Puppets and Satire in Early Eighteenth-Century London

Matthew Gardner

During the eighteenth century there is evidence of around 30 puppet shows in London; some survived only a few years, others were longer running enterprises at fairs or markets. One of the earliest examples is Martin Powell's show at Covent Garden, which is most commonly remembered for having played an important role in establishing the character of Mr Punch in England. Early eighteenth-century Britons were also well known for their love of satire with various publications, such as *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, devoted to philosophy, as well as the intellectual ridicule of politics, society and the arts. The puppet shows of the period were almost always satirical in nature, offering an extension of popular literary satire through the light relief of an alternative form of entertainment to operas or plays. While the broader history of puppetry in England has been examined by George Speaight and John Minniear, there has not yet been a more detailed study on the links between the introduction of Italian opera to England, satirical literature and puppet shows in early eighteenth-century London.[1] This article therefore aims to shed new light on what was available to audiences, how they may have understood and interpreted performances, and the strategies employed by composers, impresarios and puppet-show men in order to gain the maximum success for their respective offerings.

History of Puppetry in England

The history of puppetry in England before the eighteenth century can be summarized fairly quickly. There is little evidence of when exactly puppets, or rather puppet theatre, first arrived in England, but it is likely that they were in use throughout the Roman Empire, including Britain. During the Middle Ages traveling minstrels and entertainers probably used puppets in their shows based on Greek and Roman legends, although these were likely glove puppets which were easy to transport, rather than marionettes. In the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, travelling puppeteers remained popular and

1 George Speaight, *The History of the English Puppet Theatre*, London 1955, ²1990 and John Minniear, *Marionette Opera: The History and Literature*, PhD dissertation, North Texas State University, 1971, pp. 225–330.

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visiting Italian puppeteers travelled the length of the country providing entertainment at fairs and markets, as well as performing in the country homes of the wealthy. The earliest known public puppet plays in London are from around 1600, with plays being put on at locations across the city, but especially at fairs and markets – nevertheless, puppeteers still needed to travel to make a living. It was during the Commonwealth Period from 1642 to 1660 when puppet plays gained significant popularity in London, owing to the closure of the theatres by the Puritans. Puppet plays were exempt from this and therefore became one of the few ways to enjoy a play. On the restoration of the monarchy, Charles II returned to England from France bringing with him various continental influences, including puppeteers, which was probably when the famous character of Mr Punch was introduced to England as the Commedia dell'arte figure, Pulcinella. The earliest record of a performance of a puppet play is found in the diary of Samuel Pepys, written between 1660 and 1669, and well-known for offering a unique glimpse into life in seventeenth century England. On 9 May 1662 he wrote:

> Thence to see an Italian puppet play that is within the rayles there [Covent Garden], which is very pretty, the best that ever I saw, and great resort of gallants. So to the Temple and by water home, and so walk upon the leads, and in the dark there played upon my flageolette, it being a fine still evening, and so to supper and to bed.[2]

Speaight has connected this entry to a performance by Signor Bologna (whose real name was Pietro Gimonde).[3] Two weeks later Pepys also took his wife to see the performance and described it as 'very pleasant'.[4] Further references to London's puppet theatre can be found throughout Pepys's diary and clearly the entertainment remained popular throughout the rest of seventeenth century.[5]

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2 *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, *Friday 9 May 1662*, https://www.pepysdiary.com/diary/1662/05/09/ (accessed 10 December 2019).

3 Speaight, *The History of the English Puppet Theatre*, p. 73.

4 *The Diary of Samuel Pepys, Friday 23 May 1662*, https://www.pepysdiary.com/diary/1662/05/23/ (accessed 10 December 2019).

5 For references to puppet operas in Pepys's diary, see Speaight, *The History of the English Puppet Theatre*, pp. 73–5.

Puppet Theatres in Early Eighteenth-Century London

The eighteenth century also saw a strong interest in puppet theatres, most of which were located in the Covent Garden area of the city.[6] Perhaps the most important example of an early eighteenth-century puppet theatre in London is that directed by Martin Powell, who had arrived in London from Bath in late 1709 and in January 1710 began offering performances. His first theatre was located in St Martin's Lane, but owing to the popularity of his performances, a year later in early 1711 he moved to the 'Seven Stars' (probably a tavern or coffee house) in the Little Piazza at Covent Garden. His new puppet theatre, known as 'Punch's Theatre', could probably seat about 300 people and included a pit and boxes. The price of admission for a performance was 1s for the pit and 2s for a box (by comparison a play at Drury Lane Theatre was 3s and 5s). Performances lasted about 2 1/2 hours, began at 6pm and each show ran for about a week. The puppets were most likely marionettes operated with wires. As Speaight and Minniear have shown, most of this is easily gained from the advertisements for performances found in the London press – the main source of information on puppet shows in London for the period.[7]

