

**signum**  
CLASSICS

# HANDEL'S QUEENS

*Cuzzoni & Faustina*



**LUCY CROWE & MARY BEVAN**  
**LONDON EARLY OPERA**  
**BRIDGET CUNNINGHAM**

# HANDEL'S QUEENS

## CD1

- |          |   |                                      |        |
|----------|---|--------------------------------------|--------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Sinfonia</b><br>From <i>Ariodante</i> (1718)   | Carlo Pollarolo (1653-1723)          | [3.59] |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Da tempeste il legno infranto</b> <sup>LC</sup><br>From <i>Giulio Cesare</i> HWV 17                                  | George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)   | [6.09] |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Se fosse il mio diletto</b> <sup>MB</sup><br>From <i>Dalisa</i>  | Johann Adolph Hasse (1699-1783)      | [8.19] |
| <b>4</b> | Recit: <b>È tale Otton?</b> <sup>LC</sup><br>Aria: <b>Falsa immagine</b><br>From <i>Ottone</i> HWV 15                   | George Frideric Handel               | [6.37] |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Son prigioniera d'amore</b> <sup>MB</sup><br>From <i>Poro</i>  | Nicola Porpora (1686-1768)           | [5.29] |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Stelle, tiranne stelle</b> <sup>MB</sup><br>From <i>Nerone</i>   | Giuseppe Maria Orlandini (1676-1760) | [5.27] |
| <b>7</b> | <b>Solitudini amate</b> <sup>MB</sup><br>From <i>Alessandro</i> HWV 21  | George Frideric Handel               | [6.13] |
| <b>8</b> | <b>Serba le belle lagrime</b> <sup>LC</sup><br>From <i>Ariodante</i> (1718)   | Carlo Pollarolo                      | [6.01] |
| <b>9</b> | Recit: <b>Elisa che ricerchi</b> <sup>MB</sup><br>Aria: <b>Voglio amore</b> <sup>MB</sup><br>From <i>Tolomeo</i> HWV 25 | George Frideric Handel               | [5.05] |

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|----------------|--|-----------------------------|---------|
| <b>10</b>      | <b>Fra catene ognor penando</b> <sup>LC</sup><br>From <i>Scanderbeg</i> RV 732 | Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) | [3.44]  |
| <b>11</b>      | <b>Nelle mie selve natie</b> <sup>LC</sup><br>From <i>Scanderbeg</i> RV 732    | Antonio Vivaldi             | [3.39]  |
| <b>12</b>      | <b>Placa l'anima</b> <sup>LC MB</sup><br>Duet from <i>Alessandro</i> HWV 21    | George Frideric Handel      | [3.17]  |
| Total timings: |  |                             | [63.59] |

## CD2

- |          |  |                          |        |
|----------|--|--------------------------|--------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Scoglio d'immota fronte</b> <sup>LC</sup><br>From <i>Scipione</i> HWV 20  | George Frideric Handel   | [5.24] |
| <b>2</b> | Recit: <b>La sua disperazione</b> <sup>MB</sup><br>Aria: <b>Se a ammollire il crudo amante</b> <sup>MB</sup><br>From <i>Amadis di Grecia</i> | Pietro Torri (1650-1737) | [4.18] |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Gelosia, spietata Aletto</b> <sup>MB</sup><br>From <i>Admeto</i> HWV 22   | George Frideric Handel   | [5.28] |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Quel nome se ascolto</b> <sup>LC</sup><br>From <i>Il Ciro Riconosciuto</i> (1739 Carnivale version)                                       | Leonardo Leo (1694-1744) | [4.43] |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Il volo così fido al dolce</b> <sup>LC</sup><br>From <i>Riccardo Primo</i> HWV 23   | George Frideric Handel   | [5.59] |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Alla sua gabbia d'oro</b> <sup>MB</sup><br>From <i>Alessandro</i> HWV 21  | George Frideric Handel   | [8.17] |

7	<b>Sento che già il pensier</b> <sup>MB</sup> From <i>Astianatte</i>	Giovanni Bononcini (1670-1747)	[4.35]
8	<b>Deh! lascia o core</b> <sup>LC</sup> From <i>Astianatte</i>	Giovanni Bononcini	[4.18]
9	<b>Menuet</b> From <i>Astianatte</i>	Giovanni Bononcini	[1.31]
10	<b>Ascolta o figlio</b> <sup>LC</sup> From <i>Astianatte</i>	Giovanni Bononcini	[1.18]
11	<b>Dea triforme, astro fecondo</b> <sup>LC</sup> From <i>L'Elpidia</i> HWV A1	Leonardo Vinci (1690-1730) arr. Handel	[4.07]
12	<b>Mi credi spietata?</b> <sup>MB</sup> From <i>Artaserse</i> (1740 Dresden Version)	Johann Adolph Hasse	[3.45]
13	<b>Rendi al Padre in me la figlia</b> <sup>LC</sup> From <i>Caio Marzio Coriolano</i>	Attilio Ariosti (1666-1729)	[5.05]
14	<b>La Libertà</b> Cantata (Aria di camera) <sup>MB</sup> Total timings:	Maurice Greene (1696-1755)	[5.08] [63.57]

BRIDGET CUNNINGHAM CONDUCTOR / HARPSICHORD  
MARY BEVAN SOPRANO  
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## HANDEL'S QUEENS

Francesca Cuzzoni  
**Lucy Crowe**

Faustina Bordoni  
**Mary Bevan**

*Handel's Queens* includes some of the most exquisite music written by George Frideric Handel, and such glorious and in their day eminent contemporaries – as Carlo Francesco Pollarolo, Antonio Vivaldi and Giovanni Bononcini for two of the finest singers of the early 18th century – Faustina Bordoni and Francesca Cuzzoni.

This album contains many world premiere recordings as well as highlights from the repertory of the Royal Academy of Music, (the Academy), the most ambitious opera company of the baroque era. It explores the virtuosic and diverse styles of composition that Handel created for each singer, dispelling myths and shedding light behind the scenes on the lives of these two extraordinary *prime donne*.

As in today's world of 'up to the minute' reporting on the phenomenon of celebrities, these two singers were not wholly the authors of their own identities and reputations, and had little control over behaviour of the press and factions within their audience. Even though Cuzzoni was described as excelling in pathos-laden slower arias of the older fashion whilst Faustina reportedly excelled in virtuosic allegros in the new style, these recordings and the substantial underlying research reveal the wide range of the dazzling vocal pieces each singer performed, showing their talent to be not only distinctive but also versatile.

Public fascination has added to a continuing misperception that these two uniquely gifted singers became rivals by their own choice. However it was in fact the press and factions among opera-goers that were really to blame for this situation by spreading false rumours that conjured up the image and epithet of *Rival Queens*. Audiences enjoyed the fun of going to the opera where they could 'hiss and catcall' much to the dismay of both the Academy and the two singers themselves, who had already worked perfectly successfully together as a pair of *prime donne* in Italy.

The soprano Francesca Cuzzoni was born in Parma in 1696 and owed her musical education to her father Angelo, a professional violinist at the local Court and to her singing teacher Francesco Lanzi. Following her debut in her home city in 1714, she performed in Bologna, and in 1717 was taken on as a *virtuoso da camera* by Grand Princess Violante Beatrice of Tuscany. This privilege extended her performance opportunities, allowing her to appear on the stages of Florence, Reggio Emilia and Siena in operas by Gasparini and Orlandini – and notably in Antonio Vivaldi's *Scanderbeg*. Her Venetian debut in Carlo Pollarolo's *Ariodante* (1718) saw her appear for the first time on the same stage as the very slightly younger soprano Faustina Bordoni. Cuzzoni achieved international stardom with an invitation to sing for Emperor Charles VI in Vienna and took part in many more performances before returning to Venice for the season of 1721–22, when she sang in five operas, including Giuseppe Maria Orlandini's *Nerone*, which once again placed her alongside Faustina Bordoni. In her prime Cuzzoni had a compass stretching two octaves above Middle C.

The Academy was established as an opera company in London in 1719. In 1722 it engaged Cuzzoni to sing in London on a salary of 1,500 guineas (the same as the famous castrato Senesino). Her arrival to the English capital was keenly anticipated in the press 'the finest performer that ever Italy produced' wrote the London Journal in 1723 and she made her London debut on 12 January 1723, creating the role of Teofane in Handel's *Ottone* at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket, performance seat of the Academy.

