

LEONARDO VINCI'S DIDONE ABBANDONATA (1726):

AN EXERCISE IN RHETORIC

by

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We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

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### ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the discernment of rhetorical technique within the eighteenth-century opera seria. An oration and an opera seria are both carefully planned word strategies which are vocally performed before an audience with the aim both to entertain and to persuade. As the audience is led through a succession of events and emotional responses to these events, a climax is reached where the audience is suddenly aware of the message of the oration or drama, and the conclusion strongly reinforces this before the curtain drops. The audience is therefore objectively convinced as to the moral of the drama through the libretto and is similarly emotionally convinced through the use of music and gesture. This is the method of opera seria. The libretto, the music, and the acting all work towards the same rhetorical ideal of a moral lesson through persuasive presentation. It is truly an exercise in rhetoric from its smallest component to its overall structure.

Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782) wrote his first opera seria libretto in 1724 -- Didone abbandonata (set by Domenico Sarro) -- and from this point on, he became the century's chief librettist for opera seria. Anxious to continue the earlier reforms in operatic libretti, Metastasio required an ideal

model on which to base his reforms. Given his strong knowledge and ready skill in the art of oration, this thesis proposes that it is upon this model that he formulated his many opera seria libretti. Although the original 1724 production of Didone abbandonata was a great success, most eighteenth-century critics of opera maintained that the drama was best presented in the Rome production (1726) as set to music by Leonardo Vinci (1690-1730), and it is this setting which will be the focus of the thesis.

Chapter I examines and defines the art of rhetoric. Proof is provided to illustrate that both music and rhetoric share the same means, procedures, and goals, and as seen through the words of musicians and writers of rhetoric, it is shown that they themselves borrowed extensively from each other. In Chapter II, the libretto of Didone abbandonata is analyzed as a rhetorical exercise using the rhetorical framework discussed in the previous chapter as a guide. Chapter III examines the persuasive functions of the aria and the accompanied recitative for, although the libretto alone is a persuasive argument, it grows more powerful when underlined and punctuated with music as a direct appeal to the emotions of the audience. Finally, Chapter IV concludes with a discussion of the abuse of the aria by virtuoso singers and the unchanging opera seria format whose principles did not adapt to changing tastes of the audience. As a result, the opera seria remains a genre of the early eighteenth-century.

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1. MUSIC AND HISTORY

... dress had an effect which was...  
... which Naples had never before...  
... was hardly surpassed when the...  
... curious spectacle that had...  
... was the change in their...  
... that was instantly arrested...  
... and unbridled clamour...

To my parents, Donn and Norine Kirton,  
without whose enduring support this  
could never have been undertaken.

... with such vehemence, that even the...  
... not be heard. - But now every one...  
... and notorious arrangement of the...  
... sweetness of the voice, the...  
... elements, the texture of the...  
... Metastasio's poetry, was...  
... profound silence and...  
... Enneas was related the...  
... of the Siege of Troy, and...  
... eagerness that had...  
... representation....

... passage is found in the...  
... of the Abate Metastasio...  
... illustrates the powerful...  
... of musical drama...  
... (1782). The...  
... reacting is the...  
... (Naples, 1721), which...  
... except the small...  
... referring to the...  
... and it was Maria...  
... in the...  
... in...  
... directed to the...  
... Metastasio's dramatic...  
... the convinced...

## I. MUSIC AND RHETORIC

... this drama had an effect upon the audience in general, which Naples had never before experienced. The recitative was hardly begun, when the spectators formed a more curious spectacle than the actors themselves: so great was the change in their behaviour and mode of listening that was instantly produced. Violent noise and unbridled clamour, used to reign in every part of that theatre, and could never be subdued but with great difficulty, even when some capital singer had a favourite air to perform, and it was no sooner over, than the din was renewed with such vehemence, that even the orchestra could not be heard. But now, every one delighted by the new and decorous arrangement of the scenes, original beauty and sweetness of the verse, the force of the sentiments, the texture of the parts, and all the wonders of Metastasio's poetry, was forced, almost insensibly, into profound silence and attention. The companions of Dido while Eneas was relating the tragical events which happened at the Siege of Troy, could not have listened with more eagerness than the Neapolitan audience did at this representation....<sup>1</sup>

This lengthy passage is found in the Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Abate Metastasio by Charles Burney (1726-1824) and illustrates the powerful reaction of audiences to the new style of musical drama penned by the poet Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782). The work to which this specific audience was reacting is the two-act serenata Gli orti esperidi (Naples, 1721), which featured the prima donna La Romanina amongst the small cast of singers in the semi-dramatic offering to the Empress of Austria in honour of her birthday, and it was Maria Benti Bulgarelli (La Romanina) who played a key role in the creation of the work to be examined in this thesis, the opera seria Didone abbandonata. La Romanina was as affected as the Neapolitan audience by Metastasio's dramatic poetry, and she convinced him to leave

the legal profession and to create his first opera seria libretto, Didone abbandonata (Naples, 1724). The success of Didone abbandonata equalled or even exceeded that of the earlier cited Gli orti esperidi, as seen in Burney's use of Didone's main characters as a basis of comparison with the earlier serenata.

Why would the Neapolitan audience have responded so strongly to this new style of operatic libretto? In an examination of the schools of opera which preceded the time of Metastasio, we find a drastic shift in the balance of music with drama. Opera, as a musical form, had been created at the close of the Renaissance by the Florentine Camerata in an attempt to resurrect the ancient Greek tragedy. Poet-composers such as Giulio Caccini (1546-1618) and Jacopo Peri (1561-1633) presented a dramatic representation of Greek myth in poetry with an accompanying melody which imitated the pitch flow of natural speech. This was called stile recitativo, later called stile rappresentativo, and it was supported by a simple, improvised accompaniment of harpsichord and a variety of plucked and bowed string instruments. Choral refrains and sections of a more melodic recitative (as opposed to a more declamatory style) alleviated this highly speech-oriented style of opera.

Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) raised music to equal the importance of the text in his operas of the early seventeenth century. He used both the unfolding events of the plot and

recurring instrumental ritornellos to unify the drama. Greater dramatic effect was achieved through the exploration of a wider range of emotions. This was mainly a result of his use of a much larger orchestra which could provide contrasts in sound and relief from dramatic tension through the use of purely instrumental sections (sinfonias, ritornellos) and through the combination of particular instruments for colour and emotional appeal. Solo songs, duets, choruses, and dances allowed for greater variety to maintain the interest of the audience.

The centre of operatic writing shifted to Rome, then to Venice, and finally to Naples over the course of the seventeenth century. The sacred or pastoral plots of Roman opera placed less emphasis on the drama, which was now moved along through a rapidly declaimed recitative within a narrow range of tones, and with more emphasis placed on the musical presentation of two-part songs or arias. Some elements of comedy, special effects in scenery, and irrelevant subplots began to appear. The bel canto or elegant vocal style appeared with Venetian opera, placing greater emphasis on the aria melody than on the text, and the aria was clearly the most important element of the opera. A variety of vocal styles were rivaled by a variety of aria types. In contrast, the dramatic events of the plot were now even more rapidly declaimed within an even narrower range of tones with the accompaniment of an occasional chord on the harpsichord.

Confusing and improbable plots, frequent use of comic elements, of the supernatural and of magic, and extraordinary stage machinery for special effects were all present in the Venetian opera. This resulted from public demand, for Venice opened its first commercial opera house in 1637, and the paying audience (mainly aristocrats who regularly attended for social exposure as well as musical enjoyment) required a variety of elements to keep their attention. With the absence of a strong plot and interesting dramatic development through the events of the recitative, opera was now forced to rely on a disjunct presentation of plots and sub-plots, on a variety of aria types, and, greatly, on special effects.

Opera seria originated in reforms to the Venetian opera which began at the end of the seventeenth century in Italy as one feature of a general reform movement in literature. The tragic or heroic drama of the opera seria (dramma per musica) conformed to these new standards set by the Arcadian Society, which originally formed in Rome in 1690 and whose branch societies spread through the city states of Italy and abroad. The goals of the Society were to:

further scientific studies and reawaken good taste in literature and particularly in vernacular poetry throughout the major part of Italy.<sup>2</sup>

In opera, this meant the elimination, or at least substantial decrease, of seventeenth-century operatic spectacle, machinery, excessive emotional display, violence, and the complex and disjunct libretto scenario. There was a revival

of the ideals of ancient Greek tragedy which had originally created opera in the Renaissance. The audience was to be educated as to the true nature of drama as it conformed to the rules of the ancients, by which music and elaborate stage effects would be of secondary importance. The drama would provide a strong cohesive core of unity and direction for the other elements of the opera.

Apostolo Zeno (1668-1750) preceded Metastasio in applying the reforms to opera libretti for the creation of opera seria. Restraint and order are traits found in the simple moral dilemma within Zeno's historical plots, in the moderate use of machinery, in the decreased number of roles and their lack of complexity in characterization, in the simplicity and yet importance of the poetry, and, finally, in the more carefully crafted and dramatically strategic placement of emotional display in the drama. Such displays were allocated to arias at the end of certain scenes. It may be supposed that the prevalent view of opera seria as an "aria opera" held today was a consequence of this over-simplification of the libretto. All else in the opera appears subservient to the aria with its elaborate musical treatment and the most persuasively-worded text. However, the resurgence of the recitative as a dramatic element and the integral relationship of all parts of the opera seria created an operatic form which needed only a master of persuasive wording to elicit total audience approval.

Metastasio wrote his first opera seria libretto in 1724 -- Didone abbandonata (set by Domenico Sarro) -- and from this point on he became the century's chief librettist for opera seria. He would go on to create librettos for twenty-six three-act operas which would be set in his lifetime over eight hundred times by various composers. He was anxious to continue the reforms in operatic libretti begun by Zeno, and required an ideal model on which to base his reforms. He was consciously or unconsciously aware of an art which emphasized ideas, encouraged elegant word setting, and allowed for dramatic development and audience appeal. His was a model virtually unchanged since the time of ancient Greece and Rome (his era approved all that evolved from the Classic period). Metastasio had been schooled in the classics when studying to be a lawyer, and he could readily improvise lengthy poetry recitations at social gatherings. He had a strong knowledge and ready skill of the art of oration, and this is the model on which I believe he formulated his many opera seria libretti.

The object of this thesis is to show the similarity between a Metastasian opera seria libretto and the technique of rhetoric. Both are carefully worked out word strategies which are vocally performed in front of an audience with the aim both to entertain and to persuade the audience to empathise with the emotion of given moments in the drama. As the audience is led through a succession of events and

emotional responses to these events, a climax is reached at which the audience is suddenly aware of the message of the oration or drama, and the conclusion strongly reinforces this before the curtain drops. The reforms begun by Zeno maintain aspects of rhetorical style in that the reforms advocated restraint and order, lack of complexity in presentation, the importance of convincing yet pleasing word arrangement, the use of believable historical examples, and the strategic placement of emotional display (i.e., arias at the close of a scene). These conditions apply to both an opera seria format and to that of an oration.

Therefore, this thesis will attempt to prove that opera seria is indeed an exercise in rhetoric. In this chapter, the art of rhetoric will be defined. Following this, proof will be provided to illustrate that both music and rhetoric share the same means, procedures, and goals; as seen through both the words of musicians and writers of rhetoric, it will be obvious that they borrowed extensively from each other. The second chapter will examine the overall format of Didone abbandonata (Rome, 1726, set by Leonardo Vinci) as an actual oration, and the third chapter will discuss the specific elements (the aria, recitative, etc.) as tools of rhetoric.

The bulk of this thesis is concerned with the discernment of rhetorical technique within an opera seria, and it is therefore crucial that the reader understand the art of rhetoric. The writers of ancient Greece and Rome (for

example, Aristotle, Cicero, Quintillian) believed that an ideal life may be obtained through the understanding of truths. An example of one such truth is taken from Aristotle's Rhetorica (I.9):

... virtue must be noble, since it is both a good thing and also praiseworthy.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, one may have a key to the attainment of an ideal life if the attempt were made to be virtuous. However, it would hardly have been convincing to stand before an audience and state the above truth and then to have retired from the stage.

Rhetoric evolved from a need to present truth in convincing oral or written fashion. A system of argument was created by which a subject which conveyed truth might be presented. A position would be discussed with points chosen which would affirm and argue against the validity of the truth and through which the case for the truth would be made stronger and thus emerge as unquestionably genuine. By setting all elements of the argument in as persuasive an order as possible, the orator might yet further his presentation through the memorization of the oration and by supportive facial expression, gesture, and voice level contrasts. The orator could then quit the stage knowing that the audience was absorbed and moved by the successful presentation while at the same time being instructed as to the truth in the subject. For this was the purpose of rhetoric according to Cicero's dictate: to instruct (docere) by delighting (delectare) and moving (movere) the audience.<sup>4</sup>

Metastasian libretti were always lessons in morality--the virtue of duty over love, the virtue of courage over cowardliness, etc.. Metastasio hoped that through the observation of these lessons, one would admire these qualities in the hero and attempt to emulate such noble virtues. This is seen in a letter from Metastasio to Farinelli (Vienna, January 28, 1750) as Metastasio attempted to write his own eulogy:

... He [Metastasio] laboured during his whole life, at once to instruct and delight mankind....<sup>5</sup>

The goal of instructing while entertaining an audience was maintained by the majority of poets and playwrights throughout the Baroque period (consider, for instance, Sidney's Defense of Poesy, 1595).

