

Arnold Jacobshagen (Hrsg.)

Opera buffa

Gestern und heute
Past and Present



MUSIK - KULTUR - GESCHICHTE

Königshausen & Neumann

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Im Auftrag des Instituts für Historische Musikwissenschaft
der Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln

Herausgegeben von
Arnold Jacobshagen, Sabine Meine und Michael Rappe

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Continuity and transformation in Neapolitan *commedia per musica*: from Piccinni's *Gelosia per gelosia* (1770) to Paisiello and Palma's *Le vane gelosie* (1790)

The Neapolitan *commedia per musica* appears as a sort of separate land in the continent of eighteenth-century comic opera. One of the most evident reasons for this relative isolation undoubtedly lies in the linguistic option at the origin of its tradition, the Neapolitan dialect being spoken at first by all and then by some of the characters in each libretto. But upon closer inspection, language turns out to be only a component of the independence that characterises the genre, which is marked by a strong cultural identity and a deep sense of continuity. This special condition produces peculiar effects: on the one hand, the importation and adaptation of 'foreign' librettos was a relatively rare phenomenon; on the other, only a fairly limited number of titles enjoyed a large circulation outside Naples. In the following pages, some ingredients and tendencies of this genre will be illustrated by means of two examples: Piccinni's *Gelosia per gelosia*, which had its debut at the Teatro dei Fiorentini in 1770,¹ and *Le vane gelosie*, composed exactly twenty years later by Giovanni Paisiello in collaboration with his pupil Silvestro Palma for the same venue.² The choice of these two operas

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- 1 Cf. *Gelosia per gelosia. Commedia per musica di Giambattista Lorenzi p. a. da rappresentarsi nel Teatro de' Fiorentini nell'està del corrente anno 1770*, Napoli, Vincenzo Flauto, 1770 (I-Fc, Melodrammi 2199.8; from now on, *Gelosia per gelosia-L*). According to Benedetto Croce, *I teatri di Napoli. Secolo XV-XVIII*, Napoli 1891, p. 542, the opera was also performed at the court theatre in the royal palace of Naples on 3 December of the same year. Piccinni's autograph score is in I-Nc, 16.3.6-8 (*Gelosia per gelosia-S*). The same library preserves a coeval copy with shelfmark Rari Cornice 3.3-5 (*Gelosia per gelosia-Sc*), which contains a very interesting indication at the beginning of the first recitativo semplice (vol. 1, f. 38r): „I qui sotto recitativi si eseguiranno tutti in prosa senso [*sic*] accompagnamento della musica; e così in presieque [*sic*] per tutta l'opera“ („The recitatives here below have to be performed in prose without music accompaniment; and likewise thereafter for the entire opera“); on this prescription see Giovanni Polin, „Questa farsa buffa a quattro voci ... è composta con recitativi in prosa et arie in musica“. Tra prassi e sperimentazione: note su storia, struttura e diffusione di spettacoli „misti“ a Venezia nella seconda metà del Settecento“, in: *Commedia e musica al tramonto dell'ancien régime: Cimarosa, Paisiello e i maestri europei*, ed. Antonio Caroccia, Avellino 2017, pp. 227–255: 236.
 - 2 Cf. *Le vane gelosie. Commedia per musica di Giambattista Lorenzi p. a. da rappresentarsi nel Teatro de' Fiorentini per prim'opera di quest'anno 1790*, Napoli, Vincenzo Flauto, 1790 (I-Bc, Lo.3908; *Vane gelosie-L*). The main musical source is in I-Nc, 16.5.5-6 (*Vane gelosie-S*).

among dozens of titles is justified by a special circumstance: the libretto used by Paisiello and Palma is a revamped version, with changed title, of the text set to music by Piccinni, the poet himself, the famous Giambattista Lorenzi, being responsible for the revision. The reuse of existing librettos is a common practice in Neapolitan buffo theatres. This case study, however, provides a valuable opportunity to compare two different stages in the history of the *commedia per musica*. Its interest is further increased by the quality of the authors, since Piccinni and Paisiello are two of the most representative and celebrated operatic composers in the second half of the century. Moreover, *Gelosia per gelosia* and *Le vane gelosie* have one singer in common, the basso Antonio Casaccia, the idol of the Neapolitan audience, who played the same role in both operas.

Before comparing the two works, some information about their reception can be added. Piccinni's creation was revived in 1774 in a slightly altered form; responsible for the adaptation of the text was Antonio Palomba, who in the preface of the printed libretto claims to be a disciple of Lorenzi.³ No other production of *Gelosia per gelosia* is known, either in Naples or elsewhere. Paisiello and Palma's *Le vane gelosie* enjoyed a somewhat wider circulation, with performances in Milan in 1791,⁴ in London in 1792 (with the new title *La discordia coniugale*)⁵ and again in Naples in

3 Cf. *Gelosia per gelosia. Commedia per musica da rappresentarsi nel Teatro de' Fiorentini nell'està del corrente anno 1774*, Napoli, Vincenzo Flauto, 1774 (B-Bc, 20468; I-Mc, Lib.J.97), pp. [3]–[4]: „A chi legge. Questa commedia fu rappresentata con felicissimo incontro l'anno 1770 nell'istesso Teatro de' Fiorentini. Or si è dovuta replicare, e perché da dieci personaggi ch'ella era si è dovuta ridurre ad otto, come ancora per adattare qualche cosa al fare d'alcuni nuovi personaggi, ne fu pregato il suo rispettabile autore, il quale per le maggiori occupazioni che aveva ruscò di metterci mano; nulla però di meno, ne incaricò il suo discepolo; siccome quanto d'inferiore si troverà allo stile di esso autore, è stato tutto debolmente eseguito da Giuseppe Palomba“ („Notice to the reader. This comedy was performed with great success in the year 1770 in the same Fiorentini theatre. Now it has had to be repeated, and since it had to be reduced from ten characters to eight, as well as in order to adapt something to the acting of some new characters, its respectable author was asked to do it, but because of his greater occupations he declined to take up the task; nevertheless, he entrusted the work to his disciple; so everything is found inferior to the style of the author, it has been all improperly made by Giuseppe Palomba“).

