

# MOZART'S OPERATIC AUDITION. THE MILAN CONCERT, 12 MARCH 1770: A REAPPRAISAL AND REVISION

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## ABSTRACT

*Mozart's Milan concert on 12 March 1770 secured for him his first commission to write an opera seria for Italy. The works usually thought to have been performed on this occasion are Fra cento affanni, K88, Misero tu, K73A, and Misero me . . . misero pargoletto, K77. This article offers new evidence for redating Fra cento affanni and argues that neither it nor Misero tu was performed at the event. Instead, the case is made for a programme consisting solely of concert arias with texts from the libretto of Metastasio's Demofonte, presented together as a kind of truncated 'opera in aria'. In support of this hypothesis, the compositional circumstances surrounding Se tutti i mali miei, K83, and Ah più tremar, K71, are reassessed and possible performances by the singers Giuseppe Aprile, Antonia Bernasconi, Guglielmo d'Ettore, Lucrezia Agujari and Carlo Niccolini discussed.*

In December 1769 Mozart and his father set out for their first tour of Italy. It had long been Leopold's ambition to secure a commission for Mozart to write an Italian opera for a theatre south of the Alps,<sup>1</sup> and exactly one year later that goal was achieved with the performance of *Mitridate, re di Ponto*, K87/74a, at the Ducal Theatre in Milan.

The basic chronology of how that commission was secured has been set out before, but not the details, and with respect to the music that Mozart composed in order to press his case, there have been only brief speculations.<sup>2</sup> Mozart's greatest asset, in terms of patronage, was that the Governor of Lombardy, residing in

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1 See, for example, Friedrich Melchior Grimm's prediction of 1766 (in his *Correspondance littéraire*) that Mozart would write an opera for the Italian stage before he was twelve, and Leopold's eager reference to this in 1768 (in his petition to the Emperor Joseph II) in Otto Erich Deutsch, *Mozart: die Dokumente seines Lebens* (hereafter *Dokumente*) (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1961), 55, 76; trans. and ed. Eric Blom, Peter Branscombe and Jeremy Noble as *Mozart: A Documentary Biography* (hereafter *Documents*), second edition (London: Simon and Schuster, 1966), 56, 80.

2 See the accounts in Guglielmo Barblan and Andrea della Corte, *Mozart in Italia* (Milan: Ricordi, 1956); Rudolph Angermüller and Geneviève Geffray, *Delitiae Italiae: Mozarts Reisen in Italien* (Bad Honnef: Bock, 1994); Cristina Wysocki, 'Il giovane Mozart e il conte Firmian', in *Mozart e i musicisti italiani del suo tempo: atti del convegno internazionale di studi Roma, 21–22 ottobre 1991*, ed. Annalisa Bini (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1994), 81–88; Iwo and Pamela Załuski, *Mozart in Italy* (London: Peter Owen, 1999). See also the commentaries to the Mozart family letters from this period in *Mozart: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen: Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Wilhelm A. Bauer, Otto Erich Deutsch and Joseph Heinz Eibel (hereafter *Briefe*), 7 volumes (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1962–1975); and *The Letters of Mozart and His Family* (hereafter *Letters*), trans. and ed. Emily Anderson, third edition, revised Stanley Sadie and Fiona Smart (London: Macmillan, 1985). Additionally, see Cliff Eisen, *New Mozart Documents: A Supplement to O. E. Deutsch's Documentary Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 18, and *Mozart: Die Dokumente seines Lebens: Addenda, Neue Folge* (Wolfgang



Milan, happened to be the nephew of the archbishop who had first employed Leopold Mozart in Salzburg. But even the Governor of Lombardy, Count Karl Firmian, needed some guarantees that the young Mozart had the ability to rise to the operatic challenge. Only Mozart's music could do that and he had never written an opera seria before. Leopold Mozart writes in a letter of 17 December 1769 that, although he has taken the score of Mozart's comic opera *La finta semplice* on the journey to Italy (it had been performed in Salzburg in 1769), he 'forgot to take a few arias for Wolfgang'<sup>3</sup> – an unfortunate mistake, since nearly all of Mozart's concert arias up to that date had been written on seria texts.<sup>4</sup> Clearly Mozart was at some point going to have to demonstrate publicly that he could compose music in that genre.

The Mozarts arrived in Milan on 23 January 1770<sup>5</sup> and finally managed to meet Count Firmian on 7 February.<sup>6</sup> On that occasion Firmian presented Mozart with the nine volumes of the Turin edition of Metastasio's works, published in 1757.<sup>7</sup> Very little attention has been paid to this fact, but, as we shall see, it provides a significant background clue to Mozart's compositional choices at this time. Additionally, it raises some interesting questions about the exact mechanisms by which a composer such as Mozart might have gained access to librettos or aria texts. Some texts were collected by the Mozarts in the course of their many visits to the theatre,<sup>8</sup> while others were either acquired during their travels or held in Salzburg.<sup>9</sup> And possibly some were sent to Mozart by hopeful singers.<sup>10</sup> But all three of these possibilities are only patchily supported by the surviving evidence and, in any case, we know little about exactly how Mozart engaged with such sources once he had embarked upon the act of composition.

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Amadeus Mozart, *Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke* (hereafter *NMA*) X/31/ Nachträge, Band 2 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1997), 17; *Dokumente*, 100; *Documents*, 110. On the composition of *Mitridate* and the singers involved see Harrison James Wignall, 'Mozart, Guglielmo d'Etto and the Composition of *Mitridate*' (PhD dissertation, Brandeis University, 1995) and 'Guglielmo d'Etto: Mozart's First *Mitridate*', *The Opera Quarterly* 10/3 (1994), 93–112.

3 *Briefe*, volume 1, 294–295; *Letters*, 101–102.

4 The only exception seems to have been *Cara, se le mie pene*, κdeest.

5 *Briefe*, volume 1, 305; *Letters*, 107.

6 *Briefe*, volume 1, 312; *Letters*, 112.

7 The full title page (folio 2 recto) reads: 'POESIE / DEL / SIGNOR ABATE / PIETRO METASTASIO / Giusta le correzioni fatte dall'Autore nell'Edizione / di Parigi, coll'aggiunta della NITTETI, / e del SOGNO, ultimamente date / alla luce dal medesimo. / TOMO PRIMO / [pictorial device] / IN TORINO, / NELLA STAMPERIA REALE. / MDCCLVII'. However, the opening *Lettera dell'Autore* is dated 9 March 1754, since, as indicated on the title page, the Turin edition is a revised and updated version of the Paris edition published in 1755. See, for example, the copy in the British Library, London, shelfmark 1479.aa.1.

8 Curiously enough, little is said about this in the surviving documents. In a letter of 7 May 1783 Mozart casually remarks that he has 'looked through at least a hundred libretti' in search of a suitable text (*Briefe*, volume 3, 268; *Letters*, 847). The inventory of his estate papers (*Dokumente*, 493–511; *Documents*, 587–591) lists, as item 40, 'Sechs Komödien Bände'.

9 On the personal library of the Mozarts see Cliff Eisen, 'The Mozarts' Salzburg Music Library', in *Mozart Studies* 2 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 85–138, especially 99–101. The evidence here seems to suggest that mostly single arias or aria collections were owned by the Mozarts, rather than complete operas. For complete opera settings held elsewhere in Salzburg see Cliff Eisen, 'Mozart e l'Italia: il ruolo di Salisburgo', *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 30/1 (1995), 51–84, especially 78–83 (note, for example, the settings of *Demetrio* and *Demofonte* by Ernst Eberlin dating from 1759–1760 (82), which were almost certainly known to the Mozarts). For evidence that there seems to have been an assumption that Metastasio's works were easily available in certain circles see Leopold's letter of 30 July 1768, in which he says: 'I asked someone to take any portion of the works of Metastasio, open the book and put before little Wolfgang the first aria he should hit upon' (*Briefe*, volume 1, 271; *Letters*, 89). The context here may have been rather specialized, though, since Leopold goes on to say that 'he did this at the houses of Kapellmeister Bonno, Abbate Metastasio, Hasse and the Duke de Braganza and Prince von Kaunitz'.

10 Leopold Mozart, in a letter of 15 December 1780, for example, writes, 'I have had a letter from Madame Duschek enclosing a text for an aria.' *Briefe*, volume 3, 57; *Letters*, 688. We do not know what this text was or whether Mozart ever set it.



What is clear is that by the time Mozart met Count Firmian in February 1770, he had already somehow acquired and set texts from Metastasio's *Ezio*,<sup>11</sup> *Demetrio*<sup>12</sup> and, above all, *Artaserse*. In fact, given the number of *Artaserse* settings by Mozart before 1770 – including *Conservati fedele*, κ23; *Per pietà, bell'idol mio*, κ78; and *O temerario Arbace* . . . *Per quel paterno amplesso*, κ73d (and the fragmentary setting κ73D) – we might pause to wonder whether this libretto had become something of an undeclared focus for his opera seria ambitions, perhaps dating back to the mid-1770s. Why this particular choice should have been made, though, and whether it was made in piecemeal fashion, setting by setting, or as an intended large project, is far from clear.

The possibility that, prior to 1770, Mozart had it in mind to set the text of *Artaserse* as a complete opera may, at first glance, seem to be supported by a number of factors. First, *Artaserse* was among the most popular librettos of its time,<sup>13</sup> and it would have been natural for Mozart to have wished to make his mark in such a popular arena. Moreover, it was not only the first opera text to be set both by J. C. Bach and by Gluck, but it was also the first Metastasio opera composed by Hasse.<sup>14</sup> Given that Mozart seems to have respected J. C. Bach, Gluck and Hasse above many other contemporary opera composers,<sup>15</sup> we might suppose that he would have wished to follow their models – though there is no direct evidence of this in the aria settings. Again, any 'large-project' hypothesis might also seem to be supported by Mozart's probable knowledge of Andrea Bernasconi's setting for Munich in 1763.<sup>16</sup> But we cannot as yet demonstrate a direct influence. And, although the Mozarts must have come across Arne's setting (published in 1763)<sup>17</sup> when they were in London, they clearly had little contact with Arne.<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand, the possibility that the *Artaserse* settings arose from piecemeal considerations is quite strong. First, the pre-1770 arias seem to have been taken at random from the libretto (Act 1 Scenes 1 and 5, Act 2 Scene 11) and are for three different characters (Mandane, Artaserse and Artabano). Second, it is difficult to link any particular singers known to Mozart at this time with these roles. For example, in spite of the documented friendly relations between the famous singer Giovanni Manzuoli and the Mozarts in London,<sup>19</sup> we should note that Manzuoli seems never to have sung a major role in any production of *Artaserse*<sup>20</sup> and his

11 *Va, dal furor portata*, κ21.

12 *Misero tu*, κ73A (now lost). See *Briefe*, volume 1, 309; *Letters*, 110.

13 For the surviving librettos of at least twenty-four versions of *Artaserse* performed between 1760 and 1770 see Claudio Sartori, *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800: catalogo analitico con 16 indici*, 7 volumes (Milan: Bertola and Locatelli, 1990–), volume 1, items 3041–3065.

14 Hasse, *Artaserse*: Venice, Teatro S. Giovanni Crisostomo, February 1730; Gluck, *Artaserse*: Milan, Teatro Regio Ducal, 26 December 1741; J. C. Bach, *Artaserse*: Turin, Teatro Regio, 26 December 1760.

