2.
Chamber Duet

2. 1.
DEFINITIONS AND TYPOLOGIES

> As a field for compositional experimentation, for purposes of instruction or study, as "table-music" or music for social occasions in aristocratic palaces and affluent urban homes, the chamber duet remained limited to a relatively small circle of connoisseurs and admirers due to its high demands on composers, interpreters and recipients.[45] (Musketa 1990, 185)

The idea of the chamber duet as an essentially private musical genre in the 17th and 18th centuries explains its relatively marginal position in music history, as opposed to the more public genres of opera and church music. This can be explained by a fundamental change in musical aesthetics in the late 18th and the 19th century that led to a highly different concept of chamber music. While in the 17th and a larger part of the 18th century the term was applied with equal force to vocal and instrumental music, a tradition with Joseph Haydn's string quartets at its outset led into the establishment of the aesthetic category of "absolute" instrumental music, and subsequently, chamber music became conceived as predominantly instrumental. In contrast, prior to this the chamber duet and the trio sonata were perceived as embodiments of the same structural principles in a different (instrumental and vocal) medium (cf. Boyd 1997, 182). The marginality of the chamber duet is reinforced by its similarly lateral position in relation to the genre synonymous with the term of "vocal chamber music", the (solo) cantata. However, both chamber duet and cantata have in common that in the course of the 17th century they served as an experimental field for structural innovations and the expansion of forms that left a mark on the public genres of opera and oratorio, reluctant to take these risks themselves (cf. Riemann 1912, 391). It is interesting to note how Musketa traces this marginality to the "learned", contrapuntal nature of the chamber duet, placing "high demands" on the levels of musical production, reception and performance. In an age that is gradually going to give way to ideas about

45 **Als kompositorisches Experimentierfeld, für Unterrichts- und Studienzwecke, als Tafelmusik oder zu geselligen Anlässen in aristokratischen Palästen und wohlhabenden Bürgerhäusern blieb das Kammerduett aufgrund seiner hohen Ansprüche an Komponisten, Interpreten und Rezipienten nur auf einen relativ kleinen Kreis von Kennern und Liebhabern beschränkt.**

the artificiality of counterpoint as opposed to a more natural aesthetic of sentiment, the share that contrapuntal techniques have in the chamber duet always plays an important part in its reception.

Compared to the vocal duet in general, the chamber duet is more difficult to define with precision. Although the already mentioned distinction between a lyric text as opposed to a dramatic one is decisive for the dichotomy between the chamber and the dramatic duet, due to the similar scale of the performing forces (two voices plus accompaniment, whether continuo or simpler chamber/orchestral forces) and often also the overall formal structuring, the line between a chamber duet and a (dramatic) cantata for two voices (in the original Italian: *cantata a due*) can be difficult to draw. This is evident in the ways different authors subsume the two genres within each other. According to Hans Joachim Marx (1986, 121), the "antithesis of lyrical and declamatory expression, […] articulation by changes of beat and key, gradual separation of recitative and arioso sections" are common to both, to the extent that he finds that the *cantata a due* is a subspecies of the chamber duet and not of the cantata proper. On the other hand, Timms and Burrows (in Steffani 1987, vii) as well as the *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Emans et al. 1996, 1712) share the opinion that the chamber duet is a "subspecies"[46] of the cantata. Although the relationship between the text (dramatic or lyric) and the genre should be straightforward, in the course of Chapter 2 (2.4 in particular) we will deal with many examples that fall somewhere in between the two extremes. As we shall see later on, the reason for this is that the chamber duet can sometimes display formal and structural traits of the cantata, such as the alternation of solo and duet sections or of recitative on the one hand and aria or duet sections on the other hand, although not always.

The occasional use of the term "madrigal" in connection with the term chamber duet adds to the terminological confusion. It rests on the idea of a continuation of the tradition of polyphonic vocal music from the 16th century. "The cembalo in the early 18th-century drawing room had supplanted the Renaissance dining table as a gathering place, and the circle of singers had diminished from some half dozen to two or three." (Saville 1958, 128) Even though evolutionary ideas of the sort have been subjected to criticism (cf. Liebscher 1987), a certain equivalence between the madrigal and the chamber duet cannot be denied. While discussing Gasparini's collection of chamber duets (Gasparini MS, Duetti; to be dealt with in detail in Chapter 2.4), Michael F. Robinson (1981, 70–71) claims that in Gasparini's time an older type of chamber duet in which "each singer normally sang all the words", employing "polyphonic techniques

46 **Unterart**.

with more consistency" could be identified with the titular notion of the "madrigal". He brings some more examples to support this claim: the collection *Madrigali a 2* (1740–1741) by Giovanni Carlo Maria Clari (Clari MS) and Benedetto Marcello's *Canzoni madrigalesche* (1717), op. 4 (Marcello 1717), both containing quintessentially polyphonic duets of the first type. However, the title of Lotti's collection *Duetti, terzetti, e madrigal a più voci* (Lotti 1705) seems to contradict Robinson's claim as it makes a clear distinction between the madrigal as a vocal genre for more than three voices (and most often *a capella*) and not only the chamber duet but also the chamber trio. Robinson concludes that Gasparini's collection might have initially contained madrigals in Lotti's sense of the word, too, but that they have been meanwhile removed from the aforementioned manuscript at the British Library (also the only available source for the work), and although possible, to me this seems like stretching the argument a bit too far. There are, however, opposing opinions as well, such as Saville's (1958, 130) that "there is no evidence that Clari himself especially thought of his secular pieces [chamber duets, A/N] as madrigals", but that this designation of genre "persisted largely at the hands of publishers and especially of copyists, about whose pages […] there clings an unmistakeable aura of wishful thinking about the good old days of madrigal singing."

A lyric poem is usually a reflection in the first person, and even though love poetry directly involves its addressee into the discourse, sometimes using direct and indirect speech for the purpose, the chamber duet as such rarely capitalizes on this. For instance, even if—and this is very frequent—it involves solo sections, movements in recitative and/or arias, the composer rarely sets them so as to differentiate direct speech as coming from only one of the two imaginary *dramatis personae*, as otherwise the composition would become a *cantata a due* instead of a chamber duet. Still, traces of "latent" dramaturgy will be sought in the chamber duets examined in this study, for even though the text is lyric and the voices do not represent distinct characters, composers still find a way to infuse their setting with dramatic traits. In this last instance, the term "dramatic" is not used in the literal sense (in the sense of equivalence to lyric, epic and dramatic literature) but in a metaphorical one, expressive of the character of the setting. When dealing with the category of the "dramatic", the need for flexibility cannot be stressed enough, for even though the voices in a dramatic duet are individualised on the dramaturgic plane as distinctive characters, this differentiation can be absent on the level of the musical setting, whereas a setting of a chamber duet can be dramatic in character even if the texts that the two voices sing are not.

Let us now attempt to give a brief historical outline of the development—if one can call it a development—of the chamber duet in the 17th

and 18th centuries. As opposed to the authors stressing the continuity with the madrigal quoted above, Liebscher (1987, 31–42) insists that the chamber duet did not evolve from 16th-century vocal polyphony but from early 17th monody by the addition of an extra voice. The beginnings of the early chamber duet cannot be separated from the history of the related genres of the *continuo* madrigal for two voices and the dialogue on the one hand, and the aria and the solo cantata on the other (cf. Whenham 1982; Liebscher 1996). In the two-voice madrigal the generation of composers starting with Claudio Monteverdi used *concertante* techniques to create a specific, dialogic interplay between the voices on the firm basis of *continuo* accompaniment, whereas the genre of the dialogue was determined firstly as a "setting of a text involving conversational exchanges between two or more characters", and only secondly as a "work that employed musical devices such as alternation, echo or contrast in a way which is analogous to the exchanges of spoken dialogue" (Whenham 1982, 181). On the other hand, cantata settings of both lyric, monologic (seemingly designed with a one-voice setting in mind, but set for two voices instead) and dialogic texts integrated soloist, aria movements and duet movements, as well as one-voice and two-voice recitative. Only halfway through the century did the term "duetto" begin to be applied uniformly to compositions deriving from all these previously listed traditions, the first entire collection stemming from Maurizio Cazzati (*Duetti per Camera*, Bologna, 1677). In the second half of the 17th century the composition of chamber duets was focused in Venice and Bologna, but most particularly in Rome, as the "leading cantata composers of Rome—Luigi Rossi, Carissimi, Cesti and Stradella—all wrote duets and set an example that was followed by Steffani and by composers elsewhere, especially at Bologna" (Timms in Steffani 1987, viii). Apart from learned contrapuntal techniques, traits of the opera duet such as dialogic successive exchanges between the two voices instead of imitation were—according to Schmitz (1916, 55–56)—even more prominent in Venetian chamber duets due to the domination of opera in the city's musical life. These prevail in Cavalli's, to a certain extent also Cesti's and later Pallavicino's and Pollarolo's chamber duets, whereas composers such as P. A. Ziani and Giovanni Legrenzi drew on the older tradition of the *concertante* madrigal for two voices.

However, the chamber duet "acquired the status of an autonomous vocal genre with its own formal characteristics" only in the period 1670–1750, "when it can be considered as the vocal equivalent of the trio sonata"[47] (Liebscher 1996, 1572). Moreover, in her foreword to the HHA edition

47 **Den Rang einer eigenständigen Vokalform mit Gattungscharakter erlangte es […] wo es als vokales Pendant zur Triosonate greifbar wird.**

of Handel's chamber duets and trios, Konstanze Musketa claims that the chamber duet reached "its full maturity around 1700" (Handel, 2011, XIV). Cazzati's successors from Bologna such as Giovanni Maria Bononcini, Antonio Pistocchi and Giovanni Bononcini remained at the helm of the genre tradition, turning the extensive, alternating soloist presentation of the long-span thematic material before the voices are combined into a specific feature of the Bolognese duet. But the breadth of techniques such as "echo, dialogue (questions-answers), imitation, simultaneous singing, contrasting juxtaposition of monologic and dialogic sections"[48] (Liebscher 1996, 1575) is at its most evident in the chamber duets of the Roman composer Agostino Steffani, who is at the centre of my interest. Although some contemporary authorities such as Charles Burney identified Bononcini's collection of *Duetti da camera,* op. 8 (1691) as the first representative of "a species of learned and elaborate *Chamber Duets* for voices that began to be in favour" (Burney 1958, 534), this is mostly due to the fact Steffani's duets were dispersed in manuscripts only after 1691, although Timms presents clear evidence that many of them were conceived earlier (cf. Chapter 2.2). According to Timms (Steffani 1987, viii), it was through Steffani's duets that the genre became associated with the notion of a display of contrapuntal skill.

According to Liebscher (2006, 1572), the chamber duet in the period 1670–1750 "led to the manifestation of three well defined formal types"[49], to be described in detail soon and all of them clearly manifested in Steffani's chamber duet opus. She applies her distinction between "Triobesetzung" (trio setting), "Triosatz" (trio texture), "Trioprinzip" (trio principle) and trio sonata to the chamber duet in the following manner: the chamber duet shows a tendency toward the formation of a trio texture between the *concertante*, imitative upper pair of voices and the bass part occupying middle ground between harmonic support and contrapuntal balance, but never reaches the status of the bass part in the trio sonata (Liebscher 1987, 97). This means that the chamber duet is undoubtedly set for three voices and governed by the trio principle, but—unlike the trio sonata—does not display all traits of the trio texture. Nevertheless, the same way as in the trio sonata, it is the use of counterpoint us that distinguishes the genre, although the techniques of imitation are handled more freely than in stricter polyphonic genres such as the fugue.

Chrysander, Liebscher (1987) and Timms (foreword to Steffani 1987) have devised somewhat contrasting, but methodologically similar formal

48 **Echo, Dialog (Frage-Antwort […]), Imitation, Simultanvortrag, kontrastierende Gegenüberstellung monologischer und dialogisierender Abschnitte.**

49 **Drei fest umrissenen Formtypen.**

typologies of the chamber duet. Bearing in mind the formal diversity of Steffani's chamber duets, Timms speaks of the madrigal, the aria and the cantata type. By naming the type of duet that contains exclusively duet movements (and no solos) and has a through-composed, open conception of form after the madrigal, Timms stressed continuity with the most prominent 16th-century genre counterpart. Although most often through-composed, the movements of the madrigal type themselves can also be formally closed, e. g. in ABA form. Timms's aria type is the opposite of the madrigal type in that it inevitably involves repetition on a large scale, producing closed units on multiple levels of form. Unlike the madrigal type, it can also contain solos (a trait it has in common with the cantata type), both recitatives and arias. Elements of strophic repetition can also be found in the variants of rondo form that the aria type sometimes builds. One central duet movement assumes the role of the refrain while the episodes can be duets as well, but are more often solos and strophically related to each other (e. g. the formal plan A B A b A). Finally, Timms's cantata type combines traits of both previous types but is closer to the aria type with the crucial difference that it entails no large-scale repetition. This is where the kinship of the late 17th-century and early 18th-century duet with the cantata is at its most evident, as the "the solo and duet movements serve a formal function similar to that of recitatives and arias (respectively) in the late baroque solo cantata" (Timms in Steffani 1987, ix–x). The solos can include arias, but are most often recitatives with an extensive setting of the last line as arioso.

Chrysander divided Steffani's chamber duets into three groups: "(*a*) 'small' duets in one movement some with *da capo*; (*b*) 'large' duets in which solo movements, some with recitative, were framed by duet movements; and (*c*) 'medium' duets in more than one movement but without solos" (Timms 1987, 222). Liebscher took over and adapted Chrysander's categories. Table 1 attempts to juxtapose Timms's and Liebscher's formal typology. Unlike Timms's, Liebscher's aria type is mainly distinguished by its size. Her aria type is usually a chamber duet on the scale of a single movement, which makes the possibility of both large-scale repetition and solos unlikely and often finds its equivalent in Timms's madrigal type. Liebscher's cantata type is defined solely through its similarity with the cantata, as it is less important to Liebscher if it contains large-scale repetition or not. Finally, Liebscher's sonata type uses criteria that are absent from Timms's classification, since for her historical overview of the chamber duet from 1670 to 1750 it was more important to stress the influence of the trio sonata on the chamber duet. In its complete avoidance of solos and succession of duet movements Liebscher saw the principle of the sonata prevail over the principle of the cantata, and it is irrelevant

for Liebscher whether any movements are repeated. This study adopts Liebscher's categories because of their stress on the kinship between the chamber duet and the trio sonata. From the point of view of Liebscher's classification, dramatic duets often resemble the aria type of chamber duet or a single movement in the sonata type of chamber duet, which facilitates the comparison between chamber and dramatic duets that is at the core of this study when compared to, say, using Timms's classification.

TIMMS		LIEBSCHER
madrigal	→	aria
	←	sonata
aria	→	cantata
	←	sonata
cantata	→	cantata
	←	

TABLE 1.
Timms's and Liebscher's formal classification of the chamber duet

Let us now offer an outline of structural procedures in the chamber duet, applying mostly to its duet movements, that is, to duets of Liebscher's aria or sonata type. As in the opera duet, the voices often alternate their statements of the material over the bass first before engaging in imitation with each other. A longer subject is often composed of two or three units, so that the composer can state it and imitate it both in its entirety or work with its separate units, often combining them contrapuntally with each other. Along with numerous "false entries", when instead of the whole subject only its head motif is stated, the techniques of the interrupting and splitting of the material result in the effect of a stretto although—strictly speaking—there is none.

According to Liebscher, all this can lead to an "incongruity between text and music as well as to an emancipation of musical-structural means as opposed to the text"[50] (1987, 174). With the extensive juxtaposition, superposition and repetition of the text, it is often rendered incomprehensible and a lot of the affect-laden expressivity of the music as the "servant of the text" is lost. Liebscher elaborates on this further by claiming that the incongruity is due to the fact that the text does not call for a two-part vocal setting in the first place, but forms a contradiction with it instead. She sees the dramaturgy of the chamber duet as the parallel unfolding of two monologues

50 **Inkongruenz von Text und Musik sowie die Verselbstständigung der musikalisch-technischen Mittel gegenüber der Textvorlage.**

interconnected only at the level of the texture, resulting in the estrangement of a monologic text through a dialogic setting. However, in my opinion this does not exclude occasional latent dialogic characteristics in the chamber duet. For instance, love lyric is "addressed to the distant beloved, who is yearned for with oaths of love or accused of infidelity. The singer as the performer of the underlying text is in this way at the same time mentally connected with the object to which the statement is directed."[51] (Liebscher 1987, 208) The addressee that is not present in the text is to a certain extent made present in the person of the second singer. "The seeming dialogic stance in the text corresponds to the covert dialogic stance in the music."[52] (1987, 208) In the course of Chapter 2, I shall examine if there is indeed more to this latent dramaturgical aspect than it would seem at first. However, there is no reason why this approach should be confined exclusively to the chamber duet, for latent dramaturgy plays a certain part in the opera duet as well. Many opera duets are conceived on the part of the librettist as parallel monologues, and even the treatment of a dialogic text in a dramatic duet can display traits typical of the chamber duet.

In devising a selection of the chamber duets considered in this chapter, it was essential to consider both printed collections and manuscripts. If we look for the earliest printed collections and the approximate time of creation of some of the manuscript duets, a provisory chronology of duets considered in this study presents itself: Giovanni Bononcini (print, 1691, 1721), Antonio Lotti (print, 1705), George Frideric Handel (manuscript, 1708–1745), Giovanni Carlo Maria Clari (print, 1720 and various MS collections) and Francesco Durante[53] (manuscript, 1720–1730), while the chamber duets of Gasparini remain impossible to date (cf. Cavina 1998, 13). Even though his chamber duets were written over a large time span, Steffani was a pacesetter for the genre due to the wide influence of his chamber duets, so it goes without saying that he should be added to the list and considered first (Chapter 2.2). In the case of his duets the distinction between chamber and dramatic duets is clearer than in the case of some other composers whose works will be examined later on since his chamber duets differ on so many levels from his dramatic duets (see Timms 2003, 198–201), which makes them particularly suitable for a starting point in

51 **An die ferne Geliebte, die durch Liebeschwüre herbeigesehnt oder wegen Treulosigkeit angeklagt wird. Der Sänger als Interpret des zugrundeliegenden Textes ist auf diese Weise gleichsam gedanklich mit dem Objekt verbunden, an das die Aussage gerichtet ist… Der im Text real nicht anwesende Adressat.**

52 **Der verdeckten Dialoghaltung im Text entspricht die scheinbare Dialoghaltung in der Musik.**

53 **As a composer given detailed analytical attention in this study, Francesco Durante will only be referred to by his surname from here on.**

the examination of the genre in the given period. After an analysis of G. F. Handel's chamber duets through the prism of this influence (Chapter 2.3), a detailed comparative examination of selected duets from the aforementioned composers will follow (Chapter 2.4) in the hope of explaining the specificity of their contribution in relation to Handel's and how this relates to their respective dramatic duets, analysed in Chapter 3.

2. 2.
AGOSTINO STEFFANI AS A FORERUNNER

The importance of Agostino Steffani for the music of the middle baroque period has been increasingly recognised lately. Colin Timms claims that "he made a major contribution to opera in northern Germany, where he spent most of his life, and his celebrated chamber duets for two voices and continuo represent an important stage in the development of Italian secular vocal music between Carissimi and Handel" (Timms 2001). Steffani "contributed handsomely to the dissemination of the late seventeenth-century Italian style" (Steffani, 1987, 1). His chamber duets had "a similar impact on European composers as the trio sonatas of his contemporary A. Corelli, only a year Steffani's senior"[54] (Leopold, 2006, 1370), since, to be more specific, "composers such as S. Kusser, G. C. Schürmann, G. Ph. Telemann or G. Fr. Handel took Steffani's style of composing, oscillating between Italian and French music as their example"[55] (Leopold 2006, 1368). Nevertheless, the most influential genre in the composer's opus was unquestionably the chamber duet. Chrysander was of the opinion that "like the string quartets of Haydn, they said everything of which the medium was capable" (Timms, 1987, 222). The opinion of Steffani's contemporaries and immediate successors, such as the aforementioned Mattheson (cf. 1981, 438) and the theorist Giordano Riccati, one of the composer's first biographers, was along similar lines of praise. Riccati admired Steffani's duets in his treatise *Saggio sopra le leggi di contrapunto* (1762) "for their variety and unity, expression of words, and marvellous 'conduct' which he found 'unaffected, easy, and delightful'". (Timms 2003, 304) The composer understood his duets as "an experimental field for vocal composition"[56] (Leopold 2006, 1369). "It is the quality of Steffani's counterpoint and the beauty of his melodic and harmonic expression that make him the greatest exponent of the Italian chamber duet in the late 17th and early 18th centuries" (Timms, 2003, 288).

A precise chronology of Steffani's duets is impossible to establish and can only be reconstructed in fifteen out of his 81 duets on the basis of circumstantial evidence, e. g. the former use of their texts in a cantata. A lot of texts stem from solo-cantatas from the last third of the 17th century, which is an indirect indication that they may have been composed earlier

54 **Hatten für die Komponisten Europas eine ähnliche Vorbildfunktion wie die Triosonaten seines ein Jahr zuvor geborenen Altersgenossen A. Corelli.**

55 **Komponisten wie Joh. S. Kusser, G. C. Schürmann, G. Ph. Telemann oder G. Fr. Händel nahmen sich Steffanis zwischen französischer und italienischer Musik changierende Schreibart zum Vorbild.**

56 **Ein Experimentierfeld für vokales Komponieren.**

than previously thought, as early as the 1670s. This is inevitably the case with the earlier versions of the nineteen duets that the composer revised in the period of 1702–1710, due to a self-proclaimed intention to improve them aesthetically. However, the majority of duets were originally written between 1688 and 1696 when Steffani was *Kapellmeister* at the court in Hanover (Timms 1973, 119), but the selection of duets analysed in this chapter will always take into account the revised versions.

The texts of Steffani's duets are expectedly lyrical, reflecting both the tradition of Petrarchan and pastoral poetry in their exploration of love. The occasionally dramatized, but more often monologic discourse is often directed to an idealised or unattainable amorous object, but can also contain accusations or jealousy or unresponsiveness. Sometimes the typical pastoral characters Clori, Filli, Tirsi or Fileno are named, either as the subjects or as the addressees of the discourse. Even if direct or indirect speech forms an integral part of the text, the musical setting never treats it in terms of dramatic differentiation. As an analysis of Steffani's only dialogic duet *Io mi parto* will show, the composer does not set a dialogue any differently than he would normally set a monologue. The somewhat abstract approach to the text is perceivable also in the relationship between poetic and musical structure and form. "The texts suggest, but by no means determine, the shape of the musical setting" (Timms in Steffani 1987, ix). Also, there are cases where "Steffani could have used one of the singers for narrative and the other for direct speech, but he ignored the opportunity for characterisation, placing considerations of musical form and balance above those of textual propriety." (Timms in Steffani 1985, pages unnumbered) Although Steffani adheres to the duality of text setting known from the cantata by setting the longer *versi sciolti* as recitative and the metrically regular stanzas as arias and duets, there is by no means a direct equivalence between poetic and musical form, especially regarding the question of whether a particular section of the text will be set as duet or aria. He often shows a disregard for large-scale strophic structures, since the "ignoring of strophic elements in texts betokens an interest in through-composition" (Timms 2003, 291).

Steffani's duets are tonally closed, with no more than one out of the maximum of six movements in a key other than the main one. They could be performed by gifted amateurs, but the technical demands can occasionally be challenging, although the composer achieves melodic expressivity by the simplest means as well. The texture of the duets is often rendered richer and denser by the expressive use of chromaticism (e. g. *Begl'occhi, oh Dio, non più*) or a predilection for suspensions (*Pria ch'io faccia*, *Begl'occhi, oh Dio, non più*, *Saldi marmi*). The duets are composed for diverse combinations of voices out of which the ones written for soprano and alto (20),

soprano and tenor (19) and soprano and bass (19) are the most common (Timms 2003, 284). As had been noticed by Leopold (2006, 1370), this is slightly unusual when we think of the fact that both the earlier, *concertante* chamber duet of the 17th century as well as the emergent trio sonata give preference to equal voices, most commonly two trebles. On the other hand, "since equal voices generally excel in similar parts of the range, their use tends to favour parallel motion; counterpoint is not excluded, but it is more difficult for the composer to maintain the independence and distinctiveness of the two equal parts. Scoring for unequal voices does not guarantee a contrapuntal texture, but it facilitates imitation at the fifth, octave, or twelfth and creates tonal space for manoeuvre: it provides opportunities for counterpoint, and Steffani exploits them to the full." (Timms 2003, 285) Almost a third of Steffani's duets written for soprano and alto are relatively late or revised compositions. This type of setting was ideal for the introduction of more dense contrapuntal writing, which contributes to the idea of the composer's maturity. He is also important as one of the first composers to use double counterpoint in 17th-century vocal music.

It is interesting to observe how the thorough revisions Steffani made to his duets (there are 19 preserved examples) affected some of the aforementioned stylistic and formal traits. Steffani often made considerable changes to the thematic material itself, which often had a profound influence on the overall unfolding of the duet. "By exploring more thoroughly the contrapuntal potential of material recast for the purpose, he substantially increased the length and complexity of most of the duet movements. Compared with the earlier versions, the revisions tend as a result of these changes to comprise a smaller number of larger movements of which a greater proportion are duets and are not repeated" (Timms in Steffani 1987, x). Timms (2003, 294) goes as far as to say that on the basis of the chronology of the fifteen dateable duets, a compositional development from closed and repetitive to through-composed duets can be outlined due to Steffani's "burgeoning interest in counterpoint" and supports this claim by a comparison of the revised duets with the earlier ones. The idea of a development from the aria and the cantata type to the sonata type is implied to be gradual, and even more importantly, qualitative and progressive.

Steffani's chamber duets were highly influential in their age. They were not only regularly performed in Hanover, Kassel, Würzbug, Munich, Brussels and Berlin but also imitated by composers such as Giuseppe Antonio Bernabei and Torri in Munich as well as Handel in Italy, Hanover and England. Additional indirect evidence that they were to a certain extent part of the musical life in London is provided by the following: "In London the impresario Heidegger sang them for Princess Caroline in 1719; two years later Durastanti sang 'four songs and [with Senesino] six duettos by the famous Signor Steffani' at her benefit concert" (Timms 2003, 304),

which was probably the first public performance of Steffani's chamber duets. Handel's singers, the castrato Senesino and the soprano Anna Maria Strada del Pò often sang them "during their morning studies", which not only testifies to their pedagogic function but proves that there must have been a connection between the chamber duet and operatic practice, if not directly at the level of composition (as this study will attempt to show), then at least in terms of performance practice.

Besides many manuscript copies, Steffani's chamber duets are accessible in three representative printed editions. The earliest is part of the series *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Bayern*, edited by Alfred Einstein and Adolf Sandberger (Steffani 1905) . By favouring sonata duets for soprano and alto, it cultivates the image of Steffani as a"mature" composer of contrapuntal chamber duets. The image is slightly more diversified in the two collections edited by Timms, a transcribed selection of 12 duets (Steffani 1987) and the facsimile edition of autographs of cantatas and duets in the Garland series *Italian Cantata* (Steffani 1985). The selection of nine analysed duets has been heavily influenced by the accessibility of these sources. An overview is displayed in Table 2:

DUET	SETTING	TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS
Ribellatevi, o pensieri	S&S	cantata	liveliness, simplicity
Su, ferisci, alato arciero	S&S	cantata	
Pria ch'io faccio	S&S	sonata	
Libertà, libertà	S&A	cantata	attempt at dramatization
Io mi parto / Resto solo	S&T	cantata	
Placidissime catene	S&A	sonata	unity, 'abstract' dramaturgy
E così mi compartite	S&T	sonata	unity, formal diversity
Begl'occhi, oh Dio, non più	S&A	cantata	pathetic character
Saldi marmi	S&S	cantata	dying codas

TABLE 2.
A selection of Steffani's chamber duets and their main characteristics

These duets are meant to highlight the diversity of Steffani's chamber duets in terms of setting, formal and structural traits and the relationship to the text. Although not representative of all the traits of the composer's contribution to the genre, they nevertheless exemplify the most important tendencies. The first three duets are simple, lively compositions written for two sopranos, while the next two present attempts at dramatizing the chamber duet as a genre from within. The next three are elaborate chamber

duets for unequal voices. Attention to each one of these groups will be devoted in separate subchapters, while the exceptional and unconventional duet *Saldi marmi* will merit a separate subchapter.

2. 2. 1.
Playfully Equal Voices

Whether a duet is set for equal or unequal voices exerts a great influence on its structural unfolding. The examination of three of Steffani's duets written for two sopranos shows that, although their texts are marked by different, sometimes even opposing affective contents, a range of common traits on the structural and formal plan are due to the specificity of the setting. *Ribellatevi, o pensieri* is an emphatic repudiation of love, *Su ferisci, alato arciero* a no less ardent invocation of Cupid, and *Pria ch'io faccia* a determinate pledge never to reveal the object of one's amorous interest. In spite of contrasting affects, all three of them open with a section in a swift (or in the case of *Pria ch'io faccia*, moderate) tempo in a major mode and the first two close with a repeat of this section. It is not an exaggeration to claim that a setting for equal voices, with its limited possibilities of contrapuntal development, favours shorter forms (as well as a lower share of duet sections within the overall chamber duet), and therefore repetition as well. Similarly, a lively *concertante* texture between equal voices functions better in a swifter tempo, as a slower tempo would offer fewer possibilities for diversity.

Ribellatevi, o pensieri (Steffani 1987, 20–25) and *Su, ferisci, alato arciero* share an identical formal plan of a tripartite (A B A) duet section followed by a strophic solo for each of the singers. The former is an example of utter simplicity in Steffani's chamber duets. The structural plan of subsection A of the duet is bipartite, which is typical for Steffani, and involves the transposition to the dominant of the opening subsection a1 (b. 1–15) as a2 (b 15–30). This formal pattern will be found in many chamber duets of his. The main difference with most duets, especially those written for neighbouring rather than equal voices, is the looser, not strictly contrapuntal relationship between the voices. In order to achieve better exposure of his thematic material in the first bars of the duet, something that seems like a head motif in Soprano 1 is briefly imitated in Soprano 2 only to be taken up again in what sounds like a variant of the theme, but is in fact its continuation. The figurative nature of the material (arpeggiation, quaver figuration) is not only suitable to the emphatic nature of the text ("Ribellatevi", "Pera", both in the imperative mood) but also enables the free handling of contrapuntal techniques: imitation in the octave facilitates consonance, and the passagework can be modified without the loss of thematic recognisability. Subsection B (b. 31–54) is treated even more freely with a lot of loose counterpoint over held notes.

This structural model is slightly extended in *Su, ferisci, alato arciero* (Steffani 1987, 26–33; Steffani recording, Su, ferisci, alato arciero), a duet with a character very similar to *Ribellatevi*. Unlike in *Ribellatevi*, Steffani presents the thematic material of the opening section A in Soprano 1 in its entirety first, assigning distinctive motifs (b. 1–4 = a1; b. 5–7 = a2; b. 7–10 = a3) to individual lines (or their sections) before combining them contrapuntally in the manner of a stretto. Steffani never consistently imitates the three motifs in succession but makes them serve as countersubject to each other before resorting to transpositions and extension to keep the flow going. It is interesting to note that Steffani's more or less consistent use of double counterpoint (juxtaposing a2 and a3), a technique desirable in a chamber duet as the inversion of the voices propels the unfolding of the duet, does not require the same contrapuntal skills as in other duets due to the inevitably frequent crossing of the voices, and only enhances the effect of their interchangeability. *Su, ferisci* does not have a written out *dal segno*, but inverts the voices, written in consistent double counterpoint, in the third (A') section of the only duet movement in the chamber duet.[57] Between comes a bipartite middle section of somewhat smaller proportions (B1 B2). The almost madrigalistic musical interpretation of the text, secured by the careful placement of melismatic passagework on words like "ferisci" (a1), "stral" (a2) is resumed in the similar treatment of the words "saetta" (b1), "dolce" (b2) and "piaga" (b3). The singling out of particular, semantically important words for melismatic treatment is something that the chamber duet shares with the cantata and opera. Whereas *Ribellatevi* justified its lively character by its emphatic protestation, *Su, ferisci* addresses Cupid with the vivid musical imagery of his arrows, a sensual relish in the wounds and the pain that they cause.

TEXT	BAR	FORM		THEMATIC MATERIAL	KEY
Su, ferisci, alato arciero, Il tuo stral non fa morir.	1–10 10–34	A	A_1 A_2	a_1, a_2, a_3 a_1&a_2&a_3	G G-D-G
Occhio nero che saetta Fa una piaga che diletta E fa dolce anco il martir.	34–46 46–60	B	B_1 B_2	b_1&b_1, b_2&b_3 b_1&b_1, b_2&b_3	G
Su, ferisci, alato arciero, Il tuo stral non fa morir.	60ff	A'	A_2	A in invertible CP; A_1 as exposition left out	as A

TABLE 3.
Formal plan of the duet movement of Steffani's chamber duet *Su, ferisci, alato arciero*

57 The distinction between movement and section is sometimes blurred in the chamber duet. This study will be guided by editorial markings, whereby movements are numbered and sections are units that movements consist of. However, in the cases of the so-called cantata type of duet, sections set for solo voices and sections set for two voices will be called movements, whatever their size.

