

L'Alcasta and the Emergence of Collective Patronage in Mid-Seventeenth-Century Rome

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In January 1673, *Amor per vendetta, ovvero L'Alcasta*, a new opera authored by the celebrated poet Giovanni Filippo Apolloni and set to music by Bernardo Pasquini, premiered in Rome in the recently inaugurated commercial Teatro Tordinona.¹ The printed libretto was dedicated, with all due solemnity, to Queen Christina of Sweden, arguably one of the most influential patrons of music and theater in Rome at the time. The dedication by the printer Bartolomeo Lupardi makes use of all the expected *topoi* employed in similar literary exercises, including references to the virgin goddess Diana and Alexander

195

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¹ On the Teatro Tordinona, see Alberto Cametti, *Il Teatro Tordinona poi di Apollo*, 2 vols. (Tivoli: Arti Grafiche Aldo Chicca, 1938).

the Great (both of whom Christina had been associated with since her years in Sweden), the wheat spike, symbol of her family, and her abdication of the Swedish throne and conversion to the Catholic religion. He concluded with the hope that by looking at Christina as an emblem of virtue and justice, Queen Alcasta could find repose from her earthly preoccupations:

Now . . . do not disdain to hear the sonorous plectrum, which re-sounds with the fortune of a princess, whose only concern is [to have] your protection: Alcasta is her name; she is of royal blood, noble conduct, and heroic spirit. Vengeful, she is; but her anger is so just that you should not reproach it as a sin, but instead praise it as a virtue. *Anger, champion of fierce virtue*. And even if she were to go past the limits imposed by her duty, who knows, could just one glance of Your Majesty placate her as the monsters of Dis were placated at the sight of Orpheus? She will probably forget the offences against her when she realizes that Your Majesty cast off her scepters for God, and resolved to renounce the kingdoms of her ancestors; by this she surpassed Alexander (even greater from the day Your Majesty took his name) whose avidity to conquer was put to shame when he saw that [you] refused what you had conquered, and whereas he cried because he did not have more kingdoms, Your Majesty scorned all she had, and taught him how to become magnanimous, refusing to conquer more provinces and monarchies, which, as daughters of the Earth, just like their mother ultimately turn into dust. May Your Majesty (I humbly beg you) be to Alcasta a benign star, a wheat spike for this virgin, so that after wandering through many storms, she might find the much desired harbor of your most compassionate patronage, and might sing, on the shores of Ephesus where Diana was worshiped, praises to that Sun that for a prodigious occurrence from the North appeared to brighten the sky of the Roman Church.²

² "Ora . . . non isdegni udir sonoro plectro, che risuona gli accidenti d'una Principessa, non d'altro curante, che della sua protezione: Alcasta s'appella; di sangue chiaro, di costumi nobili, di valor eroico. E vendicativa sì; ma è tanto giusta l'ira sua, che in questo caso non si riprende, come vizio, ma può lodarsi, come virtù lo sdegno. *Sdegno campion de la virtù feroce*. E se pure passasse i limiti del dovere, chi sa, che a un solo sguardo della Maestà Vostra non si plachi, come placaronsi i mostri di Dite alla vista d'Orfeo? Forse si scorderà dell'offese quando rifletterà, che la Maestà Vostra seppe per Dio scordarsi de' scettri, e spogliarsi de' Regni aviti; superando Alessandro (fatto più grande dal di, che Vostra Maestà prese il suo nome) che avido di conquistare, arse poi di vergogna nel veder ch'ella rifiutava il conquistato, e dov'egli pianse per non posseder più mondi, Vostra Maestà si rise del molto che possedeva, e gl'insegnò a rigettar magnanimo, non a bramar avaro le provincie, e le monarchie, quali, come figlie della terra, somigliando alla madre si risolvono in polve. Sia Vostra Maestà (umilmente la supplico) per Alcasta stella salutare, anzi la spica di questa vergine, perché dopo le tempeste che proverà raminga, trovi il sospirato porto del suo benignissimo patrocínio, e possa sui lidi d'Efeso, ove fu adorata Diana, cantar le lodi di quel Sole, che con nobilissimo prodigio spuntò dal settentrione per illustrare il cielo della Romana Chiesa." [Giovanni Filippo Apolloni], *Amor per vendetta, ovvero L'Alcasta* (Rome: Bartolomeo Lupardi, 1673), 2v-4r. The seventeenth-century Italian texts that appear in this article have been lightly modernized and the