15 For Mozart's view of J. C. Bach see his letter of 27 August 1778 (*Briefe*, volume 2, 458; *Letters*, 606); on Hasse see Leopold's letter of 30 July 1768 (*Briefe*, volume 1, 127; *Letters*, 88). Initially there was some suspicion of Gluck but Mozart's respect for his music is obvious from his letter of 24 October 1781 (*Briefe*, volume 3, 170–171; *Letters*, 775). Also a 'sketch' by Mozart from 1783 transmits a keyboard version of 'Non vi turbate, no' from Act 2 Scene 2 of the Italian version of Gluck's *Alceste*. See *NMA X/30/3*, ed. Ulrich Konrad (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1998), item 57A and the commentary, 31. Mozart's setting of another text from *Artaserse*, 'Se al labbro', κ295, has an indirect connection with Hasse. Its text is not by Metastasio, but probably by Salvi, who wrote the text for Hasse's *Arminio*, which Mozart then transplanted into his *Artaserse*. See Mozart's letter of 28 February 1778 (*Briefe*, volume 2, 304, and volume 5, 500; *Letters*, 496–497).

16 See Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, volume 1, item 3054. Mozart wrote the part of Ninetta in his *La finta semplice* in 1768 for Bernasconi's wife, Antonia.

17 Arne's *Artaserse* was premiered at Covent Garden on 2 February 1762.

18 Arne is not mentioned in the letters but he is listed in Leopold's 'travel notes' (see *Briefe*, volume 1, 194; *Leopold Mozart Reiseaufzeichnungen 1763–1771*, ed. Arthur Schurig (Dresden: Oscar Laube, 1920), 36). It is unlikely that the Mozarts were close to Arne, since they had to cancel a concert at short notice on 15 February 1765 when they discovered that it clashed with a performance of Arne's *Judith* (*Dokumente*, 40–41; *Documents*, 40–41).

19 See *Dokumente*, 55, 89; *Documents*, 56–57, 98.

20 He sang the part of Amore (from the Prologue) in Naples in 1738. See Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, volume 1, item 2954.



favourite composer, Giovanni Pescetti, never set the text.<sup>21</sup> More significantly, perhaps, two arias from Galuppi's 1761 version of *Artaserse*, 'Per pietà bell'idol mio' (Act 1 Scene 5) and 'Rendi mi il caro amico' (Act 2 Scene 1), survive in the Museum Carolino Augusteum, Salzburg.<sup>22</sup> Although there is no direct evidence that the Mozarts knew these copies, the probability that they did seems high, and it happens that Wolfgang wrote music for the first of these texts (as K78) in 1765 or 1766, which might well make it, given the uncertainties of exact dating for these works, his earliest setting from *Artaserse*.<sup>23</sup> Taking these factors together, it seems unlikely that Mozart's ambitions to write a complete Italian opera seria had coalesced into anything resembling a sustained, focused project before 1770.

The gift of the Metastasio edition made to Mozart by Count Firmian can hardly have been a spontaneous present. Rather, it must have indicated that Firmian had some knowledge of Mozart's operatic ambitions and was willing to support them. Moreover, Mozart must have been encouraged and enthused by Firmian's gift, and he seems to have used that collection for some time. (Assertions that the Turin edition of Metastasio's works is the one listed in the inventory of Mozart's possessions made in 1792 after his death seem to be mistaken, however.<sup>24</sup> It is the Venice edition of 1781 that is recorded in the inventory.<sup>25</sup>) What is clear is that during the rest of 1770 Mozart composed a substantial number of Metastasian arias, all of them – with one notable exception to be discussed later – on texts conforming to the standard versions reproduced in the Turin edition. In fact, of the concert arias known to have been written by Mozart in 1770, only one came from volume 1 (which contains *Artaserse*) and the rest from volume 3 (which contains *Demoföonte*).<sup>26</sup> These particular volumes have only three or four librettos apiece, while others have up to twelve, and they are among the least bulky of the collection. Since Leopold Mozart, in a letter of 25 August 1770 to his wife, writes that when he returns to Milan he will pick up 'a great many things which we left behind',<sup>27</sup> it seems possible that these two volumes were the only ones to accompany the Mozarts on their tour of Italy.

The Mozarts were in Milan for about seven weeks, but we first hear of the crucial 'audition' concert towards the end of their stay, in a letter from Leopold of 27 February 1770. He writes that Count Firmian wanted Mozart to take part in a 'large musical academy for the ladies in his house in the first week of Lent'.<sup>28</sup> This seems to have taken Leopold slightly by surprise, since he reports in the same letter that he had wanted to 'go off sooner' from Milan, and that, instead, Wolfgang was now 'busy composing two arias'. One explanation for this might be that Leopold had known about the concert for a week or two (perhaps since his meeting with Firmian on 7 February) but had expected it to be earlier – but, if so, why was Mozart only now busily composing? A more likely explanation is that neither Leopold nor Wolfgang realized before the end of February that they would be expected to give yet another concert, since they had already given a private recital at Firmian's house on 18 February in the presence of the Duke of Modena and his granddaughter, Princess Maria d'Este.<sup>29</sup> It must have seemed that they had done enough networking in Milan, hence their

21 On surviving Pescetti works in Salzburg see Eisen, 'The Mozarts' Salzburg Music Library', 109, 113. On Manzuoli's use of arias by Pescetti see Charles Burney, *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period*, ed. Frank Mercer, 2 volumes (London: Constable, 1957), volume 2, 868.

22 Eisen, 'The Mozarts' Salzburg Music Library', 117.

23 On the now accepted dating of this work to the 1760s see Alan Tyson, *Mozart: Studies of the Autograph Scores* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1987), 13.

24 See, for example, Eisen, 'The Mozarts' Salzburg Music Library', 123.

25 The inventory of his estate papers lists as item 39 'Opere del Sig. Metastasio. Tomo 1, 2, 4, 5. Venez. 781 [sic]' (*Dokumente*, 498; *Documents*, 589). The Venetian edition comprised seven volumes in all; what happened to the other three is not known. The fate of Mozart's Turin edition remains a mystery.

26 Volume 1 comprises *Artaserse*, *Adriano in Siria* and *Demetrio*, as well as Calzabigi's *Dissertazione* on Metastasio; volume 3 contains *La Clemenza di Tito*, *Siroe*, *Catone in Utica* and *Demoföonte*.

27 *Briefe*, volume 1, 384; *Letters*, 157–158.

28 *Briefe*, volume 1, 316; *Letters*, 115.

29 *Briefe*, volume 1, 315; *Letters*, 114.



surprise at this news of another concert and at what must have been a rather sudden request for newly composed arias. Presumably this had happened because at the recital on 18 February Firmian and the others had only heard Mozart play.<sup>30</sup>

If this reasoning is correct, then a definite decision had been taken to clarify the issue of Mozart's operatic skills. The concert took place as planned on Monday, 12 March 1770, again in the presence of the Duke of Modena and Princess Maria, but this time accompanied by 150 members of the nobility. The very next day we hear about the event from Leopold, who writes that it had been a great success and that Mozart had indeed been asked to write an opera for Milan, though the subject of the opera was, as yet, unknown.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, it seems possible that this concert may have led indirectly to a second commission: when Princess Maria d'Este later married Archduke Ferdinand, Mozart was asked to write *Ascanio in Alba* (K111) to celebrate the event<sup>32</sup> – a request that is unlikely to have been made unless the first encounter with his vocal music had been a favourable one.

The surviving documents confirm that the 12 March concert was designed precisely to scrutinize Mozart's operatic powers. A few days after the event, the *Notizie del mondo*, published in Florence, reported that on 'Monday evening at the palace of His Excellency Count Firmian there was a magnificent academy with vocal and instrumental music . . . At this academy, the young German who has been here for some time gave proof of his skill'.<sup>33</sup> Even more explicitly, Mozart himself wrote to his sister on 21 April 1770 about some arias 'which I had to compose in Milan [note the implied imperative] in order that the Milanese, who had heard none of my dramatic music, should see that I am capable of writing an opera'.<sup>34</sup>

Three days after the concert the Mozarts left Milan, but in a letter written from Bologna on 24 March Leopold makes it clear that 'the scrittura [contract] was drawn up in Count Firmian's house', presumably at their farewell meal with him on Wednesday, 15 March.<sup>35</sup> The same letter also tells us that it has been agreed that 'the prima donna and seconda donna are Signora Gabriella [Caterina Gabrieli] and her sister. The tenor is Signor Ettore . . . The primo uomo and others have not yet been chosen'. Ettore did sing in *Mitridate*, and we shall return to him later, but the Gabrielis withdrew from the opera at an early stage.<sup>36</sup>

Naturally there has been some speculation as to exactly which works by Mozart were performed at the crucial 12 March event. The first clue comes in a letter written by Leopold to his wife on 13 March in which he writes that Mozart 'had to compose for the concert held yesterday at Count Firmian's, three arias and a recitative with violins'.<sup>37</sup> Answering these questions will give us some idea of how widely, chronologically, we need to cast our net in search of suitable works.

The number cited by Leopold seems rather precise, as if he is reporting not only a final tally of pieces (he had mentioned only two arias in his letter of 27 February<sup>38</sup>) but also a clear arrangement designed to show the young composer's range. What is more, it is suggestive that, where programmes for Mozart's concerts survive, the number of new arias never exceeds three.<sup>39</sup> More significantly, three is exactly the number that

30 The account of the concert on 18 February says that the nobility are coming 'den Wolfgang zu hören' (*Briefe*, volume 1, 315); Anderson plausibly translates this as 'to hear Wolfgang play' (*Letters*, 114).

31 *Briefe*, volume 1, 320; *Letters*, 118.

32 *Briefe*, volume 1, 431; *Letters*, 193.

33 *Documents*, 18; *Dokumente*, 17.

34 'Welche ich in mailand componirn habe müssen, weil man gar nichts von theatralischen sachen von mir gehört hat, un daraus zu sehen das ich fähig bin eine opera zu schreiben' (*Briefe*, volume 1, 340; *Letters*, 130–131).

35 *Briefe*, volume 1, 325; *Letters*, 119.

36 Caterina Gabrieli got herself into conflicting contractual difficulties. See Barblan and della Corte, *Mozart in Italia*, 83, 100ff.

37 *Briefe*, volume 1, 320; *Letters*, 118.

38 *Briefe*, volume 1, 317; *Letters*, 116.

39 In Mozart's public recital at Mantua on 16 January 1770, for example, there were two symphonies and some improvised compositions (including a single aria, a harpsichord sonata, a fugue and an extemporised violin part to a trio), all by Mozart, as well as two arias and two concertos apparently by other composers; see *Dokumente*, 96–97; *Documents*, 106.



would have been required if Mozart were to demonstrate in a systematic way that he could write for the three major singers in an opera seria – the *prima donna* (a female soprano), the *primo uomo* (a castrato) and the *tenore* (who might play the role of a father or ruler). These three roles were the most expensive to fill, and their success or failure represented the greatest financial and social risk.<sup>40</sup> It seems likely that at least someone would have wondered whether Mozart could write music that would keep these types of singers happy and show them to the public in their best light.

If, however, we assume that there were more arias in the concert, we run into difficulties. First, as we have seen, the concert was probably planned late, so there was less than a fortnight to get ready and this in the middle of carnival time, when, among other things, Mozart and his father were obliged to go to the opera ‘six or seven times’.<sup>41</sup> Also, as the account of the concert in the *Notizie del mondo* shows, it contained instrumental works as well, some almost certainly by Mozart, which would have had to be prepared and rehearsed alongside the arias. Again, had Mozart included more than three arias, he would probably have had to use works not composed specifically for the concert, and since he must have known that it was a crucial test of his compositional maturity, it is perhaps unlikely that he would have used even fairly recent arias that did not have the benefit of his latest and rapidly developing understanding of the Italian style. Finally, his earlier works would, except in cases of lucky coincidence, have been written without any knowledge of the singers in the concert – a situation he usually took great pains to avoid.<sup>42</sup>

It seems probable, then, that Leopold’s enumeration of the arias in the concert was correct. The various speculations about which works were in it are set out in Table 1. The first two candidates suggested in the sixth edition of the Köchel catalogue and Deutsch’s documentary biography<sup>43</sup> – *Per pietà*, K78, and *O temerario Arbace*, K79 – have now been shown by Alan Tyson’s study of the watermarks in the autographs to have been written probably around 1766, long before the Milan event.<sup>44</sup> As a result, they are generally excluded from the concert, and the consensus now seems to be that the three vocal compositions in the Milan concert were *Misero tu* from *Demetrio* K73A; the recitative and aria *Misero me . . . Misero pargoletto*, K77, from *Demofonte*; and *Fra cento affanni*, K88, from Metastasio’s *Artaserse*.