The duet cannot be interpreted otherwise than as a parallel unfolding of two identical monologues, and it shows many parallels to the socalled monotextual dramatic duet of unity, which also unanimously expresses the same affective content, but by characters united in a dramatic situation. *Ribellatevi,* on the other hand, would only be possible to conceive in dramatic terms as a duet of conflict (a "quarrel duet" between two lovers), although there is no difference either in form or in style, which only proves that these dramaturgic distinctions play no part in the musical setting. Still, it is interesting to note that the first solo of the chamber duet, following immediately after the duet movement described above, mentions the amorous object ("infida bellezza") as well. As in most chamber duets to be examined in this study, such a formulation is only slightly coded in terms of gender. Although love poetry of the period most often suggests, through its identification with the person of the poet, a predominantly masculine perspective, this one-sidedness is slightly destabilised through its performance by two voices that are, when it comes to the combination of soprano & soprano and soprano & alto, ambiguously coded in terms of gender as they could be performed both by female singers and castratos. The duet *Pria ch'io faccia* is even less suitable for considerations of latent dramaturgy, as the only hypothetical dramatic situation we could imagine for this duet would be two lovers leading the same inner monologue about the concealment of their passion from each other.

Although the first three sections of *Pria ch'io faccia* (Steffani 1987, 1–9; Steffani recording, Vocal chamber duets) are contrasting in terms of thematic material and are both scored for two voices, the fourth section, being a strophic variation of the second, shows that Steffani's setting follows the strophic structure of the text after all. What begins as a typical example of a sonata duet proves to include large-scale structural repetition in its overall design (A B: first stanza; C B': second stanza) given its musical, albeit not textual refrain. The first section consists once again of two subsections (A1 A2), each one setting its two lines to a composite, bipartite subject. Whereas the first halves of the subjects (a11 = b. 1–2; a21 = b. 14–15) are given only one imitative treatment, the rest of the respective two subsections is based on a free imitative treatment of a12 (b. 10–13) and a22 (b. 16–22). Resisting symmetry, the respective subsections in section C are set differently: C1 (b. 1–8) makes use of only one motif (c1), shifting the balance to subsection C2 (b. 8–26), with its more extensive subject c2 imitated in the manner of a stretto first and then more freely. This tendency of an asymmetrical treatment of sections is at its most intense in the refrain (B), containing three subsections (B1, B2, B3). Whereas the first one (b. 23–30) subjects its material (b1) to two subsequent "interrupted" imitations, the second one (b. 30–35) is almost rudimentary. The third one (b. 35–57) is the

most elaborate with its composite material: b31 (first occurrence in 35–36) provides melodic distinctiveness required of a refrain, while b321 (b. 38–39) and its continuation b322 (b. 39–40) are contrapuntally developed in both successiveness and simultaneity. Section B' is not a strophic repetition of B. Steffani inverts the double counterpoint of the closing section of B (b. 43–57) in B' (b. 49–62).

The composer's decision to give certain lines of the text more space is more meaningful if we carefully read the text. The anonymous poetry would lead us to expect a pathetic chamber duet in the minor mode. Steffani, however, has given the introverted lover's oaths of choosing death rather than revealing the identity of his/her beloved a particular twist. As already said, the dominant character is lively and playful. Steffani not only sets the entire duet in major keys, but implies (there are no tempo indications in any of his duets) a moderate tempo. This is why it does not come as a surprise that the lines mentioning death (motifs a2, b1) are either given little space or treated in a playful way in contrast to their meaning. There is a certain *joie de vivre* in the relishing in a secret and almost something witty in the refrain, as if Steffani was suggesting not taking the lover's oaths so seriously. It might be that this was the reason why Steffani chose to set it for two sopranos in the first place. Indeed, the *concertante* interplay of interchangeable voices does not seem to be appropriate for the pathetic register.

2. 2. 2.
Attempts at Dramatization

Steffani eschews these expectations by writing a duet for soprano and alto in the vein of the soprano duets examined so far. Nevertheless, *Libertà, libertà* (Steffani 1985, 92–100; Steffani recording, Duetti Da Camera) distinguishes itself from them by being a clear case of the cantata type, integrating extensive solos for both alto and soprano between the two duet movements[58]. Whereas two soprano solos, especially in immediate succession, would contribute to a sense of monotony due to the lack of both colouristic and dramaturgic differentiation between them (*Ribellatevi* and *Su, ferisci* do not even attempt to do so, assigning two stanzas of the same strophe to each soloist), *Libertà* can venture into more extended soloist representation, even though the solos do not fully escape the impression of monotony. The two duet movements that frame them, producing an overall four-partite formal design (A B C D), are more different than it

58 **This duet is not edited, but as it belongs to the cantata type, the alternation of duets and solos will be considered like movements rather than sections.**

seems at first. The first one (A) takes up two thematic ideas and imitates them perhaps even more freely than in the previously discussed duets, forming two sections (b. 1–12 and 12–22) in invertible counterpoint and attaching to them a coda (b. 22–34) with a great deal of parallel motion. The character of the duet, abundant in broken chords and dotted passages as well as the text that invokes freedom from a certain "fiera beltà"[59] are comparable to the operatic *Streitduett* or *Zankduett*, a duet giving musical shape to an argument between the characters with the effect of interlocutors interrupting each other. Steffani never sets the line "non posso, non voglio" in its entirety in a single voice but divides it between them. Division of the text between the voices rather than having both voices declaim all lines in their entirety is a distinguishing feature of dramatic vocal genres, and a dramatization of sorts is even more evident in the second duet movement (D). The lines "Quell'altiero sembiante / più non riguarderò", "di quell fasto arrogante / più non mi curerò", "Si sprezzi il laccio ingiusto" and "si scuota il giogo indegno" are evenly divided between the two soloists in alternation, without any sort of contrapuntal interaction between them. The reasons for this could be either that the composer recognised the dual guiding principle of the text as having potential for the introduction of dialogic elements, or that he simply wanted to move on as quickly as possible to the main part of movement D, the setting of the final line "ciò che legò l'amor, sciolga lo sdegno" fully in the tradition of chamber duet. Having the stress on the final section of the text does not necessarily mean a semantic focus as well, but it could be attributed to a mere convention of text setting in vocal music of the 17th and 18th centuries, the same as the last line of a cantata recitative is often set as an arioso. In this movement, an extended subject is imitated three times in two cycles, ending the process with a parallel leading of the voices on the undulating motif of the countersubject. The mellow melismas are set to the word "sciolga", and the verb "sciogliere" (to melt) is treated similarly in the duet *Placidissime catene*.

It is slightly puzzling that Steffani chose to round off this lively, energetic duet with such a gentle closing movement. The imagery of the dissolving of love's ties by anger gains an almost melancholic dimension that creates a good musical balance to the rest of the chamber duet, but does not really lend itself to semantic interpretation. *Libertà* has shown that within a chamber duet, there is room for a pluralism of vocal styles, as elements of the solo as well as the dramatic cantata are often blended with the traditional, contrapuntal duet. Let us now examine the only overtly dialogic of Steffani's

59 **Although traditionally coded as feminine, in a more abstract interpretation the amorous object could be neutral in terms of gender.**

chamber duets, not necessarily his best one. In its duet movements, *Io mi parto / Resto solo* (Steffani 1985, 113–122; Steffani recording, Io parto / Resto solo) does not divide the lines between the voices but uses two variants of almost every line in the manner of dramatic genres such as opera, in line with a dramatic situation of lovers parting. The text varies according to the question which one of the (imaginary?) characters is leaving ("parto") and which one is staying ("resto"). The idea of a female subject (S) who is leaving and a male subject (T) who is staying finds justification in the background of the duet's first performance—namely, it was sung by Princess Sophie Charlotte of Hanover and Max Emanuel, elector of Bavaria on the occasion of her visit to his court in Brussels in 1700, making her the leaving party and him the staying one (Einstein 1907, 87). Steffani's intentions of composing the duet specifically for this occasion are unquestionable and it is interesting to examine to what extent he was aiming at an identification of the voices with the first performers (and the roles they were assuming). The text clearly prescribes a duet setting in the first and sixth stanza as they are the ones that contain the aforementioned textual variants, but it leaves open how the remaining stanzas should be set. A discreet gender specification is provided in the first stanza (section A) by the use of "solo", the masculine form, in the second variant of the opening line, clearly implying a masculine subject who is staying ("resto"). However, in the second (B) and fourth stanza (D) this discrete hint gives room to a very specific dramatic individualisation: the second stanza refers, in direct speech, to "Fileno" as the addressee of the amorous discourse, while the fourth is addressed to an unnamed "bella". This in itself would have not been a reason not to set the following, third (C) and fifth stanzas (E) as duets, since they continue the direct speech uttered by the "characters" Fileno and "bella" (probably an unnamed nymph), but in terms of verse structure both aria and duet would have been a viable option for a setting. By assigning sections B (recitative) and C (aria) to soprano solo and D (recitative) and E (aria) to tenor solo, Steffani identified the tenor as the shepherd Fileno, and the soprano as his "bella". Whether Sophie Charlotte and Max Emanuel consciously participated in this pastoral masquerade remains unknown, but the specific occasion for which the duet was composed would not have been addressed in the setting had not Steffani wanted it so. Although it goes without saying that "the text of the opening duet would not have been out of place in an opera" (Timms 2003, 273), *Io mi parto / Resto solo* is a borderline example between chamber duet and *cantata a due.* Although in terms of the overall organization of movements it approximates the *cantata a due*, the duet movements do not possess traits of the dramatic duets in formal or structural terms.

Musically, the duet is quite unremarkable. Some of the other duets written for Sophie Charlotte (e. g. *Placidissime catene*) demand a higher

standard of vocal agility, whereas this one makes little demands on the soloists' technique, which may be down to Max Emanuel, who could easily have been a less able singer than the princess. It employs a simple melodic style in the duets throughout, and the form is structured even more straightforwardly than in some of the duets for two sopranos examined so far. The first duet movement is in tripartite A B A' form and avoids the *da capo* by inverting the voices in the restatement of the first section, written in double counterpoint. Each of the sections consists of three parts: in the case of A and A', the first two imitate their respective thematic material (a1 and a2), whereas the third one (material a2', set to the same text as a2) adds a descending chromatic line to the words "amato bene". Varying the music of a text that had already been set is comparatively rare in Steffani's chamber duets and could be explained by the need to make the piece even more concise. The second duet movement is even shorter than the first one, comprising two imitative statements of motifs d1 and d1' (a major-mode variant of d1) and two statements of d2 with a countersubject. In terms of the thematic material, the parts are not differentiated, but this is most often the case in dramatic duets, too.

2. 2. 3.
Elaborate Duets for Unequal Voices

Another duet for soprano and alto, but more importantly, one of the rare duets analysed here that belong to the category of the sonata type, *Placidissime catene* (Steffani 1905, 7–14; Steffani recording, Duetti Da Camera) is included in the collection of Steffani's duets in Chrysander's edition of the *DTB*. He was of the opinion that, since the solo movements in the cantata type of chamber duet were often aesthetically inferior to the duet movements, "the finest works were the [above-mentioned, A/N] 'medium' duets" (Timms 1987, 223 and Chrysander 1919a, 332–333). By favouring the sonata type, Chrysander conceived (and helped perpetuate) an image of Steffani as a composer with a propensity for through-composition and an aversion to large-scale repetition. This way, Steffani's duets were made to resemble the sonata duets cultivated by Handel and Clari, which is a misperception since Steffani composed many chamber duets of the cantata type. The duet is constructed by stringing together sections based on two or three subsections that are treated contrapuntally with a varying degree of polyphonic density. The two stanzas of the text are set in two movements and five sections, three in the first one (I–III) and two in the second one (IV–V), although they are not grouped into a bipartite form. Table 4 provides a detailed overview.

TEXT	BAR	FORM	THEMATIC MATERIAL	KEY*
1. Placidissime catene Rallentarvi e crudeltà.	1–13 13–20	I.11 I.12	a_1, a_2 a_2'	D A
	20–26 26–32	I.21 I.22	a_2, a_1 a_2'	D
Hà perduto ogni suo bene Chi ritorna in libertà.	32–38	II.1	b	A
	38–45	II.2	b	
Vivo in doglie e moro in pene Se i miei lacci amor disfà.	46–56	III.1	c_1, c_2 (rhythm of a_1)	b, A
	56–74	III.2	c_1, c_2: extended!	e, D
2. Affanni, pene e guai Voi non farete mai Ch'io mi disciolga, nò.	74–92	IV.1	$d_1+d_2+d_3$, d_3'	D, A
	Bar	IV.2	$d_1+d_2+d_3$, d_3'	D
Amor fa quanto sai, Dalla prigion ch'amai Mai mai non fuggirò.	1–13 13–20	V.1	e_1, $e_{21}+e_{22}$	A, D
	34–60	V.2	e_1, $e_{21}+e_{22}$	D

TABLE 4.
Formal plan of Steffani's chamber duet *Placidissime catene*

* **Throughout this study, in tables the majuscule will refer to major and the minuscule to minor keys.**

So far we have been dealing with duets that work with smaller segments of the text (usually a single line or a couple of lines), translating them into vivid musical imagery. The question of formal and structural unity has been addressed only in the case of duets which involve large-scale repetition of sections or in the case of a prevailing musical "character". On the other hand, *Placidissime catene* is permeated by a madrigalistic musical metaphor if not in its entirety, then at least in the whole setting of the first stanza. This dominant imagery is incredibly well suited to the introduction of counterpoint as the prevailing musical technique of the chamber duet, since the duet is woven together from threads not unlike the "placidissime catene" of love that the text describes. This is most markedly felt in the opening, longest section (I) of the duet, whose second subsection (I.2) is a modified variant of the first one (I.1), resorting to the inversion of voices written in double counterpoint and a transposition of the closing subsection (I.12) back to the tonic (I.22). Subsections I.11 and I.21 are characterised by a triple unfolding of the main thematic material (a1) on the first line ("Placidissime catene"). It does not come as a surprise that the syllable "te" from "catene" receives extensive melismatic treatment, counterpointed consistently by the emphatic, rhythmically marked upward fourth leaps

of a2 (keyword: "rallentarvi", to break you) as a countersubject. Thus the countersubject literally attempts to break the chains of the subject, but does not really succeed, since in the following subsections (I.12 and I.22) it is transformed into a chain itself in a free counterpoint that weaves alternating melismas around held notes, almost paradoxically on the syllable "tar" from "rallentarvi". Thus attempts to break the chains of love become chains themselves and begin to dominate the texture until, quite unexpectedly, a1 enters again in b. 21 in a new subsection (I.21) that looks at first as if it was going to work only with material a2 like the previous one, but proves in the end to be a variant of I.11. Timms (2003, 288) must have had something like this reluctance of the composer to break his own contrapuntal chains in mind when he spoke of the contrapuntal expansion that marks this duet.

Section II offers some necessary contrast by combining the voices much more freely, but once again in double counterpoint, although the word "libertà" is fittingly underlined by parallel semiquaver passages. No wonder this section is the shortest and, to a certain extent, the most superficial in the duet, as it claims that the freedom from love's chains is a great loss. The initial material of section III, with its angular movement and imitation on the seventh (sic!) is fittingly expressive of the affect of pain it conveys ("Vivo in doglie e moro in pene"), presenting the only digression in the minor mode. But it is not long before the major mode returns and with it the imagery of chains, this time in a stretto imitation of the new material c2, whose dotted rhythm reminds us of subject a1 and is followed by undulating melismas in free counterpoint on the word "lacci" (a synonym of "catene") in its closing subsection. The bipartite structural principle brings yet another subsection (III.2) with inverted parts and an extension of the closing subsection into an even more florid chain of coloraturas than the first one.

As the opening section of the second stanza, section IV is marked by a similar motivic plasticity that comes to the fore in the use of an emphatic countersubject. Still, all this material is presented as a composite subject (d1+d2+d3) in the alto first (b. 74–83), although its d2 part is already counterpointed in the soprano by d1. The duality of these two motifs resembles the contrast between a1 and a2 in section I, not only because one of the motifs is dotted and outlines a gradual melodic bow (d1, a1) and the other treats an upward fourth leap sequentially (d2, a2) but also because the emphatic d2 ("voi non farete") directly "addresses" the grief, pain and suffering mentioned in d1 ("Affanni, pene e guai"). The ultimate sense of this contrapuntal-semantic dialogue is revealed in the third line (d3), with its keyword "disciolga" (to melt, to dissolve). The pain and the suffering, inevitably an integral part of a Western cultural

perception of romantic love since Petrarch, would like to dissolve the bonds of love were it not for the determinate resistance of the subject ("voi non farete"!). In its two subsections (IV.1 and IV.2) Steffani works with d1 and d2 as subject and countersubject whereas d3, the semantically crucial material of the section, is subject to a stretto imitation as well as to extension and ornamentation (d3', first occurrence b. 91). The treatment of "disciolga" is similar to the treatment of "catene", "rallentarvi" and "lacci", involving semiquaver passages against held notes in free counterpoint, suggesting perhaps again that love's chains are more steadfast than they appear and that they will not dissolve after all. Section V confirms that the main theme of the second stanza is the lover's determination and constancy. Both its subsections begin with the semantically less significant line ("Amor fa quanto sai", motif e1), followed by a contrapuntal intertwining of e21 and e22 that may again remind us of the combinations a1&a2 and d1&d2. In its repetitive oaths of "mai, mai" (never to escape from his beloved prison) e22 is once again sequential, rhythmically characteristic and emphatic. As before, near the end of the respective subsections (V.1 and V.2) this material undergoes a free stretto treatment, extension and variation, especially in V.2, where the initial gradual movement of e22 is extended into a fourth leap.

Steffani sent *Placidissime catene* with another two duets to Sophie Charlotte in 1699. The princess was not only an avid performer, but Steffani wrote and revised his earlier duets with her in mind. This particular duet displays no latent dramaturgy between amorous subject and object, and it could function both as a parallel unfolding of two identical monologues and as a love duet marked by a unity of affect, affirmative in its adherence to love in spite of the pain it brings. The kind of lyric poetry Steffani set insists on a clear delineation of the roles of the subject and the object of amorous discourse, but the sensuality of two voices in counterpoint is also very well suited to a poem describing the delights of the chains of love. The text is internally dramatized by letting the amorous subject emphatically address "placidissime catene", "affanni, pene e guai" as well as the god of love himself ("Amor"). If a dramatic relationship takes place in *Placidissime catene*, it occurs between the amorous subject and more abstract entities such as the love commitment itself (depicted with the metaphor of chains) and the pains that it brings, and this kind of abstract dramaturgy will permeate some other chamber duets as well.

E così mi compartite (Steffani 1987, 43–50; Steffani recording, Vocal chamber duets) repeatedly addresses the eyes of the beloved with emphatic accusations of cruelty, using the first line as a refrain and introducing elements of formal unity. While both poems combine their respective refrains into repetitive forms on multiple levels of formal structuring, *E così mi*

compartite adds an extra, highly unusual layer to the structural and formal unities that permeate the piece. In Leopold's (2006, 1370) correct opinion "*da capo* form, strophic form, rondo form and vocal ostinato overlap"[60] in it. In spite of large-scale repetition, it belongs to the sonata type as it contains no solo sections. It is also strophic, outlining the following overall form: A B (first stanza) A B' (second stanza). Steffani remains true to his inclination towards binary forms not only on the level of subsections but also by neutralising the tripartite potential of the stanza with the integration of the second repeat of the refrain into the respective second sections (B and B'), written in double counterpoint. With a cadence in b. 17, section A is organised into two subsections (A1 and A2). The composer makes very little use of the second part of the subject (a12, first occurrence b. 3–5) and reduces the texture to free imitations of the main thematic idea a11 (first occurrence b. 1–2). Steffani decided to turn *E così mi compartite* into one of his most monothematic duets, but the thematic material he is working with has comparatively little potential for development.

In section B and B' Steffani chose to reach for motif a11 again, which does not come as a surprise as the refrain almost demands this, but instead of going for the *da capo* repeat, he integrates the textual refrain into what begins at first as a soprano solo on a wholly different text. The idea to juxtapose the seemingly independent melodic unfolding in one voice after only eight bars (beginning from b. 46) with a counterpoint consisting of a modulatory sequence based on a11 and some free figuration seems first and foremost unexpected, as full textual and motivic simultaneity is seldom met in Steffani's chamber duets. The decision seems motivated by a wish to enliven the texture. Had the text not been lyric and monologic, Steffani's idea of superimposing texts in section B would have been well suited to the dramatic situation of a "Streitduett", where characters are interrupting each other or not paying attention to what the other one is saying. Unlike in *Pria ch'io faccia* or *Libertà, libertà* with their simultaneity of different texts, here the parallel unfolding of texts is elevated to a structural principle.

Begl'occhi, oh Dio, non più (Steffani 1987, 103–114; Steffani recording, Duetti Da Camera), another example of the pathetic style, presents an interesting exploration of the pains of jealousy with the central image of tears that the nymph Clori sheds because of her unfounded mistrust of the lyric subject's devotion. This is probably the duet that Steffani revised most extensively. It was originally conceived in *da capo* form, with the first duet movement *Begl'occhi, oh Dio, non più* repeated in its entirety at the end of the piece as a refrain: A (*Begl'occhi*)–solo–B (*Clori mia*)–solo–A

60 **Da-capo-Form, strophische Form, Rondoform und vokales Ostinato.**

(*Begl'occhi*). In addition, duet movement A itself was tripartite. In the revision, tripartite forms gave way to bipartite and large-scale repetition to through-composition. Besides his reductions on the level of overall form, Steffani also made cuts to the text of the recitative, resulting in a more economical text that reduces the incessantly repeated summoning of Clori to a minimum by narrowing the actual pleas to the metrically regular lines that are to be set as duets, while providing background information in recitative. Even more importantly, by cancelling all signs of the refrain principle, Steffani "sacrificed the balanced shape of the original", discarding it "in favour of a more organic structure". (Timms 1969, 122) The revision moved the movement "Clori mia" to the end of the chamber duet, resulting in the following formal design: A–solo (A)–solo (S)–B.

Movement A is shorter and more compact than movement B. Its first section (A1) presents two successive, lapidary motifs separated by rests (a11, b. 1–2 and a12, b. 3–4) that provide the section with melodic recognisability and a more elaborate musical idea (a13, b. 5–9) that induces the section with expressive flavour with the "expressive use of chromaticism", depicting the keyword "piangete". After the initial presentation in succession, motifs a11 and a13 are presented two more times. Section A2 (b. 20–50) is more extended as it works with a composite subject (a21, b. 20–21; a22, b. 21–23; a23, b. 23–28) first presented in its entirety and then imitated motif per motif. Most space is given to motif a23 (b. 31–50), whose forceful dotted rhythm, combined with a little chromaticism, depicts the word "foco" (fire), a contrasting metaphor for the ardour fuelled by Clori's tears ("acqua") in the lyric subject, resulting in a very common, paradoxical poetic opposition of fire and ice (or water). The expansion of this section is achieved by Steffani's usual techniques (imitation, transposition and near-end extension), while the undulating, downward movement on "foco" (opposed to the steady upward movement of "piangete") comes to dominate the texture.

Movement B is tripartite, longer and looser than movement A. It has as many as four sections, out of which the first (B1, b. 1–6) and the third one (B3, b. 25–28) consist of brief motivic alternations with only moderate elements of counterpoint, but are nevertheless important not only for the musical identity of the section but also for the homogeneity of the duet. Material b1 is distinguished by its motivic kinship with a12 (creating a bridge between movements A and B, separated by two long solos), whereas b3 is derived from the material of the preceding section, B2 (b. 7–25). In Timms's opinion (1969, 124), material b2 (b. 7–13) is not substantial enough to carry the construction of this section on its shoulders. Still, in his desire to stress Steffani's potential for contrapuntal and formal development (and the occasional lack of it), he overlooks the fact

that this section sets the words "Ferma il corso a quei due fiumi" (stop the flow of those two streams), so that the clear direction and the monotony of the melodic movement may be due to the endless uniformity of the flow of Clori's tears. Finally, section B4 (b. 28–57) is based on an even more extravagant poetic image, expressed by the keyword "sommerger" (to drown). Built on another bipartite composite subject, this final section exploits all the possibilities that the alternation and the contrapuntal combination of b41 (b. 28–30) and b42 (b. 31–34) provide. Motif b42 closes the circle outlined by the rhythmically lively chromatic ascent of a13 and the dotted chromatic descent of a23 with its likewise dotted, extravagant wavelike movement that underlines, in a typical "marine" metaphor encountered in Italian poetry of the time, the unbridled, unrestrained character of the sea (of Clori's tears). Timms has shown that Steffani revised the material of B4 so that b41, in its melodic contour, can show similarities to the composite of b11 and b12 from section B1 and that he intensified its contrapuntal treatment when compared to the earlier version of the duet. Indeed, b41 and b42 are both imitated individually and contrapuntally combined with each other in a section that unfolds effortlessly. Timms concludes that *Begl'occhi, oh Dio, non più* might have originally been a very early piece dating from 1672–1674. To this testifies a "large number of short points [motifs or idea, A/N] which, once stated, were not re-used", whereas in the revision Steffani used fewer but longer and more elaborate ideas, "systematically exploited in various combinations" (Timms 1969, 127).

2. 2. 4.
Saldi marmi: An Atypical Case Study

Begl'occhi, oh Dio, non più shows no traces of latent dramaturgy, as a presumption that the jealous Clori has two lovers would not only trigger unsuitable comparisons with Handel's cantata *Clori, Tirsi e Fileno* (where Clori is deceiving her two suitors), but it is clear that the text is directed to an absent and unresponsive amorous object. While the drama in *Placidissime catene* was more abstract, the conflict expressed in Saldi marmi (Steffani 1987, 51–66; Steffani, Vocal chamber duets), the last duet to be examined here, is very concrete. The duet is fascinating alone in its text, an engaging account of the nymph Fille, torn between the memory of her deceased beloved Fileno and the awakening of a new love for the handsome Tirsi. It is almost an exception in an array of more conventional lyrics that Steffani set. The poem is very long: it sets apart two different stanzas at the beginning and at the end from a detailed, metrically irregular conglomerate of verse, inviting the composer to set only the former

as duets and the latter as recitative. Leopold (2006, 1370) rightly noticed that by doing this Steffani "set himself apart from the idea of a musical scene"[61], since setting direct speech (Fille's laments) as duet and indirect speech (the narration that provides a context for the laments) as solo recitative contradicts the concept of the solo cantata.[62]

Steffani even expanded the already lengthy recitative section while revising the duet in order to bridge the affective contrast between the two movements of the duet (movement 1 and 2, see Table 5). The first stanza thrusts us in the midst of Fille's distress: in the highly rhetorical opening, she is addressing the marbles of a yet unnamed lover's grave as the witnesses of her fidelity to him with a dramatic question as to whether she should oppose the grave's coldness to her new love, or simply die. This opposition leaves no room for a peaceful resolution, but is nevertheless ambiguous in the interpretation of the word "die" (morire), for we are left wondering if death is referred to literally as the only remaining, radical way out of the ordeal Fille finds herself in or if it is actually a reference to succumbing to amorous, sensual desire, whereof death is a typically baroque metaphor. In the following, long recitative section, a third-person narrator not only explains the background of the situation, naming all three "characters" and explaining that Fileno had died four years ago as well as that it is only after she met Tirsi that Fille considered loving again, but also states that Fille has in the end made the decision to give in to her new love after all. Afterwards, an equally energetic, but highly contrasting monologue follows. Fille not only spitefully rejects the reproaches of the allegorical figure of "inconstanza" (in modern words, her conscience) but directly addresses Tirsi's eyes, openly admitting to him that she might love them (or him) only because of their resemblance to the late Fileno's eyes and concluding the duet with the energetic closing statement "vissi agl'estinti, e per chi vive or moro" (I lived for the dead, and now for one who lives I die).

While revising the duet, Steffani added the recitative "Così Fille dicea" before the second movement ("Inconstanza"), set entirely as a duet, to prepare Fille's change of heart. Unlike some other duets, here the setting (two sopranos) highlights the subject's isolation and loneliness. This is especially felt in the first section of the first movement, where in a slightly morbid way Fille is addressing a quintessentially silent partner, a

61 **Von der Idee einer musikalischen Szene**.

62 **The anonymous text could have easily been set as a dramatic operatic *scena*, the likes of which we often find in Handel's cantatas such as *Dietro l'orme fuggaci* (Armida abbandonata), HWV 105 or *Dunque sarà pur vero* (Agrippina condotta a morire), HWV 110.**

grave, giving the duet setting something of an echo-like effect. The figure of musical echo played an essential role in music history and remained recognisable as a musical topos in Steffani's time as well, so that one could imagine the chamber duet as an echoed monologue instead of a latent dialogue. Nowhere does this come to the fore better than in *Saldi marmi*, especially as Steffani transcends the limited technical capacities of a setting for two voices and adds a new dimension to the typical intertwining of two trebles. The prevailing longer note values (and, accordingly, probably moderate or slower tempi), the avoidance of large-scale repetition and its sheer length render this duet different from the others written for two sopranos, the domination of the major mode being the only common factor.

	TEXT	BAR	FORM	THEMATIC MATERIAL	KEY
1.	"Saldi marmi, che coprite Del mio ben l'ignuda salma	1–18	A_1	a_{11}+ a_{12}	B♭, F, B♭
	Ch'ogni dì più in mezz'all'alma La mia fede stabilite, Che ne dite?	18–36	A_2	a_{21}, a_{21}' a_{22}	c, B♭ F
	Deggio al nuovo desire Opporre il vostro gelo, o pur morire?"	37–56 56–68 68–74	A_{31} A_{32} A_{33}	a_{31}+a_{32}+a_{33} a_{32}+a_{33} a_{33}' (coda)	F, B♭
	Così Fille dicea…			recitative (S_1 or S_2)	
2.	"Incostanza, e che pretendi? Amerò, sì, ch'amerò. So ben io come si può	1–13 13–21	B_{11} B_{12}	b_{111}+b_{112} b_{121}, b_{122}	B♭
	Cangiar amanti e non cangiar gl'incendi.	22–48	B_2	b_{21}+b_{22}	F
	Voi tra tanto, occhi lucenti, Che nel cor mi ravvivate Quegl'ardor ch'eran già spenti, Consolate i miei tormenti, Ch'altri per voi, e voi per altri adoro; Vissi agli'estinti, e per chi vive or moro."	1–4 4–17 17–26 26–30 30–51 51–64	C_1 C_2 C_3 C_4 C_5 coda	c_1 c_2 c_3 c_4 c_5 c_5'	F B♭ g, c c B♭, F

TABLE 5.
Formal plan of Steffani's chamber duet *Saldi marmi*

Having a shorter text of only one stanza, the first duet section is somewhat more compact. Its three subsections show all the tendencies we have

observed so far. For example, both subsections A1 and A3 treat their respective composite subjects (e. g. a11+a12 or a31+a32+a33) contrapuntally either in their entirety, by imitating its constituent parts or combining them with each other. In contrast, subsection A2 presents a longer subject (a21) likewise lending itself to being contrapuntally "dismantled", but chooses to imitate it instead in a consequent stretto (b. 18–22, 26–30) before breaking off into sequential chains of suspensions (b. 22–26, 30–33)[63] that are rhythmically and melodically derived from the semiquaver downward movement of a21 (and therefore marked a21'). The usual bipartite construction of the subsection through the use of invertible counterpoint and transposition (to B-flat major) is rounded off by three emphatic bars on the text "Che ne dite?". By its swift alternation of a lapidary motif (a22, b. 34–36), this brief subsection evokes comparisons with similar homophonic passages in 16th-century madrigal. The madrigalistic stringing together of polyphonic subsections on ever newer thematic material will be even more evident in the second movement.

Meanwhile, it is important to stress a quality of this duet that was remarked upon already by Steffani's immediate contemporaries such as Riccati, who praised the use of the major mode to convey the "affetti molli" of the poetic text, especially Steffani's treatment of the word "morire".[64] Timms identifies the last bars of what I called the coda of subsection A3, "where the voices form exquisite suspensions over a pedal in the bass" (Timms 2003, 274), as the passage Riccati might have had in mind. Apart from the major mode, the predominant musical character of subsection A1 (textually invoking the marbles of Fileno's grave) is also remarkable in its lightness and simplicity of melody and harmony as well as its steady, straightforward rhythmic movement. There is nothing to suggest the dramatic nature of a dead lover's desperate invocations. Subsection A3 is easier to account for. It is semantically more elaborate in its material: motif a31 provides the initial motivic and emphatic impulse ("Deggio al nuovo desire", must I this new desire), whereas a32 ("Oppore il vostro gelo", oppose with your coldness) and a33 ("o pur morire", or die) share syncopated rhythm (ideal for the application of suspensions) and gradual movement, but are differentiated in terms of melodic contour. In the first subsection (A31), Steffani presents the broad melodic arch in its entirety, first in the second and then in the first soprano, interrupting long stretches of solos with the juxtaposition of motifs a31 and a32 as

63 Unlike in *Placidissime catene*, the chains of Fille's fidelity to the dead Fileno will acquire negative connotations in the course of the duet.

64 Due to the unavailability of a modern edition of Riccati's treatise, all information on it was drawn from De Piero 2012 and Timms 2003.

counterpoint. Subsection A32 omits a31 altogether and is constructed solely on either a free stretto imitation of a33 (modifying the original motif) or the already heard juxtaposition of a32 and a33. Steffani clearly wrote the motifs not only in double counterpoint, but also in a way to secure a continuing contrapuntal flow with the simplest means of pitting against each other a series of suspensions and passing note figures. The most unusual bit of this subsection is its coda. Although b. 68–74 are obviously based on material a33, they decompose its motivic recognisability into undulating, complementary upward and downward movement. It is highly uncommon for Steffani's or for chamber duets by other composers to have non-thematic sections. As Timms had noted, the closing bars in particular are effective in avoiding monotony by a consistent use of passing notes and suspensions on a pedal bass. Subsection A3 not only follows a dialectic plan of presenting its material, developing it contrapuntally and then decomposing it by having it die out in musical terms but also elevates the contrapuntal device of non-harmonic notes into a structural principle. Riccati obviously considered the "weakness" of the affective content of this passage of the text particularly poignantly expressed in the major mode, which is from a modern perspective an unusual way to paint the general atmosphere of the text.

