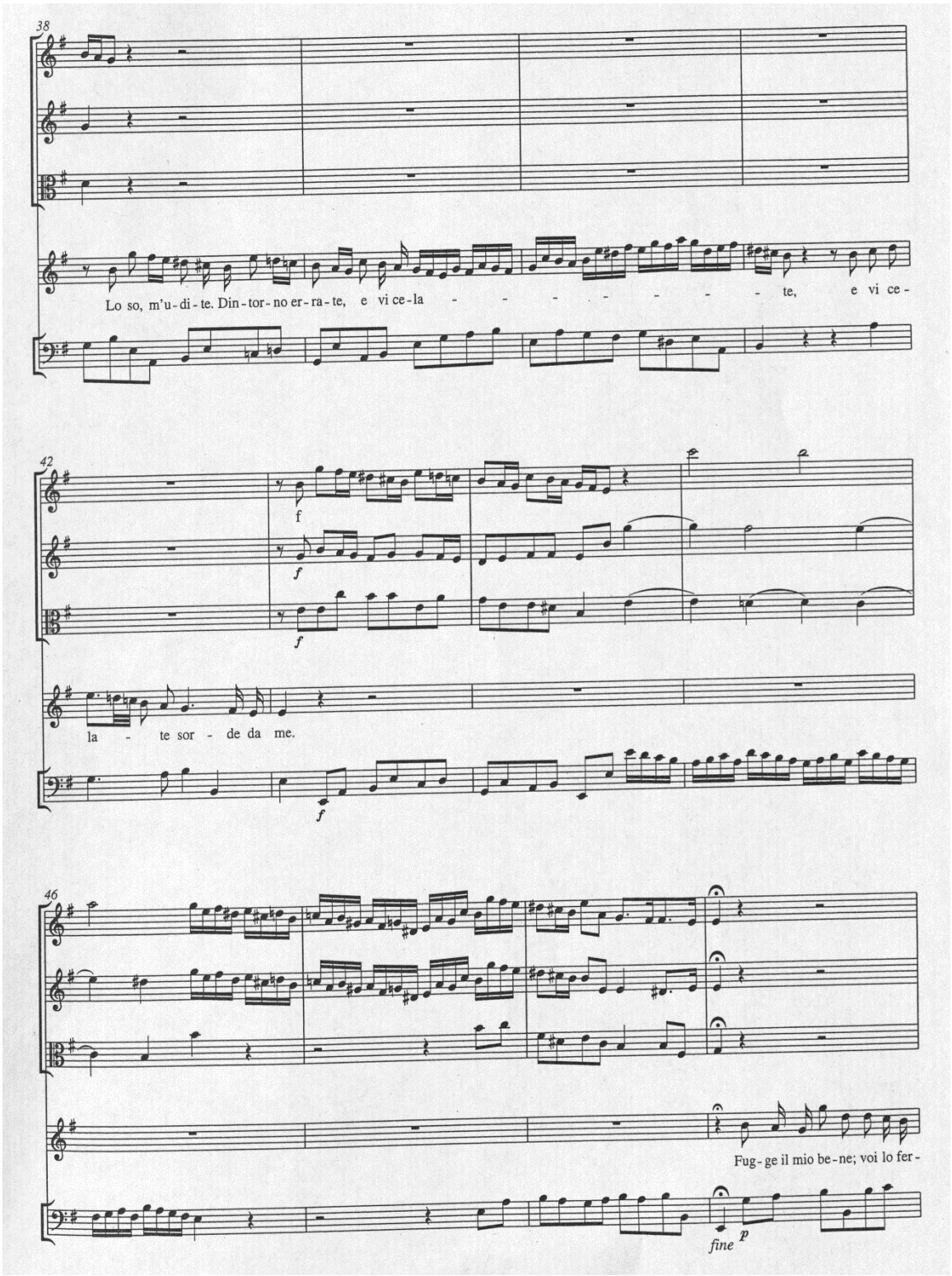


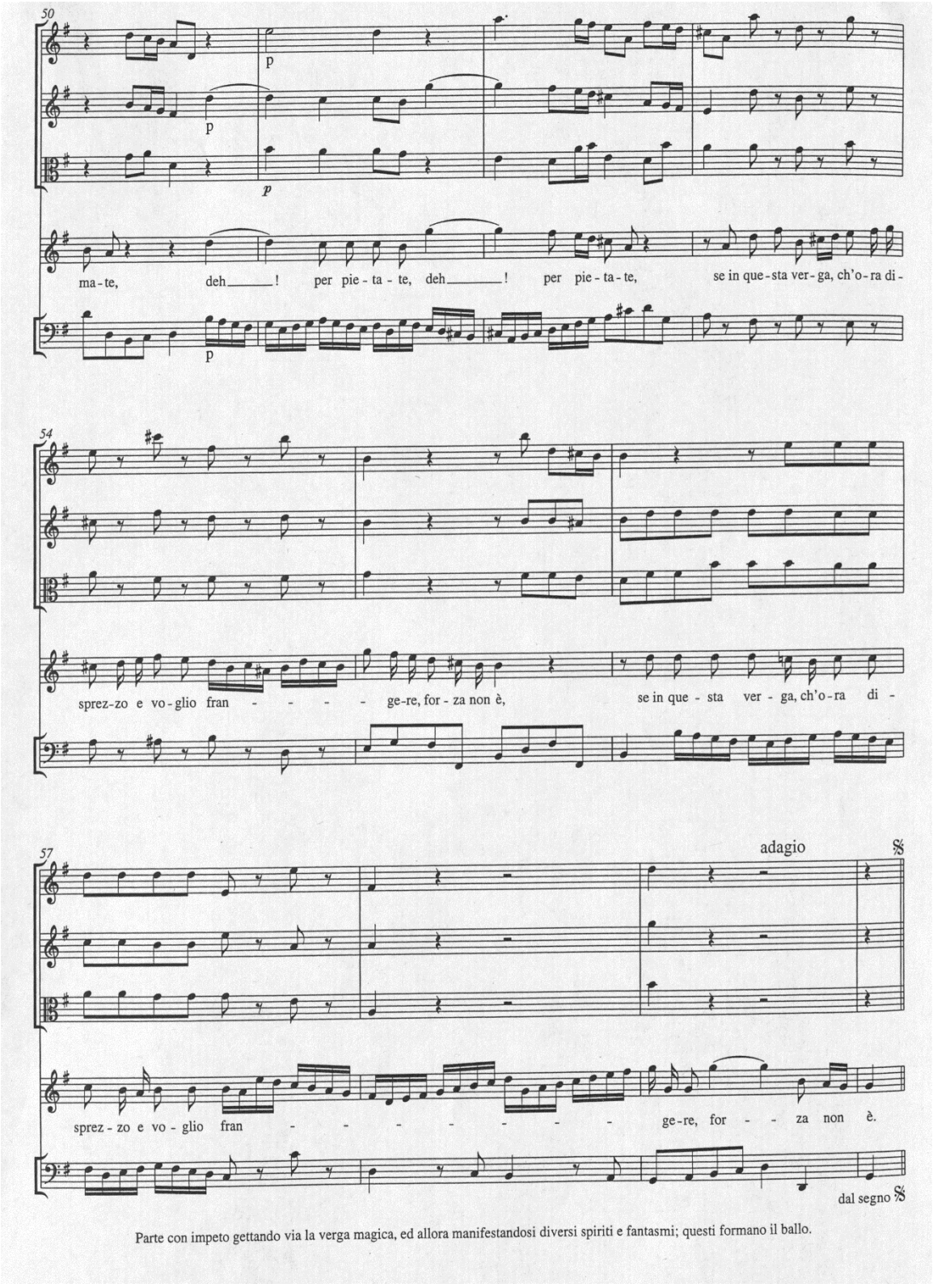
Appendix C, Example 3b (Full score)


8
la - te, din-tor-no er-ra - te, din-tor-no er-ra - - - - - - - te, e vi ce-la - te, e vi ce-
11
la - te sor - de da me, sor - de da me. Per-ché? Per - ché? Om - bre
15
pal - li-de, lo so, m'u-di - te, lo so, m'u-di - te. Din-tor-no er-ra - te, e vi ce-

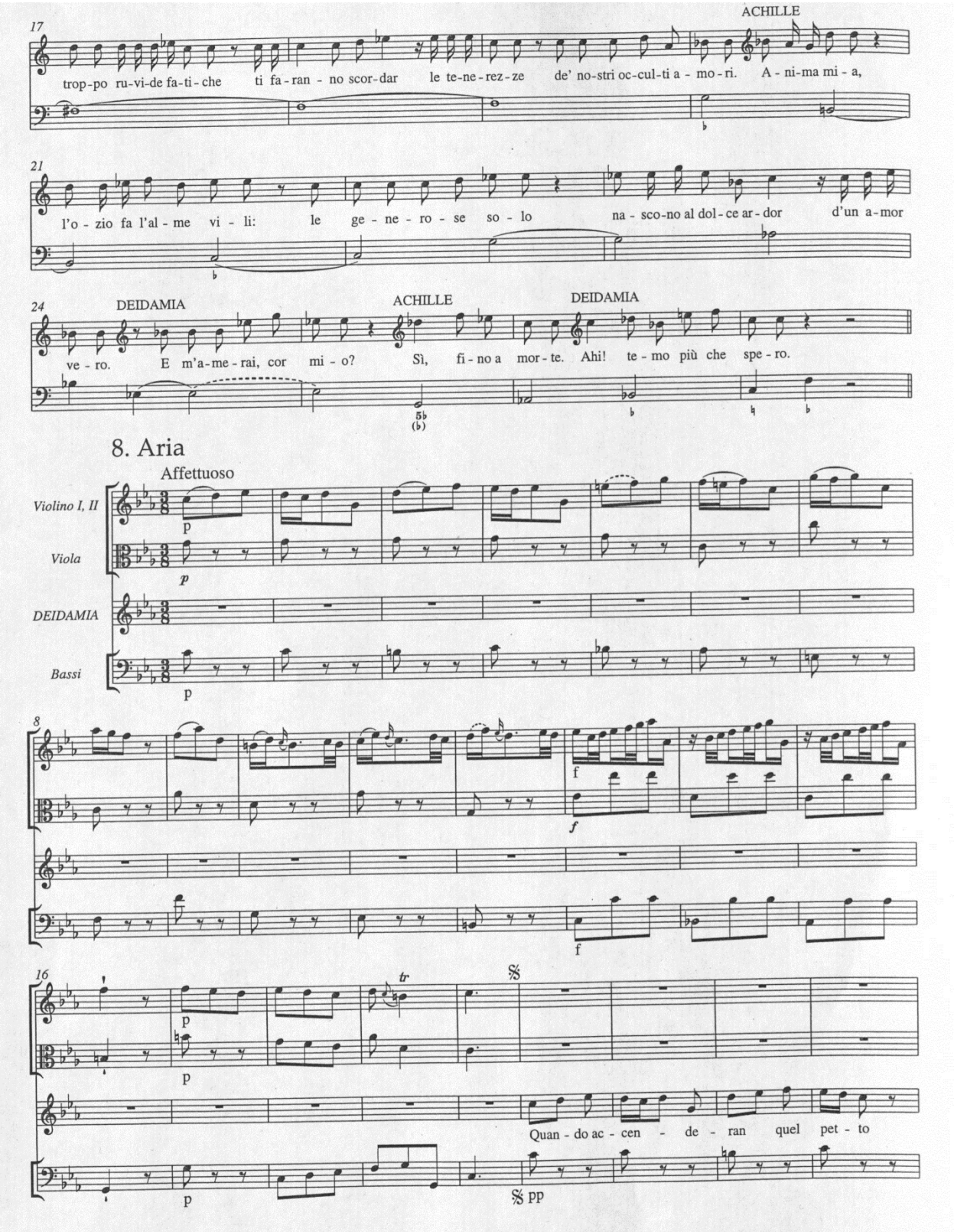

18
la - - - - - - - - - - te sor - - de, sor - -
22
- - - - - de, sor-de da me.
25
Om-bre pal-li-de, lo so, m'u-di - te. Din-tor-no er-ra - te, din-tor-no er-ra - - -


29
32
- te, om - - - bre, per - ché? per - ché? E vi ce - la - - -
35
- - - - - - - - te, e vi ce - la - te sor - de da me.

