

## From Vivaldi to Gluck: On the Road with Anna Girò

The singer Anna Girò (1710-after 1749) is normally associated with Antonio Vivaldi, who cherished her performances for their dramatic qualities. Girò made her stage debut (1723) at 13 in Treviso. By the age of 20 (1730) she had also sung in Venice, Bologna, and Florence. From time to time she appeared with Faustina Bordoni and several other luminaries of the opera world. Over the next decade she added Ancona, Ferrara, Mantua, Milan, Pavia, Turin, and Verona to her resume. What interests us here is the final decade of her career, because it offers a gloss on the turbulent world of itinerant theatrical life, the one in which Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787) found many of his early opportunities as a composer. In the 1740s this sphere of activity shaped the spread of Italian opera beyond the Alps, in small cities found today in Slovenia, Moravia, the Czech Republic, and eastern (then Inner) Austria as well as in other regions such as Lombardy which were under Austrian rule. The hope of troupes in Graz, Ljubljana, and Bratislava was always for a foothold in Vienna. Local counts typically had townhouses in the celebrated city on the Danube, but times were turbulent there during the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-47), and performers sought their opportunities in calmer byways. The modest operas of the provinces were covert reminders of the displacements and artistic inconveniences caused by the conflict. One unanticipated consequence of the war was that after its conclusion performers such as Gluck moved past Vienna and Dresden to Hamburg and Copenhagen, but by then Girò had retired.

The troupe model of opera production was thus a by-product of cultural disruption. For a singer trained, like Girò, in the 1720s, the adaptation must have been difficult. Yet an interesting aspect of her transition is that in the 1740s she continued to sing in the watered-down remnants of what had been the dignified *dramma per musica*. In a traveling troupe everyone worked on a blanket contract. The impresario made all the arrangements. Singers did not exist as individuals. They were little noticed as discrete entities, for their names were not given in most libretti. They simply survived. Venetian opera chronographers such as Bonlini and Groppo, who had studiously compiled lists of every production of serious opera in Venice,<sup>1</sup> desisted after 1745 not

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<sup>1</sup> Gio. Carlo Bonlini (*Le glorie della poesia e della musica*) ended his compilation in 1730. Antonio Groppo (a publisher) continued his *Catalogo di tutti i drammi per musica recitate nei teatri di Venezia dall'anno 1637 until*

because there were no more operas but because the mongrel works now being given in Venice (initially by the Mingotti troupe, with whom Girò found employ in other venues) no longer merited notice. Pastiche was the order of the day for troupes. Since only fragments of most of their adaptations survive, it is impossible to certify musical content, much less the style or quality of performance. No one thought to preserve the manuscripts used for performance. We are left with little more than titles.

Even though Girò and Gluck were contemporaries, but in relation to their career trajectories Girò's late years corresponded to Gluck's early ones. The decade they shared in common was the 1740s. For Girò this decade marked the final stage of her career, while for Gluck, it provided him opportunities to sample many venues and expand his experience. Yet almost four decades remained to him when Girò left the stage. Girò's career had begun at an unusually early point for a singer, while Gluck's as a composer started in a leisurely fashion (at least when compared to the ample ranks of priest and male choristers who started composing in the late teens). The career of a *virtuosa* often declined at around 35, but composers' lasting works were sometimes written in staunch middle age. The irony of the brief encounter(s) between Girò and Gluck (1745) puts their contrasting trajectories in high relief: she was 35, he 31.

### Girò before Ferrara

Between 1723 and 1749 Girò appeared in 28 operas outside Venice. Twenty-one were given prior to Vivaldi's death (1741). Although Girò lives in the shadow of Vivaldi, he was the composer of only ten of these works. Girò is best known for her passionate performances in the 1720s and 30s of "rage" arias. She could as easily be associated with male roles she (a common procedure in theaters such as Sant'Angelo, in contrast to the continuing presence of *castrati* (male countertenors in female roles) at San Giovanni Grisostomo. What Vivaldi cherished in Girò's voice may have been particular to Venetian audiences, which were socially mixed, because in the noble societies that operated theaters elsewhere Girò prompted much controversy.

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1745. Both compiled supplementary listings after initial publication (for details see E. Selfridge-Field, *Song and Season: Science, Culture, and Theatrical Time in Early Modern Venice* (Stanford University Press, 2007), Ch. 10, pp. 267-303. Apostolo Zeno is credited with continuing Groppo's work from its printed termination to 1752, but Groppo himself compiled entries by hand until 1767. He took pains to explain, with considerable disdain, that the dramatic genres of many recent titles were indeterminate.

