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ITALIAN MUSIC MANUSCRIPTS IN THE BRITISH LIBRARY

Section D: c.1770-1820

Part Three: Additional Manuscripts, 24298 - 57538

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Manuscripts 24298-57538

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

It was the end of the eighteenth century which saw the flowering of the neo-classical style, the continuing supremacy of opera, with both comic and serious opera retaining huge popularity in Italy, and the rise of instrumental and orchestral works, in the shadow of two great musical genii, Mozart and Rossini.

This section of our programme is fully representative of all these forms, and shows a very high quality cross-section of musical work in this remarkable period.

As before, opera dominates the Italian collection at the British Library. The Neapolitan opera buffa retained its popularity and scope, and in the hands of Piccini, Paisiello, Anfossi, Guglielmi and Cimarosa it came to represent the cream of Italian music.

Opera buffa manuscripts abound in this programme, with Piccini's I Stravaganti (Naples, autograph, 1761) and Donna Vana (Naples, 1764) among 8 manuscripts by him.

One of the most prolific and successful composers, with over 80 operas, 25 here in manuscript scores, was Giovanni Paisiello (1740-1816). Paisiello's early period, 1766-76 is best represented by his opera buffa, especially in his collaborations with the Neapolitan librettist Giambattista Lorenzi. Among these operas we have the score of L'idolo cinese, 1767 at Add.Ms.16086. Paisiello spent some time composing at the Russian court of Catherine II, where language problems impelled him to refine the expressive qualities of his music, producing works reminiscent of Mozart, in Il Re Teodoro, Vienna, 1784 (Add.Ms.16076-8) and Il Barbiere di Seviglia, 1783, (Add.Ms.16079). The opera which exemplifies eighteenth century sentimental comedy is his Nina, o sia la pazza per amore, 1789, at Add.Ms.16092.

In his tragic/heroic operas, Paisiello was among those trying to remove the singers' opportunities for lengthy cadenzas and vocalisations which digressed and distracted from the plot and structure. His Elfrida (1792, text by Calzabigi, at Add. Ms.32068), is unusual in allocating all solo songs to the principal characters.

Other masters of the comic opera form were:

Pasquale Anfossi (1727-97) who wrote over 60 operas and a large corpus of church music. We publish here manuscripts of 7 operas and a volume of mass settings. (Add.Ms.14174)

Pietro Carlo Guglielmi (1763-1817) was primarily a composer of comic opera and sacred works. Perhaps more impressive than his comic works, is his oratorio La Distruzione di Gerusalemme, at Add.Ms.16021.

Domenico Cimarosa (1749-1801) was a pupil of Piccini, best known for his comic operas. By the mid 1780s he was established as one of the most popular opera composers on a national and international level. Among the 31 Cimarosa manuscripts here, we have:

- a part autograph manuscript of Il Credulo Deluso, Naples, 1786, at Add.Ms.16001.
- Il convito di Massimo, Venice, 1782, at Add.Ms.15994.
- Il Matrimonio Segreto, after Colman and Garrick's The Clandestine Marriage, Vienna, 1792 at Add.Ms.16003-4.
- 4 copies and one arrangement of Gli orazi ed i Curazi, Venice, 1797.

At the centre of Italian operatic life by the early nineteenth century however, was one man whose fame and accomplishment were to overshadow Paisiello and Cimarosa completely - Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868). Not until Verdi was his supremacy to be challenged.

Rossini came to the fore as a composer in the years 1810-15, when Italian opera was in decline, with the Neapolitan buffa tradition waning and the conventions of opera seria outmoded by Mozart's tonal sophistication. For some critics these early works are Rossini's best, and for Stendhal, Tancredi (1812) (manuscript at Egerton 2501, and an 1813 copy at Egerton 2502) is an apotheosis of the freshness which it shows. The melodic beauty of Demetrio e Polibio, his first opera, 1812, at Egerton 2499, are also refreshing after the familiar later works, and this collection offers a rare opportunity to study these early works of a major composer.

This section of the programme is remarkable however for the huge increase in the number and range of chamber and orchestral works alongside the opera scores.

With the increasing range and sophistication of instruments available to composers by the early 1800s and the classical style well established we begin to see an increasing demand for instrumental works.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Chamber music and in particular, string quartets were becoming popular by the 1800s, and we offer here manuscripts by Paisiello (Egerton 2966-8) and Dragonetti, whose autograph string quartets are at Add.Mss.17727-30. String works also include 12 string duets by F. Giardini at Add.Mss.31695-6; trio sonatas by Lidarti at Add.Ms.32316; Giardini's autograph string trio of 1792 at Add.Ms.57538 and quartets at Royal Music 17.c.2 and 21.c.1-4.

Solo instrumental sonatas and pieces include:

- an autograph manuscript of pieces for solo double bass by Dragonetti at Add.Ms.17726.
- Clementi sonatas at Add.Ms.29294.
- Violin studies by Pidella Camera, at Add.Ms.31312-3.
- Cello sonatas by Dell' Abaco, at Add.Ms.31528.

The solo, classical concerto had also taken over from the concerto grosso of the baroque by this period, and we have examples here of this new form in:

- concertos for double bass by Cimador and Moncenigo at Add.Ms.17834.
- an autograph violin concerto by Viotti at Add.Ms.28970.
- a bassoon concerto by F.A. Rosetti at Add.Ms.47894.
- violin concertos by Giardini at Royal Music 21.a.14.

The classical symphony too is present, with examples here by A. Rosetti at Royal Music 21.b.9-13.

Antonio Salieri, Mozart's great "rival" was a bridge figure in many ways between the Viennese tradition of Gluck and Grassmann, the Paris opera of the 1780s and his pupils, who included Beethoven, Schubert and Liszt. He is represented here in manuscript opera scores for his Axur, Re d'Ormus (a tragi-comedy, Vienna, 1788 at Add.Ms.16118) La Secchia Rapita (opera buffa, Vienna, 1772, Add.Ms.16119); Palmira, Regina di Persia (Vienna, 1795, Add.Ms.22270 and Royal Music 23.b.4-6).

The programme is accompanied by a hard copy guide giving full contents of reels, and descriptive catalogue entries for each manuscript taken from the British Library catalogues.

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REEL FIFTY ONE

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