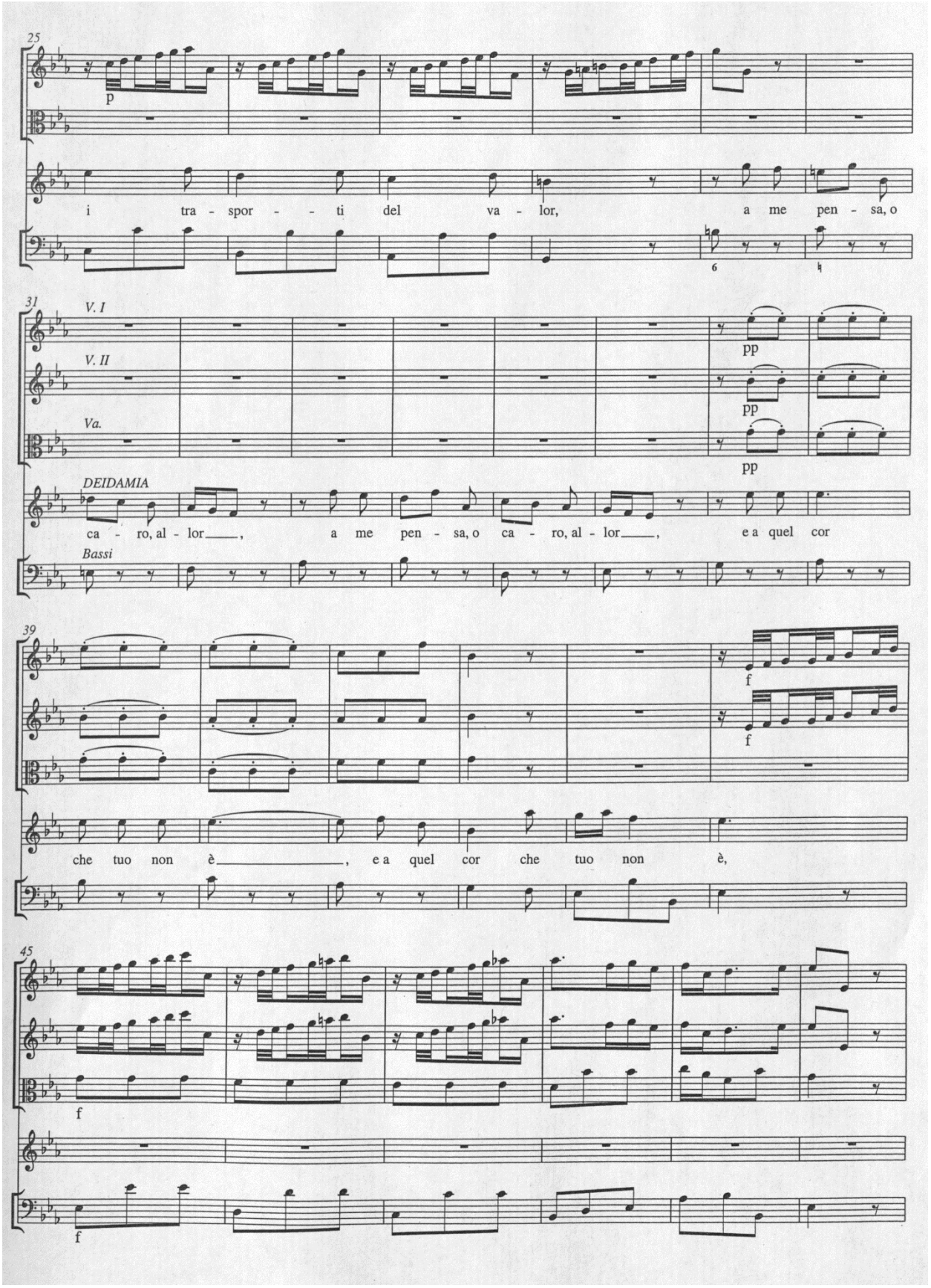

38
Lo so, m'u-di-te. Din-tor-no er-ra-te, e vi ce-la - - - - - - - - te, e vi ce-
42
f
f
f
la - te sor - de da me.
f
46
Fug-ge il mio be-ne; voi lo fer-
fine
p

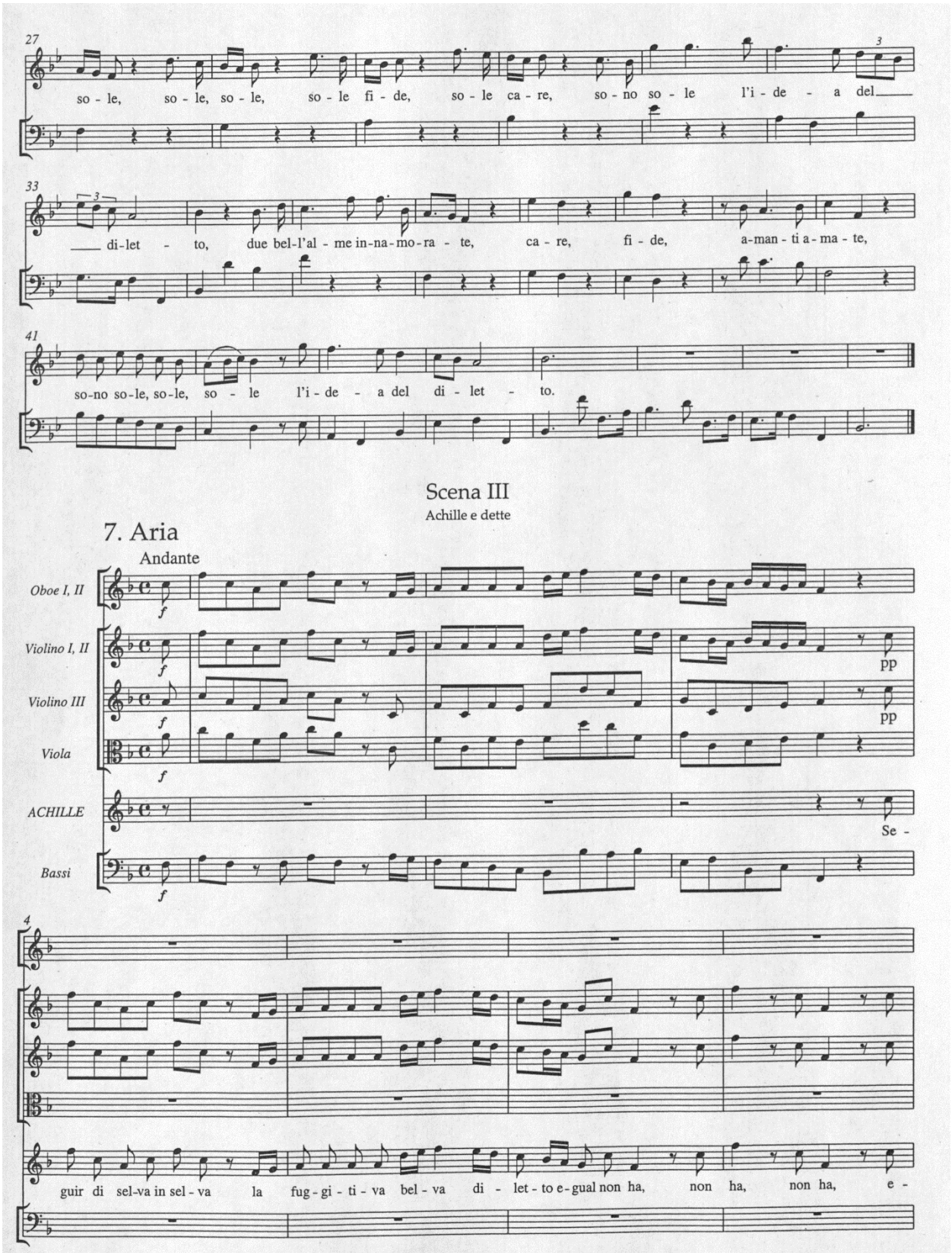


Parte con impeto gettando via la verga magica, ed allora manifestandosi diversi spiriti e fantasmi; questi formano il ballo.

