

Alessandro Scarlatti's serenata *Genio di Partenope, Gloria del Sebeto, Piacere di Mergellina* and the Summer of 1696 at Naples

In memory of Warren and Ursula Kirkendale

Thomas Griffin

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1696 was a busy year for Alessandro Scarlatti, *maestro di cappella* at the Spanish Viceregal Court of Naples. That summer alone he composed and produced three serenatas within a period little over two months. The first two were for conspicuous public festivals sponsored by the Viceroy. At their performance they assumed the character of secular ritual conforming to long-standing local traditions at Naples, as well as to more recent Spanish practices in effect at Rome. The third serenata, *Genio di Partenope, Gloria del Sebeto, Piacere di Mergellina*¹ was quite different from the first two, as it was heard at an intimate birthday party for the Viceroy's wife on the evening of August 5, 1696. Let us begin by recounting a few pertinent facts leading up to the performance of *Il*

Genio at Naples, including a consideration of developments at Rome that may shed further light on this serenata.

In May 1503 the Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella took possession of the *regno di Napoli*, and for over two hundred years the Kingdom of Naples was governed by viceroys appointed by the Spanish monarchy. Scarlatti composed the three serenatas of 1696 shortly after the arrival of Luis Francisco de la Cerda y Aragón, ninth Duke of Medinaceli, as the new Viceroy of Naples. Don Luis, one of the last and most colorful of the Spanish viceroys, was already well-known to the inhabitants of Naples when he took command of the kingdom on March 28, 1696.²

Earlier in his career, known then as the Marchese of Cogolludo, he had served as the Admiral of the Galleys of

¹Hereafter called *Il Genio*. A modern edition of the score and a libretto are available on this writer's website http://www.ascarlatti2010.net/main_page/genio as well as photographs of letters found at Subiaco referred to below.

²A chronology of daily events at Naples can be established from the journal of the Neapolitan lawyer Domenico Conforto, *Giornale di Napoli dal MDCLXXIX al MDCIC*, ed. Nicola Nicolini (Naples: Luigi Lubrano, 1930) and from the printed news sheets, or *Gazzette di Napoli*. For references to music at Naples in the latter see Ausilia Muggada-Danilo Costantini, *Musica e spettacolo nel regno di Napoli attraverso lo spoglio della "Gazzetta" (1675-1768)*. Roma: ISMEZ-Onlus, 2011.

Naples during his uncle's term as the Viceroy Marchese del Carpio (1683-1687). Still known as Cogolludo, he subsequently served as Spanish Ambassador at Rome (1687-1696) until he inherited the title of Duke of Medinaceli and received the appointment as Viceroy of Naples in 1696. His activities as patron of music have been discussed by this writer,³ by Roberto Pagano,⁴ and most recently by José María Domínguez.⁵ Before Medinaceli's arrival as Viceroy, Alessandro Scarlatti had served twelve years as *maestro di cappella* at Naples, first under Don Luis' uncle, the Viceroy del Carpio, followed by Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna, *gran connestabile del regno di Napoli*, who served a short term as interregnum-viceroy at the inopportune death of del Carpio in 1687, and finally under Francisco de Benavides, Count of Santistaban, known at Naples as Santo Stefano (1688-1696).

During the period of Spanish rule at Naples the aristocracy and populace enjoyed a tradition of summer-time entertainment known as the *spassi di Posillipo*.⁶ By the 1690s many of the elite families of Naples had acquired suburban *palazzi, ville* or *casini* a few kilometers northwest of downtown Naples, where, on the Cape of Posillipo or at the nearby cove called the *Mergellina*⁷, they might escape the heat of central Naples and enjoy the entertainments of the *spassi*. Not to be surpassed by his subjects, the new Viceroy took over the palazzo dei Cantalupi⁸ the first summer of his tenure. Confuorto reports the Viceroy spending many thousands of ducats renovating the building, where the ladies of court would meet "*per divertirsi con musiche e serenate*."⁹

For the opening of the *spassi* that summer on June 24 Medinaceli had planned the performance of

³Thomas Griffin, "Nuove fonti per la storia della musica a Napoli durante il regno del Marchese del Carpio (1683-1687)," *Rivista italiana di musicologia* XVI (1981), pp. 207-228 and "Alessandro Scarlatti e la serenata a Roma e a Napoli" in *La musica a Napoli durante il Seicento: Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi (Napoli, 11-14 aprile 1985)*, a cura di Domenico D'Alessandro e Agostino Ziino (Rome: Torre d'Orfeo, 1987), pp. 351-368.

⁴Roberto Pagano, *Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti: Two Lives in One*, trans. by Frederick Hammond (Hillsdale, N.Y.: Pendragon, 2006), pp. 37-41. Pagano's monograph first appeared in 1985 published by Mondadori in Milan as *Scarlatti: Alessandro e Domenico: Due Vite in Una*.

⁵José María Domínguez Rodríguez, *Mecenazgo musical del IX Duque de Medinaceli: Roma-Napoli-Madrid, 1687-1710*, Thesis doctoral: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2010

⁶This tradition is considered in greater detail by Dinko Fabris, *Music in seventeenth-century Naples: Francesco Provenzale (1624-1704)* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2007), pp. 7-9. and "La serenata a Napoli prima di Alessandro Scarlatti" in *La serenata tra seicento*, op. cit. pp. 15-72.

⁷Today the site of a small-craft harbor, the Porto Sannazaro, from which modern hydrofoils depart for Capri and Ischia.

⁸"... situato vicino la chiesa di S. Maria del Parto a Mergellina," according to Pier Luigi Ciapparelli, *I luoghi del teatro a Napoli nel seicento: le sali 'privati'* *La musica a Napoli durante il Seicento*, p. 400.

⁹Confuorto, *Giornali*, II, 224. The Venetian residente Giacomo Resio noted the Viceroy's move to his new summer residence in an *avviso* of July 7, 1696: *Ha stabilito il Signor Vice Rè di andar ad habitar à Posilippo, per goder à causa delle sue indispositioni del beneficio di quell'aria salutare, mà tal lontananza riuscirà di molto incomodo.* (Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Dispacci degli ambasciatori al senato, Napoli filza 104).

¹⁰Rosalind Halton has recently published a critical edition of this serenata with much valu-

Alessandro Scarlatti's serenata *Venere, Adone et Amor* in honor of the ladies of Naples.¹⁰ Serenatas were indeed heard that Sunday at the seashore according to Confuorto¹¹ but the Viceroy's inaugural serenata, *Venere, Adone et Amore*, was not given until Sunday, July 15.

The ostensible reason for this delay was out of respect for the period of mourning then in effect for the Queen Mother, Marianna of Austria, who had died on May 16.¹² But the real cause for delay must have been the late return to Naples of the castrato Matteo Sassano,¹³ for whom Scarlatti wrote the role of Adone. Sassano (or Matteuccio) the much admired soprano known as "il rosignolo di Napoli" had been summoned to the Imperial court at Vienna in 1695 against the wishes of many Neapolitans and to the great distress of the singer himself. His participation in *Venere, Adone et Amore* only two days after his return to Naples surely generated lively interest in the serenata. There can be little doubt that Scarlatti expressly created the role of Adone for Matteuccio. Rosalind Halton sees the singers's late arrival in Naples acted out in the text

of the serenata. "Adone is the last character to be introduced, after an exasperated exchange between Venere and Amore. He is immediately berated for staying away dallying with nymphs—or maybe, with the audience of Vienna."¹⁴

Accounts of the performance of *Venere, Adone et Amore* are preserved in the *Gazzetta di Napoli*¹⁵ and by Confuorto. The *Gazzetta* clearly names Alessandro Scarlatti composer and "the learned Abate Francesco Maria Paglia" librettist. Interestingly, the *Gazzetta* reports that the serenata was performed on the seashore for a great throng of ladies in their carriages while, at the same time, the Viceroy, his wife and a few select guests were able to hear it from the palazzo dei Cantalupi. Confuorto furnishes the names of the singers: "*Matteuccio Adone, l'Acquilano Amore e la cantarina Bombace Venere. E durò sino alle quattro ore di notte.*"¹⁶

These are the same singers who performed *Il Genio* three weeks later. The castrato called l'Aquilano can be identified as Domenico Melchiorri, a contralto who enjoyed a long and distinguished career at Naples. In the

able introductory material, (A-R Editions: Middleton, Wisconsin, 2009). A CD recording of the serenata by Chacona under Halton's direction is also available (ABC Classics 476 6170).