The academicians of Florence complained of Girò's "small voice" and a lack of connection with audiences. In Ferrara dismay with the texts Vivaldi selected (often with a view towards Girò's strengths) usually led to their being overruled, forcing the prima donna into role after role by Johann Adolf Hasse, whose operas rose to enormous popularity in the 1730s. (Their popularity rapidly eclipsed that of Vivaldi.) Taking these profiles together, we might imagine that while Girò possessed great vocal agility and a strong sense of character, neither her singing nor Vivaldi's operas suited all tastes.

Girò's early life was a difficult one, for she was abandoned by her mother, ignored by her Mantuan father and brothers, and raised (as well as accompanied throughout her opera career) by her step-sister, Paolina Trevisan, who was about 20 years her senior. Girò's earliest known patron was Alderano I Cybo Malaspina, the duke of Massa e Carrara. Another may have been the nobleman Gio. Pietro Pasqualigo. She may have studied singing with Tomaso Albinoni prior to her singing debut (in Treviso) at the tender age of 13. A year later Vivaldi, in league with the dance master Giovanni Gallo, encouraged her to learn to play the harpsichord. Early on, she worked with several impresarios in Venice, where she sang principally at Sant'Angelo and San Moisè. (See Table 1.) Her most important roles—as Eudamia in Vivaldi's *Dorilla in Tempe* (Sant'Angelo, 9 November 1726; revived in 1734) and as Tamiri in his *Farnace* (10 February 1727)—came early in her career. *Farnace* enjoyed at least six revivals over the next dozen or so years.

Girò was left without continuing appearances in Vivaldi's operas five years after her first appearance in one his works because the composer spent most of year in an undefined venue in "Germania" (the venue is currently believed to have been Prague). She seized the bit admirably, pursuing invitations to Milan, Turin (not realized), and other venues outside the Venetian Republic. Her one-off performances in Mantua and Pavia were occasioned by Vivaldi's return to Italy,<sup>2</sup> but the two coincided only rarely at the Teatro Filarmonico, Verona, where Vivaldi was to enjoy his greatest success. The theater was inaugurated at the start of 1732 with Vivaldi's first known attempt at a pastoral subject (*La fida ninfa*, based on Scipione Maffei's text). The production did not include Girò (owing to other commitments, she was not available). The theater had been commissioned by the Venetian Senate in 1716, and Vivaldi is likely to have

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<sup>2</sup> Vivaldi went to "Germania" for most of a year starting in early October 1729.

prepared at last some elements of the work for performance in 1729, when the new theater was expected to open. Girò appeared at the Teatro Filarmonico in 1734 — as Statira in Orlandini's *Arsace* and then as Papiria in Giacomelli's *Lucio Papirio dittatore*. The work that brought dismissal of her “small voice” by Florentine academicians was Vivaldi's own *Griselda*, which opened in Venice at the Grimani's Teatro San Samuele (previously a comedy house) on 18 May 1735.<sup>3</sup> Carlo Goldoni, who found little to praise either in either Vivaldi's music or his person, seized the opportunity to “improve” the work for an autumn production in prose by “assassinating” the text (by Apostolo Zeno) that Vivaldi had used and by discarding the music.<sup>4</sup>

Vivaldi suffered the greatest heights and depths of his career between May 1737, when his *Catone in Utica* generated high praise and huge profits in Verona, and November of the same year, when he was unexpectedly informed by the papal nuncio in Venice that he was being banned from Ferrara (where he had been engaged to produce two seasons' worth of operas) for the rest of his life. The papal representative described the charges as being that Vivaldi was “a priest who did not say mass” and that he had an improper relationship with Girò. This message came in the midst of much bickering between Vivaldi and the Ferrarese academicians, who had to approve the selection of subjects and the composers who were to set them.<sup>5</sup> Vivaldi had been intent on promoting his own operas, but when the prestige of librettists was taken into account by the academicians Vivaldi's choices did not fare well: they were in most cases not by Metastasio, the imperial court poet whose texts were of impeccable reputation. Having set several of Metastasio's dramas to music in the past five years, Vivaldi was taken aback past accommodations could not dissuade the academicians from choosing Hasse's *Demetrio* and *Alessandro nell'Indie* over Vivaldi's own works. As for the Ferrarese ban on his person, Vivaldi had already made extensive outlays for scenery, costumes, and singers. The ultimate result of the ban, and the chaotic conditions created at the Teatro Bonacossi, would be to incur debts

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<sup>3</sup> Girò's Florentine critics were predominantly merchants, for Venice's spring theatrical season was an adjunct to the city's mercantile fair (E. Selfridge-Field, *A New Chronology of Venetian Opera and Related Genres (1660-1670)*, Stanford University Press 2007, pp. 445f).