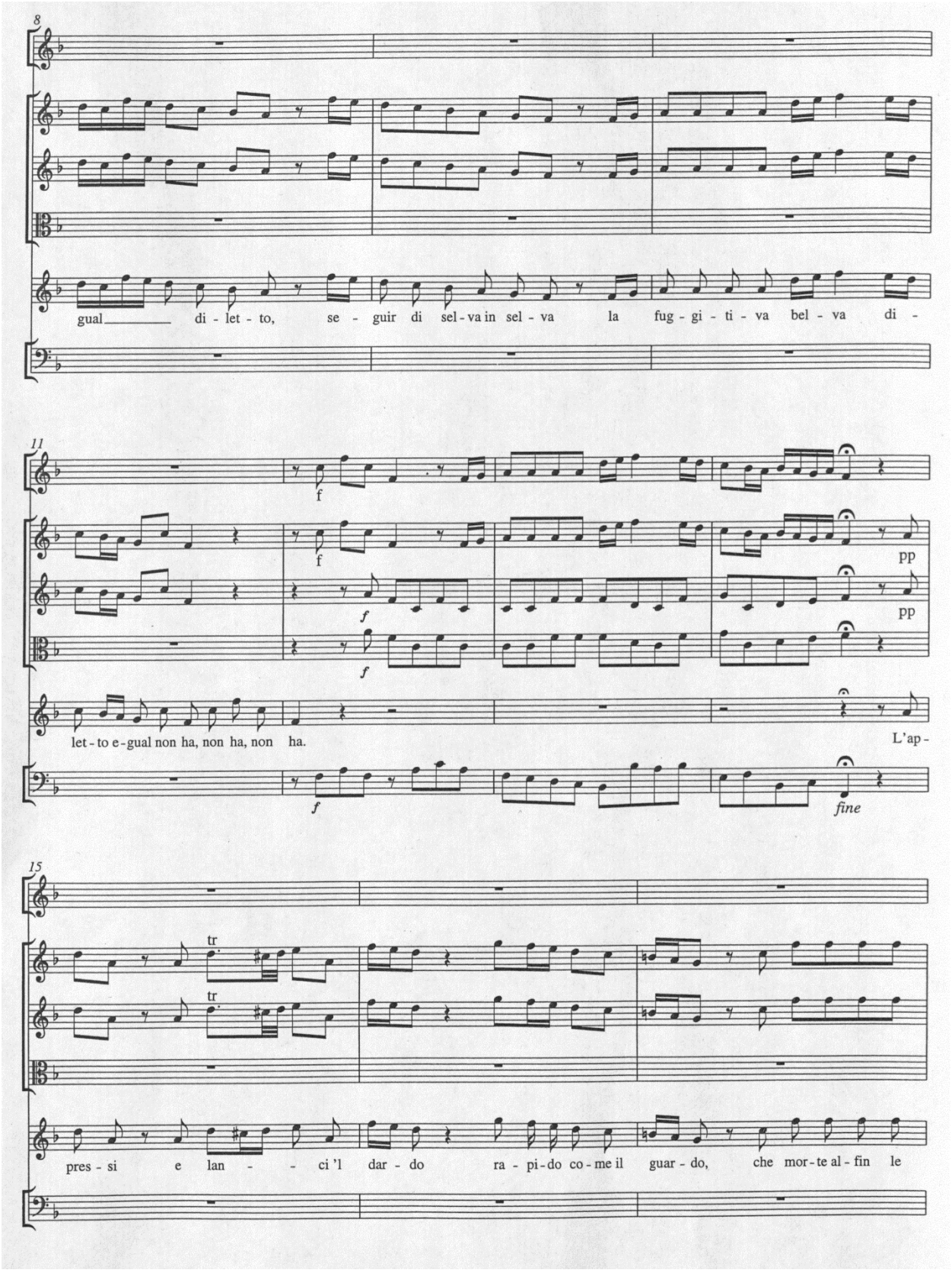


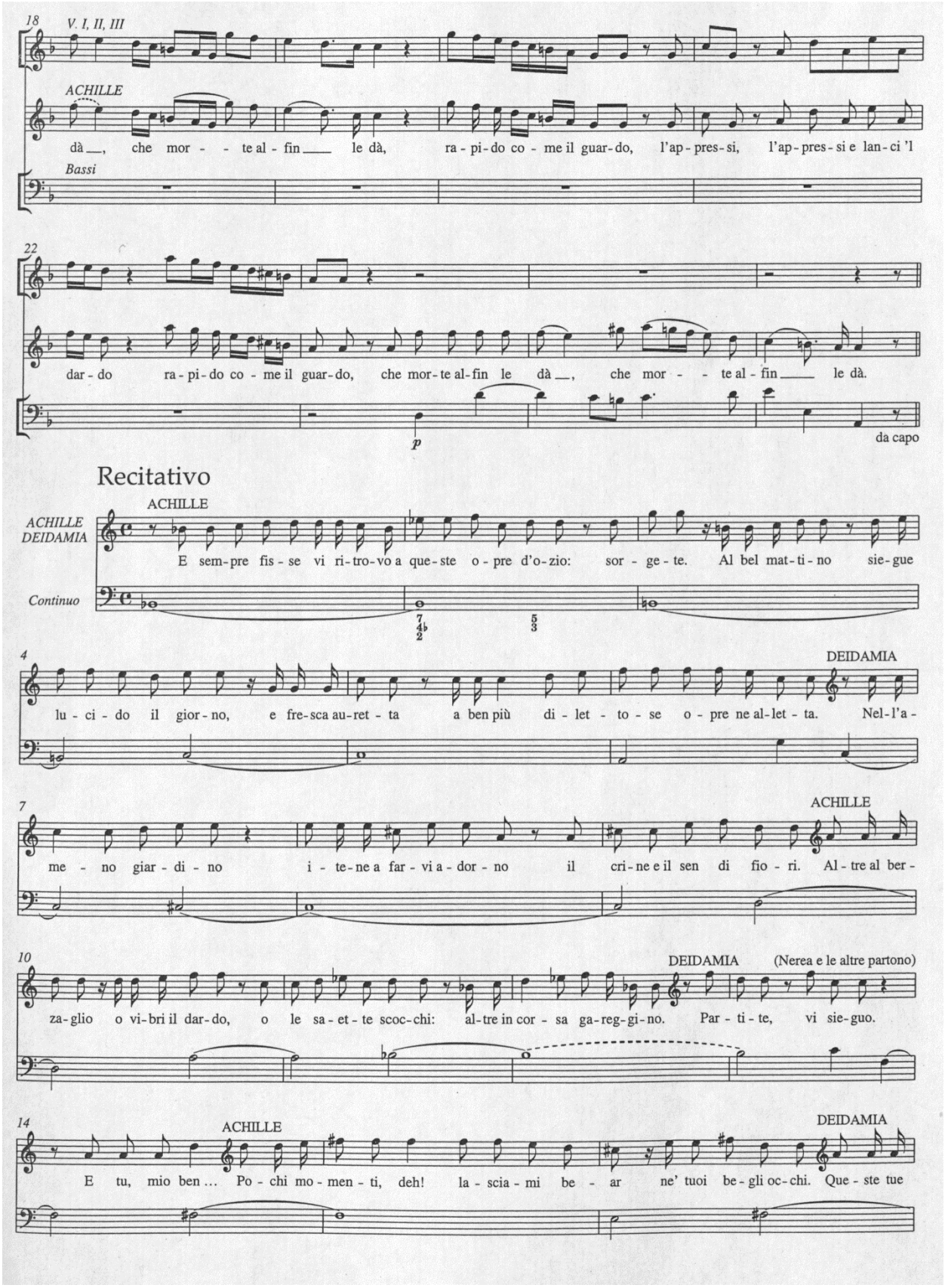
Appendix D, Example 1

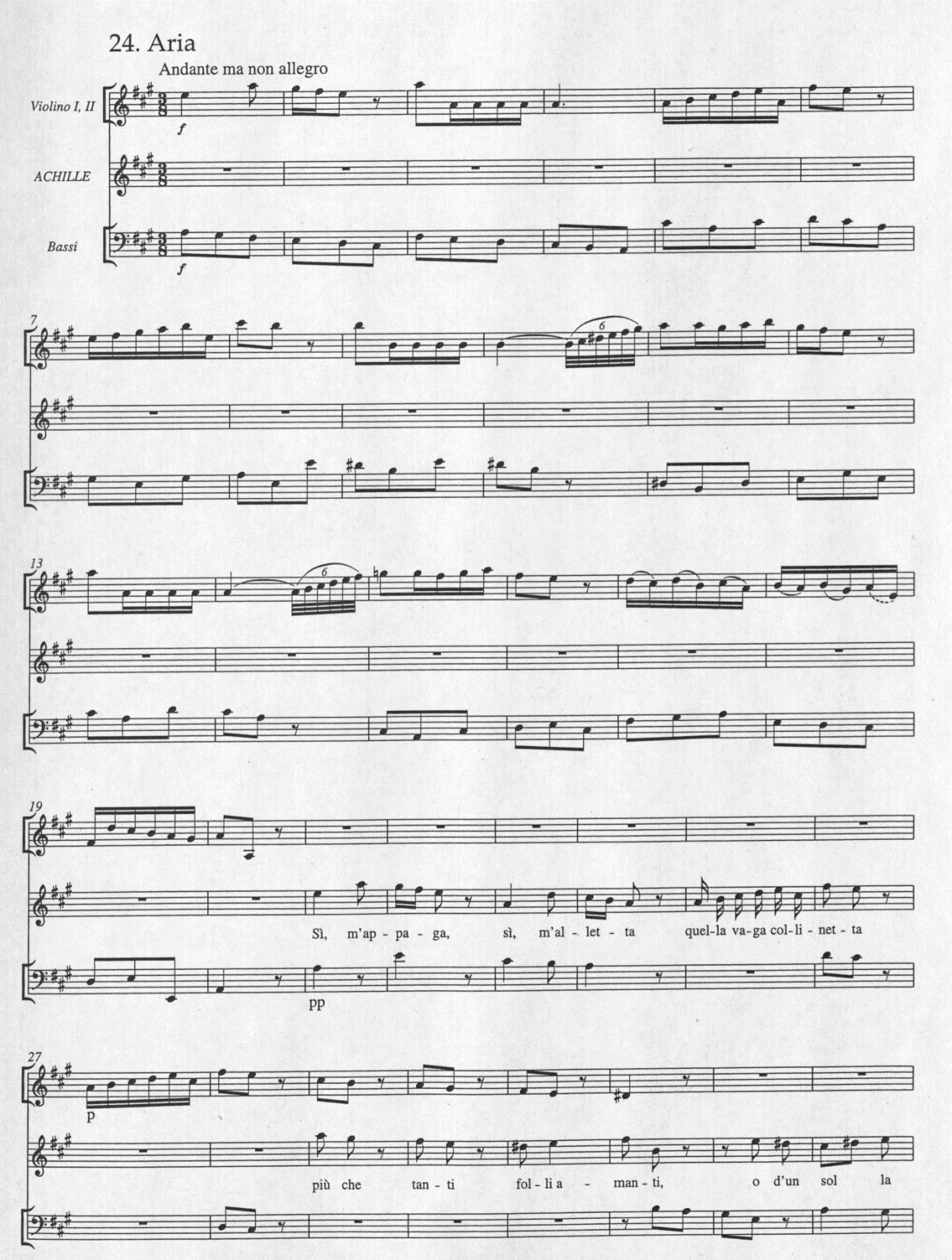

25
p
i tra - spor - - ti del va - lor, a me pen - sa, o
31
V. I
V. II
Va.
pp
pp
pp
DEIDAMIA
ca - ro, al - lor___, a me pen - sa, o ca - ro, al - lor___, e a quel cor
Bassi
39
f
f
che tuo non è___, e a quel cor che tuo non è,
45
f
f



