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INDICE

FRANCESCO DEGRADA, Premessa	Pag. 5
<i>L'Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi alla Fondazione Giorgio Cini</i>	» 9
WALTER KOLNEDER, <i>Musikalische Symbolik bei Vivaldi</i> . . .	» 13
JEAN-PIERRE DEMOULIN, <i>A propos de la chronologie des oeuvres de Vivaldi. Definition des periodes creatives stylistiques</i> . .	» 25
DENIS ARNOLD, <i>Vivaldi's Motets for solo voice</i>	» 37
HELMUT HUCKE, <i>Vivaldi's Stabat Mater</i>	» 49
RUDOLF ELLER, <i>Vivaldi and Bach</i>	» 55
MICHAEL TALBOT, <i>Charles Jennens and Antonio Vivaldi</i> . . .	» 67
CLAUDIO GALLICO, <i>Vivaldi dagli archivi di Mantova</i>	» 77
LINO MORETTI, <i>Dopo l'insuccesso di Ferrara: diverbio tra Vivaldi e Antonio Mauro</i>	» 89
GASTONE VIO, <i>Precisazioni sui documenti della Pietà in relazione alle « Figlie del coro »</i>	» 101
NICHOLAS ANDERSON, <i>The italian influence on Bach's vocal music</i>	» 123
ELEANOR SELFRIDGE-FIELD, <i>Juditha in historical perspective. Scarlatti, Gasparini, Marcello and Vivaldi</i>	» 135
FRANCESCO DEGRADA, <i>Vivaldi e Metastasio: note in margine a una lettura dell'Olimpiade</i>	» 155
BRUNO BRIZI, <i>Domenico Lalli librettista di Vivaldi?</i>	» 183

INDICE

GIANFRANCO FOLENA, <i>Prima le parole, poi la musica: Scipione Maffei poeta per musica e la Fida ninfa</i>	Pag. 205
MARIA TERESA MURARO-ELENA POVOLEDO, <i>Le scene della Fida ninfa: Maffei, Vivaldi e Francesco Bibiena</i>	» 235
<i>Tavola rotonda sulla prassi esecutiva vivaldiana</i>	» 253
MARIO RINALDI, <i>Itinerario della rivalutazione vivaldiana</i>	» 289
FIAMMA NICOLODI, <i>Vivaldi nell'attività di Alfredo Casella organizzatore e interprete</i>	» 303
ROGER-CLAUDE TRAVERS, <i>La redécouverte de Vivaldi par le disque, de 1950 à 1978</i>	» 333
Indice dei nomi (a cura di Anna Maria Morazzoni)	» 349



ELEANOR SELFRIDGE-FIELD

JUDITHA IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.
SCARLATTI, GASPARINI, MARCELLO, AND VIVALDI

The oratorio in Venice seems to have had a limited history prior to 1716. As Vivaldi's only surviving work in this genre, *Juditha triumphans* therefore appears to have been an anomalous one. The view that Venice was a centre of little importance in the history of the Baroque oratorio results from the limited evidence of surviving libretti and the almost negligible evidence of surviving scores. In his *Geschichte des Oratoriums* (Leipzig 1911) Arnold Schering claimed Carlo Francesco Pollaro, Marc'Antonio Ziani, Antonio Lotti, and Antonio Caldara for Vienna despite the fact that all were born, trained, or employed in Venice. The principal Italian histories of the oratorio¹ are concerned mainly with Florentine and Roman works. Howard Smither's recent study of the Baroque oratorio, which traces the progress of the genre by the chief works of the major oratorio composers, takes the works of Legrenzi and Vivaldi's *Juditha* to represent Venice.²

Secondary sources of information, such as diaries and catalogues of works, tend to suggest a more ample presence of the

¹ GUIDO PASQUETTI, *L'Oratorio musicale in Italia*, Florence 1906; DOMENICO ALAIONE, *Storia dell'oratorio musicale in Italia*, Milan 1945.

² HOWARD E. SMITHER, *A History of the Oratorio: I, The Oratorio in the Baroque Era-Italy, Vienna, Paris*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 1977, pp. 305-314, 348-355. As Smither acknowledges, Legrenzi's surviving oratorios were not written in Venice.

oratorio in Venice. For example, Maria Antonietta Zorzi's catalogue of Venetian oratorios,³ which mentions any number of works no longer survived by primary evidence, names nearly 50 oratorios presented in the four Venetian *ospedali* during the 30 years that preceded *Juditha*. A largely overlooked Venetian journal, *Pallade veneta*, the surviving fragments of which cover short periods between 1687 and 1750, indicates that new oratorios appeared at almost the same rate as new operas: 14 oratorios as against 19 operas, for example, are cited during 34 scattered months from 1687 to 1708.