<sup>4</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> The Bentivoglio correspondence is transcribed in the sources itemized above.

that Vivaldi would eventually find to be insurmountable,<sup>6</sup> but that was not recognized for another two years.

### Girò in Ferrara (1737-39)

Once Vivaldi was banned from Ferrara, it fell to Girò, her step-sister Trevisan, and the scenographer Antonio Mauro to be Vivaldi's surrogates—the first two in collecting the receipts and bringing the earnings back to Venice, the latter in making sure each production was mounted appropriately. He selected the cast and trained the singers in Venice. According to his own statement, Mauro considered himself a de facto manager but one without the skills to direct musical performances. Musical decisions (in some cases made by the participant who was most insistent) caused many discontents.

From Vivaldi's point of view the second Ferrara season, 1738-39, was crueler than the first. Vivaldi was apoplectic over the harsh reports he received of production and musical mishaps and condemned nearly all the participants.<sup>7</sup> The harpsichordist altered large portions of Metastasio's text for Hasse's *Siroe*. We see just one of them such alteration, a new recitative for Girò (Emira) from Act II, Sc. 14 (Figure 1). The work that was given in Ferrara in the winter of 1739 was obviously altered on the spot. Barely a page of the libretto lacks a paste-in.<sup>8</sup>

<< Insert Figure 1 >>

The *Siroe* that Vivaldi had wished to provide for Ferrara in the winter of 1738 was instead performed the following summer (with Girò) in Ancona. Vivaldi was not present there either, but Girò and Trevisan were. Vivaldi's claim that the materials he prepared were butchered beyond recognition is entirely credible. (According to Mauro, most of the changes were made by the accompanist.)

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<sup>6</sup> Because of his debts Vivaldi went into hiding (by means that have yet to be determined) in the spring of 1740 and was largely invisible until his death on July 28, 1741, in Vienna.

<sup>7</sup> The correspondence related to this episode is reproduced in several studies of Vivaldi including those of Remo Giazotto (*Vivaldi*, Milan: Nuova Academia Editrice), Karl Heller (*Antonio Vivaldi, The Red Priest*, Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1997), and Micky White (*Antonio Vivaldi: A Life in Documents*, Leo S. Olschki, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Kindly made available by Alfredo Vitolo from the Museo Internazionale e Biblioteca della Musica, Bologna.

The music for the Ferrarese *Siroe* does not survive, and in fact it is difficult to imagine that an intact score actually existed by the end of the production. Hill's study of Girò's roles is concerned mainly with surviving works through the 1730s that featured Girò, and particularly those that feature one simple aria in 3/8 found in five Vivaldi operas — *Farnace* (1732), *Moteczuma* (1733), *Catone in Utica* (1737), *Siroe* (1739), and *Ciro* (1739).<sup>9</sup> (Aria reuse reduced the amount of new material that many singers had to learn for new productions.) No reports of the 1739 season's other work, Hasse's *Atalo, re di Bitinnia*, have come to light.

### Girò on the Transalpine Road

No evidence of contact between Vivaldi and Girò postdating the disastrous Ferrara season has come to light. Girò did not appear in what proved to be Vivaldi's final work for Venice, his *Feraspe* (November 1739). She was not named in his will. Fragments of operas from Vivaldi's later seasons could have traveled with Girò to her new itinerant life as an opera-troupe singer.

Girò paused only briefly in Venice before taking the road to Graz. She had been in Klagenfurt, at the new Stadt Theater (a "ball house" renovated for opera) in the summer or autumn of 1738 for a revival of Vivaldi's recent *Rosmira*. Upon her arrival in Graz in the spring of 1739 she converged with the Mingotti troupe,<sup>10</sup> which had spent the four previous years in Brno. The Tummelplatz *per se* was a modest market square in Graz. The small theater that faced onto the square was nestled under a wing of the bishop's palace, but it seems unlikely that the bishop had any interest in theatrical affairs. Its new market aside, Graz was culturally isolated and austere and religious. Cultural enterprises enjoyed the limited patronage of one branch of the Eggenberg family<sup>11</sup> and another of Trauttmansdorffs. By the standards of most places where Girò had performed, the audience available in Graz would have been modest in both size and taste.