4 Cf. *Le vane gelosie. Commedia per musica da rappresentarsi nel Teatro grande alla Scala la primavera 1791*, Milano, Gio. Batista Bianchi, n.d. (D-Mbs, L.eleg.m. 4028).

5 Cf. *La discordia coniugale. A comic opera as represented at the King's Theatre, Pantheon*, London, H. Reynell, 1792 (GB-Lbl, 907.k.3.(6.)); details on this production, including a discussion of the alterations made to Paisiello's score, can be found in *Italian opera in late eighteenth-century London*, vol. 2: Judith Milhous, Gabriella Dideriksen, Robert D. Hume, *The Pantheon opera and its aftermath, 1789-1795*, Oxford 2001, pp. 530–540.

1802.⁶ The original libretto of *Gelosia per gelosia* was included in the third volume of Lorenzi's collected works,⁷ while the 1790 version for Paisiello and Palma was heavily revised to be reused in Venice in 1793 with new music by Gennaro Astarita.⁸

As is often the case in his works, in *Gelosia per gelosia* Lorenzi prefers to obtain funny effects from each dramatic situation than to preserve a general coherence.⁹ In his dramaturgical conception, hilarious incidents count more than consistency and plausibility. Each act has its own comical sketches with little or no connection with the main action. Misunderstandings and disguises contribute to complicate the plot and to postpone the inevitable happy ending.¹⁰

The title of the 1770 libretto alludes to the jealousy that pits the two main protagonists against each other. Aurora suspects that his husband Trifone is in love with Doralba; in fact, Trifone is not interested in the girl, but in her brother Gerundio, who claims to be an alchemist capable of fabricating gold. In order to take revenge for the alleged betrayal, Aurora, with the complicity of her father Polibio, introduces her brother Riccardo, who has just returned from a long trip abroad, as her suitor. Riccardo turns out to be Doralba's fiancé, the two having been separated due to a series of misfortunes. Another sentimental relationship exists between Clarice, who

6 Cf. *Le vane gelosie. Commedia per musica di Giambattista Lorenzi p. a. da rappresentarsi nel Teatro Nuovo sopra Toledo in questo corrente anno 1802*, Napoli, Stamperia flautina, 1802 (I-Bc, Lo.3910).

7 Cf. Giambattista Lorenzi, *Opere teatrali*, vol. 3, Napoli, Stamperia flautina, 1819, pp. 1–96.

8 Cf. *Le fallaci apparenze. Dramma giocoso per musica in due atti, poesia di Gio: Battista Lorenzi accomodata dal tenente Antonio Valli, da recitarsi nell'autunno 1793 nel nobilissimo Teatro di San Samuele*, Venezia, Modesto Fanzo, 1793 (I-Bc, Lo.350); the derivation of this libretto from the one set to music by Paisiello and Palma was first pointed out by Eugenio Faustini-Fasini, *Opere teatrali, oratori e cantate di Giovanni Paisiello (1764–1808)*, Bari 1940, p. 138.

9 On Lorenzi see Francesco Paolo Russo, „I libretti di Giambattista Lorenzi e le opere di Giovanni Paisiello: da *Il furbo malaccorto* a *Le vane gelosie* (1767–1790)“, in: *Studi musicali* 20 (1991), pp. 267–315; Lucio Tufano, „Da *Don Anchise* ai *Litiganti*. L'esordio librettistico di Giambattista Lorenzi tra teatro di parola e opera in musica“, in: *Belliniana et alia musicologica. Festschrift für Friedrich Lippmann zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Daniel Brandenburg and Thomas Lindner, Wien 2004 (Primo Ottocento, 4), pp. 268–300; Anthony R. DelDonna, „Giovanni Battista Lorenzi (1721–1807) and Neapolitan comic opera in the late eighteenth century“, in: *Genre in eighteenth-century music*, ed. Anthony R. DelDonna, Ann Arbor 2008, pp. 52–85.

10 A contemporary theorist counts *Gelosia per gelosia* among Lorenzi's librettos closer to the comedy than to the farce: see Pietro Napoli Signorelli, *Storia critica de' teatri antichi e moderni*, 2nd ed., vol. 6, Napoli, Vincenzo Orsino, 1790, p. 258; the same concept is expressed in the third edition of the work, vol. 10/2, Napoli, Vincenzo Orsino, 1813, p. 123.

is Aurora's nephew, and Gerundio. The cast is completed by three servants: Stella, Cannetella and Suglia, in the employ of Doralba, Aurora and Riccardo respectively.

In the 1790 revision, the number of characters is reduced from ten to seven. Those who disappear are two of the servants, Stella and Suglia, and Clarice, all minor roles in Piccinni. Their elimination requires some changes in dialogues but does not affect the plot substantially. Moreover, Riccardo is renamed Ridolfo, and Cannetella is now called Cardellina. An important change concerns the language. In *Gelosia per gelosia*, six of the ten characters (Aurora, Trifone, Polibio, Stella, Cannetella and Suglia) speak Neapolitan, and the other four (Doralba, Riccardo, Gerundio and Clarice) Tuscan. In *Le vane gelosie* Lorenzi translates into Tuscan all the roles but that of Trifone, performed by Antonio Casaccia as in 1770. The seven characters who act in both the operas have the same voices: soprano for all the women, basso for Trifone and Polibio, tenor for Riccardo *alias* Ridolfo; the only difference concerns Gerundio, who is a basso in Piccinni and a tenor in Paisiello.