¹¹Confuorto, op. cit. Nothing for certain is known of these serenatas, but one might have been the anonymous *Dialogo: Mergellina e Zefiro* in Web Library of Seventeenth-Century Music, LSCM no. 10 http://aaswebsv.aas.duke.edu/wlscm/Dialogo/Mergellina_e_Zefiro. http://aaswebsv.aas.duke.edu/wlscm/Dialogo/Mergellina_e_Zefiro.html. The Dialogo score is bound in the same volume at Montecassino containing Scarlatti's *Il Genio*. Another candidate might be Severo di Luca's serenata *Aglaure e Corebo*, similarly bound into the volume at Montecassino preserving one of the sources for Scarlatti's *Venere, Adone et Amore*.

¹²Confourto, *Giornali*, II, 221-22, reports the news of her death arriving at Naples on June 11. Subsequently the Viceroy proclaimed four months of mourning.

¹³Sassano's career is documented by Ulisse Prota-Giurleo, "Matteo Sassano detto Matteuccio," *textit*Rivista italiana di musicologia, I (1966), 97-119.

¹⁴Halton on p. 14 of the notes to her CD recording and on p. x of the Introduction to her A-R Edition.

¹⁵Extract 96 of Thomas Griffin, *Musical References in the 'Gazzetta di Napoli' 1681-1725*. (Berkeley: Fallen Leaf Press, 1993), p. 22.

¹⁶*Giornali*, II, 228.

prologue to the score of Scarlatti's *Tutto il mal non vien per nuocere* preserved at Montecassino, Aquilano is named as one of its singers. This score was heard very probably in the Neapolitan residence of the Duke of Maddaloni (Carafa) in October or early November 1684.¹⁷ Guido Olivieri reports finding Melchiorri's name in lists of the Royal Chapel since at least 1691 and as one of the Governors of the *Congregazione dei Musicisti di Palazzo* in the years 1719-20.¹⁸ According to Salvatore Di Giacomo, Melchiorri was a member of the *cappella of the Tesoro di S. Gennaro* from 1699 and is described in a document there as having "*un bel metallo di voce*" (a fine ringing voice).¹⁹ On several occasions the Savoyard agent in Naples took note of the singer Vittoria Tarquini, called la Bombace. Some idea of her strengths and weaknesses may be gathered from a letter by Giovanni Battista (or Giambattista) Operti dated February 26, 1694: *L'opere in musica recitate in questo teatro [di San Bartolomeo] sono state competenti, e più di tutti l'ultima [Pirro e Demetrio di A. Scarlatti]; la Bombace . . . hà portato l'applauso per l'atteggiar con pose, mà il suo canto è irregolare, non*

*per mancanza d'arte, mà di petto, onde non è piacevole.*²⁰

Operti would have us believe that by late 1696 her voice was past its prime. After hearing her sing in Scarlatti's opera *Comodo Antonino* (performed in the the *Teatro San Bartolomeo* for the first time on November 18, 1696), he wrote in an *avviso* dated November 30 of that year: *La Bombace, che ne primi posti delle recite degli anni scorsi riceveva tutto l'applauso, hora pare molto inferiore.*²¹

Despite Operti's harsh judgment, the soprano enjoyed a successful career at Naples for several years following the summer of 1696. She appeared in several of Scarlatti's operas heard in the *Teatro San Bartolomeo* and, perhaps most tellingly, created the title role in Giovanni Bononcini's widely acclaimed opera *Il Trionfo di Camilla*, first performed in December 1696 at Naples. As Halton suggests, Operti's opinions may amount to nothing more than malicious criticism.²² In any case, there is evidence that Tarquini's charms were not limited to the realm of music.

Sometime after 1696 Roberto Pagano finds Vittoria, now called *la Bambagia*, in the company of

¹⁷Griffin, "Nuove fonti," pp. 210-11.

¹⁸Information kindly provided in private correspondence from Prof. Olivieri.

¹⁹Salvatori Di Giacomo, *Maestri di cappella, musicisti e istrumenti al Tesoro di S. Gennaro nei sec. XVII e XVIII* (Naples, 1920), p. 17. I am grateful to Prof. Olivieri for bringing this citation to my attention.

²⁰Archivio di Stato di Torino (hereafter AST), Lettere Ministri, Due Sicilie, mazzo 5.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²On p. 15 of the notes to the CD recording cited above. On p. x of the Introduction to her A-R Edition Halton observes that in "the part of Venere, Scarlatti gave her two rapid arias (nos. 5 and 17) and ample opportunity for her dramatic skills, but no sustained cantabile arias that might have accentuated her declining vocal technique—if this was indeed the case."

²³Pagano, *Two Lives in One*, pp. 55, 90. Ursula Kirkendale, "Handel with Ruspoli: New documents from the Archivio Segreto Vaticano, December 1706 to December 1708," *Studi Musicali* XXXII, 2003 no. 2, pp. 322-25, finds Tarquini at Florence starting in 1699. See Warren Kirkendale, *The Court Musicians in Florence* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1993), pp. 652, 441-444.

the Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici, who evidently picked her up in Venice.²³ The document cited by Pagano is said to demonstrate Ferdinando's conversion from homosexuality to an orthodox interest in the female.²⁴

Curiously, the rumor of a sexual liaison between Vittoria Tarquini and Georg Friedrich Händel during the early years of the composer's career has cast the singer in a similar role. Despite some rather dubious assertions to the contrary,²⁵ it continues to be cited as evidence of Händel's heterosexuality, at least to the satisfaction of his orthodox supporters. Eleven days after the performance of *Venere, Adone et Amore*, Medinaceli's second and even more conspicuous serenata was given that summer, not at the seashore as tradition at Naples would have suggested, but downtown, in front of the Royal Palace. The performance was conceived as the glorious finale to a day-long public *fiesta* on Saint Anne day, July 26, in celebration of the name of the reigning Queen of Spain, Marianna of Pfalz-Neuburg. In a lengthy and characteris-

tically baroque account²⁶ the *Gazzetta di Napoli* of July 31 names Alessandro Scarlatti composer and Francesco Maria Paglia librettist of the serenata *Il Trionfo delle stagioni*. Neither a score nor a libretto for the serenata has survived.²⁷ The *Gazzetta* speaks of the serenata consisting of "the most harmonious of *ripieni*, excellent voices, and instruments, the latter exceeding the number of one-hundred and fifty and the former fifty," In a letter sent from Naples by Francesco Resta to Pablo Spinola Doria, III Marqués de los Balbases, in Madrid it is described more precisely as . . . *una famosa serenata en la cual interviniéron 140 instrumentos y entre ellos 60 violines con 36 voces divididas en dos coros aunque 4 de ellas fueron las principales representando los 4 tiempos del año.*²⁸

Most of the *Gazzetta* account is given over to a lengthy description of the temporary theater upon which the four soloists, two choruses and a large orchestra performed. In less than five days the brother architects Filippo and Cristoforo Schor erected a sumptuous edifice in the shape of an amphitheater, described by the *Gazzetta* as forming

a perfect oval at its base, measured three hundred and twelve palmi [68.64 meters] in circumference, the first tier of which was twenty palmi [4.4 meters]

²⁴Luca Ombrosi, *Vita dei Medici sodomitii* (Rome: Canesi n.d. [1965]), pp. 112-13.

²⁵Ellen Harris, *Handel as Orpheus: Voices and Desire in the chamber Cantatas* (Harvard University Press, 2001) and Gary C. Thomas, "Was George Frideric Handel Gay?: On Closet Questions and Cultural Politics," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elisabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 1994), 155-203). Much of Harris's speculations regarding Handel's cantatas, including their supposed gay content, has been demolished in Ursula Kirkendale's article cited above, pp. 301-348.

²⁶Published as extract 97 in Griffin, *Musical References*, pp. 23-24.

²⁷A document cited below, however suggests that a libretto was in fact printed and distributed to high-ranking members of the audience in commemoration of the event.