This precise configuration of works, although superficially plausible, begins to look rather unlikely upon closer investigation. First, there is *Misero tu* from *Demetrio*. Unfortunately this composition is now lost, so we cannot consult the autograph (or any other musical source) in order to gather precise evidence for its dating or whether there might have been more than one stage in its composition, perhaps involving revised

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Again, the tremendously grand concert Mozart gave for the Emperor in Vienna on 23 March 1783 contained at least twelve Mozart compositions, including the following vocal works: Giunia’s aria No. 16 from *Lucio Silla*; Ilia’s aria No. 11 from *Idomeneo*; the scena and aria *Misera, dove son! . . . Ah! Non son’io che parlo*, K369; and the recitative and rondo *Mia speranza adorata . . . Ah, non sai qual pena*, K416; see *Briefe*, volume 3, 261–262; *Letters*, 843; *Dokumente*, 189; *Documents*, 213. Not one of these arias was composed specifically for the concert. For Mozart to compose three new concert arias for a single event (and not in aid of a particular performer, but apparently at the request of a patron) is unique, and underscores the exact nature of the test in Milan.

40 See, for example, the discussion in Kathleen Hansell, ‘Mozart’s Milanese Theatrical Works’, in *Music in Theatre, Church and Villa: Essays in Honor of Robert Lamar Weaver and Norma Wright Weaver*, ed. Susan Parisi (Warren, MI: Harmonie Park, 2000), 198–199.

41 Letter from Mozart to his sister, 3 March 1770 (*Briefe*, volume 1, 319; *Letters*, 117).

42 See, for example, the remarks of Leopold Mozart in the letter of 24 November 1770, in which he says that Mozart is waiting for the singer to arrive before composing more so that he can ‘fit the costume to his figure’ (*Briefe*, volume 1, 405; *Letters*, 171). Compare Wolfgang’s assertion in a letter to his father dated 28 February 1778 that he likes an aria ‘to fit a singer as perfectly as a well-made suit of clothes’ (*Briefe*, volume 2, 304; *Letters*, 497). In a small number of early cases, however, he seems to have written aria settings for practice, without any particular singer in mind – or, at least, without any particular singer’s voice as the primary factor governing his compositional choices. Such an instance might well be represented by his setting of *Misero tu* from *Demetrio*, K73A, to be discussed shortly.

43 See *Dokumente*, 100; *Documents*, 110. Both sources state that ‘nothing further’ is known about the event.

44 Tyson, *Mozart: Studies of the Autograph Scores*, 13.





Table 1 Previous suggestions regarding the contents of the Milan concert, 12 March 1770

Work	Notes	Köchel, 6th Edition (1964)	O. Deutsch (1961; 1966)	<i>Briefe</i> (1962– 1975)	<i>Letters</i> (3/1985)	Eisen (1991; 1997)
κ78/73b 'Per pietà' <i>Artaserse</i> , Act 1 Scene 5: <i>Artaserse</i> ( <i>secondo uomo</i> )	Tyson watermark Anhang II Hague c1766	*	*			
κ79/73d 'O temerario . . . Per quel paterno' <i>Artaserse</i> , Act 1 Scene 11: <i>Artabano, Arbace</i> ( <i>tenore</i> and <i>primo uomo</i> )	Tyson watermark Anhang II Hague c1766 recit. and aria	*	*			
κ88/73c 'Fra cento affanni' <i>Artaserse</i> , Act 1 Scene 2: <i>Arbace</i> ( <i>primo uomo</i> )	Tyson watermark Italian 1770 ?after 19 March	*	*	*	*	*
κ77/73e 'Misero me . . . misero pargoletto' <i>Demofònte</i> , Act 3 Scenes 4 and 5: <i>Timante</i> ( <i>primo uomo</i> )	Tyson watermark 16 Italian 1770 recit. and aria	*	*	*	*	*
κA2/73A 'Misero tu' <i>Demetrio</i> , Act 1 Scene 4: <i>Barsene</i> ( <i>seconda donna</i> )	Lost See letter of 26 January 1770			*	*	*

versions. We know of its existence from a letter Mozart wrote to his sister from Milan on 26 January 1770,<sup>45</sup> in which he says, according to the standard translation of the letters by Anderson, that he has 'just composed' the piece. The German here, however, is *verfertigt* – 'finished', or 'made ready' – and this suggests that he

45 *Briefe*, volume 1, 309; *Letters*, 110.



may have been working on the aria since Mantua, where, as he implies in the same letter, he was inspired to set the text (which he writes out in full) when he heard Hasse's *Demetrio* there on 10 January.

What is clear is that Mozart's aria was not composed specifically for the Milan concert and so does not meet Leopold's description. Moreover, since the Mozarts had been in Milan for only four days when *Misero tu* was 'composed',<sup>46</sup> the aria could not have been written with the knowledge of which singers were to be asked to perform in the March concert. Nor, at the time of the concert, would it have represented Mozart's latest understanding of style and compositional technique. Also, *Misero tu* comes from Act 1 Scene 4 of *Demetrio*<sup>47</sup> and is assigned to Barsene (the female confidante of Princess Cleonice), a subsidiary role sung by the *seconda donna*: at the very least this would have been a slightly odd choice for inclusion among just three items designed to show that Mozart could meet the greatest challenges that opera seria had to offer. We may suppose that Mozart simply liked Hasse's setting of *Misero tu* when he heard it in Mantua and was immediately tempted to try out his own skills on the same words, but this need have had no bearing on later events in Milan.

The candidacy of *Misero tu* for inclusion in the March concert is weak, and not only for the reasons adduced so far. It also happens to be a work that falls into the general category of 'concert' aria because we do not know where else to put it, though the information we have suggests that it was, in fact, a 'practice' aria written primarily to develop Mozart's compositional skills. There is clear evidence for Mozart's doing this kind of thing in a letter of 28 February 1778, in which he writes: 'For practice I have also set to music the aria *Non so d'onde viene*, etc. which has been so beautifully composed by [J. C.] Bach. Just because I know Bach's setting so well and liked it so much, and because it is always ringing in my ears, I wished to see whether in spite of all this I could not write an aria totally unlike his.'<sup>48</sup> This, of course, provides something of a musicological warning: the direct models for Mozart's works will not always be discernible in the contours of his music, since it was part of his competitive nature to write *against* his models. Moreover, Mozart explains in the same letter that although he began the work by vaguely having the voice of Anton Raaff in mind, he later had no qualms about adapting it for Aloysia Weber (in which form it survives as K294). Later still he reset the same words for the famous bass Johann Ludwig Fischer (K512). In cases such as these, the journey from initial musical conception to eventual performance (if any) can be tortuous indeed. We may suppose that the link between Mozart's *Misero tu* from *Demetrio* and any particular performance, let alone the Milan concert on 12 March, is likely to have been tenuous.

Then there is the case of the recitative and aria *Misero me . . . Misero pargoletto*. The remarkable accompanied recitative section alone is 130 bars long and, together with the aria, forms a tragic episode from Act 3 Scenes 4 and 5 of Metastasio's *Demofonte*, where the *primo uomo*, Timante, gives vent to his feelings of despair.<sup>49</sup> Taken as a whole, it is the longest concert aria ever written by Mozart, 243 bars. It would have made an impressive central feature for the Milan concert and its accompanied recitative fits nicely with Leopold's description of a 'recitative with strings'. Moreover, its autograph is on a paper type which is Italian and which Alan Tyson assigns to this exact period.<sup>50</sup> In fact Tyson's reasoning here may be somewhat circular since the paper is assigned to this period partly because of the supposed date of composition of K77. Even so, it is rather hard to imagine why Mozart would have written a composition with such a long and complex introductory accompanied recitative unless it was a kind of demonstration piece simulating, as it were, a real operatic situation, rather than functioning as an ordinary concert work.

There is another factor which suggests that the recitative and aria would have been a particularly suitable choice for the concert. Volume 1 of the Turin edition of Metastasio's works – the edition owned by Mozart – includes Ranieri Calzabigi's long *Dissertazione* on the poet. Calzabigi singles out just two of Metastasio's

46 The Mozarts arrived in Milan on 23 January; see *Briefe*, volume 1, 305; *Letters*, 107.

47 Pietro Metastasio, *Demetrio*, in *Poesie del Signor Abate Pietro Metastasio* (Turin, 1757), volume 1, 213–214.

48 *Briefe*, volume 2, 304; *Letters*, 497.

49 Metastasio, *Demofonte*, in *Poesie del Signor Abate Pietro Metastasio*, volume 3, 421–425.

50 Alan Tyson, *Wasserzeichen-Katalog: Textband*, NMA X/33/2 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1992), 8 (watermark 16).





works as containing 'to the highest degree, the essential ingredients of Tragedy': the first of these is *Demoföonte* and the second *Issipile*.<sup>51</sup> For any composer working in 1770, the better known of these pieces by far was *Demoföonte*, which had attracted many more settings than the latter text.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, during the course of his discussion of *Demoföonte* Calzabigi pauses to muse at some length upon the power and effectiveness of precisely the recitative *Misero me* and the aria *Misero pargoletto*, and he quotes their texts in full.<sup>53</sup> This treatment must have made these items seem particularly appropriate vehicles to both Mozart and his sponsor Count Firmian for testing a young composer's musical and dramatic skills. Taking all of these circumstances together, it seems almost certain that *Misero me* and *Misero pargoletto* did indeed form the centrepiece of the 12 March concert. Moreover, the high praise given by Calzabigi to *Demoföonte* perhaps helps to explain why Mozart was motivated to set so many texts from that particular libretto.<sup>54</sup>

The question now arises as to who might have sung *Misero pargoletto*. In fact, Mozart actually writes in a letter of 5 June 1770 that 'Aprile . . . sang in Milan',<sup>55</sup> a reference to the famous castrato Giuseppe Aprile. However, the event referred to is not specified and we do know that the Mozarts happened to hear him in a church service just after they arrived in the city.<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, the reference in the June letter is in the context of a discussion of opera. Aprile was a well-known *primo uomo* and Mozart's aria was written for such a role. Also, the active mode of description in the phrase 'sang in Milan' ('zu mailand gesungen hat'), rather than a more passive expression such as 'we heard him in Milan', seems to suggest something formally arranged, rather than a chance encounter.

The vocal characteristics of Mozart's setting of Timante's aria *Misero pargoletto* are fairly distinct. It has a slightly restricted vocal range, a very specific 'centre of gravity' around the C an octave above middle C and a basically lyrical rather than vigorous demeanour and it employs the highest notes only sparingly. It is interesting to note that in the very same year as the Milan concert Giuseppe Aprile was described by Charles Burney as having a restricted voice, but as singing 'with much taste and expression'. Moreover, Burney made these observations in relation to Aprile's performance as Timante in another setting of *Demoföonte*, that by Jommelli given in Naples.<sup>57</sup> Aprile had attracted acclaim in the role of Timante in an even earlier version of

51 In the Turin edition the *Dissertazione di Ranieri De'Calzabigi dell'Accademia di Cortona, sul le poesie drammatiche del Sig. Abate Pietro Metastasio* appears in volume 1, iii–ccxiv. The discussion of *Demoföonte* and *Issipile* begins on lxxxv, where he says: 'I will pause on Demoföonte and on Issipile, in which I will find, meanwhile, having considered [the matter], to the highest degree the essential ingredients of Tragedy' (mi fermerò sul Demoföonte, e sull'Issipile, nel che fare mi troverò in un tempo stesso aver ponderata la parte sommamente essenziale della Tragedia).