Notwithstanding the huge demands by the public for Italian singers, Handel was only too aware of their potentially exacting demands and rebellious natures. According to the historian John Mainwaring, whose *Memoirs of the Late George Frederic Handel* were published in 1760 – Cuzzoni initially refused to sing her first aria in *Ottone*, '*Falsa immagine*'. This challenge provoked a quick-witted response from Handel, who threatened to throw her out of the window, (one of the legally sanctioned modes of executing prisoners in some parts of Germany) exclaiming 'Oh! Madame I know very well that you are a veritable she-devil, but I will show you that I am Beelzebub, the chief of the Devils.'

According to the historian Charles Burney, Cuzzoni's singing of *Falsa immagine* 'fixed her reputation as an expressive and pathetic singer', ('pathetic' here meaning 'expressive of pathos'). Her success was such that the price of half-guinea opera tickets reportedly shot up to two or three guineas.



During her period of engagement by Handel's Academy, which lasted until 1728, Cuzzoni's roles included those of Cleopatra in *Giulio Cesare*, Berenice in *Scipione*, the eponymous title heroine in *Rodelinda* and Costanza in *Riccardo primo*, she appeared as well in numerous operas by Ariosti, Bononcini plus two pasticcios. During the summer of 1724 she travelled to Paris performing in concert versions of *Ottone* and *Cesare* and sacred repertoire written for King Louis XV and the French Court. In 1725 Cuzzoni married the composer and harpsichordist Pietro Giuseppe Sandoni as it was still incredibly difficult for the majority of female singers to be allowed to perform on stage in public unless they had the support of a musical family and patrons.

Faustina Bordoni (popularly known simply as Faustina) was born in 1697 in Venice, where she had already started to make a name for herself even before Cuzzoni arrived. She was brought up

under the protection of the aristocratic brothers Alessandro and Benedetto Marcello, both composers and taught singing by another composer, Michelangelo Gasparini. Although her early career was troubled – in 1714 at the age of seventeen, following her release from imprisonment (for unknown reasons), she was briefly the object of a tussle over custody by two competing noble female patrons and was abducted by Isabella Renier Lombria, she made her operatic debut in Pollarolo's opera, *Ariodante* in 1716. She performed *Ariodante* again in 1718 alongside Cuzzoni illustrating the Venetian practice of employing two equal or nearly equal leading women in a cast – both having an equal number of arias but with additional recitatives and a duet for Faustina. As the Venetian prima donna of choice, and possibly even preferred for her distinctive technical virtuosity, '*modo Faustinaire*', Faustina was used to having a slightly larger share of music shown also earlier when she was paired with Maria Anna Benti-Bulgarelli.

Aware of how Faustina's career was flourishing across Europe, the Academy took the decision to engage not one but two stellar female singers in line with practice at the leading continental theatres. Accordingly, between March 1726 and May 1728 they played host to Faustina, 'the Fine songstress of Venice', in addition to Cuzzoni. The celebrated Faustina came to London with a male companion in tow – this was not a husband but a reputed lover, Mauro D'Alay a violinist and minor composer who at her insistence was made leader of the opera orchestra.

Although Cuzzoni and Faustina had appeared together without incident in six operas given in Venice and Milan between 1718 and 1721, and beforehand Faustina had been paired successfully with Anna Benti-Bulgarelli, the recruitment of the second singer by the Academy gave rise to a noisy battle between the supporters of each singer. This bizarre occurrence was aided and abetted by the London press, which from the very start actively promoted rivalry between the two singers. 'Faustina a famous Italian Lady, is coming over this Winter to rival Signiora Cuzzoni' wrote the London Journal September 1725. This stirring of the pot echoed what had earlier been said about Cuzzoni's engagement in relation to the previous leading female singer in London: 'Cuzzoni is expected with much impatience, for the improvement of our opera performances, and as 'tis said, she far excells Sigra Durastante (Margherita Durastante).

The enthusiasm of Cuzzoni's supporters led to quarrels with the devotees of Senesino and later with those of Faustina, whose London debut alongside Cuzzoni occurred in Handel's opera *Alessandro* (1726) based on the popular tragedy by Nathaniel Lee entitled *The Rival Queens, or the Death of Alexander the Great* (1677). Although the musical roles of the two leading ladies are very balanced and they share a duet, the storyline of *Alessandro* entails their competition for the affections of the hero Alessandro. Interestingly, the two singers' roles, considered in purely dramatic terms, have little impact on the plot, which in fact chooses to empathise their 'meta-dramatic' presence as rivals Cuzzoni and Faustina rather than to follow the relationship of the characters Lisaura and Rossane (this point was made in 2013 by Suzanne Aspden in her book *The Rival Sirens*). Perceptions of identity relating to the characters on stage and the actual singers came to overlap, leading many members of the London audience to become fiercely partisan in favouring either Faustina or Cuzzoni at the expense of the other. Satirical pamphlets (one entitled *An Epistle from Signor Senesino to Faustina*) began to circulate.

Factionalism even caused the performance to be halted, and the press to explode with tales of scandal and rivalry, on one night of Bononcini's *Astianatte* (6 June 1727), when Cuzzoni was portraying the character of Andromaca, the distressed mother, whilst Faustina depicted the evil Ermione who was plotting against her. Despite the presence in the house of Caroline, Princess of Wales, trouble – not caused by the singers – erupted in the auditorium. There were reports of hissing by one side answered by clapping on the other, of catcalls, of pulling of head-dresses and of other great indecencies on the part of the audience – all leading to an interruption of the performance.

Cuzzoni and Faustina were subsequently blamed unjustly for the fracas and the misogynistic archetype of professional female jealousy was inflamed by images of two fighting *prime donne* in new fictional pamphlets and satires that included *The Devil to pay at St James's; or a full and true account of a most horrible and bloody battle between Madam Faustina and Madam Cuzzoni*, while the *Rival Queens* motif from Lee's drama resurfaced in a farce entitled *The Contre Temps* that heightened suspicions about the Italian singers being papists and a danger to the realm. Even before the singing pair had appeared together in public, membership of opposing factions

was taking shape: Cuzzoni's supporters included the King, the Duke of Rutland, Lady Pembroke and most of the Italian community, whilst London's aristocratic gentlemen mostly supported the more alluring newcomer Faustina. This was, one must remember, a society that feasted on binary oppositions: Catholic versus Protestant; Whig versus Tory; Handel versus Bononcini; King George versus the Prince of Wales; English versus Italian.

Although both singers were upset threatening to leave the Academy in response to this unwelcome press and factionalism of the audience, they remained in London on account of the high fees offered and continued to appear together onstage, a fact that helped to keep attendances reasonably buoyant. This scandal was certainly not the type of press reaction that the Academy's directors had invested such large sums in: the institution's financial health depended heavily on long term subscriptions and, it was important to preserve the image of being one of the best, most sophisticated companies in the world.

Following the death of George I on the 11th June 1727 all the theatres were closed for the summer, causing the premiere of *Riccardo Primo* to be postponed until the next season. The singers were further lampooned in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, premiered on 29 January 1728. This work owed much of its success to its employment of shorter arias and, unsurprisingly, sung in English.

So after the Academy's auspicious start, cumulative effect of illnesses, absences, audience and press disruptions, dwindling audience numbers (partly due, ironically, to the restored decorum) the instability of the stock market, competition of rival forms of theatrical entertainment, and largely the inflated fees demanded by the best singers ('costly canaries', as Mainwaring called them), led to the financial collapse of the Academy which closed its doors after the 1727 -8 season. It had lasted for only nine seasons instead of the twenty-one originally envisaged.

After their customary farewell concerts, several singers including Cuzzoni and Faustina left London for engagements in continental Europe. Cuzzoni worked in Vienna, Venice and other stages with her husband whilst Faustina, who was never to return to London, made a mutually beneficial marriage in 1730 to the famed composer Johann Adolf Hasse, Kapellmeister at Dresden. This allegiance

sustained her professional activity and reputation for many years. She remained as *prima donna* in Hasse's operas written for the Saxon-Polish court, continuing to perform internationally to great acclaim. She retired from the stage in 1751 but lived on until 1781, first in Vienna and then in her native Venice.