As a poet of the Baroque, Metastasio also mirrored the battle of reason versus the heart and the superiority of objective rationality. In his letter of July 4, 1733, Metastasio wrote to La Romanina the following:

... man seems not to act by reason, but mechanical impulse; adapting reason to his feelings, and not his feelings to reason. If this were not the case, all those who think well, would act well.... Who ever examined nature and virtue better than Aristotle?<sup>6</sup>

And it is in Aristotle's Rhetorica (III.13-17) that one finds Metastasio's reason for adapting the opera seria libretto to the pattern of a rhetorical oration. There are three situations for which one created a rhetorical oration. One of these is that situation where a lesson in morality is put before the public. The value of virtuous conduct was to be

successfully portrayed with many examples in the third person in rhetorical, argumentative style and successfully accepted by the spectator as a truth. This truth would then be used by the audience members to better their own lives. This was called an epideictic situation for ceremonial oration, and it was, according to Aristotle, the most literary of the three situations requiring oratory.<sup>7</sup> Hence, it was chosen by the poet Metastasio for his poetic orations in operatic libretti.

I have attempted to summarize the formal outline of the rhetorical process, which altered little through the centuries leading into the Baroque period.<sup>8</sup> As the study of rhetoric is not as dominant in education today as it was before and during the time of Metastasio, some confusion may exist regarding the terms "rhetoric" versus "oratory". Rhetoric is the study of speaking with strength and elegance, while oratory is the art of speaking to an audience. The two combine to become the persuasive setting of an oration addressed to the public. As seen in my summary, they are inseparable, for one may not successfully exist without the other.

**Table 1: The System of Rhetoric**

- I. Inventio
1. Decide on the truth to be conveyed.
  2. List all topics which will prove this truth and chose one to explore.
  3. Know in which of three situations the oration will appear: a legal (forensic), a political (deliberative), or a rhetorically entertaining (epideictic) situation.
  4. Consider the audience to which the oration is addressed.
- II. Dispositio
- A. Exordium - prepares the audience by training attention and creating a receptive mood.
  - B. Narratio
    1. Expositio - gives circumstances which lead up to or prepare the subject.
    2. Propositio - a statement of subject of the oration.
    3. Divisio - an outline of the main points to be discussed.
  - C. Confirmatio - an affirmative proof; this occasionally joins with the following confutatio in some rhetorical schemes.
  - D. Confutatio - a refutation or anticipation of objections.
  - E. Peroratio - recapitulation or strong final appeal for the subject.
- III. Elocutio  
(Style)
- This concerns the choice and placement of persuasive wording within each sentence (including word order, rhythm of syllables within each phrase, length and cohesion of sentences).
- IV. Memoria  
(Memorization)
- To appear to speak spontaneous truths without the distraction of papers, the oration should be memorized.
- V. Pronunciatio  
(Performance)
- This involves the use of voice tones (high, low), facial expression, and gesture to underline certain words or sentiments throughout the oration.

The preceding summary of the rhetorical process will become more clearly understood by studying its application in the following example. The example is taken from William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar (c. 1599) where Mark Antony, through the pen of Shakespeare, applied the rhetorical formula to his funeral oration to the Plebeians over the body of Julius Caesar. Yet his oration is not a tribute but a carefully planned argument to swing his audience from the complacent acceptance of Brutus' assassination of Caesar towards a total condemnation by the Plebeians of this act. The rhetorical formula provided him with an overall guide for the placement of each step of his argument. Also, the persuasive wording of rhetorical style allowed him to sway the mood of his audience in successive stages from silent doubt to open anger and then to violent condemnation. The excerpt to be studied is from Act Three, scene two, lines 81-263.<sup>9</sup> (The spacing within the text is for my own purposes of analysis.)

### Antony's Oration<sup>10</sup>

Exordium (The mood is set in this introduction by a very understated persuasiveness, for to begin exalting Caesar would be an act of disobedience to Brutus):

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears; line 81  
 I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him;  
 The evil that men do lives after them,  
 The good is oft interred with their bones;  
 So let it be with Caesar.... line 85

Narratio (This consists of an expositio detailing the circumstances surrounding the propositio or reason why Antony will be speaking. Doubt is introduced into the minds of the audience with the words "If it were so", as well as with the repetition "honourable man" and "honourable men"):

... The noble Brutus 85  
 Hath told you Caesar was ambitious;  
 If it were so, it was a grievous fault,  
 And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.  
 Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest --  
 For Brutus is an honourable man, 90  
 So are they all, honourable men:  
 Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.

Confirmatio and Confutatio (The audience is given three reasons -- lines 96-98, 99-102, 103-109 -- why Caesar was not ambitious, but Antony underlines his argument by contrasting Brutus' honour to these facts so that the audience is even less certain that Caesar should have been killed):

He was my friend, faithful and just to me; 93  
 But Brutus says he was ambitious,  
 And Brutus is an honourable man.  
 He hath brought many captives home to Rome,  
 Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill.  
 Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?  
 When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept;  
 Ambition should be made of sterner stuff, 100  
 Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,  
 And Brutus is an honourable man.  
 You all did see that on the Lupercal  
 I thrice presented him a kingly crown,  
 Which he did thrice refuse. Was this ambition? 105  
 Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,  
 And, he is an honourable man.

I speak not to disapprove what Brutus spoke,  
But here I am to speak what I do know.

Repeat of Exordium (This acts as an introduction in that it calls the audience to attention, addressing itself directly to the audience which is the function of the exordium, to do their duty and think rationally as to why Caesar may have been killed):

You all did love him once, not without cause, 110  
What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?  
O Judgement! thou art fled to brutish beasts,  
And men have lost their reason.... Bear with me,  
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,  
And I must pause, till it comes back to me. 115

Peroratio (Part One of three parts. Having presented his reasons why Caesar was not ambitious, Antony now concludes with his strongest appeal to the audience. He first piques their curiosity by mentioning Caesar's will and by postponing the reading of its contents for fear of Caesar's assassins. Their greed makes his audience voice their growing doubts aloud by openly berating Brutus and his men):

But yesterday the word of Caesar might 126  
Have stood against the world; now lies he there,  
And none so poor to do him reverence.  
O masters, if I were disposed to stir  
Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage,  
I should do Brutus wrong, and Caesar wrong,  
Who, you all know, are honourable men.  
I will not do them wrong; I rather choose  
To wrong the dead, to wrong myself and you,  
Than I will wrong such honourable men. 135  
But here's a parchment with the seal of Caesar;  
I found it in his closet, 'tis his will.  
Let but the commons hear this testament --  
Which, pardon me, I do not mean to read --  
And they would go and kiss dead Caesar's wounds,  
And dip their napkins in his sacred blood,  
Yea, beg a hair of him for memory,  
And, dying, mention it with their wills,  
Bequeathing it as a rich legacy  
Unto their issue....  
Have patience, gentle friends, I must not 148  
read it.

It is not meet you know how Caesar loved you;  
 You are not wood, you are not stones, but men;  
 And being men, hearing the will of Caesar,  
 It will inflame you, it will make you mad.  
 'Tis good you know not that you are his heirs,  
 For if you should, O what would come of it?  
 Will you be patient? Will you stay awhile?  
 I have o'ershot myself to tell you of it:  
 I fear I wrong the honourable men  
 Whose daggers have stabb'd Caesar; I do fear it. 160  
 You will compel me then to read the will? 165  
 Then make a ring about the corpse of Caesar,  
 And let me show you him that made the will.  
 Shall I descend? And will you give me leave?

Peroratio (Part Two of three parts. The audience is further unsettled by Antony's appeal to pity for Caesar and by mounting greedy impatience to hear the will. There is much use of "sight" and "sound" figures in the descriptions of Caesar's death which gives a strong impression to the audience and heightens their emotional response--in this case, pity for Caesar's wrongful death):

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now. 177  
 You all do know this mantle; I remember  
 The first time every Caesar put it on:  
 'Twas on a summer's evening, in his tent,  
 That day he overcame the Nervii.  
 Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through;  
 See what a rent the envious Casca made;  
 Through this, the well-beloved Brutus stabbed,  
 And as he plucked his cursed steel away,  
 Mark how the blood of Caesar followed it,  
 As rushing out of doors, to be resolv'd  
 If Brutus so unkindly knocked, or no;  
 For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel. 190  
 Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him.  
 This was the most unkindest cut of all.  
 For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,  
 Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,  
 Quite vanquish'd him; then burst his mighty heart,  
 And, in his mantle muffling up his face,  
 Even at the base of Pompey's statue,  
 (Which all the while ran blood), great Caesar fell.  
 O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!  
 Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,  
 Whilst bloody treason flourished over us.  
 O, now you weep, and I perceive you feel  
 The dint of pity; these are gracious drops.

Kind souls, what weep you when you but behold  
 Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look here! 205  
 Here is himself, marr'd, as you see with traitors.

Peroratio (Part Three of three parts. Although the following is similar to the Exordium in that it addresses the audience directly and is similar in wording to his introduction, it also acts as a symmetrical close to his oration. But his oration has brought the audience to such emotional turmoil that they react even more violently (by being deceived by Brutus) to Antony's sudden passivity -- a rhetorical technique to strengthen an argument through contrast. Therefore, the oration concludes with Antony's original objective for preparing his speech, that is righteous anger at the assassination):

Good friends, sweet friends, let me not stir 218  
 you up

To such a sudden flood of mutiny.  
 They that have done this deed are honourable.  
 What private griefs they have, alas, I know not,  
 That made them do it; they are wise and honourable,  
 And will, no doubt, with reasons answer you.  
 I come not, friends, to steal away your hearts,  
 I am no orator, as Brutus is;  
 But, as you know me all, a plain blunt man,  
 That love my friend, and that they know full well,  
 That gave me public leave to speak of him.  
 For I have neither writ, nor words, now worth,  
 Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech,  
 To stir men's blood. I only speak right now;  
 I tell you that which you yourselves do know,  
 Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor, poor dumb  
 mouths,

And bid them speak for me. But were I Brutus, 235  
 And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony  
 Would ruffle up your spirits, and put a tongue  
 In every wound of Caesar, that should move  
 The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny....  
 Moreover, he hath left you all his walks,  
 His private arbors, and new-planted orchards,  
 On this side Tiber; he had left them you,  
 And to your heirs forever; common pleasures,  
 To walk abroad and recreate yourselves.  
 Here was a Caesar! When comes such another?

In order to examine the contents of this example, I have presented the Dispositio first, although in the rhetorical framework, it is preceded by the Inventio, or purpose for creating the oration. In the following discussion of the Inventio, the creative considerations which might have preceded the actual writing of Antony's oration are listed in point form.

1. The truth to be conveyed within the course of this oration could be a discussion of a vice which offends the good of society.

2. Of all the vices, that of ambition would work here, although it is Shakespeare's plan to show that it is the ruthless ambition of the slayer and not the slain which harms society.

3. This oration is an eulogy with ulterior motives. Without such motives, the eulogy falls under the rhetorical situation of the epideictic or ceremonial oration, and there is much reference to the third person (Caesar) for examples of proper moral conduct versus the improper rashness of Brutus, ironically called "an honourable man".

4. The audience to which Antony's oration would appeal consists of complacent Plebeians who have accepted Brutus' claims that Caesar was ambitious and a threat to society. Antony knows he must appeal to greed and to their sense of betrayal at being told a lie (in order to cover a ruthless act) for which they had almost fallen.

## Elocutio

The purpose of the elocutio is to present each section of the dispositio as persuasively as possible. Antony's wording displays an overall clarity, and it leans more towards simplicity than artful elegance. The use of the recurring phrase "for he is an honourable man" appears at first as a simple statement of fact, yet by the end of the oration, it is clearly seen as a sarcastic jibe against Brutus and his followers which incites the audience to fury at their betrayal by this "honourable man". Antony uses much imagery and personification of objects (eg., "And as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,/Mark how the blood of Caesar followed it") to allow the audience to recreate the actual murder of Caesar. As for rhetorical figures of thought and of speech, note his constant use of the Interrogatio. It is a figure of thought, for it embodies an entire statement or sentence, using a question for dramatic emphasis. Another figure of thought found within the example is that of the Exclamatio or exclamatory sentence for dramatic effect. A figure of speech, the paronomasia appears in the third part of the Peroratio. This figure repeats sentence fragments with slight alterations or additions for emphasis, as seen in "... I have neither writ, nor words, nor worth, Action, nor utterance...." I have included further discussion of persuasive elements in brackets before each section of the oration on pages 13-16.

### Memoratio

The rhetorical process was so well known and frequently utilized in both Antony's and Shakespeare's eras that the eulogy could have been created on the spot, eliminating any need for memorization. Otherwise, it would most certainly have been committed to memory to avoid any distraction from the discourse by referring to written notes.

### Pronunciatio

The following description is based on seventeenth and eighteenth-century directions for actors and orators.<sup>11</sup> These instructions would have evolved from earlier periods. In the opening of the oration, one would begin the exordium with the left arm already at one's side and the right crossed over the chest, for the right hand represented good while the left represented evil. The voice level would begin in the low, steady tones, with gestures kept to a minimum. There would be an increase in hand movement for the narratio as well as a rise in the volume of the voice. The confirmatio and the confutatio would both present agitated gestures which always preceded the spoken word. In our example, Antony may suddenly pause in movement just before beginning the peroratio as his words indicate that he is overcome. In actuality, he is preparing for his strong close. His body would now convey the force of his emotion as he concludes his argument with first vivid imagery of the murder and sudden emotional restraint in an attempt to portray a passive acceptance of this violent act.

Now, what if one were to magnify Antony's oration so that various characters act out the ideas which he presented in each section of his oration? (One would see Brutus murder the "ambitious" Caesar, etc.). A series of scenes could be created which would still conform to the framework of rhetoric. If set to music, the drama of each scene could be placed in the recitative and an aria could conclude every major dramatic development so that there would be an emotional appeal to the audience not just to understand the conflict of the drama but also to feel this same conflict. By the close of the musical drama, the audience would have objectively drawn the proper conclusion as to the moral of the drama, and they would have been emotionally convinced as well by the use of music and gesture. This was the method of opera seria. It originated from a subject containing an abstract ideal such as the virtue of choosing duty over love. But as the drama unfolds and the audience lives the events in the conflict between duty and love, the moral of the opera is no longer an abstract idea but a truth gained through vicarious experience and may thus be more readily adapted to their lifestyle. The opera seria drama of Metastasio utilized the carefully-planned strategies of persuasive argument to teach a moral lesson to its audience.