²⁸The letter, in the Archivio Casa Ducale de Albuquerque (170, n° 4, 27 July 1696), was first published, but with errors, by Annibale Cetrangolo, *Esordi del melodramma in Spagna, Portogallo e America: Giacomo Facco e le cerimonie del 1729* (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 1992), p. 45. It is cited correctly several times by Domínguez, *Mecenazgo musical del IX Duque de Medinaceli*. I, 564, II, 77-78.

high and the circumference of which was divided into twelve squares, illuminated by a golden light and in which were to be seen the twelve months of the year, beautifully designed, with lovely floral festoons and natural fruit hanging between each of them from gilt entablatures disposed above as well as below them according to the rules of architecture; and on both sides it was divided by a stairway of twenty-four steps of simulated ancient yellow marble. The back side of this edifice, which was raised about twenty palmi [4.4 meters], was quite well divided by cornices above and below, adorned with putti al naturale, from which hung other festoons similar to those described above. On the second tier there were other steps in the form of an amphitheater twenty palmi [4.4 meters] high facing the Royal Palace for the use of the musicians [and] above this tier there was another eighteen palmi [3.96 meters] high upon which twelve massive columns of the Doric order (this entire edifice being in that order) were raised, each thirty-eight palmi [8.36 meters] high including the capital and base, which were embellished with gilt fluting in chiaroscuro. The columns were divided into eight parts [i.e., flutings] and formed a semicircle from the top of which candelabras or cornucopias with flaming torches at their summits were raised on both sides, and beautiful floral festoons and fruit like those mentioned above were everywhere held up by graceful cupids and also extended to the earth, the same also appearing on the back side facing [the convent of] San Luigi of the Minim Fathers. In the midst of these columns were beautifully displayed the coat-of-arms of our glorious Monarch on the right, and of his Royal Consort on the left, adorned with playful cupids and the royal crown with other golden embellishments. These arms were held up by the four seasons of the year, executed with bizarre caprice, the height of the royal emblem being fifty palmi [11 meters] and the width forty [8.8 meters], the same arms appearing on the back side. The barricade which formed more than a half circle around the said square measured about six hundred palmi [132 meters] and was divided by seven great portals decorated with pilasters, banners bearing mottos, and chiaroscuro statues illuminated by golden light with other decorations in feigned marble with great floral festoons hanging from the upper parts of this semicircle, which divided the space into thirty-two parts in which were beautifully displayed the emblems and quarters of Her Majesty's noble familial arms. Seven hundred wax torches and two hundred crystal lamps that shone for the use of the said musicians made the darkness of that night appear as if it were day, everything having been arranged in conformity to the viceroy's grandeur of soul by the brother architects Filippo and Cristoforo Schor, and brought to life by the lively painting of the brothers-in-law Nicola Rossi and Gaetano Brandi. The crowd of ladies in very rich gala was innumerable, as was that of the nobles and cavaliers and every other type of person, to whom were dispensed without measure precious refreshments through the magnificence of His Excellency, who, with the Most Excellent Vicereine, enjoyed from the balcony of the Royal Palace this so beautiful, pleasant, and

magnificent spectacle conceived by the august mind of His Excellency . . . ²⁹

This gigantic wedding cake-like structure sounds remarkably similar to the one Cristoforo Schor erected in 1687 at the behest of Don Luis (then known as the Marchese di Cogolludo) on the site today occupied by the Column of the Immaculate Conception facing the Palazzo di Spagna at Rome. There, shortly after his arrival as Spanish Ambassador, he inaugurated his career as patron of music and spectacle with Bernardo Pasquini's *Applauso musicale*³⁰ in celebration of the name day of the then reigning Queen of Spain.³¹ An impressive engraving³² depicting the 1687 *fiesta* at Rome may provide some idea of the Schor brother's 1696 Neapolitan amphitheater.

If Medinaceli had hoped to repeat his earlier success at Rome with the performance of *Il Trionfo delle stagioni* at Naples, he was sadly disappointed. Domenico Confuorto describes the per-

formance of *Il Trionfo* in terms very similar to those found in the *Gazzetta*. At the end of his account, however, he offers the following interesting observation: "Certainly the festive serenata was beautiful, but it did not measure up to expectation, everyone having believed that it would be greater; and it ended at three hours of night."³³ Since *Venere, Adone et Amore* ended at "four hours of night," *Il Trionfo* may have been a relatively short serenata.³⁴ In any case, it would seem that Confuorto badly understated the reception accorded the serenata by the common people. The precise manner in which the rude Neapolitan crowd showed its disdain for Medinaceli's *fiesta*, and the Viceroy's response to this display of impudence, is recounted by Operti. In an *avviso* dated July 31, 1696, he reported to Turin:

On Saint Anne's Day a sumptuous edifice was erected before the Royal Palace, and that night a very notable serenata was sung. The people, not appreciative of fine things, however, applauded little, and during the singing whistled so shrilly and with such vulgarity that it was necessary to contain them, and it seems to me that this displeased His Excellency [the Viceroy], who said that in the future they would be done indoors. Otherwise, it was pleasing and of no little expense for the illumination and for the sumptuously furnished refreshments, I having seen it incognito.

Si fece il giorno di S.anta Anna una solenis.sima machina avanti il

²⁹Italian original in Griffin, *op. cit.*

³⁰Pasquini's serenata and the circumstances surrounding its performance are discussed at length by José María Domínguez, *Mecenazgo musical del IX Duque de Medinaceli*. I, 86ff.

³¹The first wife of Charles II, Maria Luisa of Orleans, was the niece of Louis XIV of France. She died in 1689 without having given birth to a male heir and was quickly replaced by Marianna of Pfalz-Neuburg, Charles's second wife.

³²Reproduced on the cover of Gloria Staffieri, *Colligite Fragmenta* (Lucca: LIM, 1990).

³³Giornali, II, 230.

³⁴However, *Venere, Adone et Amore* as revised in 1706 for a possible performance in Rome was divided into two parts. Although not evident in the scores from 1696, there may also have been a pause during the Neapolitan performance during which refreshments, perhaps furnished by the Viceroy, were presented to the ladies in their coaches.

Regio Palazzo, e la sera vi si cantò una famosissima serenata: però il Popolo non gustoso di cose fine, fece poco applauso, e nell'atto del cantare, si sollevarono strilli della Plebaccia, tanto alti, che fù necessario contenerla, e parmi, che questo spiacque à S.ua Eccellenza, che hebbe à dire, che in avvenire la farebbe in Camera; Per altro fù cosa vistosa, e di non picciola spesa per l'Illuminatione, e rinfreschi somministrati con lautezza havendola veduta all'Incognito.³⁵

Despite the great expense lavished on the festival for the Queen's name day, it would seem that as a public manifestation of Spanish power and prestige it was a failure. The fiasco at *Il Trionfo delle stagioni*, however, should probably be attributed to local political and economic considerations rather than to any artistic shortcomings. Soon after his arrival in Naples Medinaceli became unpopular by instituting a crackdown on the smuggling of goods into and out of Naples. At the same time he allowed certain Genoese merchants to export large quantities of flour from

the Kingdom, a practice that had marred the reputation of his immediate predecessor, the Duke of Santo Stefano. The scheme worked to the benefit of the new viceroy, as the Genoese paid a percentage to the government for the export privilege; but it soured the populous by driving up the price of bread in the city. Confuorto records a vulgar, albeit clever, pasquinade attacking the viceroy for this very reason in September 1696 when the following verse was surreptitiously attached to a large statue in front of the Royal Palace.

**Se n'è ghiuto lo 'mbroglione;
benuto lo coglione,
che se tene la Giorgina
e non pensa alla farina.³⁶**

The Swindeler has gone off,
The balls-head has arrived
Who keeps Miss Giorgina
And forgets the farina.³⁷

Operti reports a rougher, more menacing verse making the rounds of Naples in an *avviso* of September 21.³⁸

**Duca di Medina
Abbassa la farina,
Manda la Giorgina,
Altrimenti farà gran ruina.**

³⁵AST, *Lettere Ministri, Due Sicilie, mazzo 6*.

³⁶*Giornali*, II, 236.

³⁷Translated by Frederick Hammand in Pagano, *Two Lives in One*, p. 90.

³⁸AST, *Letter Ministri, Due Sicilie, mazzo 6*.