In the spring of 1728, Academy subscribers handed over the management of Italian opera in London to the impresario John Jacob Heidegger and Handel who formed a 'second' Royal Academy. Although Heidegger wished to re-engage Cuzzoni and Bordoni, Handel, insisting on the need for variety, demanded a change of singers so he could write new works for new performers. After making trips to Italy, Handel finally had at his disposal a brand new cast of singers that included the soprano, Anna Strada del Pó. The Academy's long-serving librettist Paolo Rolli wistfully reflected: '(Handel) says that she sings better than the two who have left us, because one of them (Faustina) never pleased him at all and he would like to forget the other (Cuzzoni)'.

Cuzzoni's career continued to flourish amidst challenges of illnesses, debts and pregnancies and little is known of whether her two children survived. She returned to London in April 1734 joining the cast of the rival opera company the *Opera of the Nobility*, which introduced itself with works by Nicola Porpora, Sandoni, Hasse and a version of Handel's *Ottone*. After the collapse of that company, she continued to sing across Europe commanding huge salaries, such as in *Il Ciro riconosciuto* by Leonardo Leo in Turin, before entering a slow melancholy decline. In 1751, after attending Cuzzoni's final benefit concert, Burney wrote that her voice had become a thin, cracked sound. Circumstantial evidence indicates that she was imprisoned more than once for debt, amidst widespread false rumours of her having poisoned her husband in Venice, earning for this a death sentence. She lived on in Bologna until 1778 and there is currently no evidence to support the tradition that she sold buttons to make a humble living.

In 1723 the famous singing teacher Pier Tosi wrote that at the height of their fame 'The Pathetic of the one (Cuzzoni) and the Allegro of the other, are the Qualities the most to be admired respectively in each of them. What a beautiful Mixture would it be if the excellence of these two angelick Creatures would be united in one single Person!' (Tosi wisely went on, however to make the



point that neither of the identified singers would have achieved her degree of eminence if she had attempted to imitate the other).

The theorist Friedrich William Marpurge stated that the flautist Johann Joachim Quantz, who had heard Cuzzoni in 1727 found that 'her style of singing was innocent and affecting' and that she 'took possession of the soul of every auditor, by her tender and touching expression'. In contrast, Charles Burney noted, 'Damn her: she has got a nest of nightingales in her belly'. The singing teacher Giovanni Battista Mancini praised what he described as her 'native warble', pathos, natural tone, excellent *messa di voce*, perfect trills, phrasing and accuracy and sweetness of high notes. As well as excelling in the older style, Cuzzoni performed a wide range of florid compositions employing coloratura, where she displayed a high level of virtuosity.

Faustina was the paragon of the newer style, where her slightly lower voice, running from b flat to a", displayed coloratura passages, martellati, sudden changes of register, wide leaps, rhythmic variations, sequences of trills, good breath control and secure intonation. Many arias written for her by Handel and others are in E or A major or minor, for which Burney provides a good explanation by observing in a footnote that her rendition of the note e" – naturally prominent in all four named keys – was particularly powerful. Her penetrating and articulate tone '*ben granito*' (diamond) was revered. Nevertheless, she was able to extend her scope by performing slower, expressive airs in addition to the 'technical' coloratura passages on which her reputation rested.

Despite being sharply defined in the public's mind by their contrasting vocal qualities, both Cuzzoni and Faustina were fully equipped to do justice to the complete range of *affetti* (moods) demanded of singers taking major roles within eighteenth-century opera seria. They were necessarily versatile, even though composers writing for them would naturally take the opportunity where possible to play to their known strengths. How accurately, in terms of direct imitation, this blend of uniqueness and universality can be recaptured in a modern performance is unknowable. But what is unquestionable is that these stellar artists inspired through their art some brilliant music, both familiar and unfamiliar.

## THE MUSIC

### **Aria for Dalinda** (Cuzzoni)

From *Ariodante* by Carlo Francesco Pollarolo (Venice, 1718)

Faustina made her Venetian operatic début in the autumn of 1716 at the age of nineteen. The opera was *Ariodante*, based on a famous libretto by the Florentine librettist Antonio Salvi, who for his plot drew on an episode in Ludovico Ariosto's epic poem *Orlando furioso*.

In 1718, Pollarolo's *Ariodante*, in a revised form, returned to the San Giovanni Grisostomo theatre with a new *Sinfonia* (CD1 [1]) in G major. Cuzzoni joined the cast to sing the role of Dalinda, a young lady-in-waiting to Ginevra (Faustina), the marriageable princess of Scotland. This character's naïveté and her trust in the evil, scheming Polinesso, Duke of Albany, lead her accidentally to imperil the lives of her mistress and also of Ginevra's lover (and aspiring husband and future king) Prince Ariodante. In this aria *Serba le belle lagrime* (CD1 [8]) a remorseful Dalinda addresses Ariodante, assuring him that his courtship of Ginevra will, despite everything, be successful, while bewailing her earlier infatuation with Polinesso, the 'core ingrato'. The new revised setting of this aria in Siciliana rhythm reflects Cuzzoni's cantabile style.

*Serba le belle lagrime*  
*Al tenero piacer*  
*Che avrai nel riveder*  
*L'idolo amato.*  
*Lascia a me solo il piangere,*  
*A me, che amai costante,*  
*Più che un gentil semblante,*  
*Un core ingrato.*

Reserve your lovely tears  
for the sweet pleasure  
that will be yours  
when you behold again your lover.  
Let me alone weep,  
I, who with constancy loved,  
rather than a fair face,  
an ungrateful heart.

### **Aria for Cleopatra** (Cuzzoni)

from *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*, HWV 17, by George Frideric Handel (London, 1724)

The role of Cleopatra is one of the most brilliant, challenging and rewarding written for Cuzzoni, with dazzling orchestration to match. In the final scene of the opera Cleopatra has been rescued by the hero, Cesare, and sings with florid coloratura the aria *Da tempeste il legno infranto* (CD1 [2]) praising her new change of fortune and comparing past events to a ship that has reached port safely after having been damaged in a storm.

*Da tempeste il legno infranto,*  
*se poi salvo giunge in porto,*  
*Non sa più che desiar.*  
*Così il cor tra pene e pianto*  
*Or che trova il su conforto,*  
*Torna l'anima a bear.*

The ship that is battered by storms  
will, when it reaches port safely,  
have need of nothing more.  
And so my heart, stricken by grief and tears,  
now that it has found comfort,  
can be glad once more.

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### **Aria for Dalisa** (Faustina)

from *Dalisa* by Johann Adolf Hasse (Venice, 1730)

The libretto for this charming and unpretentious opera was written for the Ascension season in Venice by the city's most productive and versatile dramatic poet, Domenico Lalli. Dalisa, sung by Faustina, is a simple shepherdess blessed with beauty and virtue alike. She is spotted one day, by chance, by the Holy Roman Emperor Ottone and his brother Enrico, and both of them fall instantly in love with her. Ottone invites her to his palace. The obedient Dalisa has to comply, but with grave misgivings over her worthiness to live in such an exalted place. Not only are Ottone and Enrico rival suitors for Dalisa's hand, but Ottone already has a fiancée, Edita, who is growing impatient for her wedding day, especially since she soon gets wise to the reason for Dalisa's presence in the palace.

**Se fosse il mio diletto** (CD1 [3]) concludes a soliloquy in which Dalisa expresses discomfort over her 'out-of-placeness' in being the object of Ottone's love and her yearning for the simple rural life she has left behind. Only Enrico, to whom she has warmed, would be a reason to stay.

*Se fosse il mio diletto  
Nato a guidar gl'armenti,  
Potrei con dolce affetto  
Amarlo in libertà.  
E i voti suoi contenti  
Senza rossor farei,  
E allor non temerei  
Di offender l'onestà.*

If my darling were born  
to guide flocks,  
I could freely love him  
with sweet affection.  
And without blushing  
I would answer his prayers,  
and then I would not fear  
to offend decency.

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#### **Aria for Teofane** (Cuzzoni)

from *Ottone, re di Germania*, HWV 15, by George Frideric Handel (London, 1723)

Despite Cuzzoni's initial reluctance to sing the aria **Falsa immagine, m'ingannasti** (CD1 [4]), perhaps wishing for something more elaborate, Handel's music for it ensured her success in London. This aria remained one of her signature songs for the next 30 years. Full of pathos, the aria reveals the deep despair Teofane experiences over apparently being deceived by a supposed portrait of her future husband Ottone. After travelling a long way to meet him, she is taken aback to see a man (in reality, Adelberto, posing as Ottone) who does not match her high expectations of the handsome man in the portrait.