The persuasive success of any argument is based upon a knowledge of the emotional states of a human being and upon the skill of the orator or actor in recreating these emotional

states to provoke a similar response from the audience. This concept, known as Affektenlehre in the Baroque period, appeared far earlier in the rhetorical discussions of Aristotle, Quintilian, and other Classical writers. They claimed that passions could be produced by exactly copying the outward human signs of an emotion which mirror the identical inner emotion.<sup>12</sup> The more an audience can see and hear the portrayal of a particular passion, the more they are thrown into the corresponding feelings of that passion. An orator may use one's own sentence structure, one's own imagery, one's own voice volume, and one's own visual display (facial expression and gesture) visually and audibly to describe the outward manifestation of a passion recognized and common to all human beings. Yet, music could provide an even greater appeal to one's emotions, according to these same Classical rhetoricians.

Plato's Republic gave a fourfold description of the power of music: (a) musical harmonies and rhythms mirror the harmony of the spheres as well as the harmony between man's body and soul; (b) music has the power to affect strongly his emotional state and morality; (c) music must therefore be governed under the laws of the republic; (d) there must be a balance of harmony, rhythm, words, and dance while the text predominates.<sup>13</sup>

Aristotle also endorsed the actual methodology of inducing the passions through music:

... everyone when listening to imitations [of a passion] is thrown into a corresponding state of feeling.... From these considerations therefore it is plain that music has the power of producing a certain effect on the moral character of the soul.<sup>14</sup>

Quintilian's Institutio oratoria (Book one, Chapter 10) stresses that understanding of music was "necessary knowledge" for the orator because grammar and music were once united.<sup>15</sup> Music consisted of one kind of measure found in the sounds of the voice and another kind of measure found in the motions of the body. Thus, in music as in oratory, the

... raising, lowering, or other inflections of the voice tends to move the feelings of the hearers.<sup>16</sup>

Even purely instrumental music is good

... for we see that minds are affected in different ways even by musical instruments, though no words can be uttered by them....<sup>17</sup>

Therefore,

... the knowledge of the principles of the art [of music] ... is of the highest efficacy in eliciting and allaying the passions....<sup>18</sup>

In Book six, chapter 2 of his treatise, Quintilian leaves the realm of music but catalogues the passions and also presents what was to become the Baroque methodology of inducing such passions:

... The prime essential for stirring the emotions of others is, in my opinion, first to feel these emotions oneself....<sup>19</sup>

In order to generate these emotions in oneself, since emotion is not under one's own power, one must imagine the events which created this passion with:

... such vividness that they seem actually to be before our very eyes... not so much to narrate as to exhibit the actual scene.<sup>20</sup>

This is found in the "sight" and "sound" imagery of the arts including music. In the Baroque period, musicians and music theorists responded to the attempts of these early authors' uniting of music with rhetoric by creating their own musical techniques based on the rhetorical art.

Joachim Burmeister (1564-1629) borrowed Classical rhetorical figures and applied them to music in his Hypomnematum musicae (1599), in Musica autoschediastike (1601), and in the Musica poetica (1606). In his discussion of Lassus' skill in setting the song "Dues qui sedes", Burmeister promotes music as a persuasive rhetorical vehicle:

... Not Demosthenes, not Cicero by the art of persuading, deflecting, moving and orating, would have better placed the burden of trouble and lamentation before the eyes, moved the ears, implanted these in the heart than Orlandus did....<sup>21</sup>

Note the emphasis on moving the passions as well as the mention of the visual and oral elements.

As the first music theorist to apply rhetoric to musical composition, Burmeister attains the culmination of his theories uniting rhetoric with music in Musica poetica (1606). In a rhetorical analysis of another work by Lassus, "In me transierunt," Burmeister divided the work into its passions which he called both "affections" and "periods". There are three formal sections in "In me transierunt" which serve as a condensation of the five parts of speech in the dispositio

of our earlier rhetorical framework. Burmeister's exordium and his finis (the peroratio or conclusio) relate to Table 1; however, Burmeister includes the narratio, divisio, confirmatio, and confutatio under the general middle section heading of corpus carminis. (He mentions the similarity of the confirmatio to his middle section.)<sup>22</sup> Despite the discrepancy, he compares his system with an oration.<sup>23</sup> His work is also especially important in the cataloguing of the first musical-rhetorical figures, which will be defined later in this chapter.

Johann David Heinichen (1683-1729) is important to the analysis of aria in opera seria (see Chapter III), for Heinichen described the proper setting of aria texts and the means of finding the suitable passion in the Foreword to his Generalbass in der Komposition (1728). Heinichen believed that a skilled composer could move the passions of his audience with his own text-related musical depiction of a passion.<sup>24</sup> When setting a text for an affective statement, particularly a less than inspiring text, he proposed a method used in seventeenth-century German rhetorical manuals, the loci topici or categories of topics. One must look at the opening words of the text and study "the purpose of the words, including the related circumstances of a person, time, place, etc. ...."<sup>25</sup> His methodology in finding suitable musical ideas for sample aria texts stressed the study of the preceding recitative (the rhetorical antecedentia), the first section

of the da capo text (the locus concomitantia), or the second section of the da capo aria text or its following recitative (the rhetorical consequentia textus).<sup>26</sup> Once the composer had been given the idea for the passion to be expressed, certain words could be musically treated while a more general depiction of the passion would be expressed in the bass line.

Heinichen covered a variety of compositional dilemmas that could occur, such as an ambiguous opening text of an aria without a preceding recitative (in which case one could examine the second part of the aria text),<sup>27</sup> or the problem of too many possibilities within the text. Indeed, Heinichen's Generalbass is a valuable study of rhetoric in music, particularly in view of its discussion of opera.

Johann Mattheson (1681-1764) also wrote much on thorough-bass technique, as in his Grosse General-Bass Schule (1731) in which he promoted the use of loci topici as an aid to musical composition.<sup>28</sup> Keyboard players were expected to realize the affections or passions in the unwritten upper voices. He was a composer of sacred and secular music, including opera, and also an author and editor of one of the earliest German weeklies which dealt with issues of morality and virtue, Der Vernünfftler (published in Hamburg, 1713-14).<sup>29</sup> His musical treatises represent the height and the beginning of the decline of the truly rational application of Affektenlehre. Even as he wrote, the shift had begun towards a more subjective study of the passions of man and away from

the use of rhetorical-musical figures. In his Vollkommene Capellmeister (1739), Mattheson remarks upon the decrease in the use of figures and on their eventual disappearance from use.<sup>30</sup> His work contains the last major discussion of figures as objective, affective devices, for in the second half of the eighteenth century the use of figures was considered too mechanical and objective for the treatment of human emotional states. After 1750, only figures of embellishment were still commonly used.

The basic premise behind the treatises of Mattheson is expressed as follows:

... Alles, was ohne löbliche Affekten geschiehet,  
heisst nichts, thut nichts, gelt nichts....<sup>31</sup>

He believed that the passions should be moved through music by a type of melody which would unconsciously evoke a similar passion in the listener. He felt that the composer should experience the passion he is attempting to express in his music, while the performer must study and know the desired passion in order to portray it to the audience for the desired response. He foresaw the didactic purpose in music as a moral lesson recognizing, as well, its particular use in stirring the passion of devotion for the praise of God.

In the cataloguing of the emotional states of man, Mattheson described each emotion and the proper method to express each. For instance, joy, which broadens the life spirit, is depicted with wide or enlarged intervals. Sorrow,

the shrinking of the spirit through grief, requires narrow or small intervals. Many of the passions are inter-related so that the borrowing of the musical depiction of a related passion could occur. Or a passion may vary in degrees of intensity so that characteristic tempo expressions could be combined with melodic depiction to describe a stronger form of the passion. Mattheson maintained that even the stronger, more disagreeable passions could be depicted as well as the more gentle, pleasant passions.

In his earlier treatise Das neu-eröffnete Orchester (1713), Mattheson assigned various keys to the passions. In the minor keys, A minor lamented but could also be quiet and honourable; G minor mixed earnest and gay lovingness so that sorrow could appear with tempered happiness. D minor was gentle, pleasant, and contented, while E minor brooded in grief and sorrow. As for major keys, B major was a magnificent yet modest key and could portray the splendid or the retiring; G major was brilliant and gay, while C major was martial and sprightly. A major was for sobbing and sorrowful passions but was an excellent vehicle for the violin (for practical reasons).<sup>32</sup>

This leads into a discussion of the affective qualities of instruments. Mattheson describes the lute as being flattering and angelic, the viol d'amour and viol da gamba as sounding tender and languishing, the transverse flute as being proud and sweet, the bassoon as suggesting only pride, the

French horn as representing pomposity, the trombone as reflecting pride and ostentation, and the drum as portraying the heroic.<sup>33</sup>

In his Vollkommene Capellmeister, Mattheson stresses the importance of the text with the passion in the text underlined by the melody. In ranking them in the order of their importance, the text was foremost, the melody came second, and the other elements of music followed. The choice of underlying harmonic intervals, the tempo, and the rhythm were subordinate to the melody. The chief requirements of the text were primarily the expression of the passion in musical terms. The harmony must agree with this expression whether it be conveyed by a single bass line or several voices.

In order to stress particular words in the text which best describe the predominant mood or passion, Mattheson suggests the use of certain underlying harmonies or inversions of these, and sudden changes of key and metre. These suggestions would provide additional support to the use of melodic intervals in underlining the affective words of the text. Ornaments such as the appoggiatura<sup>34</sup> and the Übersschlag (moving a step above the previous note, then leaping down a fourth or more in the depiction of compassion or humility)<sup>35</sup> are also capable of affective connotation.

Thus far, my discussion of Mattheson touches upon features of both Affektenlehre and general rhetorical principles. However, Mattheson also directly applies rhetoric

to music. He outlined four major features of a musical text which were to be treated rhetorically. The first feature is the necessary emphasis of tone for word stress.<sup>36</sup> As previously mentioned, certain words in a melodic phrase or in the first line of a poetic text receive particular treatment because of the strength or key role of their persuasive quality. Such a word could receive a longer note value, or, in a melody of stepwise motion, it might be placed after a sudden leap, or a rest could be placed just before the word is sung. The key words may appear at the climax and semi-climaxes of the phrase. The use of figures, to be discussed shortly, do much to aid word stress.

The second element, the accentuation of word syllables, receives little discussion by Mattheson, although he states that it is impossible and unnecessary to depict the stress of each strong syllable in each word. He reiterates the need to stress the important words of the text.<sup>37</sup>

The articulation of the aria text receives lengthy discussion in the musical depiction of a sentence's structure and punctuation. While a grammatical sentence may be considered a complete statement, only a musical paragraph using two or more text sentences is considered complete.<sup>38</sup> However, at the end of the statement of a complete period, there must be a full cadence in the tonic key with the root of the chord in the soprano. An incomplete period or musical sentence ends on the dominant or with a half-cadence, with

the third or fifth of the chord in the soprano. Another type of punctuation is the musical exclamation as a joyful outcry (the passion of joy requires wide intervals and fast-moving tones), as a strong wish (the passion of tenderness requires large and small dissonant intervals), or as an outcry of extreme despair (using running intervals in a confusing mixture of major and minor groupings). Questions are to be depicted with ascending melodic lines. Even parentheses could be musically treated by stating the words within the parentheses at a lower interval of a fourth or more.

The fourth element of text and musical depiction is that of word or phrase repetition. The affect could be emphasized by the repetition in exact form, or the second presentation could heighten the affect by being different than expected.<sup>39</sup> Mattheson emphasizes that, as in rhetoric, one must keep the overall argument in mind rather than get carried away with the singular elements.

Mattheson also discusses fifteen loci topici from oratory and makes them musical topics for invention.<sup>40</sup> But it is here that Mattheson repeats Heinichen's application (summarized above) of the parts of the rhetorical formula to the aria. He insists that the composer approach the music the way an orator approaches his oration: through the use of the exordium, narratio, etc.<sup>41</sup> In the exordium, the melody is introduced. It prepares the listener and arouses his attention and takes the form of a prelude or an opening

ritornello. The narratio is a report or story suggesting the nature of the intended delivery of the passion and occurs when the voice enters and presents the first statement or subject. The propositio, expressing the purpose of the musical speech, may be simple and lightly ornamented. It follows the first statement of the melody, presenting the subject before the voice resumes. The confirmatio reinforces the propositio by repeating the melody in variations. The confutatio resolves into anticipated objections to the propositio and could be musically expressed by the use of ties or contrasting passages in the A section of a da capo aria or with the entire B section. The peroratio concludes Mattheson's "Klang-Rede"<sup>42</sup> and, as the final opportunity to persuade the listener, it must be especially moving. It may be found in the closing ritornello before the return to the A section or it may be the repetition of the A section, serving as both peroratio and exordium. Finally, Mattheson suggests that, like orators, musicians should compose their works with the strongest arguments at the end and at the beginning, and place the weakest argument in the centre of the composition.<sup>43</sup>

Both rhetoric and music utilized textual images which were identified as specific types of figures. In rhetoric, there were two types of figures. One type, based on fragments or on the specific grammatical design of vowels and consonants, was known as Figurae verborum, Wort figuren, or figures of speech. Words were repeated, contrasted, changed

in position, or combined by the orator for emphasis of meaning or for "sight" and "sound" value:

Anaphora :       The Lord sitteth above the water floods.  
                   The Lord remaineth a King forever. The  
                   Lord shall give strength unto His People.  
                   The Lord shall give His People the  
                   blessing of peace.<sup>44</sup>

The other type of figure could be based on an entire sentence, as a whole, using an exclamation, a question, or a breaking off in speech -- all for persuasive expression. An example of this Figurae sententiarum, Figuren in Spruchen (or figure of thought) follows:

Exclamatio :    O Sun! O you heavens, deserts! O virtue!  
                   O imperfect proportion!<sup>45</sup>

In music, figures could appear in any context of the music, in both vocal and instrumental music, in all, some, or in none of the vocal lines of a composition but rather in the harmonization of instrumentation, in tempo and/or in rhythms, and generally appealed to the elements of sight and sound. For example, a large choir might be split to present contrasting ideas. Moreover, texts of Biblical Law (commandments or dogma) could be set in equally rigid musical forms such as in a fugue or canon. And there is a similarity between many of the figures, thus stressing the importance of understanding the particular needs of the text in order to determine the use of the figure.