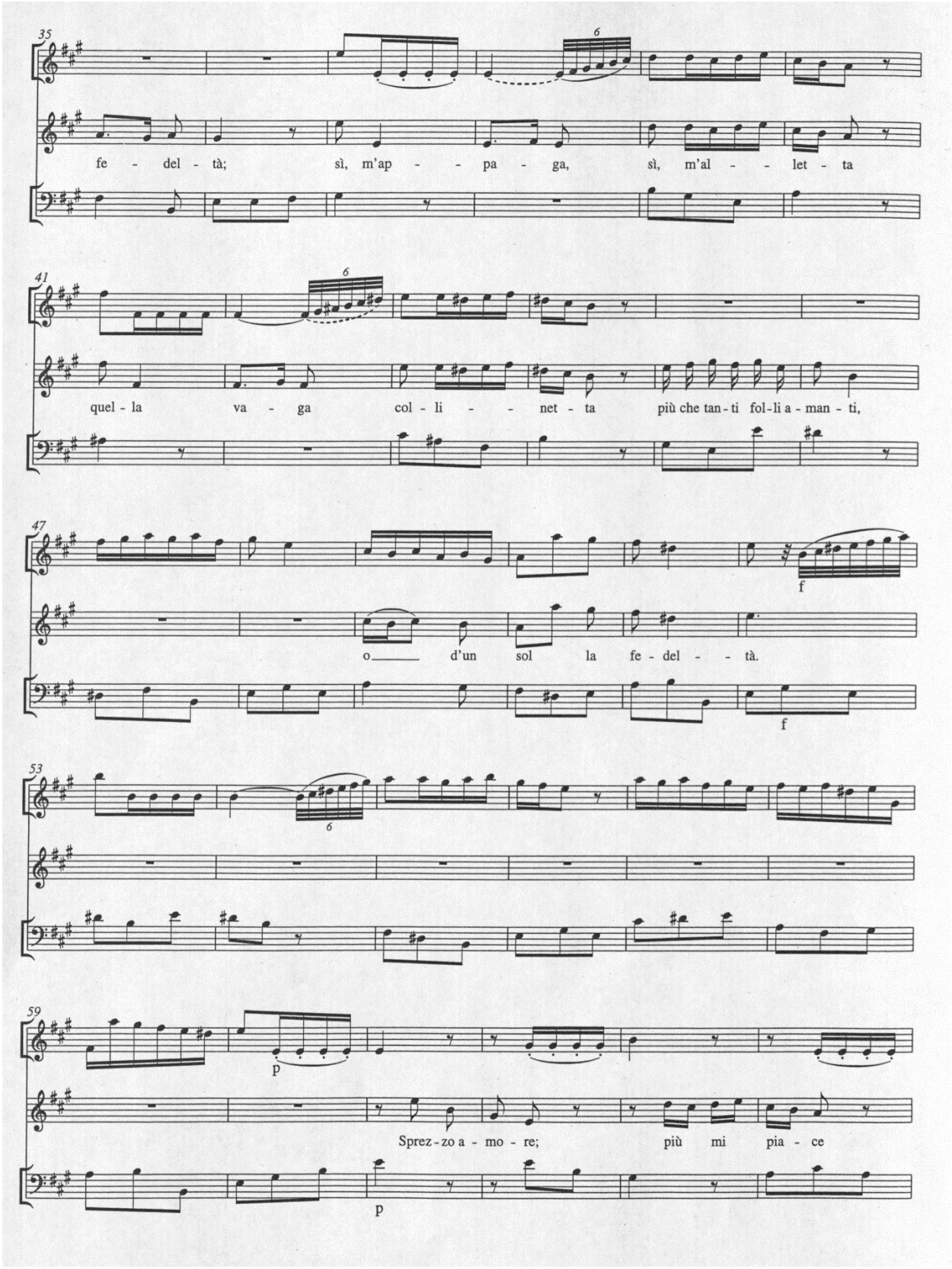
Appendix D, Example 2

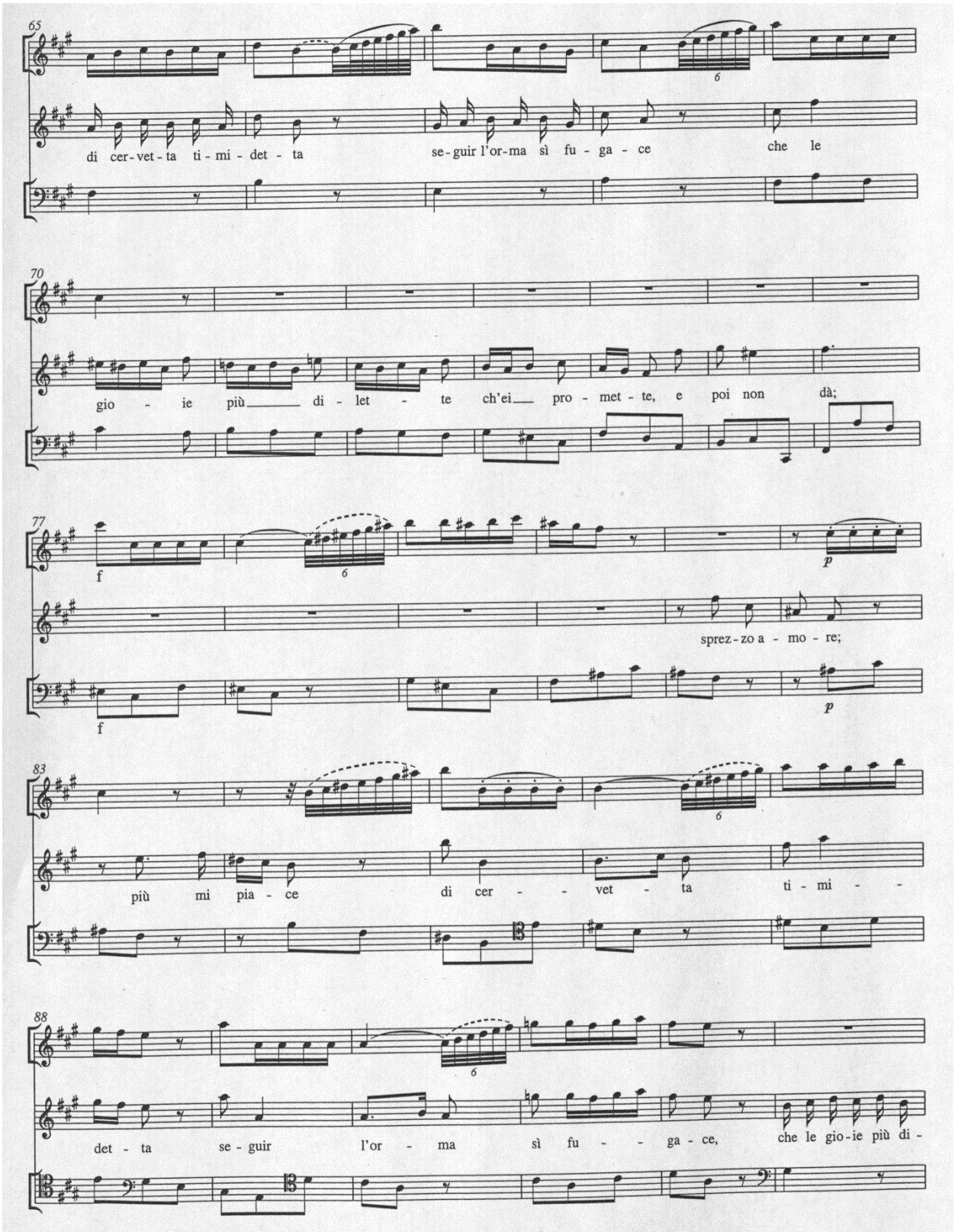

8
gual di - let - to, se - guir di sel - va in sel - va la fug - gi - ti - va bel - va di -
11
f
pp
let - to e - gual non ha, non ha, non ha.
L'ap -
fine
15
tr
pres - si e lan - - ci 'l dar - do ra - pi - do co - me il guar - do, che mor - te al - fin le

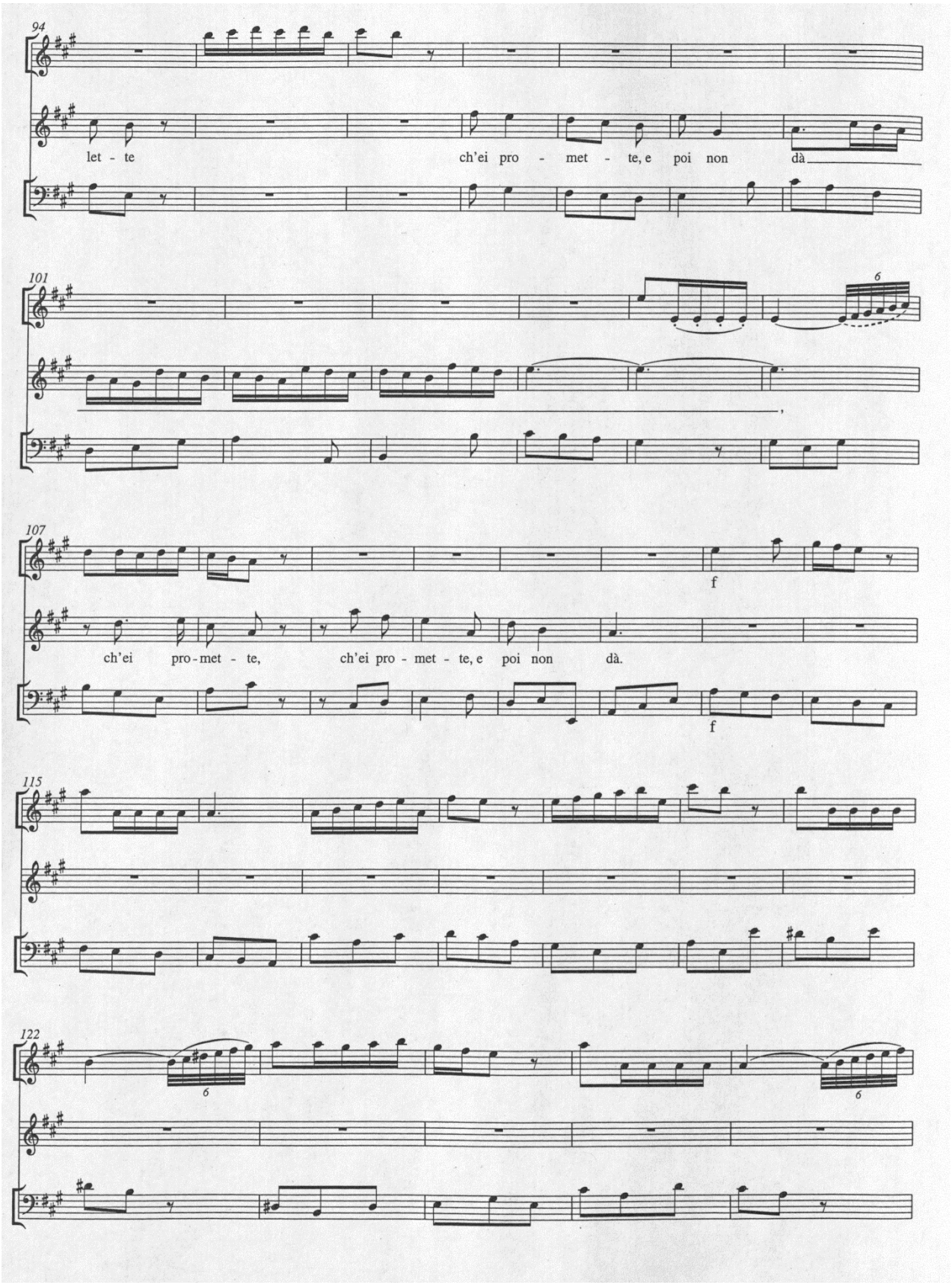

18
V. I, II, III
ACHILLE
dà __, che mor - - te al - fin ___ le dà, ra - pi - do co - me il guar - do, l'ap - pres - si, l'ap - pres - si e lan - ci 'l
Bassi
22
dar - do ra - pi - do co - me il guar - do, che mor - te al - fin le dà __, che mor - - te al - fin ___ le dà.
p
da capo
Recitativo
ACHILLE
ACHILLE DEIDAMIA
E sem - pre fis - se vi ri - tro - vo a que - ste o - pre d'o - zio: sor - ge - te. Al bel mat - ti - no sie - gue
Continuo
4
DEIDAMIA
lu - ci - do il gior - no, e fre - sca au - ret - ta a ben più di - let - to - se o - pre ne al - let - ta. Nel - l'a -
7
ACHILLE
me - no giar - di - no i - te - ne a far - vi a - dor - no il cri - ne e il sen di fio - ri. Al - tre al ber -
10
DEIDAMIA (Nerea e le altre partono)
za - glio o vi - bri il dar - do, o le sa - et - te scoc - chi: al - tre in cor - sa ga - reg - gi - no. Par - ti - te, vi sie - guo.
14
ACHILLE
DEIDAMIA
E tu, mio ben ... Po - chi mo - men - ti, deh! la - scia - mi be - ar ne' tuoi be - gli oc - chi. Que - ste tue