There were few oratorio productions at the *ospedali* prior to 1683. Between then and 1716 competition between the Incurabili and Pietà was intense. Under the leadership of Pollarolo, who served as its *maestro di coro* from at least 1696 to 1718, the Incurabili put on at least 17 oratorios; it is likely that Pollarolo himself was the composer of many. Under Francesco Gasparini, *maestro di coro* from 1701 to 1713, the Pietà was a close second in numbers of oratorios given; circumstantial evidence suggests that the *maestro* provided most of the music. Antonio Biffi served as *maestro di coro* at the Mendicanti, in which short oratorios may have been presented as early as 1640,⁴ from c. 1701 to 1711. This was the institution with which Legrenzi had been associated. In 1716 Pollarolo's son Antonio was serving as *maestro di coro* at the Derelitti (or Ospedaletto).

The intriguing situation of the *ospedali* often so dominates accounts of the music written for Venice that the oratorios produced elsewhere in Venice are overlooked. In 1661 an Oratory of St. Philip Neri was formed at the church of Santa Maria della Fava, but by 1667 it was linked with the Mendicanti. Typically, five oratorios were given during Lent and one for Assumption. A total of 11 were given in 1668,⁵ Biffi, Caldara, and M. A. Ziani

³ *Saggio di bibliografia sugli oratori sacri eseguiti a Venezia*, « Accademie e biblioteche d'Italia », IV-VII, 1930-1933, passim.

⁴ STEPHEN BONTA, *The Church Sonatas of Giovanni Legrenzi*, 2 vols. Ph. D. dissertation, Harvard University 1964, I, 81.

⁵ PAOLO PANCINO, *L'Archivio Musicale di S. Maria della Consolazione detta 'della Fava' già sede della Congregazione di S. Filippo Neri in Venezia*, typescript, pp. 67f.

all had oratorios given here between 1697 and 1704. Indeed, oratorios were also given at San Marco, as *Pallade veneta* for 1687 reports. The five surviving oratorios by the nobleman Benedetto Marcello (1686-1739) were variously composed for private audiences and small churches with which he was associated. An oratorio was given at Gasparini's home in Venice in 1710. In contrast to the all-female choirs of the *ospedali*, such situations offered male singers, but the abundant stores of instruments available especially at the Pietà and Mendicanti may have been lacking.

The story of Judith, taken from the Apochrypha, had been told in Italian oratorios for half a century and was also to enjoy numerous settings in French, German, and English. M. A. Ziani, who based his first oratorio (Mantua, 1686; not extant) on it, seems to have been the earliest Venetian composer to have set it. A *Juditha* for five voices by Gasparini (1668-1727) was given in Rome on 25 March 1689 for the Confraternity of the Holy Cross.⁶ Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725) based two oratorios on it. His « Naples » *Giuditta*⁷ was based on a libretto by Benedetto Pamphili (this text had been set in 1686 by C. F. Cesarini).⁸ The recent discovery of the Scarlatti autograph score in Morristown, New Jersey⁹ indicates that Scarlatti had in fact taken up work on the subject in 1693 and had introduced text modifications himself. Scarlatti's work was first sung before the Neapolitan merchants' guild in 1695, but its performance for the founding of the Clementine College at Rome in 1696 is more celebrated. Scarlatti's « Cambridge » *Giuditta*¹⁰ cannot be clearly dated, but

⁶ GB-Ob Mus. Sch. e. 383 (MS. 26477); libretto in I-Rvat. L. MONTALTO, *Un mecenate nella Roma barocca*, Florence 1955, p. 525, claims Pamphili to be the librettist.

⁷ Nicknamed for the source I-Nc MS. 5353, on which the modern edition (ed. LINO BIANCHI, *Gli oratorii di Alessandro Scarlatti*, I, Rome 1964) is based.

⁸ L. BIANCHI, *Gli oratorii*, III (Rome 1966), p. vi.

⁹ For a brief report see MARGERY STOMNE SELDEN's communication in the « Journal of the American Musicological Society », XXII/2, 1969, 305.

¹⁰ GB-Ckc Rowe MS. 205 (ed. L. BIANCHI, *Gli oratorii*, III).

Scarlatti's opportunity to become acquainted with its librettist, Antonio Ottoboni (1646-1720), is not likely to have occurred before 1689. The « Cambridge » *Giuditta* is usually considered to date from c. 1700, based on the belief that it is this work that was performed before the St. Mark's Company, Florence, in 1700. Lotti set a *Giuditta* for three voices (not extant) in 1701. The setting by Benedetto Marcello for seven voices, which is based on his own libretto, was performed in Rome at the home of Livia Spinola Borghese on 27 November 1709. The libretto was published in Venice in 1710.¹¹

Vivaldi's librettist, the nobleman Giacomo Casseti, is himself something of an anomaly. He is survived by only four libretti, and three of these, including *Juditha*, were written in 1716. Antonio Pollaro set Casseti's *Sacrum amoris novendiale* for the Derelitti in that year, while his father Carlo Francesco composed music for a text somewhat in keeping with the political spirit of *Juditha*. Entitled *Rex regnum in veneti maris regis a regibus adoraturus*, it was performed at the Incurabili. The libretto for *Juditha* must have enjoyed a good name, for it was to be set again for the Pietà by Gaetano Latilla in 1757.