On the basis of very similar texts, the composers elaborate two scores that diverge not only in style, but also in the general tone as well as in some morphological choices. The opening overture, for example, looks very different in the two works. Piccinni writes a traditional three-movement sinfonia (C Allegro spiritoso, 3/8 Andante con moto, 3/8 Allegro presto); the first and third movements require oboes, horns and trumpets in addition to strings, while the central one is for strings only; the last movement is as usual in triple meter. Paisiello, instead, shows a more modern form in one movement (C Allegro con spirito) with oboes and horns. In his late autobiography, the composer attributed to himself the 'invention' of the operatic symphony in one movement;¹¹ his statement cannot be taken literally, but undoubtedly he adopted early and regularly used this solution in his dramatic works.

The structure of the two operas can be observed with the help of Table 1, in which the grey background highlights the ensembles. Piccinni's score contains 29 closed pieces, 11 in the first act, 12 in the second and 6 in the third. Solo numbers are much more numerous than ensembles: 21 vs 8. Gerundio, Cannetella and Polibio have three arias each, Aurora, Trifone, Doralba, Riccardo and Clarice two, the minor roles of Stella and Suglia just one. Only two accompanied recitatives are present, one for the *primo buffo* Trifone (before No. 10), and the other for the *prima donna seria* Doralba (before No. 18). Two duets are located in the last act, one for the *prime parti serie* Doralba and Riccardo, and the other for the *buffi* Aurora and Trifone. Larger ensembles are the five-voice introduzione, a sestetto in the first act, a

11 Cf. Nino Cortese, „Un'autobiografia inedita di Giovanni Paisiello“, in: *La rassegna musicale* 3 (1930), pp. 123–135: 133: „È stato il primo a far uso delle sinfonie in un tempo solo, e poi imitato da altri“ („He was the first to make use of symphonies in one movement, later imitated by others“).

quartetto in the second and the two finali; the concluding coro (No. 29) is nothing other than a short homorhythmic number sung by all the characters.

<i>Gelosia per gelosia</i> 1770		<i>Le vane gelosie</i> 1790	
Sc.	Act I	Sc.	Act I
1	No. 1 introduzione (5 voices)	1	No. 1 introduzione (5 voices)
	No. 2 aria Gerundio		No. 2 aria Gerundio*
2	No. 3 aria Cannetella	2	No. 3 aria Cardellina*
4	No. 4 sestetto	4	No. 4 sestetto
6	No. 5 cavatina Clarice	5	No. 5 aria Doralba*
8	No. 6 aria Aurora	7	No. 6 aria Aurora
9	No. 7 aria Riccardo	9	No. 7 quintetto
10	No. 8 aria Polibio	10	No. 8 aria Polibio*
12	No. 9 aria Doralba		
13	No. 10 aria Trifone	13	No. 9 aria Trifone
14-16	No. 11 finale	14	No. 10 finale
	Act II		Act II
1	No. 12 aria Suglia		
2	No. 13 aria Clarice		
4	No. 14 aria Polibio	2	No. 11 aria Polibio*
6	No. 15 aria Gerundio	4	No. 12 aria Gerundio*
7	No. 16 aria Stella	6	No. 13 duetto Aurora-Trifone
10	No. 17 aria Trifone	7	No. 14 aria Trifone
11	No. 18 aria Doralba	8	No. 15 aria Doralba*
12	No. 19 aria Cannetella	9	No. 16 aria Cardellina*
13	No. 20 quartetto	10	No. 17 quartetto
15	No. 21 aria Riccardo	12	No. 18 aria Ridolfo*
16	No. 22 aria Aurora	13	No. 19 aria Aurora
17-18	No. 23 finale	14	No. 20 finale
	Act III		Act III
1	No. 24 aria Polibio		
2	No. 25 duetto Doralba-Riccardo		
4	No. 26 aria Cannetella		
6	No. 27 aria Gerundio		
9	No. 28 duetto Aurora-Trifone	2	No. 21 duetto Aurora-Trifone
10	No. 29 coro (= tutti)	3	No. 22? coro (= tutti)

Table 1. Comparison of Piccinni's *Gelosia per gelosia* and Paisello and Palma's *Le vane gelosie*.

Before comparing Piccinni's creation with Paisiello and Palma's *Le vane gelosie*, it is necessary to say something about the reasons for and the nature of the collaboration between the two composers. In September 1789 Paisiello found himself in serious difficulties due to too many professional commitments: in the space of four months, he was supposed to write a serious opera for the Teatro di San Carlo (*Zenobia in Palmira*) and two *commedie per musica* for the Teatro del Fondo and the Teatro dei Fiorentini (*I zingari in fiera* and *Le vane gelosie* respectively).¹² For the work destined for the Fiorentini, he asked his pupil Palma to help him; in this way *Le vane gelosie* could be premiered the following year.¹³ In the printed libretto, the closed pieces composed by the younger musician are marked with an asterisk, and the same symbol is adopted here in Table 1. As can easily be observed, Paisiello retained for himself all the ensembles as well as the solo numbers for the two *prime parti buffe*, Aurora and Trifone, and left the remaining nine arias to Palma.¹⁴ Paisiello also wrote the only accompanied recitative of the score (before No. 9) and some short segments placed in the scenes I.5-6, in the points where Gerundio and Aurora read fragments of a letter written by Doralba.¹⁵

12 The delay was due to the fact that during the previous months Paisiello had to work on *Nina o sia La pazza per amore*, which he was unexpectedly requested to write by the Neapolitan court; see the composer's supplication addressed to the king published by Eugenio Faustini-Fasini, „Documenti paisielliani inediti“, in: *Note d'archivio per la storia musicale* 13 (1936), pp. 105-127: 116–117; a different identification of the works quoted in this document is proposed by Dino Foresio, *Il migrante dorato. Giovanni Paisiello, 1740-1816*, Bologna 2016, p. 194.