There are no surviving manuscript or printed copies of the puppet plays, and there is only evidence that one play or opera, *Venus and Adonis*, was ever printed, of which no copies have survived.[8] As a result, very little is known about the repertoire that was performed other than the titles of works and any small details that can be gathered from contemporary reports of performances. Nevertheless, an image of Powell's theatre survives, in a publication that was used by two young Whigs (Thomas Burnet and George Duckett) as a lampoon against Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford and the leader of the Tory Government, using a history of Powell's theatre as a satirical means for their attack. The frontispiece for *A Second Tale of a Tub: or, the History of Robert Powel*

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6 For a map of puppet shows in eighteenth-century London see Speaight, *The History of the English Puppet Theatre*, p. 93. The map represents the entire eighteenth century; most puppet shows only survived for a few years before closing down or moving on elsewhere.

7 Speaight, *The History of the English Puppet Theatre*, pp. 94–6 and Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, pp. 243–5, 250–1 and 303–5.

8 See Speaight, *The History of the English Puppet Theatre*, p. 95.

the Puppet-Show-Man shows the Earl of Oxford in front of the puppet stage, with Punch to the left (Fig. 1).[9]

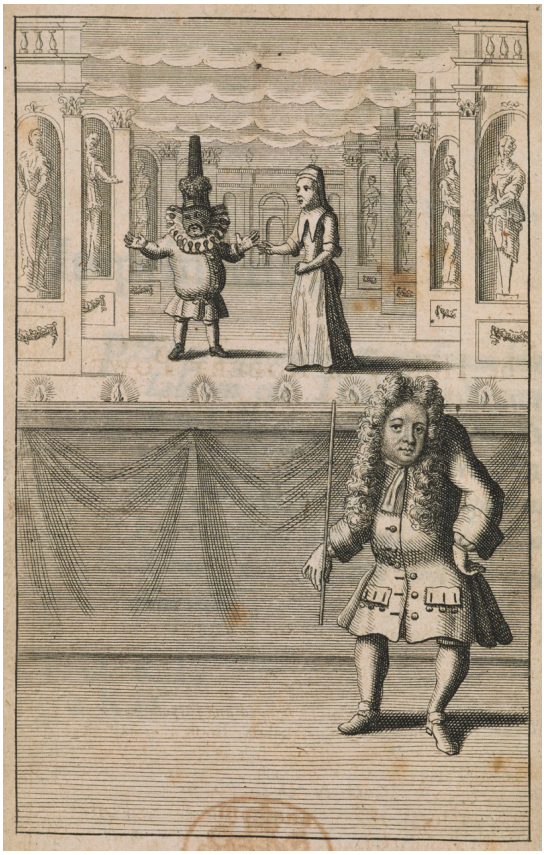

Fig. 1: Frontispiece from *A Second Tale of a Tub: or, the History of Robert Powel the Puppet-Show-Man*, London 1715, with Powell depicted © The British Library Board (292.e.10).

As Speaight has outlined, Powell offered a range of productions over a period of three seasons of six months, some of which were common puppet show plays, also found at fairs, such as *The History of Richard Whittington*, *The Court of Babylon*, or *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*; others were designed as satires of contemporary society, for example *Poor Robin's Dream, or the Vices of the Age exposed*;

9 Thomas Burnett, *A Second Tale of a Tub: or the History of Robert Powel the Puppet-Show Man*, London 1715.

and some were satires on Italian opera, including *The Destruction of Troy* and *Venus and Adonis*.[10] These were not plays that had been performed in the theatre and transferred to the puppet show, and all of them featured the character Mr Punch. An example of the use of music is mentioned in an advertisement for Powell's performance of *The False Triumph, or, The Destruction of Troy* (1712), which states that Punch sang: 'The part of Jupiter to be perform'd by Signio Punchanello, who, in a Chariot drawn by an Eagle, descends and sings to Paris'.[11] This was clearly a feature aimed at mocking Italian opera, which frequently involved the use of chariots ascending and descending as part of the spectacular stage effects – Armida's capture of Almirena in George Frideric Handel's *Rinaldo* (1711, with revivals in 1712) had recently made use of this effect.[12] Several of Powell's performance were additionally advertised as 'operas' or 'mock operas', making the satire towards Italian opera clear, whilst also suggesting that music may have been a regular feature.[13]