In addition to the printed libretto, a beautifully decorated presentation score of *L'Alcasta* was also dedicated to the queen, attesting to this production and, quite unusually for this time, recording the names of not only librettist and composer but also the singers who performed the opera at the Tordinona in 1673 (fig. 1 and fig. 2).³

Scholars have hitherto investigated the significance of *L'Alcasta* in the context of the Teatro Tordinona, and particularly of the corpus of works dedicated to Christina, without questioning the Queen of Sweden's patronage of the opera, as it is evidently indicated by the printed libretto and presentation score. Despite overwhelming evidence suggesting Christina's patronage of *L'Alcasta*, this article untangles a more complicated story that shows the Queen of Sweden as just one of a number of agents involved in the commission and production of this opera, thus testifying to a radical change in the conception of patronage and of the system of operatic production in Rome during the second half of the seventeenth century.

Through the use of new evidence that has recently surfaced from the archives of the Colonna and Chigi families, I begin by tracing the intricate history of *L'Alcasta*, which reveals a tightly knit network of Roman patrons behind the commission and subsequent production of the opera. The Colonna and Chigi families were involved in the first attempts to obtain a score for Apolloni's libretto from Antonio Cesti, very likely for a private production in Rome in 1668. Their failure to obtain the score from Cesti was followed by years of negotiations in the effort to find a new suitable venue for *L'Alcasta*, as well as to keep the libretto in Rome, which in the process derailed plans for a performance at the Teatro SS. Giovanni e Paolo of Venice. Finally, *L'Alcasta* appeared in the first commercial theater of Rome, the Teatro Tordinona, in 1673 with a musical setting by Pasquini and the dedication to Christina. From Rome, *L'Alcasta* then continued its journeys through the main stages of the Italian peninsula under concealed identity and a new title.

punctuation adjusted for clarity. The citation in italics in the original echoes Torquato Tasso's "Sdegno guerrier de la ragion feroce" in *Gerusalemme liberata*, canto 16, stanza 34. For Christina's identification with Diana and Alexander the Great, her association with the Sun, and literary references to her abdication and conversion, see Susanna Åkerman, *Queen Christina of Sweden and Her Circle: The Transformation of a Seventeenth-Century Philosophical Libertine* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991).

³ Münster, Diözesanbibliothek, Santini, Hs. 3000. See Gordon F. Crain, "The Operas of Bernardo Pasquini" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1965), 1:77–97. Another score is preserved in Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Mus. F. 904. Two versions of the libretto were printed, probably attesting to the success of the Roman 1673 performance. Neither the printed librettos nor the scores have a prologue. On prologues and intermedi for the Teatro Tordinona, see Carolyn Gianturco, "Per richiamare e divertire gli spettatori dalla seria applicazione che l'azione richiede": prologhi, intermedi e balli per il teatro di Tordinona," *Roma moderna e contemporanea* 4 (1996): 19–36.

FIGURE 1. *L'Alcasta, Opera teatrale dedicata alla Maestà della Regina di Svezia* [1670s], title page. (Münster, Diözesanbibliothek), Santini-Sammlung, Hs. 3000, reproduced by permission.