13 The date of the debut is not known; according to Faustini-Fasini, *Opere teatrali, oratori e cantate*, p. 137, the opera was premiered in spring; both Michael F. Robinson, *Giovanni Paisiello. A thematic catalogue of his works*, with the assistance of Hulrike Hofmann, vol. 1, Suvesant 1991, p. 474, and Christine Villinger, „*Mi vuoi tu corbellar*“. *Die opere buffe von Giovanni Paisiello. Analysen und Interpretationen*, Tutzing 2000, p. 361, indicate spring or early summer.

14 *Vane gelosie*-S clearly reflects the multiple paternity of the work: one can distinguish Paisiello's hand, a second hand (which is likely Palma's) for the arias marked by the asterisk, and a third hand for the recitativi semplici, which were written – as usual – by a specialized composer.

15 Doralba's letter is read in its complete form by Gerundio (I.5), but then it is ripped up; so Aurora can only know one half of the document (I.6), and this generates a misunderstanding that is resolved only at the end of the act. One can underline the different treatment adopted by Piccinni and Paisiello for the reading of the letter: the former composer includes the fragments in the recitativo semplice, while the latter emphasizes them in a sort of recitativo accompagnato. On the changing conventions concerning the act of reading in opera, see Marco Beghelli, „Letture in scena“, in: *Studi verdiani* 29 (2019-2020), pp. 17–87.

Le vane gelosie presents many changes compared to *Gelosia per gelosia*. The total number of closed pieces is reduced to 22.¹⁶ Most of them occupy the same place and are based on the same texts as in Piccinni, with the lines in Neapolitan translated into Tuscan and some other slight adaptations. In the first act, an aria for Doralba on new text (No. 5) takes the place of Piccinni's cavatina for Clarice, so anticipating the first appearance of the female *prima parte seria*. It is noteworthy that in the same act a quintetto (No. 7) is located in the area that in *Gelosia per gelosia* hosted a solo number for Riccardo, this substitution clearly matching the general trend to increase the number of ensembles. The same reason is likely behind the insertion of a second duetto for the buffo couple (No. 13) in addition to the original one in the third act (No. 21), whose text – as we shall see – is largely reworked. The insertion of a second duetto also gave the audience another opportunity to enjoy the interaction between the two much-loved artists playing the roles of Trifone and Aurora, namely Casaccia and the fascinating Celeste Coltellini.

If Paisiello and Palma's first and second acts more or less respect the organization of Piccinni's, the third one shows a radical divergence. A major alteration is announced by Lorenzi in the preface of the 1790 libretto:

„Finalmente il terzo atto, ch'era di dieci scene le quali formavano, secondo le regole dell'arte, lo sviluppo della favola, si è da me strozzato in tre sole scene. Se alla gente di buon palato dispiace sì fatta deformità, ne dia tutto il carico alla moderna stravagante moda teatrale che prescrive il solo duetto buffo nel terzo atto.”¹⁷

The last act of *Gelosia per gelosia* was already shorter than the two previous ones, but it still retained its dramaturgical function. In *Le vane gelosie*, instead, according to a well-known tendency in both serious and comic opera,¹⁸ it is reduced to a hasty conclusion including only the duetto for Aurora and Trifone and, probably, a final ,tutti'.¹⁹

Even taking into account the miniaturisation of the third act as well as the previously examined changes in the succession of musical numbers, one

16 Four arias of Piccinni's work (Nos. 5, 12, 13 and 16) have no correspondence in *Le vane gelosie* due to the suppression of the characters of Clarice, Stella and Suglia.

17 *Vane gelosie*-L, p. 3 („Finally, I drastically reduced to only three scenes the third act, originally comprising ten scenes which, according to the rules of art, provided the development of the plot. If the persons of good taste dislike such a deformity, they have to blame the modern extravagant theatrical fashion that requires only the comic duetto in the third act“).

18 On the same phenomenon in opera seria see Lucio Tufano, „Il terzo atto al San Carlo di Napoli nell'ultimo trentennio del Settecento: declino, atrofizzazione, scomparsa“, in: *L'ultimo atto nell'opera del Settecento*, ed. Gaetano Pitarresi, Reggio Calabria 2023, pp. 209–244.

19 In the score the coro is announced but not included; see *Vane gelosie*-S, vol. 2, f. 191r („Siege coro“).

has to realise that the overall plan conceived by Lorenzi in 1770 was considered still valid and effective in 1790. The passage from *Gelosia per gelosia* to *Le vane gelosie*, in other words, appears as an update more than a large and deep renovation.

But what happens inside the musical numbers? Let us begin with an analysis of the two finali. For the conclusion of the first act of *Gelosia per gelosia*, Lorenzi arranged an animated succession of 111 lines involving seven characters. The cause of the mess is Doralba's letter. Riccardo reads the first half of it, which seems to be an invitation to Trifonio to betray and abandon Aurora. But when the second half of the document is added and the complete text can be known, it clearly appears that its content is totally different and that Doralba has no bad intentions, this discovery generating a variety of reactions in everyone present. So turbulent a sequence of events results in frequent changes of metre. The 1770 structure remains essentially unchanged in *Le vane gelosie*, the increase of 3 lines being negligible. Piccinni's and Paisiello's settings also have almost identical dimensions: 547 measures for the former, 542 for the latter. Their respective musical conceptions, however, could not be more disparate.