Latin oratorios had been introduced at the Mendicanti by 1690, at the Pietà by 1700, and at the Incurabili by 1703. Vivaldi's own *Moses Deus Pharaonis* had been given at the Pietà in 1714. His only other known oratorio, the lost *Adorazione delli tre re magi*, was to be presented there in 1722. Outside the precincts of the *ospedali* oratorios seem invariably to have been in Italian,¹² however. The two-part Latin oratorio of the early eighteenth century had little in common with the shorter mote-like oratorios in Latin of mid-seventeenth century Rome. Also, the Biblical

¹¹ The music is preserved in I-OS Musiche B. 12 and B-Bc Wotquenne MS. 1090. It was not unusual for Venetian oratorio composers to maintain ties with Rome. Pollaro's *Il Convito di Baldassare* (to cite just one example) was sung at the Palazzo della Cancelleria, the home of Pietro Ottoboni (1667-1740), during Lent 1708. Caldara wrote many oratorios during his years (1709-1716) in Rome.

¹² See Zorzi's listings for S. Philip Neri and sundry churches, *Op. cit.*, VII, 329f.

subjects popular in Rome were in eclipse in Venice, where allegorical works and accounts of the lives of saints were more the fashion. Casseti's text is unusual in returning to a scriptural story for the purpose of drawing a political analogy, and his *Juditha* emerges more as a benediction on the Serenissima Repubblica than as a lesson for the faithful.

The occasion for which *Juditha* was composed is believed to have been the visit of the Saxon Elector Friedrich Augustus to Venice in 1716. The Saxons had a notably high regard for the music of the *ospedali* in general and of Vivaldi in particular. Moreover, they shared an interest in the event that is allegorically celebrated in *Juditha* – the victory of the Venetians (= Judith) over the Turks (= Holofernes) at Corfù in 1716. It may seem curious that Vivaldi, whose modern reputation is so dominated by his skill as a violinist and composer of concertos, recognised the occasion with an oratorio. But such duties had fallen to him since Gasparini's resignation from the Pietà, and Vivaldi's concurrent debut in 1713 as an opera composer. Violin performances for the Elector were provided by Tartini and Veracini. Giorgio Gentili, the leading San Marco violinist, presented his final twelve *Concerti*, Op. 6, to the Elector.¹³

Thus can the details of the oratorio's existence in Venice be sketched. Determining what elements of style prevailed, especially between the death of Legrenzi in 1690 and the composition of *Juditha* in 1716, is a more difficult task. Gasparini and Pollaro should have been the most important figures during this time.¹⁴ But there are so many gaps in source survival that we may learn as much about Venetian trends of the time by comparing contemporary Venetian and non-Venetian settings of the story of Judith, i.e., the works of Scarlatti, Gasparini, Marcello, and Vi-

¹³ A complete MS. of the opus, dated 1716, is in DDR-Dlb Mus. 2164/0/4.

¹⁴ On Pollaro's oratorios see OLGA TERMINI, *Carlo Francesco Pollaro: His Life, Time, and Music with Emphasis on the Operas*, Ph. D. dissertation, University of Southern California 1970. Additional oratorios by Pollaro are cited in MICHAEL O. TALBOT, *Some Overlooked MSS in Manchester*, « Musical Times », 115, 1974, 942-944.

valdi. Such a comparison gives some indication of the differences in practice between Naples, Rome, Venice, and perhaps Florence.

The differences are immediately striking. Scarlatti's two settings both appear to have been designed originally as guild entertainment. Both libretti were in Italian. Five soloists (SSATB) were required in the «Naples» work and three (SAT) in the «Cambridge» score. The dramatic treatment of the Ottoboni libretto is of a more delicate and profound kind than that of the Pamphili text.¹⁵ The purpose of Gasparini's five-voice (SSATB) setting in Latin was purely sacred. His vocal scoring is primarily syllabic and diatonic, with few intervals that are difficult to sing; there is a pronounced emphasis on recitative. Marcello's setting (SSSSATB) of his own text, written at the age of 23 and in Italian, was intended as an aristocratic entertainment. It was the second of Marcello's five oratorios, and it is in some ways less adventurous a work than a *sepolcro* of 1705 that seems to be by him.¹⁶ The scoring for voices in all registers sets all four earlier oratorios apart from that of Vivaldi (SSAAA). It is not particularly likely that Vivaldi knew the works by Scarlatti, Gasparini, or Marcello, although he was probably personally acquainted with all three. Although strongly associated with Naples and Rome, Scarlatti was resident in Venice in 1707.¹⁷ Gasparini served Vivaldi as a senior colleague and Marcello as a teacher. Vivaldi did not ignore Marcello's compositions: he borrowed a theme from the latter's violin concerto Op. 1, No. 2 (1708) in his own Op. 3, No. 11 (1711).