The singer Angela Maddalena Voglia, called *la Giorgina*, was Medinaceli's acknowledged mistress, whom he met at Rome while serving as Spanish Ambassador.³⁹ By the time Don Luis took possession of the government of Naples, his wife evidently had come to accept Giorgina as a member of the household. In an avviso of April 24, 1696, Operti related that

Giorgina and her sister have come in the rank of ladies-of-honor to the Vicereine, who has her [Giorgina] presented at the concourse of ladies of the city as if she were of an adequate rank to gain admission, it being known by the account of a lady who found herself present [at this gathering] that the Vicereine has Giorgina addressed by the title of marchesa and shows her every consideration and sign of affection and makes use of her as a member of her suite when she goes about with one.

La Giorgina con la sorella sono venute in qualità di dame d'honore della Signora Viceregina, che nel concorso delle dame della Città se fa intervenire, sapendo per relatione d'una dama, che s' è trovata presente, che la Signora Viceregina fece chiamar la Giorgina col titolo di Marchessa, e ne mostra ogni stima, et affettione, e la conduce di suo seguito, quando lo porta.⁴⁰

Under happier conditions the name day celebration for a Vicereine might call for a public celebration rivaling those for the reigning Queen of Spain.⁴¹ But the fiasco witnessed less than two weeks earlier may have convinced the Viceroy to downplay the significance of this celebration. Whether or not the serenata was given outdoors, and hence in some sense in public, is not known; but the audience invited into the casino was evidently limited to an intimate gathering of like-

minded aristocrats. Neither Domenico Confuorto nor Giambattista Operti appears to have been aware of this performance, and the *Gazzetta* makes only fleeting reference to it, failing to name the composer or poet. Nevertheless, the text of *Il Genio* leaves no doubt that Scarlatti's third serenata of the summer was written for this occasion on the evening of August 5 at the Viceroy's casino at Posillipo.⁴²

In the text of *Il Genio* there are clear indications that the Viceroy was not

³⁹The details of Luis de la Cerda's scandalous attachment to his mistress are recounted in Giorgio Morelli, "Una celebre 'canterina' romana del Seicento: la Giorgina," *Studi Secenteschi*, XVI (1975), 157-80.

⁴⁰AST, *Lettere Ministri, Due Sicilie, mazzo 6*.

⁴¹For example, on August 8, 1695, the birthday of Isabel Uceda, the Vicereine of Sicily, was commemorated at Messina with Giovanni Bononcini's serenata *Il Trionfo degli Dei*. The details of this very conspicuous celebration are recounted by Anna Tedesco, "La Serenata a Palermo alla fine del Seicento e il Duca di Uceda," in *La Serenata tra Seicento e Settecento: musica, poesia, scenotecnica*, a cura di Nicolò Maccavino (Reggio Calabria: Laruffa Editore, 2007), pp. 577-598.

⁴²Ulisso Prota-Giurleo, "Breve Storia del Teatro di Corte e della Musica a Napoli nei sec. XVII-XVIII," *Il Teatro di Corte del Palazzo Reale di Napoli* (Naples, 1952), p.137, reports incorrectly that the serenata was heard earlier, on 6 February 1696, at a *ballo* in the royal palace honoring the outgoing Viceroy Santo Stefano.

the patron who sponsored its performance. Recitative seven of the serenata begins with these effusive lines of

Gloria del Sebeto

Io mai non posso
quei che dan le vicende immensi affanni
se porto in seno accolto
l'applauso di Maria col nome e gl'anni.

Genio del Prtenope

Dell'eroina io parlo
ch'è stretta in nodo eterno
al gran consorte Ibero
è vero, è vero ò Gloria

Gloria del Sebeto

è vero.

Piacere di Mergellina

Quel Luigi sovrano
che con la giusta mano
regge il freno famoso
di Partenope bella al gran destriero,
è vero, è vero ò amici.

verse with which the three allegorical characters identify Maria and Luis:

Never shall I fear those severe pains
to which changes of fortune give rise
if I bear within my breast
honor for the name day and birthday of Maria.

I speak of that heroine
bound tightly with an eternal knot
to her Spanish consort,
it is true, it is true, oh Glory.

It is true.

That sovereign Luis
who, like a knight keeping
tight rein on his steed,
governs the fair Partenope with a just hand,
it is true, it is true, oh friends.

Would the Viceroy himself have paid for such unctuous flattery? Without doubt Don Luis and his wife were happy to receive compliments during the performance of the serenata, but it seems unlikely that a Spanish aristocrat's code of conduct would have permitted him to pay for such self-aggrandizing adulation. As Michael Talbot notes, "a serenata is conceived as an act of homage, therefore not something one is supposed to arrange for oneself."⁴³ Poetry such as this clearly suggests that the serenata did

not originate with the Viceroy, but was commissioned by someone else as a token of esteem for Maria and her husband.

Was it Filippo Colonna, who had honored Maria on several like occasions during the 1690s in Rome? The fact that the single surviving manuscript score⁴⁴ of *Il Genio* at Montecassino bears the Colonna coat of arms stamped in gold on the outside cover suggested this possibility to the present writer. But an examination of the financial records for the years 1696-

⁴³Michael Talbot in an untitled review in *Music & Letters* vol. 81, no. 4 (Nov. 2000), p. 618.

⁴⁴Identified by call number 5-F-15a (olim 126-D-5) in Giovanni Insom, *Il fondo musicale dell'Archivio di Montecassino* (Montecassino : Pubblicazioni Cassinesi, 2003).

97 of the Colonna household preserved in the monastery Library of Santa Scolastica, Subiaco, failed to uncover any trace of payment for the serenata. Fortunately, a document discovered by José Maria Dominguez in the *Archivo Casa Ducal de Alburquerque*⁴⁵ reveals the patron's name.

The following night on the birthday of my lady the Vicereine the Marchese Azzolino gave a famous serenata at Posillipo for their Excellencies at the great crowd for which I, for my sins, did duty. I returned home at eleven thirty at night with ears happy and eyes closed against the night dew.

La noche siguiente en que cumplió años mi s.ra la virreina el señor marqués de Azzolino dio a sus Ex.as una famosa serenada en Posillipo en cuyo gran concurso habiéndome tocado por mis pecados estar de guardia volví a casa a las once y media de la noche con los oídos gustosos y con los ojos muy cerrados de aquel mal sereno.

The Marquis Pompeo Azzolino (1654-1706) was the nipote of Cardinal Decio Azzolino, Queen Christina of Sweden's close confidant who was chiefly responsible for her defection to Catholicism and long residence in Rome.⁴⁶ At the Queen's death in April 1689 Decio inherited much of the her estate. But he too died several months later, leaving much of this great fortune to Pompeo. The Marquis was an accomplished courtier and close friend of Luis de la Cerda and his wife Maria, as is shown in a number of revealing letters sent by Luis to Pompeo and published by José Maria Domínguez.⁴⁷

While we now know that Filippo Colonna did not sponsor any serenata at Naples in 1696. However, documents⁴⁸ show that the *gran connestabile* was keenly interested in the works heard at Naples that summer. Reporting on the performance of the Viceroy's first serenata, *Venere, Adone et Amore*, Colonna's neapolitan informant reported the following in a letter dated *julio 17 de 1696*:

There is no news here . . . other than that the serenata for the opening of Posillipo the day before yesterday was performed very well, [the score] of which I send to Your Excellency for your entertainment . . .

Aqui no hay novedad . . . mas de la de haverse esecutado muy bien la serenata que se hizo antes de ahier por l'abertura del Paseo del Posilipo la que remito a V.E. para la diversión . . .

⁴⁵The ducal archive is in the Spanish city of Cuéllar. The extract below is from a letter by Francesco Resta of 10 August 1696 sent from Naples to Pablo Spinola Doria, third Marquis of Balbases, in Milan, file 107, no. 4; cited by Domínguez, *Mecenazgo musical*, II, 78.

⁴⁶Short biographies of both Azzolini are provided by Domínguez, *op. cit.*, II, 595ff.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, Appendix 1. The letters are preserved in the Archivio Azzolino of the Biblioteca e Archivio Storico Comunale, Jesi.