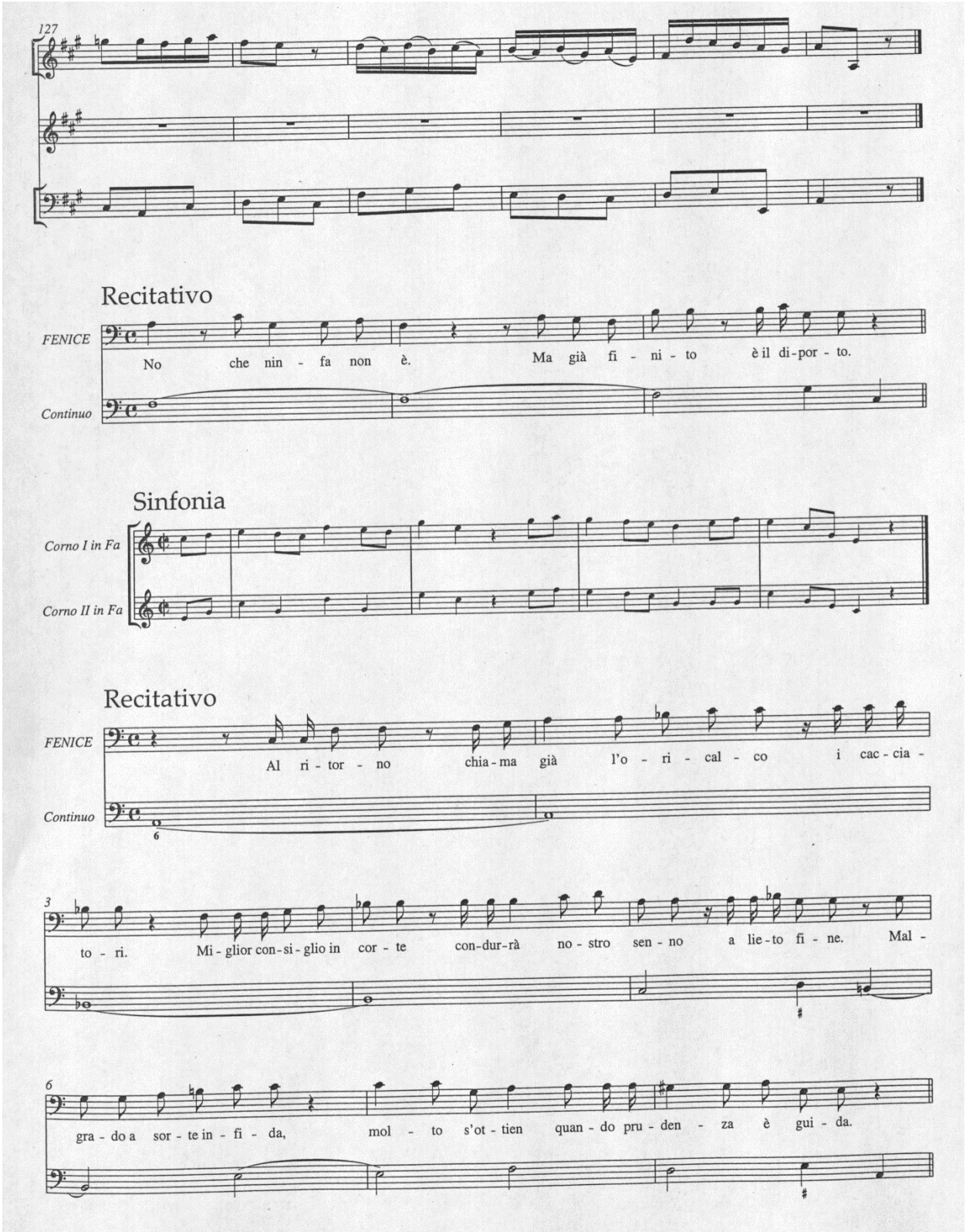


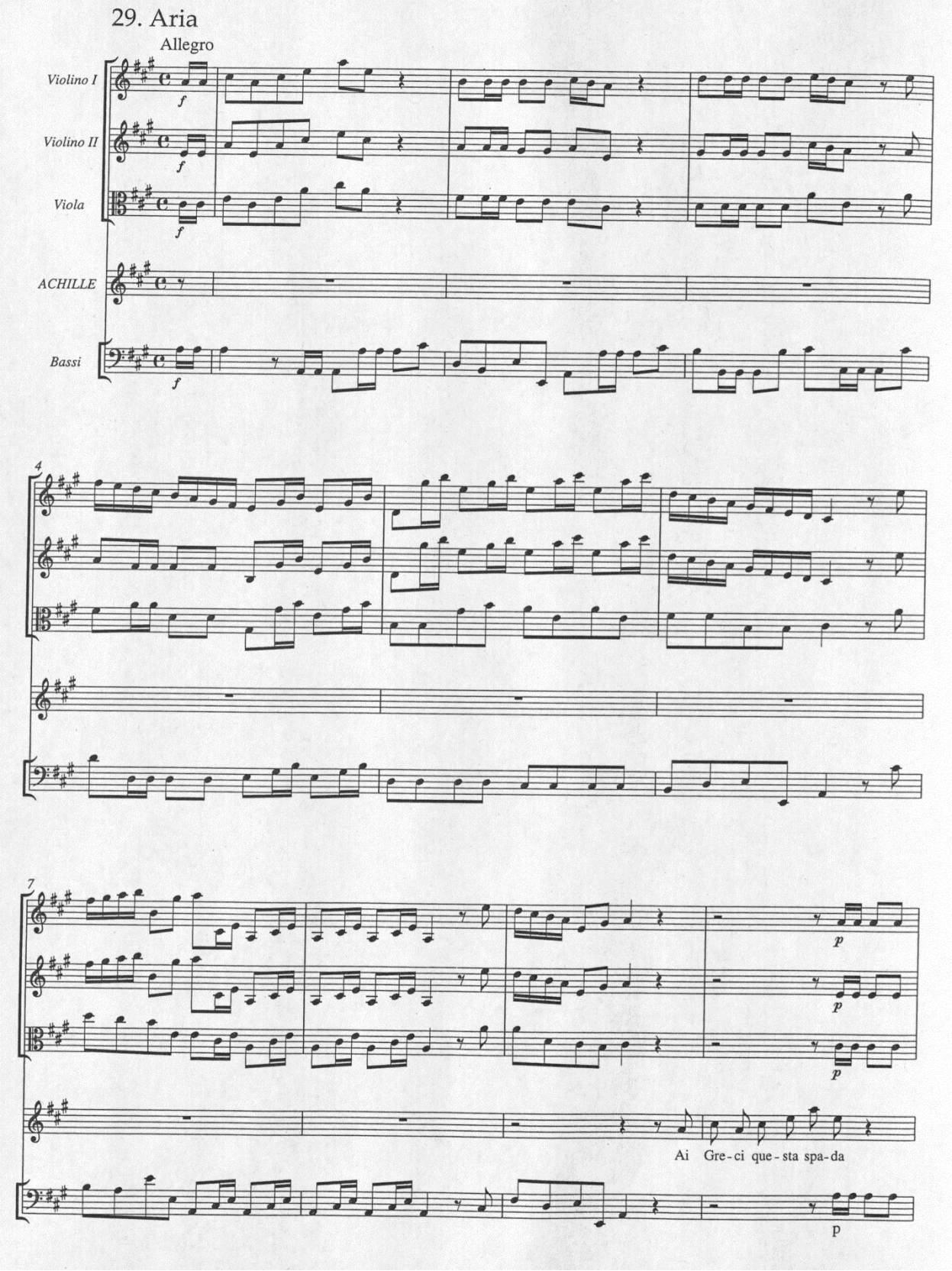
Appendix D, Example 3


35
fe - del - tà; sì, m'ap - - pa - ga, sì, m'al - - let - ta
41
quel - la va - ga col - li - - net - ta più che tan - ti fol - li a - man - ti,
47
o d'un sol la fe - del - - tà.
f
f
53
59
p
Sprez - zo a - mo - re; più mi pia - ce
p