Musical figures evolved from being decorative to becoming functional as an accepted definition of Figurenlehre (or the practice of using musical-rhetorical figures) was established.

It separated the ornamental, contrapuntal, dissonant type, and classified those figures as Manieren or ornamental embellishments. The other existing type, the grammatical or symbolic type, became the accepted figural model, and its purpose was to transmit the text in such a way as to move, through the elements of sight and sound, the sought-after passion.

Within the course of this chapter, I have shown why Metastasio would be drawn towards the art of rhetoric as a framework on which to build the opera seria drama. The musical genre provided a wealth of persuasive means unavailable in a simple oration. Rather than relate a scheme of ideas in a persuasive ordering, the drama's ideas express themselves from the mouths of the characters. Rather than assuming that the audience had been moved into feeling a certain emotion, the opera seria confirmed this with the use of an aria that would ensure this mood. Opera seria magnified the orator's persuasive tonal delivery twofold with melodic and instrumental colour. It was much the same case with the visual impact of gesture and the attempt to describe scenes through textual depiction. The opera seria's characters used these same gestures but had the resources of costume and stage scenery/machinery to intensify the impression. Yet Metastasio, while at once realizing the richer resources of an oration set as an opera seria, did not stray from the basic premise for creating the simplest oration. A moral truth was

to be carefully planned and persuasively delivered to convince an audience that it was of value to their own lives. The next chapter will examine his opera seria Didone abbandonata as an exercise in rhetoric.

## NOTES

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## II. METASTASIO'S LIBRETTO: AN ORATION

... Every scene produced one continuous applause. But who can describe the rapture of the pit, when the queen of Carthage disdainfully rising from the throne, represses the indolent pretensions of the king of Mauritania, with the dignity of an independent princess, by the spirited air, *Son Regina*, etc.. [Act I, scene 5] The noise seemed to shake the theatre to its foundation. I was not there myself... but I heard the rumour in my cell, so full was all of Rome with the fame of this production.<sup>1</sup>

Metastasio's *Didone abbandonata*, set by Leonardo Vinci (1690-1730), was performed in the Teatro Aliberti o delle Dame in Rome on January 14, 1726. Although the original 1724 production of this same drama, as set by Domenico Sarro, had also been a great success, most eighteenth-century critics on opera maintained that Metastasio's drama was best presented as revised for this Rome production and set to music by Vinci.

Vinci's compositional skills met Italian music critic Francesco Algarotti's (1712-1764) conditions that a composer of opera seria

... will not think it beneath him to receive, from the poet's mouth, the purport of his meaning and intention... and, by this proceeding, [will] keep up such a dependence and friendly intercourse as subsisted between Lully and Quinault, Vinci and Metastasio....<sup>2</sup>

Metastasio also fell within the favour of Algarotti's opera reform tenets, for he was a poet who

... exerted all his judgement and taste in choosing the subject of his drama... to delight the eyes and the ears... and to affect the hearts of an audience, without the risk of sinning against reason or common sense. [A poet must also]... make choice of an event that has happened, either in very remote times, or in countries very distant... at the same time, [the subject must]... be extremely simple and

not unknown, two desirable requisites.... The two operas of Didone and Achille in Sciro, written by the celebrated Metastasio, comes very close to the mark proposed here.<sup>3</sup>

It is significant to note that Algarotti could have been speaking of the poet of an oration or of an opera seria plot, as both sought to delight the eyes and ears and to persuade within the realm of reason.

Thus, I have chosen to examine Vinci's setting of Metastasio's Didone abbandonata (1726) because this particular work represents an early model of a Metastasian libretto which expresses strongly the poet's reforms and goals for opera, as well as his style, and demonstrates the application of rhetoric. Many contemporary sources cited Metastasio's text for Didone as an example of an ideal opera seria libretto, and Vinci's setting was clearly very popular.

In this chapter Metastasio's Didone abbandonata will be analysed as a rhetorical exercise, and the rhetorical framework discussed in Chapter I will serve as a guide. The possible arguments in the Inventio will show why the opera evolved as it did, and the finished product will reveal its basis in rhetoric. The following is, then, an analysis of the early opera seria as an exercise in rhetoric.

However, before moving to an analysis of the drama in terms of the parts of an oration, it is useful to review the general plot of Didone abbandonata and the character embodiment of a particular virtue or vice.

Didone, the Queen of Carthage, has fallen in love with a Trojan warrior, Aeneas, who was shipwrecked on the shores of her country while en route to Italy to found the new Troy. He is now well enough to leave her and resume his duty. Jarba, the King of the Moors, wishes to marry her and presents this request while disguised as an ambassador. Her sister, Selene, who secretly loves Aeneas, acts as a messenger between Didone and Aeneas. Jarba is determined to have Didone's love, and when his confidant Araspe refuses to murder Aeneas, Jarba attempts the task himself but is prevented by Araspe. Araspe is troubled by Jarba's lack of morality and provides contrast to Osmido, Didone's confidant, who offers his loyalty to Jarba. Didone declares love to Aeneas, Araspe to Selene, and Selene to Aeneas, but all are kindly rejected. Didone tries to convince Aeneas to ignore his duty and to remain with her by manipulating him into watching her accept Jarba's proposal. This simply precipitates Aeneas into making his choice between love and duty. He rescues Osmido from the anger of Jarba, turns down Selene's love, and defeats Jarba in a quick battle before leaving the shores. Jarba, to seek revenge against both Didone and Aeneas, attacks and burns Carthage. All characters flee with the exception of Didone, who laments her lost love and subsequently flings herself onto a burning pyre.

Before discussing each of the characters, their two-dimensional quality and the necessity for this within a Metastasian dramatic oration (or libretto) must be pointed

out. Metastasio's character types are not complex, for he felt that his drama required clearly-defined character traits. One may perhaps view them as embodying single virtues, but his simplified approach allows the audience to perceive clearly the moral conflicts of both major and minor characters which could occur between these virtues or vices within the course of the drama. These conflicts occur by virtue of the juxtaposition of the characters in groups of twos and threes as they speak or react in terms of the traits of their representative virtue/vice. A recitation of events that had happened or would occur would also be coloured by the nature of their virtue type.

Just as the characters do not represent believable human beings with a complexity of emotions, so also does the cast of performers in the opera seria further displace them from the realm of everyday existence. Castrati, who possessed strong voices, were the major performers of opera seria, and they played both stylised heroes and heroines; thus, high voices predominated, for low voices represented members of the masses, and the opera seria genre was aimed at the nobility and aristocracy. Further, in the 1726 production in Rome, women were prohibited from performing on the stage. Therefore, the cast was composed of male sopranos (Didone, Selene, Araspe), male altos (Jarba, Osmido), and one tenor (Aeneas).

Didone represents love, but it does not become obsessive until she is told of Aeneas' sense of obligation to depart and her attempt to keep him from his duty. As she is a royal personage of noble lineage, she was obviously once gentle, virtuous, and honourable. However, she comes to personify obsessive love as she refuses to acknowledge his sense of duty. Her choice leads to her demise.

Aeneas is truly honourable, for only once does he dismiss his duty, and that action is retracted in almost the same breath. He never allows himself the vice of revenge or fury though Jarba twice attempts to kill him. He feels great pity for Selene's anguish (at first believing it to be pain for her sister's unhappiness, later knowing that it was her love for him). He rescues Osmida despite the latter's treachery to Didone. But this paragon of virtue also displays human frailty with his pitying confusion at Didone's constant accusations of treachery for pretending to love her.

Selene represents purely unrequited love. As she does not ever expect to have her love returned, she is satisfied in acting as the messenger for her sister. She represents the opposite of Didone's obsessive love, for she refuses to demand or accept love.

Araspe is a minor character, though he rivals Aeneas in noble thought. He represents honourable conduct. He does not allow Jarba to murder Aeneas and openly questions his use of disguise to deceive Didone and falsely to promise Osmido a

reward for betraying Didone. He does not force his love on Selene but waits patiently. His own attempt at battle with Aeneas contains no real hostility, but, as Aeneas is an enemy to his master, Araspe must attempt one duel for the honour of his country.

Osmido represents treacherous ambition with shades of cowardice. He remains watchful in the background and promises fidelity to all sides while colouring his conversations to suit his own desire -- to rule Didone's country.

Jarba represents revenge as he appears in Didone's court annoyed at the rumours that Didone loves Aeneas at the same time as she refuses his marriage proposal under the pretense of fidelity to the memory of her dead husband. He shifts his revenge to Aeneas and plans to kill him, but when he and his men attack Aeneas and crew, Aeneas is the victor. Jarba then shifts his revenge back to Didone for loving Aeneas, and is successful in achieving the ruin of her country and her demise.

Jarba is also an interesting tool for rhetorical persuasion throughout the course of the opera. He is the only character who does not attempt or even pretend to be virtuous. Didone decides to follow her passion rather than her duty, but still sees herself as virtuous and noble when she accepts death rather than marriage to a man who does not know of duty nor of honour. But Jarba has no such illusions. He is never noble and scoffs at virtue. He is therefore an excellent tool

for Metastasio to use in order to display the relative virtue of other characters. (More of the role of Jarba will be considered in the section on elocutio).

The three acts of Didone abbandonata will be divided according to the rhetorical scheme presented in Chapter I. To reiterate the main features of the Dispositio:

Exordium - gains the attention of the audience and prepares the mood.

Narratio - Expositio presents the circumstances surrounding the main characters and introduces the relevant events preceding the point where the begins.

Propositio states the subject of the drama.

Divisio gives the main points which will be discussed to support the subject.

Confirmatio - offers all proof which confirms the validity of the subject.

Confutatio - provides all proof that disputes the validity of the subject.

Peroratio - gives a strong close to prove that the subject of the argument is unquestionably true.

The analysis of the libretto will now begin. One might imagine Metastasio's creation of his drama Didone abbandonata in the manner of an oration, beginning with the Inventio.

### Inventio

In the example of Antony's persuasive oration cited in Chapter I, Shakespeare's apparent purpose for creating the oration is to give an eulogy for Julius Caesar. In fact, as noted above, Antony wanted to arouse the Plebeians' anger at

the murder of a just Caesar rather than simply to pay tribute to a man assassinated for the crime of ambition which would harm society. In similar fashion, Metastasio had an inner purpose for presenting what, from all outward appearance, was the standard rule for opera seria libretti: to show the superiority of virtue over vice.

Shakespeare was faced with the problem of how to present an argument proving Caesar's innocence within the usual format of a eulogy. Metastasio was similarly challenged to present his lessons of virtue but within a format suitable to be set to music. He also attempts to address more than one single virtue within the opera. Each of his minor characters represented a single virtue or vice which was pitted against the other in a secondary plot, while the drama's central conflict, the major moral dilemma, involved the two principal characters. The triumph of virtue at the end of the opera, therefore, was established not only through the resolution of the major conflict within the drama but was also reinforced by the lesser victories of the virtuous minor characters.

Thus, Metastasio set out to present a drama encompassing a moral lesson in an epideictic or demonstrative form of oration. As mentioned in Chapter I, the epideictic oration dealt with the issue of morality, citing examples in the third person. This aptly describes an opera seria drama except that the examples are provided by the characters themselves. As Metastasio set out to write his drama, he knew from his

earlier study of oration that the epideictic was the most literary of the three types (see Chapter I).

The epideictic oration usually discussed morality through the process of comparison. Metastasio continued with this process of loci topici when presenting his subject of virtue. The loci topici (or topics of presentation) were methods for idea presentation within an oration. One could, for example, use the topic of cause and effect, of comparison, etc., to illustrate one's point. The topics were an aid to creativity and, as mentioned in Chapter I, Heinichen and Mattheson stressed the use of these topics to develop musical composition. They were ideal in suggesting methods of treating the opening theme after it had made its initial appearance.