But if there was little conscious musical modelling of each work on its predecessor, there may have been a good bit gained from libretto to libretto as vehicles for music. Three of the five *Giuditta* settings are by Venetian noblemen – Ottoboni, Marcello,

¹⁵ *Gli oratorii*, III, viii.

¹⁶ I-Vnm Cod. It. IV-572 (= 9852), Fasc. 7.

¹⁷ During his residence in Venice Scarlatti composed music for the oratorio *Il primo omicidio*. The autograph, in US-Sfsu, is dated «Genn. 1707». See MARIO FABBRI, *Torna alla luce la partitura autografa dell'oratorio di Alessandro Scarlatti*, «Chigiana», XXIII, 1966, 245-264.

and Casseti. A great deal of interest is invested in the recitative in the texts used by Marcello and Gasparini. Yet Marcello is sparing in the number of lines assigned to the heroine, who does not appear until near the end of Part One. Indeed his version is less a drama in which she participates than a tale told about her. Casseti could have learned a few things from Marcello's libretto, however, for some arias of his work develop ideas that are present but obscured in recitative in Marcello's work.

The view that the use of the chorus receded with time¹⁸ cannot be substantiated by this comparison. Instead it appears that the chorus remained popular in Venice. Legrenzi had been an exponent of the moralising *madrigale* at the close of each half of an oratorio. Pollaro had leaned to the lighter *arietta allegra* as a concluding number, although there were two choruses in each part of both *Rex regnum* and *Jezabelle* (n.d.).¹⁹ In contrast, the «Cambridge» *Giuditta* has no chorus, while the «Naples» *Giuditta* and Marcello's work call only for a final ensemble. Gasparini employs a full chorus (SSAABB) twice – once as citizens and once as soldiers – in his work. Like Legrenzi, he weaves a number of ensemble passages into his work. Vivaldi's own operas show increasing interest in the chorus.²⁰ The choral numbers of Marcello's three later oratorios are far too complex musically to qualify under the heading of *ariette allegre*. Thus in the Venetian context it should not surprise us to find Vivaldi employing an opening chorus, a closing chorus for each part, and a chorus of soldiers in the middle of each part of his *Juditha*.

While interest in the chorus is conserved, we do see a decline in the use of duets in the eighteenth-century Venetian works.

¹⁸ A. SPAGNA's, *Discorso intorno a gl'oratori*, Rome 1706, is often cited (e.g., in SMITHER, *Op. cit.*, p. 298) for its claims that composers in the early eighteenth century had little skill at choral writing and that audiences took the start of a chorus as a signal to leave the hall.

¹⁹ O. TERMINI, *Op. cit.*, p. 374.

²⁰ HELLMUTH CHRISTIAN WOLFF, *Vivaldi und der Stil der italienischen Oper*, «Acta musicologica», XL, 1968, 183. Wolff's remarks are directed particularly toward the two *Orlandos* (1714; 1727).

Scarlatti employs one dialogue duet, *Mio conforto / Mia speranza* for Judith and Holofernes, in the « Naples » work. In the alternation of interest between the voices it illustrates a standard procedure cultivated in Marcello's individual vocal duets of the second decade of the eighteenth century. But the one duet, *Speranze lusinghiere* for Achior and Ozias, to be found in Marcello's *Giuditta* relies on the less dramatic parallelisms found in the *Vincerò* duet of Judith and Nutrice in Scarlatti's « Cambridge » *Giuditta*. Although vocal duets and trios had figured prominently in the oratorios of Legrenzi, Gasparini, and Pollaro and were sometimes heard in Vivaldi's operas and sacred vocal works, they are altogether avoided in his oratorio. Similarly, instrumental obbligatos may reproduce the effect of a duet when heard with the soloist in Vivaldi's operas, but such effects are lacking in *Juditha*; as in the later oratorios of Scarlatti,²¹ the instrumental and vocal motives are thematically independent.