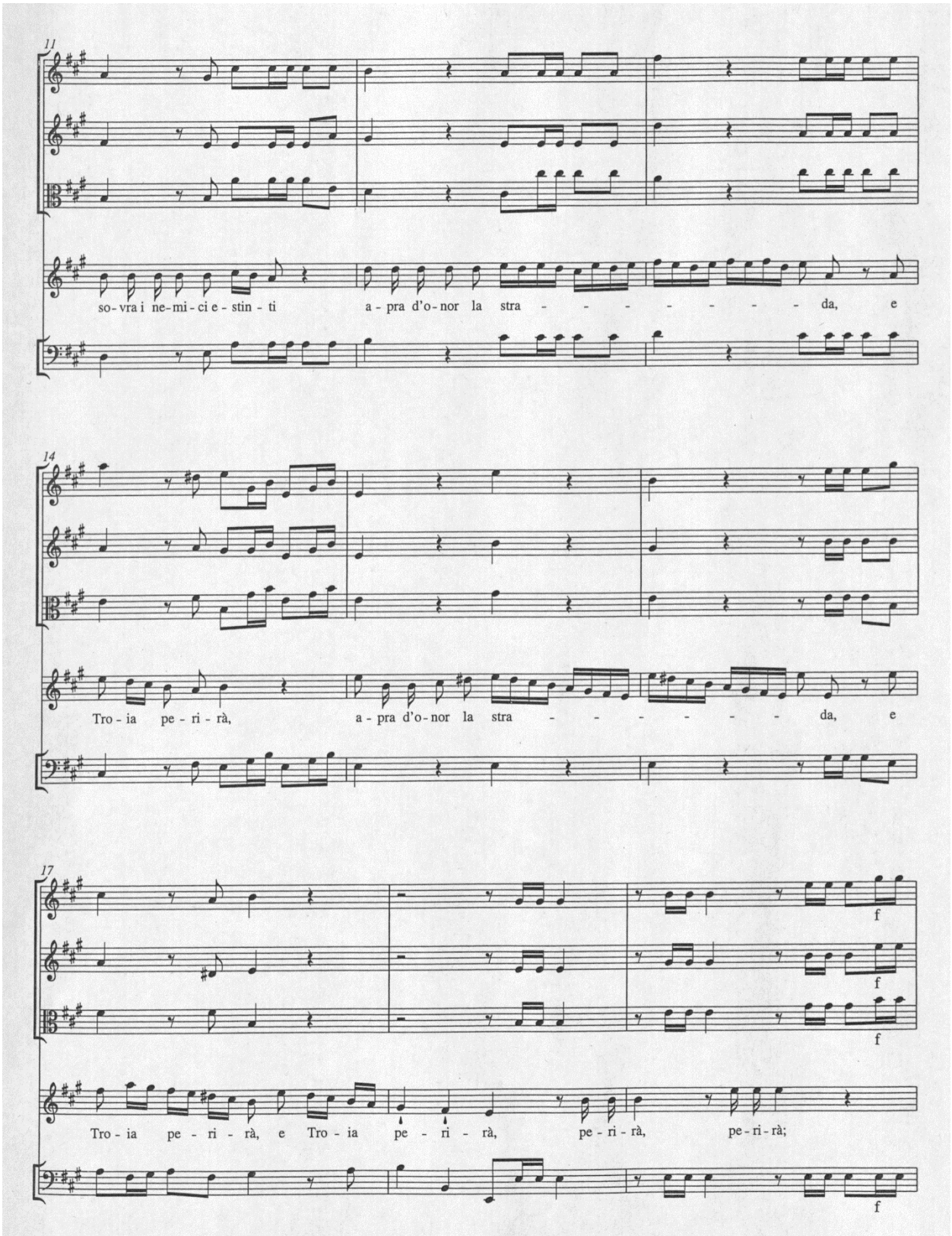

65
di cer-vet-ta ti-mi-det-ta
se-guir l'or-ma sì fu-ga-ce
che le
70
gio-ie più di-let-te ch'ei pro-met-te, e poi non dà;
77
f
p
sprez-zo a-mo-re;
f
p
83
più mi pia-ce
di cer-vet-ta
ti-mi-
88
det-ta
se-guir
l'or-ma
sì fu-ga-ce,
che le gio-ie più di-

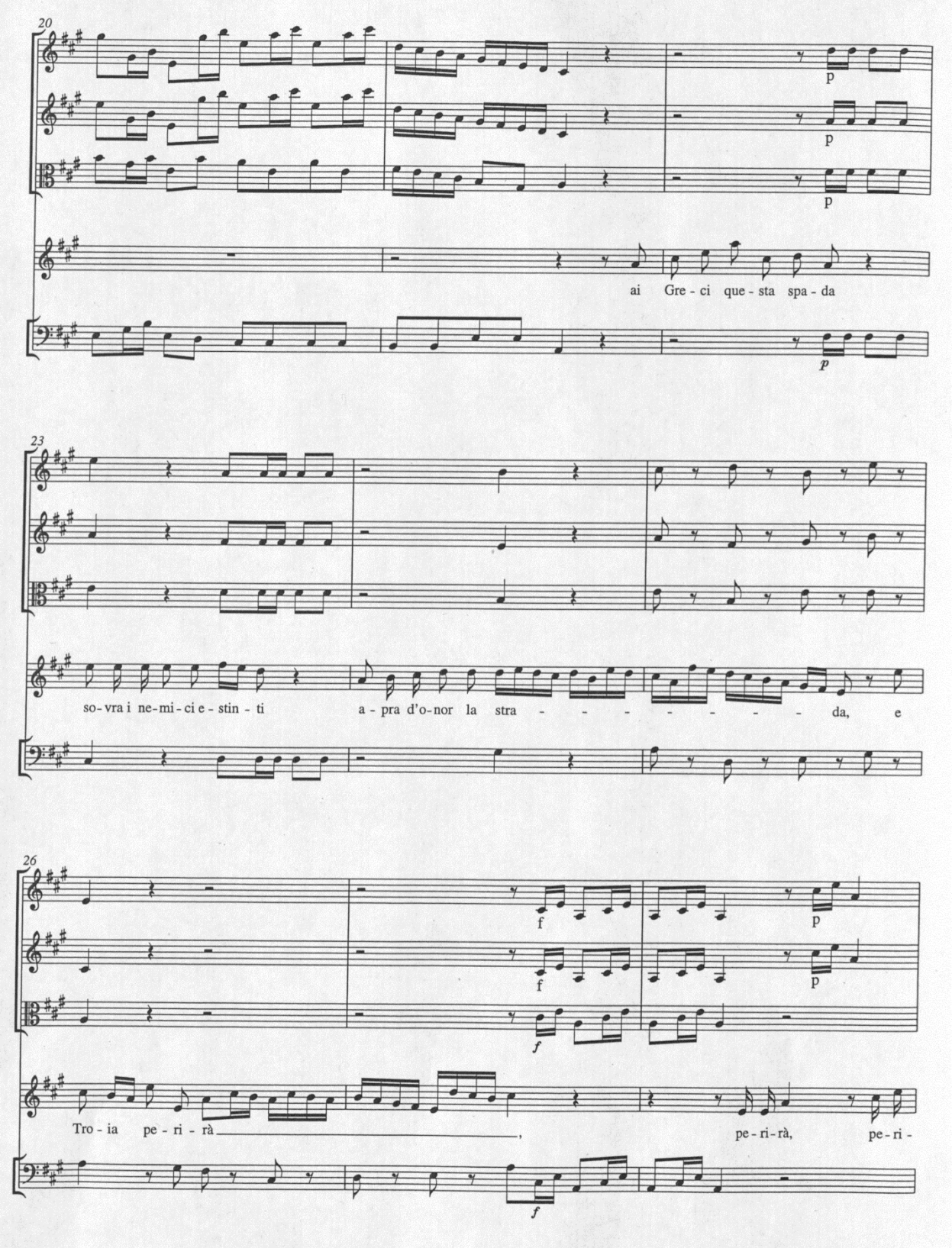

94
let - te
ch'ei pro - met - te, e poi non dà
101
6
107
f
ch'ei pro-met - te,
ch'ei pro - met - te, e poi non dà.
f
115
122
6
6

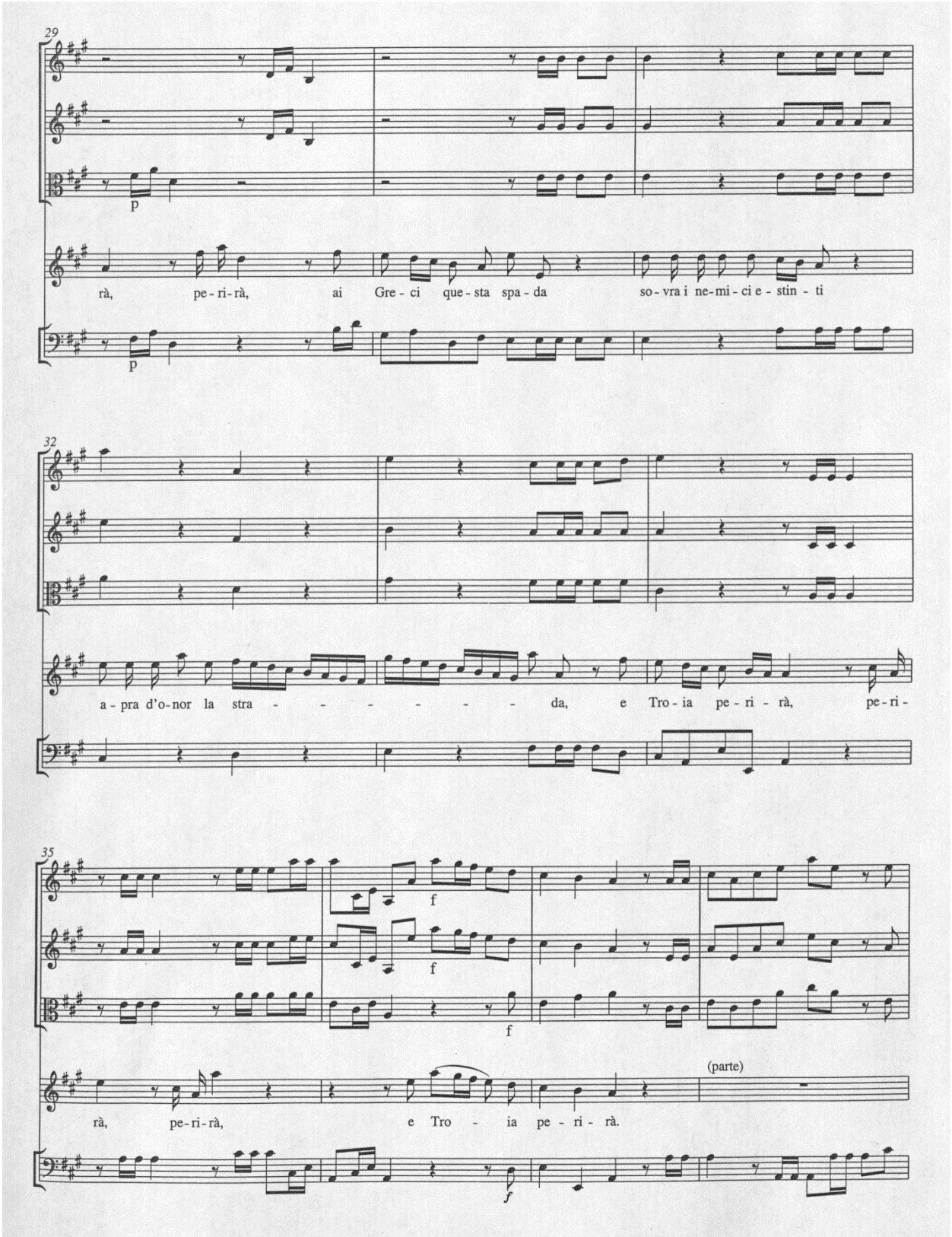

127
Recitativo
FENICE
No che nin - fa non è. Ma già fi - ni - to è il di-por - to.
Continuo
Sinfonia
Corno I in Fa
Corno II in Fa
Recitativo
FENICE
Al ri - tor - no chia-ma già l'o - ri - cal - co i cac-cia -
Continuo
6
3
to - ri. Mi-glior con-si-glio in cor - te con-dur-rà no - stro sen - no a lie-to fi - ne. Mal -
6
gra - do a sor - te in - fi - da, mol - to s'ot - tien quan - do pru - den - za è gui - da.