Metastasio utilized the method of contrast throughout his dramatic oration, not only between characters but also within a single character. In his letter to Signor Betinelli of July 23, 1734, Metastasio maintained:

... when assaulted by passion, [a character]... is impetuous, violent, and inconsiderate. But when he has time to reflect or if any object present, reminds him of his duty, he is just, moderate, and rational. And in the whole course of the drama, that contrast always appears, which arises either from the conflicting operations of the mind and heart, or impetuosity and reason.<sup>4</sup>

Later in that same letter, Metastasio actually uses Didone as an example of this:

From the contrast of these two universal principles, reason and passion, arises the diversity in the characters of men, as each of these, or both prevail. And this concurrence of different principles in the same person, reconciles the valour of Aeneas with the tears he so frequently sheds; the transports of Dido, with the good sense of a foundress of an Empire....<sup>5</sup>

A second consideration of epideictic oration, one which particularly concerned Metastasio, was with the problem of making the audience not only perceive the emotional turmoil of the characters in their battle to be virtuous, but to identify with the characters. Here, knowing one's audience plays a crucial role. Opera seria was performed to the upper classes, that is, to the nobility and monarchy. Therefore, in Didone as in his other operas, Metastasio used noble characters who behave as befits their station. The character Didone reflects this in Act I, scene 16 when she discovers that Jarba, the Moorish king, had been deceiving her:

You lie. Such wicked thought cannot find  
room within the breast of one of regal birth.<sup>6</sup>

When one observes someone like oneself in a moral dilemma, one pities the person, and Aristotle believed that one could increase this pity in an epideictic oration not only through the words of the oration, but with accompanying gesture, stance, the tone of voice, and whatever else would "put the disasters before our eyes and make them seem close to us" (Rhetorica, II,8).<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the audience was to be drawn into the drama before them by feeling pity for these characters who might have been the audience members themselves. One pities an obviously moral person who falls

from grace, and this pity increases the more one identifies with the character. However, when the character manages to overcome his lapse from moral behaviour, one is given a worthy example to emulate. The more difficult it is for the hero to act nobly, the greater is the triumph of success (Rhetorica, I, 9),<sup>8</sup> but if no attempt is made to overcome this difficulty, a tragedy is the result. In Didone, Aeneas knows he must return to sea to found the new Troy, even if that means leaving Didone whom he greatly loves and to whom he owes gratitude for having nursed him back to health. Through her manipulation of him in the second act, Aeneas is very confused and torn between his duty and his love, but he overcomes his conflict, makes the noble choice of duty, and leaves her. Didone, like Aeneas, is also a noble character who faces the same dilemma of choosing between her love for him and the recognition that he must return to sea. Another of her duties is to placate Jarba so that he will not destroy her country. The real tragedy of Didone is that she chooses not to act with nobility nor to recognize her duties. Instead, she clings to her possessive love, thereby losing Aeneas, her country, and her life.

It is interesting that Didone is neatly balanced by the two main characters suffering either pity or its opposite emotion, indignation. Aristotle, when discussing the emotions of mankind, presents them in pairs of opposites for easier analysis (Rhetorica, II, 3-5),<sup>9</sup> and pity is contrasted with

indignation. In the first half of the opera, Didone is indignant at Aeneas' attempt to overcome their love and leave her, and he pities her lack of strength displayed in her failure to let him go. The audience corresponds by being indignant with Didone for ignoring her duty while pitying poor Aeneas for having his sense of duty tested.

However, the second half of the opera turns the tables following a dramatic climax in which Didone manipulates Aeneas to such an extreme that he must immediately choose whether to stay or to leave. From this point on, Aeneas is portrayed in a colder, less sympathetic fashion. Nothing will prevent his return to the sea, and he seems almost indignant with any characters who appear before him. Meanwhile, Didone is now able to be pitied though she still responds angrily at the news that he is leaving. But she suffers in the obvious rejection of her love, at the news of her sister's love for Aeneas, at her confidant Osmido's infidelity, and at the misery of her people under attack by Jarba's men; moreover, she is reduced to such a state that even Jarba takes pity upon her and offers her a last chance to join with him (in Act III, scene 20). There is some nobility in her tragic choice to face the full consequences of following her heart rather than reason, when she refuses him with the response that she has not yet sunk to such a low state.

Metastasio's characters repeatedly impart the message of the importance of overcoming one's desires in favour of behaving with noble virtue. In Act I, scene 14, Didone's confidant Osmido tells Aeneas that to overcome one's heart surpasses every other glorious deed. Aeneas, at one point, rejects his duty to his father, to the new Troy, and to the gods, but is immediately repentant and explains his transgression with the excuse that it was Love who spoke (I, 18). He manages to overcome the demands of his heart, but Didone chooses not to, predicting that some day on the tragic stage her sufferings will be told with pity and sadness (III, 18).

It is also of note, that in terms of the notion of contrast, Metastasio contrasts fire (representing love) with water (representing duty). Selene, the tragic character who represents unrequited love and who discusses the subject more than any other character in the opera, describes love as a flame (II, 3). Aeneas maintains that his flame will burn for Didone despite their separation (I, 2). Didone's scornful response in Act II, scene 7 is that her flame is dead! In reality, this all-consuming flame is her ruin, personified by the actual fire which brings down her kingdom and cremates her. All other characters similarly undergo some pain from their love or flame, including Selene, Osmido, and Araspe, but at least these are in control. Destruction and ruin only follow a fire that is out of control.

In contrast, the ocean represents duty, for Aeneas must return to sea in order to fulfill his destiny, perform his duty, and maintain his good reputation and his honour (I, 17). To do this, he must turn away from Didone and attempt to control, if not to put out, his flame. At the drama's climax (II, 16) when Didone brings Aeneas to total confusion and jealousy (his flame is still burning), he storms out of the scene. Didone's reaction is to display the first instance of calm since she appeared in the opera (her flame is subdued and under control because she knows that he loves her) and she personifies it in her aria ("Prende ardore, e si conforta...") as a storm quelling her disturbed state (II, 18) or as putting water on her fire. But when Aeneas leaves and is out at sea, she hopes that he will drown in the ocean of duty and honour (III, 21) just as she is dying in a fiery inferno of obsessive love. Although the 1726 Vinci version of the opera does not contain the closing scene, the original Sarro version employs elaborate machinery whereby Neptune rises from the sea to put out the flames and to demonstrate the mastery of reason over passion.

## Dispositio

### Exordium:

The overture to Didone abbandonata assumes the role of the exordium. This is not an unusual supposition, as may be seen in the words of Algarotti:

The main drift of an overture should be to announce, in a certain manner, the business of the drama and consequently prepare the audience to receive those affecting impressions that are to result from the whole of the performance... as is of an oration from the exordium.<sup>10</sup>

Mattheson, in Der vollkommene Capellmeister, also claims that the intrada and sinfonia (either may precede an opera) provide a similar function to an orator's exordium, for the former awakens a desire for more and the latter provides a glimpse of what is to follow.<sup>11</sup> The exordium in an oration directs all attention to the stage for what is about to commence, and the opera seria assigns this role to the sinfonia.

One will find no particular motives in the sinfonia which will later appear in the arias; nor will one receive a direct preview of the specific passions of the characters, but rather of general passions, for the sinfonia is an independent, transferable entity. Vinci's sinfonia for Didone abbandonata is identical to one used a year earlier for a libretto by A. Salvi called Astianate (Naples, 1725), and the third section is the same as that of the sinfonia for Metastasio's libretto to Siroe, Re di Persia (Naples, 1726). Vinci had been working

on all three operas at the same time, and the borrowing of material between operas was not uncommon.

The *sinfonia* is written in three movements for an orchestra of strings (first and second violins, violas, cellos), plus harpsichord continuo. Horns are added in the first and third movements for important rhetorical effect. They provide a strong opening and closing (further explored with aria discussion in Chapter III) by first attracting the audience's attention and finally in leaving a lasting impression before the drama begins.

The opening movement of the *sinfonia* clearly defines the F major tonality as the theme, and supporting parts explore much primary triad use and scale combinations. The rhythmic drive of this Allegro in 4/4 leads the listener through a number of brief modulations before terminating in the dominant key of F major, C major. The second movement, a very brief Largo in D minor, expresses a vocally-conceived or cantabile opening of sustained notes followed by an ornamental variation of this opening in a more active yet graceful sixteenth-note pattern. The contrapuntal, thinner scoring of only strings plus continuo contrasts with the more harmonic nature of the neighbouring movements. Just as a dance suite usually concludes with a gigue to provide an exciting close, the third movement's theme in F major begins with the short upbeat characteristic of a gigue before moving through the voice

parts. In 6/8 time, the galloping dance rhythm in triple metre provides an invigorating finale to the sinfonia.

### Narratio

In Act I, scenes 1-18 combine to create the Expositio and Divisio, for as each character is introduced on the stage, events surrounding the character's history are discussed in conversation. We learn not only of the events which precede the opera, but also discover each character's chief virtue or vice.

The Propositio occurs in Act I, scene 18, as Aeneas finally tells Didone of his imminent departure and she accuses him of treachery in love. This states the theme for the rest of the opera. (While his departure and her response were topics of earlier scenes, they were presented by the minor characters.) Didone ends the scene with an aria of indignant pride ("Non ha ragione, ingrato..."), and then exits. In the scene following, Aeneas' aria ("Se resto sul lido...") counters this with his predicament of duty versus love. His confusion and exit end the first act and prepare the way for the confirmatio and the confutatio of Act II.

### Confirmatio:

As the lesson of the opera is in the victory of duty over love, Act II is, then, successful in providing arguments for and against the lesson to be learned. The dictates of an oration make it impossible for Aeneas to resolve his conflict

between duty and love in this Act II, for the audience must first witness towards both sides of his dilemma. Therefore, scenes 1-14 display a virtuous Aeneas who is still intent on returning to his duty. In scene 7, he refuses to allow Jarba to be executed despite the murderous intentions of the latter, for Aeneas maintains that his honour cannot allow Didone to avenge Jarba's attack on his life. It is also unfair to hold a person at a disadvantage and, in scene 8, Aeneas destroys Jarba's death sentence.

#### Confutatio:

In scenes 15-18 of Act II, Aeneas' love for Didone is clearly displayed, but she manipulates him into such a state of jealousy and confusion that he is finally forced to flee her presence. Her first argument which precipitates his evident confusion and arousal of jealousy is her conflict between allowing Jarba to take her as his wife or to face death at his hands. When Aeneas reacts strongly to the thought of Didone marrying Jarba, she pretends to believe he condones her death and begs him to take her life rather than let Jarba kill her. As her manipulation continues, the audience is witness to an Aeneas of unrecognizable confusion, anguish, and jealousy. These are strong arguments against the love which would possibly result between the two characters. Didone's love is not based on a respect for Aeneas (in fact, she battles his virtuous sense of duty), and the audience increasingly recognizes this and decides Aeneas' proper choice

even if he may not decide until Act III. Therefore, the confirmatio and confutatio contrast the positive demeanour of virtuous conduct and the negative confusion of subjective emotionalism within the character of Aeneas. The audience has been persuaded towards the proper outcome of this moral lesson, and the peroratio must affirm this.

#### Peroratio:

Duty has clearly won over love, for Aeneas is steadfast in his resolve to depart with the opening of Act III as he prepares his crew to set out to sea. Didone senses his departure, and, when it is confirmed, she begins her descent into madness and to death.

#### Elocutio:

This section of the rhetorical framework concerns the application of persuasive elements to every aspect of the opera seria. The audience was to be drawn into or involved with the conflict of the characters. The most persuasive technique used in opera seria was to underline the drama with music, particularly with accompanied recitative during the action and with arias at the end of specific scenes to allow the characters (and the audience) to assess and to react to the latest development in the plot or the argument.

The music will be the focus of Chapter III, for while the drama alone may involve the audience in their perception of the events in the drama, it is the music which persuades them,

or brings into play a more emotional interpretation of these dramatic events. However, there are some elements within the drama which do persuade the audience. Metastasio manipulates the characters in a pleasing yet functional arrangement, or, in a larger sense, instead of juxtaposing words and sentences for effect, Metastasio places characters (embodying virtues) into effective single and multiple groupings in the scenes (like concepts within a sentence framework). The use of asides by the characters, their attempts to hide, and their use of disguise all perform functions similar to the orator's colorful word manipulation. For if one may loosely define figures of thought (i.e., entire sentences which are used for effect, such as the exclamation, question, etc.) as character placements within the scenes of the opera, then the figures of speech (metaphors, etc., which can also depend on their visual and oral qualities in an oration) could be represented by the costumes used, props, and the staging of these scenes.

As was mentioned earlier, Jarba becomes a tool of persuasion for Metastasio much as the phrase "for he is an honourable man" is a tool which aids Antony's oration in suggesting to the Plebeians that all may not be as it seems. In scenes with Aeneas, Jarba is placed in sharp contrast with him (vice and virtue), and their battle and Jarba's defeat in Act III show the true glory of virtue's victory. When Jarba is placed with Didone, the latter takes on a superior disdain

which persists throughout the opera in her attitude that she is still not as base in her behaviour as he is. When Jarba is placed in a scene with Osmido, Osmido is given the opportunity to show his ambition and disloyalty. Araspe appears to be quite honourable when placed in a scene with Jarba.

However, when Jarba is placed with both Aeneas and Didone, the major conflict between the lovers is shown. In Act I, scene 16, Aeneas wants to avenge Jarba's attack upon his person, yet Didone will not allow this as she feels he is not strong enough and that she must make Jarba yield. This is the first glimpse of the conflict in their relationship, for she does not understand that he must be allowed to pursue his honour and subsequently his duty. This scene brings about their first confrontation regarding his departure.

Jarba is again used to show their conflict in Act II, scene 17, when Aeneas attempts to remain strong in his resolve to leave and Didone is forced to use manipulation to sway this resolve. Jarba allows Didone the means to push Aeneas into making his decision, although it is not the decision which she had hoped he would reach. Her angry dismissal of Jarba enables Metastasio to use him to destroy Carthage and contribute to Didone's misery.

Memoria:

As an opera seria was a dramatic production, the memorization of one's part would have been taken for granted.

Pronunciatio

One must rely on general eighteenth-century performance practice treatises on acting or on rhetorical manuals for speech delivery as there are no specific directions given for the action on the stage for this performance, other than the description cited by Burney at the opening of this chapter. We do know that Metastasio did not follow common opinion as to the use of the right hand to represent good and the left to represent evil, nor did he ascribe significance subsequently to the relegation of characters to either the right and left sides of the stage. Metastasio condoned any movement and gesture which made sense and continued the flow of the drama and disagreed with any that distracted the attention of the audience.

