



‘Wiener Version’ (as it appears on the cover and inside title page) or ‘Wiener Fassung’ (on the first page of the score).

The principal source, dated 1831, has a title that credits two further composers for their contributions. It reads in part: ‘Stabat mater / von Pergolesi [*sic*] / Vierstimmig gesetzt von Salieri / Mit Harmoniebegleitung v. Süßmayer’. The editor dismisses these attributions as ‘mysteriously false’. It would have been helpful to know if this title (entered on the cover of the volume) is in the same hand as one of the music copyists or was made by a different scribe. While it is possible that a busy or misinformed copyist erred in these ascriptions, it is also conceivable that he may have had some basis for the names he gave. Salieri knew Pergolesi’s *Stabat mater* well, having directed a performance in the Italian Church (Minoritenkirche) in 1777, and he is known to have revised music by earlier composers.

Historically, the ‘Wiener Version’ of Pergolesi’s *Stabat mater* is important as it testifies to the enduring popularity of the original composition, and, like Mozart’s orchestration of *Messiah*, it exemplifies how changing tastes ‘modernized’ the work of a past master. Joseph Haydn’s *Stabat mater* (1767) underwent a similar transformation in 1803, when Sigismund Neukomm, with the composer’s approval, expanded the winds from two oboes to include flute, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, three trombones and timpani. But this ‘Wiener Version’ is more than just a curiosity. Unlike Handel’s oratorio or Haydn’s cantata, Pergolesi’s sequence setting was controversial from the beginning, condemned by its critics as lightweight and nothing more than opera buffa fare. Perhaps owing to these contentions, it lived on almost as much in its ‘improved’ versions as in its original form. By bringing this nineteenth-century adaptation to light, the editor has made an important contribution to its *Rezeptionsgeschichte* and given choral directors the opportunity to present a ‘new’ oratorio.

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LEONARDO VINCI (1690–1730), ED. GAETANO PITARRESI  
*ORATORIO DI MARIA DOLORATA*  
Bologna: Ut Orpheus, 2009  
pp. xx + 152, ISMN 979 0 2153 1611 9

The name of Leonardo Vinci (c1696–1730) immediately evokes Neapolitan opera, the genre to which he dedicated almost all his life’s work. Famous for his *opere buffe* in dialect, his domination of the Neapolitan stage was unprecedented. Considered one of the fathers of the new aria style, his collaboration with Metastasio and his well-known rivalry with Nicola Porpora were certainly among the factors that nourished his innovative language. As Burney put it, ‘Vinci seems to have been the first opera composer, who . . . without degrading his art, rendered it the friend and not the slave of poetry’ (Charles Burney, *A General History of Music* (London, 1776–1789; reprinted Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), volume 4, 547). In eighteenth-century Naples the audience’s passion for opera was overwhelming. But the city also had an extremely vivid tradition of sacred music. It was second only to Rome for the number of its religious institutions, oratorios and confraternities. Indeed, a very rich and distinctive tradition of sacred music flourished from the fifteenth century onwards.

The unique political situation in Naples made it fertile ground for cultural and artistic innovations, many of which came to a head in Vinci’s lifetime. Ruled by its Viceroy, Naples nonetheless retained an autonomous government directed by local aristocrats known as the *Eletti*. They were responsible for the *cappella musicale del Tesoro di San Gennaro*, operating in close competition with the Royal Chapel of the Aragonese kings. The *maestri di capella* and members of both institutions were always prestigious musicians: composers Giovanni



de Macque, Alessandro Scarlatti and Leonardo Leo, and the castrato Farinelli, to name only the most famous. Other important musical institutions were the Casa dell'Annunziata, a charitable institution for orphans, and the Oratorio dei Girolamini, established by Filippo Neri. Music played an important role in almost all of the five hundred Neapolitan churches, not to mention the several confraternities of musicians and the famous conservatories, among them the Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo, where Vinci received his musical training.

This lively musical tradition stimulated an extremely rich output of sacred music, including masses (the so-called 'Neapolitan mass'), motets for several voices with instruments, cycles for Holy Week and Christmas, settings of the Office for the Dead and oratorios, the latter passing out of fashion after the 1730s. Comedy, oratorio, heroic opera and sacred music were equally important and influenced one another reciprocally. Sacred music followed a similar pattern of development to opera: oratorios were often staged, and apart from the distinction between topics of librettos, the musical language is identical. The dramatic quality of oratorio follows the conventions of opera, or perhaps vice versa; yet modern scholars tend to focus their attention mainly on opera, leaving aside the two other extremely important Neapolitan traditions, both sacred and instrumental.

Gaetano Pitarresi's edition of Vinci's *Oratorio di Maria Dolorata* happily contradicts this trend, offering a welcome insight into sacred music for Holy Week in southern Italy. The piece was commissioned by the Arciconfraternità dei Sette Dolori around 1723. No libretto has survived, so the edited text is reconstructed from the version preserved in the score. As for the music, only one manuscript has come down to us, containing an attribution to Vinci and dated 1731. The authorship of the work has long been considered doubtful because of the discrepancy between these two dates, but Pitarresi convincingly shows that the initial sinfonia is a slightly varied version of that composed by Vinci for the opera *La Rosmira fedele*, premiered in Venice during the Carnival of 1725 at the Teatro di San Giovanni Grisostomo; this leaves little room for doubt over the attribution. The fortuitous inclusion of a date, 15 November 1731 (though Reinhard Strohm previously read '1734' in his article 'Italienische Opernarien des frühen Settecento (1720–1739)', *Analecta musicologica* 16/2 (1976), 243), places the copying of the manuscript shortly after Vinci's death in May that year. Strohm suggested that it might have been produced for a second performance of the oratorio, but Pitarresi points out that it would be strange to copy in November an oratorio intended for Easter time. According to the editor, the manuscript might have been commissioned by a member of the Congregazione dei Sette Dolori, the original commissioners of the work, who wished to preserve it for future performance; Pitarresi suggests Cardinal Ruffo's sister Margarita, who is known to have paid for Vinci's burial after the composer died without a penny to his name.