⁴⁸These letters are preserved among various missives sent from Naples to Rome in 1696. Because the catalogers at Subiaco were unable to decipher the writer's signature, they are listed under "MA." In all probability they are the work of the Viceroy's chaplain Angelo Bernardino Mauro, who is cited by Morelli, "Una celebre 'cantarina' romana del seicento: la Giorgina" p. 175 and in various documents published by Domínguez.

A week later, on *julio 24 de 1696*, the same correspondent reported to Colonna at Rome:

The day after tomorrow the serenata for the name day of the Queen will be given, and with the news I am sending to Your Excellency its libretto.

Despues de mañana se hara la serenata al nombre de la Reyna, y con el alcance remitire a V.E. el libro della.

A third letter dated *agosto 7 de 1696* contains the following interesting observation on the performance of *Il Genio*:

The day before yesterday at Posillipo the serenata for the name day of my lady was given, and I assure Your Excellency that it went off very beautifully, Scarlatti having composed it [in a style] completely different from his usual. I am sending Your Excellency [a score] of it for your entertainment.

Antes de ahier se hico la serenata en Posilipo a los años de mi señora y aseguro a V.E. que saliò bellissima, pues escarlatti compuso todo diferentemente de su solito[.] Remitesela a V.E. para que le sirva de divertimento[.]

The first letter shows that Colonna's agent [Angelo Bernardino Mauro] sent a copy of the *Venere, Adone et Amore* score to Rome very shortly after its performance at Naples. This is surely the copy preserved at Montecassino⁴⁹ and used by Halton as the primary source for her edition. The second letter indicates that a copy of the libretto for *Il Trionfo delle stagioni* was likewise sent to Colonna. No exemplar of this libretto is known to have survived. Similarly, a copy of the score for *Il Genio* was sent to Colonna just two days after its performance. This is the single surviving score of the serenata today at Montecassino.

Giovanni Bononcini's serenata *Amor*

⁴⁹Catalogued as 5-F-16a (olim 126.D.6) by Insom, *Il fondo musicale dell'Archivio di Montecassino*. Like the score of *Il Genio* at Montecassino, this one too bears the Colonna coat-of-arms on the outside front and back covers.

⁵⁰*Colligite Fragmenta*, pp. 125-6, "(25 agosto) Per sfuggire qualche impegno non si è fatta la serenata nel cortile del contestabile Colonna . . ."

⁵¹Pier Catarino Zeno, "Elogio di Silvio Stampiglia Romano," *Giornale de' letterati d'Italia*, XXVIII (1723), part 2, p.120.

per Amore, on a text by Silvio Stampiglia, was the work prepared for Lorenza de la Cerda Colonna at Rome in August 1696. A score of the serenata survives and the libretto was published that summer in Rome, although its expected performance on August 10 may have been delayed, as suggested by an *avviso Marescotti* published by Staffieri.⁵⁰ In any case, by August the poet was probably no longer in Rome. Along with numerous other *virtuosi* the new viceroy summoned Stampiglia to Naples shortly after taking over the reins of the Kingdom in March of that year.⁵¹ This raises the intriguing possibility that Stampiglia may have written the text of *Il Genio*.

The table below shows schematically the rhyme schemes and syllable counts for the closed pieces (arias and duets) of *Il Genio*. It should be noted that all but one piece (no. 16) were set by Scarlatti using an ABA or *da capo* structure. This is certainly a progressive feature. By the early eighteenth century strophic forms (like that found in no. 16) had completely disappeared. The table also shows that *tronco* lines, that is, lines with a final accented syl-

lable, are found at the end of every closed piece, and also internally at the end of B sections of *da capo* arias (except in the case of aria 12).⁵² This too is a progressive feature. In the works of the Imperial Poet Laureate Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782) and his many followers, *tronco* lines are universally employed in this way. And already in the libretti of his predecessor at Vienna, Apostolo Zeno (1658-1750), this same mannerism is commonly found.

Rhyme schemes and syllable counts in the arias of <i>Il Genio</i>					
No.	Singer(s)	Incipit	Scheme		
2	Gloria	Care spiagge	A8	B8t	Da capo aria
			A8	B8t	
4	Genio	I fiati canori	A6	D6	Da capo aria
			B6	C6	
			C6	B6	
			B6	C6	
			D6t	D6t	
6	Piacere, Genio	Zeffiretti vezzosetti	A8	A8	Strophic, each strophe Da capo
			B8t	E8t	
			C8	F8	
			D8t	E8t	
8	Genio, Gloria	Stiam longi	A6	C6	Da capo aria
			A6	C6	
			B6t	D6t	
10	Genio	È meglio il tacere	A6	C6	Da capo aria
			A6	C6	
			B6t	C6t	
12	Genio	Bella non tacere	A11	C7t	like recitative
			B7	B11t	
14	Piacere	Nella bell'alma	A5	C5	Da capo aria
			A5	C5	
			B5t	D5t	
16	Glori	Canterò	A4t	A4t	Strophic aria
			B7	B8	
			B8	B8	
			A7t	A7t	

⁵²Aria 12 appears to use a fragment of poetry commonly found in recitative.

<i>Il Genio</i> . . . continued					
No.	Singer(s)	Incipit	Scheme		
18	Genio	Venticelli lenti	A8	D8	Da capo aria
			A4	D8	
			B8		
			C8t	C8t	
20	Gloria	Godi e spero	A8		Da capo aria
			B8	D8	
			C8t	C8t	

Of the ten closed pieces in *Il Genio*

- 5 use 8 syllable lines (ottonario)
- 3 use 6 syllable lines (senario)
- 1 uses 5 syllable lines (quinario)
- 1 uses 7 and 11 syllable lines (versi sciolti)

In Paglia's *Venere, Adone e Amore*, heard just a few weeks earlier at Naples with Scarlatti's music, 14 closed pieces make use of the following line types.

- 6 use 7 syllable lines (settenario)
- 4 use 8 syllable lines (ottonario)
- 2 use 10 syllable lines (decasillabo)
- 1 uses 6 syllable lines (senario)
- 1 uses 7 and 11 syllable lines (versi sciolti)

It is curious that both serenatas contain one aria setting lines of seven and eleven syllables. The combination of these two line types is normally seen in recitatives, but is not employed often in arias. Like the poet of *Il Genio*, Paglia writes *tronco* lines at the end of A and B sections for the *da capo* structures in *Venere, Adone et Amore*; and in this respect the two texts are similar. The primary difference between the two, at least in terms of closed numbers, is the predominance of seven and ten-syllable lines (*settenario*

and *decasillabo*) in *Venere, Adone et Amore*. Their absence in *Il Genio* may indicate that Paglia was not the librettist of this serenata.

The action of the serenata can be summarized as follows. After an instrumental *sinfonia* is heard a female character from classical antiquity appears, having just flown in from the west accompanied by sweet breezes (**Arioso 1**). She sings in praise of a beautiful seashore, site of the serenata's performance, and of the charming and virtuous ladies in atten-

⁵³Partenope was one of the mythological sirens that seduced sailors to their doom. Since classical times she was associated with the city of Naples. In this work Partenope serves as an alias for Naples. The mythological origins of Partenope are discussed by Dinko Fabris, "La città della sirena. Le origini del mito musicale di Napoli nell'età spagnola," *Napoli viceregnò spagnolo. Una capitale della cultura alle origini dell'Europa moderna (sec. XVI–XVII)* ed. M. Bosse and A. Stoll (Naples: Vivarium, Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici) 2001, II,

dance (**Aria 2**). After her aria, she sees *Genio di Partenope*⁵³ approaching (**Recitativo 3**), and she identifies the seashore as the Mergellina. *Genio di Partenope* addresses the first character as the *Gloria del Sebeto*.⁵⁴ Genio urges Gloria to shake her wings and blow her ancient trumpet in celebration of a certain Maria's birthday (**Recitativo 3**). In his subsequent aria (**Aria 4**) Genio imitates the sound of the trumpet with his voice while continuing to urge Gloria to crown this Maria from the Tago⁵⁵ with laurels of fame. A third figure, *Piacere di Mergellina*, appears, and all three—Gloria, Genio and *Piacere*—kneel before Maria (**Recitativo 5**). *Piacere* and Genio, each singing one strophe of text, share an aria (**Aria 6**) in which they extol the beauty and natural setting of the Mergellina and assure Maria of its loyalty to her.