The two stanzas of the second, closing duet movement of the work are separated by a double bar line and are therefore dealt with in Table 5 as sections B and C, respectively, but they do not function as distinctive, unified elements of form. Brevity of subsections dominates in both of them: not unlike subsections A1 and A3, subsection B1 works with both parts of a composite subject (b111+b112) only to concentrate more on the second one later on, treating it from b. 10 onwards in rapid alternation. "E che pretendi?" (b112) is given a swift reply in a brief moment of free interplay between b121 (reminiscent of a21) and b122. Subsection B2 is of a longer span and counterbalances the quaver passagework of b21 with the descending chromatic line of b22, a contrast that is based on the opposition "cangiar"/"non cangiar". Nevertheless, unlike in section A, there is little in Steffani's setting that gives the text more semantic weight, and this applies to a certain degree to the following section C as well. It strings together as many as five mainly short subsections, freely constructed by either alternating short span material (in C1) or imitating in stretto a relatively simple subject (in C2, C3 and C4). The final subsection (C5), on the other hand, is reminiscent of the final subsection (A3) of the first duet section both in its construction and character. Although the texts of A3 and C5 are highly contrasted (in the former Fille seeks death, whereas the latter ends with a pledge to "die" for the living), they not only treat their respective thematic material (fourth leaps and prolonged stepwise downward movement) in a

similar way, they also both exploit the sensuality of non-harmonic notes and end with a non-thematic coda freely based on preceding material. Steffani was guided by the word "moro" rather than by the meaning of the text, setting it as syncopated downward movement, the same way as "morire" in a33. In this coda he extended it even more than in A33, by through-composing an extended downward movement abundant in voice-crossing and suspensions. One has the impression that the two duet sections end in the same way.

Does this have semantic significance, in line with the poem's constant drawing of parallels between not only Fileno and Tirsi as objects of Fille's desire, but also between the intensity of her passion for lovers both dead and living? Could it be that the line between the nymph's persistent mourning of Fileno and her irresistible attraction to Fille is difficult to draw, as they are two sides of the same coin? After all, the only way for her to resolve her conflict is to find a common denominator between the two, as she pointedly concludes in the last line. After all, she has only changed lovers but not fires ("cangiar amanti e non cangiar gl'incendi")! The fact that Steffani set both aspects of her lovelorn *persona* in *affetti molli* is certainly a highly interesting take on poetry that seems better suited to the excessive musical practices of Monteverdi's *seconda prattica* than Steffani's smooth setting. By setting Fille's languishing the way he did, Steffani certainly unified this chamber duet in terms of structural procedures, style and character to an even larger extent than the likewise homogenous *Begl'occhi, oh Dio, non più* or *Placidissime catene.*

2. 3.
HANDEL'S CHAMBER DUETS

> The *Duetti di camera* belong to the most sublime forms of Handel's vocal chamber music.[65] (Marx 2002, 600)

Unlike Steffani's, Handel's contribution to the genre of the chamber duet is slightly more easily dateable and therefore lends itself to a division into periods due to the available philological evidence. Handel wrote his first chamber duets in Italy in the period 1706–1710. These duets are distinguished by their setting (mostly for soprano and bass, with the occasional combination of two sopranos and soprano and tenor) and certain stylistic traits that clearly set them apart from Handel's later chamber duets. For instance, "Handel planned most of the early duets as a two-part compositions in which the basso continuo has no separate function, while the later ones are composed as trios, in which two high voices are balanced against an independent continuo." (Musketa in Handel 2011b, XIV).

The penchant of the Hanoverian court for the genre, due to the fact that Steffani was Handel's predecessor as *Kapellmeister*, played a huge part in determining Handel's subsequent dealings with the chamber duet. According to both Musketa and Timms (1987), the revisions Steffani made to his late duets were crucial in exerting an influence on the young Handel as he was composing his second set of duets in Hanover (1710–1712). These duets are all written for soprano and alto and, as will be shown later on, many of them adopt other traits of Steffani's mature chamber duets apart from the setting. For a long time it had been falsely assumed that Handel wrote many more chamber duets in Hanover than is really the case. Among others, the *Händel-Handbuch*, Bernd Baselt's thematic catalogue, lists as many as twelve duets belonging to this period. Scholars were misled by a manuscript source gathering these twelve partly disparate duets into one volume, which was convincingly refuted by Burrows (1985, 35–39), among others.[66] The manuscript nevertheless confirms the performance of these duets at the Hanover court, since it was compiled and dedicated to Wilhelmina Charlotte Caroline von Brandenburg-Ansbach (Caroline of Ansbach, later Queen of England and Handel's patron), the same way Steffani wrote, revised and compiled his duets for Sophie Charlotte. Moreover, Strohm (1993, 29) even toys with the idea that Handel might have gotten acquainted with

65 **Zu den sublimsten Formen von Händels vokaler Kammermusik gehören die *Duetti di camera*.**

66 **Although there are slight disagreements about this among scholars, most probably only five chamber duets can be convincingly attributed to this period.**

the genre of the chamber duet around 1702 at the Prussian court in Berlin, where Sophie Charlotte was queen consort.

Finally, after the sporadic composition of two duets in London in the 1720s, Handel returned to the genre in the period 1740–1745, writing 6 duets for either two sopranos or soprano and alto, and in their simplicity, these duets display traits of Handel's later style and elements in common with the dramatic duet known from Handel's operas. He used some of these chamber duets as a starting point for his own later, mostly choral compositions, the most notable examples being the duets *No, di vuoi non vuò fidarmi* (HWV 189) and *Quel fior che all'alba ride* (HWV 192), wealthy sources of material for different movements in the *Messiah*. Handel always borrowed from his chamber duets for other compositions and never the other way around, and one can conclude that the genre is therefore not a marginal field in his opus (cf. Musketa in Handel 2011b, xiii–xviii). Irrespective of borrowing, duet techniques are important for other genres in Handel's opus such as the anthem, opera and oratorio. "The choruses in *Messiah* which are based on duets remind us that those techniques were central to Baroque methods of composition—and that it is only from such acorns that great oaks may grow." (Timms 1987, 242)

The influence of Steffani's duets on Handel's is undisputed and widely researched. Chrysander (1919a, 336) goes as far as to claim that "Steffani is Haydn, Mozart's share falls mostly on Clari and Handel is Beethoven: both of them, Handel and Beethoven, affiliate themselves with their masters, but both have outgrown the status of a disciple"[67]. As Roberts rightly points out about Handel, "Although he seems to have had little interest in the strict forms of canon, fugue, and ricercar hallowed by German tradition, he was evidently a master of free counterpoint, which he lavished on his Italian duets after the manner of […] Agostino Steffani." (2014, 294) He makes use of the older master's compositional techniques, albeit in a somewhat different combination. There exists clear philological evidence for this influence in the form of a manuscript copy of Steffani's duets (in the *British Library*, Add. 37779) that Handel owned as early as 1707 (Timms 1969, 374–377), during his stay in Italy. Timms (1987, 229) speculates if Handel might have become familiar with some other Steffani duets not contained in the manuscript, perhaps already in Hamburg. Although their chronology has been somewhat revised since (see Handel 2011b), the duets that Chrysander numbered as no. 3–12 are indeed the ones Handel composed in Italy and Hanover, whereas "by the time he [Handel, A/N] wrote nos. 13–20 [in England, A/N] he had long since assimilated the influence

67 **Steffani ist Haydn, Mozart's Antheil fällt größenteils auf Clari, und Händel ist Beethoven: beide, Händel und Beethoven, schließen sich ihrem Meister genau an, beide sind über das Verhältnis eines eigentlichen Schülers hinweg.**

of Steffani and developed his own style… Among the features that display Steffani's influence are the thematic material, contrapuntal procedures and structure of individual movements and complete duets."[68] (Timms 1987, 224) Timms (ibid., 238) compares a dozen excerpts from duets by Handel and Steffani and manages to draw some successful parallels in terms of similarities in melodic treatment of related texts or *affetti*, with *Pria ch'io faccia, Quanto care al cor voi siete* and *E perchè non m'uccidete* as Steffani's duets that Handel shows to have been acquainted with. He is somewhat less convincing in concluding that some of Handel's chamber duets, *Sono liete, Troppo cruda* and possibly *Conservate, radoppiate* are examples of Handel parodying Steffani. However, I am going to leave aside the question of whether Handel "borrowed" from Steffani, since it is not of great relevance to the comparative approach at the core of this study.

In any case, Handel's chamber duets display a number of traits that make them different from Steffani's. For instance, like his cantatas, Handel's chamber duets are tonally open, i. e. they often end in a key other than the one they started in (see Boyd 1997, 188; Knapp 1987, 9; Timms 1987, 224). Likewise, Handel's chamber duets mostly avoid large-scale repetition; they contain no solo movements whatsoever and can therefore be understood as examples of the sonata duet. This means that they consist of a smaller number of contrasting movements, i. e. "they usually have two or three duet movements which alternate between common and triple time" (Musketa in Handel 2011b, xiv). Timms rightly stresses the fact that the manuscript copy of Steffani's duets in Handel's possession contains no duets with solo movements either, but although this proves that Steffani could not have influenced Handel to insert elements of the cantata into his own duets (see Timms 1987, 229), the consistency with which Handel adheres to the sonata type suggests that the omission of solos was a conscious choice. Boyd (1997) draws parallels between the composer's vocal and instrumental chamber music in terms of movement organisation. This is justified because the composer's chamber duets and trio sonatas share many structural traits. Besides making use of contrapuntal techniques in the same way, both can consist of three or four movements in contrasting tempi and time signatures.

The texts of Handel's chamber duets (like Steffani's), "give the same text to both voices, without the use of dialogue" (Musketa in Handel 2011b, iv) and insofar do not destabilise the demarcation line between chamber duet and *cantata a due* like the chamber duets of some other composers to be discussed later on. Unlike Steffani's, their texts do not restrict themselves

68 **"Handel did not, apparently, have further recourse to Steffani when composing his late duets" (Timms 1987, 242), probably because Steffani's duets had become quite famous since his election as president of the Academy of Ancient Music in 1726, acquiring him a reputation matching that of Corelli's.**

to pastoral amatory poetry but embrace reflective, philosophical subjects as well. Interestingly, Reinmar Emans (2012, 497) slightly undervalues the genre by claiming that "the strongly contrapuntal writing… was as little suited for compositional experiments as the short and often stereotyped textual models"[69]. He finds that Handel overcame these shortcomings by not neglecting the overall form, being expressive of the affects of the text and amalgamating irony and different stylistic levels (cf. Emans 2012, 497). However, the claim that the aesthetical superiority of a chamber duet stems from the surpassing of the genre's conventions is somewhat questionable.

For the purposes of this research I have selected eleven of Handel's duets for analysis. Table 6 lists them in the mostly chronological order that they will be dealt with. All the different periods of Handel's career devoted to the genre are duly represented. Two or three duets composed in Italy document the composer's first attempts, and four (or five) duets written in Hanover show how his chamber duets achieved maturity. His only two duets composed in London in the 1720s confirm that he built on these foundations after longer periods of interruption, only to be crowned in his late duets of the 1740s, represented by four compositions.

A precise date or year can be attached only to the six duets written in the 1740s. It is likewise mostly unquestionable that the duets *Langue, geme sospira* (HWV 188) and *Se tu non lasci amore* (HWV 193) were composed in the 1720s in London, but as far as the rest is concerned, different conclusions can be made on the basis of the available philological evidence. Authors such as Burrows, Emans, Musketa, Timms and Strohm vary in their opinions on whether certain duets (mainly *Va, speme infida* and *Tacete, ohimè, tacete*) were written in Italy, Hanover or possibly even Hamburg (see Emans 2012, Musketa in Handel 2011b, Timms 1987, Strohm 1993, 23–29). Strohm relativises the problem of dating even further by hinting at the possibility that Handel might have revised his chamber duets in line with new performance circumstances in London, Hanover or even Italy, which means that unknown original versions of certain pieces for which no sources have been conserved may have existed. This study adopts the opinion of Reinmar Emans, namely, that the period of four years (1708–1712) in which the duets in question were most likely written narrows down the problem of dating to the philological level, as it is doubtful if one can speak of a stylistic development in such a short space of time. Therefore, the considerations of individual duets at hand will engage in questions of dating only if it is relevant to the analytical methodology.

69 **Die stark kontrapunktische Schreibweise, die das Wesen der italienischen Kammerduette ausmacht, [eigneten sich: word order changed, A/N] ebenso wenig für kompositorische Experimente wie die knappen und häufig stereotypen Textvorwürfe.**

DUET	YEAR	PLACE	VOICE	CHARACTERISTICS
Giù nei tartarei regni (HWV 187)	1709?	Italy	S&B	latent dramaturgy (fire / ice); extensive, looser imitative structures
Tacete, ohimè, tacete (HWV 196)	1706?	Italy	S&B	Cupid's sleep; exchange of sections with or without imitation (extensive, looser)
Va, speme infida (HWV 199)	1709?	Italy or Hanover	S&S	many contrasting sections with differing CP density, abridged large-scale repetition
Sono liete, fortunate (HWV 194)	1710–1712	Hanover	S&A	references to Steffani; 1st movement: unity, development; free CP treatment
Tanti strali al sen mi scocchi (HWV 197)	1710–1712	Hanover	S&A	strong motivic unity in all movements; symmetrical & directional CP structures
Troppo cruda, troppo fiera (HWV 198)	1710–1712	Hanover or Italy	S&A	1st&2nd movement: unity, polyphony; 3rd & 4th movement: disparity, homophony
Langue, geme, sospira (HWV 188)	1720–1730*	London	S&A	2nd movement: homophony; 1st&3rd mov. free CP structuring (derivation, alternation, parallelism)
Se tu non lasci amore (HWV 193)	1720–1730**	London	S&A	1st (da capo) & 3rd movement: unity despite domination of derivative free CP structuring
No, di voi non vuò fidarmi (HWV 189)	1741	London	S&S	"Messiah duet"; 1st&3rd movements: 4 cycles, combined imitation of binary material
No, di voi non vuò fidarmi (HWV 190)	1742	London	S&A	1st movement: combining cycles of imitation, ternary form; 3rd movement: quasi fugue
Beato in ver (HWV 181)	1742	London	S&A	*da capo;* sections have multipartite themes: from working out in succession to free CP

TABLE 6.
List of selected chamber duets by G. F. Handel

* Burrows et al. (2013, 207) claims the duet was composed "about 1722". This is supported by the fact that Handel parodied a chamber duet setting of the same text by Pietro Torri in the duet "Notte cara" from his opera Ottone in 1723 (see Chapter 3.4.2.2).

** According to Burrows et al. (2013, 207), the duet was composed "about 1722".

2. 3. 1.
From Italy to Hanover

When examining Handel's early duets written in Italy, the choice inevitably falls on *Giù nei tartarei regni* (HWV 187; Handel 2011b, 51–57; Handel recording, Duetti e Terzetti italiani) due to its peculiarity. As rightly pointed out by Emans, the duet is highly unorthodox already in its choice of subject matter and the treatment of text (Emans 2012, 510). Similar to Steffani's *Libertà, libertà*, it assigns some of its lines to different voices, and although "Io perché troppo amai sarò dannato" and "Tu perch'amato hai poco / sarai dannato" seem like semantic equivalents of the same statement, the duet in no way resembles a dramatic duet like Steffani's *Io parto*. The text is very explicit in addressing its "madonna" (the male lyrical subject's female amorous object) in the manner of a dramatic monologue, whereas the semantic dualities inherent in the text are expressed by a pair of voices clearly coded in terms of gender, the *par excellence* male bass and the other extreme of the coloristic vocal spectrum, the soprano. Nevertheless, the dimensions of a dramatic duet are never attained. For instance, the text "Io perché troppo amai sarò dannato" is assigned to the bass, prompting identification on the basis of the first person singular. The equation of the soprano with the bass's "madonna" does not happen, since by uttering the text "Tu perch'amato hai poco / sarai dannato" the soprano seems to be charging the bass with the accusation expected to be coming from him instead. Due to the predominantly contrapuntal nature of the duet, this dialogic stance is not pursued apart from the beginnings of subsections A21 and A22 (b. 15–16, 27–30, see Table 7) and the ending of section D (b. 144–145), when the texts "io nel tuo cor" and "e tu nel cor mio" are briefly alternated between the soprano and the bass.

The text depicts a desperate lover dragging his amorous object down to the depths of hell for not reciprocating his love (or returning it only insufficiently), but the setting for two voices adds an extra layer of interpretation to the text, especially in relation to its second half (sections C and D). In the vein of Sartre's "L'enfer, c'est les autres"[70], it is revealed that the infernal imagery is just a metaphor for the inner hell that the lovers find in each other's hearts (i. e. in each other). In this context, the idea of fire and ice as inextricably linked opposites acquires an extra dimension: for the male amorous subject, eternal punishment means being locked into the ice-cold heart of his mistress, whereas for her there is no greater suffering than being trapped inside his burning heart. Emans (2012, 512) and Musketa (2008, 238) disagree on whether the contrapuntal setting of

70 A quote from the play *Huis clos* (1943, English translation *No Exit*).

the text implies the incompatibility and irreconcilability or the mutual dependence and inseparability of the lovers, but in my opinion, this only highlights the fact that these two interpretations might be two sides of the same coin and that this semantic dimension would be lost in a setting for one voice.

TEXT	BAR	FORM	THEMATIC MATERIAL	KEY
Giù nei tartarei regni v'andrem, madonna.	1–14	A_1	$a_1(a_{11}+a_{12})$	c
Io perché troppo amai sarò dannato (B) Tu perch'amato hai poco sarai dannato (S) ove maggior è il foco.	15–26 27–37	A_{21}, A_{22}	a_2, a_2'	c f g
Giù nei tartarei regni	38–54	A_1	$a_1(a_{11}+a_{12})$	c
Io ch'ardendo mi sfaccio sarò gettato ove maggiore è il ghiaccio.	55–99	B	b_1, b_2	E♭, B♭, c, g, E♭, B♭
Ma perch'il ghiaccio estremo è nel tuo core, nel mio estremo ardore, avrem in sempiterno	100–104	C	recitative	
io nel tuo cor e tu nel mio l'inferno.	105–147	D	$d_1(d_{11}+d_{12})$	c, g, c

TABLE 7.
Formal plan of Handel's chamber duet *Giù nei tartarei regni* (HWV 187)

The duet consists of four sections, out of which the second (B) and the fourth (D) display structural parallels in their imitative, almost fugal construction. The first one (A) is the only multi-part one in the duet, outlining the clear contours of a tripartite form. Its first subsection treats a composite subject (a11+a12) imitatively, providing an energetic opening by having "the music distinctly paint the stark collapse down into the Hades (Tartarus) with an octave leap directed downwards right at the beginning"[71] (Musketa 2008, 238) and by underlining the emphatic call "v'andrem, madonna" with a series of appoggiaturas. Subsections A21 and A22 work with only one thematic idea (a2) but modify it in line with the different texts that the soprano and the bass utter. Unlike Steffani, who rarely varies his thematic material, here the basic contours of the opening and closing minim are kept, whereas the melodic crotchet movement in

71 **Die Musik malt recht deutlich den krassen Absturz hinunten in den Hades (Tartaros) mit einem abwärts gerichteten Oktavsprung gleich am Beginn.**

between is marked by an angular line with wide leaps in the bass (a2) and gradual movement in the soprano part (a2'). The twofold alternation of these motifs without counterpoint is followed by some free counterpoint, abundant in suspensions, after which in A22 the parts are reversed for a somewhat transposed free restatement of subsection A21. The restatement of A1 rounds off this quite lapidary section, the only one in the duet that works with a set of shorter thematic ideas.

Sections B engages in an extensive *fugato* on two motifs (b1 and b2), treated separately and in succession, with the occasional use of pseudo stretto (b. 72, 75, 85, 87, 97). The fifth leap on "ardendo" and the semiquaver run on "sfaccio" convey the state of being unsettled, shared between these mismatched lovers. The treatment of motif b2 is indicative of Handel's less strict, but more extensive contrapuntal flow than we can find in most of Steffani's duets examined so far. He often modifies the intervallic leap of the third and the seventh quaver of the motif, adapting it to the harmony at hand. The two-voice recitative section C, reminiscent of similar passages in Durante's chamber duets (see Chapter 2.4) leads into the no less fugal section D. Motifs d1 and d2 are rarely stated separately, except when Handel sequences motif d1 (b. 121–124) or engages in free counterpoint with variants of motif d2 (b. 136–138). Compared to the fugal section of some of the later, Hanoverian duets (e. g. *Tanti strali, al sen mi scocchi*), section D still shows a certain freedom in its approach to form.

Tacete, ohimè, tacete (HWV 196; Handel 2011b, 65–73; Handel recording, Duetti e Terzetti italiani) shows that, in contrast to *Giù nei tartarei regni*, a chamber duet for soprano and bass can be highly undramatic as well. Although it has love for subject matter, the text is reflexive and philosophical. Taking as its starting point the poetic image of Cupid sleeping, it epigrammatically concludes that the world is at peace only when love is asleep. Strohm (1993, 23–25) interprets this sententiousness as ironic, drawing on the tradition of the satiric epigram, and develops his analysis from this main hypothesis. Whether Handel's interpretation is ironic or not, there are at any rate no traces of an attempted dramatization, not only because of a clearly monologic text, but also because the abstract content does not lend itself to anything of the sort. The *da capo* form outlined in its first three sections groups them into a larger tripartite form, resulting in the overall layout of three movements: I (A1 A2 A1), II (B) and III (C). More so than *Giù nei tartarei regni, Tacete, ohimè, tacete* builds on a stark contrast between its sections in a slow tempo, ternary metre and the major mode (A1 and C) and fugal sections in a moderate or fast tempo, binary metre and the minor mode (A2 and B). With their dominant imagery of sleep ("dorme"), A1 and C share a common character, too, contributing to the large-scale homogeneity. The fairly short section A1 has the loosest

contrapuntal structure of all the duet's sections: it presents its main motivic idea first in the bass (b. 1–6) and then in the soprano (b. 6–12) only to abandon it in its later course, proceeding as a free counterpoint that makes frequent recourse to the motif accompanying the main motivic idea in the bass (b. 8–9, later on b. 18–19, 24–25). The main purpose of this section is to evoke the serene atmosphere of Cupid's slumber.

The contrast of A2, an "energetic fugue in C minor, that seems to fulfil the academic-contrapuntal demands of the chamber duet with Teutonic thoroughness"[72] (Strohm 1993, 24) is all the more strong. Handel presents something that seems like a long composite subject in a stretto imitation at first. The text "Entro fiorita cuna / dorme amor" is associated with a longer-span motif (a21, b. 32–36), whereas the brief, emphatic question "nol vedete? (a22, b. 36–38) is set to a jumpy dactilic rhythmic line. Like in the equivalent fugal section of *Giù nei tartarei regni*, Handel gives preference to a freer, but at the same time more expanded treatment of fewer thematic ideas rather than stringing together smaller sections (each of which is based on the working out of its own material), like Steffani sometimes tends to. For instance, he quickly abandons stating motif a21 in its entirety, reduces it to the gestural, emphatic head motif by leaving out its second part, consisting of a jerky, syncopated sequential movement in crotchets on the text "dorme". From b. 38 onwards, a21 is stated not only in this abbreviated form but also less often with a22 as its continuation. The texture becomes dominated by pedal structures above which one of the voices outlines sequential statements of both the abridged a21 and of a22 (the latter dominating near the end of the section) and by free counterpoint (containing occasional figuration of the material, e. g. in b. 60 and 65). Two quasi-recitative bars (b. 81–82) lead back into the repeat of A1.

The principle of alternating serene and swift passages continues in movement B, which is even less consistently imitative than A2. The single thematic idea (b, first occurrence b. 1–2) is rarely provided with a counterpoint comparable to a countersubject. It is either accompanied by held notes (b. 3, 17–23) or sung note against note, sometimes even in parallel motion and is thereby sometimes slightly modified. Handel weaves passages of free counterpoint in between (often conceived like *contrapunctus ligatus*) and enhances the tension with sequential repetition. The sense of urgency and anxiousness inherent in the danger of waking Cupid conveys the havoc created by love. Finally, the last line and the last movement (C) present the duet's moral by returning to the tone of section A1. However, it slightly undermines the structural contrast between the two types of

72 **Einer energischen c-moll-Fuge, die den akademisch-kontrapunktischen Anspruch des Kammerduetts mit deutscher Gründlichkeit zu erfüllen scheint.**

movements that mark the duet by integrating more imitative elements than the previous movement B contains. It opens with a *cantabile* subject (c1, b. 1–8) first only in alternation between the two voices, then with its extended second part (syncopated downward movement) counterpointed by a contrasting countersubject (c2, b. 12–16). After another alternation of motif c1 and a few bars in free counterpoint (b. 31–34), this is followed by a canonic imitation of a variant of motif c1 (c1') over a pedal on the dominant. The complementary undulating movement of the voices in these nine bars (b. 36–44) reinforces the effect of a lullaby for the sleeping Cupid. This section is repeated with an added passage dominated by c2 (b. 51–66) before giving way to two series of suspensions on another dominant pedal (b. 67–70, 76–80). Similarly, although somewhat less radically than Steffani in *Saldi marmi*, this duet also "decomposes" its ending in harmony with the main poetic idea of the text. The idea of the world being at peace ("il mondo è in pace") is conveyed by a gradual appeasement of the musical flow that will end in silence, since without Cupid's mischief there is obviously little need to make music. This is so effective precisely because the duet builds on a dialectic exchange of sections lacking imitation and sections dominated by looser, albeit rather extensive imitation.

There is no consensus in literature on when exactly *Va, speme infida* (HWV 199; Handel 2011b, 74–83; Handel recording, Duetti e Terzetti italiani) was written. For instance, Timms claims that the duet was created in Hanover, while Strohm and Harris (2001, 269, 282–284) are of the opinion that it was composed most probably in 1709 in Florence or Venice. Emans seems to believe that the text could stem from the Hanoverian court poet, Ortensio Mauro, which renders Timms's hypothesis plausible, but after taking into consideration borrowings from a cantata by Giovanni Bononcini and other evidence, he concludes that that the duet was more likely composed in Venice.

In its emphatic evocation of hope, the duet reminds us of the duets by Steffani where the addressee was love, whether in a similarly repudiative (*Ribellatevi, o pensieri*) or an enthusiastically affirmative way (*Sù, ferisci, alato arciero*). Two voices engage in dialogue, not with each other, but with an abstract, allegorically anthropomorphic entity such as hope, making the same reproaches not to the unresponsive amorous object but to falsity of hope in love. It is one of the few chamber duets by Handel that includes large-scale repetition, more common in Steffani's chamber duets. However, "Handel significantly cuts short the first section at its recapitulation"[73]. (Emans 2012, 516) Naturally, this partial prevalence of the refrain principle

73 **Verknappt Händel den ersten Teil bei seiner Wiederaufnahme deutlich.**

is due to the structure of the text, but the fact that Handel modified and abridged its repetition is nevertheless meaningful.

TEXT	BAR	MOVEMENT	FORM	THEMATIC MATERIAL	KEY
Va, speme infida, pur, va, non ti credo!	**1–29**	**I**	**A**	**a**	**d, F, d**
Tu baldanzosa mi vai dicendo al core:	**1–18**	**II**	**B_1**	**b_1**	**F**
"Presto in dolce pietà vedrai cangiarsi quel che teco usa Filli aspro rigore."	**18–100**		**B_2**	**b_{21}, b_{22}, b_{22}'**	**F, B♭, E♭, B♭, F**
Ma se mandace e vana fosti ognor ch'in tal guisa a me dicesti,	**1–4**	**III**	**two-part recitative**		**g**
fede or vuoi che ti presti, quando di lei nel volto sdegno e dispetto accolto	**5–37**	**IV**	**C_1**	**c_1**	**g, d**
più che mai contro me misero io vedo?	**37–75**		**C_2**	**c_{21}+c_{22}**	**d, a, d**
Va, speme infida, pur, va, non ti credo!	**76–96**		**A'**	**a**	**d, F, d**

TABLE 8.
Formal plan of Handel's chamber duet *Va, speme infida* (HWV 199)

Movement A is constructed from a single thematic idea (first occurrence b. 1–3) that serves as a source from which all its motifs are derived. This includes the sequential semiquaver downward passage on the word "credo" that serves as a countersubject to the imitation of the thematic idea in Soprano 2 (b. 4) and permeates the subsequent interlude (b. 5–7), serving as a bridge to the second chain of imitations in F major (b. 7–11). The emphatic alternating dramatic calls on "infida" (b. 12–14) are also derived from the downward broken triad of the main material and they lead into a quasi-stretto imitation, underlined with the repetition of the initial crotchet on the word "Va" (b. 14–17). The complementary rhythm and the brief interjections of the voices give the impression of interlocutors interrupting each other, familiar from many of Handel's dramatic duets (to give but one example, the *Streitduett* "Troppo oltraggi la mia fede" from *Serse*) and imply a somewhat humoristic approach (Emans 2012, 515). However, all these features also testify of the textural specificities of a setting for two sopranos, evident in Steffani's duets. Imitation in the prime and swift

alternation of the voices will remain prominent in the course of the duet. After a few bars in free counterpoint, the stretto is repeated with inverted parts (b. 23–26) and the movement cadences in parallel movement with alternating soloist displays of an extended version of the broken triad motif (b. 28, 30). The concluding movement A' brings all the known elements from A but in a slightly abridged form: the extensive semiquaver melismas on the word "credo" are reduced to a minimum and the "comic" repetitions eliminated, but the movement still follows the trajectory of two sets of imitation, one in the tonic and the other one in the mediant, followed by emphatic treatment of the broken triad motif "infida" and a stretto before the voices cadence together. Is the less exuberant scolding of hope in A' suggestive of a softening attitude to its deceptiveness?

Not entirely, if we consider the intermediary movements B and C. These are more symptomatic of Handel's reluctance to repeat, a convention he had little problems with in the field of the cantata and opera. They are characterised by an atypical abundance of text, so that unlike in some other more concise lyrics that Handel set as a chamber duet (consisting often of as little as four lines), the composer needed to deal with different verse, often setting them to several motivic ideas of considerable length. He therefore divided up the second movement (B) of the duet into two sections, B1 (b. 1–18) and B2 (b. 18–99). There is little doubt that Handel sought to demarcate and differentiate them: the punctuated chains of melismas on the word "baldanzosa" convey hope's boisterousness in section B1, whereas the longer and rhythmically even livelier B2 follows the musico-poetic idea of hope's fickleness by assigning even more melismas to the word "cangiarsi", i. e. hope's deceptive promise that the beloved nymph Filli will change her attitude. The main difference between the two sections is that section B1 contains merely one free imitation of the main material, extended by passagework (b1, first occurrence in b. 1–5, imitation in b. 5–10) and followed by free counterpoint derived from the material, whereas B2 makes extensive use of imitation. It builds on two motivic units, b21 (first occurrence b. 18–20) and the bipartite b22 (first occurrence b. 22–33), consisting of the lapidary b221 followed by a long sequential series of undulating triplets (b222). Unit b21 is sequentially repeated, alternated between the two voices or combined with b221 before giving way to the detailed unfolding of b222, as the other voice gradually slides down in a series of appoggiaturas that can be extended or reduced if necessary. The imitative procedures take place in related keys with a consistent use of double counterpoint between bars 57–72 and 72–87 (which is not as frequent in all of Handel's duets as it is in Steffani's), enabling the overall expansion of form by free counterpoint and parallel movement

(b. 87–99). The setting clearly tones down Filli's harsh severity ("aspro rigore") that hope attempts to change into sweet pity ("dolce pietà"), deception gaining the upper hand. The line making the main point of the section ("quel che teco usa Filli aspro rigore") is assigned no separate motivic unit of its own, but is used merely as a free countersubject to b222 (first in b. 37–43), its chromatic descending line slightly destabilising the escapist triplet runs of "cangiar". The flight of optimism in this section, producing the effect of acceleration (Emans 2012, 515) seems to want to be blissfully ignorant of Filli's antipathy.

The third movement of the duet begins with four bars of recitative that pass a judgement on hope's true nature and provide a link before the mood changes radically in movement C, composed in what we have previously called the pathetic style. It likewise consists of two sections, each in the minor mode, but with a disbalance in the distribution of the text. The syntactical construction of the text does not justify the singling out of the fourth line into a separate section (C2, b. 37–75) in contrast to the first three (C1, b. 5–37). It is much longer and metrically irregular but it does not bring the poem's bottom line due to the technique of enjambment: the words "sdegno e dispetto accolto" reveal Filli's attitude already in the third line. Handel was probably led by the impact of the key words "misero io". C1 treats its sequential, syllabic, descending theme imitatively, adding sequential repetitions somewhat freely. The musical culmination is reserved for section C2. Its composite subject is also built sequentially, but clearly articulated by breaks into two units: c21 (b. 37–40), distinguished by two complementary leaps on the words "più che mai contro me", and c22, with long-held appoggiaturas reserved for the crucial word "misero". Handel imitates the subject (c21+c22) using a countersubject consisting of motifs derived from c22, and resulting in a chain of deliciously sensual appoggiaturas. The effect of the return of A with "Va, speme infida" is even greater due to the exchange of highly contrasting sections so far. The lyrical subject plunges from despair and self-pity ("misero") into wrath, directing all his anger to treacherous hope instead of his amorous object. Due to its sheer size and diversity of expressive amplitude and contrapuntal density, *Va, speme infida* displays many features of Handel's maturity in the genre and it is indeed of little relevance if it was composed in Italy or Hanover. Compared to the two previously analysed duets, it seems a long way from the pseudo-academicism of the fugal fast movements of *Giù nei tartarei regni* and the predominantly featherweight and serene character of *Tacete, ohimè, tacete*. Likewise, the division of sections into subsections of unequal length with their own thematic material is slightly atypical of most of Handel's chamber duets.