SECTION	VV.	TEMPO	MM.
Nfra li guaje che st'arma mpietto	16 <i>ottonari</i>	3/8 Allegro	136
Ma via, leggitte; che più s'aspetta	4 <i>decasillabi</i>	C Allegro vivace	17
Se veramente amate	5 <i>settenari</i>	2/4 Andantino	11
Che scelerati / Che brutto nganno	4 <i>decasillabi</i>	C Allegro vivace	15
E così quella storta	3 <i>settenari</i>	2/4 Andantino	6
E io mo so storta? Vi' che frabutto	7 <i>decasillabi</i>	C Allegro vivace	42
Signora, il rimanente	13 <i>settenari</i>	3/8 Andantino con moto	49
Se veramente amate / Il nostro onore	8 <i>endecasillabi</i>	2/4 Andantino	35
Maramè, che cosa è chesta	20 <i>ottonari</i>	C Andante con moto	54
Dove si va? / Al cesso	31 <i>settenari</i>	6/8 Allegro vivace	182
Tot.	111		547

Table 2. Structure of the first-act finale of Piccinni's *Gelosia per gelosia*.

SECTION	VV.	TEMPO	MM.
Tra le spine che nel petto	16 <i>ottonari</i>	2/4 Andante	349
Ma via, leggete; che più si aspetta	4 <i>decasillabi</i>		
Se veramente amate	5 <i>settenari</i>		
Che scellerati / Che nero inganno	4 <i>decasillabi</i>		
E così quella storta	3 <i>settenari</i>		
Ed io son storta? Parla, frabutto	12 <i>decasillabi</i>		
Signora, il rimanente	13 <i>settenari</i>		
Se veramente amate / Il nostro onore	8 <i>endecasillabi</i>		
Come, co-..., che cosa è questa	20 <i>ottonari</i>		
Dove si va? / Al cesso	29 <i>settenari</i>	C Allegro	193
Tot.	114		542

Table 3. Structure of the first-act finale of Paisiello and Palma's *Le vane gelosie*.

In Piccinni each metrical change corresponds to the opening of a new musical segment (Table 2). The author applies this principle with no exception, so generating a great fragmentation: ten different sections, with extensions ranging from 6 to 182 measures. Paisiello adopts a completely different treatment of the same textual materials (Table 3). He opts for only two sections, one in slow tempo of 349 measures and the other in fast tempo of 193. Of course, they both include internal contrasts obtained by means of a refined calibration of musical parameters; but it is clear that Paisiello does not consider the changes in poetical texture as mandatory turning points. The shift from the slow to the fast section deserves a special attention. The point chosen by the composer for this crucial transition falls within the block of 20 *ottonari*, exactly in the moment in which Doralba, exasperated by Gerundio's indecision, exclaims: „Ma crepar, fratello amato, / la tua flemma mi farà“, after which – according to the stage direction – she „parte con rabbia.“²⁰ Doralba's impetus puts an end to a static moment on an long-lasting B-flat pedal, in which everyone has gone strolling around

20 *Vane gelosie-L*, p. 28 („But your calm, dear brother, / will kill me!“ „She leaves in anger“).

without deciding what to do.²¹ Paisiello gives more importance to Dor-alba's impulse of impatience than, for example, to the following return of Ridolfo, which Lorenzi had highlighted by switching from *ottonari* to *set-tenari*. So the articulation the composer adopts is purely dramaturgical in reasons and goals, and not determined by metrical factors.

SUBSECTION	VV.	TEMPO	MM.
TUTTI Maledetta la crudele	4	6/8 Allegro	23
RIC. Ama Clori e tiene accanto	4	3/8 Andantino grazioso	78
TUTTI Viva, viva l'allegria	2		
AUR. Si vorrebbe risentire	4		
TUTTI Viva, viva l'allegria	2		
CAN. Bel veder come han due cuori	4	6/8 Allegro	91
TUTTI Viva, viva l'allegria	2		
POL. Goda amor, godiamo noi	4		
TUTTI Viva, viva l'allegria	2		
TRI. Di un marito animalone	4	2/4 Andantino con moto	40
TUTTI Viva, viva l'allegria	2		
Tot.	34		232

Table 4. Structure of the second-act finale of Piccinni's *Gelosia per gelosia* (first part).

Piccinni's and Paisiello's opposite ways of conceiving and managing a *concertato* clearly emerge also from the analysis of the second-act finale. Also in this case, the 1790 text is very close to that of 1770 as regards content, articulation and dimensions (116 lines in *Gelosia per gelosia*, 122 in *Le vane gelosie*), but the musical settings, although similar in length (508 measures in Piccinni, 493 in Paisiello), are completely different. Lorenzi makes the finale start with a sort of 'realistic' music. Riccardo proposes to Aurora, Cannetella, Polibio and Trifone to sing together a *canzonetta*, „Maledetta

21 See *Vane gelosie*-S, vol. 1, ff. 168v–174r.

la crudele“, and distributes copies of its text. After an opening ,tutti’ strophe, each character sings in turn a quatrain, followed by a two-line refrain performed by all of them for a total of 34 *ottonari*.

SUBSECTION	VV.	TEMPO	MM.
TUTTI Maledetta la crudele	4	2/4 Andante	164
RIC. Ama Clori e tiene accanto	4		
TUTTI Viva, viva l'allegria	2		
AUR. Si vorrebbe risentire	4		
TUTTI Viva, viva l'allegria	2		
CAN. Bel veder come han due cuori	4		
TUTTI Viva, viva l'allegria	2		
POL. Goda amor, godiamo noi	4		
TUTTI Viva, viva l'allegria	2		
TRI. Di un marito animalone	4		
TUTTI Viva, viva l'allegria	2		
Tot.	34		164

Table 5. Structure of the second-act finale of Paisello and Palma’s *Le vane gelosie* (first part).

Piccinni (Table 4) favours musical variety. He merges Riccardo’s and Aurora’s solos with their refrains in one section marked Andantino grazioso; the same happens with Cannetella’s and Polibio’s quatrains, which are set in the same meter and tempo of the opening ,tutti’ strophe, while a final section in Andantino con moto isolates – and emphasizes – Trifone’s contribution to the performance. Paisiello (Table 5), on the contrary, respects the peculiar alternating structure of Lorenzi’s text and writes a single section of 164 measures in which each character sings his quatrain on the same melody adapted to his/her vocal range, and all the refrains have the same music. After the *canzonetta* „Maledetta la crudele“, the two finali develop in a quite similar way, but again Piccinni (Table 6) faithfully respects all the metrical changes in the text, so obtaining four more different sections, while Paisiello (Table 7) puts together the two blocks of *ottonari* and *senari* into a broad concluding Allegro.