The recitative of the Vivaldi and Scarlatti works holds a minimum of interest, while it is vested with considerable significance in the works of Gasparini and Marcello. One might however say that in Marcello's work the dramatic element is better expressed in the libretto than in the music. His use of a large number of characters allows extensive opportunity for dialogue, and this is a virtue possibly stressed by Gasparini, who also emphasises dialogue. Drama is subverted by lyricism in Cassetti's text, and reflections on the action as presented in arias take the place of the experience of the action as presented in earlier works in the recitative. Only rarely does the intensity of the drama break through directly into the aria. The nervous haste of Holofernes' first meeting with Judith is underscored by the absence of an introductory instrumental ritornello, a unique occurrence in this work.

²¹ DAVID POULTNEY, *Alessandro Scarlatti and the Transformation of the Oratorio*, « Musical Quarterly » LIX/4, 1973, 598.



Inevitably the four composers represent quite different approaches to the aria. Scarlatti looks back in the « Naples » *Giuditta* in some interesting ways to the strophic works of Carissimi and employs a variety of aria forms. The most elaborate example is the dialogue *Combattuta navicella* for Judith and Ozias, in which the strophes are separated by choruses and instrumental ritornellos. Marcello, Gasparini, and Scarlatti in his « Cambridge » score rely on *da capo* arias, although Marcello's occasional heightening of sectional contrast by means of changes in metre shows him keener to accommodate the text than to follow musical convention *per se*. Vivaldi's work is dominated entirely by *da capo* form, but because of the virtuoso indulgence of the singer and the variety of accompaniments provided it is never cloying.

The degree of vocal virtuosity varies along predictable lines. Scarlatti, so frequently preoccupied with clever motivic mutations in his themes, rarely pursues a virtuoso line. Gasparini's singer may be gently agitated but never excessively excited. While Marcello's overall inclination was to run far more toward setting the sentiment than the word, this tendency is not yet conspicuous in *Giuditta*, except perhaps in the piety of the prayer arias, such as *Padre e Dio*. Many of the stock melismas of the late seventeenth century can still be seen in Marcello's work. The briefest examination of any of Vivaldi's vocal works establishes that he leaned toward a *Gesamtstil* that elevated solo writing irrespective of the genre, and the arias of *Juditha* are no exception to this rule. The simple melisma generated by a single word in the works of Marcello and others grows into the process of *Fortspinnung* in Vivaldi's arias as, bar by bar, they wind themselves up ever more

tightly, only to uncoil in more and more elaborate diminutions. This technique might seem to have been engendered in the instrumental sphere, but transitional examples will be seen in the vocal works of the preceding generation.²²

With regard to phrasing, the contrast between Marcello and Vivaldi could not be more marked. Paraphrasing Lawrence Durrell on grammar, one could say that in unison Marcello's poetic and melodic phrases «split like string beans». The symmetry of *Del fulmine il lampo* / *Precede nel campo* or *Di palme d'allori* / *Prepara gl'honori* is accommodated as regularly in the harmony as in the melody:

[GIUDITHA]
All[egr]o assai

La ful - gi - da auro - ra che il Cie - lo co - lo - ra
I V V I

Although at times confronted with the same limitation – in such arias as *Quanto m'alletta*, *La fresca erbetta* from *Ottone* (1713),²³ for example – Vivaldi seems to have gone out of his way to avoid reinforcing this kind of naive simplicity. Nor in the case of *Juditha* is he led in this direction, for Cassetti's rhymes are not themselves so simple. Vivaldi's propensity for tripartite phrasing, a stock feature of Venetian concertos of the time, mitigates the couplet effect from the start. *Nil arma, nil bella*, Holofernes' first aria, offers an instructive example of the structural complexities of both poet and composer. It is a text of seven lines, the first unrhymed with the others except by initial alliteration:

²² See for example the quotation from Pollarolo's *Rosinda* (Vienne 1685) in A. SCHERING, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

²³ WALTER KOLNEDER, *Vivaldis Aria-Concerto*, «Deutsches Jahrbuch der Musikwissenschaft für 1964», No. 9, Leipzig 1965, p. 18.

Text	Bars	As Treated by Vivaldi
<i>Nil arma, nil bella, Nil flamma furoris Si cor bellatoris Est cadens in se. Si pugnat sperando, Iam virtus pugnando Vigescit in spe.</i>	4	<i>Nil arma, nil bella, nil flamma furoris</i> I V . .
	4	<i>Si cor bellatoris est cadens in se.</i> V V
	8	<i>Nil arma, nil bella, nil flamma furoris</i> V I-V-VI-V
	11	<i>Si cor bellatoris</i> I . . . IV-V-I
	5	<i>Si cor bellatoris est cadens in se.</i> V I . . II-I ⁴ - V-I

Examining the «A» section of this *da capo* aria, we find Vivaldi at great pains to avoid melodic and harmonic reinforcement of the metre. For instance, if one views the passage as consisting of two units of 16 bars (which is what the harmony suggests), then symmetry is subverted by the restatement of the first two lines of the text in Bars 9-16. The suborganization is equally curious, with a tripartite subdivision of the first sixteen bars and an extravagant division into 11- and 5-bar phrases (both based on the third line of the text) to complete the section. Conversely, if one takes the text as the organizing principle of the setting, then Bars 9-32 become an elaboration of Bars 1-8 in which the first two lines are expanded twofold and the second two fourfold. But either way the combination of harmonic symmetry and melodic asymmetry induces a feeling of tension that enhances the work. It could not be achieved in the strictly regular settings of Vivaldi's peers.