52 Between 1760 and 1770 there were nine new settings of *Demoföonte* (almost one in every year) and only two of *Issipile* (in 1761 and 1766). See Don Neville, 'Metastasio', *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1992), volume 3, 355–356. Neville's list probably gives a good account of those performances most likely to have come to the attention of Mozart. A more complete list, including performances in Copenhagen and Malta as well as repeat performances of earlier settings, can be found in Sartori, *I libretti italiani*. Sartori lists eighteen performances for *Demoföonte* between 1760 and 1770 (volume 2, nos 7531–7548) and just four for *Issipile* (volume 3, nos 13923–13926).

53 The text of the recitative *Misero me* is quoted on xcii–xciii and that of the aria *Misero pargoletto* on xciv.

54 That both Mozart and his father respected Calzabigi is clear from Leopold's remarks on the librettist in a letter of 12 February 1778 (*Briefe*, volume 2, 275; *Letters*, 476). Also, Mozart set Calzabigi's *Popoli di Tessaglia* . . . *Io non chiedo*, κ316, for Aloysia Weber in 1778–1779. In addition to *Misero me* . . . *Misero pargoletto*, Mozart's settings from *Demoföonte* include *Ah più tremar*, κ71; *Se ardire e speranza*, κ82; *Se tutti i mali miei*, κ83; perhaps *Non curo l'affetto*, κ74b (though the work may be spurious); the recitative and aria *Ma che vi fece* . . . *Sperai vicino*, κ368; and *In te spero*, κ440. More music was composed by Mozart for *Demoföonte* than for most of his fragmentary stage works, including *Thamos, König in Ägypten*, κ345; *L'oca del Cairo*, κ422; and *Lo sposo deluso*, κ430. The combined length of the *Demoföonte* settings also exceeds that of the music written for *Der Schauspieldirektor*, κ486.

55 *Briefe*, volume 1, 358; *Letters*, 143.

56 *Briefe*, volume 1, 310; *Letters*, 111.

57 Charles Burney, *Music, Men and Manners in France and Italy, 1770*, ed. H. Edmund Poole (London: Eulenburg, 1974), 186.



Jommelli's opera given in Stuttgart in 1764.<sup>58</sup> Not only is the musical style of Mozart's *Misero pargoletto* similar to Jommelli's earlier setting,<sup>59</sup> but the range of Jommelli's aria is from middle C to the A almost two octaves above, and Mozart's from middle C to the B♭. Given that the two settings are in different keys, this is about as close as they could get. In both cases, the highest notes are used only very briefly, once or twice, and the preferred tessitura reflected in the two pieces is virtually identical. If Aprile 'sang in Milan' in Mozart's concert, then *Misero pargoletto* is the work he must have performed.

Exactly the same vocal characteristics – a range from middle C to top B♭ with the highest note appearing only twice and with almost no semiquaver activity – appear in another aria written by Mozart for the character of Timante, *Se ardire e speranza*, K82. We first hear of this composition in a note that Mozart wrote to his sister from Rome on 21 April 1770.<sup>60</sup> The information that he is writing this aria for Timante comes in a sentence immediately following one in which he reports that he has recommended 'a text by Metastasio' for his opera in Milan. It is hard not to conclude that, at this stage, the text Mozart had in mind was Metastasio's *Demoföonte* (as we have seen, it was probably one of the few Metastasio texts he had with him on his travels) and that, given the vocal characteristics of *Se ardire*, he might have hoped that the *primo uomo* would be Giuseppe Aprile, presumably because he had sung in the audition for the opera commission.

At least two other performance contexts have been suggested for *Se ardire*. One is that it was intended not for Aprile but for Giovanni Manzuoli, who is mentioned in the same letter as the aria and said to be negotiating with the Milanese to sing in Mozart's forthcoming opera.<sup>61</sup> This sounds promising, and Mozart specifically says that he 'should wish' (*wünschte*) that Manzuoli could take a part in his new opera, since he is a good friend. But the exact wording may be significant here ('wish' rather than 'like' – though the Anderson translation says 'like'), particularly in the context of what we know about Manzuoli's vocal abilities at the time. Just a year later, in 1771, he sang the title role in *Ascanio in Alba*: a contralto castrato, his preferred tessitura was a good four or five notes lower than that represented by *Se ardire*. Mozart heard Manzuoli sing in Florence,<sup>62</sup> and so, coincidentally, did Charles Burney in the same year, describing him as less powerful than when he had been in England (Manzuoli was at least fifty years old and approaching retirement).<sup>63</sup> Mozart was friendly towards the singer but we may doubt that he would have been Mozart's honest first choice as *primo uomo*. When Manzuoli sang in *Ascanio in Alba*, Mozart, rather uncharacteristically, made no reference at all to his singing in his letters and discussed only his behaviour, which 'in his old age has given the world a sample of his stupidity and conceit'.<sup>64</sup>

A second suggestion is that *Se ardire* might have been intended as an insertion aria in Johann Vanhal's setting of *Demoföonte* in Rome in 1770.<sup>65</sup> This is intriguing, but the music to Vanhal's opera (if it was ever written) is lost, and one would need to explain why there is absolutely no mention of its performance anywhere in the Mozart letters, particularly in the letter where Mozart tells us that he is writing the aria. In any case, Vanhal's *Demoföonte* performance was apparently a premiere, and insertion arias were not

58 Niccolò Jommelli, *Demoföonte*, with an introduction by Howard Mayer Brown (facsimile edition, New York and London: Garland, 1978). Apart from the Stuttgart performance, Aprile had previously sung the role of Timante in 1757 in Rome and 1758 in Mantua and was about to sing it again (in 1770) in Naples, where he was heard by Burney. For details of Aprile's performances see Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, volume 7, Index.

59 Jommelli, *Demoföonte*, Act 3, 22ff, 46ff.

60 *Briefe*, volume 1, 340; *Letters*, 131.

61 See, for example, *The Complete Mozart: A Guide to the Musical Works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*, ed. Neal Zaslaw and William Cowdrey (New York and London: Norton, 1990), 75.

62 *Briefe*, volume 1, 339; *Letters*, 130.

63 Burney, *Music, Men and Manners in France and Italy*, 114, 128.

64 24 November 1771. *Briefe*, volume 1, 451; *Letters*, 207.

65 See David Wyn Jones in the booklet accompanying the recording of the concert arias in the *Complete Mozart Edition*, volume 23, Philips 422 523–2 (1991), 82. In fact Jones is careful not to make the suggestion directly: he merely states that the composition of *Se ardire* 'coincided' with the premiere of Vanhal's *Demoföonte*.



ordinarily introduced at premieres.<sup>66</sup> Taking all of the evidence together, we might well suppose that *Misero pargoletto* and *Se ardire* were intended for the same singer and that, if so, he is likely to have been Giuseppe Aprile.

There is only one other work that shares the same paper type as the recitative and aria *Misero me . . . Misero pargoletto*, and that is *Fra cento affanni*.<sup>67</sup> Many have been more than happy to allocate this work to the Milan concert, not least because the autograph manuscript bears the inscription (if in a hand other than Mozart's) 'Aria di Amadeo Wolfgang Mozart. 1770 à Milano'.<sup>68</sup> Here, though, we should be cautious. The aria comes from Act 1 Scene 2 of *Artaserse* and is sung by Arbace,<sup>69</sup> another *primo uomo* role, making it the second of its kind in the usual list of suggested arias. The music for this composition is spectacular, clearly exceeding in length and difficulty any other aria allocated to the concert by any scholar to date. Comparing *Fra cento* with the aria *Misero pargoletto*, we find that the latter is 109 bars long, with only two top Bs and no semiquaver runs, whereas the former is 195 bars long (without the da capo repeat), with ten top Cs, nineteen top Bs and no fewer than twenty-four bars of semiquaver runs. But even beyond its greater length and the rather different character of its text, it is clear that a totally different level of musicianship is required to perform *Fra cento*: it would easily, and awkwardly, have outshone the aria from *Demofonte* had it been in the same concert. The singer of *Fra cento* could hardly have been at ease with the markedly lower tessitura of *Misero pargoletto* and this tends to undermine any theory that the concert might have been built, for the sake of convenience, around performances by a single *primo uomo* singer. Indeed, if we wish to say that *Fra cento* and *Misero pargoletto* were both in the concert, then we have to suppose that Count Firmian was willing to employ not one but two expensive castrato singers for the event.

But if we are to get further with the arguments about *Fra cento affanni*, we need to consider a detail of its orchestration. It is accompanied by an orchestra which not only has the usual strings and wind but also has two trumpets. This may seem a minor point, but three separate issues arise from their presence on this occasion. First, the trumpets in *Fra cento* do not have any noteworthy material of their own and they play in only a few bars of the piece. This may be significant: if the trumpeters were just sitting in the orchestra at the Milan concert, making only a routine contribution to *Fra cento*, then they were almost certainly part of the regular establishment there and not specially gifted players imported only for that aria. The question then arises: why were they not similarly employed in the other arias?

One answer to this might be that the other arias in the event were not suitable for the use of trumpets, because their texts were reflective rather than pompous or strident. Certainly, if we take the traditional suggestions about the content of the concert as set out in Table 1, then that would be true, and this may be the reason this issue has never been raised before. But, at the risk of anticipating the conclusion to this article,

66 David Wyn Jones made this point to me in a private communication. Of course, on occasion a singer might interpolate a 'suitcase aria' even into the premiere of a work, as Guglielmo d'Ettore did at the first performance of Mozart's *Mitridate*. The evidence for there being a Vanhal version of *Demofonte* in Rome in 1770 is in any case not strong. The claim was first made in an anonymous necrology published in *Vaterländische Blätter für den Österreichischen Kaiserstaat* (Vienna: Anton Strauss, 1813), volume 2 (July–December), 476–478. It was repeated in G. J. Dlabacz's account of Vanhal in his *Künstler-Lexikon* (Vienna, 1815). For reproductions and translations of these original documents see Paul Bryan, *Johann Wanhal: Viennese Symphonist, His Life and His Musical Environment*, Thematic Catalogues Series 23 (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon, 1997), 8, 18. No surviving libretto for this supposed performance is recorded in Sartori's *I libretti italiani*.

67 Tyson, *Wasserzeichen-Katalog: Textband*, 8 (watermark 16).

68 Ludwig von Köchel, *Chronologisch-thematisches Verzeichnis sämtlicher Tonwerke Wolfgang Amade Mozarts* (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1862; second edition 1905, ed. P. Graf von Walderssee; third edition, ed. Alfred Einstein (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1937; reprinted with supplement 1947; reprinted 1958, 1963); sixth edition revised and edited Franz Giegling, Alexander Weinmann and Gerd Sievers (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1964; reprinted 1965, 1983), 98–99.

69 Metastasio, *Artaserse*, in *Poesie del Signor Abate Pietro Metastasio*, volume 1, 14–15.



the likely candidates for participation in the event make it improbable that text content was the reason for the isolated use of trumpets in *Fra cento*.