SECTION	VV.	TEMPO	MM.
Maledetta la crudele	34 <i>ottonari</i>	6/8 Allegro 3/8 Andantino grazioso 6/8 Allegro 2/4 Andantino con moto	232
Signor, rendetemi	24 <i>quinari</i> 1 <i>endecasillabo</i>	<i>Alla breve</i> / Andante sostenuto	83
Signor, chi siete voi?	1 <i>endecasillabo</i> 1 <i>settenario</i>	<i>Recitativo</i>	10
Son Riccardo, ingannatrice	22 <i>ottonari</i>	<i>Alla breve</i> / Allegro	65
A me sto schiaffone?	33 <i>senari</i>	6/8 Allegro	118
Tot.	116		508

Table 6. Structure of the second-act finale of Piccinni's *Gelosia per gelosia* (complete).

SECTION	VV.	TEMPO	MM.
Maledetta la crudele	34 <i>ottonari</i>	2/4 Andante	164
Signor, rendetemi	28 <i>quinari</i>	2/4 Maestoso	71
Ma si rompa il silenzio	2 <i>endecasillabi</i> 1 <i>settenario</i>	<i>Recitativo</i>	7
Son Ridolfo, ingannatrice	23 <i>ottonari</i>	C Allegro	251
A me sto schiaffone?	34 <i>senari</i>		
Tot.	122		493

Table 7. Structure of the second-act finale of Paisiello and Palma's *Le vane gelosie* (complete).

As previously said, the celebrated *buffo napoletano* Antonio Casaccia, also called 'Casacciello', acted in both *Gelosia per gelosia* and *Le vane gelosie*. This circumstance offers the precious opportunity to observe what treatment Piccinni and Paisiello reserved for a so beloved star of the Neapolitan stage. Casaccia was such a popular artist that poets and composers were

more than willing to enhance his talents.²² Charles Burney, who during his stay in Naples in October 1770 attended in a performance of *Gelosia per gelosia*, testifies to the great feeling between Casaccia and the local audience:

„Indeed this opera had nothing else but the merit and reputation of the composer to support it, as both the drama and singing were bad. There was, however, a comic character performed by Signor Casaccia, a man of infinite humour; the whole house was in a roar the instant he appeared; and the pleasantry of this actor did not consist in buffoonery, nor was it local, which in Italy, and, indeed, elsewhere, is often the case; but was that of original and general sort as would excite laughter at all times and in all places.“²³

Burney confirmed his first impression in the occasion of a second attendance in the opera: „The singing, as I before observed, is wretched; but there is so much *vis comica* in Casaccia, that his singing is never thought of.“²⁴ Despite the opinion expressed by the English traveller, Casaccia's comicality was strongly rooted in the Neapolitan tradition, starting with the exclusive use of dialect. As far as we know, he was of stocky build. In 1785 Lord Edgcumbe described him as a „a man of enormous corpulence“.²⁵ In order to understand his tremendous success, one has to look at him – as insightfully observed by Burney – not only as a singer, but mainly as an actor. He mixed limited vocal abilities with a skilful use of body, gesture and facial expression. Not by chance, Lorenzi's libretto often takes advantage of Casaccia's physicality: in the second act, Trifone disguises himself as a „statua matematica“, a mathematical statue, a sort of automaton that responds

22 For two examples of the influence he was able to exert on the construction of the roles he created, see Lucio Tufano, „Nozze napoletane. *La serva onorata* di Giambattista Lorenzi e Niccolò Piccinni (1792)“, in: *Mozart Studien* 21 (2012), pp. 279–336; Lucio Tufano, „Intertestualità e parodia nella commedia per musica napoletana: il caso dell'*Armida immaginaria* di Giuseppe Palomba e Domenico Cimarosa (1777)“, in: *Studi goldoniani* 18 (2021), pp. 145–172.

23 Charles Burney, *The present state of music in France and Italy or The journal of a tour through those countries undertaken to collect materials for a general history of music*, 2nd ed., London, T. Becket, J. Robson and G. Robinson, 1773, pp. 302–303.

24 Burney, *The present state of music in France and Italy*, p. 326.

25 Richard Edgcumbe Earl of Mount Edgcumbe, *Musical reminiscences containing an account of the Italian opera in England from 1773*, 4th ed., London, John Andrews and F. H. Walls, 1834, p. 40.

when questioned and performs mechanical movements;²⁶ the third act (but only in Piccinni's larger version) includes a series of scenes in which Trifone goes up and down from a balcony sitting in a big bucket and, after struggling with Riccardo, remains ridiculously suspended in the air.²⁷

Allegro moderato

Ob. I-II

Hn. in D I-II

Hn. in D III-IV

TRI.
Deh chiam - ma -

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Bsi.

p

Example 1. Piccinni, Trifone's aria „Morirò, ma dopo morto“ (*Gelosia per gelosia*-S, vol. 1, ff. 142 v-143 v).

Casaccia's extraordinary versatility is fully exploited in *Gelosia per gelosia*. A good example is offered by his first aria, „Morirò, ma dopo morto“ (No. 10). In scene I.13 Aurora, her father Polibio and the servant Cannetella accuse Trifone and threaten to call the guards to have him arrested. All this turmoil is nothing more than a pretext devised by Lorenzi to offer Casaccia the chance to exploit one of the stage situations that he loved most: the

26 See scenes II.12-13 in *Gelosia per gelosia*-L, pp. 44–49, corresponding to scenes II.9–10 in *Vane gelosie*-L, pp. 41–46. The same expedient is the theme at the centre of a successful drama giocoso by Giovanni Bertati and Giovanni Valentini, *La statua matematica*, premiered in Venice in the Carnival season of 1781; on the great interest in automata nurtured by the eighteenth century see Adelheid Voskuhl, *Androids in the Enlightenment. Mechanics, artisans, and cultures of the self*, Chicago-London 2013.