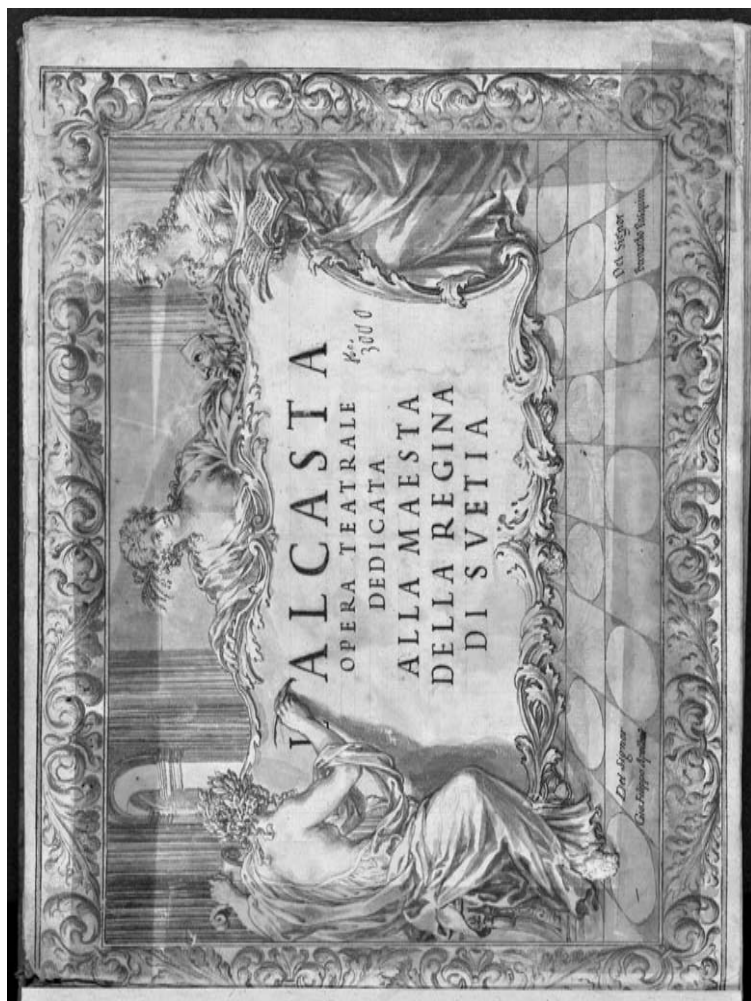
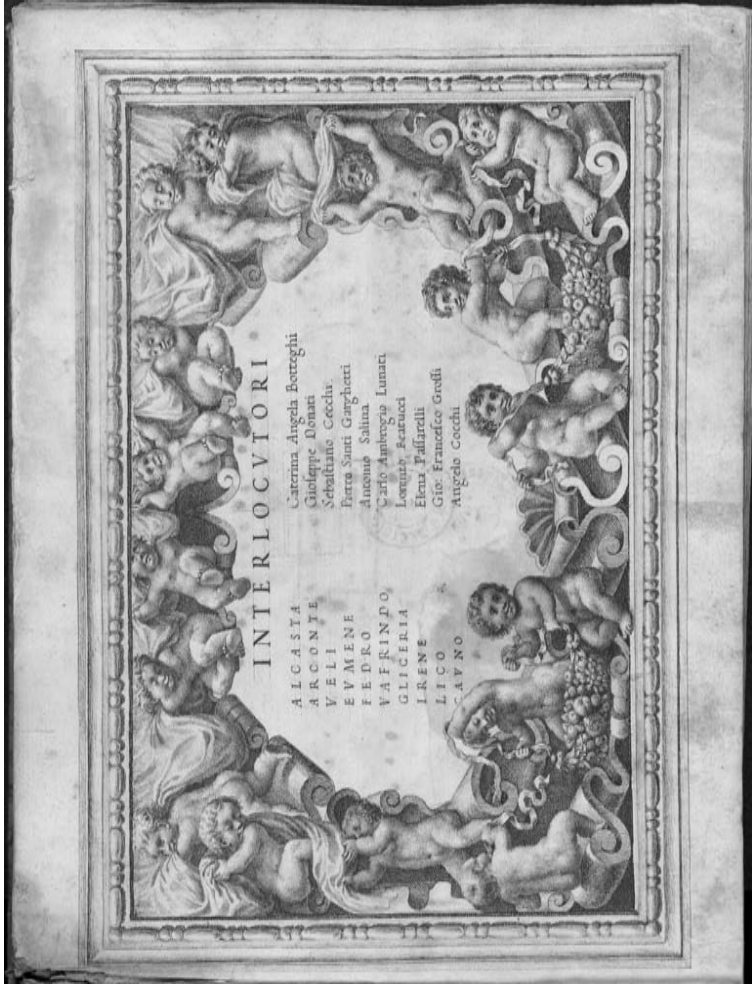


FIGURE 2. *L'Alcasta, Opera teatrale dedicata alla Maestà della Regina di Svezia* [1670s], "Interlocutori."
 (Münster, Diözesanbibliothek), Santini-Sammlung, Hs. 3000, reproduced by permission.