At this point in the serenata the three interlocutori have been introduced, each has sung at least one aria, and as a body they have paid their respects to Maria. Each represents a

local deity whose first name encapsulates a specific quality associated with Naples. *Genio* refers to wit, or *arguzia*; and *Gloria* is nothing less than the Neapolitan manifestation of the goddess *Fama*, an allegorical figure encountered repeatedly in baroque serenatas, opera prologs, and occasional entertainments of various sorts.

During the Renaissance, numerous classical deities and personages had been resurrected and sanctioned for use in elite, humanist-inspired literature, entertainment and ritual. *Fama Buona*,⁵⁶ as she was known properly in Italy, was one of those whose iconography and mythic attributes were securely fixed in the collective imagination of elite Latin societies by the end of the Renaissance.⁵⁷ Through the allusion to her power of flight, to her capacity to crown with laurels (to bestow fame), and to the trumpet she was said to carry, the aristocratic audience at this serenata would have grasped immediately Gloria's identity. Indeed, the more musically attuned members of the audience may have sensed the

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⁵⁴During Scarlatti's lifetime the river Sebeto marked the south-eastern periphery of Naples. The Ponte della Madalena, under which the Sebeto passed, is seen at number 43 on Domenico Antonio Parrino's late seventeenth-century map of Naples *Fidelissima Urbis Neapolitanæ cum Omnibus Locis Accurata et Nova Delineatio 1691*. The map is reproduced at the beginning of Ulisse Prota-Giurleo, *I Teatri di Napoli nel '600* (Naples: Fausto Fiorentino, 1962). Like Partenope, Sebeto serves as a reference to Naples.

⁵⁵The longest river in the Iberian peninsula. This is an allusion to Maria's Iberian ancestry.

⁵⁶Stefanie Tcharos, "The Serenata in Early 18th-Century Rome: Sight, Sound, Ritual, and the Signification of Meaning," *The Journal of Musicology* XXIII (2006) 4, pp. 528–568, has much to say of the key role played by *Fama* in several conspicuous Roman serenatas from the first decade of the eighteenth century.

⁵⁷By Scarlatti's era it would seem that the poetic vocabulary associated with *Fama* had become stereotyped. The verb *scuotere* is used by the poet of *Il Genio* and by Francesco Posterla, the poet of Scarlatti's 1704 serenata *La Contesa d'onore* to depict *Fama* shaking her wings. Posterla makes explicit reference to the *ali* of *Fama* in his libretto. The anonymous poet of *Il Genio* fails to mention Gloria's *ali*, but they are implicit in his choice of this verb. Similarly, Giacomo Buonaccorsi, the poet of Pietro Paolo Bencini's 1704 serenata *Le gare festive in applauso alla Real Casa di Francia*, gives the phrase "*i fiati alteri*" to *Fama* as she invokes the sound of her trumpet. In the present work, Genio evokes the trumpet of Gloria with the phrase "*i fiati canori*" since no real trumpets were employed in Scarlatti's orchestra.

presence of the goddess after hearing only a few measures of the fanfare-like figures played by the violins of the opening *sinfonia*.

A hint of discord or controversy arises following the duet as Genio asks if it is enough that voices are accompanied only by string at festive concerts, **Recitativo 9**. Gloria responds that she will, in effect, summon up the heroic sound of the trumpet in her imagination, displaying in this way devotion to Maria on her name day. Genio counters that this fine idea is not entirely satisfactory, but that it is indeed fitting to express applause with agile, cultivated voices. In his subsequent aria, however, he warns that “it is better to keep quiet if your lips cannot do their duty.” (**Aria 10**).

With a bizarre metaphor in which he likens the three demigods to “unhappy moles” not permitted to fix their blind gaze upon such splendid beings (i.e., upon Maria and the other aristocrats in the audience), Genio asks, rhetorically, if on such a day it is not appropriate to broadcast the fame of Maria throughout the universe (**Recitativo 11**). Answering his own question, he addresses an aria to Gloria urging her not to remain silent (**Aria**

12). Following the aria, the three deities offer a further compliment to the Vicereine, asserting that Maria embodies qualities of each of them, she being a noble soul of wit, of glory, and of delight (**Recitativo 13**). *Piacere* completes the compliment with an aria extolling Maria’s nobility and beauty (**Aria 14**).

Seemingly out of the blue, Genio poses a riddle (**Recitativo 15**): “Che porta il mar nel nome? Ma lo fecer le stelle un mar tutto pietà senza procelle?” “What does the name of the sea indicate? Did the stars take pity and make it without storms?” Gloria ventures a solution to the riddle in an aria contrasting her wish to sing with her desire to keep still (**Aria 16**). Genio, perhaps unsatisfied with this non-sequitur response, commands Gloria to be silent. He sees an apparition of Zefiro leading Morfeo to Maria that she may fall sweetly asleep (**Recitativo 17**). In a soporific aria Genio orders the breezes to be still, for Maria wishes now to rest (**Aria 18**). After Maria’s brief siesta the serenata ends on a joyful note with Gloria expressing the hope that Maria may soon give birth to a son (**Recitativo 19**), to . . .

... una prole che del sole	An offspring whose face bears
porti in fronte lo splendor.	the splendour of the sun,
Un incanto d’ogni sfera	an enchantment of every sphere,
un novello dio d’amor.	a new god of Love. (Aria 20)

One can scarcely speak of a plot in connection with the text of *Il Genio*. Upon reading it the Spanish word *encuentro*, or the Italian *incontro*, comes to mind: a meeting by three demigods on the seashore near Naples, their discovery of Maria, her husband

the Viceroy, and perhaps a few other personages of quality, compliments expressed by the demigods to the Vicereine on her birthday, a mild controversy regarding the proper musical instruments needed to honor her, a curious riddle posed but seemingly left

unsolved, a vision of Morfeo bringing sleep to Maria, and a final joyous aria foretelling the birth of her son.

Perhaps the best clue to an understanding of the serenata occurs when Genio, a personification of wit or *arguzia*, without apparent motivation poses a riddle. In aristocratic social gatherings riddles were used to elicit demonstrations of mental agility (*arguzia*) from those in attendance.⁵⁸ In the musically stylized case of *Il Genio* an agile musical response along with a clever poetic turn of phrase would have constituted a successful answer to the riddle. It appears that Genio judged Gloria's response less than stellar. In any case, the riddle indicates that *Il Genio* is nothing less than a stylized rendition of an aristocratic *conversazione*; and as performed in 1696 the serenata furnishes a notable example of a *conversazione* within a *conversazione*.

The riddle itself makes veiled reference to Maria's somewhat depressed, perhaps even desperate state. By 1696 she was under considerable pressure to give birth to an heir.⁵⁹ The riddle, along with Gloria's response, counsels Maria that even for one at the highest level of aristocratic society life may not be easy. One should nevertheless strive

to do one's duty.

Edward Dent, who was not at all pleased with much of Scarlatti's musical output from the late 1690s, was surely too harsh when he wrote that the "usual serenata consists simply of a number of airs and duets strung together on a flimsy thread of recitative. The subjects are pastoral or mythological; but, as with the operas, the subjects are of little importance. Arcadian love-making at the beginning, versified politics at the end—one could scarcely imagine anything less inspiring."⁶⁰

But as Freitas convincingly argues, seicento "cantatas were created and experienced within an environment that valued wit and ingenuity over emotional revelation, the modern notion of sincerity is largely irrelevant to historical criticism. Rather, contemporaries more likely experienced cantatas—both textually and musically—as convivial exhibitions of rhetorical skill than as the personal disclosures of the poet, composer or performer."⁶¹ These same observations must hold for the serenata of the early modern period, a subtype within the larger generic classification of cantata.

Despite Dent's opinion cited above, the pioneering English musicologist found much to like in *Il Genio*:

⁵⁸Roger Freitas, "Singing and Playing: The Italian Cantata and the Rage for Wit," *Music & Letters* vol. 82, no. 41, p. 512

⁵⁹The web page dedicated to Maria at the *Fundación Medinacel*, <http://www.fundacionmedinaceli.org/casaducal/fichaindividuo.aspx?id=170>, indicates she gave birth to a daughter in the year of her marriage (1678), but the child died in infancy (1681).