27 See scenes III.7-9 in *Vane gelosie*-L, pp. 69–72.

parody of a great tragic scene.²⁸ Pressed by his pursuers, Trifone declares that he wants to throw himself into the waves. In the accompanied recitative, he exhibits a noble (albeit distorted) language to describe the sea monsters that will devour him. The following closed piece mimics a serious farewell aria, so Piccinni writes long melismatic passages and makes the orchestra echo the vocal line, first using oboes and horns and then – exceptionally – a second couple of horns (Example 1); this interplay is repeated two times throughout the piece,²⁹ with great comical effect. In the same aria, the composer asks Casaccia to speak instead of singing: when Trifone is about to commit suicide, a few words in natural language disclose a moment of sincerity and reveal his fearful nature (Example 2).³⁰

The image shows a musical score for a scene from *Gelosia per gelosia*. The top staff is for the Tenor (TRI.) with lyrics "Ne? Mme jetto?" and "Mme jet - to?". Below are the instrumental parts: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Bass (Bsi.). The music is in 2/4 time and D major. The vocal line is a recitative, with the instrumental parts providing a rhythmic and melodic accompaniment.

Example 2. Piccinni, Trifone's aria „Morirò, ma dopo morto“ (*Gelosia per gelosia*-S, vol. 1, f. 150v).

Piccinni also entrusts Casaccia with onomatopoeic effects. Towards the end of first-act finale, when confusion reaches its peak, Trifone watches disconsolately Aurora and Riccardo leaving on a galley, and in his last lines he describes himself running alone „co no cornetto“.³¹ At this point of the action, he thinks that Riccardo is his wife's lover, so the mention of the

28 Similar parodies of serious scenes can be found in Cimarosa's *Armida immaginaria* (1771) and Piccinni's *La serva onorata* (1792); see, respectively, Tufano, „Intertestualità e parodia nella commedia per musica napoletana“, pp. 158–167, and Tufano, „Nozze napoletane“, pp. 318–321.

29 After the first occurrence (see *Gelosia per gelosia*-S, vol. 1, ff. 143r–144r), it is also applied on the word „disperato“ (ff. 147r–147v) and presented again, but in a different form, when the Allegro moderato section is repeated (ff. 152v–153v).

30 See *Gelosia per gelosia*-S, vol. 1, f. 150v; the same passage is repeated at ff. 156v–156bisr (this repetition, as well as the whole final Allegro vivace section of the aria, is absent in the copy of the score, which offers a shorter version of the number; see *Gelosia per gelosia*-Sc, vol. 1, ff. 158r–177v).

31 *Gelosia per gelosia*-L, p. 31 („with a little horn“).

“cornetto” undoubtedly alludes to cuckoldry.³² The composer, in order not to miss the opportunity to underline this piquant detail, isolates Trifone’s part imitating the sound of the horn from the simultaneous singing of the other characters on stage (Example 3).³³



Example 3. Piccinni, first-act finale (*Gelosia per gelosia-S*, vol. 1, ff. 204v-205r).

Piccinni exceptionally adopts non-musical and even non-verbal tools for Casaccia. In his second aria, „Mo’ vevimmo... mo’ zucammo...“, Trifone has to drink a cup of hot chocolate, so he blows to cool it down. In the score the composer requires the pure sound resulting from this action (Example 4): in this and several similar passages,³⁴ the double „f“ is not an indication of *fortissimo*, but represents the hiss of the consonant *f*.

32 The word „corno“ indicates both the musical instrument and the protuberance present in pairs on the head of some animals, this latter being in Italy a symbol of cuckoldry.

33 See *Gelosia per gelosia-S*, vol. 1, ff. 204v-205r and again ff. 206r-206v.

34 See *Gelosia per gelosia-S*, vol. 2, ff. 76r-77r and again ff. 79r, 84r-85r, 87v-88r, 88v-89r.



Example 4. Piccinni, Trifone's aria „Mo' vevimmo... mo' zucammo..." (*Gelosia per gelosia*-S, vol. 2, ff. 76r-76v).

A very few traces of this variety remain in Paisiello's numbers for the same singer. Casaccia's melodic lines in *Le vane gelosie* are predominantly syllabic. Paisiello still grants him a certain freedom: in his first aria (No. 9), for example, there are frequent grand pauses (as many as eleven in the opening slow section),³⁵ and at each of them we can imagine the famous actor in a funny pose, or grimacing, or joking with the audience. But in general it is clear that Paisiello tries to contain Casaccia's exuberance by means of a more uniform and controlled vocal writing.

Another trait seems to go in the same direction. Paisiello and Palma's score gives very little space to folklike elements, which in contrast are conspicuously present in *Gelosia per gelosia*. Popular features are evident in some Piccinni's arias in six-eight time and in dance style, such as Polibio's „Figlio mio, si' no zuccotto" (No. 8), or Cannetella's „Si vide puzzille" (No. 26). Nothing similar can be found in *Le vane gelosie*, also due to the overall stylistic homogeneity of the solo numbers composed by Palma.

The most emblematic case in this regard is the duetto of Aurora and Trifone in the third act. The opening lines in the 1770 libretto sound totally unrelated to the two characters and the dramatic situation:

AURORA Non songo Aurora chiù, non so chiù chella;
songo na pellegrina sfortunata.