While there is only little evidence of music at Powell's performances, according to the music historian John Hawkins, in 1708 the castrato Valentini (Valentino Urbani) was the instigator behind the only known early eighteenth-century fantoccini (Italian puppet opera) performance in London.[14] Whilst discussing the progress of Italian opera in England, Hawkins states that the new Italian opera for the 1708 season at the Haymarket theatre, *The Triumph of Love*, based on a libretto by Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni in Rome and originally set to music by Francesco Gasparini and Carlo Francesco Cesarini, was performed with puppets:

> This pastoral was written by Cardinal Ottoboni, and set to music by Carlo Cesarini Giovanni, fornamed [sic] del Violone, and Francesco Gasparini, and was intended to introduce a kind of drama, wherein certain little wooden figures were the actors, which by means of springs, contrived by two famous mechanics, the Count St. Martini and the Cavalier Acciaioli, were made to move with surprizing grace and agility [...]. The music to this entertainment Valentini found

10 Speaight, *The History of the English Puppet Theatre*, p. 95 and Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, pp. 243–5, 250–1 and 305.

11 *The Spectator*, 1 December 1712.

12 Further revivals took place in 1713, 1714–15, 1717 and 1731.

13 See for example *Venus and Adonis; or, the Triumph of Love*, first performed in April 1713, advertised in *The Daily Courant*, 1 April 1713; *The Fall of Caleb the Great Enchantress, or the Birth of St George*, advertised in *The Daily Courant*, 6 January 1713; or *The State of Innocence*, advertised in *The Daily Courant*, 18 January 1712.

14 See John McCormick's paper in the present volume.

> means to procure, and having got it, he contrived to get it set to English words [...] and endeavoured to suit the performance, which was calculated for chamber amusement, to the opera stage; but the bad success that attended the representation convinced him of his error, and determined him to confine himself to his profession of a singer, and never more act as a manager.[15]

The newspaper advertisements for the opera, the first performance of which was on 26 February 1708 and was in Italian and English, make no mention of the puppets.[16] Perhaps the performance was an attempt by Nicolini to add a new Italianate element to London operas.

Powell's theatre was, in contrast to Valentini's attempt at fantoccini in London, clearly extremely popular with theatre goers and in March 1711 *The Spectator* printed a short piece jokingly writing as the Under-Sexton of the local church, that the puppet show was more of a draw than services – St Paul's Covent Garden was perhaps about a two-minute walk from the puppet theatre:

> I Have been for twenty Years Under-Sexton of this Parish of St. *Paul's, Covent-Garden*, and have not missed tolling in to Prayers six times in all those Years; which Office I have performed to my great Satisfaction, till this Fortnight last past, during which Time I find my Congregation take the Warning of my Bell, Morning and Evening, to go to a Puppett-show set forth by one *Powel*, under the *Piazzas*. By this Means, I have not only lost my two Customers, whom I used to place for six Pence a Piece over-against Mrs *Rachel Eyebright*, but Mrs *Rachel* herself is gone thither also. There now appear among us none but a few ordinary People, who come to Church only to say their Prayers, so that I have no Work worth speaking of but on *Sundays*. I have placed my Son at the *Piazzas*, to acquaint the Ladies that the Bell rings for Church, and that it stands on the other side of the *Garden*; but they only laugh at the Child.
>
> I desire you would lay this before all the World, that I may not be made such a Tool for the Future, and that Punchinello may chuse Hours less canonical. As things are now, Mr *Powell* has a full Congregation, while we have a very thin House; which if you can Remedy, you will very much oblige.[17]

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15 John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, London 1770, vol. 5, pp. 145–6.

16 *The Daily Courant*, 26 February 1708.

17 *The Spectator*, 16 March 1711.

Satire and Music in Eighteenth-Century London

Satirical entertainment had been popular for centuries in England and can, for example, be traced back to court masques in the Tudor and Elizabethan periods, and satire had been an integral part of puppet shows for as long as they are known to have existed. Writings and publications which included satire, especially relating to contemporary events and people, were likewise popular.[18] In 1709, for example, Richard Steele founded *The Tatler*, designed as a journal that, in educated essays, would commentate on contemporary society under the pseudonym 'Isaac Bickerstaff'. In 1711 Steele joined forces with Joseph Addison, closed *The Tatler* in January and from March began publishing *The Spectator* six times a week until December 1712 when it also closed. The aim of *The Spectator* was to improve society by introducing its readers to philosophical thought (partly through satire); as Addison wrote in issue 10 on 12 March 1711: 'I have brought Philosophy out of the closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses'.[19]