⁶⁰Edward J. Dent, *Alessandro Scarlatti: His Life and Works*, Preface and additional notes by Frank Walker (London: Edward Arnold, 1960), p. 66. According to Dent, p. 65, the success of Bononcini's *Il trionfo di Camilla*, with its tunes "to which even a viceregal foot could quite easily beat time" was probably to blame for the poor quality, as judged by Dent, of Scarlatti's output at this time. "...no doubt Scarlatti received an intimation from high quarters that he would do well to apply his talents in that direction. He did, and between 1697 and 1702 provided the Viceroy with as much rubbish as the most exalted patron of fine arts could desire to encourage."

⁶¹Freitas, *op. cit.* p. 510.

“The best of the Neapolitan serenatas is one composed in 1696 for the birthday of the viceroy’s wife, in which she is saluted by three allegorical representatives of Naples, the Genius of Parthenope, the Delight of Mergellina, and the Glory of Sebeto. Here Scarlatti seizes such advantages as the form presented. Not being represented on the stage, there was more scope for purely musical treatment, and the composer could approximate more nearly to the chamber style; at the same time the very best singers were available. The result is something half-way between the chamber and the stage, and this particular example contains some very good music, the most attractive number being an air ‘*Venticelli lenti, lenti,*’ accompanied by the *concerto grosso* and two *concertini*, one at a distance, producing the effect of two sets of echoes. The final air, ‘*Godi e spera,*’ in which Gloria del Sebeto expresses the hope that the viceroy’s wife will shortly give birth to a son and heir, is also extremely beautiful.”⁶²

Aside from the undeniable *soavità* of its poetry and the curious *conversazione* within a *conversazione* setting, there are a number of details beyond those mentioned by Dent that set *Il Genio* apart from similar works. The table below provides an overview of the basic musical properties of the arias and duets in the serenata.⁶³

Musical attributes for closed numbers in <i>Il Genio</i>					
No.	Singer(s)	Incipit	Key	Meter	Instrumental Scoring
2	Gloria	Care spiagge	A (2 sharps)	3/4	vl 1, vl 2, bc
4	Genio	I fiati canori	G (no sharp)	3/4	bc
6	Piacere	Zeffiretti vezzosetti	b (2 sharps)	C	vl solo, bc
6	Genio	Augeletti garuletti	e (1 sharp)	C	vl solo, bc
8	Genio, Gloria	Stiam lungi	C	C=12/8	bc
10	Genio	È meglio il tacere	B flat (1 flat)	C	vlc solo, bc
12	Genio	Bella non tacere	g (1 flat)	C	bc
14	Piacere	Nella bell'alma	F (no flat)	3/8	vl solo, bc
16	Gloria	Canterò	B flat (1 flat)	C=12/8	bc
18	Genio	Venticelli lenti	c (2 flats)	3/8	concerto grosso (vl echo 1 (vl 1, vl 2, b echo 2 (vl 1, vl2, bc vl unisoni, bc
20	Gloria	Godi e spera	A (2 sharps)	C	vl unisoni, bc

⁶²Dent, *op. cit.* pp. 68-69.

⁶³The format of the table follows the one published by Michael Talbot in his model study “Loving without Falling in Love: Pietro Paolo Bencini’s Serenata *Li Due Volubili*” in *La Serenata tra Seicento e Settecento*, p. 386. In the present study the column for tempo has been removed. In the manuscript source for *Il Genio* tempo markings are almost entirely absent.

For reasons unknown today Scarlatti did not employ real trumpets in this serenata even though their sound was traditionally associated with Fama or Gloria. In **Recitativo 9** Genio confronts Gloria with this very issue. “Is it enough that only strings accompany the voices at a festive concert?” she asks. Gloria proposes an imaginative (and imaginary) solution. Genio remains unconvinced but reluctantly seems to accept Gloria’s answer. But then he expresses some concerns in a B-flat major aria (with only one flat). Flat keys dominate the remainder of the serenata as Genio sings a particularly bizarre aria in G minor (no. 12 with one flat) in response to a baroque simile introduced by the poet. A riddle and a dubious answer to it likewise call for flat keys, and Maria is put to sleep with an aria in C minor (with two flats), a key that Halton associates with resignation and is found in other soporific arias by the composer. The spirit of agitated joy returns only at the very end as Gloria foretells the birth of an heir in an aria in A major. This symmetrical division of the serenata into two parts, with sharp keys dominating the first half, a tonal center to the work in C major, and flat keys predominant in the second half, until a quick return to A major ensures tonal closure, seems too neat to be a coincidence.

Why Scarlatti made no use of real trumpets in this score remains unclear. The allegorical figure Fama or Gloria is routinely shown holding a trumpet in the iconography of that era. The audi-

ence for the serenata must surely have anticipated their sound, as trumpet-like figures dominate the opening measures of the violins in the introductory *sinfonia*. And when Genio urges Gloria to flap her wings to the sound of the ancient trumpet and to sing of Maria’s birthday, Scarlatti assigns a curious “trumpet aria” for voice alone (**Aria 4**) to the demigod. The aria appears to be in G major, but the key signature lacks the expected F sharp, and the opening phrase of the voice (*I fiati canori*) ascends to an F natural above the tonic harmony on G. Evidently the aria is not in G major, but in the archaic mixolydian mode. Surely this is Scarlatti’s witty attempt to depict the ancient trumpet of classical antiquity.⁶⁴ Finally, Gloria even offers a sort of excuse or apology for the lack of trumpets in the serenata (**Recitativo 9**), saying she will in effect hear their sound in her imagination.

This is all the more puzzling as Domínguez⁶⁵ has uncovered documents showing that in early 1696 Don Luis was in search of good German trumpet players and that by June or July 1696 a pair of the finest had made the trip from Vienna to Naples. Even if the German instrumentalists were not assigned to the Royal Chapel there can be little doubt that Scarlatti would have had access to their services if requested. Pompeo Azzolino, the serenata’s patron, was Captain of the German Guard at Naples. Perhaps the fact that trumpets were not used in *Il Genio* indicates the serenata was given inside the Viceroy’s casino, in a cham-

⁶⁴Pagano, *Due vite*. p. 167, coined the phrase “*reperti archeologici e rarità*” to characterize some of the music Scarlatti sent to Ferdinando dei Medici in an ill-fated attempt to obtain a position at the prince’s court. That apt expression might well be applied here too.

⁶⁵*Mecenazgo musical*, II, 65, 69, 76-77.

⁶⁶As suggested by Dent, *op. cit.* pp. 68-69.

ber setting,⁶⁶ where their sound would have been too over-powering in an enclosed space.⁶⁷

An even more bizarre form of wit than found in the “trumpet aria” mentioned above can be heard in Genio’s **aria 12**. In the preceding recitative the character likens his fellow demigods to “unhappy moles,” not worthy of looking upon Maria and the other aristocrats present. He asks, rhetorically, if on such a day it is not appropriate to broadcast the fame of Maria throughout the universe. The answer is clear. Maria’s name should indeed be celebrated. In his aria he urges Gloria not to remain silent. Despite the literal meaning of the text sung by Genio as the piece unfolds, the strange image of the blind mole carries over to dominate the aria. After a motto opening by the voice of a descending fifth, the mole tunnels away in the continuo for three and a half measures. The key of the aria is heard as g minor with a strong hint of the relative major, B flat, both of which make use of the note D natural. After a half cadence on g minor in bar 10, the voice and continuo quickly cadence in c minor (bars 11–13) and b flat minor (bars 14–15). The rapid descent in tonality and the completely unexpected sound of D flat in measure 14 produces an exceptionally eerie effect. Is the mole tunneling deeper, or showing its ugly face? However one wishes to interpret the precise musical meaning here, this bizarre display of wit was certainly not calculated to succeed in an opera

house. But it may well have been appreciated by Don Luis, his wife Maria, and a few knowledgeable friends in the Viceroy’s casino that evening.