The way in which Vivaldi uses instruments is the feature that most sets *Juditha* apart from and above its predecessors. The role of instruments is most limited in Gasparini's work, which opens with a recitative and includes only brief passages

for eight unspecified instruments (apparently four violins, viola, cello, double bass and keyboard). Scarlatti's « Cambridge » score requires only violins, violas, and continuo, and this ensemble is heard alone only in an opening sinfonia of three movements. The arias are accompanied either by harpsichord or unison strings. In the « Naples » *Giuditta*, the nucleus of the orchestra is formed by strings, but there are also obbligato parts for trombones, trumpets, and recorders.²⁴ Here there is some differentiation of first and second violin parts. An opening sinfonia proceeds from a fast movement in triple metre to a slow movement in duple.

Of the four earlier settings of *Giuditta*, Marcello's anticipates Vivaldi's most closely in the handling of instruments. While limiting himself to strings, Marcello uses instruments generously. The accompaniment is individualized for each aria and ranges from harpsichord alone to full string ensemble. Although violoncello and violone are not specifically mentioned as ripieno instruments, there are obbligato parts for them. (Marcello himself played the cello, and *concertante* scoring for it had been a conspicuous feature of his *Concerti*, Op. 1.) He employs a three-movement sinfonia, the final movement of which is reminiscent of the Prestissimo finale of his Op. 1, No. 9. A Corellian emphasis is noticeable in Marcello's concerto grosso scoring, a trait absent in all the other works. In the aria *Con la mia destra* solo and tutti violins alternate bar by bar. It is curious that Marcello does not require any wind instruments in *Giuditta*, for in his youthful *sepolcro* he scored for trombones and bassoons. Trumpets are conspicuously absent in a D-Major aria that makes reference to them, *Ben s'accorda di trombe pugnaci*. It may be that trumpets were simply considered inappropriate for a performance in a private residence.

Vivaldi's diversified orchestra, with ripieno parts for trumpets and drums, oboes, and *clarini*, took the five-part string ensemble so familiar from the concerto repertory as its core. Among

²⁴ The use of lute may also have been considered, for there is a miscellaneous aria with lute accompaniment appended to the Morristown autograph.

obbligato instruments Vivaldi included parts for recorders, chalumeau, mandolin, viola d'amore and apparently its relative, the baryton.²⁵ He distinguishes meticulously between harpsichord and organ accompaniment, a rarity for the time. Here, as in Vivaldi's other works, concerto grosso elements are altogether lacking. There is no sinfonia, although Ryom suggests there may once have been one.²⁶ As it stands, the work opens with a fanfare for trumpets and oboes followed immediately by a chorus accompanied by full orchestra.

It is not, however, the mere variety in instrumentation that sets *Juditha* so much apart from other oratorios. Vivaldi employs his instruments according to a careful regard for their long-standing contextual associations. He uses them to stress images in the texts. The mechanical limitation of some specific instruments combined with the traditional association of general classes of instruments with particular kinds of texts conspire to produce what at first glance seems to be key symbolism. Multiple levels of meaning are conveyed simultaneously by text, timbre, image, and key. In these combined processes, most dependent on the use of instruments, Vivaldi's genius is exhibited in a way that his concertos often suggest but, through the paradoxical lack of a text, never so fully reveal. Let us consider these elements individually.

In selecting the instruments to use for specific arias, we see Vivaldi often introducing some refinement into a traditional choice. In light of the violins' association with love, for example, it is noteworthy that the viola d'amore is Vivaldi's choice to represent the victor's mercy to the vanquished in Judith's aria *Quanto magis generosa*. The use of the solo violone to suggest sleep is not new, but the requirement of English violets (*viole all'inglese*) in *Summe astrorum* is as appropriate as it is unusual: the lingering sound of the sympathetic strings could aptly convey

²⁵ ELEANOR SELFRIDGE-FIELD, *Vivaldi's Esoteric Instruments*, « Early Music », VI, 3, 1978, presents a discussion of the problems of identifying the more unusual instruments in *Juditha* and other works. Further on the chalumeau see MICHAEL TALBOT, *Vivaldi e il chalumeau*, forthcoming in the « Rivista Italiana di Musicologia ».