A somewhat more intriguing possibility would be that there were no trumpets available in Milan at the time, and that this is the reason the other arias do not use them. If this were the case, since *Fra cento* requires standard trumpet players, it could not have been written for that orchestra in that concert. But at first glance this argument will not do, either, since the orchestra of the Teatro Regio Ducal (as the opera house was called before La Scala was built in 1778) did indeed have two trumpets in 1770.<sup>70</sup>

There is, in any case, a complicating factor here, concerning the probable venue of the concert. The March event was essentially a private gathering, or ‘academy’, at the ‘palace’, as we learn from the description of it in the *Notizia del mondo*.<sup>71</sup> In fact there were two palaces associated with Firmian in Milan: the Palazzo Melzi on the via Fatebenefratelli (effectively Firmian’s home) and the official Palazzo Reale (Royal Palace), adjacent to the Cathedral.<sup>72</sup> Of these two palaces, it was the latter to which the Teatro Regio Ducal was attached,<sup>73</sup> and the question remains as to which of the two is the more likely to have been the scene of the concert. Leopold Mozart writes that the concert took place in what he specifically calls Count Firmian’s ‘Hause’;<sup>74</sup> which probably implies his normal place of residence rather than the official court centre. Moreover, in a letter from 26 January 1770, Leopold informs his wife that, in Milan, he is staying in the Augustinian monastery of San Marco ‘near His Excellency Count Firmian’.<sup>75</sup> Both the monastery and the Palazzo Melzi were on the via Fatebenefratelli, about two hundred metres apart, whereas the Palazzo Reale (with its theatre) was about three-quarters of a mile away.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, when the Mozarts returned to Milan later in the year, Leopold wrote on 27 October 1770 that he was now staying ‘rather a long way from Count Firmian’s house, but this time we have to be near the theatre’.<sup>77</sup> In fact, whenever Leopold uses the term ‘Hause’ (or one of its cognates) in relation to Firmian, and we are able to deduce exactly where he means, it always refers to the Palazzo Melzi.

Taking all of the evidence together, then, we can probably conclude that the March concert was given at the Palazzo Melzi, some way from the theatre. Even so, the *Notizia del mondo* also tells us that the concert was a ‘magnificent’ event with ‘many’ members of the nobility, and with instrumental music as well as vocal, so the trumpets, along with most of the theatre orchestra, could have been transported for the evening to the Palazzo Melzi. What this means is that the absence of trumpets from the other arias in the concert does not, on its own, rule out *Fra cento* from the concert, since the brass could still have been gainfully employed during the instrumental works, or for ceremonial duties. We must look for other ways to further our argument.

The second and third issues connected with the brass instruments in *Fra cento affanni* are more problematic and depend for their resolution on a much wider contextual study than can be provided here. The second concerns the fact that, as it turns out, this work is the only ‘concert’ aria in Mozart’s entire output that does employ trumpets: all of the other ‘free-standing’ arias that employ these instruments are, in fact, insertion arias for operas.<sup>78</sup> Mozart never wrote a setting of *Artaserse* (though he did compose four arias from

70 See Table 12.6 in Hansell, ‘Mozart’s Milanese Theatrical Works’, 210.

71 *Documents*, 18; *Dokumente*, Addenda, 17.

72 See Harrison James Wignall, *In Mozart’s Footsteps: A Travel Guide* (New York: Ha’penny Press, 1991), 244–247. See also Wignall, ‘Mozart, Guglielmo d’Ettore and the Composition of *Mitridate*’, 110–125.

73 Hansell, ‘Mozart’s Milanese Theatrical Works’, 199.

74 *Briefe*, volume 1, 320; *Letters*, 118. In a letter of 26 December 1772 Leopold also refers to Firmian’s ‘Hause’ (twice) in relation to some seasonal gatherings; see *Briefe*, volume 1, 470; *Letters*, 222.

75 *Briefe*, volume 1, 308; *Letters*, 108.

76 The monastery of San Marco is still on the via Fatebenefratelli, but the Palazzo Melzi was bombed by the allies in 1943; on the site today is the Hotel Cavour. See Wignall, *In Mozart’s Footsteps*, 245.

77 *Briefe*, volume 1, 399; *Letters*, 167.

78 *Or che il dover . . . Tali e cotanti sono*, K36 (a licenza, sung at the end of a theatrical presentation in Salzburg); *No, che non sei capace*, K419 (for Anfossi’s *Il curioso indiscreto*); *Rivolgete a lui lo sguardo*, K584 (for *Così fan tutte*); and *Per queste due manine*, K540b (for *Don Giovanni*).



Metastasio's libretto),<sup>79</sup> but *Fra cento affanni* might possibly have been intended for inclusion in a setting by someone else. We shall return to this possibility shortly.

The third issue concerns the 'hierarchical' use of trumpets in opera arias. There is good evidence from the many variant versions of the arias that Mozart had to write later that year for *Mitridate* that the presence or absence of trumpets in the orchestration was closely linked to the importance of the character being portrayed, together with the status of the singer – and that, only after these things had been taken into account, did the actual text also play a role.<sup>80</sup> For example, the original versions of 'In faccia all'oggetto' and 'Son reo', for Ismene and Farnace respectively (both secondary characters), do have trumpets, but these have been removed in the final versions. By contrast, the opening aria for the *prima donna*, 'Al destin che la minaccia', was originally set in a reflective mood in the key of G without trumpets, but Mozart was clearly pressured in some way to reset the piece in a defiant mood, slightly out of keeping with its text, in the key of C with trumpets. The implications of all this for the singers in the Milan concert, and for the various roles they portrayed, can only be guessed at.

Taking the evidence so far, we might sum up the situation as follows: if we accept that *Fra cento* and *Misero tu* were in the concert with *Misero pargoletto*, then we have to accept that Mozart had brass instruments at his disposal but probably used them only once (the music of the aria from *Demetrio* is lost, but its allocation to a secondary character, and the nature of the text, make the use of trumpets extremely unlikely); that he thought it would be appropriate to combine two *primo uomo* pieces with one *seconda donna* work; that such a demonstration would require two castrato singers, not one; that he was willing to overshadow what was probably the centrepiece presentation of an accompanied recitative and aria with another work of great length; that there is some special reason why *Fra cento* is the only concert aria in Mozart's entire output to use trumpets; and that nobody minded that their use might stir up complex professional rivalries between the singers in what was essentially a private concert.

None of this, of course, proves that *Fra cento affanni* was *not* performed at the Milan concert but there is one further piece of evidence that might just tip the balance in favour of that conclusion. Three days after the Milan concert, Leopold and Mozart left the city and set off again on their travels. By Tuesday, 20 March, they had arrived in Parma, where they stayed for three days.<sup>81</sup> Here they met the singer Lucrezia Agujari (or Aguiari), who lived with Giuseppe Colla, an established composer of operas. Agujari performed for the Mozarts and Leopold described the event in his letter of 24 March 1770.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, Wolfgang was so taken with the extraordinary range and agility of her voice that he wrote down her vocal passages while they were still fresh in his mind, in a postscript to his father's letter.

The autograph of this letter is lost but the text was printed in Nissen's 1828 biography of Mozart, together with the music.<sup>83</sup> It has been reproduced many times, but often with minor variations in pitch and slur marks (especially in the first two phrases) and slightly differing representations of the trills.<sup>84</sup> Additionally, Nissen prints the example in the G clef but states it was originally written in the C (soprano) clef,<sup>85</sup> so it is often

79 *Conservati fedele; Per pietà, bell'idol mio; Fra cento affanni; and O temerario Arpace . . . Per quel paterno amplesso.*

80 My discussion of the hierarchical use of trumpets owes much to Daniel Hertz, *Haydn, Mozart and the Viennese School, 1740–1780* (New York and London: Norton, 1995), 545ff.

81 See the letter dated 20 March 1770 from Guglielmo du Tillot in Parma to Count Firmian confirming that 'Sig. Leopoldo Mozart has presented himself to me' (*Dokumente*, 101; *Documents*, 111). See also Barblan and Della Corte, *Mozart in Italia*, 75.

82 See *Briefe*, volume 1, 323–327; *Letters*, 119–122. Agujari's music is reproduced in *Briefe*, volume 1, 324, and *Letters*, 121–122. Giuseppe Colla is not mentioned in the letters, but he appears in Leopold's travel notes for Parma, published in *Briefe*, volume 1, 322–323 (also see Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, volume 5, item 25187).

83 Georg Nikolaus von Nissen, *Biographie W. A. Mozarts* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1828), 184–186.

84 See for example the garbled version in Gaspare Nello Vetro, *Lucrezia Agujari, la 'Bastardella'* (Parma: Edizioni Zara, 1993), 20. Nello Vetro compounds the few errors that already existed in the source for his music example, which was Barblan and Della Corte, *Mozart in Italia*, 228–229.

85 Nissen, *Biographie W. A. Mozarts*, 186.



transcribed back. What is interesting about Agujari's music is that every single one of its four long phrases seems to find a direct echo, at the same pitch, in Mozart's *Fra cento affanni* (see Example 1).

Visually, the resemblances between the two pieces of music are hard to miss: the underlying musical frames are alike (especially the shaping of the first Mozart section and the placement of melodic high points throughout), the melodic diminutions are closely matched (particularly in fragments two and four),<sup>86</sup> and the sheer number of correspondences in key (both begin in G major and gravitate to C major) is itself compelling. There are other reasons to suggest that these resemblances are more than coincidental. First, although some of the phrases in Mozart's aria seem conventional, they simply cannot be found in his other arias from the same period; indeed, only the approach to the cadence on G in the second section (bars 67–69) seems to have an exact equivalent elsewhere – and that is from an aria written some thirteen years later.<sup>87</sup> Second, where Mozart's aria seems to have only an approximate relation to Agujari's music, such approximations can easily be explained as compositional rationalizations of the singer's ornamentation. In Mozart's bars 86–87, for example, the steady, rising quaver oscillations can be seen as a formalized version of the ascending trill in the Agujari, rather precisely corresponding to Charles Burney's description of her shake as 'open and perfect'.<sup>88</sup> Third, there is the question of the exact point in Mozart's aria where these apparent 'quotations' have been placed. It may be significant that *Fra cento affanni* is one of the earliest concert arias by Mozart to employ a 'dal segno' da capo that eliminates the opening section of the vocal entry as well as the initial instrumental ritornello: this manoeuvre ensures that the start of the da capo section in *Fra cento* coincides exactly with the point where the music is modelled on the opening of Agujari's vocal *passaggi* and where it is able, because of the move away from C major, to be in the same key as its model, G major. Whether this was a conscious or unconscious move on Mozart's part is not clear.

Finally, there is an intriguing contextual clue to a possible connection between Mozart's aria and Agujari's music. Leopold writes in his letter of 24 March 1770 that the passages which Wolfgang had written down 'occurred in her aria'. We do not know what aria this was but it may be possible to make some guesses about it. After all, it was clearly an 'aria di bravura' of some kind and of a type that we know was normally used to express pride, revenge or anger. Also, the passages presumably came towards the end of the aria, where their extreme range and difficulty would have provided a fitting climax. Again, we might suppose that if the similarities between Mozart's and Agujari's music are not merely accidental, then there must have been something about the process of setting *Fra cento affanni* that triggered an association in Mozart's mind. An obvious place to start such an investigation would seem to be with the text itself.

In fact, of the four passages in Example 1 from Mozart's aria, the first sets the opening two lines of stanza 1 ('Fra cento affanni e cento / palpito, tremo e sento'), the third sets the third line ('Che freddo dalle vene'), and the other two – highly ornamented – both serve to emphasize the fourth line ('Fugge il mio sangue al cor'). When Mozart reproduced Agujari's music in his postscript to Leopold's letter (so far as we can tell from the version transmitted in Nissen's biography), he did not provide the text that she sang. However, it may be possible to identify some likely contenders, since we know quite a lot about Agujari's career before she met Mozart. Her early roles included Dircea in *Demofonte* (1764 and 1765), Fulvia in *Ezio* (1765), Berenice in *Antigono* (1765), Beroe in *La Nitteti* (1766), Cleonice in *Demetrio* (1766), Cleofide in *Alessandro nell'Indie* (1766), Cleopatra in *Tigrane* (1767), Ipermestra in *Ipermestra* (1767) and a series of non-heroic roles in various *pastorali* in 1768 and 1769.<sup>89</sup> It turns out that of all these roles, the only one containing a text remotely close

86 Very little work seems to have been done on the various categories of written-out vocal diminutions that Mozart employed to decorate any given harmony. For some brief, impressionistic remarks on the subject see Christoph-Hellmut Mahling, "'... new and altogether special and astonishingly difficult': Some Comments on Junia's Aria in *Lucio Silla*", in *Wolfgang Amadè Mozart: Essays on his Life and his Music*, ed. Stanley Sadie (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 377–394.