Even at first glance it is easy to understand on what grounds the commission and production of *L'Alcasta* have been attributed to the queen.⁴ Her familiarity with the librettist Giovanni Filippo Apolloni and the composer Bernardo Pasquini, both of whom were very active in Rome at the time and worked for several aristocratic families and patrons, is undoubtedly one of the reasons that led scholars to believe that Christina must have been at least partially responsible for the commission of the work.⁵ Apolloni in particular represents a strong and meaningful tie with the queen: he had authored the libretto of *L'Argia*, set to music by Antonio Cesti, which celebrated the arrival of Queen Christina in Innsbruck in 1655 during the journey that took her to her new abode in Rome after her conversion and abdication.⁶

Furthermore, during Christina's lifetime—and this view continues to affect contemporary studies—the Teatro Tordinona where *L'Alcasta* premiered was regarded by many as the queen's theater.⁷ She not only put pressure on Pope Clement X (1670–76) to procure the necessary permissions for her secretary Count d'Alibert to build and open the Tordinona in 1671, but she had also continued to sustain the endeavor by obtaining permission for women to perform, and by securing the most talented composers, librettists, and performers for the theater's productions.⁸ Her “royal” box, which occupied the most highly visible position in the theater, large enough to host numerous guests and surmounted by a crown, testified to her pivotal role both in the establishment and in her continued support of the theater. The dedication of

⁴ Gloria Staffieri, “‘La reine s’amuse’: *L'Alcasta* di Apolloni e Pasquini al Tordinona (1673),” in *Convegno internazionale Cristina di Svezia e la musica* (Rome, 5–6 December 1996) (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1998), 21–43; Cametti, *Il Teatro Tordinona*, 1:69, 2:339; Filippo Clementi, *Il carnevale romano nelle cronache contemporanee*, 2 vols. (Città di Castello, R.O.R.E.-NIRUF, 1939), 588–89.

⁵ This association is made explicit in Alberto Cametti, *Cristina di Svezia, l'arte musicale e gli spettacoli teatrali in Roma: Bernardo Pasquini, Arcangelo Corelli, Alessandro Scarlatti* (Rome: Tip. Romano Mezzetti, 1931), 10–12. Arnaldo Morelli has noted that Pasquini, at this time in service of Prince Giovan Battista Borghese, worked mostly for patrons connected with the Borghese by family ties (Chigi, Pamphilj) and political alliances (Spanish ambassador, the Colonna family). Arnaldo Morelli, “Gli oratori di Bernardo Pasquini: problemi di datazione e committenza,” in *Percorsi dell'oratorio romano. Da “historia sacra” a melodramma spirituale*, ed. Saverio Franchi (Rome: IBIMUS, 2002), 70–72.

⁶ Staffieri, “‘La reine s’amuse,’” 23 and 24, note 15.

⁷ Cametti, *Il Teatro Tordinona*, 1:5–71; Alessandro Ademollo, *I teatri di Roma nel secolo decimosettimo* (Bologna: Forni Editore, 1969, first ed. 1888), 129–46; Clementi, *Il carnevale romano*, 1:582–92; Per Bjurström, *Feast and Theatre in Queen Christina's Rome* (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum Stockholm, 1966), 100–112. For an examination of Queen Christina's patronage of music in Rome, see Arnaldo Morelli, “Il mecenatismo musicale di Cristina di Svezia: Una riconsiderazione,” in *Convegno internazionale Cristina di Svezia e la musica* (Rome: Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, 1998), 326–27, and idem, “Mecenatismo musicale nella Roma Barocca: il caso di Cristina di Svezia,” *Quaderni Storici* 95 (1997): 387–408.