One of the various 'problems' of early eighteenth-century society which Addison and Steele addressed was opera and theatre. All-sung opera had been slow to arrive in England; the staple form of theatrical entertainment being the spoken play. Since the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 and the consequent reopening of the theatres after puritan rule, the play continued to dominate the London stage. Although some attempts at all-sung opera were made, such as Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, John Blow's *Venus and Adonis*, and Louis Grabu's *Albion and Albanius*, they were, despite being all-sung, generally rooted more in the performance tradition of the court masque, rather than Italian opera. Plays nevertheless frequently included music comprising of instrumental music at the start of each act and a selection of songs. By the 1690s, when London's leading composer Henry Purcell was producing his dramatic operas, the dominance of the spoken word was still apparent, with the main characters speaking while secondary characters provided the music. It was not until 1705, ten years after Purcell's death, that opera after the Italian manner, meaning all-sung, with a sequence of recitative and arias, began to

18 For a detailed overview of satire in England see Ashley Marshall, *The Practice of Satire in England 1658–1770*, Baltimore 2013; for the early eighteenth century see pp. 150–193.

19 *The Spectator*, 12 March 1711.

make significant progress on the London stage.[20] The first of these operas is the well-known *Arsinoe: Queen of Cyprus* compiled by Thomas Clayton. Clayton's purpose was to introduce all-sung opera to London, so that the wealthy who had enjoyed Italian opera whilst on the Grand Tour to the continent could experience something similar back home. As a result of Clayton's efforts, a number of further operas followed which eventually led to the formation of the Royal Academy of Music in 1719, a joint-stock company funded by the aristocracy to maintain Italian opera in London.[21]

These early operas included English operas after the Italian manner, bilingual operas performed in Italian and English, Italian operas, pasticcios and newly composed operas. For Italian opera to be truly successful in London several elements were necessary: financial support, a theatre with the necessary stage equipment, a full complement of outstanding Italian singers (including castrati), a supply of good librettos and a poet to adapt them for London, as well as at least one first rate composer capable of writing new music in the Italian style. Clayton, who was not the most accomplished composer, was also missing a good libretto and Italian singers. Yet over the years that followed these elements were gradually put into place, reaching a climax in 1711 with Handel's first opera for London, *Rinaldo*.[22] The arrival of a good castrato (Valentini) in 1707 was an important step in this process, however more important was the presence from December 1708 of one of the finest castratos available, Nicolini (Nicolò Grimaldi), especially as he seemed interested in encouraging opera in England.[23]

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20 For an overview of the progress of all-sung opera in England see John Merrill Knapp, 'Eighteenth-Century Opera in London before Handel', in: *British Theatre and the Other Arts, 1660–1800*, edited by Shirley Strum Kelly, Washington 1984, pp. 92–104; Winton Dean and John Merrill Knapp, *Handel's Operas 1704–1726*, Oxford 1987, ²1995, pp. 140–150 and in Lowell Lindgren, 'Critiques of Opera in London, 1705–1719', in: *Il melodramma italiano in Italia e in Germania nell'età barocca*, edited by Alberto Colzani, Norbert Dubowy, Andrea Luppi and Maurizio Padoan, Como 1995, pp. 145–65.

21 For a list of operas performed between 1705 and 1711 see Knapp, 'Eighteenth-Century Opera in London before Handel', p. 103; for those performed between 1710 and 1717 see Dean and Knapp, *Handel's Operas 1704–1726*, p. 156.

22 See Dean and Knapp, *Handel's Operas 1704–1726*, pp. 168–205.

23 For Nicolini's standing and salary see Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, 'Opera Salaries in Eighteenth-Century London', in: *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 46/1 (1993), p. 30.

There was, however, also opposition to all-sung Italian opera in England and *The Spectator* provides some of the most colourful satirical commentary on the establishment of opera in London, ridiculing for example the idea that audiences would rather see an opera performed in a language they do not understand than going to a play or opera performed in English.

> The next Step to our Refinement, was the introducing of *Italian* Actors into our Opera; who sung their Parts in their own Language, at the same time that our Countrymen performed theirs in our native Tongue. The King or Hero of the Play generally spoke in *Italian*, and his Slaves answered him in *English*: The Lover frequently made his Court, and gained the Heart of his Princess in a Language which she did not understand. One would have thought it very difficult to have carried on Dialogues after this manner, without an Interpreter between the Persons that convers'd together; but this was the State of the *English* Stage for about three Years.
>
> At length the Audience grew tired of understanding Half the Opera, and therefore to ease themselves entirely of the Fatigue of Thinking, have so ordered it at Present that the whole Opera is performed in an unknown Tongue. We no longer understand the Language of our own Stage [...]. In the mean time I cannot forbear thinking how naturally an Historian who writes two or three hundred Years hence, and does not know the Taste of his wise Forefathers, will make the following Reflection, *In the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century the* Italian *Tongue was so well understood in* England, *that Opera's were acted on the publick Stage in that Language*.[24]