TRIFONE No mme chiammate chiù donna Sabella,
ah menicò, menicò, menicò;
chiammateme Sabella sbenturata.³⁶

35 See *Vane gelosie*-S, vol. 1, ff. 134r-136r.

36 *Gelosia per gelosia*-L, p. 73 („AURORA I am no longer Aurora, I am no longer she; / I am an unlucky pilgrimess. / TRIFONE Don't call me Lady Isabel any more, / menicò, menicò, menicò; / call me unfortunate Isabel"); the repetitions of the word „menicò", which likely derives from the first name Domenico, serves as an intercalary line.

In fact, as noted by Michael Robinson,³⁷ in the third and fifth line Lorenzi quotes a widespread popular song of Renaissance origin, the so called *Canzone di Donna Sabella* (*Lady Isabel's song*), which was still well known in Southern Italy at the end of the nineteenth century, when its text was recorded by several scholars of folk traditions:

Nu' mme chiamati cchiui donna 'Sabella,
chiamatime 'Sabella spenturata;
foi patruna de trentatrè castella,
de Puglia chiana e de Basilecata.³⁸

This quotation, which was easily recognisable by the Fiorentini audience,³⁹ together with the use of Neapolitan dialect and *endecasillabi* (the typical meter of traditional, orally transmitted poetry), gives the duetto of Aurora and Trifone a strong popular tone, which Piccinni perfectly grasps and follows in his setting, characterized by six-eight meter, elementary harmony, rough dynamic contrasts, and constant repetition of short, simple phrases.⁴⁰

When he was asked to revise his libretto for Paisiello, Lorenzi deleted any reference to the *Canzone di Donna Sabella* and used *ottonari* in place of *endecasillabi* and Italian in place of dialect for Aurora; a reminiscence of the previous text can be recognized only in the image of the unfortunate pilgrimess with which Aurora describes herself:

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- 37 Cf. Michael F. Robinson, *Naples and Neapolitan opera*, Oxford 1972, pp. 212-219; the quotation had been already pointed out by Michele Scherillo, *L'opera buffa napoletana durante il Settecento. Storia letteraria*, Palermo 1914, p. 483.
- 38 This version is reported from the area of Lecce and Cavallino (southern Apulia) by Antonio Casetti, Vittorio Imbriani, *Canti popolari delle provincie meridionali*, vol. 2, Roma-Torino-Firenze 1872, p. 428, No. xvii („Don't call me Lady Isabel any more, / call me unfortunate Isabel; / I was mistress of thirty-six castles, / the flat Apulia and Basilicata“); at p. 429 the authors add a „variante napoletanesca“ („Neapolitan variant“): „No' mme chiammate cchiù donna 'Sabella, / chiamateme 'Sabella spenturata; / haggio perduto trentasei castella, / la Puglia chiana e la Vasilicata“ („Don't call me Lady Isabel any more, / call me unfortunate Isabel; / I have lost thirty-six castles, / the flat Apulia and Basilicata“). See also Luigi Molinaro Del Chiaro, *Canti del popolo napoletano*, Napoli 1880, p. 236, No. 388; for a detailed discussion of this song's tradition, see Alessandro D'Ancona, *La poesia popolare italiana. Studi*, 2nd ed., Livorno 1906, pp. 111-113.
- 39 That the *Canzone di Donna Sabella* was well known in Naples in the second half of the eighteenth century is proven by a short manuscript note by Ferdinando Galiani preserved among the materials he collected in preparation for the second edition of his treatise on Neapolitan dialect; see Ferdinando Galiani, *Del dialetto napoletano*, ed. Fausto Nicolini, Napoli 1923, pp. 293-294.
- 40 The start of the duetto is transcribed by Robinson, *Naples and Neapolitan opera*, pp. 213-218; concerning its possible popular origin, the author writes: „Piccinni's music ... leaves us guessing about the extent to which he has used the music either of the Isabella song – if indeed it had its special melody – or of any other“ (p. 219).

AURORA Pellegrina sventurata,
senza casa e senza letto,
cercherò qualche ricetto,
chi mi accolga troverò.

TRIFONE Pecoraro affritto e scuro,
mo' mugnenno e po' quaglianno,
jarraje scauzo tu strillanno:
„Latto frisco nce ne vo?“⁴¹

So in the duetto of *Le vane gelosie* the popular aura is completely lost, and the same happens in Paisiello's setting. Aurora's vocal line, supported by a refined instrumental accompaniment, is gentle and expressive, not without pathetic inflections inspired by the new lines. This can be easily explained by remembering that in 1790 the character was played by Celeste Coltellini, who one year before created the sentimental role *par excellence*, that of Nina in Paisiello's *Nina o sia La pazza per amore*.

Perhaps it is precisely in this shift in tone that the main difference between the two operas lies. The choice of more measured forms and the adoption of a sort of middle style, together with limited use of dialect, clearly distinguish Paisiello and Palma's work from Piccini's. Farcical features appear significantly reduced, and a more sober atmosphere dominates. Nevertheless, the comparison between *Gelosia per gelosia* and *Le vane gelosie* clearly shows and effectively demonstrates the tenacity of the conventions that regulate the Neapolitan *commedia per musica*. In the twenty years between 1770 and 1790, the general structure of the libretto remains essentially unchanged, the increase in the number of ensembles in the latter work being significant but not striking. In addition, the role of the singers appears absolutely crucial in both cases. From this point of view, the centrality of a figure such as Casaccia is emblematic; he, although somewhat downgraded by Paisiello, proves capable of shaping the dramaturgy of both operas in order to achieve immediate comic effects based not only on voice, but also on body and gesture. In the history of the genre, therefore, continuity and transformation coexist in a lively balance that guarantees both recognisability and adaptation to changing tastes.

41 *Vane gelosie*-L, p. 62 („AURORA As an unfortunate pilgrimess, / without home and bed, / I will look for some shelter, / I will find someone who welcomes me. / TRIFONE As a distressed and sad shepherd, / now milking and now curdling, / you will go barefoot shouting: / „Need fresh milk?““).