2. 3. 2.
Hanoverian Maturity

What clearly distinguishes *Va, speme infida* from Handel's later duets is that its *basso continuo* never participates in the trio texture as an equal of the two vocal parts (cf. Handel 2011b, XIV). In *Giù nei tartarei regni* and *Tacete, ohimè, tacete* this is entirely understandable as they are written for soprano and bass, which would make the complete emancipation of the *basso continuo* from the lower of the two vocal parts more difficult. On the other hand, a duet such as *A mirarvi io son inento* (HWV 178; Handel 2011b, 84–92; Handel recording, Duetti da Camera) frequently includes the *basso continuo* in an imitative, *concertante* interplay with the voices and it is therefore probably not a coincidence that, unlike *Va, speme infida*, it was definitely composed in Hanover. Handel sets the first movement consisting of four lines in *da capo* form (A1 A2 A1). The motivic and harmonic connections between sections A1 and A2 recall the logic of the construction of a *da capo* aria, where the purpose of the middle section is not to outshine but to offer contrast and preserve unity with the first section. Handel thus imports traits from dramatic music into the chamber duet. This duet is also distinguished by a consistent level of motivic unity, and all these are the traits that were to be characteristic of chamber duets written in Hanover.

But if the criteria of the equality of the *basso continuo* in the trio texture was decisive in recognising traces of Steffani's influence in *A mirarvi io son intento*, in *Sono liete, fortunate* (HWV 194; Handel 2011b, 98–103; Handel recording, Duetti da Camera) this is not the case, with the exception of the third section of the duet. Nevertheless, for Timms (1987, 230–231), this duet is one of the most evident examples of intertextual relationships between Handel's and Steffani's chamber duets since he finds as many as four examples of borrowing from *Quanto care al cor voi siete*. Even though some of them indeed possess the character of a topos, i. e. the kind of thematic material found in works of many composers at the time, in my opinion the sense of kinship is much stronger in the case of the opening bars of *Sono liete* and Steffani's *Pria ch'io faccia*, recalling the practice of 16th-century parody. There are additional similarities supporting the claim that "Handel had at his disposal different duets by his Italian colleague [Steffani, A/N], *a mente* so to speak, so that certain character traits and some motifs could flow into the process of composition."[74] (Emans 2012, 521) What matters more than if the intertextuality was intentional is the kind of purpose this

74 **Verschiedene Duette seines italienischen Kollegen standen sozusagen "a mente" zur Verfügung und so gewisse Charakterzüge und manche Motive in die Komposition einfließen konnten.**

intertextual relationship came to acquire. In spite of the tragic potential of the text, Steffani took a somewhat joyous, even serene take on *Pria ch'io faccia* in his setting. This "character trait" is much more appropriate for the simplicity of the text of *Sono liete, fortunate* that expresses the joys of being in love. Although quite a bit shorter, in terms of subject matter and its main poetic idea it can be compared to another chamber duet by Steffani, *Placidissime catene*. Handel's brief ode to the chains of love does not miss out on the opportunity to depict them madrigalistically with the above mentioned "chain" figure on the word "catene" (first occurrence b. 3), reminiscent of the similar setting of the word in Steffani's *Quanto care*. In both duets the motif occurs in the second part of the main, composite subject, consisting of a1 (b. 1–3[75]) and a2 (b. 3–6). The sequential character of motif a2 makes it possible to use it for the chain of brief sequential pseudo-imitations that follow the imitation of the subject (b. 6–7 in *Sono liete*). The main difference between the two duets is that Steffani immediately moves on to new material (and the new text "Per colei che mi legò"), never to return to this material again in the course of the duet, whereas Handel permeates with it the entirety of the first movement (A) of the duet. Not only is every imitation of the composite subject followed by a few bars of the aforementioned "chain" sequence before the final cadence, this sequence is sometimes repeated (b. 8–10) or freely varied (b. 16–17, 19–21, 26–29). As we have seen, the musical embodiment of the chain metaphor, rudimentary in *Quanto care* but decisive for the first movement of *Sono liete*, permeates Steffani's duet *Placidissime catene* on a much larger scale. In its section I, the word "rallentarvi" receives treatment similar to the one the word "catene" receives in the two aforementioned duets, serving as a bridge between more widely spaced out imitative sections. However, apart from this, the semantic exploration of amorous chains in *Placidissime catene* extends to almost the whole of the duet.

This is not the case in *Sono liete*, but it testifies to the fact that Handel and Steffani were sensitive to the poetical imagery of the text in different ways. What distinguished Handel is an inclination to formal unity: instead of stringing together imitations of different motifs, he is more economical and therefore prone to develop his material, thereby expanding the form. The bipartite second movement consists of two sections: the slow, pathetic B1 (b. 1–14) and the swift, more extensive, freely fugal B2, subjecting its composite, figurative subject (b21, b. 15–19 + b22, b. 20–28) to an array of free imitations, wherein the continuo also plays a certain role. Although the web of imitations is extended, Handel rarely treats his

75 **The bar numbers refer to *Sono liete, fortunate* rather than *Quanto care al cor voi siete* since it is Handel's duets that this subchatper is devoted to.**

material contrapuntally in a literal and strict way, but subjects it to more variation than Steffani usually does. The stretto imitation of the undulating melismas occasionally results in parallel movement, and this also occurs more often in Handel's than in Steffani's chamber duets. As to whether it is due to the influence of dramatic vocal genres on Handel's chamber duets, favouring a more clear-cut articulation of the vocal parts with parallel movement in cadences, remains open to debate.

TEXT	BAR	MOVEMENT	FORM	THEMATIC MATERIAL	KEY
Tanti strali al sen mi scocchi quante stelle sono in ciel.	**1–98**	**I**	A_1	$a_{11}+a_{12}+a_{13}$	**G, D, G**
Tanti fior' quanti ne tocchi s'innamorato al tuo bel.	**99–138**		A_2	a_{21}, a_{22}	**e, b, G**
Tanti strali…	**1–98**		A_1	***da capo***	**G, D, G**
Ma se l'alma sempre geme nell'amor arsa e consunta	**1–16**	**II**	B_1	b_1, **countersubject**	**D, A**
questo avvien perch'arde e teme dal tuo cor esser disgiunta.	**16–27**		B_2	b_2	**f♯, b**
Dunque annoda pur, ben mio, di catena immortale anch'il desio.	**1–49**	**III**	C	$c_1+c_2+c_3$	**G, D, G**

TABLE 9.
Formal plan of Handel's chamber duet *Tanti strali al sen mi scocchi* (HWV 197)

Led by the special brevity of *Sono liete, fortunate,* it is tempting to assume that the Hanoverian duets show a tendency towards a fewer number of movements. More important are the economy of means and the structural unities that Handel imposes on the genre, whether he was led in this by Steffani's influence or not. Like *A mirarvi io son intento*, *Tanti strali al sen mi scocchi* (HWV 197; Handel 2011b, 104–112; Handel recording, Duetti da Camera) opens with a movement in *da capo* form equally unified in motivic terms, but more concise in that the middle section (A2), with its shorter dimensions and harmonic contrast corresponds even more to a middle section of a *da capo* form in dramatic genres such as cantata or opera. The opening (A) and the closing movement (C) are characterised by an extreme economy of means, as both of them are wholly derived from their respective, composite thematic ideas. Unlike most of the chamber duets by both Steffani and Handel analysed so far, the first movement of *Tanti strali* unfolds its extensive subject, consisting of a11 (b. 1–8) + a12 (b.

9–13) + a13 (b. 14–20) in the soprano in its entirety before engaging in any kind of imitation in the alto.[76] The only motivic element that does not stem directly from this material is a contrapuntal figure accompanying motif a11 (in b. 22–25, 41–44, 82–85), but even it shares some common melodic-rhythmic traits with the main material. The rest of the countersubject accompanying two complete, regular imitations of the subject (b. 20–39 and 39–56) is derived from motif a13, which results in four bars of parallel melismas on the word "scocchi" (b. 31–32), once again vividly depicting the shooting of Cupid's darts. The frequent simultaneous appearance of a12 and a13 provides evidence that Handel wrote the subject making sure that these motifs can be combined in inverted counterpoint. The remaining part of the movement does not contain any more full-scale imitations of the subject: instead, in b. 56–73, the already familiar combination of a12 and a13 is preceded by an inverted variant of a11 (b. 56–60) and a free imitation of a13 and a12 in turn. Handel's setting suggests an affirmative approach to the thrills that Cupid's arrows bring on the semantic plan. His biggest care was to balance out the whole of this *da capo* form: A2 is much shorter than the analogous section in *A mirarvi io son intento*, and its two motifs clearly derived from the subject of A1. The structural layout of this movement makes comparisons with the treatment of *da capo* form in an opera duet even more viable. Even the bridge to the *da capo* contributes to the overall sense of homogeneity, as it is a statement of a11 in the continuo.

Movement B is shorter and less unified, but its first section (B1) continues to impress by virtue of its economy and contrapuntal consistency. The gentle, cantabile subject (b1, b. 1–5) delivers the section's two lines syllabically, giving the described sufferings of an enamoured soul an almost melancholic quality. It flows almost seamlessly into its countersubject (b. 3–7) on the same words, before the two voices cadence parallel and the process is repeated with the vocal parts in inversion. Interestingly enough, parallels to section A2 can be drawn on the basis of how section B2 is constructed: not only is it shorter and less prominent in its thematic material but it consists of two loosely imitative passages in double counterpoint transposed from F-sharp minor (the key B1 cadences in) to B minor. The similarities do not end here, as the *basso continuo* modulates back to G major after the vocal parts have cadenced in B minor, thereby almost making it possible to repeat B1 in the manner of a *da capo* form, the same way as had already happened in section A1 (but does not happen here). Large-scale formal parallels in the construction of the duet's sections extend to its final movement, C. Like A, it works with a composite tripartite

76 **This is a trait that recalls duets in dramatic genres where it was important for the spectator to clearly distinguish between the characters.**

subject, consisting of an energetic opening with a broken triad (c1, b. 1–2), a sequential motif involving quaver repetition (c2, b. 2–4) and a semiquaver passage on the word "immortale"[77] (c3, b. 4–6), and it also uses one if its motifs (c2) as a counterpoint to the subject (b. 7–8, 11–12, 17–18, 27–28). The tempo is somewhat brisker and the subject and its motifs of a somewhat shorter span, but the movement follows movement A in both structure and form: e. g. the *comes* always sets in with imitation of the integral subject before the *dux* concludes, and imitations are combined with episodes likewise derived from the material. Besides the gestural, figurative character of the thematic material, the ease of the imitative unfolding is mostly due to the fact that unlike the duet's other movements, imitation often occurs on the prime here, which is rather unusual in most of Handel's duets for soprano and alto.

This is a good point to summarize certain traits of the Hanoverian duets analysed so far, and to compare them amongst themselves and especially in relation to the ones Handel wrote in Italy. A comparison of the fugal movements of *Tanti strali* described above with the third movement of *A mirarvi io son intento* ("E vibrando in un baleno") shows that the latter movement is contrapuntally looser and contains more alternating, non-contrapuntal passages, besides being a little bit less thematically unified than, for instance, *Tanti strali*'s first (A) and third movement (C). However, if we look at *Giù nei tartarei regni*, the differences between the respective faster, fugal movements will prove even more drastic. The second section (B) of the latter duet rarely imitates literally, but modifies the material instead, using a lot of free counterpoint and treats what at first seems as a composite subject rather freely, by combining contrapuntally motifs b1 and b2 in succession, reversed order, separately or simultaneously. If one takes a look at sections A2 and B of *Tacete, ohimè, tacete*, the differences appear even more striking. To a certain extent section A2 gradually dissolves the initial imitation of its two motifs with the introduction of sequence and pedal notes, whereas in B, in its figurative material already less prone to strict counterpoint, free counterpoint almost dominates the mildly imitative texture. Given the described extremes between *Tacete, ohimè, tacete* on the one hand and *Tanti strali* on the other, we may safely draw the conclusion that in his Italian duets Handel was less inclined to write symmetrical, consistent and clearly directional imitative structures than in the ones he wrote in Hanover.

77 **As Emans points it out, although placed on "immortale", the melisma "actually portrays the 'catene' musically" (allerdings wohl die "catene" musikalisch darstellt, Emans 2012, 525).**

Like some of the other chamber duets whose texts do not develop the idea of dramatic conflict, *Tanti strali* could function on the operatic stage as a dramatic duet that consists of two parallel monologues. Although the text is monological and the roles of the suffering subject consumed by love and the somewhat indifferent object who carelessly shares her (or his) graces without sensitivity to the havoc this provokes are clearly assigned, Handel's harmonious and balanced setting makes it sound as if the two lovers were addressing each other with the same reproaches, as if the roles were reversible. Although the text of *Tanti strali* with its "burnt and consumed" soul could have contained a grain of ambivalence, Handel's setting is once again surprisingly affirmative to the ideal of love it depicts.

TEXT	BAR	FORM	THEMATIC MATERIAL	KEY
Troppo cruda, troppo fiera è la legge dell'amor.	**1–58**	**A**	a_1+a_2 a_1', a_1''	**e, b, a, e**
Ma la speme lusinghiera raddolcisce ogni rigor.	**1–51**	**B**	b_1+b_2 b_1', b_2'	**G, D, G, C, b, G**
Infiammate, saettate, ma lasciatemi sperar.	**1–29**	**C**	**c, c'**	**b, f♯, e**
A chi spera, o luci amate, non dà pena il sospirar.	**1–108**	**D**	d_1, d_2, d_3	**e, b, e, a, e**

TABLE 10.
Formal plan of Handel's chamber duet *Troppo cruda, troppo fiera* (HWV 198)

Much more than *Tanti strali*, the music of *Troppo cruda, troppo fiera* (HWV 198; (Handel 2011b, 113–121; Handel recording, Duetti da Camera) moves along these lines of ambivalence. It progresses through as many as four affective stances to the problem of falsity of hope in love by a metrically regular sequence of four line pairs. As Handel set each of the pairs as a separate movement, the progression from a stoical acceptance of the law of love ("legge dell'amor") in movement A to the optimism at hope's appeasement of suffering (B) and the subsequent passionate plea to hope (C) ends in the equally stoic acceptance of suffering as the price for hope (D).

Burrows, Timms and Musketa are confident in assigning the duet to Handel's Hanover period, while Strohm is of the opinion that *Troppo cruda* (like *Va, speme infida*) might have been written earlier, in Italy or even in Hamburg. Relinquishing the possibility of giving an exact answer to the question of dating, I find it more important to examine Timms's claim for the maturity of *Troppo cruda* in terms of contrapuntal density and its alleged superiority over *Giù nei tartarei regni*, which he explains with exposure to

Steffani. His key argument is a comparison between the second section (B) of *Giù nei tartarei regni* and the second movement (B) of *Troppo cruda*, and he labels the latter "a marvellous example of counterpoint and structure" (1987, 241). Timms concludes that "by the time he came to write *Troppo cruda*, he [Handel, A/N] had clearly been profoundly influenced by Steffani's ideas on counterpoint and structure." The latter movement consists of a single fast fugal section based on a subject (b1, b. 1–4 + b2, b. 4–6) treated contrapuntally in a free manner. The subject in its complete, composite guise appears only three times, and is otherwise subject to variation, abridgement and extension. My own comparison between the two sections highlights considerably more similarities than differences, and not only due to the similarity of the thematic material. In both, a distinctive motivic complex is gaining momentum by being varied and adapted so that it can be subjected to extensive contrapuntal treatment without losing its recognisability. The contrapuntal freedom and lack of regularity are similar, with a difference that in *Giù nei tartarei regni* the flow is less directional than in *Troppo cruda*. The differences in the construction of fast fugal movements are strongly highlighted when we compare these two with the fugal movements in *A mirarvi io son intento* (movement A) and *Tanti strali* (movements A and C), characterised by strict thematic homogeneity, economy of means, consistency of contrapuntal procedures and lack of free counterpoint. The possibility that the difference in contrapuntal procedures in *Troppo cruda* when compared to the other Hanoverian duets is a sign of its earlier provenance should not be entirely overlooked.

Unlike the chamber duets written in Italy, *Troppo cruda* shows clear signs of cyclic organisation, compared by Malcolm Boyd (1997, 191) to the *sonata da chiesa*. The first movement (A), albeit in a slower tempo and of entirely different affective content, shows many parallels in overall construction to movement B discussed above. Its treatment of the composite subject (a1, b. 1–4 + a2, b. 5–11) is more consistent in that when imitated, the motifs are almost never modified, but the episodes between the imitative sections are likewise written in much freer counterpoint. Due to the shorter dimensions of the movement, they often consist of alternations of related motifs, all of which share not only the text but also the punctuated crotchet rhythm of a1 and are undoubtedly derived from it (which is why I marked them with a1' and a1'' in Table 10). Unlike many of Steffani's chamber duets, Handel adopts contrapuntal procedures characteristic of the fugue here. Naturally, this is not carried out in strict terms as it would not be suitable to a genre such as the chamber duet. Movement A and B share a directional and consistent polyphonic structure that is partly absent from the last two movements of the duet. The slow movement C contains only pseudo-counterpoint in that instead of imitating, it alternates

its vocal parts on either rests (b. 1–3) or held notes (b. 4–12 and most of the remainder of the movement). At the same time, this brief movement also remains monothematic since it derives all its material with ease from the downward *ductus* of the head of motif c (b. 1–2).

Finally, movement D sets out as yet another imitative, tripartite *andante* movement, the likes of which we have often encountered in Handel, but after the imitation of its main idea (d1, b. 1–9), it slightly surprises us with a non-thematic homophonic passage on the word "sospirar", making recourse to typical sigh figures descending half a tone (d2 in Table 10, first occurrence b. 19–23), known from numerous other works by composers of the period as the "rhetorical figure of *tmesis* or *suspiratio*" (Emans 2012, 527). The function of passages dominated by b3 (b. 27–32, 63–64) is modulatory, as was the case with the rhythmically identical (dotted quaver) motif a1' from movement A of the duet, which might be a case of motivic connections between movements that Musketa (1990, 190) mentions. However, these "subsidiary" motivic complexes seem to be taking over the movement, for apart from its imitation at the opening of the movement, d1 appears only twice (b. 33–42, 83–89). Instead, a new material that inverts some of the melodic motifs from d1 (d4, b. 65–68) gains prominence along with the sigh motif (d2). It is not only subject to stretto imitation (b. 65–69) but also combined with d2 and put under the spotlight by the use of pedal notes (b. 74–80) and parallel statements. Handel almost abandons the initial subject and engages in a series of free motivic derivations combined in a texture that verges on the homophonic. The use of the sigh motif in particular draws on dramatic genres such as opera, oratorio and cantata. Although the overall meaning of the two lines that round off the poem (and the chamber duet) is a stoical acceptance of sighs as the price for hope, the prominent setting of the word "sospirar" suggests that these sighs are musically more prominent than the text suggests.

In spite of textural disparity (polyphony in the first two, pseudo-polyphony or even homophony in the last two movements), *Troppo cruda, troppo fiera* is distinguished by a different kind of thematic unity than the highly monothematic individual movements of, say, *Tanti strali.* It does not engage in the imitation of multiple motifs, but instead develops some more "subsidiary" material, often derived from the main subject and combined into alternating statements or free counterpoint. To sum up, although in certain aspects disparate, the duets written in Hanover examined here display certain features that testify of Handel's "maturity". Giordano Riccati had good reasons to single out *Sono liete, fortunate* and *Troppo cruda, troppo fiera* for the economy and developmental potential of their thematic material (De Piero 2012, 185). *Va speme infida* and *Troppo cruda* share some of these traits, which may or may not question their dating.

2. 3. 3.
London in the Span of Two Decades

Handel's only duets that bridge a long temporal gap between the wealth of duets written in Hanover in 1710–1712 and in London in 1740–1745 are *Langue, geme, sospira* (HWV 188) and *Se tu non lasci amore* (HWV 193), written in London in the 1720s. Their dating is due to philological (the type of paper used) rather than stylistic reasons, and in spite of a gap of two decades, they deserve to be considered together with the duets from the 1740s. Certain traits already noticed in earlier, Hanoverian duets come to the fore, e. g. "a consequently executed double counterpoint", the abandoning of "pre-existing [imitative, A/N] ways in favour of an insistence on small-scale motivic cells"[78] (Emans 2012, 530), most commonly by their rapid alternation as well as a tendency towards a smaller number and a clearer demarcation of movements.

TEXT	BAR	FORM	THEMATIC MATERIAL	KEY
Langue, geme, sospira e si lagna colomba che chiama l'errante compagna.	**1–69**	**A_1**	**a_{11}+a_{12}+a_{13}**	**e, b, e, a, G, e**
Ma poi quando vede che in braccio le riede quel ben che tant'ama,	**69–110**	**A_2**	**a_{21}, a_{22}**	**D, G, b**
cangia i gemiti in baci e più non brama.	**111–195**	**B**	**b_1+b_2**	**e, b, d, G, e**

TABLE 11.
Formal plan of Handel's chamber duet *Langue, geme, sospira* (HWV 188)

Langue, geme, sospira (HWV 188; Handel 2011b, 122–127; Handel recording, Duetti da Camera) consists of only two movements contrasting in terms of tempo (slow-fast), the first one bipartite, resulting in the overall form A1 A2 B. Like *Troppo cruda*, it combines polyphonic and homophonic sections, A2 providing a predominantly homophonic contrast to the polyphonic A1 and B. Emans is right when he claims that in section A2 of *Langue, geme, sospira* "the voice leading runs largely parallel, to which end Handel was

78 **Die vorgegebenen Bahnen zugunsten eines kleingliedrigen Beharrens auf kleinen Motivpartikeln.**

surely motivated by the text uniting the lovers"[79] (2012, 529). To a certain extent, the same goes for the affirmative statement of "No, no, che d'altrui che di te mai non sarò", and the parallelisms seem equally appropriate to stress the determinacy of the amorous subject despite the pain he or she felt in the previous section.

Although equally monologic as any other chamber duet text examined so far, instead of an amorous subject's unilateral dramatization of the pains or joys of love, the text of *Langue, geme* uses a metaphor from the natural world to depict the affects of amorous separation and reunion. The "wandering dove" is a frequent thematic topos in dramatic genres of the period, so it comes as no surprise that the text belongs to an aria from Domenico de Totis's libretto *La caduta del regno dell'Amazoni* (1690). Pietro Torri was the first one to set it as a chamber duet and Handel was not only led by his example but he also "borrowed" motivic material from the duet.[80] The dove's wandering is portrayed with equally "errant" chains of melismas and interestingly it is precisely this subsidiary material that dominates the section. Emans's astonishment that Handel did not treat the first line of the text as a quasi-motto seems ungrounded. The composer chose not to exploit the expressive potential of the main subject's (a11) suspensions—the sigh motifs on the keywords "langue" and "geme" (b. 1–4)—but stated them only four times, perhaps because the wandering dove will soon be reunited with its beloved. What initially appears as a tripartite composite subject (a11, b. 1–7 + a12, b. 7–11 + a13, b. 11–16) is imitated only once in incomplete form, since the soprano abridges a13 in b. 22–23 already. Instead, Handel works mainly with a12 and a13, using a11 as counterpoint with its contrasting long note values (b. 23–26, 45–48). It is the pulse of the semiquavers and the emphatic rhythmic figure of a12 that provide recognisability and continuity. Handel indeed makes use of "motivic cells", combining them sometimes in the manner of a mosaic.

Section A2 also presents two motifs (a21, b. 69–71 and a22, b. 73–77), but they are not meant to form a composite subject. Motif a22 seems to be imitated at the fifth first, but this proves to be an illusion because not only does the interval change to the octave in bar 76 but a22 is also interspersed with rests, so instead of counterpoint, we in fact witness alternation and parallelism. The movement cadences in B minor, which not only makes the transition to movement B smooth in harmonic terms, but would leave room for a *da capo* repetition of A2. In terms of the text, a return to the initial languishes and moans after the dove has already been reunited with

79 **Die Führung der Singstimmen läuft weitgehend parallel, wozu Händel gewiss vom Text motiviert wurde, in dem die Liebenden zusammengeführt werden.**

80 **As we shall see in Chapter 3.4.2, the "borrowing" is even more direct in the duet "Notte cara" from *Ottone*.**

its mate would be absurd, but the proportions of the two sections and the aforementioned contrast, not to mention the slightly anticlimactic effect of the less inventive section A2 would welcome a repetition of A1 in strictly musical terms. What follows instead is the relatively short imitative section B, working with a bipartite subject (b1, b. 111–114 + b2, b. 115–119). In their basically imitative structuring that nevertheless seamlessly integrates alternating statements, motivic derivations and free counterpoint into the texture, there is a lot of kinship between A1 and B as the framing sections of this chamber duet. In this duet, Handel has convincingly shown that he can defy expectations without having to jeopardise a vivid musical interpretation of the text or the structural unity so important to him.

In *Se tu non lasci amore* (HWV 193; Handel 2011b, 128–135; Handel recording, Duetti da Camera), many of the tendencies that were already at strength in *Langue, geme* are taken even further away from the by now antiquated polyphonic construction of many of Steffani's chamber duets. Instead of a chain of sections that work out the clearly presented thematic material with varying, but in most cases consistently implemented imitative techniques, here we often have imitation only at the outset of a section, with its further course ruled either by alternating homophonic or freely contrapuntal, often figurative writing. Handel preserves the structural unity of its movements and sections whether he was following a strict monothematicism (like in *Tanti strali*) or writing in a more improvisatory, derivative way, which testifies to a new compositional logic behind his chamber duets. The duet is in three movements, but places the stress on the first one, composed in a written out *da capo* form: A1 (b. 1–27), A2 (b. 28–47), A1' (b. 48–75), B (b. 75–86) and C (87–167). In its first movement (A) the amorous subject is addressing his heart directly, which is followed in movements B and C by a monologic introspection about the fact that it is forlorn. The numerous, brief alternating statements ("lo so" / "mio cor" / ti pentirai") in particular seem to suggest a dialogic stance, although the text could on no account be assigned to two imaginary characters. The change of stance in movement B with the question "Ma con chi parlo, oh Dio?" could be said to sum up the contradictory nature of the chamber duet *per se*, for although the subject in what is essentially a monologue asks himself who he or she is talking to, the musical texture remains as it was, in two parts and with an inner structural echo that determines the genre.

The second and the third movement are not unlike the movements and sections analysed so far. Setting off the typical "plot twist" of amorous discourse, the sudden comprehension that the subject has lost control of his heart as it no longer belongs to him or her, movement B ("Ma con chi parlo, oh Dio") elaborates on a single emphatic utterance, making use of a concise motivic idea (b, b. 75–76) and intermixing it with minimal counterpoint and a lot of alternating and parallel statements as it moves through

a series of related keys. Movement C ("quando non ho più core, / o il core che pur ho non è più mio?") displays many traits encountered in *Langue, geme* and some of the Hanover duets such as free imitation with a lot of alternation of the parts, free counterpoint and the almost improvisatory derivation of thematic material. What makes it special is the fact that the last line of its text is not thematically bound at all. At first it seems that, following the characteristic, "jumpy" head of subject c (b. 86–87), b. 88–93 outline the contours of what is perhaps even a bipartite subject, but the musical *ductus* of the movement evolves in an almost spontaneous manner. In consequence, the only thematic material of the movement is a single motivic idea consisting of two bars. Whereas in the case of the transitory, slow movement B this reduction is not surprising, it comes unexpectedly in a concluding, albeit not too extensive movement.

It is movement A, or more precisely its opening section (A1) that draws the most analytical attention. It appears at first to display a smooth, playful subject (b. 1–4) that is imitated at the fifth in the soprano along with what seems like a countersubject (b. 4–5). This subject served Handel as a source of self-borrowing in his oratorio *Messiah*, although unlike in HWV 189, he slightly modified its second half for the duet "O death, where is thy sting?". The second part of the second line of the text ("lo so ben io") is treated too freely for it to be considered an integral part of the subject. The only motivic constant in the setting of this text is the upward fourth leap on the text "lo so", as can be seen in the following bars (b. 6–7), where the parts first alternate the aforementioned fourth motif with a semiquaver figure derived from the subject (b. 5) on the word "ti pentirai", only to give way to this figure in b. 7–8. Expectations of a "regular" imitation of the subject after this episode are thwarted in b. 8–10, where the subject is presented only in an abbreviated form and leads into free, cadential counterpoint distinguished merely by the aforementioned upward jump (now extended to a sixth and an octave). The further course of the section playfully alternates both the semiquaver motif (b. 14, 16, 19–22, 24) and the "jump" motif (b. 15–17, 19–21, 23–25), with only one more appearance of the abridged subject (b. 17–18). The domination of "subsidiary" (and somewhat improvisatory) thematic material is seemingly abandoned in the seemingly more imitative section A2. However, the strong thematic identity of the section is weakened by its subsequent course, a fully improvisatory polyphonic, modulatory section only loosely based on the thematic material.

The question why the composer returned to the genre after such a long break in his last six chamber duets written in the 1740s remains open. As he borrowed from three of them in his large-scale works, it was considered that they were preliminary studies, but this has been refuted by many authors (Musketa 1990, 192; Burrows et al. 2013, 411). One of the best and most famous examples is *No, di voi non vuò fidarmi* (HWV 189; Handel 2011b,

142–149; Handel recording, Arcadian duets), often nicknamed the "Messiah duet" since Handel borrowed from its first movement in the chorus "For unto us a child is born" and from the third, "So per prova i vostri inganni" in "All we like sheep have gone astray". He must have found the themes that he borrowed "appropriate in character (and in their technical ability to carry the new words) to the new contexts" (Burrows et al. 2013, 411). Taruskin's (2010, 322) question "Should it surprise or dismay us to discover that this erotic duet became the basis for not one but two choruses in *Messiah*?" is clearly a rhetorical one. The techniques he made use of while transferring a freely contrapuntal duet texture onto the larger canvas of the orchestrally accompanied chorus have been discussed in detail elsewhere (Liebscher 1987, 219–228, among others), so we shall not dwell on them further. In terms of prosody and semantics the text of the first movement ("No, di voi non vuò fidarmi") is indeed treated much more successfully in the original setting than in its later counterpart, "For unto us a child is born" (Knapp 1987). Both "For unto us a child is born" and "All we like sheep have gone astray" share a fast tempo and a predominantly joyous character with the first and the third movement of the chamber duet. What made the two movements even more suitable for borrowings in different movements of a large-scale work such as *Messiah* is the jumpy, emphatically rhythmic character of the opening material (a11 and c11 in Table 12), making them almost related in motivic terms. In contrast to the short middle movement "Altra volta incatenarmi" which serves as a harmonic link, we shall see that "No, di voi non vuò fidarmi" and "So per prova i vostri inganni" display additional structural parallels.

MOVEMENT	TEXT	THEMATIC MATERIAL*	FORM	BAR	KEY
I	No, di voi non vuò fidarmi, cieco amor, crudel beltà! Troppo siete, menzognere, lusinghiere deità!	a_{11}(+)a_{12} a_2, (a_3)	A_1 A_2 A_3 A_4	1–24 24–36 36–51 51–65	G, D D, G G, C, G G
II	Altra volta incatenarmi già poteste il fido cor.	b, b'	B_1 B_2	1–19 19–28	e, a e
III	So per prova i vostri inganni: due tiranni siete ognor.	c_{11}, c_{12}, (c_2?)	C_1 C_2 C_3 C_4	1–12 12–27 27–41 41–56	G D, G G, C G

TABLE 12.
Formal plan of Handel's chamber duet *No, di voi non vuò fidarmi* (HWV 189)

* **In movement I, the display of the thematic material in Table 12 aligns with the text, whereas in movements II and III it aligns with the formal outline and its bar numbers.**

As can be seen from the formal disposition of this lapidary duet, both the first and the third movement are characterised by the use of a seemingly bipartite initial subject (a11&a12, c11&c12, the second of which is abundant in coloratura passages), combined with a second, less characteristic and less consistently exploited motif (a2 and c2) in four cycles (A1–A4, C1–C4), outlining a similar harmonic trajectory into the dominant and the subdominant and working towards a culmination before bringing the movement to an end with a cadential figure in a slower tempo. In the first movement, however, the heads of motifs a11 and a12 are identical, which accounts for the frequent false effect of a stretto when the two motifs are contrapuntally combined. The fact that a12 with its melismatic passages sounds as a countersubject to the syllabic motif a11, interspersed with pauses, does not lessen its importance, for section A1 presents the two motifs as a composite subject in both voices (b. 1–12 in S1, b. 6–18 in S2), before introducing the dotted motif a2 by way of two bars of alternating arpeggiations (b. 18–20). Sections A2 and A3 are different from the first one in that they do not require such a detailed unfolding of a11 and a12 but work with a new motif on the third and fourth line that we could call a2 although it takes on a fully different guise (a3) in A2 (b. 33–36) and A3 (46–51). It is fascinating that Handel treats the text cyclically, setting all four lines in each of the four sections, countering tendencies exemplified by Steffani and moving towards dramatic structures that treat the text of an aria as a unified whole, and not as a sequence of lines or pairs of lines. *Da capo* repetition exempted, Handel's two settings of "No, di voi non vuò fidarmi" (HWV 189 and HWV 190) are among the rare chamber duets by Handel that employ this kind of cyclic, multiple text setting. Finally, section A4 combines a12 in what most resembles a stretto, which results in the culminating parallel coloraturas characteristic of many Handel duets at the time (often marking the culmination of a movement) before the conclusion of the section. The seamless mosaic structure conceals its build-up and has the effect of a constant stretto of lapidary motifs, and thus perfectly suited to a text that, were it directed to a lover rather than the allegorical attributes of blind love ("cieco amor") and cruel beauty ("crudel beltà"), could function as an operatic "Streitduett".