If you ask me who should be placed on the right hand, and who on the left, I must tell you I never meant to regulate that by the dignity of the personages, but by the convenience and necessity of the action.... The right hand... has varied and changed its signification, according to the caprice of different ages and nations....<sup>12</sup>

The countenance was an important tool of persuasion for the eliciting of passion in the audience. If the actor felt the passion within himself, the outward expression of the passion would follow. The description of the ability of the

famous eighteenth-century actor John Garrick to recreate the passions follows:

Garrick will put his head between two folding doors and in the course of five or six seconds his expression will change successively from wild delight to temperate pleasure, from this to tranquility, from tranquility to surprise, from surprise to blank astonishment, from that to sorrow, from sorrow to the air of one overwhelmed, from that to fright, from fright to horror, from horror to despair, and thence he will go up again to the point from which he started.<sup>13</sup>

In this chapter, I have attempted to show that the drama in the libretto of the opera seria conformed to the framework of a rhetorical exercise, as displayed in Didone abbandonata. The oration is brought to life by characters who represent qualities which would prove the argument of the oration. In the personification of virtue (as opposed to passion), the love of two major characters was seen as secondary to the duty of each character to his/her people (Aeneas to the Trojans, and Didone to the people of Carthage). One character is willing to overcome love and obey his duty. The other refuses, thus affording a lesson in morality as well as sealing the character's fate, for virtue must always win in the opera seria argument. Though the drama alone is a persuasive argument, the events grow more powerful when underlined by orchestral accompaniment, and the use of arias, which alone could convince an audience to feel a corresponding passion. In Chapter III, I will discuss the rhetorical use of music in the opera seria.

## NOTES

## II. METASTASIO'S LIBRETTO: AN ORATION

1. Charles Burney, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Abate Metastasio (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), I:39.
2. William Oliver Strunk, Source Readings in Music History (New York: Norton, 1950), 665.
3. Ibid., 661-662.
4. Burney, Memoirs, I:148.
5. Ibid., I:150.
6. Joseph G. Fucilla, ed. and trans., Three Melodramas by Pietro Metastasio (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1981), 34. I will be using Fucilla's translation in all subsequent discussion of the libretto.
7. Aristotle, "Rhetorica", The Works of Aristotle edited by W.D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), XI: 13861.
8. Ibid., 1367b.
9. Ibid., 1385a - 1387b.
10. W.O. Strunk, Source Readings, 662.
11. Johann Mattheson, Der vollkommene Capellmeister, 1739 (Kassel: Barenreiter Verlag, 1954), 233-234.
12. Charles Burney, Memoirs, I: 321-327.

13.

Alan T. McKenzie, "The Countenance You Show Me: Reading the Passions in the Eighteenth Century," The Georgian Review 32 (1978): 766. Also, in his discussion of the study and performance of the passions by eighteenth-century actors in the third of his three-part series, "Art and Eighteenth-Century Acting Style," Theatre Notebook 41 (1987): Parts 1-3, Alan Hughes reiterates this dramatic exercise by Garrick. Moreover, Dr. Hughes emphasizes the pride taken by eighteenth-century audiences in their ability to read these passions.

### III. VINCI'S MUSIC: THE ELOCUTIO

... for in this exquisite drama, not only the airs were greatly applauded, but the recitative, particularly in the last act, which being chiefly accompanied, had such an effect, that, according to Count Algarotti, 'Virgil himself would have been pleased to hear a composition so animated and so terrible, in which the heart and soul were at once assailed by all the powers of Music'.<sup>1</sup>

Just as the libretto of an opera seria may be perceived as an exercise in rhetoric, music performs the persuasive functions of the rhetorical elocutio. The aria and the accompanied recitative are the two key components of this rhetorical persuasion.

This chapter will examine the aria in order to show that it performs two functions in the opera seria. In the overall sense of interpreting the libretto as an oratorical argument in virtue, the aria serves to reinforce each step of the argument. This is done through a direct appeal to the emotions of an audience which has been intellectually convinced by the events in the preceding recitative. The aria ensures an emotional conviction as to the development of the argument before the action continues. The second function of the aria is based on the premise that it is a miniature oration in itself, and this will also be shown to be a powerfully persuasive tool.

Metastasio had definite ideas as to the musical accompaniment of his more dramatic sections of recitative. He successfully transmitted these ideas to Vinci, whose

interpretation of the accompanied recitative in Act III rivalled the success of the preceding arias in the opera. Therefore, this chapter will also examine Vinci's accompanied recitative. Accompanied recitative is normally used solely for dramatic moments where it must be assured that the audience feel the tension of the drama. But in Didone, the recitative also serves a symbolic function. It represents Didone's descent into despair and loss of reason as she throws herself into the fire.

This opera seria employs the da capo aria form in the first and second acts, and some roles use the form in the third act as well. This form, characterized by a somewhat rigid format, is also used by Didone in the first two acts. In Act III, she has only a cavatina (a simplified aria form) and accompanied recitative for the remainder of the act. One interpretation of this could be that even the rational, structured form of the da capo aria gives way under the force of her passion, and she can only express herself in the unrestrained and highly dramatic style of accompanied recitative before dying.

Few aspects of the opera seria Didone abbandonata were governed by elements outside the control of Metastasio.<sup>2</sup> He wrote Didone for the prima donna La Romanina (Maria Benti Bulgarelli) in Sarro's production of 1724. He knew exactly how the production would be performed, and was certain of the successful interpretation of his rhetorical argument. Both

he and La Romanina went to Rome to instruct the castrato Giacinto Fontana in Didone's role for Vinci's setting of 1726 because, as has been noted, women were not allowed to perform on stage in Rome. Thus, again, he could ensure that all arias met his specific rhetorical needs. However, normally, the availability of certain performers determined the number and placement of the arias. The oration within the opera seria had then to rely on the persuasiveness of the drama itself to convince the audience.

Because of the rigid structure of an opera seria as it attempted to conform to the framework of rhetorical oration, Metastasio continued and supplemented Zeno's initial rules governing the placement and type of arias. Metastasio could not allow the whims of the performers nor the will of the composer to detract from his overall scheme. Arias were meant to end a particularly dramatic development with a pause of reflection by the character (and the audience) on these developments, and to lead to the exit of the singer. The major characters performed the greater number of arias, for their conflicts required more serious audience persuasion than the less important conflicts of the minor characters. Arias expressing the same passion could not follow each other, nor could the same singer perform two arias in a row, for both cases would weaken the dramatic and persuasive effect of the aria. These rules and others were important in order to ensure that the oration within the opera did not become

weakened by poor placement or choice of arias. The exit following the performance of the aria was a necessary rhetorical device, for it terminated that part of the dramatic development, and if the performer were to remain, the persuasive quality of the aria would be diminished, as would the use, at that stage, of proof in the argument.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the aria was an expression of emotion, and to exit at its conclusion symbolized the termination of emotional display.

This leads into a discussion of the necessity to use such a rigid form as the da capo aria. When dealing with emotion, there is a need to contain it within formal restraints. Thus, as previously mentioned, Didone has gone past the limits of reasonable restraint in Act III when she can no longer keep her emotions within the da capo format, and even the simpler cavatina is finally replaced by the flow of the accompanied recitative.

The da capo aria form is a three part structure of A - B - A<sup>1</sup>(d.c.). (A more detailed analysis of aria form occurs later in this chapter). One might wonder at the function of the repetition of the A section, but there was an important rhetorical reason for this.

Ciceronian rhetoric and the rhetoricians of Metastasio's era believed that an audience was most attentive at the beginning and at the end of the oration. It was therefore crucial to place the most important statement at the end to leave a lasting impression; the second most important place

is at the beginning, for here the first impression is made and must win the attention of the audience.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, the middle section should complement the preceding and following sections, but it was clearly of lesser importance. Therefore, one could suggest that the da capo aria form was influenced by Ciceronian rhetoric.<sup>5</sup> As seen in Chapter I, Mattheson had also approved this order of importance in the creation of a musical composition.

In the repetition of the A section, musical ornaments were improvised by the performer to embellish or decorate the vocal line. As much of the music was actually newly created by the performer through improvisation,<sup>6</sup> it was therefore crucial for the performer to acknowledge that said embellishment was primarily intended to further convince the audience of the character's emotional state, and not, as was later the case, to further promote the performer's virtuosic talent (see the discussion of abuses in Chapter IV).

The concept of decoration is important in the opera seria, for as in an oration, the elocutio is to provide style and elegance while serving as a method of persuasion. A stylized presentation is achieved through the use of the ornaments. As opera was entertainment for the upper classes, the ornaments were decorations which raised the aria above the plain and ordinary. An eighteenth-century audience expected embellishment as a parallel to their own environment.

As well, ornaments enliven what might become a boring restatement of the A section. Rather than have the audience ignore the repetition or take it for granted, the ornamentation ensures that at least this part of the aria or oration will not go unnoticed. Its lasting impression is the result of the heightened emotion through the use of ornaments.

The visual and oral elements of rhetorical persuasion found in the aria draw the audience even closer to identifying with the character's emotional state. An example of this successful imagery is Jarba's aria of Act I, scene 13. Having earlier dismissed the existence of virtue, his aria of arrogant pride is full of the imagery of a brook out of control:

I am not unlike the humour-laden stream,  
Which, made torrential by the melting ice  
Drags with it headlong and without a curb  
The woods, the flocks, the herdsmen, and their homes.

And if it sees it is restrained by dykes,  
It scorns its bed, its margins overflow  
And with disdainful rage unfettered roam.<sup>7</sup>

The waters of this unruly brook push against the shores out of control and heedless of its boundary. The audience is acquainted with the wildness and unpredictability of nature (a prevalent Baroque concept is that an ordered universe is desirable) and more quickly gains a deeper understanding of Jarba's character and his motives for the preceding recitative. It is a far more effective portrayal of Jarba than for him to stand before the audience announcing "I am an unruly character" to Araspe. With the accompanying music and

arrogant gesture, the overall impression left with the audience is very real.

The discussion so far provides a general introduction to the rhetorical aspects of the aria. But the aria performs two direct functions within the opera seria. The first is to ensure the audience understands and feels moved by the argument up to that point in the drama. This is achieved by the placing of arias not at the close of every scene, but at the end of specific developments in the drama. The audience might understand and be involved with the events up to that point from an intellectual standpoint, but the aria also ensures the emotional contact. The anger, disgust, or sorrow of a character with respect to the events of the recent dramatic development is reflected in the audience. Thus, this lesson in virtue was not merely observed as in a classroom but actually lived by the audience members, and, as was Metastasio's aim, the experience could be taken out of the theatre and applied to personal conduct.

The second rhetorical function of the aria is to persuade those members of the audience who may have been distracted from observing the preceding dramatic development. The aria is, therefore, required to elicit the desired response without the members knowing exactly why they feel the suggested emotion. It is therefore necessary for the aria to become a miniature oration or argument which seeks to persuade using only two musically treated quatrains without benefit of the

preceding recitative. This explains why many of the arias in Didone appear to be more poetic, more image-filled versions of their preceding recitatives. Unfortunately, the audience later became dependent upon this function and turned their attentions to the stage for the arias only.

The following is a summary of arias in Didone abbandonata.<sup>8</sup> From this, one may observe that Metastasio allows the minor characters ample opportunity to restate their respective virtues or vices. For example, Selene represents unrequited love, and her arias concentrate only on various aspects of love. Araspe's arias deal with his virtue, with his honourable conduct, as he sings of awaiting Selene's love or battles with matters of principle with Jarba. However, the major characters are given arias which punctuate the course of the oratorical argument (see the discussion following the summary).

Table 2: Aria CompositeAct I (19 scenes)

<u>Scene</u>	<u>Incipit</u>	<u>Character</u>	<u>Topic</u>
3	Dirò, che fida sei...	Selene	Love
5	Son Regina...	Didone	Pride
6	Grato rende...	Osmido	Treachery
7	Trà lo splendor...	Jarba	Arrogance
8	Se dalle stelle...	Araspe	Bewilderment
10	Quando saprai chi son...	Aeneas	Confusion (Honour) (Duty)
11	Ogni amator suppone...	Selene	Love (Advice)
13	Son quel fiume...	Jarba	Pride
14	Su la pendice...	Araspe	Honour
18	Non hà ragione...	Didone	Wrathful Love
19	Se resto sul lido...	Aeneas	Confusion (Love)

Act II (18 scenes)

2	Leon, ch'errando...	Jarba	Willful Destruction
3	Ardi per me fedele...	Selene	Unrequited Love
4	Amor che nasce...	Araspe	Hope
7	Se vuoi, ch'io mora...	Didone	Sorrow (Love)
8	Vedi nel mio perdonno...	Aeneas	Honourable Conduct
10	Son quest' idoli...	Osmido	Selfishness
12	Sono intrepido...	Araspe	Confusion (Honour)
14	L'augelletto...	Selene	Love (Advice)
17	Chiamami pur cosi...	Jarba	Revenge
18	Prende ardire...	Didone	Hope (Love)

Act III (22 scenes)

2	Vivi, superbo...	Aeneas	Honour (Duty)
3	Cadrà fra poco...	Jarba	Revenge
7	Quando l'onda...	Osmido	Repentance
8	À trionfar...	Aeneas	Triumphant Courage (Duty)
9	Se ti lagni...	Selene	Sorrow
10	Sorge così dal seno...	Araspe	Sorrow
17	Già si desta	Araspe	Pity
20	In si misero...	Jarba	Revenge

The aria is a structural component in the opera's moral argument when presented through the major characters -- Didone and Aeneas. Unlike its function for the minor characters which repeatedly reinforces their single virtue or vice, an aria for Didone or Aeneas features the two contrasting emotions which dominate the characters. Thus, Aeneas' arias contrast love (Act I, scene 19) with courage and duty (Act III, scene 8). Similarly, Didone's aria of her right to love (Act I, scene 5) contrasts with an aria of doubtful hope at the return of Aeneas' love (Act II, scene 18).

In terms of rhetorical function, the aria confirms the stages of the argument within the course of the moral lesson. The Narratio of Act I presents Didone's declaration of love over responsibility and Aeneas' attempt to return to duty despite his love for Didone. In Act II, the Confirmatio's case for honour is found with Aeneas' aria responding to the wrathful sorrow of Didone's aria. The Confutatio's case against Aeneas' love for Didone allows him only recitative in the close of Act II. However, Didone seemingly anticipates the negative outcome of this argument as her final aria in Act II tempers hope with strong doubt. The Peroratio of Act III confirms this outcome with Aeneas' aria of his triumphant return to duty.