87 *No, che non sei capace*, K419 (1783), bars 48–50.

88 Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, volume 2, 883.

89 See Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, volume 7, and Nello Vetro, *Lucrezia Agujari, la 'Bastardella'*, 171–174.





Agujari

Mozart

Agujari

Mozart

Example 1 Lucrezia Agujari's vocal *passaggi* heard on or around 20 March 1770 in Parma, and Mozart's *Fra cento affanni*, K88/73c



to *Fra cento affanni* was that of her last really great dramatic success before she met Mozart: *Ipermestra*. The exit aria ‘Ah non parlar d’amore’ from Act 1 Scene 3<sup>90</sup> shares an unusually high number of crucial affective words (or their near equivalents) with the Mozart composition, some six in all: *fuggilfugge*, *tremar/tremo*, *sentol sento*, *venolvene*, *sanguel/sangue* and *gelar/freddo*. In particular, given that both texts were written by Metastasio (who was clearly trying to avoid repeating himself), the parallels between the final two lines of text are striking and might well have been the trigger for the reminiscence:<sup>91</sup>

<i>Fra cento</i> (lines 1–4)	<i>Ah non parlar</i> (lines 4–8)
	Ah tu mi fai tremar.
Fra cento affanni, e cento	Fuggi; che s’io t’ascolto,
Palpito, tremo, e sento,	Che s’io ti miro in volto,
Che freddo dalle vena	Mi sento in ogni vena
Fugge il mio sangue al cor	Il sangue, oh Dio, gelar.

As yet, it has not been possible to trace the music sung by Agujari in *Ipermestra*, but, according to the libretto connected with her performance, it was composed ‘di vari celebri maestri’.<sup>92</sup> In these circumstances, any identification of this aria with the one heard by Leopold and Wolfgang must remain highly speculative<sup>93</sup> – but this is a separate issue from that of the similarity between Agujari’s vocal *passaggi* as written down by Mozart and Mozart’s own music for *Fra cento affanni*.

Taking all of the circumstances together, including the unusual vocal style of *Fra cento* and its close similarities to Agujari’s music, it seems almost certain that the aria must have been written after Mozart met the singer. Accordingly, it could not have been in the Milan concert, and the date that has traditionally been assumed for its composition, between 27 February and 12 March 1770, should be revised to one later in that year.

We cannot simply conclude from this, however, that Mozart must have written *Fra cento affanni* for Agujari; the evidence is mixed. On the one hand the aria is written for the character of Arbace – a *primo uomo* role – and it seems reasonable to suppose that Agujari would have preferred a text for a *prima donna*. But, on the other hand, we do know that some opera houses might, for the sake of economy or convenience, occasionally assign castrato roles to female singers. To take a local example, when, in 1767, Turin produced a setting of *Mitridate* by the resident maestro di cappella Quirino Gasparini, the male role of Farnace was sung by Maria Antonia Giacomazzi, whereas when the same text was set by Mozart for Milan the role was sung by the well known castrato Giuseppe Cicognani.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, there are examples among Mozart’s

90 See Metastasio, *Ipermestra*, in *Poesie del Signor Abate Pietro Metastasio* (Turin, 1757), volume 5, 106.

91 Of course, if Agujari’s aria ended with stanza two (rather than stanza one as in a normal *da capo* aria), then this would have made it a composition in binary form. This is not uncommon for exit, ‘rage’ arias, as can be seen, for example, in arias nos 4 and 29a for Elettra in *Idomeneo* (‘Tutti nel cor’ and ‘D’Oreste d’Aiace’).

92 See Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, volume 3, item 13596, and Nello Vetro, *Lucrezia Agujari, la ‘Bastardella’*, 172.

93 Indeed, one opera that was almost certainly discussed at the meeting was Colla’s new setting of *Vologeso*, which was about to be performed at Venice in only eight weeks’ time (Teatro San Benedetto, 24 May 1770). We know from the surviving libretto (Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, volume 5, item 25187) that the role of Berenice in the Venice performance was sung by Lucrezia Agujari – so the aria performed might have been one of Colla’s new arias for the character. It may also be relevant that Mozart’s setting of *Sol nascente*, K70, apparently based on a libretto of *Vologeso*, seems originally to have been intended for the character Berenice. Moreover, it was clearly conceived for a singer with a high and agile voice. Traditionally, Mozart’s work (with the text of the initial recitative altered so as to praise Archbishop Schrattenbach of Salzburg) has been assigned to 1767–1769, but Schrattenbach died in 1771 and nothing about the paper type on which the work is written rules out a slightly later date for a related (perhaps even more elaborate) version of the aria. Agujari could not, of course, have sung the work at Salzburg; Maria Fesemayr is a strong candidate for that performance (her aria ‘Schildre einem Philosophen’ from *Die Schuldigkeit des ersten Gebots*, K35, goes up to top D, as does *Sol nascente*). Further investigation might prove fruitful.

94 See Wignall, ‘Mozart, Guglielmo d’Ettore and the Composition of *Mitridate*’, 9.



concert arias where a text assigned to a male character in the original libretto is known to have been set for a female singer. A case in point is the scena for King Clistene from Metastasio's *L'Olimpiade*, *Alcandro lo confesso* . . . *mon sò d'onde vieni*, κ294 (which Mozart only later reset for a bass, as κ512).

On gender grounds, then, we cannot be certain that Agujari did not sing *Fra cento*, but what is clear is that her extraordinary vocal sound stayed with Mozart and re-emerged in that work in a creatively adapted form. Quite why someone wrote '1770 à Milano' on the manuscript of *Fra cento*, however, remains unresolved. Although the lack of a specific day or month suggests a retrospective dating, the aria is unlikely to have been first written towards the end of 1770, when the Mozarts did, in fact, come to Milan again,<sup>95</sup> because it uses the same paper type as *Misero pargoletto*.<sup>96</sup> This almost certainly places it at the beginning of the year but not in the Milan period.

There is, however, one circumstance that might draw together these apparent conflicts. It concerns the performance of a setting of *Artaserse* in Florence for 'il carnevale del 1770' (that is, late 1770 or early 1771).<sup>97</sup> The music was by the Milanese composer Giovanni Battista Lampugnani, who had originally written the work for Milan in 1749, so the Florence version was a revival. And the performance clearly would have been planned from early 1770; according to the libretto, the main singers were 'Giuseppe Meisner [Joseph Meissner], virtuoso di capp. e camera di S. A. monsig. Arcives. e Principe di Salisburgo', who took the title role, and Carlo Niccolini, who sang the part of Arbace – which of course entailed singing an aria on the text 'Fra cento affanni'. In fact Mozart met both of these singers a very short while after taking leave of Agujari: Niccolini in Florence in the first week of April 1770<sup>98</sup> and Meissner in the first week of May in Rome as he was attempting to get to Florence, presumably for discussions about the forthcoming *Artaserse*.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, Mozart had known Niccolini for some time, since he performed in a concert with him in 1762.<sup>100</sup> As for Lampugnani, he helped coach the singers in Milan for Mozart's *Mitridate*,<sup>101</sup> played the 'second clavier' in a performance of the opera in Milan<sup>102</sup> and was described by Mozart as a 'true friend'.<sup>103</sup>

If we are looking for a suitable compositional and performance context for *Fra cento affani* dating from shortly after Mozart's encounter with Agujari, then it would be hard to improve on the revival of *Artaserse* being planned at that time, with its strong Salzburg and Milanese connections. Moreover, such a circumstance would immediately eliminate the problem of the use of trumpets in the work, since their use is perfectly normal for Mozart's 'insertion' arias, as opposed to his 'concert' arias. It seems at least possible, then, that Mozart may have written an early version of *Fra cento* for Niccolini in April in Florence, but that its use in the opera was not finally sanctioned by Lampugnani until later in the year. If so, this might explain why the surviving copy shares its paper type with *Misero pargoletto*, written in March (because it was actually composed only three weeks later, in April), and why it later acquired the inscription '1770 à Milano' (because this would have indicated the date and place where the work was finalized for inclusion in Lampugnani's opera).

To return to the Milan concert, we are now left with a dilemma: if *Fra cento affanni* was not in the concert, and the *Demetrio* aria might not have been, then we have to find at least one aria, and probably two, to go with *Misero pargoletto* to make up the 'three arias and a recitative' mentioned in Leopold's description. A first suggestion might be that there were other arias, now lost, which fit the bill. But this seems unlikely since, in

95 On 18 October. See *Briefe*, volume 1, 395; *Letters*, 165.

96 Tyson, *Wasserzeichen-Katalog: Textband*, 8 (watermark 16).

97 See Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, volume 1, item 3063.

98 *Dokumente*, 105; *Documents*, 116.

99 Letter of 2 May 1770. *Briefe*, volume 1, 344; *Letters*, 133. The Mozarts already knew Meissner from Salzburg, and it is almost inconceivable that they would not have discussed with him the planned *Artaserse* performance, particularly as, with their Milan connections, they had probably heard about it already.

100 *Dokumente*, 19; *Documents*, 18.

101 Letter of 10 November 1770. *Briefe*, volume 1, 402; *Letters*, 169–170.

102 Letter of 5 January 1771. *Briefe*, volume 1, 414; *Letters*, 179.

103 Letter of 22 December 1770. *Briefe*, volume 1, 410; *Letters*, 175.



a letter of 4 August 1770, Mozart gives his sister what seems to be a tally of his recent compositions, including ‘five or six’ arias<sup>104</sup> – and, if this total is correct, then it is reasonable to suppose that it must cover some or all of the following arias: *Misero pargoletto*, κ77; *Se ardire e speranza*, κ82; *Se tutti i mali miei*, κ83; *Ah più tremar*, κ71; *Fra cento affanni*, κ88; and the lost *Misero tu non sei*, κ73A.

All but the final two arias in this list are settings from Metastasio’s *Demofönte*.<sup>105</sup> But if, as I have argued, it is precisely these two final arias that were not in the Milan concert, then almost certainly Mozart based his ‘audition’ concert on the other pieces, all of them from *Demofönte*. In this way, Mozart would have been able to create, for his operatic audition, a sense of what we might call an ‘opera in aria’ – a slightly curious phrase, except that Mozart himself used the expression in relation to *Demofönte* in a letter of 3 July 1778 when there was a possibility of setting a version of the libretto for Paris.<sup>106</sup> Of the four *Demofönte* settings in the list, I have already argued that *Misero pargoletto* was in the concert and that *Se ardire e speranza* was not, because it was composed in Rome. That leaves just two further candidates from Mozart’s surviving works for the Milan concert: *Se tutti i mali miei* and *Ah più tremar*. We ought at least to consider the possibility that versions of these works were in the concert on 12 March 1770.

The text of *Se tutti i mali miei* comes from Act 2 Scene 6 of *Demofönte*, where it is sung by the *prima donna*, Dircea.<sup>107</sup> Again, there is a problem with the dating of the autograph score, which is signed ‘Rome 1770’. The Mozarts arrived in Rome on 11 April 1770,<sup>108</sup> and if we take the date on the manuscript at face value, then the work could not have been in the Milan concert. However, the manuscript itself has major revisions to the music – to the extent that the *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe* prints two distinct versions of the aria<sup>109</sup> – and it is unclear whether the date refers to the original version or the final, revised, version. What is clear is that the paper type on which the aria is written is unique<sup>110</sup> and therefore not the same as that used for *Se ardire e speranza*, a composition unquestionably connected with Rome. Moreover, since the date on the autograph does not specify the month or day of composition, we might suppose that it was added some time after the music was composed.

It is clear that the situation regarding Mozart’s original scores became rather complicated as father and son travelled around Italy. As we saw earlier, Leopold wrote in a letter of 25 August that on his return to Milan he would be ‘picking up a great many things which we left behind’.<sup>111</sup> On the other hand, we can be fairly certain that the autograph of the Minuet in E flat, κ122, probably composed in Bologna in 1770, was sent back

104 *Briefe*, volume 1, 377; *Letters*, 153.