In its first section, the second movement (B1) strings together three mildly contrapuntal entries of a simple subject (b, b. 1–5) that draws its pathetic appeal by the use of the Neapolitan chord, albeit on a semantically unremarkable word ("poteste"). Its second section (B2) breaks a variant of this subject (b', b. 18–25) into alternating and parallel statements. The purpose of this section is to offer a harmonic and an affective contrast to the overall joyous, playful character of the duet and in doing so it is not necessarily guided by the text, for the first two lines of the duet's second

stanza do not acquire their full meaning without the last two, reserved for the third movement. The tendency of depriving the text of some of its semantics is followed in the third movement. The four cycles of the setting of both lines are constructed in a similar way as in the first movement: they first present alternating statements of an emphatic motif (c11, b. 1–6) followed by a melismatic one (c12, b. 6–9), with the difference that the two of them never function as a compound or as countersubjects to each other. Section C1 is rounded off by a motif outlining a third in Soprano 1 (c2, b. 10–11) that seems insignificant at first, but gains in importance in sections C2 and C3 by being imitated (b. 22–23) and alternated in varied form (b. 38–41). The stretto in C4 culminates in parallel melismas similar to the first movement, after which c2 rounds off the duet as a cadential figure.

Unlike HWV 189, *No, di voi non vuò fidarmi* (HWV 190; Handel 2011b, 156–163; Handel recording, Arcadian duets) is written for soprano and alto, which slightly reduces the potential for a lively *concertante* exchange between equal voices, resulting in frequent rapid exchanges and quasi- stretto imitation on the prime. Due to the same text, it shares the former duet's three-movement structure, with two lengthier movements in the major mode framing a minor middle one. Handel decided to follow in his own compositional footsteps while setting the first four lines in several cycles in the course of the first movement, although the process has altogether different formal contours. In HWV 189 there was a through-composed cyclic, simultaneous setting of two groups of lines with their respective thematic material, whereas HWV 190 integrates likewise four settings of the whole text into a free tripartite form. After a section (A1, b. 1–57) that narrows itself to a setting of the first two lines, some new material on the third and fourth line follows, but the listener's expectations of a *da capo* form are thwarted, as from b. 72 onwards the movement is based on several cycles that alternate material associated with the respective pair of lines. The tonal structure is decisive in the outlining of a tripartite form; unlike the modulatory middle section (A2, b. 58–103), A3 (b. 103–140) stays within the confines of E major.

The movement opens with the alto presenting a lapidary, composite periodic subject (a11, b. 1–4 + a12, b. 4–8) in its entirety, then it repeats its head (b. 8–9) before giving way to a full imitation in the soprano (b. 9–16), doubled by a discrete counterpoint in the alto. In the remainder of A1, Handel works with a11 and a12 separately, alternating or imitating a11 in the manner of a stretto (b. 21–31, 40–44), while using cadential passages based on a12 to lead back into the tonic (b. 31–40). Section A2 imitates its repetitive motif a2 to a counterpoint of quaver neighbour notes that give way to the unfolding of the integral subject a1 (=a11+a12) in b. 72–79. The remainder of the section is constituted by alternating, modulating exchanges of

the head of motif a11 (b. 80–85), before devoting itself exclusively to two free imitations of a2 (b. 85–103). Finally, section A3 places the stress back on the material from A1, first by an even less regular, sequential imitation of a11 (b. 103–110) ending in arpeggiated figures on the words "cieco amor, crudel beltà" (b. 111–113), which is modelled on the respective passages in HWV 189. A free imitation of a2 (b. 114–124) is followed by a final extension of a11 to conclude the movement. It looks as if Handel, while rounding off this aria-like tripartite movement, seems to have forgotten about a12 and reduced the material combined from A1 and A2 to a11 and a2.

The second, *largo* movement ("Altra volta incatenarmi") shares the pathetic, minor-mode character with HWV 189, but it differs from the former piece's simple motivic alternations by a free, only partly imitative contrapuntal flow. On the other hand, the third movement ("So per prova"), however, shows no parallels to the first movement of the duet as had happened in HWV 189. It is written in the manner of a lapidary *fugato*, for it imitates a single thematic idea of a longer span (c, b. 1–6), with elements derived from it in its counterpoint (b. 7–12). The use of episodes derived from the subject in between imitations and brief strettos confirm this. In terms of motivic unity it compares with many movements in Handel's duets that freely derive their subsidiary material from the initial one, but is nevertheless almost unique in its adherence to the structural principles of the fugue. It shows that, in contrast to the first two movements, Handel consciously conceived the third movement of HWV 190 independently of its counterpart in HWV 189.

The chamber duet *Beato in ver* (HWV 181; (Handel 2011b, 150–155; Handel recording, Duetti da Camera), the last one to be examined here, is the setting of a free translation of one of Horace's *Epodes* (II, 1–8), idealising pastoral life because of its freedom from material goods and ambition. In his last duets Handel was apparently drawn to more reflective texts. *Fronda leggiera e mobile* (HWV 186; Handel 2011b, 164–172; Handel recording, Duetti da Camera), a reflection on the inconstancy of fate and an advocacy of steadfastness in face of life's unpredictability, also displays the composer at his most philosophical in a chamber duet. I wonder whether the breach of the tradition of amorous subjects at the heart of the chamber duet had anything to do with the surpassing of the genre's structural and formal conventions, taken furthest in Handel's output so far, since Handel translates this eulogy of country life onto the plane of a single large-scale, almost operatic *da capo* form. In contemplative texts of the sort it is not only the somewhat surprising affect of joy but also the formal and structural regularity that contributes to the effect of playfulness and lightness.

	TEXT	THEMATIC MATERIAL*	FORM	BAR	KEY
A	Beato in ver chi può, lontan da gravi affari star ne' paterni lari e il suo terren solcar.	a_1 a_2 a_3	A_1 A_2 A_3	1–39 39–73 73–110	A, E, A A, D, A A
B	Troppa ricchezza, no, né povertà l'affanna, ambizion tiranna nol fa mai sospirar.	b_1 b_2 %	B_1 B_2	110–149 150–195	f♯, b, e, b, f♯ f♯, c♯
A'	Beato in ver…	*da capo*			

TABLE 13.
Formal plan of Handel's chamber duet *Beato in ver* (HWV 181)

* **Like in the previous Table 13, the columns "Text" and "Thematic material" are mutually aligned, whereas "Form", "Bar" and "Key" refer to each other.**

As in *Fronda leggiera e mobile*, each of the duet's sections opens with a lengthy alternative presentation of a tripartite subject, with the difference that the head (a1) intervenes in b. 16 in the alto, almost in the manner of a *motto* aria before the soprano concludes its final cadence, so that the alto can start again, stating the whole subject in b. 21. The composite nature of the subject (a1, b. 1–4; a2, b. 4–8; a3, b. 8–21) nevertheless leaves room for flexibility, as Handel subjects the range of the initial leap of a1 to variation and freely extends a3 by a *Fortspinnung* of its quaver figures (first occurrence b. 31–35), supported by a lengthy pedal in harmony with the text's pastoral theme. As in all the duets composed in the 1740s analysed so far, he constructs his sections in several cycles that set the text of the movement in its entirety. As in the opening movements of HWV 186 and 190, the first section[81] unfolds three cycles of this kind. Subsection A1 avoids counterpoint altogether, presenting the material in alternation, while subsection A2 and A3 work out each of the subject's three particles in succession. Imitative procedures are free, due among others to the varying of a1 (presented in alternating statements in A2, b. 39–46 and in parallel in A3, b. 73–76), whereas the imitation of a3 gives way to some further extensive *Fortspinnung* (b. 56–64, 85–90, 96–102), resulting occasionally in (quasi-)parallel movement. The crucial difference between sections A2 and A3 is in the much narrower imitative entries of a3. Section A thus proceeds from a regular alternation of composite subjects via the working

81 **There is no change of tempo or a double bar-line between A and B.**

out of its particles to a free contrapuntal interplay in which the motivic material serves merely as a point of departure.

The part of the continuo, containing elements of a1 and a3, leads into section B. It functions as a contrasting middle section in a *da capo* form, eventually rounded off by the repeat of A, and is therefore set apart from it by a harmonic contrast (related minor keys) and the idiomatic expressive treatment of words such as "affanna", "tiranna" and "sospirar", the latter interspersed with rests and following the traditions of musical rhetoric (Emans 2012, 538). However, I find it equally if not more important to stress the structural parallels and differences between the sections, taken even further than in section A. Although it seems that at the first utterance of the last line ("nol fa mai sospirar") in b. 127, we are dealing with a new, third motivic unit, its subsequent treatment and its absence from subsection B2 show that Handel decided to treat this line freely, with the aforementioned sighing figures (first occurrence b. 132–136) as its only motivic trademark. As in section A, the two subsections display a growing share of *Fortspinnung* in their concluding bars, more extended in B2 when compared to B1 the same way a3 became extended in each of A's subsections.

To a certain extent, in both *Beato in ver* and *Fronda leggiera e mobile* (possibly written even later, between 1740 and 1745)[82], Handel proceeds as he did in the two settings of *No, di voi non vuò fidarmi*, by turning away from the compositional logic of the madrigal in favour of a cyclical conception of form that sets all the lines of a movement in several turns. However, the movements of these late duets differ from HWV 189 and 190 by opening with lengthy, alternating presentations of long, tripartite (or in the case of the second movement of *Beato in ver*, bipartite) subjects that can be dismantled into their constituent motifs and are possible to combine contrapuntally in the manner of a mosaic. Unlike HWV 189 and 190, they do not unite an essentially dual thematic material into alternating cyclic settings, but present their respective texts (the first stanza in the case of the first movement, the second stanza in the case of the second one) as composite thematic material in its entirety. Both these duets seem to gradually abandon the need to infuse the text with interpretation, which could be down to both the reflective character and the departures from the tradition of the genre as exemplified in the work of Handel's great precursor, Steffani.

82 Disagreeing, Burrows (2012, 207) thinks that the duet was "probably completed" in 1741.

2. 4.
CHAMBER DUETS BY HANDEL'S ITALIAN CONTEMPORARIES: G. BONONCINI, F. GASPARINI, A. LOTTI, F. DURANTE

Whereas the need for a comparison of Handel's ensembles with the ones of his Italian contemporaries such as Bononcini, Gasparini and others is almost self-evident (see Chapter 1.1) in Handel's dramatic music, in the case of the chamber duet such comparisons need more justification. There is little trace of direct influence in this domain except for Steffani's chamber duets as predecessors and models, and the chamber duets by Giovanni Carlo Maria Clari, whose complex musical relationship with Handel surpasses the scope and purpose of this study. However, I still find it interesting to examine the chamber duets by composers as diverse as Antonio Lotti, Francesco Gasparini, Giovanni Bononcini and Francesco Durante[83] in their own merit. Firstly, most of them were written in Handel's lifetime and reflect the complex situation the genre found itself in. Secondly, some of these composers engaged in a specific musical interplay with Handel, whether as models or opponents in other musical genres although there is no evidence of direct contact between their respective chamber duets. Thirdly, as shall be seen in Chapter 3, many of these names will be important points of reference for duets in Handel's dramatic music. And we should not forget that not only Handel's contemporaries but also theorists of a younger generation in the 18th century such as the already mentioned Giordano Riccati compared the chamber duets of some of these composers. Riccati was, namely, of the opinion that the chamber duets of Giovanni Bononcini "do not yield in the least to the ones by Handel, and both the one and the other compete with the famous duets of Monsignor Agostino Steffani"[84] (Lindgren 2009, 149).

The accessibility and comprehensibility of the sources, as well as the availability of recordings played a crucial part in reaching a selection of nine chamber duets. However, the selection also highlights the diversity of the genre in a guise not so familiar from the chamber duets by Handel and Steffani that were analysed in previous chapters. Table 14 groups them partly according to structural and formal criteria to be explained in the course of Chapters 2.4.1 and 2.4.3 (the first two duets as well as the last four), partly by their authors (Bononcini and, to a lesser extent, Gasparini in the third group).

83 **The composers are listed chronologically by date of birth, as an exact chronology of their chamber duets is not possible.**

84 **Non la cedono per lo meni a quelli dell'Handel, e che gli uni, e gli altri gareggino coi famosi duetti di Monsignor Agostino Steffani**

COMPOSER	DUET	YEAR	SETTING	TYPE	FORM	TEXT/DRAMA	CHARACTERISTICS
Durante Francesco	*Mitilde, mio Tesoro*	1720–1730	S&A	reworking of a cantata=hybrid	exchange of recitative arioso, duet sections	dramatized monologue	reflection on absence (echo) free contrapuntal elaboration
Gasparini Francesco	*Nice s'è ver che m'ami*	?	S&A	hybrid: text = cantata, music = chamber duet	recitative interspersed with ariosi ending in a duet (fugue structure)	dramatic dialogue ending in duet of unity	ariosi: brief outbursts of joy; duet movement: regular fugue with tripartite subject
Bononcini Giovanni	*Luci barbare spietate*	1721	S&A	hybrid: text (epic), otherwise cantata a 2	2 movements separated with rec. (1st ABA, 2nd ABA)	1st duet & rec: dram. dialogue, 2nd duet: narrator	1st and 2nd ABA: alternation & (quasi) imitation; unity, operatic in layout & structure
	Pietoso nume arcier	1721	S&A	cantata a 2 without arias	2 mov. sep. with rec. (1st ABA, 2nd ABA)	dramatic dialogue (unity)	similar to Luci barbare (unity), but loose structure, less imit.
	Chi d'amor tra le catene	1691	S&S	chamber duet: between sonata & cantata type	6 movements: first two sonata type, the others cantata type	monologue with traces of dialogue	movements I & II: tripartite, imitative; other movements: recitative + arioso or fugal
Lotti, Antonio	*Poss'io morir*	1705	S&A	sonata type	3 mov. built from short sections, last one repetition of first one	monotextual: no dramatization	sections based on own them. mat., brief imitation followed by sequential CP (suspensions)
Gasparini Francesco	*Sdegno ed Amor*	?	S&A	sonata type	4 movements (inner: madrigal, outer: fugue structure)	monologue dramatized in 2nd movement	outer mov.: fugal working out; inner mov.: madrigal structure, division of lines in 2nd
	A' voi, piante innocent	?	S&S	sonata type	3 movement: fugue, free CP & combination of the two	emphasised lament	1st mov.: consistent fugue; 2nd homophony / free CP, non-motivic; 3rd : combination
	Sento tal fiamma	?	S&A	sonata type	2 movements	languishes cut short by Love's address	1st mov.: starts out as fugue but becomes more free; 2nd mov.: multi-sectional, diversity

TABLE 14.
A selection of chamber duets by Handel's Italian contemporaries for analysis

A duet by Durante is included not only because it is recorded (Durante recording, XII duetti a soprano e contralto) and available in a 19th-century edition (Durante 1844) but also because Durante's authorial transformation of Alessandro Scarlatti's solo cantatas into chamber duets results in highly unconventional solutions to the problems of genre posed by the chamber duet. A discussion of Gasparini's duet *Nice, s'è ver che m'ami* will follow before the analysis of other duets by the composer, many of them also recorded (Gasparini recording, Amori e ombre). This duet is akin to Durante's in that it is a hybrid between a *cantata a due* and a chamber duet, but in an entirely different way to Bononcini's *Si fugga, si sprezzi / s'apprezzi* and *Luci barbare spietate*, published in different printed collections in the composer's lifetime (*Duetti da camera,* 1691 and *Cantate e duetti*, 1721, see Bononcini 1701; Bononcini 2008). *Pietoso nume arcier*, however, is a fully fledged *cantata a due*, which is perhaps less surprising as it was originally published in a collection of cantatas. The fourth remaining Bononcini duet, *Chi d'amor tra le catene* is important as a link with the tradition of the older type of chamber duet in numerous sections or movements, often characteristic of Steffani. It will be interesting to compare it to a chamber duet by another composer associated with Handel through issues of borrowing, Lotti's *Poss'io morir*, a duet published less than fifteen years after Bononcini's (Lotti 1705) and meanwhile recorded (Amore e morte dell'amore, recording). Whereas Lotti's duet is a clear example of the "sonata duet", Bononcini infuses his with elements of the cantata. After an overview of diverse musical possibilities within the genre around the time Handel was reaching maturity in it, a study of duets that approximate Handel's more closely in stylistic and structural terms will follow. Three of Gasparini's duets (*Sdegno ed Amor*, *A voi, piante innocenti* and *Sento tal fiamma* from the same MS offer a chance for a comparison of common structural traits with Handel and the composers named above.

Giovanni Maria Clari will be absent from the comparison. Although widely available in editions both during his lifetime (Clari 1740) and later on (Clari 1823; Clari 1892) but barely recorded, his chamber duets have been subjected to more study (Taylor 1906; Saville 1958; Baggiani 1977; Liebscher 1987; Emans 1997) than the Italian composers' duets analysed in the subsequent course of this chapter. Clari is different from these Italian composers in that he is remembered first and foremost as a composer of chamber duets. Not only was he highly regarded by illustrious contemporaries such as Burney (who even favoured him over Steffani), Avison, Eximeno and Padre Martini but also by singing teachers of his age and beyond (extending into the 19th century), who used his chamber duets in vocal training. He was an "enormously skilled craftsman" (Saville 1958, 139), mostly in terms of contrapuntal technique and melodic idiosincracy. Saville describes Clari's collection *Duetti e madrigali* of 1720 in the

following words: "Formally, they rather resemble miniature 'fugues', each movement a schematic dialogue in which swift subjects and countersubjects spring nimbly from the text" and "engage in brief episodes" (ibid., 137). The majority are sonata duets, often working out the thematic material with variable degrees of contrapuntal density in several cycles, just like some of Handel's. This renders comparisons with Handel viable, and it is precisely in relation to Handel that Clari has often been examined. Most authors focus on the topic of Handel's borrowings from him, giving less attention to structural and formal similarities. Chrysander showed how Handel parodied six chamber duets by Clari in his oratorio *Theodora*, and the borrowing process has been further investigated since. Taylor's (1906, 28) opinion that "several entire choruses and a long orchestral movement are, with more or less infusion of other matter, developed out of passages of two or three bars each taken from Clari's unpretentious but charming little compositions" has not been challenged seriously even though later authors (e. g. Dean 1959; Liebscher 1987) realised that Handel often took over and adapted larger structures, sometimes even whole movements. However, the dominant point of view is that Handel improved the borrowed material, working it out on a "larger canvas" of choral and orchestral textures, although it hardly comes as a surprise that in the (dramatic) duet "To thee, thou glorious son of worth" from the oratorio *Theodora* (a parody of Clari's *Dov'è quell'usignolo*) Handel abandoned the relationship between the vocal parts and the continuo of Clari's original (Liebscher 1987, 215). In a dramatic duet the comprehensibility of the (different) text(s) comes to the fore and some of the textural complexity such as contrapuntal density is transferred from the relationship between the voices and the continuo onto the level of orchestral accompaniment.

That the comparative research of Handel's and Clari's chamber duets can lead to contradictory results is suggested by Emans's analysis of "Come Mighty Father". He insists that Handel here makes us forget his model by transforming it. He seems to imply that Handel consciously avoided reaching for more distinctive material from Clari so that he would not be limited in his transformative creativity (cf. Emans 1997, 420–422). Among others this proves that the similarities and the differences between the two composers' chamber duets are either too circumstantial to outline or too complex to elucidate in the scope of this study. Moreover, since unlike the other Italian composers considered in this study, there were no direct contacts between Handel and Clari whatsoever and relations of parody and possible influence are confined to the genre of the chamber duet (in which Clari was not as influential a figure as Steffani), I can conclude that a comparison between these two composers would not be as fruitful.

2. 4. 1.
Hybrid Chamber Duets

The Neapolitan composer F. Durante (1684–1755) differs from his own generation of composers in that he did not pursue an operatic career like his fellow citizens Nicola Porpora, Leonardo Vinci and Leonardo Leo. Having established his reputation entirely in the realm of church (and to a lesser degree, chamber) music, he was often regarded by his contemporaries and immediate successors as a follower of learned traditions, although he strived to amalgamate them with new stylistic influences the Neapolitan school was known for (see Cafiero and Dietz 2001). For instance, Dent singles out Durante from other representatives of the Neapolitan school (characterised by him in negative terms), claiming that "he exhibits a larger share than any of the others [Neapolitan composers, A/N] of Scarlatti's poetry and tenderness of style" (1960, 198). Durante's contribution to vocal chamber music played a considerable part in the composer's reception, since he took recitatives from cantatas by Alessandro Scarlatti as the basis for his manuscript collection of *XII duetti da camera* and he reworked and expanded them into unconventional, formally fluid chamber duets to the extent that according to many (including Burney), they outshone the "original". Although it was undertaken by Durante mostly for didactic purposes (cf. Dietz 2001), both his and Scarlatti's merits in this fascinating case of intertextual exchange (designated "parody cantata" by Ferand) have been contested. Hasse and Dent on one hand and Villafranco on the other hoist the achievements of Scarlatti and Durante respectively, describing the other composer as "coarse and uncouth" or "dry and scholastic" (Ferand 1958, 54).

Durante transformed Scarlatti's recitatives by developing them "into *arioso* sections by the devices of imitation, question-answer, echo effects, transposition, modulation, sequential treatment, and variation; occasionally, by interpolating material of his own… […] The two voices sometimes start separately, in *arioso* manner, with longer or shorter phrases, or they begin simultaneously, in parallel motion, in chordal or moderately contrapuntal fashion…" (Ferand 1958, 53). Thus the formal openness and fluidity of the original recitative transfers onto the level of a variety of chamber duet textures, and it is not surprising that Riemann appreciated the different levels of contrapuntal density present in these chamber duets "at moments genuinely canonical, on wider and narrower intervals and differently spaced, and at other moments freely contrapuntal"[85] (Riemann 1921,

85 **Die 'XII duetti da camera' von Francesco Durante sind ebenfalls bald wirklich kanonisch in engeren und weiteren Ton- und Zeitabständen, bald ganz frei kontrapunktiert**.

193). Nevertheless, Durante's duets achieved popularity and held esteem throughout the 18th century and remained in use up to the 20th.[86]

Let us examine how Ferand's description relates to our own analysis of one of Durante's duets, *Mitilde, mio Tesoro* (no. 7 from the collection, Durante 1844, 2:12–18; Durante recording, XII duetti a soprano e contralto). The choice was not obvious as there are duets in the collection that draw our attention equally, if not more, by their unconventionality. The elaborate lyrics of *Dormono l'aure estive* (no. 11) inspired Durante to distinct musical ideas for each of the pastoral images described in the text in an almost madrigalistic way. Due to the scanty use of recitative, this is one of the most diffuse of the twelve duets in terms of form, abiding in arioso sections. Most of the other duets follow the dialectic of the cantata in distinguishing more clearly between recitative and duet sections. However, they are by no means cantata duets; on the contrary, they often contain parallel, two-voice recitative, rarely to be encountered in Handel's and Steffani's duets. This is explained by the fact that Durante's duets are reworkings of sections of solo cantatas for two voices, so it would make little sense if they contained solo sections, since Durante would have had to retain Scarlatti's. Therefore, Liebscher's typology remains somewhat inappropriate. A duet with longer and contrapuntally more worked out duet sections such as *Alme, voi che provaste* (no. 4) poses the question of how Durante decides which lines of Scarlatti's cantata he will set as recitative, which as duet, which he should structure like an arioso and which he should work out contrapuntally. In some of the duets from the collection, answers to these questions seem to suggest a somewhat arbitrary, almost experimental stance on the part of the composer, but in *Mitilde, mio Tesoro* Durante's decisions seem to make perfect dramatic sense, for this duet is fuelled with latent dramaturgy in the vein of many of Steffani's, which is why—among others—I chose it for analysis.

The text is a fairly conventional and generalized invocation of the absent beloved. Sections B and C, i. e. two parallel poetic imaginings of the beloved in pastoral landscapes ("fortunato lido" and "ciel"), are framed by the initial dramatic address to Metilde (section A) and the conclusion on the cruelty of amorous absence (section D). Unlike Handel's mature sonata duets, favouring a balanced relationship between movements (sections), Durante destabilizes the poem's symmetry by placing the musical emphasis on sections B and D. However, this does not mean that, since Durante's chamber duets grew out of a solo cantata's recitatives, sections A and C are mere recitative introductions to the "real" duet sections of B and D, for

86 **The esteem of Durante's duets stems from their suitability for use in vocal training, but their reduction solely to this domain (Dietz 2001; Cafiero and Dietz 2001) is not justified, since he also wrote *solfeggi*, duets that serve this purpose only.**

not only are some arioso passages integrated into section C, but both the text and—in a manner of speaking—the material of section A are brought back in section D, resulting in a specific, dual construction. Durante in his setting not only repeats lines and motifs associated with section A but also fragments and juxtaposes them, resulting in textual combinations (both in succession and simultaneity) that are not present in the original poem, such as "Metilde, tu mi tormenti!". Whether it is merely her absence or the beloved nymph herself causing torment to the lyrical subject is less important than the fact that with its emphatic lines, often set in a way to highlight their latent dramatic potential, Durante's setting for two voices adds a pseudo-dialogic dimension often encountered in many of Steffani's duets and a few of Handel's duets.

TEXT	BAR	FORM	THEM. MATERIAL	TYPE
Metilde, mio Tesoro, / e dove sei? Dove il tu piè s'aggira?	1–21	A	gestures (fourth, fifth)	recit.
Qual fortunato lido il tuo vago splendor stupido ammira?	21–45	B	b_1, b_2	duet
Qual ciel per te risplende al bel fulgor delle tue luci ardenti?	45–53	C	–	recit.
Ah distanza crudel, tu mi tormenti!	54–71		c_1, (c2?)	arioso
[Metilde, e dove sei? Ah distanza crudel, tu mi tormenti!]	71–103	D	gestures (A), c_1, c_2	duet
	104–114	coda	c_2	

TABLE 15.
Formal outline of Durante's chamber duet *Metilde, mio Tesoro*

Probably precisely because it grows out of the emphatic, gestural rhetoric of the recitative, *Metilde, mio Tesoro!* is atypical in its thematic material. Section A alternates two recitative statements (b. 1–5 and 5–10) of the only three lines of the section a fourth lower, but it soon becomes clear that only certain intervallic gestures will retain motivic significance throughout not only the section but also the duet in its entirety. These contain the downward fourth leap on the words "Metilde", two leaps (the first usually a third, the second a fourth or a fifth) in opposite directions for the repetition of the words "e dove" as well as the melodic-rhythmic contours of the words "dove il tuo piè s'aggira?" (first occurrence b. 5). These three elements are freely varied in what matches Ferand's description quoted above[87], with

87 Development "into *arioso* sections by the devices of imitation, question-answer, echo effects, transposition, modulation, sequential treatment, and variation".

b. 1–10 serving as a starting point. The effect of immediacy is enhanced by the shortening of alternating phrases, culminating in double-quaver exchanges of "dove" (b. 17–18, 20). This is followed by B, a "real" duet section that works out its initial material (b1, b. 24–25) in contrapuntal terms, but with a likewise free treatment. It subjects b1 to alternation and imitation in an abridged or extended form, although motif b2 (first occurrence b. 28–29, associated with the second line) emancipates itself from b1 and is alternated and loosely imitated independently of it in the course of the section. This free contrapuntal interplay occasionally flows into sequential contrapuntal chains (b. 14–16, 40–42), but its main feature is the abundance of chromatic alteration typical not only of Durante's duets, but also of Scarlatti's cantatas. In this case, it is not governed by the semantics of the text but merely a generalized trait of "learned" music that could be associated with the chamber duet, as well.

Section C rapidly sets the second pair of lines (this time wondering about what skies Metilde finds herself under) as a swift recitative for the soprano (b. 45–50), but focuses on the motto of the poem, "Ah distanza crudel, tu mi tormenti" later on. Unlike the gestural contours in section A and the free variation in section B, this line is treated even more loosely in motivic terms, for it is first set in the alto to a quasi-recitative passage (b. 50–51) highlighting an expressive jump on the word "distanza", only to be varied already in its repetition in the soprano (b. 52–53). A stark contrast is offered in b. 54 with the establishment of a steady rhythmic pace in a downward progression of minims accompanied by a likewise downward chordal figure in the continuo (b. 54–69), making way for an arioso *a due* in which the downward minim motif (c1, b. 54–56) is freely combined with varied outcries of "ah distanza crudel" (that I will mark as c2[88]), characterised by emphatic leaps on the syllable "del" that vary from a major sixth (b. 59–60) to an octave (b. 60–61) and an augmented fourth (65–66). The following bars display, for the first time, arpeggiations on the words "tu mi tormenti" (b. 66–67) that are to be associated with this text in section D. One could argue that the latter's beginning in b. 71 is somewhat arbitrarily defined, as the break from recitative to arioso happened already in b. 54, and in b. 71 there is no break within the arioso texture of b. 54–71. However, I will insist on this formal outline because fragments of the duet's first line ("Metilde, e dove sei?") return and—with them—their associated gestural motifs. Section D opens with four bars (b. 71–75) freely reminiscing on the gestural motifs on the words "Metilde" and "dove sei", before returning to a free imitation of c1, underlined by its characteristic rhythmic accompaniment (b. 75–77). This unexpected ordering of the text

88 **Although one can hardly speak of motifs in the strict sense, more so of motivic contours.**

already produces the above mentioned semantic link between the torments and the beloved, and the remaining course of the section will only enhance this effect dramatically. It will continue to contrapuntally juxtapose the gestural motifs of "Metilde" or "dove sei" with variants of c2 (b. 78–80, 92–93), c1 (b. 90–92) or to develop free counterpoint from the already mentioned arpeggiations on the words "tu mi tormenti" (b. 94–99), making use—as before—of extension and variation, as well as the inversion of parts without consistent double counterpoint. The coda, left only with the text "tu mi tormenti" will get its expressive initial impulse from the leap on the word "crudel" (motivic association c2) extended to a diminished octave, only to die away gradually by a contrapuntal flow combining free counterpoint and brief alternation of parts reminiscent of the exchanges of "Metilde" and "dove" in section A. The lapidary ending—an exchange of "Metilde" in the alto with a descending "tu mi tormenti" in the soprano (far-reaching variation of c1)—makes for a pointing conclusion to the duet.

Chamber duets about amorous abandonment or solitude have benefited from the tradition of the musical echo, so prominent in music of the 17th century, since it is pointedly dramatic when there is nothing to answer the languishing laments of the subject but the faint echo of his or her voice. As had already been noticed in Steffani's *Saldi marmi* and, to a lesser extent, Handel's *Se tu non lasci amore* (HWV 193), the chamber duet not only plays with this effect but sometimes makes out of it a musical-dramatic guiding principle of the composition. There are few such elaborate musical structurings of an inner echo such as *Metilde, mio Tesoro!* Durante uses his method of reworking Scarlatti's recitatives to produce a flexible, fluid structure of two-voice recitative, arioso and duet proper, and he also assures large-scale motivic unity and continuity by bringing back the emphatic calls to Metilde and leading them into an intensive dialogue with the conclusion of the poem on the cruelty of absence. To this purpose, his rich harmonic language, abundant with alterations and chains of secondary dominants, is more than perfectly suited.