While some members of the audiences possessed sufficient knowledge of the Italian language to understand opera, the majority did not, shown by the fact that English translations of the librettos for Italian operas were provided on facing pages in the wordbooks available at performances. This is just one example of some of the criticism that Italian operas attracted. Other authors, such as John Dennis in his *Essay on the Opera's after the Italian Manner*, as the title page shows, addresses the 'damage they may bring to the publick', primarily meaning their effect on the spoken play.[25] Publications were, however, not the only place where Italian opera in London was ridiculed.

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24 *The Spectator*, 21 March 1711.

25 John Dennis, *An Essay on the Opera's after the Italian Manner, which are about to be Establish'd on the English Stage: With some Reflections on the Damage which they may bring to the Publick*, London 1706. A detailed list of further criticism of Italian opera can be found in Lindgren, 'Critiques of Opera in London, 1705–1719'.

Satire on the Puppet Stage: *Hydaspes*, a Lion and a Pig

Italian opera provided Powell with an ideal target for his satirical performances at Punch's Theatre and his puppet shows therefore became a further vehicle with which Italian opera could be attacked and ridiculed. Aside from Punch descending in a chariot, as mentioned earlier, one particularly good example can be found in connection with the opera *L'Idaspe fedele*, known in England as *Hydaspes*.[26] The first performance was given on 23 March 1710 (about a year before the article in *The Spectator* lampooning all-Italian performances) of which this opera was the second, preceded only by *Almahide* two months earlier.[27] *Hydaspes*, like the operas before it in the London theatres, was an adaptation of a pre-existing work, in this case the Neapolitan opera *Gl'amanti generosi* ('The generous lovers') by Francesco Mancini, a score of which, written on Neapolitan paper, survives in Milan.[28] The opera found its way to London with Nicolini who had worked in Naples before coming to London and had sung in Mancini's original production at the Teatro San Bartolomeo during the 1705 carnival. The libretto by Giovanni Pietro Candi, which had originally been published in Venice in 1703[29] and was revised for Naples by Giulio Convò and Silvio Stampiglia, was adapted for London and an English translation prepared by an unknown poet – the dedication of the London wordbook is signed by Nicolini, who may have been involved in the process of adaption alongside John Heidegger, the impresario of the Queen's Theatre.[30] The majority of the music for the London version was taken from Mancini's original opera and had been brought to London by Nicolini.[31] The music was then arranged by Johann Christoph Pepusch, who had also been involved in earlier operas at the Haymarket Theatre; some music by Bononcini and as yet unidentified composers was, however, also added.[32]

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26 *Hydaspes. An Opera. As it is Perform'd at the Queen's Theatre in the Hay-Market*, London 1710.

27 *The Daily Courant*, 23 March 1710. The comic interludes in *Almahide* were, however, performed in English, but the opera itself was in Italian.

28 I-Mc MS Noseda G.10.; see also facsimile edition in the *Garland Italian Opera 1640–1770* series, vol. 18: Francesco Mancini, *Gl'amanti generosi*, with an Introduction by Howard Mayer Brown, New York 1978.

29 *Gli Amanti generosi. Drama per Musica*, Venice 1703. The music in 1703 (now lost) was by Benedetto Vinaccesi.

30 *Hydaspes. An Opera*, p. 3

31 Ibid. p. 1.

32 Donald Burrows, *Handel*, Oxford u. a. 1995, ²2012, p. 82.

Additional comic scenes that had been inserted into the libretto for Naples were removed. The wordbook also reveals that the scenery for London was painted by Marco Rizzi of Venice, who was probably one of 'two famous Italian Painters' reported to have arrived in England in 1709 and who worked on some of the earlier operas for the London stage.[33] The arias from the opera were published by John Walsh shortly after the first performance, but, except for the overture, none of the music has yet been recorded.[34]

The plot of the opera draws on the life of the Persian King Artaxerxes (fourth century BC) and revolves around the problems he is having with two pairs of lovers: firstly, Idaspe (his nephew) and Berenice – who Artaxerxes is also in love with himself; and secondly Darius (his brother) and Mandana, the daughter of the King of Media and who is being held prisoner by Artaxerxes. Stampiglia added a further pair of comic lovers, Ircano (one of Darius's soldiers) and Drosilla (Mandana's maid). Artaxerxes plans to put his rival lover Idaspe to death with the assistance of his captain Arbace. Arbace, however, comes to lose faith in his king and instead joins forces with Darius – together they attack the capital city. When Artaxerxes's life is at risk from Darius's soldiers, Darius and Idaspe protect him, causing him to admit his mistakes, as well as return Berenice to Idaspe and Mandana to Darius.