²⁶ PETER RYOM, *Les Manuscrits de Vivaldi*, Copenhagen 1977, p. 72.

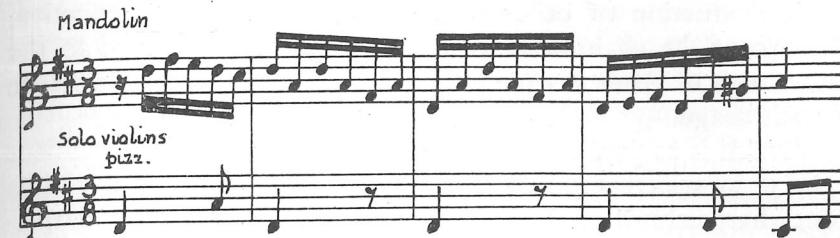
the eternity of heaven. The drums of war and trumpets of victory may be clichés, but Vivaldi chose reed instruments to provide the obbligatos of his soldiers' choruses – two oboes in one case and two *claren* (probably clarinets) in the other. Only the recorders, in being associated with sleep and peace, fail to escape their own stereotypes.

In common with many composers of the time, Vivaldi often seizes one image in the text on which to concentrate attention. Usually this is a static quality, such as a state of affairs (war, peace), a state of nature (day, night), a state of the soul (faith), or a state of the body (rest). The one dynamic quality to which reference is frequently made is the passing of time. Reflections on the contrast between ephemeral and enduring qualities were commonplace. In translating these images into music, Vivaldi relies on a wide variety of devices. Often he invents an accompaniment figure to suit a dominating image. The violins portray dripping blood in *In somno profundis* and twinkling stars in *O sydera, o stellae*. The stars and planets erupt in short tiratas and pulsate in dotted quavers throughout the ritornello and instrumental accompaniment of the latter aria. Similar efforts exist only to a very limited degree in the earlier *Giuditta* settings and lie almost entirely within the limits of string writing. Examples can be found in Scarlatti's *Tu che desti, o eterno nume* of the «Cambridge» work, and in Marcello's representation of Holofernes' blowing out his lamps to sleep:

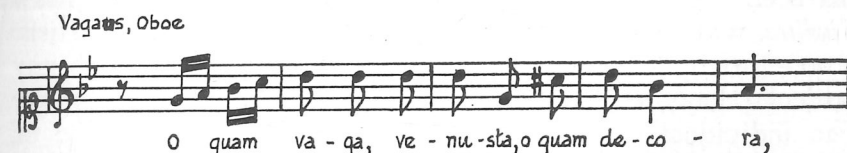


Ever prone to emphasise naturalistic similes, Vivaldi depicts the flight of the swallow (violin) in *Agitata infido* and of the

turtledove (chalumeau) in *Veni, veni mi sequere fida*. The walking bass (or treble) is used no fewer than four times in *Juditha*. In *Agitata infido* it represents wandering; rendered by four theorbos in *O servi volate* (first version) it represents fleeing soldiers;²⁷ passing time is represented both in *Non ita reducem* and more impressively in the mandolin obbligato of *Transit aetas*:



Here the contrasting motive of the immortal flame of love, which is to be addressed in the text of the «B» section, is represented in the pizzicato violin accompaniment. In other cases the melody itself may be used to suggest some aspect of the text. The «foreign» tritone in *O quam vaga*, sung by Vagaus and Holofernes' soldiers



upon first seeing Judith, may have been used to emphasise her exotic beauty. Metre is sometimes used to good effect in obvious ways, but the fact that Vivaldi changed two arias from C to 3/8

²⁷ The second version of the aria, written expressly for «Signora Barbara» and considered a later substitution, uses neither a walking bass nor theorboes. The accompaniment is by string ensemble. The facsimile edition of the manuscript (Siena 1948) shows that Vivaldi originally set this piece as a simple continuo aria.

for « Signora Barbara » suggests that he did not see metre as being determined entirely by the text.

Vivaldi's multiple images can be effective when handled entirely within the string section, as in *Agitata infido*. This aria includes motives for a treacherous wind (*stile concitato*), a lost swallow (descending chromatic scale), and weeping (dotted quavers) – all in an extended simile on the sorrow of Judith's soul. The introduction of other timbres can be still more effective. The use of the chalumeau to accompany Judith's appeal to the faithfulness of Abra is a memorable and indeed haunting instance of such usage.

Vivaldi is as precise in his choice of continuo accompaniment as he is in selecting obbligato instruments. He may use violins alone, harpsichord without violone or violone without harpsichord, and various other modifications of the standard combinations of the day. His choice of the organ to accompany Holofernes' aria *Nox obscura tenebrosa* seems to have been meant to convey the darkness of Holofernes' soul as much as the shadows of night, for the organ returns, almost as Holofernes' symbol, to accompany *Noli o cara*.