Francesco Gasparini's *Nice, s'è ver che m'ami* (Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 5, 33'–38'[89]; Gasparini recording, Amori e ombre) is one of a few duets in the composer's MS collection of twelve duets conserved at the British Library that does not belong to the sonata type of chamber duet, along with *Su quest'amena spada* (Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 3, 15'–26) and *Quanto felice sei* (Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 12, 84–94), examples of the cantata duet. As Robinson (1981, 69) rightly points out, in the case of these duets "the musical form partly depends on the poetry", whose verse structure "invites the musician to compose them more

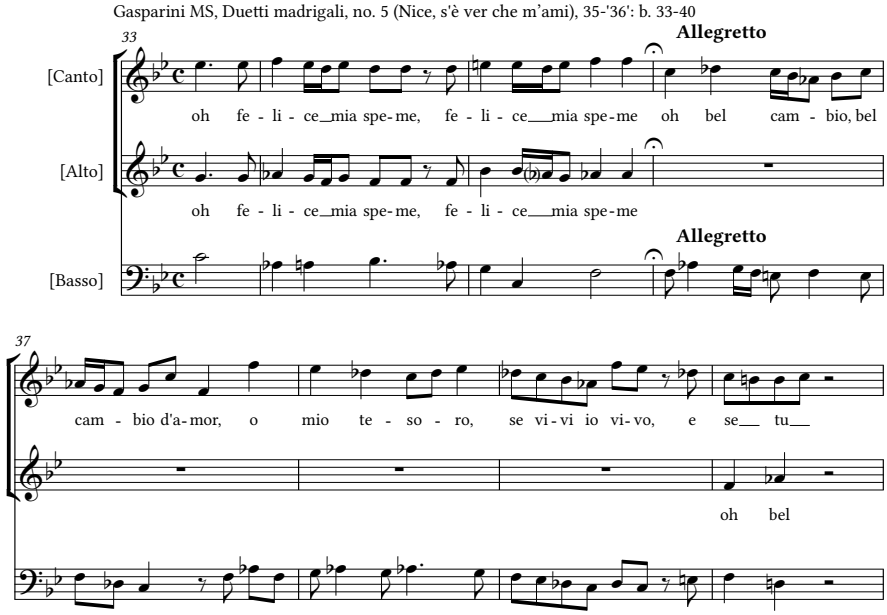
89 **In the main text, manuscripts will be referred to according to the Chicago Manual of Style in the following way: Author, Primary title, (Secondary title), Foliation.**

or less in an operatic manner, that is, with recitatives and arias/duets in alternation."[90] The reason why after the consideration of Durante's duet I have decided to concentrate on *Nice, s'è ver che m'ami* is not merely that it, too, is a hybrid between the cantata and the chamber duet. The duet's text is, namely, unambiguously a dialogue in recitative with roles clearly assigned to the shepherd Tirsi (A) and the nymph Nice (S), which means that, unlike in duets of the cantata type making use of both solo and two-voice recitative (thus remaining monologic), its text is conceived as a *cantata a due*. The shepherd Tirsi and the nymph Nice mutually confess that they have lost their hearts to each other and conclude that, since each of their hearts is safely endorsed within the breast of the other, there is no reason for jealousy and fear. They unanimously celebrate their inextricable bond, leaving no place for conflict. The parallel with Durante's procedure of reworking Scarlatti's recitatives lies in how Gasparini developed and extended certain recitative passages into brief *ariosi* sung by both protagonists, which rarely happens in a *cantata a due*. Unlike in the essentially undramatic, monologic texts of Durante's duets, in *Nice, s'è ver che m'ami* this makes perfect dramatic sense, as the lines Gasparini decides to set as an arioso ("oh me felice", "oh me contento") express the affect of joy felt by both protagonists. He thus interrupts the recitative flow in two turns, first with a very short pseudo-imitative outburst on "oh me felice" (b. 9–12[91]), then with a slightly extended section on both of these phrases (b. 16–27), featuring pseudo-imitative counterpoint and parallel semiquaver passages of a longer span. The third, last and shortest recitative section (b. 29–35) ends in parallel two-voice recitative, confirming the prevalence of the duet over the soloist principle and flows into a proper duet section (the only one in the duet), written in the style of a fugue (Example 1). One wonders why Gasparini made the choice to treat a text that seems to have called for a *cantata a due* setting in the manner of a chamber duet. True, a cantata consisting of a mere dozen lines of recitative dialogue and ending in a monotextual duet (or *aria a due*) seems too limited in scope when compared to the cantata production of the period. For it to function as a cantata, it would require at least one aria for each soloist before concluding with a duet affirmative of the protagonist's mutual love. Although in a form calling for a cantata setting, the lapidary scope of the text might have urged Gasparini to set it as a chamber duet instead.

90 **La forma musicale dipende in parte dalla poesia… invitò il musicista a comporli più o meno nella maniera operistica, cioè, con recitativi ed aria/duetti in alternanza.**

91 **Bar numbers refer to my own bar markings on the photocopies of the scanned microfilm (Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 5, 33'–38').**

Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 5 (Nice, s'è ver che m'ami), 35-'36': b. 33-40



EXAMPLE 1

Gasparini's skills in the art of counterpoint (to be discussed in more detail in the example of three of his other, perhaps more typical chamber duets later on) are exemplified by the above mentioned final section of *Nice, s'è ver che m'ami*, a setting of the text "Oh bel cambio d'amor, o mio Tesoro, / se vivi io vivo, e se tu mori io moro". In the manner of many of the duets analysed so far, it presents us a tripartite subject (a1, b. 36–37 + a2, b. 37–39 + a3, b. 39–42) and proceeds to imitate it in its integral form five times in different related tonalities (b. 40, 44, 49, 58, 68). Imitations are always outlined so that the imitative entry of a1 falls just a quaver after the onset of a3, but instead of the impression of a stretto, the contrapuntal disposition of the section resembles a contrapuntal patchwork, like in many of Handel's and Steffani's duets, with the particles of the subject serving as building blocks, although the integrity of the tripartite subject is preserved throughout. Between these integral imitations, one encounters free contrapuntal combinations of variants of motifs a3 and a2. Whereas the former is the least imposing and therefore the most viable to variation, the head of the subject (a1) needs to remain recognisable as a fugal entry and therefore cannot serve as a basis for the fugue's episodes. The only real contrast the whole duet works with is the contrast between the major-mode inflection of a2 ("se vivi io vivo") and the mild chromaticism of a3 ("se tu mori io moro"), but this is preserved only in the imitative entries and plays no part in the episodes, nevertheless stressing the interwoven destinies of the lovers effectively. The only duet section of *Nice, s'è ver che m'ami* proves that a chamber duet setting of a text more appropriate for a *cantata a due* can contain classically contrapuntal imitative sections as well, typical of the genre and of Gasparini's chamber duets.

2. 4. 2.
Chamber Duets by Giovanni Bononcini

The composer Giovanni Bononcini (1670–1747), son of composer and music theorist Giovanni Maria Bononcini (1642–1678) and sometimes erroneously called Giovanni Battista Bononcini, was born in Modena, but he moved to Bologna at the age of eight, where he received his musical education, among others by studying counterpoint with G. P. Colonna at the Church of San Petronio. This piece of biographical information is relevant because at the time, Bologna was the centre of "learned", contrapuntal church music (both vocal and instrumental), and the young Bononcini became a member of its renowned *Accademia Filarmonica* at the age of fifteen. Since this institution was "rigidly maintaining the practice of the earlier polyphonic style" and "helping to codify an acceptable and proper musical style" (Surian and Ballerini 2001), it is less surprising that,

before moving to Rome, in Bologna Bononcini published a collection of chamber duets (*Duetti da camera*, Bononcini 1701) as his op. 8. The duets in this collection were met with "great applause, both by scholars and music lovers"[92] (Riccati in Lindgren 2009, 148), they were reprinted and discussed by music theorists Le Cerf de la Viéville[93] in 1705 and Riccati in 1787. Although—as we shall see later on—his chamber duets are very different from Bononcini's, Gasparini, too, who worked alongside Bononcini in Rome in the 1690s, praised them for their "*bizzaria*, beauty, harmony, artful study and fanciful invention" in his theoretical treatise *L'armonico pratico al cimbalo* (quoted in Lindgren 2009, 151). Similarly, Nicola Haym, Italian composer, cellist and man of letters, best known for adapting libretti for Handel, thought that the instrumental accompaniment in Bononcini's chamber music is among the finest of his age (cf. Lindgren 2009, 146). Besides the ten from the 1691 collection, Bononcini is the author of another two[94] chamber duets published in the collection *Cantate e duetti* (London, 1721) and available in a facsimile edition, Bononcini 2008.

However, Bononcini's reception was and to a certain extent still is a matter of some controversy. Even Le Cerf de la Viéville, highly critical of Bononcini's melodic and harmonic style, conceded to some graciousness in Bononcini's melody. Johann Ernst Galliard shared the impression of an "agreable and easie style", and this "lightness" and "easiness" is one of the most common points in writing on the composer. More recently, even though Timms (in preface to Steffani 1987) avoids value judgements while establishing that Bononcini's duets are less contrapuntal and more like a *cantata a due* than Steffani's, through the association with counterpoint (via Steffani) it is implied that a chamber duet making little use of counterpoint does not meet the requirements of the genre. Timms concluded that "compared with the music of Burney's day, Bononcini's duets must have appeared 'learned and elaborate', but they now seem less consistently contrapuntal than those of Steffani and closer to the *cantata a due*" (ibid., viii). It would thus appear that due to their proximity to the *cantata a due*, Bononcini's chamber duets are less authentic representatives of the genre. Expectedly, Schmitz is more directly deprecating, criticising "the operatic character of the form, conceived as dramatized

92 Grande applauso, e da professori e da dilettanti di musica.

93 In a polemic between the merits of French and Italian music, Le Cerf de la Viéville does not share the high opinion on the composer expressed by François Raguenet (see Lindgren 2009, 141 and Viéville 1705, 81).

94 To this number we should add another duet from a Naples manuscript (***Quando voi amiche stelle***), considered spurious by some, but attributed to Bononcini by Lindgren (2009, 149).

duo-scenes with a rich interchange of solos and duets" and "the primitive counterpoint"[95] (1916, 57).

I hope to succeed in countering at least some of Schmitz's value-overlaid judgements. Easiest to contest is the equation of traits of the cantata type of chamber duet with "operatic character", since these traits are not characteristic of opera only but other dramatic genres as well. Chrysander shares Schmitz's negative attitude to influences of the cantata such as the *da capo* form as well as the looser contrapuntal techniques, and clearly labels Bononcini's 1721 contributions to the genre as "limited" (see Chrysander 1919b, 71), but it will be more interesting to return to his comments on the individual movements of the two respective chamber duets later on. In the correspondence of music theorist Giordano Riccati[96] (1709–1790), some attention is given to the chamber duets of Handel and Bononcini. Although the solo movements (i. e. arias) in the latter's 1691 collection were somewhat antiquated for Riccati's taste, he was of the opinion that the duet sections use all elements of counterpoint, imitation as well as occasionally countersubjects. Riccati criticized Bononcini's abrupt modulations and somewhat limited harmonic language, but not his contrapuntal skills, as shown by his analysis of four duets from the collection (cf. De Piero 2012; Lindgren 2009, 149). In his own analysis, Lindgren states that "in all of Bononcini's Op. 8 duets youthful fire is combined with academic texture" (Lindgren 2009, 150).

A closer look at the ten duets from the 1691 collection does show the domination of the cantata type. Six of them contain solo movements (*Se bella / E fido son io*, *Quanto cara/dolce la libertà, Prigonier d'un bel sembiante, Sempre piango/rido*, *O che lacci/strali io sento, Chi di gloria hà bel desio*) whereas the other four limit themselves to duet movements bound together by recitative dialogue (*Chi d'amor tra le catene*; *Il nume d'amore*; *Bellezza crudele/fedele*; *Si fugga, si sprezzi / s'apprezzi*). This naturally goes hand in hand with the occasional (or partial) dramatization of the compositions, whether through the more or less direct assuming of (named or unnamed) roles by the voices, or through the use of polytextuality, i. e. the fact that the two voices sing lines distinguished from each other only by a single, albeit crucial word (*Se bella / E fido son io*, *Quanto cara/dolce la libertà*, *Sempre piango/rido*, *O che lacci/strali io sento*, *Bellezza crudele/fedele*; *Si fugga, si sprezzi / s'apprezzi*). The tendency to use *da capo* form,

95 **Vom opernhaften Charakter der vorwiegend als dramatische Duoszenen mit reichem Wechsel von Soli und Zwiegesängen gegebenen Form… primitiven Kontrapunkt.**

96 **Famous for his empirical achievements in the theory of harmony and musical acoustics, see Barbieri 2001. Riccati's positive opinion on three of Handel's duets has already been discussed in Chapter 2.3.**

however, is far from being all-pervasive: only five, that is half of the duets adopt it in all the duet sections except in the final and more markedly contrapuntal one (*Il nume d'amore*, *Belleza crudele/fedele*, *Sempre piango/rido*, *O che lacci/strali io sento, Chi di gloria hà bel desio*).

Although *Chi d'amor tra le catene,* the duet opening the collection, will prove to be of special significance to the comparative agenda of this chapter, I will leave its consideration to the end of my discussion on Bononcini's chamber duets and focus on other selected duets, since it will turn out that they have much more in common in spite of the fact that thirty years separate their publication. Although published twenty years later in a collection that contains mostly cantatas (Bononcini 2008), the duet *Luci barbare spietate* (Bononcini 2008, 48–54; Bononcini recording, 'Luci barbare': cantate, duetti, sonate) displays an amazing number of parallel traits with the duet *Si fugga, si sprezzi / s'apprezzi* (Bononcini 1701, 126–137; Bononcini recording, 'Luci barbare': cantate, duetti, sonate) from the 1691 collection, including an identical formal plan and a similarly borderline position between a *cantata a due* and a chamber duet. This is why we shall briefly consider the two duets together, although the more recent one will be considered in more detail. *Si fugga, si sprezzi / s'apprezzi* is intricately polytextual, but its text also manages to individualise the two voices in dramatic terms. Although formally and structurally very different from Gasparini's *Nice, s'è ver che m'ami*, it could equally pass off as a *cantata a due* if it had additional solo arias for each voice. Despite no dramatic roles being named, in the recitatives and both of the duets the soprano consistently advocates scorn for love, whereas the alto shows worship for it, despite the awareness of the hardships it can bring. As a result, the respective texts of these two imaginary protagonists differ only in a word or two per line. In contrast, *Luci barbare spietate* is unquestionably monotextual and clearly indicates the roles of the shepherd Tirsi (S) and the nymph Dorinda (A)[97]. Like Gasparini's *Nice, s'è ver che m'ami*, it seems that the addition of a few arias would suffice to make a *cantata a due*. However, a closer look at the text reveals that the first duet movement and the recitative function on an entirely different diegetic plane than the second. With its accusatory tone and the use of the second person plural ("voi"), the first duet ("Luci barbare spietate") sounds as a lover's monologue at odds with its two-voice setting, but the subsequent recitative reveals that both Tirsi and Dorinda were in fact making the same accusation

97 **It is typical of the gender identities of high voices that the male protagonist's part could be placed above the female's. In the available Bononcini recording of the duet, this produces the effect of travesty, as Tirsi's part is sung by soprano Monique Zanetti and Dorinda's by countertenor Pascal Bertin.**

of "cruelty" to each other in parallel monologues, he for her refusal of his courting, she for his lack of faith. After they have consolidated their love in a recitative dialogue, what follows is not a love duet like in *Nice, s'è ver che m'ami* but a narrator's neutral commentary in the first person singular ("Spero, che in pace"), expressing hope that Tirsi and Dorinda will live in peace and happiness with each other. This final duet is therefore at dramatic odds with its duet setting (a characteristic of the chamber duet) and places the text on the epic rather than the dramatic plane.

TEXT	BAR	FORM	MOTIFS	KEY
Luci barbare spietate / accendetevi d'amore	1–31	A_1=A_{11} +A_{12}	a_1,(+) a_2	B, F, F, B
E così voi mi temprate / La cagion del mio dolore.	31–49	A_2	a_1, a_2'	g, c, d
Luci barbare spietate / accendetevi d'amore.		A_1	*da capo*	
Così Dorinda mia…	recitative reconciliation of Tirsi and Dorinda			
Spero che in pace / Vivran quest'alme / Senz'altra pena,	1–37	B_1	b, be*	B, F, E♭, B
La doglia tace ora ch'amore / La rasserena.	37–59	B_2	b', b''	g, E♭, c, g
Spero che in pace / Vivran ques'alme / Senz'altra pena.		B_1	*da capo*	

TABLE 16.
Formal outline of Bononcini's chamber duet *Luci barbare spietate*

* **Closing bar of motif b (to be explained later on in the course of the analysis).**

Si fugga, si sprezzi / s'apprezzi shares the formal plan of *Luci barbare* as outlined in Table 16 with the difference that after two tripartite duet movements in *da capo* form separated by recitative, the composition is rounded off by an imitative coda. The first two duet sections are, however, very consistent in their avoidance of counterpoint. Bononcini limits himself to alternation and parallelism in that a single melodic line seems evenly divided between two voices. This division occurs so as to highlight the textual differences ("sprezzi / s'apprezzi" in A1, "soave/severo" in A2) at their first occurrence, after which the utterance of these contrasting words can occur in both voices in parallel. As we shall see later in Chapter 3, these characteristics are more often to be encountered in dramatic duets. Exposed use of the alternation of parts is sometimes recognised as a characteristic of the *Streitduett*, and indeed, the soprano and alto are here arguing on the merits of love. The absence of contrapuntal techniques that

were the motor of Steffani's, Handel's and Gasparini's duets is not felt as a loss because Bononcini works on a less "learned", more simple and direct stylistic plane. When the voices are finally intertwined in an imitative texture in the coda, one wonders whether the use of counterpoint after so much outright avoidance of it suggests that the two opposed opinions are not as irreconcilable as it seemed.

While writing about Bononcini's two duets from his 1721 collection, Chrysander understood them as a series of four (two times two) duets. He described the two duets comprising *Luci barbare spietate* in the following terms: "the first one has little worth, whereas the second one is adorned and delicately worked out in the best prototype of Steffani's chamber texture"[98] (Chrysander 1919b, 73). The contrasting evaluation of the two movements of the same duet (possibly the most unified in motivic and structural terms out of the duets by Bononcini examined in this study), necessitates a comparative analysis. In movement A, the first, repeated A1 section in this *da capo* design is unambiguously bipartite, consisting of a subsection (A11) modulating from the tonic to the dominant, and its counterpart (A12) written in quasi-inverted counterpoint, making the harmonic trajectory back to the tonic. This model, clearly building on the tradition of the baroque bipartite form, is "filled" with an imitation of a subject that can be labelled as bipartite and some cadential parallel movement. Like in many of Steffani's duets, there is only a thin line separating the second part of a bipartite subject (a2, first occurrence in b. 8–10 in the soprano) from a countersubject. The first part of the subject a1 (first occurrence b. 5–7) is alternated between the two voices without counterpoint and followed by a2 in b. 8 in the soprano as a counterpoint to a1 in the alto. The imitative flow is continued in b. 9 by an imitation of a2, leading to parallel semiquaver melismas and a reassertion of the dominant. The whole process is seemingly repeated in A12 in inverted counterpoint, but in b. 19 it becomes clear that Bononcini is more interested in freely varying and expanding the texture within the same framework, e. g. with parallel passages that give the duet some "operatic" splendour. One cannot help but wonder where in this gracious musical setting the accusatory tone of the text had disappeared to. Movement A's middle section A2 uses similar structural procedures to A1, with the main difference that there is (even) less imitation, motif a2 is reduced to its head (a2') and the form is less regular since it is governed by the need of a middle section in a *da capo* form to explore related minor tonalities. Bononcini is consistent in his motivically conditioned setting of the text: the same way as in A1, in

98 **Das erste wenig Werth hat, das zweite dagegen nach den besten Mustern eines Steffanischen Kammersatzes schmuckt und zierlich ausgearbeitet ist.**

section A2 a1 remains reserved for the third line and a2' for the fourth. Bononcini's subsequent abandonment of a1 and the concentration on a2' is justified in madrigalistic terms since the word "dolor" is considered particularly suited to modulatory treatment, although we are far from the expressive extremes of Steffani or (to a lesser extent) Handel, as the harmonic language is kept simple throughout.

TEXT	BAR	FORM	MATERIAL / STRUCTURAL TRAITS	
Pietoso nume arcier, / ascolta i voti miei / un sol momento.	**1–17**	**A_1**	**free invention & variation of motivic cells; ornaments, voice crossing**	
Fa che di Tirsi/Aminta il cor / senta l'istesso ardor/ che al cor io sento.	**17–26**	**A_2**	**series of sequential imitations of motif w in inverted counterpoint**	
Pietoso nume arcier…		**A_1**	***da capo***	
Consolati Aldimira…	**recitative**		**Dorinda consoles Aldimira**	
Se l'idolo che adoro / fedel con me sarà che più bramar non sa / quest'alma amante.	**1–33**	**B_1**	**b_1**	**parallel voice-leading (with voice-crossing!), regularity**
Già sento che ristoro / prendendo va il mio sen sperando che il suo ben / le sia constante.	**33–57**	**B_2**	**b_2, b_1'**	**imitation (suspensions), CP against held notes**
Se l'idolo che adoro / fedel con me sarà che più bramar non sa / quest'alma amante.	**da capo**	**B_1**	***da capo***	

TABLE 17.
Formal outline of Bononcini's chamber duet *Pietoso nume arcier*

In spite of Chrysander's contrasting evaluation, movement B shows many parallels with movement A. It is "fugal" in maintaining the unity of its single subject, merely deriving other motifs from it. Although counterpoint is applied more consistently and parallel movement used less often, due to frequent recourse to passages of long-held notes as a countersubject the texture is often no more taut than in movement A. After the modulation to the dominant by means of the initial imitation of b (first occurrence b. 3–5) in the lower fourth in the alto, the motif from the last bar of b (be, b. 8) sets off a sequential episode (b. 9–13), leading into another imitative chain (b. 14–19) and a second sequential episode. The regularly bipartite course of section B1 is concluded with a lengthy section (b. 24–37) based

on note-to-note voice-leading, whether parallel or in contrary motion, and often integrating elements of be into its elegant, seamless flow. Bononcini obviously felt the need to infuse his chamber duets with structural features from cantata and opera, where voices can shine more prominently together rather than be pitted against each other all the time. But the difference between movements A and B is more a question of ratio than of stark structural contrasts as Chrysander understood it: movement A simply favours an alternating rather than imitative presentation of its material and is more extensive in its parallel passages, whereas movement B prefers to work out the material contrapuntally and reserves the parallel unification of the vocal parts for the closing section of section B1. Similarly to A2, the movement's middle section (B2) modulates into related tonalities. As he does this, Bononcini makes use of not only the material of B1 but of its imitative structures as well, employing be and the subsequent held note as a counterpoint to an abridged version of b (b'', first occurrence b. 42–43). The idea that love shall brighten (crucial word "la rasserena") the future of the two lovers is stressed with coloratura passages and builds a fitting bridge to the repeat of B1. Maybe Bononcini chose a more contrapuntal setting in movement B due to the more neutral nature of the narrator's text?

Pietoso nume arcier (Bononcini 2008, 95–99; Duetti, recording) is a case of a genuine *cantata a due* without arias. Unlike *Si fugga, si sprezzi / s'apprezzi* with its abstract dramaturgy, it is written for the clearly assigned roles of the nymphs Dorinda and Aldimira, both altos[99]. Unlike *Luci barbare spietate*, it lacks conflict since the characters are united in their unrequited love for the shepherds Aminta and Tirsi (movement A), the mutual consolation that they give each other (recitative) and the hope that their beloved ones will be faithful to them (movement B). In formal terms the duet is identical to *Luci barbare spietate*, with two duets in *da capo* form, but while the former's movements show a high degree of motivic unity and a great deal of common structural features, the two duet movements of *Pietoso nume arcier* are genuinely contrasting, and here Chrysander's (1919b, 73) opinion holds more ground: the first duet movement "is canonic, but takes liberties with the idiom without fulfilling its laws: it is without allure and content; the *da capo* form may be the least suited to this form." On the other hand, the second (*Se l'idolo che adoro*), "fits this [*da capo*, A/N] construction much better, as it is held predominantly two-part"[100] and it can stand well as a stage duet of lighter fabric. Unlike in his assessment

99 **Aldimira is Alto 1, Dorinda Alto 2, although there is a lot of voice-crossing between them.**

100 **Ist kanonisch, nimmt sich die Freiheiten dieser Schreibart ohne ihre Gesetze zu erfüllen; es ist ohne Reiz und Gehalt; die Rundstrophe dürfte sich zu dieser Form auch wohl am wenigsten schicken. … Passt zu einer solchen Anlage schon besser, da es überwiegend einfach zweistimmig gehalten ist.**

of *Luci barbare spietate*, Chrysander abandons the level of appropriateness to the genre as his main criteria and judges the movements on their own merits. It is refreshing how he places the movement *Se l'idolo che adoro* above the opening one even though he dismissed movement A of *Luci barbare spietate* because of its operatic character.

Movement A is atypical not only of Bononcini's, but also of all the chamber duets analysed so far in that it does not associate its lines (or pairs of lines) with clearly recognizable motifs or subjects. Instead, it engages in a seemingly spontaneous accumulation of several musical ideas slightly subject to variation. The voices open with the descending motif x, anticipated already in the introduction of the *basso continuo*, on the first line (first occurrence b. 3–4 in Aldimira's part), taken over by Dorinda after two. The close interlinking of the parts in vocal chains of lesser contrapuntal density than in Steffani's "placidissime catene" continues with a new motif, y, on the second line (b. 5–6) in Dorinda's part. Aldimira takes it up once, but after this, the interlinking of the vocal parts gives way to semiquaver neighbour notes on the section's last line (b. 6–7). After a pause, this material z (if one can call it material, for it is more of a—rhythmic—impulse) is further elaborated into a chain of appoggiaturas, ornaments and parallel thirds, maintaining the complementary semiquaver pulse and engaging in frequent voice-crossing (b. 7–10). The subsequent course of section A1 continues to develop this structural frame with an even more intensive use of voice-crossing and suspensions. Motif x is first alternated between Dorinda (b. 10–11) and Aldimira, not on the text "Pietoso nume arcier", but on the second line ("ascolta i voti miei") instead. By disregarding how a text was previously set, Bononcini distances himself from traditions of vocal music that the chamber duet might have grown out of. The much shorter section A2 sets all its three lines in one go on a rhythmic motif I shall label as w (first occurrence b. 17–18 in Alto 1). Its structure makes it possible to concatenate it into a series of sequential imitations written in inverted counterpoint and even more abundant in ornaments. The imitative entries in b. 17–21 are separated by two beats, but after a cadence in G minor motif w is briefly imitated at the distance of a mere quaver in a quasi-stretto (b. 21) that flows into parallelism and a further exploration of non-harmonic notes and parallel thirds in b. 22–26 before a *da capo* repetition of A1. It is not entirely clear why Chrysander thought that the *da capo* form is the most inappropriate aspect of this movement, for the extremely loose contrapuntal and motivic structure seems a more likely candidate for displeasing him.

Interestingly, it is almost always Aldimira's part that sets off the contrapuntal chains. It is she who introduces each of the three lines and, with it, the new material (x, y, and z). However, in the recitative Dorinda

assumes a more active role: she not only consoles the other nymph, persuades her to take on a more optimistic attitude to the prospects of her love for Tirsi being reciprocated but also confidently claims that Aminta, too, will be faithful to her. While some of Handel's and most of Steffani's numerous duets written for two sopranos distinguish themselves with a *concertante*, playful exchange between the two vocal parts, not shunning the high register either, in the only duet written for two altos that we have considered so far, Bononcini focuses on the middle register, interweaving the vocal parts very closely. The two nymphs not only share the same fate of unrequited love and provide solace and support for each other, they are also more literally close on a purely musical level as their voices build an extremely taut texture.

Movement B, however, sees the two nymphs entirely united in both dramaturgic and musical terms. After Dorinda had managed to turn around the faint-hearted Aldimira to optimism in the preceding recitative, the two nymphs sing an entire movement mainly in parallel. The change of affect (from despair to joy) does not bring about a change from minor to major the same way this was the case in *Luci barbare spietate*. In this movement, Bononcini returns to a more regular formal (and syntactical) outline known from the opening movements of *Si fugga, si sprezzi / s'apprezzi* and *Luci barbare spietate*. A more or less continual melodic stringing together of four- and six-bar phrases follows the instrumental interlude, leading from the tonic C minor to E-flat major and back. The voices are held parallel, bar a couple of quasi-imitative entries in b. 14–15 and 28–29 and some use of double counterpoint. In the middle section (B2), after a setting of the first two lines in a quasi-imitative passage that exposes a series of 2–3 suspensions (b2, b. 36–39), the composer sets the remainder of the text by alternating between passages in parallel and contrary motion and passages in invertible counterpoint against a long-held note.

Let us now examine one of Bononcini's lengthiest duets, *Chi d'amor tra le catene* (Bononcini 1701, 1–18;[101] Duetti, recording[102]) from his 1691 collection. Unlike the others analysed so far, this duet is not another borderline case, i. e. some kind of hybrid between the chamber duet and the cantata, but a genuine representative of the chamber duet. It is imposing already in its dimensions, for it consists of no less than six movements. Although Liebscher is of the opinion that there are no borderline cases

101 **Although it has not been professionally edited, the following reliable IMSLP transcription facilitated analysis: http://imslp.org/wiki/Chi_d%27Amor_tra_le_catene_(Bononcini,_Giovanni), accessed August 10, 2014.**

102 **The only recording of the duet (Duetti, recording) chose to dispense with the performance of movements III to VI altogether.**

MOV.	TEXT (S1 & S2)	FORM	BAR	MOTIF	CHARACTERISTICS	KEY
I.	Chi d'Amor tra le catene pose un giorno incauto il piè	A	1–33	a_1, a_2	imitative chains parallelism madrigalism ("abisso") free texture, parallelism *da capo*	a
	nell'abisso delle pene sventurato allor cadè.	B	34–67	b, a_1'		e, b a, d
	Chi d'Amor…	A				
II.	Bella sì, ma crudel (S2) Vago sì, ma infedel (S1) Se ti lagni d'Amor ragion non hai.	A	1–21	% a, ac	gender-specified text; alternation of parts imitative *concertante* texture in fast tempo *Largo:* alternation of parallel arioso and short-breath imitation *da capo*	F F, C (d, a)
	Io sì che son fedel per un infido cor mi struggo in guai.	B	22–37	b		a, c, C, c
	Bella sì (da capo)	A'				
III.	Ma dì perché con ingiuste querele offendi un cor fedele (S2) oltraggi alma costante? (S1)	rec.	1–5	%	recitative (one- and two-voice); dialogue: reproaches of the amorous object	d
	Non ha il mondo di me più fido amante.	*fugato*	5–45	a, a', ah	two-voice CP (one voice & b. c.)	d, a, d, g, b, d
IV.	Sei tù fido mio ben? (S2) Leal dunque il tuo sen (S1)	rec.	1–2	%	one-voice recitative: subject addresses object	a
	Con nuovi e dolci modi i biasmi d'Amor cangisi in lodi.	arioso	3–26	%	arioso: no imitation, contrast with other duet sections, transformation	e, a, e
V.	Amor è quel bambin (S1) che contenti e piacer spargendo vola.	stanza 1	1–14	a	one-voice *concertante* texture: diatonicism, sequential melismas	C
	Col volto suo divin (S2) rasserena i pensier l'alme consola.	stanza 2	14–26	a	transposition of stanza 1	a
	Amor è quel bambin… (S1&S2)	stanza 1	27–40	a	varied repetition of stanza 1, set for two voices	C
VI.	Ceda dunque ogni petto, (S1) ceda al nobile affetto di così dolce brama.	rec.	1–4		one-voice recitative	a
	Non conosce piacer cor che non ama.	*fugato*	5–79	a, a', ah	imitations	a, C, F, d, F, a

TABLE 18.
Formal outline of Bononcini's chamber duet *Chi d'Amor tra le catene*

between cantata and sonata chamber duets, this duet seems to combine the characteristics of both. Movements I and II, namely, are formally closed and strongly demarcated by a contrast in character and structure, which approximates them more to the sonata type. Nothing seems to suggest that the next four movements will be closer to the cantata type, each except movement V preceded by a short recitative. This formal diversity is combined with Bononcini's highly subtle, latent dramatization of the chamber duet as a monologic genre. The majority of the duet allows for the possibility to interpret the two-voice setting of lyrics in the first person singular as a parallel unfolding of two monologues, but there are nevertheless several individual lines divided between the two voices and, in addition, set only once. This is in line with Resta's comprehensive text (see Table 18), dramatizing a change of attitude towards love and—if we, helped by Bononcini's setting choose to interpret it as a dialogue—a reconciliation between a pair of lovers. Let us examine how this process unfolds gradually in each of the duet's sections.

The dialogue does not come to life only in movements III, IV and VI but also at the beginning of movement II, by a brief alternation of a motif on the first line ("Bella, sì, ma crudel") in Soprano 2 and the second ("Vago, sì, ma infidel") in Soprano 1, after which these lines never appear again. Up to this moment, in movement I we were within the bounds of conventional, monologic lyric poetry on the hardships brought by the chains of love. Although the first two lines in movement II could be interpreted as a generalised reflection on the cruelty of both sexes in love, Bononcini made sure that Soprano 2's account (or complaint) of a certain "bella" and Soprano 1's mention of a certain "vago" contribute to at least a partial dramatic differentiation of the voices into characters specified in terms of gender. The same-voice setting that stressed the connection between the nymphs Aldimira and Dorinda in *Pietoso nume arcier* serves a different purpose here, namely, to show that each of these two sopranos (a voice range both female and male) could be "bella" or "vago" and address a "bella" or a "vago" in dramatic discourse. Bononcini does not distinguish between Soprano 2 as male and Soprano 1 as female, but merely implies the possibility of such a gender coding. Although the voices leave this differentiation behind in the remainder of the movement, the fact that it is written in a *concertante* texture abounding in voice-crossing surely contributes to the effect of a certain dissociation of pitch from gender. The text of the middle section of movement II adopts the first person singular in an arioso texture with a quasi-recitative opening (b. 22–23[103]). This way

103 **The bar markings are mine and they follow the disposition of movements in Table 18 counting from the beginning of each movement.**

Bononcini again turns the attention of his listeners to the possibility that each soprano was, in a way, speaking for him or herself. The vivacious first section of movement II gains in interpretive appeal through repetition: it can be read both as a bitter reproach or a sarcastic comment.