⁸ Staffieri, “‘La reine s’amuse,’” 21.

five operas to Christina during only four years of activity at the Tordinona (1671–74) has also served to reinforce the sense that the queen represented the most influential agent behind the theater's operation and the choice of its repertory.⁹

On closer scrutiny, even more elements in the libretto and the score of *L'Alcasta* seem to point to Christina's patronage. Gloria Staffieri advanced the hypothesis that the queen commissioned the libretto of *L'Alcasta* from Apolloni as a way to revive the celebratory splendor of the 1655 performance of *L'Argia*, thus creating a bridge between the time of her conversion and her new role as patroness of the newly opened Teatro Tordinona.¹⁰ Furthermore, Staffieri has identified rhythmic and melodic material from the sinfonia that returns, modified, at two important moments: Alcasta's arioso at the opening of the opera (act 1, sc. 1) and her climactic aria "Nacqui regina" (act 3, sc. 11). In this way the figure of Alcasta/Christina frames, as it were, the entire opera. According to Staffieri, the solemn and majestic pace of "Nacqui regina," in which Alcasta finally abandons her disguise, served the purpose of the librettist and composer especially well, for it not only revealed the protagonist as a queen, but also celebrated Christina as the dedicatee of the spectacle. The fact that Cesti had deployed a similar strategy in *L'Argia* reinforces Staffieri's argument that Pasquini was drawing an implicit connection between the present moment and Christina's conversion, exploiting a theme that the printer Lupardi had already emphasized in the dedication.¹¹

But do the dedication of libretto and score, the allusions in the plot and in the musical style, and Christina's role as patroness of the Teatro Tordinona constitute adequate evidence that she was behind the commission and production of this work? Is the fact that both Apolloni and Pasquini were artists active in her intellectual circles a sufficient argument to claim that the queen might have influenced or inspired the composition of both the libretto and the score? In other words, whose agency is behind the commission, production, and dedication of *L'Alcasta*?

⁹ The operas dedicated to Queen Christina are *Scipione affricano* (1671), *Eliogabalo* (1673), *Amor per vendetta, ovvero L'Alcasta* (1673), *Massenzio* (1674), and *Il Caligola* (1674). See Cametti, *Il Teatro Tordinona*, 2:323–42.

¹⁰ Staffieri, "La reine s'amuse," 23. Carolyn Gianturco, "Cristina di Svezia scenarista per Alessandro Stradella," in *Convegno internazionale Cristina di Svezia e la musica* (Rome, 5–6 December 1996) (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1998), 45, has pointed out that the prologue of the first opera produced at Tordinona and dedicated to the Queen, *Scipione affricano*, was a condensed version of *Marte placato*, the "componimento scenico" by Apolloni and Cesti performed for the Queen in Innsbruck on the same occasion as *L'Argia*.

¹¹ Staffieri, "La reine s'amuse," 42–43.

Since its first appearance, opera served the political and social purposes of the elite classes who supported and conspicuously consumed this quintessentially aristocratic entertainment.¹² In the wake of Lorenzo Bianconi's and Thomas Walker's pivotal article "Production, Consumption and Political Function of Seventeenth-Century Opera," the question of the patronage and agency behind the commission, production, and dedication of opera has become central to most studies on this genre.¹³ Deciphering symbolic or allegorical representations behind elements of the plot and seeking to identify distinct features in the music that might link it to a patron often lead to the same questions: who commissioned the work and how did he or she influence it? Who provided the conspicuous financial means necessary to produce such an expensive spectacle? What role did the dedicatee play in the process that brought the opera on stage?