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<sup>9</sup> John Walter Hill, "Vivaldi's *Griselda*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 31(1), 53–82 (<http://doi.org/10.2307/831385>), pp. 76f. Hill's appendix (pp. 79ff) itemizes Girò's arias in each of her roles, following libretti mainly in the Braidense National Library, Milan.

<sup>10</sup> The brothers Angelo and Pietro Mingotti started the careers as collaborators but their joint efforts were interspersed with independent itineraries involving smaller troupes. Pietro (1702-1759) was the brother more active in Graz, and Girò's appearances there were all under his direction. Angelo (1700-after 1767) had taken a troupe to Brno in 1732.

<sup>11</sup> Their more notable theatrical enterprise, dating from 1673, was situated in the castle of Czesky-Krumlov, where another branch of the Eggenberg family had built a fully functional Baroque theater that is fully restored.

The repertory of the Mingotti troupe may have suited the situation as well as anything else available. Girò took the role of Mandane in a pastiche of *Ciro riconosciuto* in the spring of 1739.<sup>12</sup> In the autumn she was cast in the title role of *Rosmira*, in an apparent adaptation of Vivaldi's *Rosmira fedele*. Another of her appearances was in a pastiche version of *Catone in Utica*; her likely role would have been that of Marzia, from the celebrated Veronese production of 1737. At some time in 1740 Girò also appeared in *Amor, Odio, e Pentimento*, which may have been based on the like-named work set by Giovanni Porta (Mestre, 1729).

The *Zenobia* of Luca Antonio Predieri (1668-1767), who had succeeded Antonio Caldara (1670-1736) as vice *Kapellmeister* in 1737, had been presented at the Kärtnertor on August 28, 1740, to commemorate the birthday of the empress, Elisabeth Christine (1691-1750). This would have been slightly more than a month before the emperor's death (October 1, 1740). No cast was named.<sup>13</sup> The gap in Girò's appearances throughout the year 1741 has prompted speculation that she joined Vivaldi in Vienna. Yet no one has determined when exactly Vivaldi went to Vienna, where he died on the night of July 27/28, 1741. Vivaldi was well acquainted with Predieri, but Predieri's position was too conspicuous to have sheltered the fugitive Vivaldi when he fled from Venice in May 1740.

Six months after the composer's death (Carnival 1742) Girò<sup>14</sup> was featured in a pastiche of Vivaldi's *L'oracolo in Messenia*<sup>15</sup> at the Teatro Privilegiato (otherwise known as for its location as the Kärtnertor; it was "privileged" in that it enjoyed royal protection). It could have been a memorial nod to Vivaldi, or a performance delayed by the mourning imposed after the

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<sup>12</sup> We presume that she did not appear in the Mingotti troupe's productions during Carnival 1739 in Graz, because she would have been fully occupied in Ferrara. It was generally the case (as here) in Graz that a role suited to or previously performed by Girò was taken up subsequently by Teresa Peruzzi ("La Denzia", i.e. the younger).

<sup>13</sup> The full score survives in US-Lc and A-Wn. *Zenobia* was Predieri's last completed opera score. He was appointed full *Kapellmeister* in 1741.

<sup>14</sup> During absences of the Mingotti troupe from Graz, Girò became hard to locate. She did not perform in works by Paolo Scalabrini in Graz -- *Sirbace* (1742), *Caio Fabrizio* (1743), and *La Semiramide riconosciuta* (1743).

<sup>15</sup> The premier of *L'oracolo in Messenia* had taken place at Sant'Angelo on 28 December 1737, a few weeks after Vivaldi received word that his upcoming Carnival season in Ferrara could not include him (E. Selfridge-Field, *A New Chronology of Venetian Opera and related Genres, 1660-1760* (Stanford University press, 2007, pp. 457f. The text was a resetting of Zeno's *Merope* (1712), and in Vivaldi's version Girò took the part of Merope. A setting by Giacomelli that remained close to Gasparini's of 1712 had been given at San Giovanni Grisostomo in 1734. Vivaldi's *Rosmira* had opened at Sant'Angelo a month after *L'oracolo in Messenia*, i.e. on 27 January 1738 (loc. cit.). Girò did not appear in what appears to have been a revival of the work (as *Merope*) in Ferrara in 1746.

death of Charles VI (1 October 1740). By the time a year's mourning had passed, Vivaldi had died. After Girò's 1742 appearance, a work attributed to Giuseppe Maria Orlandini (1676-1760), *La fedeltà sin alla morte*, was performed at the same theater. Statira and Arsace figured among the roles taken by its unidentified cast. The production included *balli*<sup>16</sup> set in a harem (reminiscent of Venetian operas by Giovanni Legrenzi in the 1670s).