The brief recitative opening movement III suggests a radical change of perspective: instead of the reproachful amorous subject, the offended amorous object is given a voice here, which implies that we are dealing with two characters that are referencing each other. After this recitative, the lovers are once again united in professing their faithfulness by setting the remaining two lines in the manner of a *fugato*. If these two lovers are competing with each other in making a convincing claim about which one of them is more faithful, it is also possible that both of them are making this point to their vocal partner in the duet. The recitative introducing movement IV contains a gender-specific address ("Sei tù fido mio ben?" in Soprano 2). Unlike in movement II, it is addressing not a female but a male amorous object, which implies that Bononcini did not mean to specify the voices in terms of gender after all. The following arioso traces an arch from lovesickness to the acknowledgement of mutual love. The change from reprove to praise of love is further elaborated in movement V with its strophic construction, allowing the two voices to alternate in their laudation of Cupid in a stanza each before they repeat the first one together. Finally, after Soprano 1 gives a sententious call to the audience to submit to the pleasures of love in the recitative opening of movement VI, the two voices engage in a contrapuntal unfolding of the last two lines.

This complex textual build-up abounds in poetic structures of various length, metre, line groupings and stanzas and demands some diversity on the musical level, too. Movement I sets out to leave a serious, dignified impression: in a *Largo* tempo, it unfolds two contrapuntal chains (b. 1–11, 12–17) written in invertible counterpoint and imitating motif a1, a setting of the first line. The second line is assigned its own, gestural descending material (a2, first occurrence b. 18–21), but a brief imitation in b. 19–22 gives way to a predominantly parallel undulating movement (suited to the word "incauto") that brings the section to a close. After setting the tone with utter simplicity, the modulatory middle section (B) raises the harmonic complexity. This section is fugal, containing some highly madrigalistic thematic material, especially the dissonant fall of a diminished seventh in motif b (first occurrence b. 34–37), conveniently placed on the word "abisso". The construction of this section is dual as in A: after the section imitating b (b. 34–48), the fourth line is set to a motif resembling an inversion of a1 (a1', b. 49–50), supported in the continuo with the diminished seventh leap from b (b. 48–49, 50–51). This motivic link between the two sections is of a short span and the treatment of the text in the rest of the section becomes freer.

In movement II, after initial alternating statements (b. 1–3), a subject (a, first occurrence b. 3–5) is consistently imitated four times. Bononcini avoids the impression of monotony by enriching the texture with two "false" entries of a variant of the subject and two abridged entries in the minor mode (b. 14–15 in Soprano 1 and b. 15–17 in Soprano 2). The first line of the second section ("Io sì che son fedel") is set only twice as a parallel arioso, but otherwise the section comes down to short alternating and imitative statements of a lapidary motif, characterised by gradual quaver movement (b, first occurrence b. 23–24) as the movement modulates, probably because the realization that all the suffering happens for an unworthy heart requires a heightened sensuality and expressivity, further propelled by frequent voice-crossing and often accompanied by suspensions.

The duet sections of all the remaining movements (nos. III to VI) are invariably shorter and never bi- or tripartite. Movement III displays some parallels with section A of movement II in that it is constructed as a loosely structured *fugato* with a lot of voice-crossing and involves the continuo into the imitative texture, although most often combined with only one of the vocal parts. A somewhat more substantial subject, built from an easily recognisable head (first occurrence b. 5–6) and a sequenced semiquaver motif (first occurrence b. 7–8), is imitated twice, followed by an episodic section (b. 13–22). The subsequent imitations in G and B minor state the subject in an altered form (b. 22–25, 26–28, 30–33), with a counterpoint of a single held note. Only towards the end of the movement does the texture become genuinely three-voiced. In movement IV the change of heart of the mistreated lover (or lovers, if we choose to "hear" two dramatic voices) takes place. After an even shorter recitative exchange than in movements II and III comes the least imitative duet section in the whole chamber duet. With its contrast in tempo (*Largo*), articulation (resembling an arioso) and character, it aims at a musical depiction of the crucial words "cangisi in lodi" (changing into praise) and employing chains of suspensions to this expressive purpose.

Movements V and VI serve the function of affirming and consolidating love, and to this purpose movement V almost ventures into soloist territory, coming closest to this characteristic of the cantata duet. A somewhat longer, diatonic statement of the first stanza by Soprano 1 in C Major, abounding in semiquaver melismas, is repeated in Soprano 2 transposed to A minor on the second stanza, after which the two voices are strung together in pseudo-counterpoint in a varied repetition of the first stanza, again in C Major. Although this movement of the duet lacks in variety, it fulfils its clear function of setting apart and then joining the voices again, bringing it much closer to a dramatic conception of the setting of the text, according to which the two sopranos represent two voices accusing each other of cruelty or infidelity only to reaffirm their mutual love.

The final movement shows some resemblance to movement III in its contrapuntal construction, but it is also the only slow fugal movement (*Largo*) of the whole chamber duet, rounding off *Chi d'amor tra le catene* with a minor-mode movement, although very different in terms of character and texture from the opening. It radiates serenity in the stoic acceptance that "the heart that does not love does not know pleasure" (*Non conosce piacer cor che non ama*). Its subject is markedly bipartite: Bononcini even sets up expectations by alternating only the head of the subject (b. 5–7 in Soprano 1 and 7–9 in Soprano 2), but instead of resuming it again in Soprano 1, he states it in its entirety in Soprano 2 instead (b. 9–13). This second part of the subject, characterised by a syncopated gradual downward movement, lends itself to an introduction of a chain of suspensions in the other voice, while the bass provides a steady pace, almost resembling an ostinato (e. g. b. 15–19, 24–27, 37–40, 48–51, 63–67). After various imitations of the subject (more often than not in a slightly modified form), combined with modulatory episodes, the movement is concluded with a section (b. 61–79) distinguished by a total absence of the head of the subject, as the two voices are consolidated into cadencing together, in line with their newly found unity in love.

2. 4. 3.
Further Solutions to the Problem of the Genre: Lotti, Gasparini

While *Chi d'amor tra le catene* attests to Bononcini's inclination to permeate his chamber duets with elements of dramatic music on the formal (the *da capo* form), structural (less strict imitative procedures) and dramaturgic level (dramatization of the genre by the individualisation of vocal parts) like any of the other duets of his mentioned in this study, it is unorthodox in its length and complexity[104]. Its placement at the opening of the collection may have wanted to impress the public, but also to build a bridge with the tradition of the madrigal by stringing together such a large number of sections. Antonio Lotti's *Poss'io morir* (Giuramento amoroso) as a consistent example of the sonata duet is even more firmly rooted in this tradition. Besides this, it also recalls the principle of the stringing together of sections based on new thematic material in the vein of some of Steffani's chamber duets.

Lotti (1666–1740) was a composer of seemingly local significance: he spent most of his life in Venice, where he excelled first and foremost

104 **In an integral performance, the duration of *Chi d'amor tra le catene* would surpass ten minutes. Even Steffani's duets of the cantata type (containing solos) are usually shorter.**

as the organist and *maestro di capella* of St Mark's Basilica and a composer of church music. However, as proved by both Byram-Wigfield (2012, 153) and Roberts (2012 and 2014), the impact of his only musical activity outside Italy in the service of Saxon Elector August der Starke in Dresden (1717–1719) was far-reaching, e g. in the wide distribution of sources of Lotti's sacred music in Dresden, Prague, Vienna and Berlin. In Dresden Lotti composed operas, performances of which were witnessed by Handel himself, enticing him to sign up Lotti's singers for the Royal Academy of Music as well as to set some of his libretti. Lotti is also the author of a substantial body of vocal chamber music, out of which his op. 1, the collection *Duetti, terzetti e madrigali a più voci* (Lotti 1705) will be of interest to this study. Francesco Florimo, an Italian musicologist of the 19th century, claimed that Lotti's chamber music "could be quoted as a true model of grace and elegance", favouring it over his dramatic music that "lacks in vivaciousness"[105] (quoted in Becherini 1962, 224). The collection prompted a contemporary critical reply from Benedetto Marcello, member of the famous Accademia Filarmonica in Bologna and an ardent representative of the "learned", contrapuntal style, even though an amateur. In the anonymously published *Lettera Famigliare d'un Accademico Filarmonico et Arcade, Discorsiva sopra un Libro di Duetti, e Madrigali a più voci, stampato in Venezia da Antonio Bortoli l'anno 1705* Marcello scrutinized Lotti's compositions in a negative light. Becherini (1962, 228) implies that his motivation was due to professional rivalry.[106]

Spitz (1918, 51) sees the composer as a follower of the tradition of chamber duet started by Steffani: "The style of complementary voice-leading, the treatment of canonic entry, then in turn the use of simply alternating voices that are in the end united—to interweave all these in a smooth musical unity would be the ideal fruit of the knowledge of Steffani's chamber art."[107] In what sense Spitz thinks of Steffani as Lotti's teacher remains uncertain: the odds that this was in the literal, biographical sense of the word are unlikely, as Steffani was appointed *Kapellmeister* in Hanover in 1688, by which time Lotti was in Venice even if we allow for the possibility

105 **Le sue musiche per camera poi possono essere citate come veri modelli di grazia ed eleganza… manca la vivacità.**

106 **An examination of *Poss'io morir* (Giuramento amoroso) is included in Marcello's review, but the primary source is unavailable to me, and the example of the analysis of the trio *Ci string'il core Amor* (Lamento de tre amanti), quoted in Becherini 1962, 229, shows its adherence to an 18th-century academic discourse that is of little relevance to the approach taken by this study.**

107 **Die Art der gegenseitigen Stimmführung, die Behandlung des kanonischen Einsatzes, dann wiederum die Benutzung einfach alternierender Stimmen, die sich zuletzt vereinen – dies alles in ein flüssiges, klingendes Ganzes verwoben, wäre die ideale Frucht der Kenntnis der Steffanischen Kammerkunst.**

of his birth in Hanover. Although published ten years after Bononcini's highly different collection[108], Lotti indeed follows in the footsteps of the contrapuntal, madrigalistic conception of the genre. The authorship of two collections of chamber duets published within a space of ten years might have put the composers in a position of rivalry, perhaps against their own will and this may have played a part in the series of scandals that led Bononcini to leave England in 1732. To Taylor Sedley (1906, 176) the way in which the authorship of the five-voice madrigal *In una siepe ombrosa* (La vita caduca) was heavily contested in London is an indication that "plagiarism was regarded by educated musicians in the eighteenth century exactly as it is regarded by them in the twentieth."

Most sources (including Romagnoli 2000 and Bennett and Lindgren 2001) accuse Bononcini outright of plagiarising Lotti's madrigal, but Lindgren (1975) brings forth a somewhat different account. His point of departure is John Hawkins's (1776) original account of the three incidents "fatal to the interest of Bononcini". Hawkins maintained that the principal motor between the presentation of *In una siepe ombrosa* as Bononcini's composition were members of the Academy of Ancient Music centred around Maurice Greene, who presented the madrigal as Bononcini's composition in 1728, possibly without the composer's knowledge since there is no evidence that Bononcini ever claimed the composition as his own. In 1731 the madrigal was performed again, this time attributed to Lotti, which was followed by an extensive polemic that was eventually published, including a few letters to and from Lotti himself. Bononcini remained silent in the dispute, and Lotti's conciliatory stance towards him allows for the possibility that Bononcini might not have plagiarized Lotti's madrigal at all (see Lindgren 1975, 564–571). Another reason to compare the chamber duets of the two composers is that both of them are important points of reference for Handel, who extensively borrowed from his two older Italian peers. He evidently knew not only Lotti's sacred music and operas, but his 1705 collection as well, as has been shown by Roberts (2012, 171–173) who succeeded in identifying a number of borrowings in Handel's English-language works, mostly his anthems.[109]

Although the reasons why the choice fell on *Poss'io morir* (Giuramento amoroso; Lotti 1705, 39–43; Amore e morte dell'amore, recording) have already been outlined, it is certainly not the most representative, nor the

108 **Both composers dedicated their collections to a distinguished dedicatee in the person of the current Habsburg emperor, Bononcini to Leopold I and Lotti to Joseph I, perhaps reflecting the taste for learned music in Vienna.**

109 **He does not identify any borrowings from *Poss'io morir*, though, which possibly makes it even more suitable for the kind of comparison this study strives to achieve.**

musically most attractive duet of the collection. Although Lotti's chamber duets dispense with elements of the *cantata a due* altogether, they have a dramatic side to them since all the compositions in the collection carry a title, which makes them similar to a number of duets by Giovanni Carlo Maria Clari. They are even thematically divided into "amorous" and "pathetic" ones, and it is no surprise that the duets fall within the former category. In terms of scope and structural procedures, *Poss´io morir* is most similar to the duet *Ben dovrei occhi leggiadri* (Querela amorosa), which is in line with the somewhat lighter approach to love taken by the former's text, the most significant difference being that *Ben dovrei occhi leggiadri* resorts more often to alternating statements and parallelism. *Nò che lungi da quel volto* (Lontananza insopportabile) is worked out more extensively in contrapuntal terms. It deals with the subject of the absence of the beloved, perhaps more serious that the topos of a distant and unresponsive object's (the nymph Fille) mistrust for the subject's amorous pledges in *Poss'io morir*. Simply put, this duet represents a certain middle ground in the collection and it is more suitable for comparison with the other chamber duets discussed in this chapter.

MOV.	SEC.	TEXT	BAR	MOTIF	CHARAC-TERISTICS	KEY
I	A_1 A_2 A_3 A_4 A_5	Poss'io morir se non t'adoro, o Fille, Ma che giova ingrandir col giuramenti La mia costanza eternal? Chiedilo a miei tormeni, Dimandalo alle tue care pupille.	1–11 11–14 14–19 19–24 24–38	a_1 a_2 a_3 a_4 a_5	succession of short sections based on respective them. material	g d mod. mod. B♭
II B2	B_1 B_{21} B_{22}	Ma perché tu non vedi la chiara fiamma ond'hai sì pieni i lumi? E perché tu non credi / ch'io per te mi consume?	1–25 26–37 38–57	b_1 b_2	alternating statements disguised imitation; CP chains	E♭, B♭ mod. g - F
III	C_1	Torno à giurar la fè del mio martoro	1–10	c		F, B♭, g
	C_2 = A_1	[Fille,] poss'io morir se non t'adoro?	10–22	a_1		

TABLE 19.
Formal outline of Lotti's chamber duet *Poss'io morir* (Giuramento amoroso)

The loose, "madrigal" formal structure of the duet is evident in its first movement, consisting of as far as five thematically unrelated sections.

Out of these, the two framing sections stand out in thematic terms (A1), or in sheer length (A5), recalling the build-up of some of Steffani's chamber duets with its lengthier, more elaborate closing sections. Lotti's duets are generally on a smaller scale, and in none of the duets examined in this study except of Steffani's shall we see anything comparable to the tiny units that make up the first movement of *Poss'io morir*. Lotti usually starts his sections with a recognisable imitative motivic entry, but lets it unfold freely, usually in sequential passages loosely based on the initial thematic material that propel the enunciation of each of the five lines. He chose to provide a distinct, motivic section for each of them (which would have been unusual in the chamber duets of Handel and his generation of composers writing in the second or third decade of the century). The opening motto section with its fervent pledge (A1) will reappear in the final, third movement, closing the duet in its entirety as well. Two brief sections in D minor (A2 & A3) follow, attaching a bar or two to a single imitation of their respective transitory motifs. The second and the third line thus receive only subsidiary treatment from the composer, even though they state the crucial ideas that further pledges to the nymph Fille are pointless because, as the next six lines explain, she chooses to disregard not only the subject's words, but his actions and behaviour as well. Lines four and five, with their imagery of torments ("tormenti") and the beloved's eyes ("care pupille") are set in a more expansive way, suggesting that poetic images are more important for the setting than rhetoric and semantic aspects of the text. A4 starts off a chain of chromatically introduced secondary dominants that continue into section A5 until the modulations reach and affirm B major in b. 26.[110] A5 as the longest and only multi-partite section of the movement offers continuity on the compositional and the motivic plan: not only does it consist of two subsections (b. 24–30, 31–38) that follow the same plan of imitative entries, consequent imitative sequential counterpoint and parallel cadencing, they are also motivically related: the heads of a4 and a5 are similar and the *contrapunctus ligatus* that the parts weave around each other after the imitation is related as well.

Movement B dwells less on its lines' semantics than the first movement did and favours the quick alternation of motifs in the vocal parts to their imitative treatment in the first section (B1). A secondary motif (b. 13–16) displays some coloratura on the madrigalistic word "fiamma". As in the first movement, the concluding section (B2) is bipartite, its two subsections mutually reciprocal as with the two subsections of A5. Both of these subsections open with what seems like alternative statements of a brief

110 **It is possible, although not conclusive, that Schmitz (1914, 145) might have had passages like these in mind when he praised Lotti's harmonic finesse.**

motif (first occurrence b. 26–27) in the two voices, but it turns out that the voices are engaging in consistent imitation up to b. 34 while modulations take place. The section ends in a delicate chain of suspensions that confirm a new tonic on the word "consumi", used here in the pejorative sense, and thus perhaps stressing the ambivalent appeal of the subject's pining for Fille, maybe even inviting comparisons with the closing of Steffani's duet *Saldi marmi*.

The only function of C1, the opening section of the final, third movement, is to provide a motivic bridge to the repetition of the opening line, inverted in the sense that it pushes "Fille" to the beginning of the line. The latter section (C2, equivalent to A1) is set as an almost exact repetition of section A1, mirroring the aforementioned repositioning of the word "Fille" onto a motif the length of a bar (b. 10–11 in Soprano 2, imitated in b. 12 in Soprano 1), after which the course of section A1 proceeds identically as in the first movement, the only difference being that the word "Fille" is no longer set, giving way to the syllables "do-ro" from "adoro" to round off the motivic entries' minim cadences. The brief section C1 takes up characteristics of the other movements' closing sections (A5 and B2) by imitating a characteristic motif. It subsequently gives way to a section (b. 5–10) built from two small units, comprising loosely structured chains of suspensions, but lacking in regularity and tension when compared to the equivalent passages in sections in A1, A3, A5 and B2. It should be interpreted in light of Lotti's tendency to stretch out his brief section with the help of sequential structures often abiding in suspensions. The continuity of these compositional techniques provides *Poss'io morir* with a sense of unity that is not in contradiction with the heterogeneous motivic material of its numerous brief sections.

Even though their dating is uncertain and their distribution and probably also their influence somewhat limited, Francesco Gasparini's twelve chamber duets (Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali as the only available source) have received some scholarly attention. Gasparini, too, belongs to the group of "learned" Italian composers who were opposed to the advent of new musical styles in the second fourth of the 18th century (cf. Navach 2002). Also a teacher[111], he had profound contrapuntal skills, "most obvious in the easy and frequent use of complicated canonic devices in his church music but also apparent from the mastery of free counterpoint in his other works (such as the set of brilliantly written chamber duets)." (Libby and Lepore 2001) According to Robinson (1981,

111 **Not only did he teach Domenico Scarlatti, Benedetto Marcello and J. J. Quantz, he also published a treatise on *basso continuo* practice, *L'armonico pratico al cimbalo*.**

70–71), Gasparini is highly sensitive to the expressive content of the text (somewhat more so than Lotti in *Poss'io morir*) and he begins each section of his chambers duets "like a fugal exposition" (Robinson 1981, 70–71), imitating a subject in stretto imitation, working with a countersubject or developing the head of a subject in free counterpoint resplendent in coloratura. Indeed, most of the duets in this collection (with the exception of *Nice, s'è ver che m'ami*, which is the reason why it was delegated to Chapter 2.4.2 with other examples of the hybrid type) employ extensive imitation, producing movements with fugal structure and inviting comparisons with fugal movements in some of Handel's chamber duets. However, as the three analyses in this chapter will show, not all of his sections open like a fugal exposition, and although this impression is enhanced by the opening and sometimes the closing movements of his chamber duets, Gasparini strives for a balanced application of different compositional techniques rather than some abstract fugal ideal.

A comparison of Gasparini's duet *Sdegno ed Amor* (Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 11, 77'–83'; Gasparini recording, Amori e ombre) with *Poss'io morir* shows some parallels. Both duets belong to the sonata type and contain movements of a pointedly "madrigal" structure, the difference being that *Poss'io morir* is faithful to this structural principle in its entirety, whereas *Sdegno ed Amor* adheres to it only in its inner two, multi-sectional movements. The two framing movements (the first and the fourth) are strikingly different with their expansive subjects imitated extensively, and are thus, as we shall also see in *A voi, piante innocenti* (Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 8) and *Sento tal fiamma* (Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 4), more reminiscent of some of Handel's and Clari's chamber duets. The bulk of the poem on the contradictory impulses of anger and love, presumably due to the disinterest of the amorous object for the subject, is contained in the inner as opposed to the framing movements. In its unevenness, the distribution of the lines between the four movements is symptomatic of their different structural conceptions. The first and the fourth movement are the settings of the first and the last line, while all the other (eleven!) lines are distributed between movements two and three. This is certainly rhetorically justified, for first and the last line are not only the longest, they also state the essence of the subject's predicament (line 1) and bring an unexpected twist (line 13), thus stressing the compulsive, irrational nature of Amor as rational Sdegno apparently prevails. Whereas Gasparini worked out the material of movements I and IV extensively, he was left with an abundance of lines to set in the inner movements, requiring an altogether different approach.

MOV.	SEC.	BAR	TEXT	LINE
I	A		Sdegno ed Amor nel mio pensier fan guerra:	1
II	B	1–13	questi la fiamma accende,	2
			ch'era in parte già spenta,	3
			quel ripieno di gelo il cor mi rende.	4
			Questi m'annoda più, quel mi rallenta	5
	C	15–26	L'uno e l'altro m'atterra	6
			tent'è possente e fiero,	7
			nè so dir chi di lor fia vincitore.	8
III	D_1	1–9	Ma ben ti dico, Amore,	9
	D_2	10–35	che se tu vinci e a'lacci tuoi ritorno,	10
			non passerà mai giorno	11
			ch'io di te non mi doglia:	12
IV	E		tuo sarò, ma per forza e non per voglia.	13

TABLE 20.
Rough formal outline of Gasparini's chamber duet *Sdegno ed Amor*

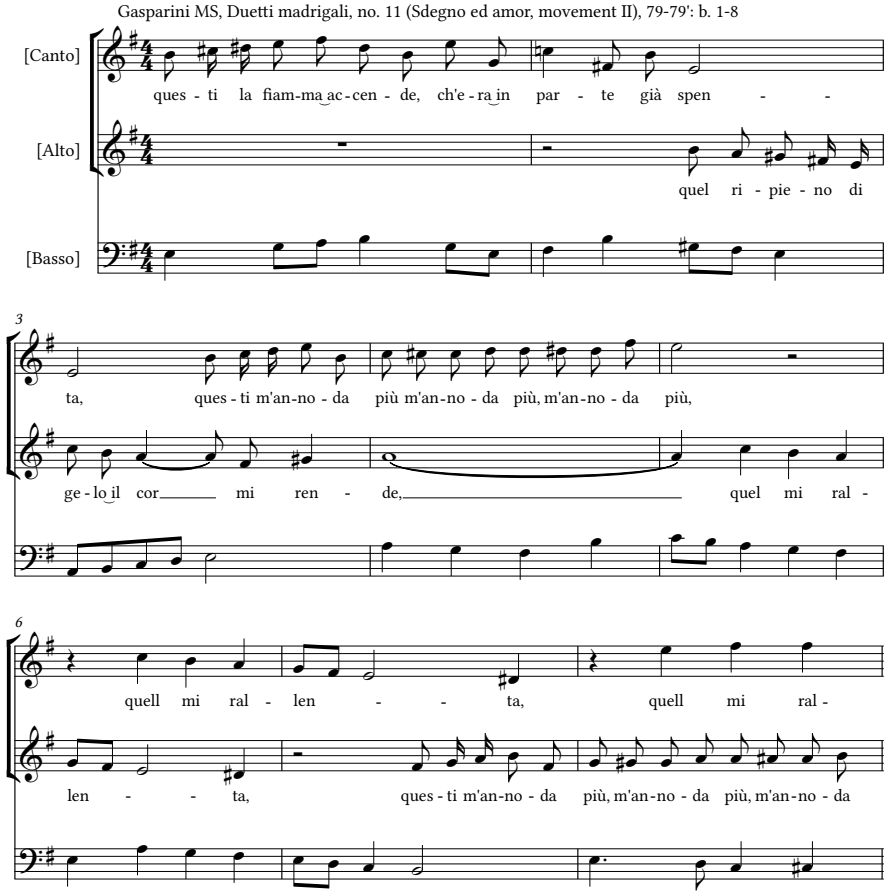
In order to examine the aforementioned connection between Gasparini and Lotti first, we shall now consider the inner movements of *Sdegno ed amor*. The composer was probably inspired by the opposition of the contrasting impact that Love and Anger have on the subject's heart when he divided the lines between the parts in movement II (Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 11, 79–80'). Lines two and three and the first half of line five describe how Love rekindles the subject's passion ("Questi m'annoda più"), whereas line four and the second half of line five describe how Anger loosens these bonds ("quel mi rallenta"). Subsequently, Gasparini sets lines two and three only in the soprano and line four only in the alto using independent thematic material, and at first (b. 3–4) he seems to be doing the same with the two halves of line five, but proceeds to entangle the two parts with both poles of the opposition ("annoda"/"rallenta") in an imitation (b. 5–7), followed by a contrapuntal section (b. 7–14) in which both parts, in equal measure, bring forth two different motifs that have now become associated with each pole of the semantic opposition: an agitated ascending motif with a light chromatic touch for the words "questi m'annoda più" and a calm, syncopated descending line for "quel mi rallenta" (Example 2). In the setting of lines 6–8, the voices are united in the utterance of the same text (a summary on the power of the two opposing forces) and are consequently

led mostly parallel, broken up only by occasional playful exchanges (b. 22–25), once again suggestive of the competition of the two agents. While in Lotti's *Poss'io morir* the multi-sectional nature of the movements was a convention that appropriated the genre of the chamber duet to the tradition of the madrigal it was trying to revive, in this movement Gasparini is led almost exclusively by the text's semantic binary oppositions.

In the third movement[112] (Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 11, 80'–82) there is a rhetorical change to the subject's monologic, lamenting address of Love, who is apparently more likely to win the duel. Unlike in the second movement, where the setting had a dual structural logic rooted in the opposed semantic forces of the lyrics, here Gasparini tips the balance between the movement's two sections. The shorter section D1 is written as a consistent imitative strain of a longer span, whereas the much longer D2 is no less contrapuntal, but contains fewer elements of the fugue and treats the text much more freely. For example, after the exposition of the subject of section D2 in the alto (b. 10–13) on both of the section's lines (no. 9 and 10), the composer supplements its imitation in the soprano with a countersubject (b. 13–15, in the alto) on the ninth line, contradicting the principle of never setting the same text twice in succession using different material. Section D2 alternates this kind of imitative texture with less dense sections.

It is difficult to say if this means that Gasparini in this duet owes more or less to the tradition of the madrigal than Lotti, for a concatenation of sections is usually not the typical structure he bestows on his chamber duet movements. He also places an expressive emphasis on the musical interpretation of the text more than Lotti did in *Poss'io morir*. For a better grasp of Gasparini's art of the chamber duet, a discussion of the first and the last movement of *Sdegno ed Amor* is needed, too. Both open with a lengthy subject whose second part is suitable for sequential contrapuntal treatment, and movement I (Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 11, 77'–79) outlines three stretto statements of the subject (b. 1–6). In the first two imitations Gasparini uses a countersubject of sorts that sets off in the other voice when the subject is in its fifth bar. The remainder of movement I (b. 15–28) gives the impression of an even tighter stretto (at the length

112 **We shall leave aside the question raised by the Gasparini recording, Amori e ombre if movement II could in fact be thought of as the middle section of a *da capo* form. The performers' choice to repeat the first movement ("Sdegno ed Amor nel mio pensier fan guerra") before moving on to the third is not indicated in the manuscript source (Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 11, 80'), and the structure of movement II is nothing like the middle section of a da capo form, but in performance the repetition sounds musically valid and in line with the harmonic trajectory, that is, the modulation back into G major in section C.**


Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 11 (Sdegno ed amor, movement II), 79-79': b. 1-8
[Canto]
ques - ti la fiam-ma ac-cen - de, ch'e - ra in par - te già spen - -
[Alto]
quel ri - pie - no di
[Basso]
3
ta, ques - ti m'an-no - da più m'an-no - da più, m'an-no - da più,
ge - lo il cor mi ren - de, quel mi ral -
6
quell mi ral - len - - ta, quell mi ral -
len - - ta, ques - ti m'an-no - da più, m'an-no - da più, m'an-no - da

EXAMPLE 2

of a single bar) at first sight, but it turns out that it treats the semiquaver triplets of the subject's second part (first occurrence b. 3–4) as well as the repetitive second setting of the text "nel mio pensier fan" (first occurrence b. 5) exactly the opposite way, in a freer contrapuntal flow instead of the strictness that stretto imitation would imply. In comparison, the denser contrapuntal network of movement IV (Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 11, 82–83') fulfils a different function. Unlike the opening *Allegro,* presenting the main binary opposition of the duet's semantics, this *Vivace* serves to round up the duet in a tone of hurried excitement in line with the already mentioned rational acknowledgement of Amore's compulsive nature ("per forza e non per voglia"). A dynamic, swiftly moving subject of only three bars hardly disappears from the 29 bars of the movement, appearing most of the time in consistent imitation, but leaving some room for freer contrapuntal treatment as well.

MOV.	SEC.	BAR	TEXT	LINE	MOTIFS
I	A	1–38	A voi, piante innocenti	1	a_1 +
			che in questo colle ameno	2	
			udite i miei lamenti	3	a_2 +
			narro, ma in vano, oh Dio,	4	a_3 +
			il barbaro rigor del fato mio.	5	a_4 + a_5
II	B	1–20	Ne verdi tronchi almeno	6	
			permettere che incida	7	
			il nome della mia cruda omicida	8	
	C	21–77	acciò crescendo voi	9	c1+
			crescer si vegga poi	10	
			la sua fierezza e la costanza mia,	11	…c_2
III	D_{11}	1–16	e'l passeggier che miri	12	
	D_2	16–42	scolpiti i miei martiri	13	
			e la sua tirannia	14	
			dica con labbro di pietoso amore:	15	
			"Ninfa crudele, povero pastore."	16	d_1(+d_2?)

TABLE 21.
Rough formal outline of Gasparini's chamber duet *A voi, piante innocenti*

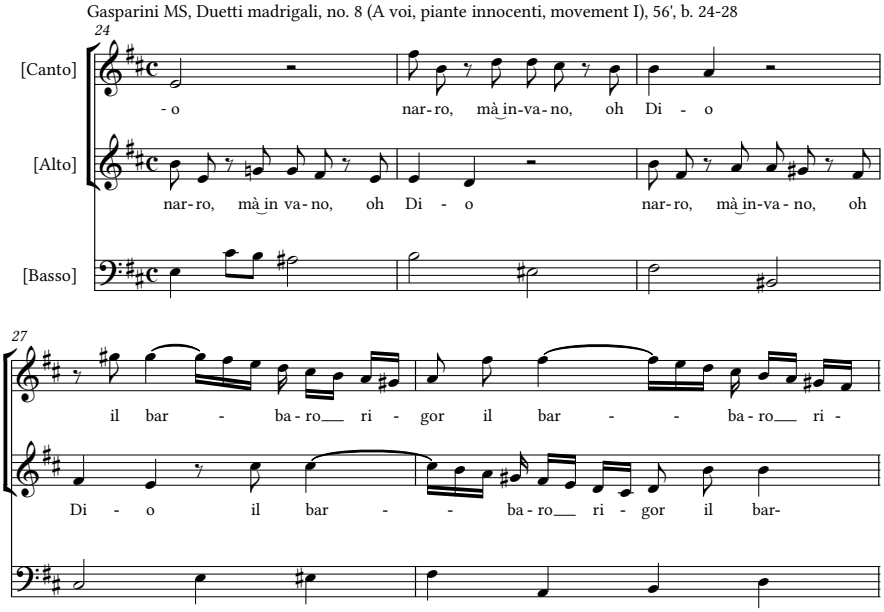
* **Formal section does not coincide with the disposition of the text: both sections are setting of all five lines.**

A voi, piante innocenti (Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 8, 55–62; Gasparini recording, Amori e ombre) shares traits with the outer movements of *Sdegno ed Amor*, but it has an entirely different affective content reminiscent of Steffani's pathetic, minor-mode and harmonically expressive chamber duets (see Chapter 2.2, e. g. *Begl'occhi, oh Dio, non più*).

The first movement presents one of the most widely spaced out imitative structures that I have encountered in a chamber duet so far. The subject, a setting of all the five lines in the section, consists of as many as five motifs and it is imitated four times in succession in its almost complete form. Naturally, such an expansive subject is prone to stretto imitation like the one in the opening movement of *Sdegno ed amor*: the imitative entry is introduced halfway through the subject, shortly before the onset of motif a4 (first occurrence b. 7). By introducing rests into the voice not bringing the subject, Gasparini secures textural diversity, before loosening the formal trajectory of the movement from b. 24 onwards. Instead of proceeding further with the fugal structuring, he develops two smaller sections (b. 24–31, Example 3 and 31–38) by freely imitating motifs a3 and a4. Movement II (Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 8, 57'–59') provides structural and textural contrast. Its first section (B) is one of the rare examples of homophony (b. 1–7) in Gasparini's chamber duets. The remainder of the section consists of freely imitative counterpoint (b. 7–20), but still without almost any kind of motivic-thematic identity. Section C, on the other hand, draws one's attention by its madrigalisms: the image of growth (of the tree to which the forlorn shepherd is addressing his amorous complaint, as well as of the nymph's pride and the shepherd's faith) is depicted by a rising chromatic figure (in motif c1, first occurrence b. 21–29), whereas the passage abiding in held notes often serving as its counterpoint (c2, first occurrence b. 31–40) portrays the shepherd's constancy.