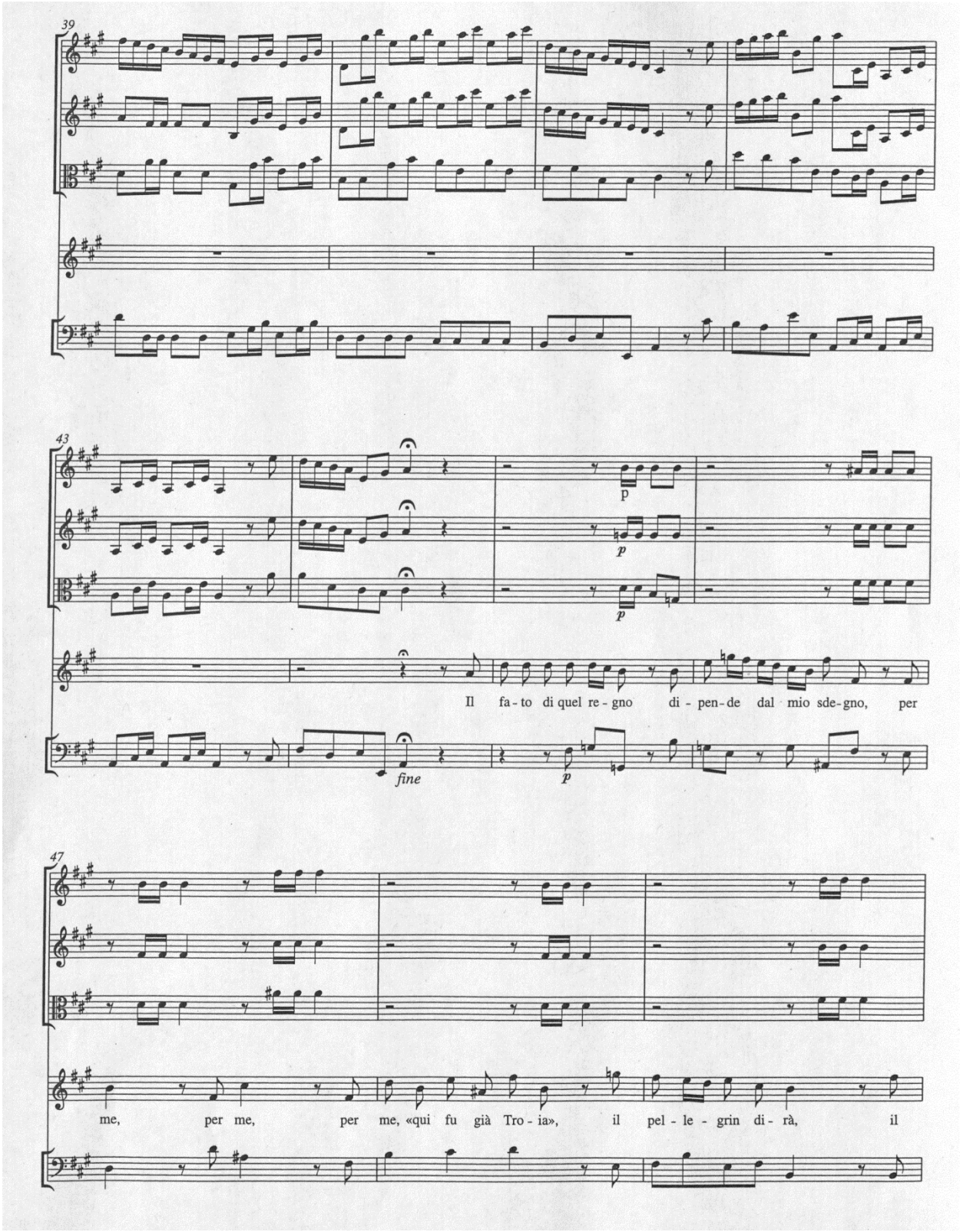


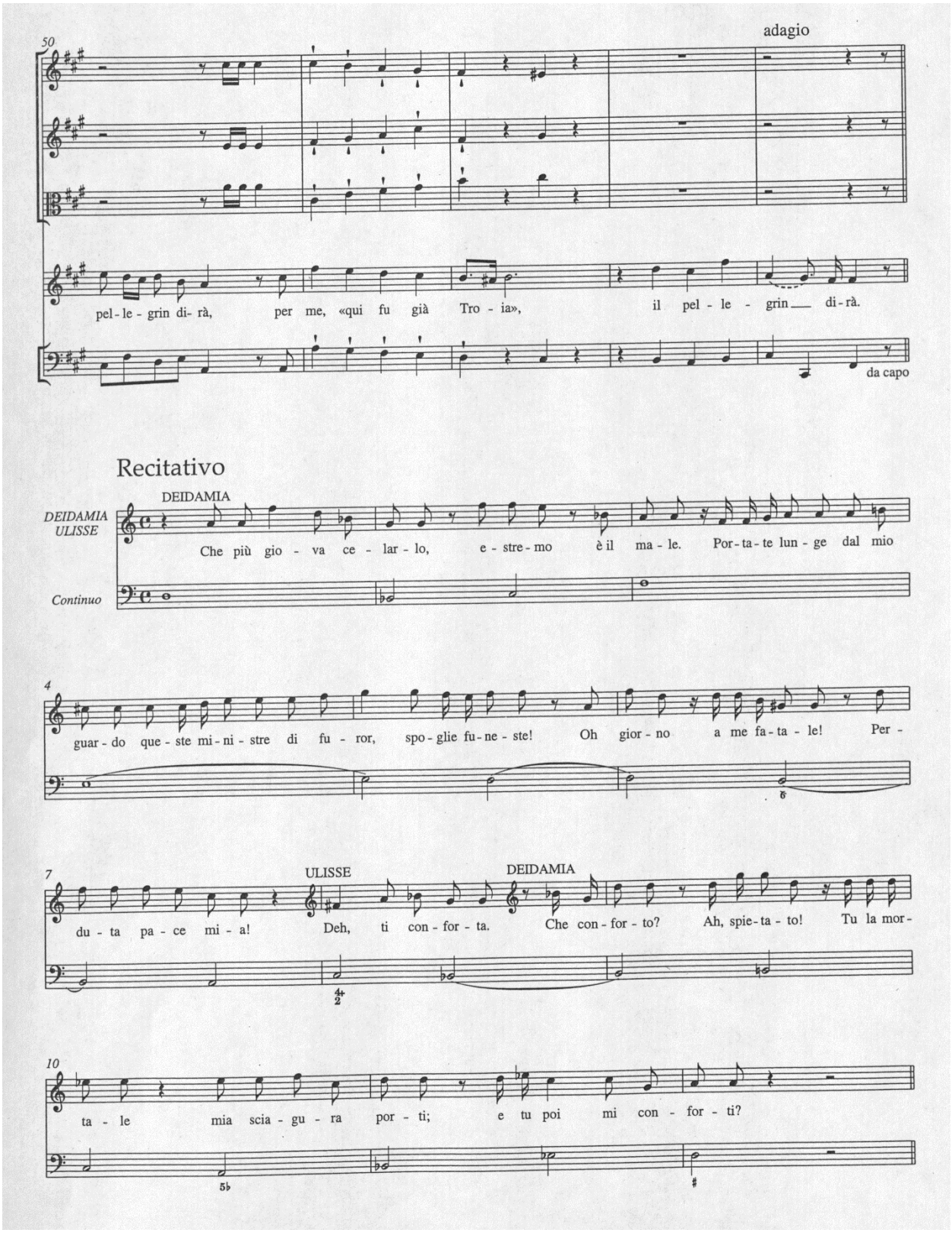
Appendix D, Example 4

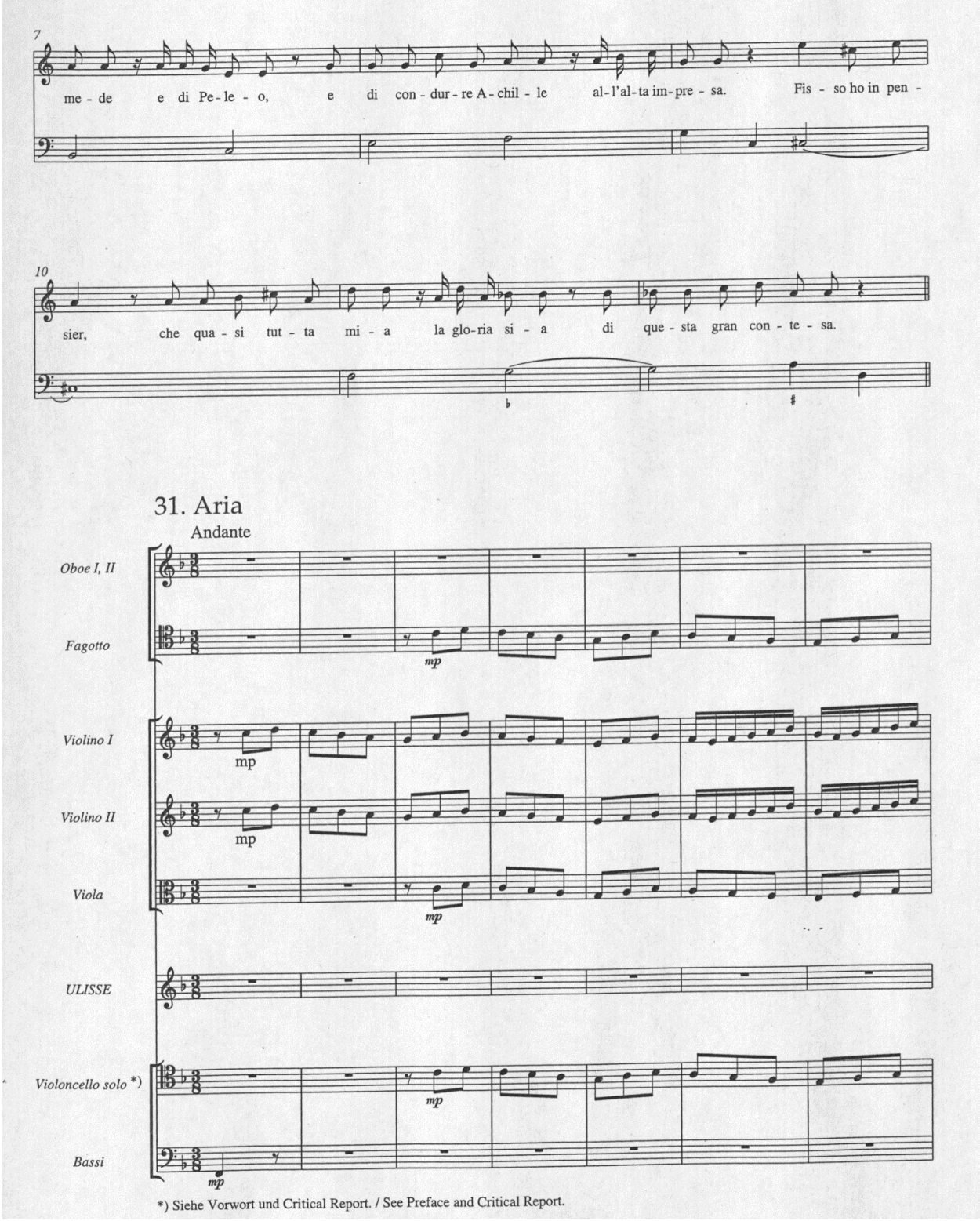

11
so-vra i ne-mi-ci e-stin-ti
a-pra d'o-nor la stra - - - - - - - da, e
14
Tro-ia pe-ri-rà,
a-pra d'o-nor la stra - - - - - - - da, e
17
f
f
f
Tro-ia pe-ri-rà, e Tro-ia pe-ri-rà, pe-ri-rà, pe-ri-rà;
f