Girò was back in Venice on 22 May 1743, when she appeared as Fulvia in G. B. Lampugnani's *Ezio*.<sup>17</sup> Inexplicably, a wintery storm buried Venice in snow the following day, but not before enthusiastic reviews of the production were circulated.<sup>18</sup> *Ezio* was such a well-worn text that the relationship of this version to earlier ones would be difficult to ascertain. Girò next surfaced in Milan late in 1744 to prepare for the winter season at the Regio Ducale. There she took the role of Edvige in Galuppi's *Berenice*, which had its premiere on 23 December. Galuppi's work was dedicated to Georg Christoph Lobkowitz (1686-1755), commander of the Hapsburg armies in Italy, which were then based near Milan. He was also briefly governor of Lombardy (1743-45).

In the imperial halo of Metastasio's dramas the textual selection of *Ippolito* for the next production would have come as no surprise. It was in this work, which had its premiere on 31 January 1745, that Gluck made his Milanese debut. Girò was cast as Fedra. In contrast to the entirely lost repertory in which she appeared over the final decade of her career, some music from *Ippolito* survives in Switzerland.<sup>19</sup> However, the usual contradictions between a libretto and remnants of its musical setting contribute an element of uncertainty as to what audiences actually heard. Among selected arias (apparently transcribed in the nineteenth century from an unknown original) six that bear the pencil marking "Fedra" on them turn out, on inspection, to refer not the role of Fedra but rather to an alternative title for the work.<sup>20</sup> Some of these "Fedra"

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<sup>16</sup> Music by Franz Holzbauer; choreography of Franz Hilferding.

<sup>17</sup> She was not involved in the 1738 production of Lampugnani's work in Piacenza.

<sup>18</sup> Full archival citation in Selfridge-Field, *New Chronology*, p 482.

<sup>19</sup> Schweizerische Nationalbibliothek, Bern, MLHs 32, Nos. 4-7, 11, 12 (all marked "Fedra"), pp. 480-501. No role is assigned to six additional arias from the same opera. The collection of the volume is entitled *Gluck | Airs, Scènes et Duos Italiens*. Other arias from the same work are in *ibid*, Hs 26. My gratitude to Laurent Pugin, head of the Swiss RISM office, for providing copies of these arias.

<sup>20</sup> Note, though, that arias marked "Fedra" in Hs 32 (Nos. 4-7, 11, 12, pp. 480-501) were not taken by Girò. The designation derives from pencil markings citing the opera by an alternative title ("Fedra"). The collection title of MS 32 is "*Gluck | Airs, Scènes et Duos Italiens*." Other (unassigned) arias from the same work are in found in Hs



arias prove to be for Teseo (Angelo Amorevoli), others for Ippolito. In the libretto the axe fell throughout the work on acres of recitative assigned to Teseo and Arsace, with smaller portions wrung from the roles of Fedra and Ippolito. In the end Girò had only two arias, according to a libretto in I-Bc (Lo02229). They were “Quando saprei le tue sorte” (Act II, Sc. 1) and “Digli, che al fin del corso” (Act III, Sc. 4), of which no copies survive.

Although much narrative was also eliminated, the changes made during production were not nearly as extreme as those for the Ferrarese production of *Siroe*. Girò retained her long soliloquy in the opening scene. Nonetheless, the most important thing that a profusion of *vergolette* tells us is that Milanese audiences wanted a lot less narrative than was found in earlier settings and a greater emphasis on placid melodies. Gluck was well suited to obliging these wishes.

### From Vivaldi to Gluck

Although only six years had elapsed, the contrast between Girò’s central role in *Siroe* and her marginal one in *Ippolito* could not have been greater. Girò’s career was clearly on the wane, but one career is not easily differentiated from another in this environment of rapidly changing musical taste. The War of the Austrian Succession (1740-47) coincided in northern Italy with a massive shift in public taste away from the *dramma per musica*, which was dying in all but the most aristocratic theaters. It was now moving towards the more popular, more easily produced *opera buffa*. Girò survived this change better than many singers of her generation did. She coped well new audiences that understood German better than Italian; with directors who had no fixed address; with venues that were much plainer than those of Venice, Mantua, and Milan; and with works that sometimes lacked dramatic coherence.<sup>21</sup> *Ippolito* is exceptional within this vortex of eroding values of the past. It was well produced, well regarded, and was staged in a handsome theater for a noble audience, some of whom were German-speaking. Despite all its suppressed recitatives the text adhered to high standards of dramatic expression.