105 See footnote 54.

106 *Briefe*, volume 2, 389; *Letters*, 559.

107 Metastasio, *Demofönte in Poesie del Signor Abate Pietro Metastasio*, volume 3, 394. There was a debate in the eighteenth century, originating in Dresden, as to whether Dircea, ‘an undiscovered princess’, outranked the character of Creusa, who was a queen. Musically, the usual practice was to treat Dircea as the *prima donna*, but see the discussion in Daniel Heartz, *Mozart’s Operas*, ed. and with contributing essays by Thomas Bauman (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 91–94. The aria κ74b is a setting of Creusa’s *Non curo l’affetto* from Act 1 Scene 7 of *Demofönte*. The problems surrounding the authorship of this piece (it is ascribed to Mozart only in a source from c1800), its date of composition (given as 1771 in the source) and its provenance (given as Pavia – though apparently Mozart was never in Pavia) lie outside the scope of this article. See Sergio Durante’s suggestion that it may have been written by Mozart for a *pasticcio* production of *Demofönte* in Pavia in 1771: ‘Tre arie di Mozart giovane’, in *Pensieri per un maestro: studi in onore di Pierluigi Petrobelli*, ed. Stefano La Via and Roger Parker (Turin: EDT, 2002), 115–124. Quite why Mozart might have written this aria for the singer Maria Antonia Brunetti ‘di Napoli’ (who according to the libretto sang the role of Creusa in that production) is not discussed. She should not be confused with Maria Brunetti née Lipp, the wife of Antonio Brunetti in Salzburg (see Ruth Halliwell, *The Mozart Family* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), Index). However, there might be an undiscovered Salzburg connection here, since Antonio Brunetti originally came from Naples.

108 *Briefe*, volume 1, 333; *Letters*, 125.

109 *NMA II/7/1*, ed. Stefan Kunze (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1967), 115–124 (short version) and Anhang 177–190 (long version).

110 Tyson, *Wasserzeichen-Katalog: Textband*, 9 (watermark 20).

111 *Briefe*, volume 1, 384; *Letters*, 157–158.



immediately to Salzburg, because it has a note from Leopold written on it asking Frau Mozart to send a copy of his *Violinschule* so that he could present it to Padre Martini.<sup>112</sup> Meanwhile, Mozart writes in a letter of 21 April that, while he was in Florence, the castrato Giovanni Manzuoli sang four or five arias to him, 'including some which I had to compose in Milan',<sup>113</sup> so he must have had them with him. Whenever the Mozarts went on a long journey, their travels resulted in frequent changes of paper supply and performance conditions; because of this we are able to see that works tended to make their way into the world in various stages and versions. The concert aria *Va, dal furor portata*, K21, for example, exists in two different redactions, one on Dutch paper, the other on French, even though Mozart may actually have been inspired to write the work in London.<sup>114</sup> Nor is it unheard of for works with apparently incontrovertible dating evidence in Mozart's own hand to have much more complex pedigrees. A famous example among the concert arias is that of *Ah se in ciel, benigne stelle*, K538, signed by Mozart 'li 4 di Marzo. 1788' and entered in his *Verzeichnüss* under the same date, but also found in an autograph voice and bass-line version which must date from some ten years earlier.<sup>115</sup>

The evidence for the chronological (and therefore the contextual) separation of the two versions of *Se tutti i mali miei* is not quite as clear as in those instances just mentioned, partly because, in the case of this aria, both versions appear in the same source. But if the second version of *Se tutti* was constructed in April, when the Mozarts arrived in Rome, then it does not stretch the imagination too far to suppose that the first version might well have been composed three or four weeks earlier in Milan. Moreover, there are at least three other aspects of the work that seem to strengthen this possibility. First, as we have seen, *Se tutti i mali miei* is written for a *prima donna*, and it is the only concert aria by Mozart from this Italian period specifically written for such a role. Of course, if the Milan concert did require Mozart to write for the three major voice types of opera seria, this would be the perfect companion to *Misero pargoletto*, which is for a *primo uomo*. Second, the orchestration of *Se tutti* matches exactly that of *Misero pargoletto* – two oboes, two horns and strings – and so would fit into the performance situation. Third, it may be significant that *Se tutti i mali miei* is the only concert aria by Mozart to have what we might call a 'stage ending' – that is, a final cadence where the orchestra moves heavily, and in unison, down on to the third degree of the scale, where, suspended, it comes to rest, thus producing an 'exit aria' close. (There is an exactly similar cadence at the end of the aria 'Venga pur' from Act 1 Scene 9 of *Mitridate*, where the original printed libretto<sup>116</sup> – but not the *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe* version of the music<sup>117</sup> – instructs the character to leave the stage immediately.) This feature seems best explained by assuming that it was performed in a quasi-staged situation of some kind, perhaps one best described by means of Mozart's own phrase 'opera in aria'.

If we accept that an early version of *Se tutti* might have been in the Milan concert, then the question arises as to who might have performed it. The only clue we have to this (since the Mozarts say nothing about it in their letters) comes from the names in Leopold's *Reiseaufzeichnungen*, or travel notes.<sup>118</sup> The lists provided by Leopold are arranged by city, and although members of the nobility usually come at the top of the lists, there is some evidence that the rest appear in the order in which the Mozarts met them.<sup>119</sup> The 'audition' concert came towards the end of their stay in Milan, and grouped near the end of the relevant Milan entry is a

112 Köchel, *Chronologisch-thematisches Verzeichnis*, 110.

113 *Briefe*, volume 1, 339; *Letters*, 130–131.

114 Tyson, *Mozart: Studies of the Autograph Scores*, 13, and *Wasserzeichen-Katalog: Textband*, 5 (watermarks 4 and 5). See also Stefan Kunze, *NMA II/7/1*, ix. The two editions of *Va, dal furor portata* are found on 3–12 and 163–172. See also the accompanying *Kritischer Bericht*.

115 Tyson, *Mozart: Studies of the Autograph Scores*, 28–29.

116 Reproduced in facsimile in *The Librettos of Mozart's Operas*, ed. Ernest Warburton (New York and London: Garland, 1992), volume 1, 168.

117 *NMA II/5/4*, 75.

118 These are reproduced piecemeal in *Briefe* under the appropriate dates.

119 This is much more apparent from the original layout, as displayed in the independent edition of the *Reiseaufzeichnungen* by Arthur Schurig.



cluster of singers – ‘Il Sgr: Sartorini Musico [Pietro Benedetti “detto Sartorini”], la Bernasconi [Antonia Bernasconi], il Cicognani [Giuseppe Cicognani], la Sigr: Varese [Anna Francesca Varese] and l’Ettore [Guglielmo Ettore]’ – whom Mozart presumably met around the time of the concert.<sup>120</sup> Every one of these singers was to appear in *Mitridate* later in the year, and the *prima donna* amongst them was Antonia Bernasconi.<sup>121</sup> Mozart had written the part of Ninetta in *La finta semplice* for her in 1768, but she did not appear in it. Even so, the Mozarts knew her voice, as Leopold confirms in a letter of 30 January 1768.<sup>122</sup> When one compares the range of *Se tutti i mali miei* with the items for Bernasconi as Aspasia in *Mitridate*, two of the arias (‘Al destin’ and ‘Nel grave tormento’) match exactly and the rest are within one or two notes. These and other characteristics of Bernasconi’s *Mitridate* music show that her voice would have been exactly suited to the piece and, in spite of the (vague) date on the score, the first version of it may well have been available for the concert on 12 March.

Finally we come to *Ah più tremar*.<sup>123</sup> This aria is found in Act 1 Scene 1 of *Demofonte* and is written for the character Matusio – a *tenore* role, and the only one not so far represented among the three most important seria types.<sup>124</sup> This is another instance where we find a particular voice type attracting just a single concert aria from Mozart during this period and, as with *Se tutti*, the orchestration exactly matches that of *Misero pargoletto*. The paper type of the autograph is Italian and is unique to this work, but Tyson places it chronologically right next to that of *Misero pargoletto*.<sup>125</sup> So far, so good, but in the autograph score this fully orchestrated work breaks off at bar 48, at the bottom of a page and in the middle of a phrase; when it was edited in 1972 by Stefan Kunze for the *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*, he asserted that the rest of the manuscript was lost.<sup>126</sup> This may have been the case, but before we accept this conclusion at its simple face value we should take a moment to consider several features of this fragment.

First, *Ah più tremar* is the only concert aria written by Mozart in 1770 that does not follow the standard version of the text as reflected in the Turin edition or, indeed, the other standard editions of Metastasio’s works. Not only is the first word of the text changed but there are also several other significant variants:

Turin Edition	κ71
O più tremar non voglio	Ah più tremar non voglio
Fra tanti affanni e tanti	Fra tanti affanni e tanti
O ancor chi preme il soglio	Quello che preme il soglio
Ha da tremar con me.	Ha da morir con me.

These changes are unlikely to be slips on Mozart’s part because, as we have seen, he probably had the Turin edition in front of him, and in any case his texting is usually accurate. Instead the adjustments seem to be of the kind an established singer might make in order to remove vowels that are difficult to sing in certain registers: ‘O più’ is changed to ‘Ah più’ so as to support a high, bright note at the beginning; the rather awkward and uncontrollable ‘O ancor chi preme’ is replaced by the vigorous and rhythmic ‘Quello che preme’; and ‘morir’ rather than ‘tremar’ replaces a repeated word and provides the opportunity for a darker tone colour. In short, the aria text here is not a deliberate ‘literary’ improvement of the original, nor is it a paraphrase of

120 *Briefe*, volume 1, 322; Schurig, *Reiseaufzeichnungen*, 50–51. Giuseppe Aprile, already mentioned in connection with *Misero pargoletto*, appears slightly earlier in the list for Milan.

121 See the cast list in the original printed libretto, reproduced in Warburton, *The Librettos of Mozart’s Operas*, volume 1, 158. The only *Mitridate* singers apparently not met by the Mozarts in early 1770 were ‘Signor Gaspare’, who sang the role of Marzio, and ‘Signor Pietro Muschietti’, who played Arbate.

122 *Briefe*, volume 1, 258; *Letters*, 83.

123 *NMA* II/7/4, Anhang, 145–148.

124 Metastasio, *Demofonte*, in *Poesie del Signor Abate Pietro Metastasio*, volume 3, 345.

125 Tyson, *Wasserzeichen-Katalog: Textband*, 8 (watermark 15).

126 *NMA* II/7/4, xii.





Metastasio's text designed to adapt it to a new context.<sup>127</sup> Rather, it is something almost certainly done at the insistence of a particular singer so as to maximize the display of his particular vocal qualities.

We cannot be sure of the identity of the singer involved here, but a very strong candidate at this time for such interventions in a tenor aria by Mozart must be the famous tenor Guglielmo Ettore. Ettore became notorious among the Mozarts for demanding multiple rewritings of arias.<sup>128</sup> When he sang the role of Mitridate later that year, Mozart had to produce no fewer than four different drafts of his cavata 'Se di lauri', and Mozart's setting of the aria 'Vado incontro' was rejected completely and replaced by a rearranged version of a setting composed by Quirino Gasparini (which is the version unwittingly published in the *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*).<sup>129</sup> Eight years later, in a letter of 6 May 1778, Leopold cautioned his son not to be discouraged 'by those who envy you . . . Remember Italy and your first opera . . . and d'Ettore and so forth'.<sup>130</sup>

The possibility that Guglielmo Ettore was involved with the composition of *Ah più tremar* is further strengthened by another feature of the work. If we compare the orchestral introduction and the opening vocal phrase of *Ah più tremar* with the parallel sections in Gasparini's version of 'Vado incontro', there are very striking similarities (see Example 2).