When we examine early productions of opera in the Italian courts, the answer to these questions seems invariably to point to one individual: the patron who either commissioned the libretto and score of a new opera, or alternatively chose a preexisting work, provided the necessary means for its production, and was the principal—if not sole—dedicatee of the performance. In this system of production, opera aptly functioned as an important means of self-fashioning, displaying the patron's social status, wealth, and intellectual refinement, as well as celebrating family events, diplomatic achievements, and political alliances.¹⁴

As opera began its slow and inexorable migration from the court to the public stage during the 1640s, however, the picture became rather more complex. Beth Glixon and Jonathan Glixon have offered the most thorough investigation of these questions in relation to the commercial theaters of Venice. They conclude that, at this time and in the context of commercial enterprises, the figure of the patron ceased to embody all the functions of the "court" patron. Instead, the patron's role was being redefined by the financial and practical commitment of various parties to the opera production, the role of the impresario, the increasing power of performers, and the importance that audience taste acquired in determining the success of an opera.¹⁵

¹² On the "conspicuous consumption" of the Italian elites, see Peter Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 1st ed. 1987), 132–49. See also Claudio Annibaldi, "Towards a Theory of Musical Patronage in the Renaissance and Baroque: The Perspective from Anthropology and Semiotics," *Ricerchare: Rivista per lo studio e la pratica della musica antica* 10 (1998): 173–82.

¹³ Lorenzo Bianconi and Thomas Walker, "Production, Consumption and Political Function of Seventeenth-Century Opera," *Early Music History* 4 (1984): 211–99.

¹⁴ Claudio Annibaldi, "Introduzione," in *La musica e il mondo: Mecenatismo e committenza musicale in Italia tra Quattrocento e Settecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993), 9–43.

¹⁵ Beth L. Glixon and Jonathan E. Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera: The Impresario and His World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), especially 295–322.

By the mid-1660s, this process was underway also in other cities and courts of the Italian peninsula, acquiring different characteristics according to local sociopolitical conditions. Forms of aristocratic collective patronage, often under the auspices of a society or *accademia*, were fast spreading throughout Italy, and experiments of joint commercial ventures involving rulers, patricians, impresarios, and intellectuals emerged in Bologna, Florence, Pistoia, Genoa, Reggio Emilia, Palermo, and Naples.¹⁶

It is against this backdrop that the story of *L'Alcasta* unfolds. This opera provides an opportunity to explore how competition with the commercial theaters began to threaten the long-established monopoly that elite social classes exerted over operatic production. The consequent "dissolution" of the patron as the sole agent in the process of production of opera raises many questions about the nature of patronage in the context of commercial enterprises. In this light, the story of *L'Alcasta* calls for a reassessment of the Teatro Tordinona as an endeavor of "collective patronage" on the part of the Roman aristocracy.¹⁷ Furthermore, beyond showing the complex web of relationships behind the production of opera, it attests to the importance that opera and its control acquired in early modern Italy, at a time in which the commercial nature of the genre gave impresarios and performers of the public theaters new power to negotiate their roles in the social and cultural marketplace. Finally, from the vicissitudes surrounding the story of *L'Alcasta* and the power struggles behind the attempts at appropriating its poetry, we gain a unique opportunity to glimpse the fascinating story of a seventeenth-century libretto. This story reminds us of the importance of this literary genre, whose complex and multireferential nature rendered it so valuable and so open to reinterpretation, transformation, and appropriation.

The Commission of L'Alcasta

The creative process behind any work of art is to some extent bound to remain a mystery. With opera librettos and scores, the study of their various stages of composition and of the influence of external interventions can provide important insights into this fascinating and elusive process. Recognizing the ways in which the agents who commissioned a work had an impact on its character, form, and content

¹⁶ For a general overview of this process during the second half of the seventeenth century, see Franco Piperno, "Opera Production to 1780," in *Opera Production and Its Resources*, ed. Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli, vol. 4 of *History of Italian Opera*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 7–31.

¹⁷ See Morelli, "Il mecenatismo musicale di Cristina di Svezia," and idem, "Mecenatismo musicale nella Roma Barocca," for a reassessment of the Queen of Sweden's role in the enterprise of the Teatro Tordinona.

and understanding the extent of that influence are more puzzling questions.

Since the evidence of collaboration between patron, poet, and composer in the preparation of libretto and score is often scant or completely lacking, scholars have often relied on deductive methods to discern patterns, conventions, themes, and styles that might reveal the nature of the patron's input in the creation of the final product. Yet the printed libretto and the beautifully ornate score of *L'Alcasta*, both dedicated to the queen, tell us only part of the story. Most importantly, perhaps, all the evidence seems to indicate that the libretto was not conceived with Queen Christina in mind. Six years before the opera's triumphal appearance on the stage of the Tordinona, another Roman aristocrat, Prince Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna, had already made his own plans for it: a musical setting by Antonio Cesti to be heard in private performance in his palace. It is to this early phase of the creation of *L'Alcasta* that I now turn.