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26. I am grateful to Laurent Pugin, head of the Swiss RISM office, for providing copies of these arias, which are in a nineteenth-century hand and include orchestration. No role is assigned to six further arias in Hs 26 but some are identifiable from the libretto, as mentioned in the main text.

<sup>21</sup> In her final decade Girò appeared in **up to six** works produced by one or both Mingotti (in Graz), one in Vienna, three in Milan (one of which was Gluck’s *L’Ippolito*), two in Ferrara, and one each in Piacenza, and Venice. Since libretti for pastiches given by traveling troupes often failed to name singers, it is possible that she appeared in other works in Austrian and Bohemia during this same decade.

In 1748, a year after the death of her brother-in-law Francesco Trevisan, Girò married a nobleman, though probably an impecunious one. Antonio Zanardi Landi came from a family that had lost its land holdings south of Piacenza in 1746. It is far from certain that the newlyweds settled in Piacenza. They could have settled in Venice, Mantua (where the family had had a box during Vivaldi's years as impresario to Prince Philip of Hesse Darmstadt), or in any number of other cities. Despite her marriage, Girò took a curtain call with the Mingotti troupe in 1749, when she appeared in a pastiche version of *Lucio Papirio dittatore* at the Tummelplatz. She must have had a following there, but the Mingotti troupe, having visited Copenhagen earlier in the same year, was about to move on.<sup>22</sup>

Gluck too was on the move. Having been based in Milan since 1737, he moved immediately after the production of *Ippolito* to the King's Theater, London. There his London sojourn was to be undermined by a political crisis,<sup>23</sup> and by 1747 the composer had left London to join — the troupe of Pietro Mingotti. His stint with them, for the wedding opera *Le nozze di d'Ercole e d'Ebe* at Pillnitz Castle, near Dresden, may not have amounted to more than a stop in June of that year.

A comparison of the itineraries of Girò and Gluck in the 1740s points to the remarkable fact that despite a long list of common venues, troupes, and benefactors, their paths crossed only in Milan. This is a statement broadly indicative of the unsettled state of theatrical entertainment in the 1740s. Both were affected by dislocations during the War of the Austrian Succession which, in the context of opera performance, undermined some practices, encouraged others, and threw up any number of practical obstacles into the paths of musicians and composers. Any sense of personal goals or cultural values in the overall career paths of aspiring professionals would have been sabotaged. They all survived as best they could. (See Table 2.)

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The two Metastasian operas Gluck set for production in Venice in the 1740s — *Demetrio* (San Samuele, May 2, 1742<sup>24</sup>) and *Ipermestra* (San Giovanni Grisostomo, November 21, 1744) — are not known to have attracted large audiences. The spring season was marginal, the autumn

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<sup>22</sup> Details of the Mingottis' troupe sojourn in Copenhagen are currently (2015) under investigation by Christine Jeanneret.

<sup>23</sup> See Brian Locke's study of *La caduta dei giganti* elsewhere in this volume.

<sup>24</sup> Arias (*inter alia*) in the Swiss National Library, Bern.

only slightly less so. San Giovanni Grisostomo was in rapid decline. Despite their close proximity, these two productions straddled an enormous divide in public taste, as the advent of Neapolitan *opera buffa* completely captivated audiences at San Cassiano and San Moisè in from 1743, enabling both to eclipse the Grimani houses in which Gluck's works appeared almost overnight.<sup>25</sup> The well honed *dramma per musica* struggled to survive beyond the 1740s. Only the dwindling nobility that cherished the imperial sympathies and dramatic rectitude embedded in the earlier genre continued to support it.<sup>26</sup> It would be an oversimplification to view Girò's appearances in Graz as a come-down or Gluck's in Venice as early successes. The truth is both more complex and more nuanced.

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<sup>25</sup> E. Selfridge-Field, *A New Chronology of Venetian Opera*, pp. 476-493.

<sup>26</sup> When the Teatro di San Benedetto opened in 1755 in order to preserve the *dramma per musica*, the genre was all but extinct in the remaining theaters.