Producing a critical edition is always something of a minefield, presenting numerous challenges and dilemmas. The score is a largely incomplete codification of a sonic artefact. The source is a historical object, conceived in a specific context and dependent upon many unwritten conventions. The task of the editor is to rewrite the lost object of music in order to attempt a translation for modern readers or performers, based on partial and incomplete traces. He should at the same time restore this historical object as faithfully as possible and present an updated version suitable for modern musicians. The editor can choose between a copy-text edition (Walter Greg, Fredson Bowers, G. Thomas Tanselle) and an ideal transcription. While the former represents an attempt to reconstruct final authorial intentions through fidelity to a single reliable source, except in cases of obvious corruption, and is thus subject to the problems of establishing authorial intentions in the first place, the creation of an 'ideal' version through an eclectic approach to the sources almost always results in a text that is a historical impossibility (like Raphael's most beautiful woman, made up of several beautiful women combined in a single ideal model). The problem of Vinci's oratorio is not the choice of copy-text, since we have only one surviving copy; rather, it is the question of the proximity of that manuscript to the lost original, and hence its distance from the author's intention. Created almost ten years after the original performance, it was most probably corrupted. Pitarresi indicates moreover that the copyist was careless, especially in regard to the pitches' positions on the staff. If no ideal transcription is possible here, no stemmatic analysis is conceivable either, except for the initial sinfonia, the only part of the work that has another source.



Bearing in mind these and other dilemmas that face the editor, this edition has been very carefully realized, choosing a cautious and intelligent middle way between the Charybdis of historical faithfulness and the Scylla of modern performance practices. No excessive additions have been made to features such as dynamics or figured bass. The editor has helpfully chosen not to normalize the beaming of small note values, thus preserving indications of articulation. Editions with standardized beaming according to modern usage unfortunately remain prevalent, obscuring many gestures and expressive markings that can be extremely useful to the performer by forcing the original notation into a rigid and sterile frame. A few pages of the source in facsimile would have been welcome, to give the reader an idea of its appearance. Since the Preface has been translated into English, a translation of the libretto might also have been a useful addition for non-Italian singers.

The edition of the text presents some inconsistencies with regard to editorial criteria. As is the custom in Italian philology, the editor rightly chooses to normalize some particularities of eighteenth-century orthography (such as the etymological *h*, the distinction between *u* and *v*, and the use of the modern *i* in place of *y* and *j*). Nevertheless, many of the notes in the critical apparatus of the text edition mention these kinds of changes and are therefore redundant. As for the music, the editorial procedures are valid and respectful towards the source. The presentation in the score, however, is occasionally too heavily charged with square brackets, which appear every time the editor chooses to add dynamics, ornaments, accidentals, figured bass or other accessory signs. A less fussy option might have been to choose italics, or a different font, thus avoiding these recurring and unnecessary brackets and facilitating reading. But *de gustibus non disputandum est*: this slight reservation should not obscure the fine work of the editor. It is good news that such Neapolitan sacred music is finally attracting scholarly attention, and that Vinci's oratorio benefits from so competent a modern edition as this.

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## RECORDINGS

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IGNAZ JOSEPH PLEYEL (1757–1831)

*SYMPHONIES CONCERTANTES, VIOLIN CONCERTO*

David Perry (violin), Isabella Lippi (violin), Victoria Chiang (viola), Baltimore Chamber Orchestra / Markand Thakar Naxos, 8.570320, 2009; one disc, 79 minutes

Recorded shortly after the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Pleyel's birth, this Naxos disc contains three of his most effective pieces: his two string *symphonies concertantes* (B112 in B flat, B114 in A), and his only violin concerto, B103/103A in D (following Rita Benton's numbering in her *Ignace Pleyel: A Thematic Catalogue of His Compositions* (New York: Pendragon, 1977)). London proved especially receptive to Pleyel's *symphonies concertantes*, and we owe Haydn's glorious example to the fabricated rivalry in Hanover Square when, as John Marsh commented in February 1792, Pleyel was 'pitted' against his former teacher (Brian Robins, ed., *The John Marsh Journals: The Life and Times of a Gentleman Composer (1752–1828)* (New York: Pendragon, 1998), 513).

Pleyel had begun writing *symphonies concertantes* in Strasbourg. The French fashion initiated around 1770 by Davaux and Saint-Georges was followed by composers like Barrière and Leduc, and exploited enthusiastically by the indefatigable Cambini, author of over eighty such works. In the 1780s Pleyel joined the ranks of exponents like Bertheaume, Devienne, Bréval and Viotti. Between 1785 and 1802 he produced five examples, B111–115, not the eight claimed by Barry S. Brook in *La Symphonie Française dans la seconde moitié*