*È tale Otton? tale il mio sposo? Quello che del  
Mio sen per pompa qui effigiato ha mentitor penello?  
Ove son le sembianze,  
Che a vagheggiar mi preparava in lui?*

And is this Otto? This my spouse?  
whose portrait the lying paintbrush made  
as an adornment of my breast?  
Where are those looks which made me ready to

*Mandata fui, perché durasse, oh Dio!  
Tra il germanico regno e'l greco impero  
La stabilita pace, non perché guerra eterna  
Tra il mio genio sorgesse, e'l dover mio.  
Ma tal' è Otton? Tale il mio sposo? E dove,  
Dove ne andò la maestà del ciglio?  
Sgomentata, tremante,  
Qual prenderò nel caso mio consiglio?*

admire him?  
Alas, I was sent so that a lasting peace might be  
established between the German kingdom and the  
Grecian empire,  
not so that a perpetual war should arise  
between my inclination and my duty.  
But ... is this Otto? This my husband?  
Where, o where, is the majesty of his glance?  
Frightened, trembling,  
what course can I take in my situation?

*Falsa immagine, m'ingannasti,  
Mi mostrasti un volto amabile;  
E quel volto m'allettò.  
Or cessato il dolce inganno,  
Trovo orrore, e trovo affanno  
Ove gioie il cor sperò.*

False image, you deceived me:  
You showed me a handsome face,  
And that face allured me!  
Now the sweet deception is past;  
I find repugnance, I find affliction  
Where my heart hoped for joy.

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#### **Aria for Cleofide** (Faustina)

from **Poro** by Nicola Porpora (Turin, 1731)

Poro is an alternative title for Metastasio's drama *Alessandro nelle Indie*, a very popular libretto among audiences and composers.

Cleofide, sung by Faustina, is Queen of an Indian kingdom adjoining that of her lover Poro, which has just been conquered by Alessandro (Alexander the Great). In this aria, **Son prigioniera** (CD1 [5]), Cleofide reflects that she, too, has become a prisoner – not of an enemy, but of her love for Poro, to which she promises to hold fast. Through Alessandro's clemency and admiration of Indian virtue, Poro will at the end of Act III regain his kingdom plus Cleofide as his wife.

*Son prigioniera  
D'amore anch'io.  
Lo sa il cor mio,  
Che soffre, e spera  
Veder placata  
Dell'empio Fato  
La crudeltà.  
Ognor costante  
Ma sventurata,  
Quest'alma amante  
Pura la fede  
A chi la diede  
Serbar saprà.*

I, too, am  
a prisoner of love.  
My suffering heart  
knows it,  
And hopes to see placated  
The cruelty  
of pitiless Fate.  
Ever constant  
but unfortunate,  
This loving soul vows  
to keep intact  
Its fidelity to him  
to whom it promised it.

---

#### **Aria for Ottavia** (Faustina)

from **Nerone** by Giuseppe Maria Orlandini (Venice, 1721).

This opera, on a libretto by the Venetian nobleman Count Agostino Piovene, introduces the familiar characters of the Roman emperor Nero (Nerone), his wife Octavia (Ottavia), his mistress Poppea and his mother Agrippina. Cuzzoni sang the role of Poppea, Faustina that of Ottavia. This aria, **Stelle, tiranne stelle** (CD1 [6]), is Ottavia's lament at the end of Act Two: a rebellion in her favour, but not instigated by her (this is why she insists she is innocent), has taken place in order to forestall her husband Nerone's plan to marry Poppea. Nerone does not believe Ottavia's sincere assurance that she has not organized the uprising and sees this as the ideal opportunity to repudiate her, hence her despair at the prospect of both losing her husband and, even worse, having her character besmirched.

*Stelle, tiranne stelle,  
De' vostri avversi rai  
Quando avrà fine mai  
Il barbaro rigor?  
A nuovi colpi ancora  
Sia scopo questo seno;  
Ma l'innocenza almeno  
Lasciatemi, e l'onor.*

O stars, tyrannical stars,  
when will the cruel severity  
of your adverse rays  
come to an end?  
Let this breast be  
the target of still more blows;  
but at least leave me my innocence  
and my honour.

---

#### **Arias for Rossane** (Faustina) and **Lisaura** (Cuzzoni)

from **Alessandro**, HWV 21, by George Frideric Handel (London, 1726)

*Alessandro* marked Faustina's first appearance in London with Cuzzoni and Senesino. Both Princesses Rossane and Lisaura are in love with their hero Alessandro and unite to sing their first and only duet, **Placa l'alma** (CD1 [12]), at the end of Act One. They attempt to calm Alessandro's rage after he has struck one of his captains to the ground for not believing his absurd claim that he is the son of the god Jupiter.

#### **Rossane** *Placa l'alma, quieta il petto,!*

*Pace, calme vuole amor.*

*La dolcezza spira affetto*

*La fierazza dà timor.*

**Lisaura** *Son d'amore nella face*

*Calma, pace, non furor:*

*Quando alletta, arde il seno:*

*Ma diletta con l'ardor.*

**Rossane** Calm your spirit, and still thy breast;  
for peace and true love calms,  
sweetness moves the soul to love;  
fear causes ferocity.

**Lisaura** In Love's torch, peace and calm,  
not fury, reign;  
when it inflames, the breast burns,  
but delight comes with passion.

*Lisaura* Sdegnò il Core  
Non t'offenda!

*Rossane* Ma l'amore  
Sol l'accenda!

*Lisaura* Torna in calma.

*Rossane* Placa l'alma.

*Lisaura, Rossane* Breve è sdegnò  
In nobil cor.

*Rossane* Placa l'alma.

*Lisaura* Quieta il petto.

*Rossane* Pace,

*Lisaura* calma

*Lisaura, Rossane* Vuole amor.

*Lisaura* Bel diletto,

*Rossane* Caro affetto,

*Lisaura, Rossane* No, non nasce  
del rigor.

*Rossane* Placa l'alma etc

*Lisaura* Let thy heart  
disown all wrath.

*Rossane* Love alone  
should warm it.

*Lisaura* Be calm again.

*Rossane* Calm your spirit.

*Lisaura, Rossane* Rage is brief  
in a noble heart.

*Rossane* Calm your spirit.

*Lisaura* Still thy breast.

*Rossane* Peace,

*Lisaura* calm,

*Lisaura, Rossane* are Love's demand.

*Lisaura* Sweet delight,

*Rossane* dear affection,

*Lisaura, Rossane* no, they are not born  
from harshness.

*Rossane* Calm your spirit etc.

*Solitudini amate,*  
*In cui sfogarmi mi lice*  
*Una fiamma infelice;*  
*Voi le sventure mie, deh, consolate,*  
*Solitudini amate!*  
*Amo il grand' Alessandro, ei sol mi sembra*  
*Degno dell'amor mio;*  
*Mà in quel core infedel non regno sola.*  
*Chi mi consiglia, ohimè! chi mi consola!*

*Aure, fonti, ombre gradite,*  
*Che mi dite?*  
*Che fàro?*  
*Languirò, spererò.*  
*Amerò le mie ferite,*  
*Purché vengano guarite*  
*Dalla man che m'impiegò.*  
*Aure, fonti ...*  
*Sento il sonno, che vela*  
*Le stanche luci mie con l'ali placide.*  
*Aure, fonti ...*  
*Al fin, dolce riposo,*  
*Cedo agli inviti tuoi.*  
*Ombre gradite,*  
*Che mi dite ...*  
*(S'addormenta).*

Beloved solitude,  
which allows me to confess to  
a hopeless passion,  
show consolation to my misfortunes,  
beloved solitude!  
I love the mighty Alexander,  
he alone seems worthy of my love,  
but in his faithless heart I do not reign alone.  
Who will counsel me, alas! Who will comfort me?

Breezes, fountains, pleasing shadows,  
what are you telling me?  
What shall I do?  
Shall I pine away? Shall I hope?  
I shall love my wounds  
if only they can be healed  
by the hand that struck me,  
Breezes, springs ...  
I feel sleep veiling my weary eyes  
with its soothing wings.  
Breezes, fountains ...  
At last, sweet rest,  
I yield to your invitation;  
pleasing shadows,  
what are you telling me ...  
(She lies down to sleep).

---

The aria *Solitudini amati* (CD1 [7]) opens Act Two, sung by Rossane alone in a garden, unsure whether it is her or Lisaura whom Alessandro really loves, and mourning her broken and heavy heart. An atmospheric prelude sets the scene, leading into an accomplished recitative and an aria, *Aure, fonti, ombre gradite*, which is broken up with more recitative before Rossane sinks into a deep and troubled sleep, ending the piece without a *da capo* reprise.