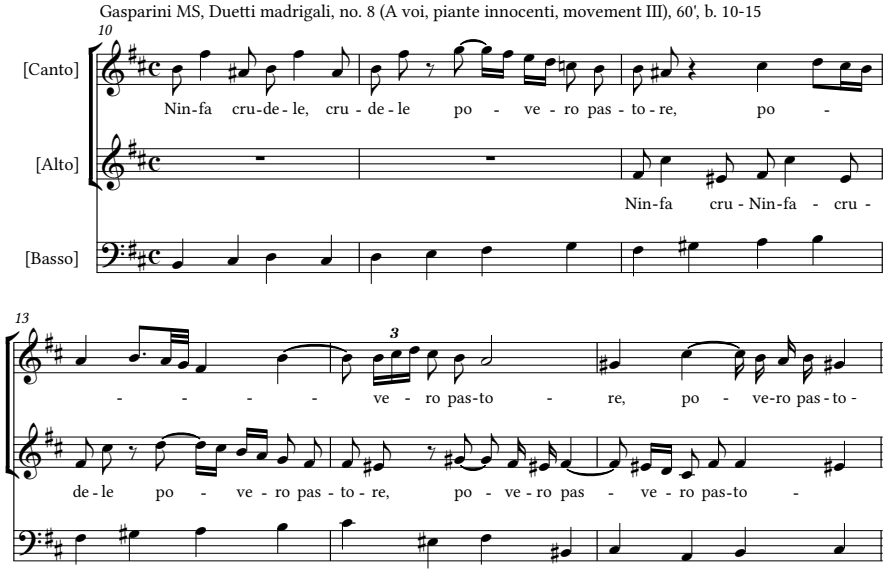
The third movement (Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 8, 59'–62) is unique in that it adheres neither to the "fugal" imitative nor to the freely contrapuntal texture type that we had the chance to observe in Gasparini's chamber duets so far. Unlike *Sdegno ed Amor*, the setting does not single out the final point of the poem into a separate, contrasting section. Here, the passer-by's conclusion in direct speech ("Ninfa crudele, povero pastore") is woven into the indirect speech that sets the scene: the entirety of the text is set twice, in subsections D1 and D2 (cf. Table 21). This duality in the text is highlighted in the type of setting: whereas the four lines in indirect speech are set in a homophonic or freely polyphonic texture without motivic significance, the final line (or to be more precise, its first line, set as d1, first occurrence b. 10–16, prepared by a *fermata*) is set apart by imitation as well as marked motivic distinguishability, almost as if its emphatic repetitions and leaps were an outcry to the cruel nymph ("Ninfa crudele"). The other pole of this binary opposition, the poor shepherd ("povero pastore"), does not take on such sharp motivic contours (d2, first occurrence b. 11–16), although setting the text on syncopated motifs followed by semiquaver passages enables a more free elaboration later on (Example 4). After a transposed and mildly varied repetition of the

Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 8 (A voi, piante innocenti, movement I), 56', b. 24-28



EXAMPLE 3

Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 8 (A voi, piante innocenti, movement III), 60', b. 10-15



EXAMPLE 4

setting of lines 12–15 in b. 16–22, an extended setting of motifs d1 and d2 in simultaneity and in succession follows. The shepherd seems to be gaining the upper hand here, since his syncopated passages are more suited to free contrapuntal variation and extension, resulting even in occasional melismatic parallelism in the voices.

MOV.	SEC.*	BAR	KEY	TEXT	LINE	MOTIFS
I	A_1 A_2	1–35 36–53 53–89	E♭, B♭, g, d, B♭, E♭	Sento tal fiamma al core mia vita, amato bene, ch'è miracol d'amore se non incenerisco a tante pene.	1 2 3 4	a_{11}+ a_{12} a_{21}+ a_{22}/cs_1
II	B	1–26	c, g, f, c	Ma un'aura lusinghiera poi mi ravviva, e quando l'alma geme par che sol la conforti amica speme,	5 6 7	b_1 +b_2 (CS)
	C_1	26–28;** 41–43	E♭ / A♭	e con legge severa	8	%
	C_2	28–41; 43–62	E♭, f, A♭ A♭, c, E♭	Amor mi dice: "Mori, o soffri e spera."	9	c_{21}, c_{22}, c_{23} (var.)

TABLE 22.
Rough formal outline of Gasparini's chamber duet *Sento tal fiamma*

* **Sections and bars are aligned with the range of tonal centres in this table, not with the lines and motifs.**

** **The cycle C1 (homophonic section, line 8) + C2 (polyphonic section, line 9) is repeated once, in heavily varied from.**

The opening movement of *Sento tal fiamma* (Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 4, 26'–33; Gasparini recording, Amori e ombre) sets out as a typical fugal movement in Gasparini's duets, opening with a lengthy composite subject in the soprano (a11, first occurrence b. 1–4 + a12, first occurrence b. 4–8). At first it seems that the imitation of this subject in the alto (b. 8–15) is accompanied by an equally composite countersubject in the soprano (a21, first occurrence b. 9–12 + a22, b. 12–15) which could be conceived of as the continuation of the subject, except for the fact that it modulates into the dominant in the same way that this would happen in a fugal exposition (Example 5). The fugal constructivism is further enhanced by the supply of a21 + a22 with a descending countersubject of its own (cs1, first occurrence b. 15–19) as the music returns into the tonic E-flat major in b. 21. This is followed by a brief section in the dominant (b. 29–35) with a slightly varied rendition of the subject in the soprano with the complete

countersubject in the alto (a21+a22), modulating to G minor. The remainder of the movement takes an unexpected course as its imitative and motivic regularity gives way to much freer polyphonic structuring. The head of the subject (a1) and its complementary line 1 disappear, rendering the settings of line 3 with its relative pronoun ("che") somewhat incomprehensible.[113] The modulatory middle section (A2) freely imitates motifs a21, a modified, abridged version of a22 and cs1, but when the dominant and the tonic are reinstated in section A3, rather than returning to the ways of A1, the texture becomes even looser in contrapuntal terms. As in A2, motif a21 is often subjected to a brief stretto, while the freely varied motif a22, accompanied either by cs1 or an isolated a12, propels the movement further and begins to dominate it. The concluding section (b. 74–89) displays an increasing motivic dissolution, as extensively varied variants of a22 are accompanied by extended leaps in the other voice and tension is enhanced by suggesting a move to A-flat major that never really happens.

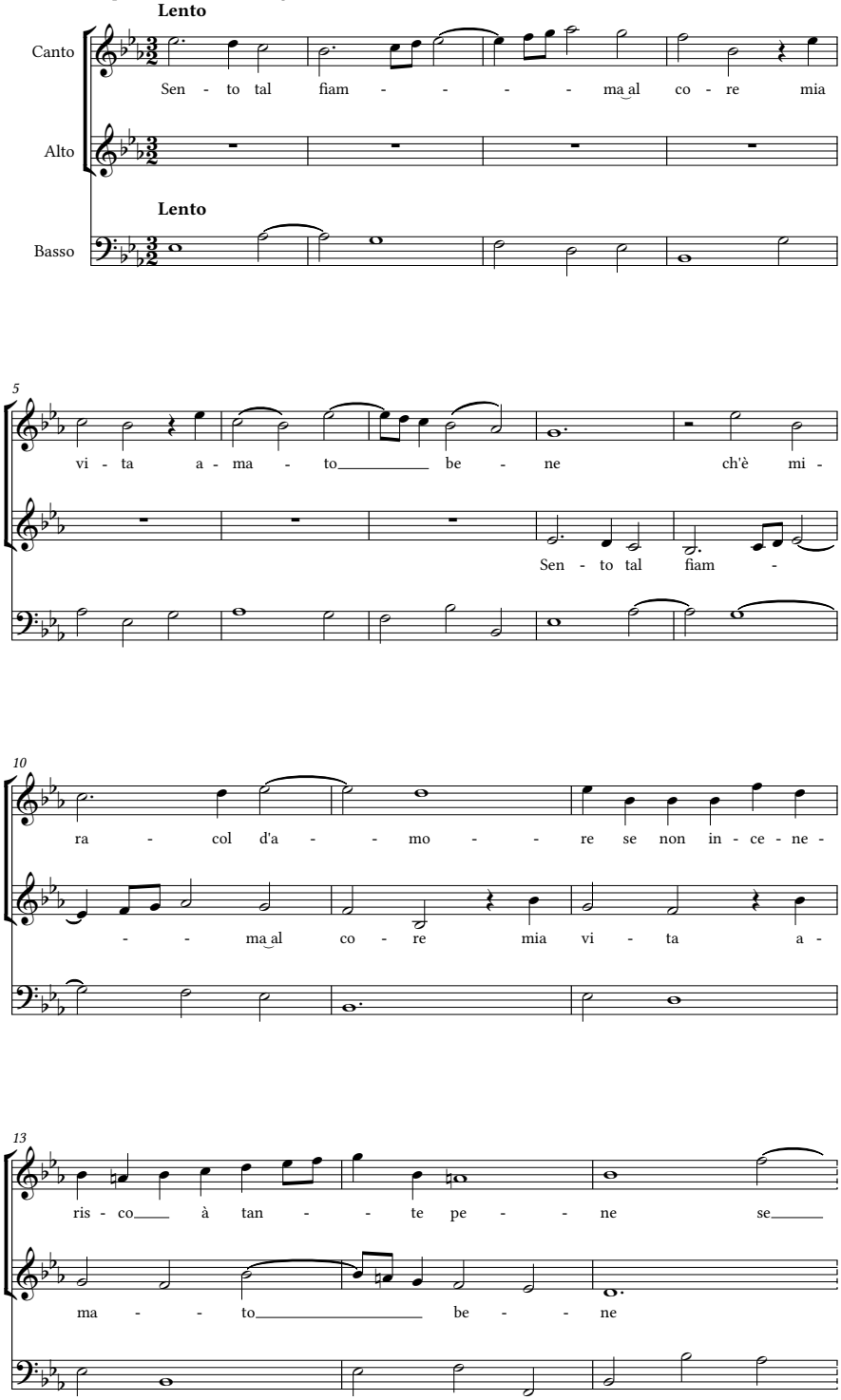
In other words, in movement I we see an outlining of a two-voice[114] contrapuntal flow that at first suggests a fugal interchange of imitative and episodic passages but then breaks off from these as well as from the initial motivic constraints. Could this be related to Gasparini's interpretation of the text? He did not attach a lot of importance to his first melodic idea, the undulating melismatic passage on the crucial word "fiamma": in sections A2 and A3 lines 3 (motif a21) and 4 (motifs a22 and cs1) dominate instead. True, a lot of chamber duets give more attention to finishing lines (or sections) in a movement, but Gasparini manages to keep motif a22 recognisable in spite of varying and transforming it in section A3. One must bear in mind that the texture of the chamber duet is incompatible with consistent fugal writing by its very nature, but the reason why he opted to give a certain movement the illusion of fugal structure only to destroy it later is hard to point out.

Movement II takes an entirely different approach structurally and formally, perhaps inspired by the text's more active stance compared to the incinerating languishes of the first stanza. Imitative, but this time less fugal writing is reserved for its first section (B), splitting up the three lines (no. 5–7) into two distinct motivic units, b1 (first occurrence b. 1–3) and b2 (first occurrence b. 3–7), which repeatedly serves as countersubject to the imitation of b1, although often in modified or abridged form. The

113 For unknown reasons and often colliding with the number of syllables, the source (Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 4, 26'–28') makes use of two variants of this line, "ch'è miracol d'amore" and "ch'è un miracol d'amore". This is unrelated to the dropping of line 1 from A2 and A3 as it already occurs in section A1.

114 The *basso continuo* never participates in the counterpoint, limiting itself to steady minim and semibreve movement and providing harmonic support.

Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 4 (Sento tal fiamma, movement I), 26'-27, b. 1-15



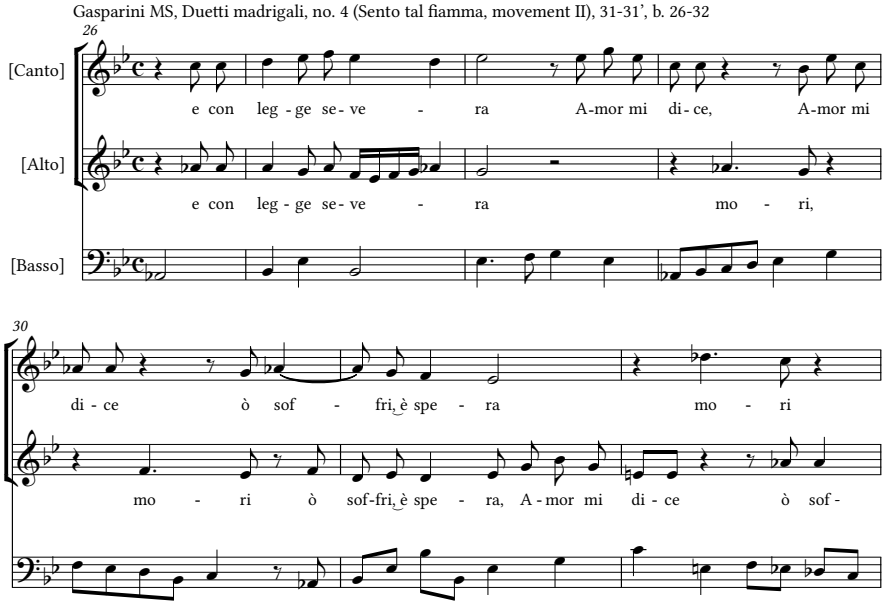
EXAMPLE 5

fugal quasi-exposition ends with bars 8–11 inverted and transposed (which shows that Gasparini wrote it in double counterpoint so that he can use it for episodes between imitations), and a non-motivic *codetta* (b. 23–26) leading into a *fermata*.

Similarly to the last, third movement of *A voi, piante innocenti,* the second and closing movement of *Sento tal fiamma* is also constructed in dual terms, as an interchange of contrasting settings of groupings or individual lines. After the "introductory" section B, in section C line 8 (subsection C1) alternates with the final line 9 (a contrasting subsection C2). The dual interchange is thus prefaced by an introductory section, with the substantial difference that unlike in *A voi, piante innocenti* where imitative treatment was reserved for only the very last line, here it is the prefatory section that bears resemblance to the fugal thinking we usually associate with the framing movements of Gasparini's duets. C1 introduces the "severe law" (*legge severa*) in a brief homophonic passage of a mere two bars. In setting the last line, it must have been important to Gasparini to highlight the division of the line into indirect ("Amor mi dice") and direct speech ("Mori, o soffri e spera.") in a texture of alternating statements, as if Love itself was addressing the amorous subject. The texture is similar to that of some of Bononcini's chamber duets, dividing the melody between the two voices in successiveness rather than simultaneity (Example 6). It seems at first that Gasparini is about to outline three motifs to base the entire section on: c21 on the text "Amor mi dice" (first occurrence b. 28–29 in the soprano), c22 on the text "mori" (b. 29 in the alto) and the descending c23 on the text "O soffri, e spera" (b. 30–31). It turns out that they are merely contours that can be "filled" with different melodic content via extensive variation as long as they retain their rhythmic and textural characteristics. The second rendition of subsection (C2, b. 43–62) is constructed in similar terms, with the important difference that "o soffri, e spera" as the more fitting choice to Love's ultimatum seems to be gaining the upper hand, the amorous subject accepting suffering as the price of love instead of perishing amidst Love's flames. Even in the first appearance of subsection C2 this text had repeatedly been uniting the voices in a free contrapuntal texture (b. 34–35, 39–40). It seems that by varying the structural procedures in this section, Gasparini wanted to depict that at the mercy of the incinerating power of the beloved, stoic optimism should always prevail.

It is not easy to explain why this chamber duet is somewhat different from the other two by Gasparini analysed here. Although it shares with them the combination of fugal and non-fugal movements and has a closing section of a similarly dual conception such as that of the third movement of *A voi, piante innocenti*, it develops these traits in a rather irregular and unconventional manner. Gasparini seems to relish in setting up structural

Gasparini MS, Duetti madrigali, no. 4 (Sento tal fiamma, movement II), 31-31', b. 26-32



EXAMPLE 6

expectation only to defy them in the end. While he clearly differentiated the fugal outer with the inner movements in *Sdegno ed Amor*, in *A voi, piante innocenti,* he stuck to this model only in the first movement, bringing in more diversity in the second one. *Sento tal fiamma* subverts the opening fugue by eventually repressing the head of its subject, although not in the vein of Steffani's sectional, madrigalistic concentration on the contrapuntal working out of the material presented (usually with more stress on the material we hear last), but in a much more intricate manner. Finally, although the last movement of *A voi, piante innocenti* also developed a dialogic dynamic between the emphatic material associated with the first half of its single, final line ("Ninfa crudele") and the second ("povero pastore"), the latent dramaturgy in the closing section of *Sento tal fiamma* seems equally if not even more complex.

2. 5.
CONCLUSIONS ON THE COMPARISON OF CHAMBER DUETS

A comparative analysis of the selected chamber duets by Steffani allows for a few conclusions, although it is important to note that these are not to be generalised as they stem from a sample of a mere sixth of the overall number of compositions. With their affirmative approach to romantic love, duets as diverse as *Sù, ferisci* and *Placidissime catene* fall close to the category of the love duet as the unanimous expression of mutual devotion by a pair of imaginary characters. The voices of *Ribellatevi* and *Libertà, libertà* are, on the other hand, united in their desire to break free from the constraints of love and are the closest that a chamber duet can come to a duet of quarrelling lovers. The musical means used by Steffani show some signs of being rooted in the tradition of the musical interpretation of the text with its vivid musical imagery for the portrayal of key notions. Rapid scalar passages and arpeggiations depict the words "ferisci" and "stral", crucial to the imagery of Cupid shooting arrows in the duet *Su, ferisci*. Chains and their breaking are at the heart of *Placidissime catene*, so this is underlined by alternating semiquaver passages on held notes on the words "catene", "rallentarvi" and "lacci", but also "disciolga". Minor-mode, pathetic duets written for unequal voices such as *Begl'occhi, oh Dio, non più* are persistent in their use of dissonance and suspensions to express the anguishes of love in both harmonic and contrapuntal terms. In *Begl'occhi, oh Dio, non più* a semantic duality is at work: whereas the central image of Clori's tears is conveyed by the expressive use of chromaticism, words such as "foco" and "sommerger", natural metaphors expressive of mental agitation, are madrigalistically conveyed by vigorous rhythmic figures.

Steffani's duets are generally not prone to latent dramatization. In most cases the utterance of the same text by the two voices can be interpreted only as the parallel unfolding of two identical monologues, although occasionally even this is rendered impossible in duets with clearly delineated roles for the suffering amorous subject and its indifferent object, e. g. in *E così mi compartite* and *Begl'occhi, oh Dio, non più*. If interpreted dramatically, parallel monologues can take on the guise of certain types of the dramatic duet, despite the fact that they are not related to it structurally or stylistically. Nevertheless, Steffani's duets occasionally do draw our attention to latent dramaturgic traits. *Libertà, libertà* assigns parts of or even whole lines of the text to different voices, whereas in *Io mi parto / Resto solo* the text is dialogic in itself and demands a setting for two voices, therefore bordering on the dramatic *cantata a due*. However, more interesting are the cases where a dramatic relationship is formed between the subject and abstract entities such as the chains of love (*Placidissime*

catene) or the memory of a previous lover echoing the words of his beloved (*Saldi marmi*). The predominantly contrapuntal texture enables a semantic exploration of textual simultaneity. The emphatic interjections "e crudeltà", "voi non farete", "mai, mai" in *Placidissime catene* are "addressing" the contrasting thematic material they are contrapuntally combined with. *E così mi compartite* goes even further in integrating its refrain into what at first seems a solo movement. Still, the semantic treatment of the text often remains ambiguous, as abstract, musical categories prevail over textual interpretation. As seen in many duets, often the expansion of the final subsection does not stem from a semantic stress but from a desire to elaborate near the end.

Particular formal types of the chamber duet are appropriate for different expressive registers, and contrasting texts are often set in similar ways. Duets written for equal voices such as *Ribellatevi*, *Sù, ferisci* and *Pria ch'io faccia* have a number of characteristics[115] that make them almost unsuitable for a pathetic musical setting, characterised by the expressive use of harmony and counterpoint. The case of *Pria ch'io faccia* with its light treatment of the theme of the lover's introversion seems to support this claim, but the tendency is to a certain extent countered by *Saldi marmi*, a duet for two sopranos with a very specific, highly dramatic text. It distinguishes itself by the stringing together of numerous sections as well as by the avoidance of repetition and by the use of the major mode in moderate tempi to convey entirely different affects.

Achieving formal unity (most usually by means of kinship of thematic material between different subsections and sections) was not imperative for Steffani. In some duets, large-scale repetition imposes elements of overall formal unity, but otherwise it is not easy to determine why Steffani strove for homogeneity or even monothematicism in certain duets and not at all in others. This tendency is not in contrast with his affinity for through-composition, as the most interesting examples of motivic homogeneity among the analysed duets belong to the sonata (*Placidissime catene*) and the cantata type (*Begl' occhi, oh Dio, non più; Saldi marmi*) of chamber duet, containing no elements of repetition at all. *E così mi compartite* employs a complex refrain structure to heighten the sense of homogeneity, already inherent in the derivation of all of its motivic material from the same source. Still, in the likewise monothematic *Io mi parto / Resto solo* this can contribute to a sense of monotony, while duets such

115 **Prevalence of the major mode and swift tempi, brevity and a tendency for large-scale repetition, pseudo-counterpoint with imitation at the prime, voice-crossing, a looser contrapuntal relationship of the voices and the affective content of joy or serenity.**

as *Begl'occhi, oh Dio, non più* and *Saldi marmi* are more successful in their subtle motivic connections.

There is no doubt that Steffani is responsible for the flourishing of the chamber duet around 1700. While composing his late duets or revising the early ones, one may assume that he was pursuing a structural trajectory of the following kind. After having made a decision on the overall form of the duet, he divided the text into sections and subsections, sketched out the often composite thematic material for the respective subsections, then moved on to the working out of this material, handling its constituent parts both individually and in combination with each other. According to Konstanze Musketa (1990, 186), Steffani's mature duets are "more strongly worked out contrapuntally as opposed to the earlier ones and make the developmental tendencies of the genre appear especially clear"[116]. This "developmental tendency" played a crucial role in the composer's influence on a whole generation of composers.

It is no wonder that Musketa's summarising words on the corpus of Handel's chamber duets as a whole bear traces of the evolutionary paradigm: "In their high level of consistency and maturity Handel's chamber duets represent the crowning conclusion of the history of the genre: they are musically sophisticated, with a skilful contrapuntal texture; the early ones in stricter style, more academic and over-extended, but masterly in their technique, the later ones technically more ambitious, but more compact." (Musketa in Handel 2011b, xiv). These words elevate Handel to the status of the perfector of the chamber duet, a title he could inherit only from Steffani. It is less clear, however, what Musketa means by "early" and "later" duets. At the end of the spectrum, his first duets composed in Italy and the ones created in the 1740s in London leave little doubt as to which group they belong to, but the Hanoverian duets and the two duets from the 1720s are more difficult to place within these categories. Only a broad generalisation of the "development" of the genre at Handel's hand is possible rather than a precise periodization. As we have already seen, the stylistic differences between duets composed in Hanover and London (complicated by problems of dating) remain somewhat blurred. Consequently, insistence on developmental tendencies in the case of a genre such as the chamber duet might appear counterproductive.

A comparison on the basis of criteria such as the interpretation of the text, form, latent dramatization and homogeneity is not as distinctive as in the case of Steffani. Handel's duets are less varied when it comes to setting than Steffani's, and although the preference for duets for soprano and alto

116 **Sie sind gegenüber den früheren stärker kontrapunktisch gearbeitet und lassen die Entwicklungstendenzen der Gattung besonders deutlich ablesen.**

could be traced back to the model composer's influence, maybe Handel would have showed less diversity in the setting of his duets irrespectively of Steffani. In terms of form, the sonata duet dominates. Handel was less inclined to infuse the chamber duet with elements of the cantata, the same way he was less prone to accentuate elements of latent dramaturgy in his duets (though this is partially due to the texts he set) than his Italian predecessor. He had a different approach to form and structure and he showed an even greater tendency to unify his duets in structural, often also motivic terms. Rather than showing tendencies of developmental change in the contrapuntal working out of the thematic material, Handel displayed great flexibility, covering a wide spectrum from quasi-learned counterpoint to a less literal imitative treatment and almost improvisatory, derivatively free contrapuntal writing. As a result, his chamber duets often function on the more abstract level of instrumental music than, say, Steffani's, but they also integrate techniques characteristic of dramatic genres such as opera and cantata more seamlessly into themselves, although not as nearly as much as Bononcini's chamber duets.

In a comparative analysis of the use of counterpoint in Steffani's *Quanto care al cor voi siete* and Handel's *Giù nei Tartarei regni* and *Troppo cruda, troppo fiera*, Timms (1987, 240–241 claimed that Handel's inclination to more complex imitative structures can be brought into connection with his reception of Steffani's chamber duets (cf. Timms). However, if Timms's hypothesis that *Giù nei Tartarei regni*, composed in Italy possibly before Handel's full exposure to Steffani's chamber duets, weaves its motifs into a somewhat simpler contrapuntal web than *Troppo cruda, troppo fiera* is true, it might not necessarily follow from this directly but it could equally stem from Handel's "inner" development. However, it is plausible that Steffani's influence was rendering Handel's Hanoverian duets more directional and regular in their use of imitative procedures, for his chamber duets written in Italy, although deploying a diversity of techniques (imitation, stretto, free counterpoint) show less inclination to use invertible counterpoint (Steffani's trademark!) and they are also formally more open in their stringing together of numerous contrasting and often shorter, less clearly demarcated sections and movements.

The duets composed in Hanover examined here have a lesser number of movements, but are more rounded off formally and also show a tendency towards homogeneity and motivic unity, whether by means of a consistent imitation of a composite subject (e. g. in *Tanti strali*) or a free motivic derivation of the material from the main one (e. g. in *Troppo cruda*), with many alternatives to imitation in the polyphonic treatment of the parts. In these duets Handel integrates the continuo as an equal part into the trio texture for the first time. Imitation becomes only one

among many, consciously deployed techniques of voice-leading such as the alternation of parts, free voice-leading or even parallelism. In the first London duets some of these tendencies remain strong, but the strict imitative monothematicism of *Tanti strali* is less often encountered and motivic derivation occurs more frequently instead. The duets composed in London in the 1740s continue these tendencies, deriving subsidiary thematic material from the main one and strengthening the ratio of alternation, free counterpoint and parallelism as opposed to imitation. At the same time, Handel attempted to extend his chamber duets in formal terms, as he often subjected his thematic material (conceived as dual or ternary) to several cycles of imitation, whether simultaneous (*No, di voi non vuò fidarmi*, HWV 189), successive (*Fronda leggiera e mobile*) or the combination of both (*No, di voi non vuò fidarmi*, HWV 190). Finally, there is no better example of laying out the chamber duet on the canvas of opera duet than *Beato in ver*, and not only because it is written in a single extended *da capo* form like many of Handel's opera duets.

The examination of duets by Handel's Italian contemporaries such as Bononcini, Gasparini, Durante and Lotti after the analyses of Steffani's and Handel's duets gains momentum from being considered in this order given the sheer amount of diversity highlighted. Rather than the conventional ordering of the duets chronologically or in terms of their authors, the golden thread was the investigation of different, often hybrid solutions to the problem (if it can be considered a problem) of the questionable demarcation line between the *cantata a due* and the chamber duet on the one hand, as well as between different types of chamber duets (e. g. cantata and sonata type) on the other. The first two examples by Durante and Gasparini gain ground by their unorthodox nature. The highly specific contribution to the genre exemplified in the four duets by Bononcini could be compared to cutting the Gordian knot in that he often refused to distinguish between the *cantata a due* and the chamber duet. Although he was one of the first composers to publish his attempts in the time span under inspection in this study, of all the chamber duets examined, Bononcini distanced himself the most from Steffani's legacy, most evidently by permeating his chamber duets with elements of dramatic music. As can be seen in his duets *Luci barbare spietete* and *Pietoso nume arcier*, Bononcini seemed less interested in the translation of the poetry into musical ideas and concepts, as Steffani and Handel were, but placed strong musical and dramatic accents, allowing for more flexibility in terms of both technique and genre. His freedom of treatment of the genre pervades not only to the handling of contrapuntal techniques (resulting in a less dense texture than in Steffani's, Handel's and Gasparini's chamber duets), but also to the potential for latent dramaturgy. It often seems that with the differentiation of the voices in the texture or

with the help of different texts that they sing, he sets up expectations of a dramatization of the chamber duet from within not unlike Steffani's. However, Bononcini rarely follows through with this, especially in the elaborately long *Chi d'amor tra le catene.*

In spite of Gasparini's praise of Bononcini's skills and abilities as a composer (cf. Lindgren 2009, 140), the two composers' chamber duets could not be more different. Gasparini's chamber duets approximate Handel's in the interchange of fugal movements and/or sections based on a contrapuntal treatment of multipartite subjects and more freely constituted textural types. They also show features that distinguish them from the younger, German composer's works. Before drawing conclusions, one should bear in mind that Gasparini's chamber duet opus is on a much smaller scale, resulting in a modest sample in statistical terms, not to mention that one cannot attempt to outline anything like the developmental tendencies we can trace in Handel's chamber duets. This renders the comparison somewhat ungrateful, but a conclusion that Gasparini is a composer of pronouncedly individual solutions to the problems of the genre of the chamber duet has considerable plausibility nevertheless.

Certainly, there are many similarities between the two composers' chamber duets. They share not only the above mentioned interchange of taut (imitative, fugal) and less taut (homophonic or abiding in alternating or parallel passages) sections, but their fugal constructions have a lot in common, too, in that they often start out in a more or less strict, literal way and become freer as the section progresses. Both composers show a proclivity for through-composition, although Handel begins to experiment with operatic formal elements such as the *da capo* to a certain extent already in the duets written in Hanover, but most prominently in his London duets. Nevertheless, the regularity and symmetry of directional contrapuntal structures that often went hand in hand with a motivic economy of means (e. g. *Tanti strali, al sen mi scocchi*, HWV 197) is not characteristic of Gasparini. In his *Sento tal fiamma* and, to a lesser extent, *A voi, piante innocenti*, he defies expectations that were set up in the opening movements with substantial irregularity, a trait that can be recognised in Handel's *Va, speme infida, pur* (HWV 199) and especially in the opening section of *Lange, geme, sospira* (HWV 188), in whose first movement a distinctive head motif receives relatively little attention. The latter duet contains a section reminiscent of a middle section in a *da capo* form. Nothing could be further from Gasparini's formal procedures that rarely link movements or sections, showing considerable flexibility in manipulating the dual construction of closing sections (e. g. D1 and D2 in *A voi, piante innocenti* and C1 and C2 in *Sento tal fiamma*). This dual logic does not resemble the way in which Handel sets his dual thematic

material in several cycles in the opening movement of *No, di voi non vuò fidarmi* (HWV 189) or the irregular tripartite form of *No, di voi non vuò fidarmi* (HWV 190). If it might seem that Handel and Bononcini are different in the formal shaping of their chamber duet movements in the sense that Bononcini's clear-cut, balanced bipartite or *da capo* structures are absent from the German master's chamber duet opus, Gasparini seems even less likely to fit into the box of operatic regularity.

If Handel's chamber duets written in Italy were more representative of the state of the chamber duet in Italy in the early 18th century and his later development representative of the continental appropriation of the genre as laid out by his distinguished precursor Steffani, Gasparini's chamber duets examined in this study are certainly closer to the former, Italian tradition. If an estimate of their creation was necessary on purely stylistic terms, I would be inclined to say that they must have been written in the second or maybe the third decade of the century. They seem several steps ahead of Lotti's *Poss'io morir*, which still heavily treads in the footsteps of Steffani, but fall short of introducing operatic elements even in the moderate sense Handel had done in the 1720s and 40s. Maybe Gasparini's chamber duets are more representative of the tradition of the chamber duet (in Italy or in general) than it would seem at first by the limited distribution of their sources? Of course, it is entirely imaginable that Gasparini, a conservative composer of learned music in the first half of the 18th century, might have stayed true to his aesthetic and stylistic positions adopted early on in his creative life. As remarked in Chapter 2.3, *Va speme, infida, pur* (HWV 199) is notoriously difficult to date with any certainty, and it might not be a coincidence that with its formal experimentation, this duet of Handel's approximates the ones by Gasparini examined here the most.

Even though the chamber duet may have seemed marginal in the questions of musical relationships between Handel and his Italian contemporaries, the aim of this chapter was to prove the contrary by highlighting the diversity of the genre in the chosen period and to elucidate the distinguishing traits and interrelationships of composers active in the genre. With some exceptions (most notably Steffani), these composers will also feature in the second part of this study, a comparison of dramatic duets by Handel and his contemporaries. The dramatic duet is not only stylistically, structurally and dramaturgically different from the chamber duet but the comparative methodology in these two main parts of the dissertation will differ to a certain extent as well. In the observation as to whether the chamber and dramatic duets of these composers relate to each other and in what terms, the study of compositional techniques in the chamber duet will most definitely be of great use, too.