For Powell and his puppet theatre, one scene in particular was attractive for satire. At the start of Act 3, Idaspe, having being captured, is to be put to death in front of his beloved Berenice in an amphitheatre by being forced to fight a hungry lion.[35] The music for the encounter with the lion included a dramatic D major aria by Mancini (the original version was in F major), using the concitato style in the A section to demonstrate the ferociousness of the animal who is about to tear him apart, and a contrasting B-section in the relative minor for the description of his flaming heart which the lion will find within his chest (Fig. 2). The opening two bars are borrowed from the start of the overture (Fig. 3), perhaps highlighting that this scene is the emotional highpoint of the plot – Berenice must watch while her lover is either eaten alive or defeats the beast.

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33 Lowell Lindgren, 'The Staging of Handel's Operas in London', in: *Handel Tercentenary Collection*, edited by Stanley Sadie and Anthony Hicks, London 1987, p. 115n.

34 *Songs in the New Opera, Call'd Hydaspes*, London [1710]; copies in: GB-Lbl I.282., GB-Lbl Hirsch II.559, and F-Pn Rés.V.S.1278.

35 *Hydaspes. An Opera*, pp. 58–59.

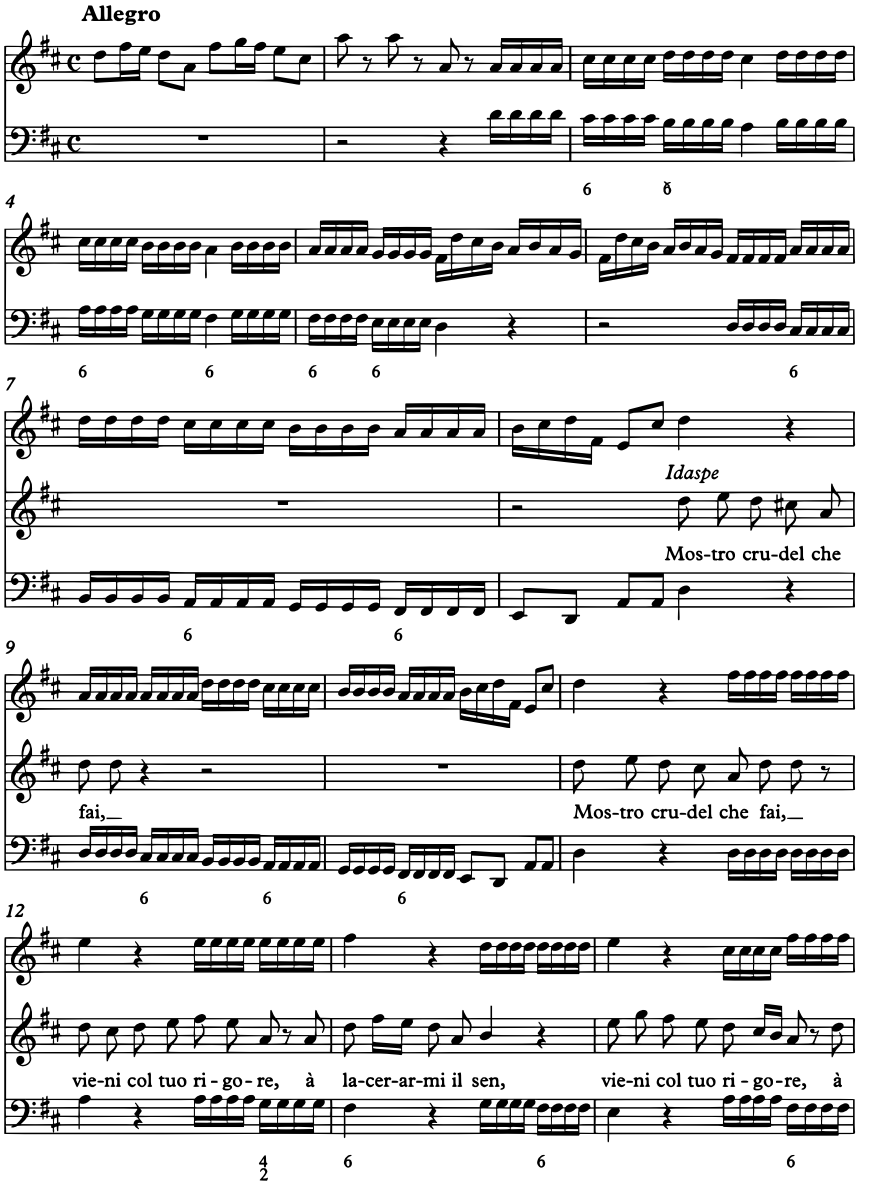

Fig. 2: Francesco Mancini, Aria, 'Mostro crudel che fai?', in: *Songs in the New Opera, Call'd Hydaspes*, London [1710], pp. 49–50.[36]