**Alla sua gabbia d'oro** (CD2 [6]), which comes later in Act Two, was a showstopper for Faustina, since she excelled in the use of trills, coloratura and martellato technique (repeated notes). Here, Rossane resolves to make a melting appeal to Alessandro to free her from captivity, realising how she would not be able to leave him even if she possessed the freedom of a bird.

*Alla sua gabbia d'oro*

*Suol ritornar talor*

*Quell'augellin canoro*

*Che rapido fuggi;*

*Sai perché torna ancor donde parti?*

*La sua prigion gli è cara*

*Più della liberta.*

*Ma la prigion d'oro,*

*Sai perché piace allor*

*All'augellin canoro?*

*Più caro al suo signor*

*Sa ben che tornerà.*

To the little cage of gold

the songbird

that flew fast away

sometimes returns:

Do you know why the bird returns to its starting point?

Her prison is dearer to her

than her freedom.

But do you know why

the songbird still cherishes

her golden prison?

She knows well that on her return

her master will love her even more.

---

**Recitative for Elisa** (Faustina) and **Seleuce** (Cuzzoni) & **Aria for Elisa** (Faustina) from **Tolomeo, re d'Egitto**, HWV 25, by George Frideric Handel (London, 1728)

(CD1 [9]) Although Tolomeo involved all three big stars – Cuzzoni, Faustina and Senesino – audience numbers were waning and money was running out. Then Faustina became ill, causing this Academy opera to close abruptly. In this drama Elisa (sung by Faustina) has been rejected by Ptolemy (Senesino), who actually loves Seleuce (Cuzzoni). Elisa vents the full force of her fury by urging Seleuce to give him up: if he is not willing to marry her instead, he must die.

**Seleuce** *Elisa, che ricerchi*

*Da un'infelice omai, vuoi la mia morte?*

**Elisa** *Anzi con la tua vita*

*Quella di Tolomeo salvar desio.*

**Seleuce** *Ah! se ciò fosse ver, che non farei?*

**Elisa** *Cederlo a me tu dei; e se ricusi,*

*A morte più che certa l'abbandoni.*

**Seleuce** *E a questo prezzo vendi i tuoi favori?*

**Elisa** *Qui verrà; seco parla, e seco allora*

*Concludi o che me sposi o pur che mora.*

**Elisa** *Voglio amore o pur vendetta*

*Da chi l'alma acceso m'ha.*

*Da due fiamme ho eguale ardore:*

*l'una e l'altra, sì, m'alletta*

*Ché se manca l'una al core,*

*L'altra più l'accenderà.*

**Seleuce** Elisa what is it you seek from an unhappy woman? Do you wish me dead?

**Elisa** No, it is with your life that I wish to save Ptolemy's.

**Seleuce** Ah, if that were true, what would I not do?

**Elisa** You must relinquish him to me; and if you refuse, you abandon him to a more than certain death.

**Seleuce** Is it at this price that you sell your favours?

**Elisa** He is coming here; speak to him and settle it that either he marries me or he dies.

**Elisa** I want either love or vengeance from the man who has set my heart on fire.

I feel an equal heat from two flames, and both attract me, so that if one gives out, the other will flare up all the more.

---

**Arias for Doneca** (Cuzzoni)

from **Scanderbeg**, RV 732, by Antonio Vivaldi (Florence, 1718)

*Scanderbeg*, (RV 732) on a libretto by Antonio Salvi, was Vivaldi's first opera for Florence, where it was premiered in June 1718. The libretto tells of the victory of the medieval Albanian king Scanderbeg (George Castriot) – to this day, his country's national hero – over the occupying Ottoman ruler Amurat II. Doneca (sung by Cuzzoni) is Scanderbeg's wife, taken captive (in the disguise of a shepherdess) by Amurat.

In ***Fra catene ognor pensando*** (CD1 [10]) Doneca expresses her true regal self in a soliloquy without any pretence of being a shepherdess. This rousing aria tells of her yearning for freedom and – more importantly – her hope of regaining it through the heroism of her husband and his followers.

*Fra catene ognor pensando,  
A cercar va la sua pace  
Il mio core in libertà.  
E 'l pensier di quando in quando  
Vola intorno alla sua face  
Col sperar ch'un dì godrà.*

In chains but ever thoughtful,  
my heart goes in search of peace  
through freedom.  
And my thought from time to time  
flits around freedom's torch  
in the hope of enjoying it some day.

In ***Nelle mie selve natie*** (CD1 [11]) Doneca, still believed by Amurat to be a shepherdess, boldly spurns his amorous advances. The aria accordingly expresses the homespun simplicity of a shepherdess and the vulnerability of a captive, but also, hidden behind these, the steely resolve and dignity of a queen.

This is a unique aria in Vivaldi's operas in that in that the singer has no accompaniment at all: no basso continuo, no bassetto on viola and/or violins, and no unison doubling by the violins (that this does not occur is shown clearly by the half-bar rests that Vivaldi has included, in addition to the absence of specific cues for doubling anywhere).

No other known Vivaldi aria leaves the voice totally unaccompanied and the bareness seems partly dramatic, in order to portray Doneca's aloneness and vulnerability in the face of imminent death, and partly to play to Cuzzoni's strengths and focus attention on her alone.

*Nelle mie selve natie  
A morir pria che macchiarsi  
L'armellino m'insegnò.  
Coll'esempio del suo scempio  
Sempre intatta a conservarmi  
Morte anch'io sprezzar saprò.*

In my native woods  
the stoat taught me to die  
rather than stain oneself.  
Following the example of his slaughter  
I too will know how to keep myself intact,  
scorning death.

### **Aria for Berenice** (Cuzzoni)

from ***Publio Cornelio Scipione***, HWV 20, by George Frideric Handel (London, 1726)

The opera *Scipione* has a colourful fresh and inventive array of arias as well as instrumental movements including the slow march now used as the regimental march of the Grenadier Guards. The plot relates how Berenice's fiancé, the Spanish prince Lucejo, makes an unsuccessful attempt to rescue her and is put under arrest. Although Scipio offers himself as a more worthy suitor, Berenice swears undying fidelity to her first love in ***Scoglio d'immota fronte*** (CD2 [1]), comparing herself to a rock unmoved by tempestuous seas. Virtuoso vocal phrases soar over the turbulence and changing orchestral harmonies representing Berenice's steadfast loyalty.

*Scoglio d'immota fronte  
Nel torbido elemento,  
Cime d'eccelso monte  
Al tempestar del vento,  
È negli affetti suoi  
Quest'alma amante.  
Già data è la mia fé;  
S'altri la meritò,  
Non lagnisi di me:  
La sorte gli mancò  
Dal primo istante.*

A rock that remains unmoved  
amid the raging elements,  
the peak of a lofty mountain  
as the wind howls around it:  
such is this loving soul  
in its affections.  
My troth is already plighted;  
if someone else has deserved it,  
let him not complain of me:  
fortune was unkind to him  
from the very first.

---

### **Recitative and Aria for Melissa** (Faustina)

from ***Amadis di Grecia*** by Pietro Torri (Munich, 1724)

(CD2 [2]) *Amadis di Grecia*, which is a setting of a libretto by one of the Bavarian court's resident poets, Perozzo di Perozzi, by the same court's most prominent composer and future Kapellmeister, Pietro Torri (c.1660–1737), is a typical *dramma per musica*, this time set in Ancient Greece.

The Queen of Sparta (also a sorceress), Melissa, has been scorned by the Greek warrior Amadis, who loves princess Nicea. In her recitative Melissa reveals her plan to deceive Princess Nicea by showing Amadis that the Princess is receptive to Prince Arsace's advances. In the ensuing aria she gives vent to her passion but confesses her dilemma: if she punishes Amadis for his continued unresponsiveness to her, she will only punish herself – a thought reflected in the inner section of the aria.

*La sua disperazione  
Alla mia non potrebbe esser uguale  
S'ei non vede l'amata principessa  
Nell'atto d'adorar il suo rivale.*

His desperation  
will not match mine  
until he beholds his beloved princess  
in the act of loving his rival.