Prince Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna and his wife Maria Mancini were two of the most active patrons of music and theater during the second half of the century.¹⁸ As heads of a very illustrious and ancient family in Rome, the Colonna occupied a special place among the Roman nobility. Their close ties with the Spanish crown, established in the sixteenth century, meant that the head of the family was endowed with the title of *contestabile* of the Kingdom of Naples. The Colonna thus enjoyed an international stature and countless privileges that made them among the most notable and influential families in the city.

Colonna and Mancini shared a passion for entertainments and public display that often saw them as the protagonists of the Roman cultural scene.¹⁹ In 1661, just a few months after the acquisition of his titles and at the time of his marriage to Mancini, Colonna had already made known his distinct taste in opera by sponsoring two productions, in March and September, of Giacinto Andrea Cicognini's and Antonio Cesti's *Orontea*, which would become one of the most popular and influential operas of the century. Cesti was in Rome during the March

¹⁸ Maria Mancini Colonna was also a very active sponsor of carnival floats and other entertainments during these years. For a discussion of her patronage, see Valeria De Lucca, "Pallade al valor, Venere al volto": Music, Theatricality, and Performance in Marie Mancini Colonna's Patronage," in *"The Wandering Life I Led": Essays on Hortense Mancini, Duchess Mazarin and Early Modern Women's Border-Crossings*, ed. Susan Shifrin (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 113–56.

¹⁹ The most thorough examination of the Colonna's patronage of theater is Elena Tamburini, *Due teatri per il principe: studi sulla committenza teatrale di Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna (1659–1689)* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1997). For their patronage of opera between 1659 and 1675, see Valeria De Lucca, "Dalle sponde del Tevere alle rive dell'Adria: Maria Mancini and Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna's Patronage of Music and Theater between Rome and Venice (1659–1675)" (PhD diss.: Princeton University, 2009).

production, and the relationship that developed between him and Colonna was to have a significant influence upon both their lives and careers.²⁰ Cesti became the Colonna family's favorite composer, and in the following years the prince and his wife supported him in numerous ways, sponsoring his operas in Venice and Rome, as well as commissioning new works from him.²¹ Furthermore, on the occasion of the 1661 Roman productions of *Orontea*, the young Prince Colonna must have also made the acquaintance of Giovanni Filippo Apolloni, the poet who authored the new prologue for *Orontea*, first performed at Innsbruck in 1656. At that time Apolloni was entering the service of Cardinal Flavio Chigi and resided in the family palace, just a few steps away from Palazzo Colonna (fig. 3).

Following the production of *Orontea* and the arrival of Maria Mancini at Palazzo Colonna in 1661, the couple's attention was soon attracted by the more lively and exciting operatic life of Venice. The long papacy of Alexander VII (1655–67) had been characterized, particularly toward its final years, by an austere policy toward public as well as private entertainments, which included balls, spoken plays, and operas performed in the palaces of Rome's aristocratic families. For this reason, the Colonna couple spent much of the carnival seasons of 1663–67 in Venice and engaged in the production of numerous operas, especially in helping impresario Marco Faustini of the Teatro SS. Giovanni e Paolo to recruit the best available singers and suggesting appropriate repertoire for their talents.²² During the three seasons they spent in Venice, the couple established close ties with the world of Venetian opera and six works were dedicated to them, including three operas by Cesti: *Orontea* (1666), the first production of *Il Tito* (1666), and *La Dori* (1667).²³