The three-movement Italian overture has long been recognized as an important predecessor of the classical symphony, and Alessandro Scarlatti’s key role in the stabilization of the fast-slow-fast sequence of movements is well understood and documented. Scarlatti may with some justification be considered the first major composer to cultivate the tradition that eventually produced the symphonies of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. With the *sinfonia* to *Il Genio*, however, Scarlatti has not yet arrived at the standard three-movement Italian overture. Here the *sinfonia* consists of four distinct movements as well as a short, two-bar transitional passage linking the first movement with the second. The division of instruments into *concerto grosso* and *concertino* is of considerable interest. But it should be noted that the *concerto grosso* introduces no independent musical material. For the most part, it simply reinforces the *concertino* at cadences. In effect, the *sinfonia* is a trio sonata set in relief by a *concerto grosso*. Similarly, separate *ritornelli* played by the *concerto grosso* at the end of arias and duets never introduce new musical material. They serve simply to set the voice in relief while marking the end of the piece.

The most progressive orchestration in *Il Genio* is seen in number 18, the

⁶⁷Whether or not the German *virtuosi* performed in *Venere, Adone et Amore* at Naples earlier that summer also remains in doubt. The 1696 version of the serenata indeed contains trumpet parts, but the natural trumpet players used by Halton in her recording of the serenata found them unplayable. Halton recorded the more idiomatic, easier trumpet parts from the 1706 version of the serenata.

⁶⁸Dent, *Ibid.*

aria “*Venticelli lenti, lenti*” praised by Dent.⁶⁸ Here the *concerto grosso*, voice and two *concertini* echoing the voice are integrated into a single aria. As in the opening *sinfonia*, the *concerto grosso* reinforces cadences at important structural points, but more interestingly, it provides an opening *ritornello* that defines the dominant mood or affection of the aria.

Considering the forces needed to perform “*Venticelli lenti, lenti*,” *Il Genio* would require at minimum an orchestra of seventeen players:

- 4 violins for two concertini (echi)
- 2 violoncellos for concertini
- 4 violins for concerto grosso
- 3 violas
- 2 violoncellos
- 1 violone or double bass
- 1 harpsichord

To this list might well be added a second harpsichord and at least one theorbo or archlute. The true size of the orchestra in 1696 remains unknown and may have been considerably larger than the list above suggests.

The recitative found in the serenata is very similar to that employed in Scarlatti’s operas from the 1690s. If one looks at the conventional cadences used at full stops in the text, progressive types, such as those in No. 3, bar 6, or No. 7, bar 21, are certainly to be found. But the more lyrical types associated with seventeenth-century practice are seen more often. In the case of the progressive type of cadence, a 43 suspension should be played by the

continuo on the dominant chord. The continuo players should not pause until the singer finishes the phrase, delaying the cadence, as would be done in chamber cantata, but rather should play the dominant chord during the last two syllables of the singer’s line, as in opera. Because there is relatively little plot or action to advance in this text, here Scarlatti’s recitative turns lyrical, arioso-like, more often than is the case in opera. Glory’s first number is a particularly fine specimen of Scarlatti’s late seventeenth-century, arioso style. Other examples are to be found at the end of **Recitative 3**, in the middle and end of **Recitative 7**, at end of **Recitative 11**, and in the middle of **Recitative 15**. After the turn of the century arioso begin to disappear from Scarlatti’s operas, serenatas, and oratorios, and are replaced by recitative accompanied by strings and continuo.

Whether in recitative, arioso or aria one should note the freedom with which Scarlatti’s melodies move from one mode to another. This often results in the effect described by Michael Talbot⁶⁹ as ‘minorization’: momentary ‘dips’ into the parallel minor key. This effect is heard at the end of the opening *sinfonia* as well as in many subsequent places in *Il Genio*. Sometimes the ‘dip’ does not occur on the third degree of the scale or mode, but rather on the second. From the harmonic perspective this is usually explained as a chromatic alteration of the ii chord in first inversion, the so-called Neapolitan sixth chord. From the perspective of melody, however, it usually signals a change of key (as at bar 14 of number 12, Genio’s ‘cieca talpa aria’) or the switch to a phrygian scale. Sometimes

⁶⁹“Loving without Falling in Love,” p. 388.

an abrupt switch of mode in a melody can be explained or justified by the text or idea expressed at that moment. But there are enough cases in *Il Genio* where no immediate explanation can be found, such as at the end of the introductory *sinfonia*, to suggest that this mannerism had taken on a life of its own at Naples and was enjoyed as a purely musical effect. In 1696 this use of ‘minorization,’ of chromatic alterations of melody, and of rapid switching of mode was a noteworthy feature in the serenata. Talbot relates that “Neapolitan composers were, it seems, the first to employ ‘minorization’ routinely; Roman and Venetian composers began to use it regularly only in the second decade of the eighteenth century.”⁷⁰ Techniques such as these can be found in Scarlatti’s earlier serenata that summer, *Venere, Adone et Amore*; but Scarlatti employs these musical devices to much greater effect in *Il Genio*. Perhaps this may partly explain the observation by Angelo Mauro, Colonna’s agent in Naples, that Scarlatti composed his last serenata that summer “**todo diferente-mente de su solito.**”

In 1709 Count Francesco Maria Zambeccari criticized Scarlatti for filling his operas with difficult music demanding an understanding of counterpoint beyond the grasp of the average theatergoer of the era.⁷¹ But with the small elite gathering that wit-

nessed *Il Genio*, Scarlatti may have found an ideal audience for the subtle wit of his music. While often clever or witty, nothing in the serenata seems long-winded or especially difficult. Surely here Scarlatti applied Shakespeare’s dictum that “brevity is the soul of wit.” Nor can Scarlatti be faulted for a lack of *roba allegra*. Two Arias (6 and 14) pair the voice with a virtuoso solo violin, and a particularly splendid part for solo violoncello is paired with the voice in Aria 10. At the very heart of the serenata, Duet 8, Genio and Gloria rejoice in exuberant triplets and parallel thirds, a classic example of seventeenth-century trio texture. At the end of the serenata Maria is put to sleep with a hypnotic, soporific Aria 18, making use of two string *concertini* and a *concerto grosso*, only to be suddenly reinvigorated by a jubilant Aria 20, foretelling the birth of her son and heir.

Sadly it must be reported that Maria was not destined to have this child. When her husband died in 1711, in disgrace and probably poisoned in the castle of Pamplona, the line of Medinaceli Dukes represented by Don Luis came to an end. Maria’s desire for children in 1696, however, was certainly sincere. Only two days after the performance of *Il Genio* one reads this touching paragraph in Confuorto’s journal.

In devotion to and imploring grace of the Most Holy Virgin that she might give birth to sons with her husband the viceroy, this Lady the vicereine,

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ [Scarlatti] “è un grand’uomo, e per esser così buono, riesce cattivo, perché le composizioni sue sono difficilissime e cose da stanze, che in teatro non riescono. In primis, chi s’intende di contrappunto le stimerà; ma in udienza, in teatro, di mille persone, non ve ne sono venti che l’intendono; e gli altri, non sentendo roba allegra e teatrale, s’annoiano.” Cited in Ludovico Frati, “Un Impresario teatrale del Settecento e la sua biblioteca,” *Rivista Musicale Italiana* XVII (1911), p. 69.

desiring to raise as her own an orphaned girl from the Santissima Annunziata, made a request to that end of the Lord Governors that they find her one–three or four years of age, physically attractive, white, with blonde hair and blue eyes, and above all of lively spirit; and quickly having found her one, about three years old, and having presented the child with great pomp, dressed in white, to her, the said Lady, having found the child dearly to her satisfaction, is thus raising her as her own daughter, taking the child with her to private and public functions in her own sedan chair, holding her hand, kissing her and caressing her in public. Such, in the end, was the little girl’s good fortune.

Questa signora viceregina intendendo, per sua divozione e per impetrar grazia dalla Madonna santissima di procrear figliuoli col signor duca viceré suo marito, di educare come sua una figliuola esposita della Santissima Annunziata, fecero perciò richiedere a’ signori governatori che gliene facessero trovar una di tre o quattr’anni, ben fatta di persona, bianca, bionda, d’occhi azzurri e sopra tutto di spiriti vivaci, e tale appunto glien’hanno trovata una di tre anni in circa, e gliel’hanno appresentata pomposamente vestita di bianco, da detta signora caramente, trovandola di sua sodisfazione, onde la tratta come sua propria figlia, portandola seco nelle private e pubbliche funzioni dentro la medesima sua seggia, tenendola per la mano e baciandola ed accarezzandola pubblicamente. Infine è stata la fortuna di tal figliuola.⁷²

⁷²Confuorto, *Giornali*, II, 231-2