*Se a ammollire il crudo amante  
L'arte mia non è bastante,  
Tutto ciò ch'ha il cieco regno  
Di terribile armerò.  
Eh, mio cor, non tanto sdegno;  
Ti consuma un'ira fiera;  
E in voler che l'empio pera lo perire ti vedrò.*

If my arts are insufficient  
to soften the heart of my cruel lover  
I will summon up the most terrible things  
Hell has to offer.  
O, my heart, show less scorn;  
a fierce wrath consumes you.  
And by wishing the scoundrel to perish  
I will see you perish too.

---

#### **Aria for Alceste** (Faustina)

from *Admeto, re di Tessaglia*, HWV 22, by George Frideric Handel (London, 1727)

Handel and the librettist Haym reworked a previously known work – *L'Alceste*, based on a play by Euripides and scored by Mattio Trento – and renamed it *Admeto* to be performed in London with all three celebrity singers Faustina, Cuzzoni and Senesino where it proved a great success running for seventeen shows.

As the story unfolds, Admeto's beloved wife Alceste sacrifices her own life for his and is rescued from Hades by Hercules. She is provoked into a jealous rage by her rival Antigona (Cuzzoni) when she hears that Admeto – unaware of her return – is already contemplating remarriage with Antigona. Consumed with rage, she sings *Gelosia, spietata Aletto* (CD2 [3]).

*Gelosia, spietata Aletto,  
Meco uscisti dall'inferno,  
E m'entrasti a forza in petto  
Per affligger questo cor.  
Ti vorrei scacciar dal seno,  
Ma non ho vigore bastante;  
Chi non prova il tuo veleno,  
Non sa che cosa è amor.*

Pitiless Aletto, jealous Fury,  
you escaped from Hell with me,  
and entered my breast by force,  
to wound my heart.  
I would like to drive you from my bosom,  
but I have not enough strength;  
whoever does not feel your poison  
does not know what love is.

---

#### **Aria for Mandane** (Cuzzoni)

from *Il Ciro riconosciuto* by Leonardo Leo (Turin, 1739)

Pietro Metastasio's drama *Il Ciro riconosciuto* was first set to music by Antonio Caldara in 1736, and the setting by the Neapolitan composer Leonardo Leo for the Teatro Regio, Turin, in 1739, with Cuzzoni singing the role of Mandane, was the fourth of over twenty settings that were composed during the next century. Later, in Dresden (1751), Mandane's part was sung by Faustina, by then the wife of the composer Hasse.

This drama is highly unusual for Metastasio, and indeed for the opera seria tradition in general, in including no element of romantic love, although parental love figures prominently. Equally unusual is the fact that there is only one female role: Mandane, Princess of the kingdom of the Medes, who is daughter to Astiage, the reigning king, wife to the Persian Prince Cambise and mother to Ciro (Cyrus), who, believed dead (killed by order of Astiage in order to thwart a prophesy), is living in disguise as a shepherd boy called Alceo.

**Quel nome se ascolto** (CD2 [4]) comes close to the end of the second act. The Princess has just met Alceo, now aware of his royal blood, but has been tricked into believing that he is not truly her son (whom she has never seen before) but in fact an impostor who has killed him in order to steal his identity. Hence her passionate outburst of revulsion against this 'traitor'. The composer Leo's powerful aria, marked '*con smania ed arioso*' (agitated and tuneful), does full justice to this rather unusual direction, using chromatic melody and harmony extravagantly to achieve its effect.

*Quel nome se ascolto  
Mi palpita il core:  
Se penso a quel volto  
Mi sento gelar.  
Non so ricordarmi  
Di quel traditore  
Né senza sdegnarmi  
Né senza tremar.*

If I hear that name  
my heart throbs:  
if I think of that face  
I feel myself freeze.  
I am unable to think  
of that traitor  
without experiencing revulsion  
and trembling.

---

#### **Aria for Costanza** (Cuzzoni)

from **Riccardo primo, re d'Inghilterra**, HWV 23, by George Frideric Handel (London, 1727)

Handel had already prepared the score of *Riccardo primo* in May 1727, perhaps as the final piece for the Academy's current season. It was the only time in his operatic career that he chose a subject from British history, a fact possibly celebrating his naturalisation as a British subject the previous February. Following the death of King George I and the closing of the theatres, *Riccardo primo* was shelved until November, after the Coronation of the new King George II, when an exuberant feeling of patriotism swept the country; this is reflected in Handel's reworking of the opera, which has more than the customary pomp and valour. Certain vocal roles needed to be recast, since some of Handel's singers had left the Academy since the work's composition in the spring. The composer ensured that the leading roles of Costanza (Cuzzoni) and Pulcheria (Faustina) were evenly matched. There

is even a stage direction in his autograph telling the two singers to exit the stage hand in hand – perhaps a visual sign that peace between them had been restored. Near the end of the opera Costanza has been freed from captivity by Riccardo, and a new, lighter mood prevails. She sings of her loyalty and love for him in **Il volo così fido** (CD2 [5]) to the joyful accompaniment of birdsong imitations on the piccolo (sopranino) recorder.

*Il volo così fido  
Al dolce amato nido  
Quell'augellin non ha.  
Come al tuo nobil core  
Quest'alma, tutt'amore.  
Sempre fedel sarà.*

A surer flight  
to his sweet nest  
no bird could have.  
Just as to your noble heart  
this love-filled soul  
will always remain true.

---

**Arias for Andromaca** (Cuzzoni) and Ermione (Faustina)  
from **Astianatte** by Johann Adolf Hasse (London, 1727)

Bononcini's opera *Astianatte* was on a story probably adapted by the Academy's secretary, Nicolò Haym, from a libretto for Florence (1701) by Antonio Salvi. The audience would have known this story, since versions of it went back to Jean Racine's *Andromaque* (1667) and Ambrose Philips's *The Distrest Mother* (1712). The 'Great Disturbance' in which sections of the audience supported either Cuzzoni (as Andromaca, the innocent, persecuted mother) or Faustina (as the evil Ermione) nearly ended Bononcini's career in England as a dramatic composer.

In the aria **Sento che già il pensier** (CD2 [7]) the proud Ermione, who has been spurned by the ungrateful man she believed she loved, Pirro, warns of the pain of unrequited love. This also reflects her own ungrateful heart and feelings towards another man, Oreste. The aria oscillates between themes of love and anger and is dominated by aggression rather than pity, as shown by the rapid ascending scales, octave leaps and arpeggiation in the violins, displaying the agile and diamantine (granito) quality of Faustina's voice.

*Sento che già il pensier  
Caro mi dice, è ver,  
Ama chi t'ama solo,  
Ingrato core.  
E sento la pietà  
Che dice: è crudeltà  
Rendere affanno e duolo  
A fede e amore.*

I already feel a dear thought  
saying to me, it is true:  
love whoever loves you alone,  
o ungrateful heart.  
And I feel pity,  
which says: it is cruel  
to bring horror and grief  
to love and faith.

Ermione demands that Oreste prove his love for her by avenging her honour and attacking Pirro as evidenced in **Deh! lascia, o core** (CD2 [8]), when Andromaca sees Pirro stabbed and sheds tears and sighs of relief, since she has finally agreed to his demand of marriage in order to save her son. The mournful end to Act Two is heightened by this breathless and delicate cantabile aria, a type in which Cuzzoni specialised. It has separate harpsichord and bass parts, a device praised in John Hawkins's *General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, which tells us that at the time when that opera was performed the aria was 'greatly admired for the sweetness of the air, and the originality of the accompaniment'.

*Deh! lascia, o core,  
Di sospirar  
Per un momento;  
E torna poi  
Con più dolore  
A lagrimar  
Ch'io mi contento.*

Pray cease, my heart,  
to breathe  
for one moment;  
And then return  
with more sorrow  
to weep,  
so that I can be contented.

In contrast, the most popular aria, **Ascolta, o figlio, quell'augellino** (CD2 [10]), which is composed in a simple, pastoral style, is preceded by a **Menuet** (CD2 [9]) setting the domestic scene on stage before Andromaca sings poetically of the freedom of the birds to her son, Astianatte. This utterance has added poignancy, since the audience already knows that Astianatte is soon to be abducted.

*Ascolta, o figlio,  
Quell'augellino  
Che sopra quel pino  
Cantando va;  
Sì lieto canta  
Perché si vanta  
D'aver poi trovata  
La sua libertà.  
E tu, disciolto dalle catene,  
Dolce mio bene,  
Vieni, godi la libertà.*

Listen, my son,  
to that bird  
flying over the branches  
of that pine, singing;  
It sings,  
as it happily boasts  
of having now found freedom.  
And you, freed  
from your chains,  
my sweet dear,  
come, enjoy freedom.