The aria is also a miniature oration, conceived from the rhetorical model in Chapter I. This will be shown through an analysis of Aeneas' heroic aria "À trionfar mi chiama..."

("A triumphant sense of duty calls...", Act III, scene 8. Please refer to Appendix 1). As previously mentioned, Aeneas has suffered through his conflict between duty and love and has emerged victorious. This aria confirms his victory and the moral of the opera.

The aria is preceded by a recitative in the same victorious tone:

Aeneas: Selene, speak no more about your flame,  
nor of your sister's passion. I am now  
again a fighting man and love no more.  
I am returning to my former ways,  
and shall consider as my enemy  
whoever will restrain my glorious deeds.

(aria) A triumphant sense of duty calls  
and spurs me on to victory.  
Already in myself I see  
that honour triumphs over love.

Amid disasters and grave risks  
Aflame with noble eagerness,  
I'll hasten now my locks  
to encircle with garlands new.<sup>9</sup>

In this aria, Metastasio has provided Vinci with a text of fearless valour and bravery as befits an heroic aria. In terms of the advice of Heinichen noted in Chapter I, Vinci may have looked at the opening words of the text and the preceding recitative to obtain an impression of the overall passion and to discover the best words for musical treatment. This matches the procedures of the Inventio in oratory. Then (to combine both Heinichen's and Mattheson's theory) Vinci might next have approached the music with the rhetorical framework of the Dispositio in mind (the Expositio, Propositio, etc.). If so, in order to create the music which would express the

pointed courage of the text, he would then begin with the Dispositio. In terms of da capo aria form, this begins with A section.

One will recall Mattheson's claims that the opening ritornello of an aria was equated with the exordium. Bars 1-4 of the opening ritornello to "À trionfar" strongly establishes F major as the key of the aria. Although few arias in the opera seria use keys with more than three sharps or flats, the keys that are used have designated emotional connotations. Theorists of the period who assigned said emotional connotations to the keys generally agree that F major represents beautiful sentiments and constancy. The instruments of the aria introduce a military atmosphere (the preparation for battle) through the use of the hunting horns. The other instruments employed are the strings and continuo. The allegro suggests happiness, freshness, and joy. The arpeggio figures in the orchestra reinforce this affect.

The narratio, begins with the entry of the voice which presents the opening theme of the aria. (The propositio occurs with the ritornello which follows.) In "À trionfar", the voice enters in F major at bar 5 with the words:

À trionfar mi chiama  
Un bel deso d'onore;  
E già sopra il mio core  
Comincio a trionfar.<sup>10</sup>

Although the first quatrain begins in F major, it quickly modulates to C major, which is considered by the aforementioned theorists of that period to be a martial,

sprightly key. In bar 5, the word "trionfar" (to triumph) is underlined by three repetitions of a single tone. The descending scale in the melody, which also occurs in bars 5 and 6, is usually taken to depict joy.<sup>11</sup> The fourth phrase of this first quatrain (bars 8-13) begins again with a descending scale (of joy). At the end of the poetic line after "trionfar" is sung (bar 9), a long four-bar melisma occurs, concluding with "à trionfar... à triofar." There is a sudden leap which suggests liveliness. The ritornello, leading into the repetition of the first quatrain, is no more than a short connecting passage (bars 14 and 15) in C major.

The return of the opening statement in bar 16 may be equated to the proof of the argument in an oration, or the vocal figure *circulatio* presents the descriptive material around one main note in successive clusters of sixteenth notes. This section ends with the repetition of the opening statement. Thus, Vinci treats it in a fashion similar to the opening statement but for the melisma in bars 20-24, which have an additional bar of embellishment on "trionfar", as well as a dramatic pause at the end (bar 24). This pause would allow the performer to introduce an improvised cadenza later in the repeat of the A section following the statement of the B section's new material. The words "à trionfar" are heard once again during a modulation from C major back to F major. The ritornello, which ends the A section of the da capo aria, remains in F major in an arpeggio figuration.

After cadencing in F major in bar 33, the B section, on the *confutatio*, begins with an abrupt modulation to D minor. The text of the second quatrain contrasts with the jubilant

boldness of the first quatrain. The mood is more solemn and earnest as Aeneas reflects upon possible disasters and grave risks:

Con generosa brama  
 Frà i rischi e le ruine  
 Di nuoui allori il crine  
 Io volo à circondar.<sup>12</sup>

If one again refers to the emotional connotations assigned to the language by certain theorists, such as Mattheson, the key of D minor is generally associated with gentleness and subdued enthusiasm, but it quickly modulates to B flat major, which is associated with disagreeableness, harshness, and unpleasantness. There is again a descending scale of joy in bar 37 before the cadenza on "circondar" (to encircle), and the vocal figure circulatio presents the descriptive circling around one main note in successive clusters of sixteenths. This section ends with the repetition of "io volo à circondar."

The repeat of the A section, or the peroratio, following the contrasting B section in da capo aria form requires a strong close with much ornamentation to leave a lasting impression on the audience. Embellishment was rarely written into the score and does not appear here, but Vinci would have assumed that ornaments would be furnished in abundance by the

performers, according to custom. Similarly, two or three cadenzas would have been added on the six-four chordal harmonies. These decorations bring the A section's restatement to a level out of the ordinary. Aristotle explains why this approach is necessary:

Freedom from meanness, and positive adornment are secured... such variation from what is usual makes the language appear more stately.... It is therefore well to give to everyday speech an unfamiliar air: people like what strikes them, and are struck by what is out of the way. In verse, such things are common and there they are fitting....<sup>13</sup>

Thus, this da capo aria works as follows:

<u>Dispositio</u>	<u>A section</u>		
<u>Exordium</u>	- Ritornello 1	F major	1 - 4
<u>Narratio</u>	- Quatrain 1	F major/C major	5 - 13
( <u>Propositio</u> )	- Ritornello 2	C major	14 - 15
<u>Confirmatio</u>	- Repeat of Quatrain 1	C major/F major	16 - 25
	- Ritornello 3	F major	26 - 33
<u>Confutatio</u>	- <u>B section</u>	D minor/B flat major	33 - 42
<u>Peroratio</u>	- Repeat of <u>A section</u>	F major/C major/ F major	1 - 33

The element in oration which attempted to persuade through figures of speech and of thought is the elocutio. As discussed in Chapter I, the practice of using musical-rhetorical figures, or Figurenlehre, was established to transmit the text in such a way as to move, through the elements of sight and sound, the sought after passion. The

Figurenlehre<sup>14</sup> which bring the sight and sound element to this aria are (please refer to Appendix 1):

analepsis - the repetition of the same tone in bar 5 and bar 16 on "triumphant call" emphasizes the word and Aeneas' triumph.

antithesis, circulatio and hypotyposis

- all found in the bars 37-42. The melody rises and falls to describe the encircling of garlands (antithesis). The circulatio shows the circling around the notes, and hypotyposis paints the picture in sound of the encircling.

catabasis - the descent by step in melody imitates the calling out to duty for, in a shout, a call generally tapers downward in pitch (bars 5,16,37).

epanalepsis - the same word is emphasized ("triumphant call") as it opens and closes each section (bars 5 and 13, 16 and 25).

tmesis - a break or rest when the composition goes from one section to the next is used to highlight the introduction of the B section (bar 33).

Figures serve both formal and decorative functions within the elocutio of an aria. As mentioned in Chapter I, the musical-rhetorical figures underlined or brought out the words or ideas in the poetry, but particular figures were not restricted to particular passions. For example, an exclamatio could be used to express joy ("Oh, what a wonderful day!") or to express misery ("Oh gods, what is to become of me!"). Figures were simply rhetorical tools adapted to music and used to highlight aspects of the aria to make it more persuasive.

The memoria and pronunciatio, as discussed in Chapter II, are again relevant here. The memorization of the aria and the performer's interpretation of heroic duty, as conveyed through

facial expression, gesture, stance, and stage position, would all transmit the determination and energy of Aeneas' resolve.

As pointed out in this chapter's opening quotation, the use of accompanied recitative rivalled the power of the aria in affecting the passions of the audience. Like the aria, the accompanied recitative is used only at the most important points of the rhetorical argument. The recitative underlined the developments occurring during the action of the drama whereas the aria usually followed such an action. The two musical forms combine in powerful contrast for the process of persuasion.

Vinci is given much to work with in the final recitative of Act III, scene 22.<sup>15</sup> (Please refer to the musical example in Appendix 2.) The orchestral chords lightly score Didone's opening words, and an abrupt modulation to B flat minor, as well as an ominous cello tremolo, accent her growing horror at the realization of her circumstances in bar 3. Death and fear are approaching, with the tremolo appearing in all parts (hypotyposis) as she trembles and the palace shakes (bars 8 and 10. Bars 9-12 mirror the description of how the palace will fall, as the outside string parts use descending figures first in the fall of a fifth and then in an entire octave drop (catabasis). There is a return to sustained, simple chording as she calls to Selene, Osmido, and the rest of the characters who have deserted her (apostrophe). That there is no one there to help her is emphasized by her pause (aposiopesis) and

the unison orchestral interlude introducing a dotted figure in C minor. This figure resembles the sound of her beating heart while she attempts anxiously to decide her course of action. When her words begins again in bar 23, she is accompanied by unison strings as she decides to stay or to go (dubitatio), and her search for pity is emphasized by her repetition of the words "finding pity anywhere" (bars 29-32) and a pause (aposiopesis); she is unaccompanied in order to emphasize her query of her own baseness (interrogatio) within her heart. However, the accompaniment begins again as she resumes her accusations that Aeneas is to blame for her fate. A descending figure (catabasis) describes her demand to let Carthage fall (bars 40-42), but again the accompaniment falls silent to emphasize her final words before breaking into a running repeated sixteenth note figuration (analepsis) which depicts her leap into the flames.

Given the above persuasive power of an accompanied recitative and the previously discussed aria, the audience would easily become absorbed with the emotional dilemma of the characters. By being drawn into the situation by the characters, the audience would be forced to consider their own moral stances and would learn by example the correct lesson in virtue. Thus, the elocutio owed much of its persuasive appeal to the function of music in the opera seria. Opera seria was truly an exercise in rhetoric as both music and text were based on the art of rhetoric.

## NOTES

## III. VINCI'S MUSIC: THE ELOCUTIO

1.

Charles Burney, A General History of Music (New York: Dover Press, 1957), II: 917.

2.

Although Metastasio was personally able to ensure the rhetorical principle of the productions in Venice, 1724 and in Rome, 1726, this was not always the case in subsequent productions of Didone abbandonata or with his other libretti. These later productions were forced to rely upon the adherence to the rules of rhetoric by the composer and performer through earlier educational training in the music conservatories in Italy and in Europe.

3.

This would seem to contradict my statement on page 8 that an actor fails to convince an audience by appearing on stage, stating a simple truth, and then exiting the stage. However, an aria presents not a simple statement but rather a convincing argument after which there is nothing left to be said. Therefore, an actor successfully exits the stage.

4.

John H. Mackin, Classical Rhetoric for Modern Discourse (New York: The Free Press, 1969), 201-202.

5.

It is conceivable that da capo aria form, related to A-B-A song form, owes much of its popularity in the opera seria to a format which adapted well to rhetorical principle. According to Francesco Tosi, Observations of the Florid Song (London: William Reeves, 1926), p.93-94, few ornaments are required to present the simple and pure strength of the poetry in the A section of the aria. In the B section, the performer may suggest greater abilities with a few more ornaments. But it is in the repetition of the A section where much ornamentation varies it for the better. In other words, the performer was to make the repetition of the pure and simple statement of A more persuasive through the musical metaphor of ornamentation. Musical strength combines with the power of the poetry to present a strong close to the aria. And, according to Charles Burney A General History of Music, London, 1776-89 (New York: Dover Press, 1957)II, p.395, the musical oration successfully moved the passion of the audience:

Whoever has seen an excellent opera performed in Naples will be in no doubt that an opera can so delude a man and make him forget its improbable nature that he will believe he is seeing the true Alexander, the true Dido, and the true Hercules [on the stage]. The heaving bosoms afflicted by anguish and the copious tears rolling down the sorrowful faces of the tender and passionate Italian ladies will prove the point for him.... Even the figures of the castratos which are often rather unsuitable for the parts they play will not hinder the deception. If as well Faustini, Cuzzoni, Farinelli, and Porpora, have suitable parts, if at the same time an Apostolo Zeno has expressed the characters' passions in the language of the Muses, and a Pergolesi has felt its accents in his soul - oh then how little can a man know of nature who considers these characters' song unnatural! He is not worthy of feeling happiness!

6.

In the repetition of the A section, the ability of the performer to understand and transmit a strong closing argument was of greater importance than was the skill of the composer in providing the basic framework of this section. Castrati, such as Farinelli and Tesi, had been trained in Italian conservatories which emphasized basic musical training and vocal technique, but which also provided the elementary study of Classical oratory and rhetoric. They were therefore trained to think in terms of rhetorical delivery, as directed in the words of Quintilian's On the Teaching of Speaking and Writing (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987) X: Chapter One. The function of the orator is to speak and to utilize key words in the most appropriate manner. Certain elegant or significant words must be kept in readiness to convey the fervour and excite the audience into an involvement with the passion itself rather than in the artificial representation of the passion. Even a declamation composed only for display may use great elegance to please the audience (II: Chapter Ten). Similarly, the function of the castrato was to sing and if one likens the musical metaphors in ornamentation to those appropriate words described above, the castrato embellished the repetition of the A section in accordance with this rhetorical principle.

7.

Joseph G. Fucilla, ed. and trans. Three Melodramas by Pietro Metastasio (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1981), 32.

8.