Given the military context of the story, it can be no surprise that D Major is the principal key of the work. The same key had been used by Marcello and by Scarlatti for the « Naples » *Giuditta*, while the other two oratorios were in C Major. There is no effort by Vivaldi to identify individual characters with any particular key; to that extent affect is already more important than individual identity. But as an accidental consequence of Vivaldi's choice of obbligato instruments, it can often be perceived to have been the key rather than the instrument that represented the affect, as in some later operas. None of these « accidents » produce surprising results. E Major is the key of « peace » in Judith's arietta *Vivat in pace*.²⁸ G Minor emerges as the key of

²⁸ The same theme in the same key was to be more fully developed in the opening movement of the « Spring » Concerto, Op. VIII, No. 1 (1725). Vivaldi also chose E Major for his titled concertos « L'Amoroso » (RV 271 - F.I, 127) and the Christmas concerto « Il Riposo » (RV 270 - F.I, 4).

sorrow, perhaps because of its widespread use as a matrix for chromaticism throughout the Baroque period in Italy. F Major, often associated with rusticity, serves Vivaldi well for Holofernes' drunken stupor as described in Judith's aria *Umbrae carae*.

Vivaldi's use of Bb Major in *Juditha* is of special interest. It seems to have been associated in his mind with the idea of beckoning.²⁹ Its use for *Veni, veni* in *Juditha* may hint at mechanical limitations of the chalumeau, for Bb was the preferred key for many of the emerging but imperfect reeds of the early eighteenth century. The core of *Juditha* is set off by a series of eight pieces that occur sequentially in the order of keys represented by the tones of the descending Bb-Major scale:

Piece	Key	Aria	Summary of action or thought
No. 12	Bb	Judith: <i>Veni, veni</i>	Asks Abra to follow her to feast
No. 13	A	Abra: <i>Fulgeat sol</i>	Swears her faithfulness
No. 14	g	Bethulians: <i>Mundi rector</i>	Pray for military success
No. 15	F	Ozias: <i>O sydera</i>	Prays to heaven
No. 16	Eb	Holofernes: <i>Nox obscura</i>	Praises Judith
No. 17	D	Judith: <i>Transit aetas</i>	Reflects that soul transcends time
No. 18	C	Holofernes: <i>Noli o cara</i>	Professes his love for Judith
No. 19	Bb	Soldiers: <i>Plena nectare</i>	Propose toast

This « octave » sets off that part of the work in which the critical action is initiated and its successful completion assured – that is, from Judith's departure for Holofernes' feast to Holofernes' toast. Once the toast is proposed, Holofernes' demise is assured. It is rather as though Judith should hold her breath (tonality) while the course of action was being resolved. After the soldiers' chorus Judith proceeds to the delicate *Vivat in pace*

²⁹ The concertos « La Caccia », Op. 8, No. 10, and « La Cornetta da Posta » (RV 363 - F. I, 163), both of which imitate but do not employ wind instruments, are in Bb Major.

in E Major, which because of its jarring tonal contrast is like an audible sigh of relief. Moreover, Vivaldi is doubly clever in treating the core of the work, for the first and last solos within it (Nos. 12 and 18) have similar themes that are sufficiently

JUDITHA (N° 12)



HOLOFERNES (N° 18)



modified by divergent accompaniments to make them appear different. In No. 12, accompanied by chalumeau, Judith seeks the faith of Abra, while in the second, accompanied by oboe, Holofernes seeks the love of Judith. It is a very neatly formed drama-within-a-drama.

In sum, *Juditha* shows efforts at structural organization and thematic integration that were advanced for the time and definitely superior to the more straightforward settings of the same story by Scarlatti, Gasparini, and Marcello. Vivaldi had indeed learned from his first experiences as an opera composer, but in composing the music for *Juditha* he exercised concurrently his best skills as an instrumental composer, possibly to an extent that he never so fully was to do in his operas. In light of this combination of merits, *Juditha triumphans* may well deserve to be considered his finest living memorial.

APPENDIX

CHARACTERS IN THE FIVE ORATORIOS

	Gasparini/Pamphili 1689	Scarlatti/Pamphili (« Naples », c. 1695	Scarlatti/Ottoboni (« Cambridge », c. 1700	Marcello/Marcello 1709	Vivaldi/Cassetti 1716
Juditha	S	S	S	S	S
Servant/Abra	S			S	S
Nutrice			A		
Achior		T		S	
Captain (1)				S	
Captain (2)				A	
Ozias	A	S		T	A
Holofernes	B	A	T	B	A
Servant/Vagaus	T				A
Hebrew Priest		B			