---

#### **Aria for Elpidia** (Cuzzoni)

used by Handel in the pasticcio **L'Elpidia** HWV A1 (London, 1725).  
Music from **Ifigenia in Tauride** by Leonardo Vinci (Venice, 1725).

*L'Elpidia* was unusual among pasticcios, which were multi-authored operas taking their constituent parts (sinfonias, arias, ensembles, choruses etc.) from a variety of sources, in that the libretto that it used, Apostolo Zeno's *Li rivali generosi*, was unconnected by origin with the musical numbers that the opera appropriated, most of which were by the up-and-coming Neapolitan composer Leonardo Vinci. In the 1725/26 production of *L'Elpidia* in London Cuzzoni took the title role, singing arias that Faustina had performed earlier in Venice – perhaps in order to show off her versatility and 'guard her territory' before the impending arrival of Faustina.

Elpidia is a Princess of Puglia, in love with the Greek (Byzantine) Prince Olindo. ***Dea triforme, astro fecondo*** (CD2 [11]) is the climax of a soliloquy that immediately follows Elpidia's pledge to Prince Belisario, who is the General of the Imperial armies fighting the invading Goths in Italy, to marry whichever of her two suitors – Olindo or his rival Arminio – acquits himself best in the impending battle. The aria is a prayer to the goddess pleading with her to preserve Olindo's life, but also a reproach to herself for placing his life in danger through her loyalty to the interests of the Empire.

*Dea triforme, astro fecondo\**  
*Che dal ciel stillando umori*  
*Spargi amor su l'erba e i fiori,*  
*Su le piante e fra l'armenti,*  
*Fa che il cor doglia non senti*  
*Nel dover di non amar.*  
*Fa ch'in me colpa non sia,*  
*Se tu vuoi la fede mia*  
*In omaggio al casto altar.*

Three-headed Goddess, fecund star,  
you, who, dripping humours from the skies,  
sprinkle love over the grass and the flowers,  
over the plants and the flocks,  
make this heart impervious to pain  
in its duty to forgo love.  
Make me without blame  
if you wish me to pledge my troth  
on your chaste altar.

\* The 'three-headed goddess' is Hecate, a goddess of the Underworld and, as a star of the same name, a constituent, with Persephone and Demeter, of the constellation known as the Northern Triangle.

### **Aria for Mandane** (Faustina)

from ***Artaserse*** by Johann Adolf Hasse (Dresden, 1740)

(CD2 [12]) *Artaserse* turned out to be Metastasio's most popular libretto, with over ninety known settings. It is the tale of two families, the royal family of Persia headed by Serse (Xerxes) and the family of his captain of guards Artabano, who has already murdered him in order to usurp the throne by the time the second scene of Act 1 arrives.

In the fifth scene of Act Three Mandane, having just been told mistakenly by Semira that her lover, Semira's brother Arbace, has been executed for disloyalty by his father Artabano, is so paralysed by grief that her lack of tears is misread by Semira as indifference. Mandane, in turn, reacts with anger towards Semira's apparent hostility, and the result is this breathless aria, full of bitter reproaches. To 'tone down' the music (for Mandane is no vengeful Fury), Hasse sensitively reduces the sonority of the accompaniment, muting the violins and making the bass pizzicato.

*Mi credi spietata?*  
*Mi chiami crudele?*  
*Non tanto furore,*  
*Non tanto querele,*  
*Ché basta il dolore*  
*Per farmi morir.*  
*Quell'odio, quell'ira*  
*D'un'alma sdegnata,*  
*Ingrata Semira,*  
*Non posso soffrir.*

Do you think me pitiless?  
Do you call me cruel?  
There's no need for such fury,  
no need for such reproaches,  
for grief alone suffices  
to bring about my death.  
That hatred, that wrath  
of an indignant soul,  
o ungrateful Semira,  
I cannot tolerate.

---

### **Aria for Volunnia** (Cuzzoni)

from ***Caio Marzio Coriolano*** by Attilio Ariosti (London, 1723)

Premiered in 1723, *Caio Marzio Coriolano*, based on an adaptation by Nicola Haym of a libretto by Pietro Pariati, was the first and most successful opera for the Academy by Attilio Ariosti (1666–1728 or later), a gifted and versatile Bolognese composer who in that year joined the 'inner circle' of composers for the Academy. Senesino, singing the role of Coriolano (Coriolanus), was the leading man, while Cuzzoni played opposite him as his loyal wife Volunnia (Volumnia). Coriolano, exiled from Rome, is besieging the city with an army of Volscians (a people that he himself had earlier conquered). In talks with a Roman envoy he agrees to return Volunnia to her father, Sesto

Furio, on condition that she remains recognized by Rome as his wife. Volunnia herself assents to this, and in the slow aria **Rendi al padre in me la figlia** (CD2 [33]) endorses this arrangement.

*Rendi al padre in me la figlia,  
Ma la sposa che ti adora  
Teco serba, e nel tuo cor;  
Con l'onor che ti consiglia  
Se pur m'ami, ascolta ancora  
Qualche volta il nostro amor.*

Restore me to my father as his daughter,  
But keep me, as your loving wife,  
with you and in your heart;  
With the honour that guides you  
listen sometimes, if you love me,  
to the voice of our love.

---

**Cantata** (Aria da camera) from **La Libertà** (Faustina)  
by Maurice Greene (London, 1728)

A kind of cantata, **La Libertà** (CD2 [14]) has been identified as Faustina's 'farewell song' to her English patrons performed just before her final departure from London in early July 1728, when she visited her most important English patrons, who included the King and Queen, to take a formal leave of them. (See Michael Talbot's edition of *La Libertà* published by Edition HH.) Although it was customary for eminent visiting singers to pay tribute to their hosts by singing a piece in praise of their nation, Faustina is not known either to have sung in English or to have sung in a public theatre except in an opera. Any performance by her as a leave-taking gesture was necessarily in Italian and in a private setting. (See Michael Talbot's article 'Maurice Greene's Vocal Music on Italian Texts', in *RMA Research Chronicle*, vol. 48 (2017).) Finding a piece of elegant Italian verse of the right length that flattered Britain is not an easy task, but in Greene's cantata, which sets a stanza from a long poem by Joseph Addison conveniently already translated into Italian by his friend Anton Maria Salvini, a very ingenious and exquisitely realized solution is revealed – one that perhaps slyly commemorates in addition the reputed amorous relationship of Faustina and the violinist Mauro D'Alay (Maurino), her inseparable companion, since the framing aria sections treat the violin as a wordless partner to the voice in the manner of a love duet. The composition is in E major, one of Faustina's favourite keys.

*O Libertà, o Dea Celeste, e Bella!  
Di ben profusa, e pregna di diletto!  
Piaceri eterni te presente regnano.  
Guida tuo gaio tren lieta dovizia;  
Vien nel suo peso Suggezion più lieve;  
Povertà sembra allegra in tua veduta;  
Fai di Natura il viso oscuro gaio;  
Doni al Sole bellezza, al giorno gioia.*

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Oh Liberty, thou Goddess heavenly bright,  
Profuse of bliss, and pregnant with delight!  
Eternal pleasures in thy presence reign,  
And smiling Plenty leads thy wanton train;  
Eas'd of her load Subjection grows more light,  
And Poverty looks chearful in thy sight;  
Thou mak'st the gloomy face of Nature gay,  
Giv'st beauty to the Sun, and pleasure to the Day.

---

## LONDON EARLY OPERA



### VIOLIN I

Catherine Martin (*Leader*)  
Felicity Broome-Skelton  
Diane Moore  
Eleanor Harrison  
Philip Yeeles  
Hazel Brooks

### VIOLIN II

Ellen O'Dell  
Julia Black  
Naomi Burrell  
Salomé Rateau  
Mark Seow

### VIOLA

Alexis Bennett  
Stefanie Heichelheim  
Joanna Patrick

### CELLO

Katherine Sharman (*also Bass Violin*)  
Carina Drury  
Norah O'Leary  
Clara Fellman

### DOUBLE BASS

Judith Evans

### BASSOON

Zoe Shevlin

### OBOE

Joel Raymond  
Oonagh Lee

### RECORDER

Louise Strickland  
Emily Baines

### HARPSICORD/ DIRECTION

Bridget Cunningham

London Early Opera (LEO) are at the forefront of baroque research and specialise in the music of George Frideric Handel and his contemporaries. They have established themselves around the world for their imaginative programmes, award winning research, outstanding baroque orchestra and for nurturing singers in the baroque style.