Composite of information combined from the following sources: Joseph G. Fucilla, Three Melodramas; Pietro Metastasio, "Didone abbandonata". Italian Opera Librettos, 1640-1770. Edited by Howard Mayer Brown (New York: Garland Publishing, 1978), IV; and

the musical score by Leonardo Vinci, Didone abbandonata. A photoreproduction of a manuscript copy is in the Newberry Library, Chicago (New York: Garland Pub., 1977). As Fucilla's translation dealt with the 1724 libretto, I have provided my own translations of revised scene texts.

9. Fucilla, Three Melodramas, 53-54.

10. Metastasio, "Didone abbandonata", 66.

11. One may simply interpret note patterns (eg. a descending scale) and the relationship of keys (eg. basic tonic-dominant, or, a major to relative minor progression) in strictly theoretical terms. However, Frederick T. Wessel's Ph.D. dissertation, "The Affektenlehre in the Eighteenth-Century" (University of Indiana, 1955), presents a comprehensive study of major eighteenth-century theorists, including Mattheson, who assigned affective connotations to these same tonal patterns and key relationships.

12. Ibid., 66.

13. Aristotle, "Rhetorica", The Works of Aristotle. Edited by W.D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), XI: 1404b.

14. Hans Heinrich Unger, Die Beziehungen Zwischen Musik und Rhetorik im 16.-18. Jahrhundert (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1969).

15. Leonardo Vinci, Didone abbandonata. Photoreproduction of a MS copy in the Newberry Library, Chicago (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), 223-227.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

... the fault is in the Singers.... In former times, divers Aires were heard in the Theatre in this delightful manner, ... it was then impossible for a human Soul, not to melt into Tenderness and Tears from the violent Motion of the Affections... pardon me if I conclude with saying, that the Moderns are arrived at the highest Degree of Perfection in singing to Ear; and the Ancients are inimitable in singing to the Heart....<sup>1</sup>

Rhetoric evolved from a belief in the existence of certain truths. These truths would benefit the listener who could be persuaded through valid argument to apply them to better his/her life. Metastasio argued the case for virtue, and he applied the framework and methods of rhetoric to the opera seria to transmit his views. The eighteenth-century opera seria audiences received this lesson in morality countless times, for Metastasio's twenty-eight libretti were set over three hundred times in the course of that century and performed innumerable times within that period. Moreover, the audience attended an opera performance as a social occasion - for conversation, games, and pursuits other than the exclusive enjoyment of the opera. Therefore, they might have attended the same performance more than once and would likely have attended every première. Metastasio's position with respect to virtue would have become common knowledge quite quickly.

However, unless new ways to express a truth are found, the original method begins to grow stale, and, to alleviate any boredom, one must attempt to make the approach more and more entertaining. To keep the audience absorbed and

persuaded was the primary function of rhetoric, so extra ornaments and perhaps a bit more emotional display were added to the performance to hold an audience's interest though not enough to corrupt the integrity of the rhetorical argument within the aria itself or to modify the overall truth of the opera. Soon, the audience grew to accept the increasingly flamboyant displays as the norm, and a combination of audience pressure and performers' vanity took the aria from a vehicle of persuasion to a form which appealed more to the ears. While many performers were acquainted with the concept of the passions and of moving the audience through an objective portrayal -- hence, of the need for a less distracting presentation -- the performers grew to ignore the rules of rhetoric. Therefore, Metastasio was witness to both the initial acceptance of and gradual deviation from the rhetorical basis of the opera seria which occurred within his lifetime.

Was opera seria's demise brought about by his unchanging opera seria format (i.e., as an oration) or by the abuse of the aria by virtuoso singers who made the aria and the overall form objects of ridicule? One must consider the ample evidence for either of these two cases.

The audience had grown accustomed to returning attention to the stage during the opera for the enjoyment of the arias only. That had been acceptable in earlier times for an aria performance taught about virtue as well as informed the

audience member of the course of the conflict. But with arias which only entertained, the audience gained merely an appreciation of the performer and then returned to their cards. This was not the objective of the original opera seria aria.

Another problem grew out of the stress placed on the aria because of the many rules attached to it. These rules had been created for rhetorical and dramatic reasons so that the conflict of the argument would be clearly presented and the success of the moral lesson would be ensured. But the performer gradually assumed the importance accorded his arias and from this, his manipulation of the form occurred.

Also, if it had been possible for Metastasio to assign virtues to encompass all levels of society, not just those born to nobility or those who were involved in acts of great heroism, the opera would have kept up with the changing social environment. With the rise of the middle classes in the middle and latter half of the eighteenth century, the opera seria was becoming an "antiquated" opera type which was respected for its age if no longer for its content. It offered lofty ideals, but did so in a manner somewhat alien to the rising middle class.

The aria became so ridiculously abused, it soon lost almost all connection with its original rhetorical purpose. Although the aria was forced to do so to attract audiences' attention to the opera, the abuses might not have occurred if

Metastasio had made his own revisions to renew the interest of the audience. However, he did not make the changes needed, such as creating complex characters. Nor would it have been likely that Metastasio would have been able to change the emphasis on class structure, nobility, and virtue, for opera seria was a genre born of an aristocratic society, and he wrote his dramas as a court poet. It was inconceivable that he would seek to satisfy the lower classes. Therefore, the decline of the opera seria was unavoidable.

Rhetoric also underwent periods during which it relied on decorating its contents persuasively (elocutio), rather than working to find new ideas to express. This is shown in the following case in which the young Votiemus Maximus criticizes Seneca the Elder for his emphasis on the elocutio, or stylistic elements of oration, at the expense of the oration's basic argument:

In declaration, men speak to please and not to persuade; ornaments are sought while argument is dispensed with as being troublesome and uninteresting; it is sufficient to please by means of sententiae and amplifications, the aim being that of personal triumph rather than the triumph of a cause.<sup>2</sup>

The cause was the truth on which one's argument was based, and when ideas used to present this argument were viewed as too "troublesome and uninteresting" by the audience, it was time to conceive of new ideas or methods with which to convey the cause. Therefore, the decline of opera seria was not the result of the unchanging nature of rhetoric but rather to the unchanging ideas of Metastasio. His original premise

was good, for his drama based on rhetorical formula and technique made the opera seria the epitome of moral entertainment. The libretto, the music, and the acting all worked towards the same rhetorical ideal of a moral lesson through persuasive presentation. It was truly an exercise in rhetoric from its smallest components to its overall structure. But this perfect vehicle did not receive new ideas (invented by J. Galliard (London: William Reeves, 1924)) (inventio) to adapt to its changing audience, and therefore remained a genre of the early eighteenth century.

## NOTES

## IV. CONCLUSION

1. Pier Francesco Tosi, (Observations of the Florid Song), translated by J. Galliard (London: William Reeves, 1926), 108-110.
2. P. Albert Duhamel, "The Function of Rhetoric as Effective Expression," Journal of the History of Ideas 10 (1949): 353.

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APPENDIX 1

A section: Ritornello 1 = Exordium (mm. 1-4)

1 Allegro

Corni da Caccia

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Aeneas

Bass.

unison

col basso

Aeneas' Aria: "A Trionfar mi chiama ..." (III, 8, Didone abbandonata), mm. 1-4 (continued)

## Quatrain 1 = Narratio (mm. 5-13)

5

(Epanalepsis)  
Analepsis ← Catabasis →

A tri-on-far mi chia-ma un bel de-sio d'o-

no-re e già so-prail mio co-re co-min-cio à tri-on-

Aeneas' Aria: "A Trionfar mi chiama ..." (III, 8,  
Didone abbandonata), mm. 5-8 (continued)

9

*p:*

*far-*

*unison*

*à tri-on-*

Aeneas' Aria: "A Trionfar mi chiama ..." (III, 8,  
Didone abbandonata), mm. 9-12 (continued)

Ritornello 2 = Propositio (mm. 14-15)

Modified Repetition of Quatrain 1 = Confirmatio (mm.16-25)

(Modified = Key change to dominant, melodic/rhythmic variation)

The musical score consists of ten staves. The first two staves are for a string quartet. The third and fourth staves are for a vocal line with lyrics: "-far à tri-on-far." and "A tri-on-far mi". The fifth staff is for a bassoon, with the annotation "col basso (Epanalepsis)". The sixth and seventh staves are for a string quartet, with the annotation "unison". The eighth and ninth staves are for a string quartet. The tenth staff is for a bassoon. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (f), trills (tr.), and articulation marks. The key signature is one flat (G minor) and the time signature is 4/4.

Aeneas' Aria: "À Trionfar mi chiama ..." (III, 8,

Didone abbandonata), mm.13-16 (continued)

17

chia-ma un bel de-sio d'o-no-re e già so-prai mio

Unison

Co-re co-mincio à tri-on-far

Aeneas' Aria: "A Trionfar mi chiama ..." (III, 8,  
Didone abbandonata), mm. 17-20 (continued)

Handwritten musical score for Aeneas' Aria, measures 21-24. The score is written on ten staves. The first system (measures 21-22) includes a vocal line with a "unison" instruction, a piano accompaniment, and a keyboard part. The second system (measures 23-24) continues the vocal and piano parts, with the keyboard part ending with a double bar line and a fermata.

Aeneas' Aria: "A Trionfar mi chiama..." (III, 8,  
Didone abbandonata), mm. 21-24 (conti.)

## Ritornello 3 = Extended Confirmatio (mm.26-33)

25

Epanalepsis

tri-on-far.

Aeneas' Aria: "A Trionfar mi chiama..." (III,8,  
Didone abbandonata), mm.25-28 (conti.)

29

unison

Aeneas' Aria: "A Trionfar mi chiama ..." (III, 8,  
Didone abbandonata), mm. 29-32 (conti.)

B section : Entire B section = Confutatio (mm.33-42)

33

Tmesis

Con gene-ro-sa brama frai ri-schiele ru-

f

unison

-i- ne di nuo-ui al-lo ri il cri-ne io

Aeneas' Aria: "À Trionfar mi chiama..." (III, 8,  
Didone abbandonata), mm.33-36 (conti.)

37

Repetition of A section

vo-lo a cir-con-dar

Circulatio (Hypotyposis)  
Antithesis

Unison

Circulatio (conti.)

io vo-lo a cir-con-

Aeneas' Aria: "A Trionfar mi chiama..." (III, 8,  
Didone abbandonata), mm. 37-40 (conti.)

Da capo (Repetition of A section) = Peroratio (mm. 1-33)

41

Tmesis

Circulatio

dar io vo-lo à cir-con-dar.

Da capo

Aeneas' Aria: "A Trionfar mi chiama..." (III, 8,  
Didone abbandonata), mm.41-42.

## APPENDIX 2

Handwritten musical score for the first system, featuring Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Didone, and Bass. The score includes a first ending bracket over the first measure of each instrument. The vocal line (Didone) has lyrics: "Ah che dis-si in-fe-li-ce! a quolec-".

Handwritten musical score for the second system, featuring Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Didone, and Bass. The score includes a unison section for the strings and a tremolo section for the Bass. The vocal line (Didone) has lyrics: "-ces-so. Oh Di-olcresce for-ro-re. O-vun-que io".

Didone's Accompanied Recitative (III, 22, Didone abbandonata), mm. 1-4 (continued)

Hypotyposis

5

col basso

mi-ro mi vien la mor-te e lo spa-

Hypotyposis

-uen-to e lo spa-uen-to in fac-cio.

Didone's Accompanied Recitative (III, 22, Didone abbandonata), mm. 5-8 (continued)



13

-le-ne, Os-mi-da, ah tut-ti tut-ti ce-

↑ Apostrophe ↓

- de-ste al-lam ia sor-te in-fi-da. Non

unison

Didone's Accompanied Recitative (III, 22, Didone abbandonata), mm. 13-16 (continued)

17

vè che mi soc-cor-ra, o chi muc-ci-da.

f

↑  
Aposiopesis

unison

col basso

Didone's Accompanied Recitative (III, 22, Didone abbandonata), mm. 17-20 (continued)

\*number of syllables  
 indicate an improvised ornament  
 here

Didone's Accompanied Recitative (III, 22, Didone  
 abbandonata), mm. 21-24 (continued)

25

unison

do-ve... oh Dio ... re-sio ... ma

↖ Dubitatio ↗

\* number of syllables indicate an improvised ornament

poi ché fò ... dunque mo-rir do-vro

Didone's Accompanied Recitative (III, 22, Didone abbandonata), mm. 25-28 (continued)

29

col canto

sen-za tro-var pie-ta

dun-que ma-rir dov-ro

← Aposiopesis →

sen-za tro-var pie-ta

sen-za tro-var pie-ta .

Didone's Accompanied Recitative (III, 22, Didone abbandonata), mm. 29-32 (continued)

33

E'ue tan-te vil-tà nel pet-to mio? No', no'.

↑ Interrogatio ————— ↑ \* number of syllables  
 indicate improvised ornament  
 (bars 34 & 36)

Si mo-ra e l'in-fe-de le E-neá.

Didone's Accompanied Recitative (III, 22, Didone abbandonata), mm. 33-36 (continued)

37

Ab-bia per mio de-sti-no un au-gu-rio fu-ne-sto al suo co-

Catabasis

-mi-no. Pre-ci-pi-ti Car-

Didone's Accompanied Recitative (III, 22, Didone abbandonata), mm. 37-40 (continued)

CatabasisCatabasis

41

-ta-go, Pre-ci-pi-ti Car-ta-go, Ar-da-la

unison

reg-gia, e<sup>\*</sup> sia il Ce-ne-re di lei la

\* number of syllables indicate  
an improvised ornament here

Didone's Accompanied Recitative (III, 22, Didone  
abbandonata), mm. 41-44 (continued)

45

Tom-ba mi-a .

↑ Analepsis (repetition of same tone) ↓

Didone's Accompanied Recitative (III, 22, Didone abbandonata), mm. 45-46.