The image displays two musical staves. The top staff is labeled 'Mozart' and shows a vocal line in G major with lyrics 'Ah più tre-mar non vo-glio più tre-mar non vo-glio'. Below the vocal line is a bass line with a triplet of eighth notes. The bottom staff is labeled 'Gasparini' and shows a vocal line in G major with lyrics 'Va-do in-con-tro al fa-to al fa-to e-stre-mo'. Below the vocal line is a bass line with a similar rhythmic pattern.

Example 2 Mozart's *Ah più tremar*, K71, and Quirino Gasparini's 'Vado incontro', from his *Mitridate* (Turin, 1767), written for Guglielmo Ettore

Significantly, Ettore had achieved a notable success in Gasparini's setting of *Mitridate* in Turin (three years before the Milan concert),<sup>131</sup> and he seems to have carried 'Vado incontro' around with him as an exemplar of the kind of style that suited his voice. Harrison Wignall, in his two studies of Ettore and

127 The use of such paraphrases in *pasticcios*, and the discussion of them by De Gamera in his *Osservazioni sullo spettacolo* (Venice, 1790), are explored in Durante's 'Tre arie di Mozart giovane', 8–9.

128 Wignall, 'Guglielmo d'Ettore: Mozart's First Mitridate', 93–112.

129 The complex relationship between the Mozart and Gasparini settings is discussed in Luigi Tagliavini, 'Quirino Gasparini and Mozart', in *New Looks at Italian Opera: Essays in Honor of Donald J. Grout*, ed. William Austin (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1968), 151–171; Wignall, 'Mozart, Guglielmo d'Ettore and the Composition of *Mitridate*'; and Wignall, 'Guglielmo d'Ettore: Mozart's First Mitridate', especially 110, note 4, where Wignall notes that the discovery that the Mozart score contained a version of Gasparini's 'Vado incontro' was made by Rita Peiretta while studying a copy of Gasparini's opera in the Circolo del Whist collection in Turin. Tagliavini, who edited *Mitridate* for the NMA in 1966, worked with the copy of Gasparini's opera in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, which does not contain Gasparini's version of 'Vado incontro' (presumably because Ettore took it to Mozart). For the Gasparini-based 'Vado incontro' and Mozart's first attempt to set the text see *NMA* II/5/4, 213–218 and 337–342. For Mozart's various attempts at 'Se di lauri' see 274–278, and Wignall, 'Mozart, Guglielmo d'Ettore and the Composition of *Mitridate*', chapter 6.

130 *Briefe*, volume 2, 353; *Letters*, 535.

131 Wignall, 'Guglielmo d'Ettore: Mozart's First Mitridate', 100, and 'Mozart, Guglielmo d'Ettore and the Composition of *Mitridate*', 25.



*Mitridate*, carefully documents the singer's attempts to coerce Mozart's melodies into the vocal shapes found in Gasparini's 1767 music.<sup>132</sup> *Ah più tremar* seems to provide yet another instance of his methods. After all, it seems a little unlikely that Mozart would have 'accidentally' composed, as it were, music that happened to mimic very closely Ettore's favourite opening vocal flourish. Moreover, there are certain curious aspects to the way the music is written in the score that suggest that, although Mozart was simply copying parts of the work (notably the parts closest to the Gasparini model), he was engaged in a rather different process in the other sections.

The surviving music is written on eight sides of paper (folios 1 recto to 4 verso) and stops at the end of page eight in the middle of a phrase.<sup>133</sup> The orchestral tutti takes up the first five pages of the manuscript (folios 1 recto to 3 recto) and seems to be a fairly neat copy of some other, possibly original, source. The vertical alignment of the parts is good, the handwriting is unhurried, and on page 1, since there is a uniform little gap at the end of every line, 'directs' are provided indicating what the pitch of the first note will be for each part on the next page (folio 1 verso). Moreover, when the voice enters at the beginning of page 6 (folio 3 verso), the handwriting is again steady for the initial phrase that mimics Gasparini's music. After that the script changes markedly: it becomes unsteady and hurried, and mistakes, corrections and what seem to be second thoughts begin to creep in, particularly on the last page (see the vocal part, four bars from the end). Moreover, directs appear only for the voice and bass parts and then in only two very odd places – between folios 3 verso and 4 recto and at the bottom of 4 verso (where the fragment ends).

This use of directs between verso and recto sides (where, since the two pages face each other, there is no need for any forewarning) is extremely unusual – just how unusual can be seen by comparing the many fragments published in facsimile in the 'Fragmente' volume of the *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*.<sup>134</sup> Of the one hundred and fifty-odd sources reproduced there, only fourteen employ directs at all,<sup>135</sup> and only two have them between verso and recto – Fragment 1779a (the Kyrie K322, completed by Maximilian Stadler) and Fragment 1770a (the aria under discussion here, *Ah più tremar*). Moreover, the Kyrie employs them only once (folio 1 verso) but in every part, apparently for the sake of neatness to fill a large gap at the end of each line on page two. The odd situation in *Ah più tremar*, with the use of directs only in the voice and bass parts and only when they move from a verso to a recto, seems to be unique.

Just what the exact explanation might be for these features of the manuscript is not altogether clear. However, a number of things seem likely. First, the fragmentary copy of this aria, as we now have it, is almost certainly not Mozart's initial version of his setting of this text. As we have seen, the words of this aria differ from the standard text, and yet the texting in the surviving source shows no trace of crossings-out, overwriting or other emendations – so those adjustments must have taken place at an earlier stage. Second, the neatness and calligraphic calmness of the opening orchestral and vocal sections (up to and including 3 verso), and their closeness to Gasparini's model, suggest that these sections had been settled and agreed with the singer. It may be that at this point, if time was pressing, the agreed opening (the first three leaves) would have been sent off to the copyist. On the last side of that batch (folio 3 verso), Mozart seems to have written out the vocal and bass parts first (they were the essential scaffolding), leaving directs only in their parts to remind himself where he had got to once he had filled in the orchestral parts on the rest of the page. Having finished that page, he would then be able to glance at the directs and start the vocal and bass scaffolding on the next sheet (4 recto), at that point relinquishing the previous page to the copyist. A similar process would have taken place at the end of the final surviving page (folio 4 verso). This provides some explanation, at least, of why the directs appear, very unusually, between verso and recto and only in the section where the voice has entered.

132 Wignall, 'Guglielmo d'Ettore: Mozart's First *Mitridate*', 106, and 'Mozart, Guglielmo d'Ettore and the Composition of *Mitridate*', chapter 7.

133 The surviving source (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn Archiv, Mus. Ms. autogr. W.A. Mozart KV71) is reproduced in facsimile in *NMA X/30/4*, 9–12 (fragment 1770a).

134 *NMA X/30/4*.

135 *NMA X/30/4*, fragments 1765b, 1770a, 1771a, 1773b, 1778b, 1779a, 1779b, 1781a, 1781b, 1781c, 1782d, 1782l, 1786e and 1790a.



However, the use of directs in this way suggests, as do the corrections on the last page, that even at this stage some level of composition was still taking place. After all, on the last page, Mozart was now deviating markedly from the Gasparini model and yet he would not have needed the directs if he had an agreed, completed written-out draft in front of him, to which he could refer, rather than just a notion of the work in his head. And if that notion was still under review, then it seems likely that disputes with the singer were continuing. Thus it may be that the copy we have of this aria, even though it breaks off at the end of a page, is actually an abandoned version rather than a completed version with the final leaves lost.<sup>136</sup> There are several instances among Mozart's works where fully orchestrated pieces were clearly abandoned before completion. Major examples of this can be found among the materials for *Mitridate*, including the long opening ritornello to an aria for Sifare and the lengthy but incomplete attempt at Aspasia's aria 'Nel grave tormento'.<sup>137</sup>

Since the surviving vocal part of *Ah più tremar* is only eighteen bars long, it is not possible properly to compare its range with those written for Ettore in *Mitridate*, but there is no obvious contradiction between the two works. Moreover, it is certainly a practical possibility that Ettore could have sung in the Milan concert, since, as we have seen, he is mentioned in the *Reiseaufzeichnungen* from around that time.<sup>138</sup> Even more significantly, he was named very quickly after the March concert as the *tenore* who would sing in Mozart's opera. As we have seen, the agreement that he would perform is reported in a letter from Leopold on 24 March – long before we discover for certain the names of any of the other singers who would eventually appear in the opera.<sup>139</sup> Given what we know of Ettore's character, it seems incredible that he would have acquiesced so speedily to such an agreement without having first heard or performed some of Mozart's music. In any case, an aria for the character of Matusio would have suited Ettore very well, since he was already familiar with the situations in *Demofonte*, having played the role of Matusio in the 1761 version by Piccinni and in the 1766 setting in Munich composed by Andrea Bernasconi.<sup>140</sup>

Taking all of this evidence together, there seems to be a strong possibility that *Ah più tremar* may have been written for the tenor Guglielmo Ettore. And particular aspects of this evidence – the scoring of *Ah più tremar*, its required voice type, its derivation from the libretto used for other works in the concert, the dating of its paper, the availability of Ettore in Milan at the right time and his acceptance of a role in Mozart's opera immediately after the concert – seem to make it likely that some version of the work was performed in the crucial concert. If so, then we can finally sum up the probable ingredients of Mozart's operatic audition in Milan on 12 March 1770 as follows:

- 1 The 'three arias and a recitative with violins' mentioned by Leopold probably consisted of the recitative and aria *Misero me . . . Misero pargoletto*, a version of *Se tutti i mali miei* and a version of *Ah più tremar*, all of which have the same orchestration.
- 2 Irrespective of whether or not this list is correct, *Fra cento affanni* was written too late for the concert, and *Misero tu* from *Demetrio* almost certainly too early.
- 3 If the list is correct, then the three arias were likely to have been sung by the castrato Giuseppe Aprile, the soprano Antonia Bernasconi and the tenor Guglielmo Ettore, respectively, thus representing the three most important opera seria types – the *primo uomo*, the *prima donna* and the *tenore*.

136 The commentary on this source in *NMA XI/30/4*, 226, includes this as a possibility, but without detailed argument.

137 *NMA II/5/4*, 343–345 (Sifare ritornello), 305–319 (Aspasia, 'Nel grave tormento'). Wignall, 'Mozart, Guglielmo d'Ettore and the Composition of *Mitridate*', 164–172, plausibly suggests that Sifare's ritornello was intended for a version of the aria 'Soffro il mio cor'.

138 *Briefe*, volume 1, 322; Schurig, *Reiseaufzeichnungen*, 50–51. Wignall, 'Guglielmo d'Ettore: Mozart's First *Mitridate*', 101, seems to imply that the Mozarts did not meet Ettore until July 1770, but without further evidence this frankly seems improbable.

139 *Briefe*, volume 1, 325; *Letters*, 120.

140 See Wignall, 'Guglielmo d'Ettore: Mozart's First *Mitridate*', 100, and 'Mozart, Guglielmo d'Ettore and the Composition of *Mitridate*', 25.



- 4 All of the pieces were therefore likely to have been settings from the libretto of Metastasio's *Demoföonte*, thus facilitating the presentation of a kind of 'opera in aria'. This would also explain the mimicking of an exit aria cadence at the end of *Se tutti i mali miei* – otherwise unknown in any concert aria by Mozart.
- 5 Finally, the concert almost certainly took place at Count Firmian's Palazzo Melzi on the via Fatebenefratelli in Milan, away from the Ducal Theatre and its orchestra but probably employing members from it in the performance.

This may not be the end of our investigations into the Milan concert – there is, after all, the question of the instrumental works and the matter of the other composers represented (if any) – but it is perhaps as complete as we can get to them, pending the discovery of new documents. As a demonstration of the historian's method, though, this investigation has at least one major failing. It assumes that events in the past were organized logically and carefully so as to maximize their beneficial effects – and we all know that history (and people) are not quite like that. New discoveries may surprise us yet.