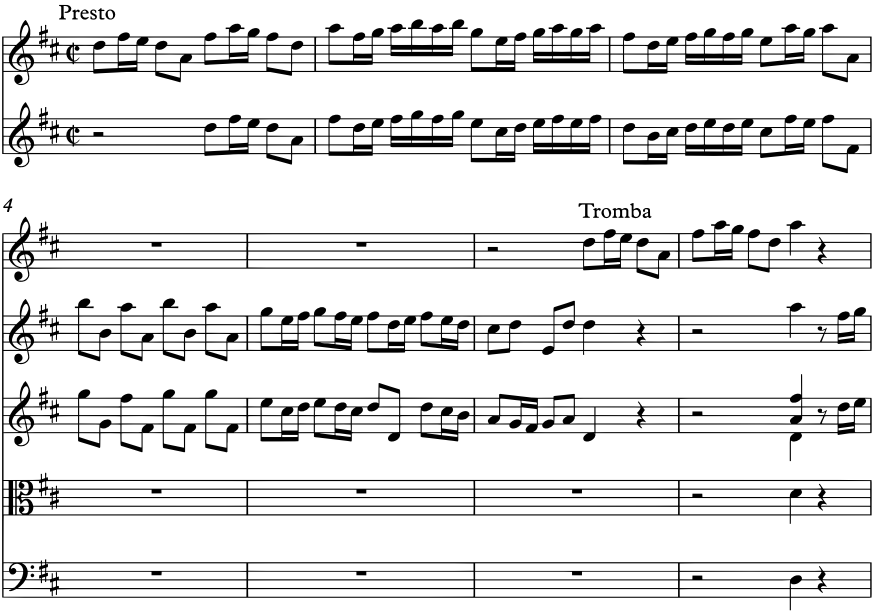

Fig. 3: Francesco Mancini, Overture, bb. 1–7, in: *Songs in the New Opera, Call'd Hydaspes*, London [1710], p. 1.[37]

The image of Nicolini wrestling with someone in a lion costume on stage, whilst singing a castrato aria must, however, have seemed to some an especially ridiculous sight, and the scene was the subject of a lengthy satire in *The Spectator* on 15 March 1711 – a year after the first performance.[38] Within a year of the first performances of *Hydaspes*, the advertisements for Powell's new opera *The British Enchanter, or the Birth of Merlin* refer to 'Scignior [sic] Punchanello Encouraging and Killing a Lion in the Amphitheatre' – the connection to *Hydaspes* is clear.[39] On 28 April 1711 both *Hydaspes* and *The Birth of Merlin* with the satirical scene at Punch's Theatre were given on the same night and were even advertised next to each other in *The Daily Courant*.[40]

36 See also: I-Mc MS Noseda G.10. pp. 227–31; facsimile edition in the *Garland Italian Opera 1640–1770* series, vol. 18: Mancini, *Gl'amanti generosi*.

37 See also: I-Mc MS Noseda G.10.; facsimile edition in the *Garland Italian Opera 1640–1770* series, vol. 18: Mancini, *Gl'amanti generosi*.

38 *The Spectator*, 15 March 1711.

39 *The Daily Courant*, 9 April 1711, see also 23 April 1711.

40 *The Daily Courant*, 28 April 1711.

Punch's encounter with the lion was clearly immensely popular, as it appeared in various performances at Powell's theatre; for example in January 1713 it was incorporated into a performance of *The Unfortunate Lovers; or The Fair Vow-Breaker*, which may have been a satire on the recent opera *The Triumph of Love*, that had premiered in November 1712.[41] As late as 1732 the scene even featured in a new puppet show established by the Yeates family, who had previously worked together with Powell's son. However, the report refers to 'Punchinello's Encounter with the Pig', not a lion.[42] That the staging of Powell's satire actually employed a pig rather than a lion is confirmed by a diary entry from Mrs Delaney, who in 1711 was a lady-in-waiting to Queen Anne, and reported that she had seen 'Powell's famous puppet show, in which Punch fought with a pig in burlesque, in imitation of Nicolini's battle with the lion'.[43] Furthermore, Speaight believes this may have been a live pig, which is suggested by a report in *The Spectator* for Friday 16 March 1711 comparing Powell's new show *Whittington and his Cat* directly with Handel's *Rinaldo*. The report also includes a unique description of some of Powell's scenery:

> The Opera at the *Hay-Market*, and that under the little *Piazza* in *Covent-Garden*, being at present the Two leading Diversions of the Town; and Mr. *Powell* professing in his Advertisements to set up *Whittington and his Cat* against *Rinaldo and Armida*, my Curiosity led me the Beginning of last Week to view both these Performances, and make my Observations upon them.
>
> First therefore, I cannot but observe that Mr. *Powell* wisely forbearing to give his Company a Bill of Fare before-hand, every Scene is new and unexpected; whereas it is certain, that the Undertakers of the *Hay-Market*, having raised too great an Expectation in their printed Opera, very much disappointed their Audience on the Stage. [...]
>
> I observe that Mr. *Powell* and the Undertakers had both the same Thought, and I think, much about the same time, of introducing Animals on their several Stages, though indeed with very different Success. The Sparrows and Chaffinches at the *Hay-Market* fly as yet very irregularly over the Stage; and instead of perching on the Trees and performing their Parts, these young Actors either get into the Galleries or put out the Candles; whereas Mr. *Powell* has so well disciplined his Pig, that in the first Scene he and Punch dance a Minuet together.

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41 *The Daily Courant*, 10 January 1713.

42 *The Daily Post*, 12 May 1732.

43 *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany: with Interesting Reminiscences of King George the Third and Queen Charlotte*, edited by Augusta Hall, London 1861, vol. 1, p. 16.

> I am informed however, that Mr. *Powell* resolves to excell his Adversaries in their own Way; and introduce Larks in his next Opera of *Susanna*, or *Innocence betrayed*, which will be exhibited next Week with a Pair of new Elders. [...]
>
> As to the Mechanism and Scenary, every thing, indeed, was uniform, and of a Piece, and the Scenes were managed very dexterously; which calls on me to take Notice, that at the *Hay-Market* the Undertakers forgetting to change their Side-Scenes, we were presented with a Prospect of the Ocean in the midst of a delightful Grove; and tho' the Gentlemen on the Stage had very much contributed to the Beauty of the Grove, by walking up and down between the Trees, I must own I was not a little astonished to see a well-dressed young Fellow in a full-bottomed Wigg, appear in the Midst of the Sea, and without any visible Concern taking Snuff.
>
> I shall only observe one thing further, in which both Dramas agree; which is, that by the Squeak of their Voices the Heroes of each are Eunuchs; and as the Wit in both Pieces are equal, I must prefer the Performance of Mr. *Powell*, because it is in our own Language.[44]

The references to live animals, the discipline of the pig (or piglet) and it dancing a minuet might, as Speaight believes, suggest a live animal; on the other hand, given the satirical nature of *The Spectator*, this could also easily have been a marionette pig.[45]

The success of Powell's satire on *Hydaspes* is perhaps also visible in regular theatres. In 1719 a new burlesque *Harlequin-Hydaspes: Or, The Greshamite. A Mock-Opera* was performed once at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre before it was banned, being a complex satire aimed at the physician, natural historian and antiquary, John Woodward, who was Professor of Physick at Gresham College.[46] The play was based on *Hydaspes*, following the story and plot closely and even including some of the arias from the original production, which, as shown earlier, had been published and were therefore easily accessible. Although in *Harlequin-Hydaspes*, Harlequin, who takes on the role of Hydaspes, wrestles a lion and not a pig, it is possible that the idea for a satirical version of the opera as a play was in some way inspired by Powell's puppet-show performances.

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44 *The Spectator*, 16 March 1711.

45 Speaight, *The History of the English Puppet Theatre*, p. 96.

46 *Harlequin-Hydaspes: Or, The Greshamite. A Mock-Opera* (London 1719). For the advertisements for the published play and the performance see *The Post-Boy*, 21–23 May 1719 and 23–26 May 1719; see also William J. Burling, *Summer Theatre in London, 1661–1820, and the rise of the Haymarket Theatre*, Madison, N.J. 2000, p. 64.

Hydaspes, and its association with commentary in *The Spectator* and Powell's puppet show, is just one example of how satire could be used as a device to ensure popularity with London readers and audiences. Many of Powell's other performances no doubt also ridiculed performances of other operas and plays, the details of which are unknown owing to a lack of surviving information, now often reduced to just the title of a performance. Perhaps, though *Harlequin-Hydaspes* might come close to what audiences may have experienced at Powell's theatre, and as the play text and sufficient music from the original opera survives, it would be possible to mount a production of this mock opera, which would no doubt be enlightening.