20
p
p
p
ai Gre - ci que - sta spa - da
p
23
so - vra i ne - mi - ci e - stin - ti
a - pra d'o - nor la stra - - - - - - - - da, e
26
f
p
f
p
f
Tro - ia pe - ri - rà
pe - ri - rà, pe - ri -

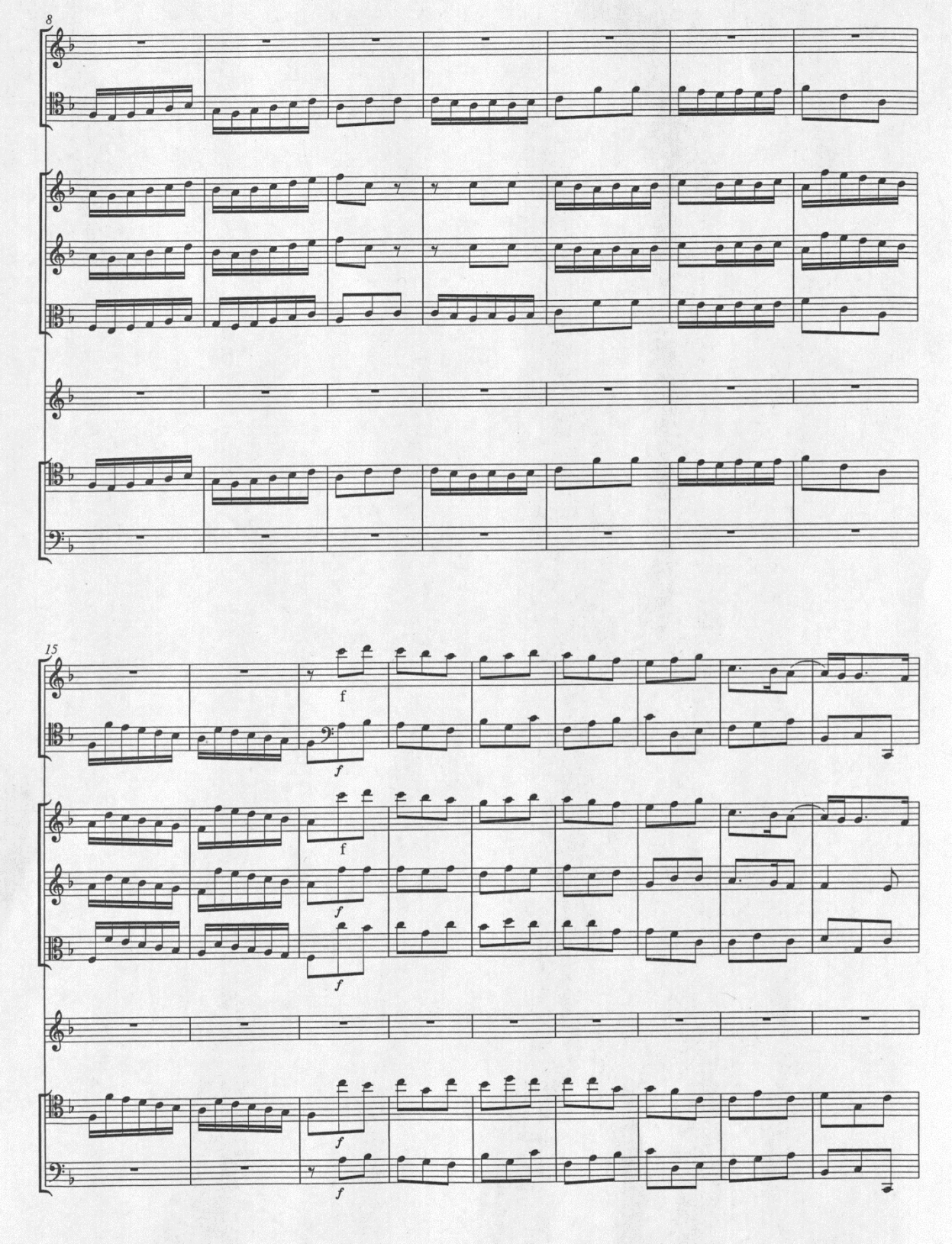

29
p
rà, pe-ri-rà, ai Gre-ci que-sta spa-da so-vra i ne-mi-ci e-stin-ti
p
32
a-pra d'o-nor la stra - - - - - - - da, e Tro-ia pe-ri-rà, pe-ri-
35
f
f
f
(parte)
rà, pe-ri-rà, e Tro - ia pe-ri-rà.
f

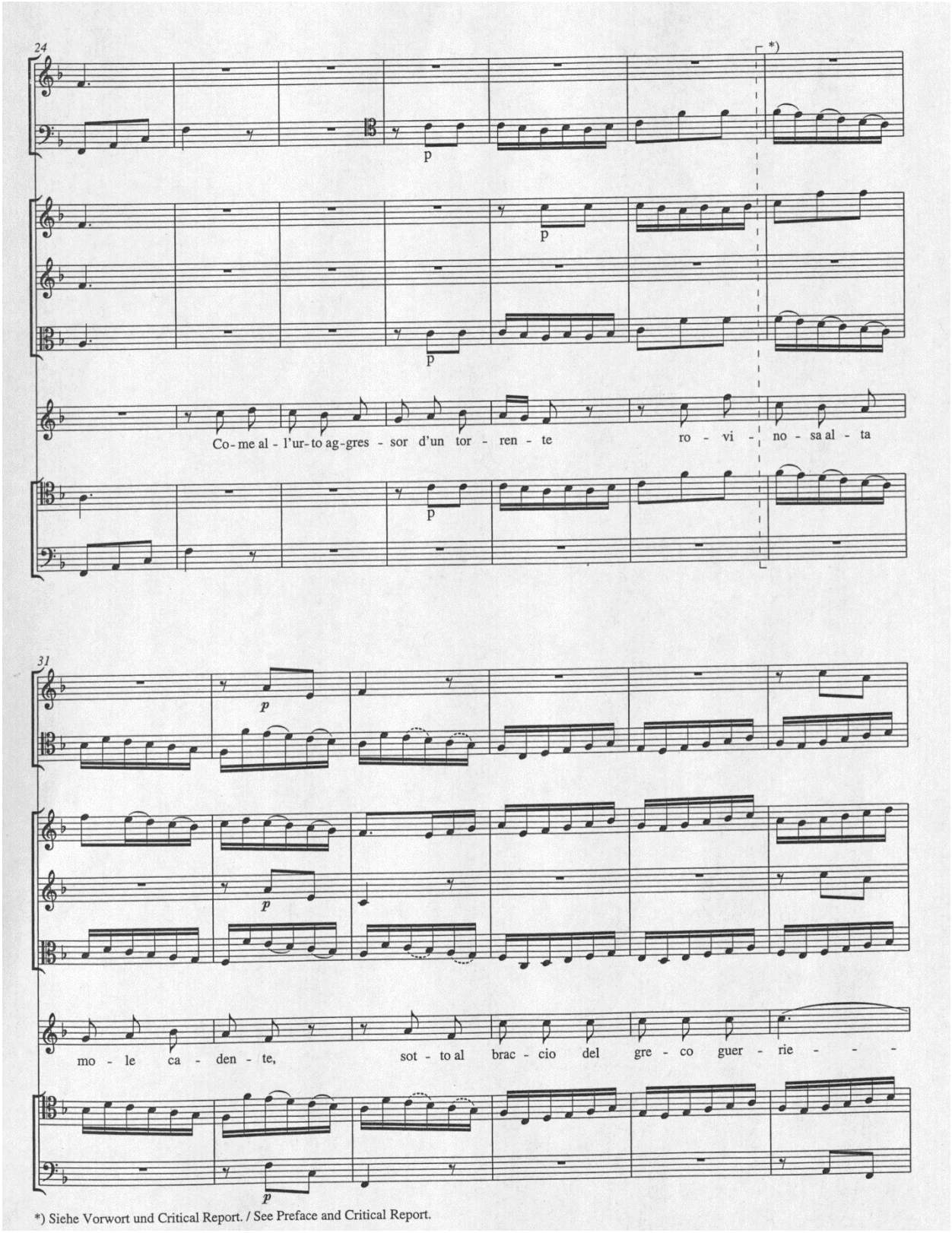

39
43
p
p
p
Il fa - to di quel re - gno di - pen - de dal mio sde - gno, per
fine
p
47
me, per me, per me, «qui fu già Tro - ia», il pel - le - grin di - rà, il


50
adagio
pel - le - grin di - rà, per me, «qui fu già Tro - ia», il pel - le - grin di - rà.
da capo
Recitativo
DEIDAMIA
DEIDAMIA
ULISSE
Continuo
Che più gio - va ce - lar - lo, e - stre - mo è il ma - le. Por - ta - te lun - ge dal mio
4
guar - do que - ste mi - ni - stre di fu - ror, spo - glie fu - ne - ste! Oh gior - no a me fa - ta - le! Per -
7
ULISSE
DEIDAMIA
du - ta pa - ce mi - a! Deh, ti con - for - ta. Che con - for - to? Ah, spie - ta - to! Tu la mor -
10
ta - le mia scia - gu - ra por - ti; e tu poi mi con - for - ti?



Appendix D, Example 5


8
15
f
f
f
f
f
f



*) Siehe Vorwort und Critical Report. / See Preface and Critical Report.

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An Epistle to John James H-dd-g-r Esq.; On the Report of Signior F-r-n-lli's being with Child. Printed and sold by E. Hill, near St. Paul's, MDCCXXXVI (London 1736). In the Eighteenth Century Collections Online. http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.its.virginia.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=viva_uva&tabID=T001&docId=CW106208601&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE (Accessed September 18, 2014), 1-8.

The contre temps: or, rival queans: a small farce. As it was lately acted, with great applause, at H-d-r's private th-re near the H---y M---t. Printed for A. Moore, near St. Paul's (London 1727). In the Eighteenth Century Collections Online. http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.its.virginia.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=viva_uva&tabID=T001&docId=CW110712695&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE (Accessed September 18, 2014), 1-16.

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http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.its.virginia.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=viva_uva&tabID=T001&docId=CW111293507&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE (Accessed September 18, 2014), 1-4.

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