Originally established in 2008 by the Artistic Director, Bridget Cunningham, they are a UK Registered Charity No. 1143989 and also work across the continent as a French Association CréAquitaine. The award winning conductor Bridget Cunningham, directs and coaches from the harpsichord, just as Handel did. They have a new scheme called *The Handelians* focusing on the development and education of exceptional singers inspiring the future generations which was a passion of Handel.

LEO are at the forefront of Baroque research and performance working with leading historians, scholars and editors recording recently discovered and unique programmes in a historical context. Performances range from Handel's *Semele*, *Acis and Galatea*, Bach's *Easter Oratorio*, 400th Anniversary concert of Monteverdi's *1610 Vespers* at Southwark Cathedral, performances at the London Handel Festival, Handel Hendrix and the Foundling Museum and a live broadcast for BBC Radio 4 on the River Thames celebrating to the day, the 300th anniversary of Handel's *Water Music* with a live performance on a boat of the work as well as a world premiere of a new BBC commission, *River*.

## MARY BEVAN

Mary Bevan is a winner of the Royal Philharmonic Society's Young Artist award and UK Critics' Circle Award for Exceptional Young Talent in music. She is a former ENO Harewood Artist and an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music.

Operatic engagements include Rose Maurrant in Weill's *Street Scene* for Teatro Real, Merab in Barrie Kosky's production of *Saul* for the Adelaide Festival, the title role in Rossi *Orpheus* for the Royal

Opera House at Shakespeare's Globe, *Bellezza Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno*, *Yum-Yum The Mikado*, *Zerlina Don Giovanni*, and *Susanna The Marriage of Figaro* at English National Opera, *Elvira L'italiana* in Algeri at Garsington Opera, *Barbarina Le nozze di Figaro* at the Royal Opera, *Despina Così fan tutte*, *Papagena The Magic Flute*, and *Rebecca in Muhly's Two Boys* at ENO. She also created the role of Lila in the world premiere of David Bruce's *The Firework Maker's Daughter* co-commissioned by The Opera Group, Opera North and Royal Opera House.

In concert Bevan recently made her Carnegie Hall debut with The English Concert and Harry Bicket in a performance of *Ariodante*; sang the role of Mary in *Beamish The Judas Passion* with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in the UK and U.S., performed baroque programs with the AAM and OAE, *Faure Requiem* with the Philharmonia, *Maxwell Davies Caroline Mathilde Suite* at the BBC Proms, and *Mendelssohn Symphony No.2* with CBSO. She also participated in a Handel Residency week with Emmanuelle Haïm at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, sang *Bach Magnificat* with the Britten Sinfonia, *Mozart Requiem* with the English Chamber Orchestra, and *Mozart*



Coronation Mass with Southbank Sinfonia. In recital Bevan has sung at the Wigmore Hall, Oxford Lieder Festival, Leeds Lieder Festival, Danube Music Festival, St John's Smith Square and Rhinegold LIVE.

Bevan's recordings already include her three albums on Signum Classics with Bridget Cunningham, *Handel in Italy Vol. 1 and 2* and *Handel at Vauxhall Vol.2*, her art song album Voyages with pianist Joseph Middleton under Signum Records, Mendelssohn songs for Champs Hill Records, Handel The Triumph of Time and Truth and Ode for St Cecilia's Day with Ludus Baroque, Vaughan Williams Symphony No.3 and Schubert Rosamunde with the BBC Philharmonic. In autumn 2019 Signum will release her second disc with Joseph Middleton including Lieder by Schubert, Haydn and Wolf.

## LUCY CROWE

Born in Staffordshire, Lucy Crowe has established herself as one of the leading lyric sopranos of her generation.

With repertoire ranging from Purcell, Handel and Mozart to Donizetti's Adina and Verdi's Gilda she has sung with opera companies throughout the world, including the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, the Glyndebourne Festival, English National Opera, the Teatro Real Madrid, the Deutsche Oper Berlin, the Bavarian State Opera and the Metropolitan Opera. Other roles include Donna Elvira, Pamina, Ismene, Adele, Eurydice, Adina, Sophie, Gilda, Susannah, Countess, Rosina, Iole, Vixen, Micaëla and Merab.

In concert, she has performed with many of the world's finest conductors and orchestras including the LA Philharmonic under Dudamel; the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Nelsons; the Accademia Santa Cecilia Orchestra under Pappano; the Berliner Philharmoniker under Rattle; the Orchestre National de France under Gatti; the Philharmonia under Salonen; the London Symphony Orchestra under Harding, Elder & Rattle; the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under Gardner; the Budapest Festival Orchestra under Iván Fischer; the Zurich Chamber Orchestra under Sir Roger Norrington; the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment under Sir Charles Mackerras; and the

Monteverdi Choir & Orchestra under Sir John Eliot Gardiner.

Lucy is a regular guest at the BBC Proms and as a committed recitalist has appeared at the Aldeburgh, Edinburgh, Salzburg, Tanglewood Festivals and at the Mostly Mozart Festival in New York. She is a regular guest at London's Wigmore Hall and other recital appearances include New York's Carnegie Hall and Amsterdam's Concertgebouw.

Her other recordings include Mendelssohn's Lobgesang with the London Symphony Orchestra under Gardiner for LSO Live; Handel's Il Pastor Fido and a Handel & Vivaldi disc with La Nuova Musica under David Bates for Harmonia Mundi; a Lutoslawski disc with the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Edward Gardner, Handel's Alceste with Christian Curnyn and the Early Opera Company, and Eccles' The Judgement of Paris all for Chandos; and a solo Handel disc – Il Caro Sassone – with Harry Bicket and the English Concert on Harmonia Mundi. Lucy is a Fellow to the Royal Academy of Music.



## BRIDGET CUNNINGHAM

Bridget Cunningham (MMus ARCM) is a conductor, prizewinning harpsichordist and musicologist who trained at the Royal College of Music where she was a Junior Fellow.

Her passion for Handel, performance and musicology, inspired her to create, research, select music and direct from the harpsichord an exciting series of Handel recordings with *London Early Opera* and *Signum Classics* exploring Handel the man, his music and his travels to capture a musical snapshot at a moment in his life. These new CDs are being released worldwide and ***Handel in Italy Vol.1 & Vol.2***, ***Handel in Ireland Vol.1*** and ***Handel at Vauxhall Vol.1 & Vol. 2*** have been reviewed with international acclaim.

Cunningham is a versatile conductor and musician and keen advocate for directing from the harpsichord – just as Handel did. As well as her numerous baroque performances including Handel's operas *Admeto*, *Semele*, Purcell's *Fairy Queen*, Bach's *Easter oratorio*, and Vivaldi's *Gloria*, she has also performed music by Piazzolla with the RTE Irish Chamber Orchestra live on Lyric Radio, conducted recordings of music by George Butterworth. She has also conducted *Elgar's Introduction and Allegro*, Mozart's Violin Concertos, and Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen* with violinist Orpheus Leander at St Martin in the Fields and a new world premiere for BBC Radio 4 with *London Early Opera*, called *River* written by a BBC Inspire Young Composer of the Year, Grace Evangeline-Mason for the 300th Anniversary of Handel's Water Music along with a live broadcast of the work for the BBC.

Her solo harpsichord performances include playing for Prince Charles and the Royal Family at Buckingham Palace, Maison Hine in Cognac, Château de Hautefort in France and the London Handel Festival and enjoys collaborating with baroque dance companies including *Mercurius Company* and *Les Plaisirs Des Nations* performing at Yale University. She also gives lecture recitals and concerts at Art Galleries and opened; 'Watteau: The Drawings Exhibition' at the Royal Academy of Arts in London.

She has performed at several prestigious venues and festivals including the Opera House Teatro Petruzzelli Bari, Italy, St George's Hanover Square, Yale University's Center for British Art, America, St John's Smith Square, London, Innsbruck Festival, Austria and the Victoria International Festival, Gozo. Radio and TV broadcasts include BBC 2 *Messiah*, BBC 4 *Vivaldi's Women*, Radio 4 *Front Row* and Radio 3 *In Tune*, SkyArts, RTE, RTP, Radio Stephansdom, Radio France and has made a short film for *Handel and Hendrix* in London.



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Franco-Flemish harpsichord built by Marc Ducornet, Paris in 2017.  
Orchestral Managers – Oonagh Lee and Debra Pring

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