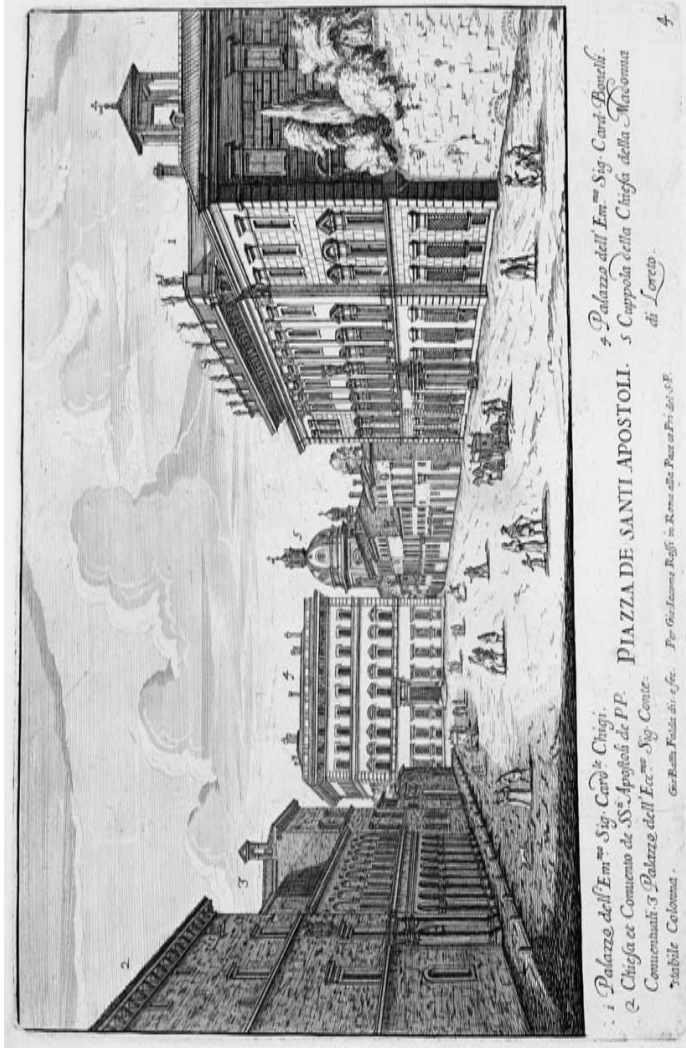
²⁰ Cesti might have been present during the March production, but not that of September, since at that time he was in Florence to supervise and possibly sing in another production of *Orontea*. See Jennifer Williams Brown, "Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen': Cesti, *Orontea*, and the Gelone Problem," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 12 (2000): 207–9.

²¹ Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Scuola Grande di San Marco, b. 188, Antonio Cesti to Marco Faustini, Vienna, 15 August 1666, f. 273. The letter is also cited in Tamburini, *Due teatri*, 98, and Lorenzo Bianconi, "Cesti, Pietro," *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/pietro-cesti_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/pietro-cesti_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) (accessed 14 April 2011).

²² Many studies have focused on the papers of Marco Faustini and on the commercial system of opera in Venice. The most recent and thorough investigation is Glixon and Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera*. Other examinations of these documents include Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Creation of a Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Bruno Brunelli, "L'impresario in angustie," *Rivista italiana del dramma* 3 (1941): 311–41; Bianconi and Walker, "Production, Consumption and Political Function"; Carl B. Schmidt, "An Episode in the History of Venetian Opera: The Tito Commission (1665–1666)," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 31 (1978): 442–66; and De Lucca, "Dalle sponde del Tebro alle rive dell'Adria," chaps. 2 and 3.

²³ These were *La Rosilena* (Aurelio Aureli and Giovan Battista Volpe) and *Scipione affricano* (Nicola Minato and Francesco Cavalli) in 1663–64; *Orontea* (Andrea Cicognini

FIGURE 3. Giovanni Battista Falda, *Piazza de Santi Apostoli*. Etching. Reprinted from *Il nuovo teatro delle fabbriche et edificii in prospettiva di Roma moderna*, vol. 2 (Rome: G. G. Rossi, ca. 1665), 4. © The British Library Board (744.b.19).



The election in 1667 of Giulio Rospigliosi as Pope Clement IX marked the beginning of a new vibrant phase for opera and theater in Rome and represented a turning point in the Colonna's support of opera.²⁴ Indeed, the new pope was none other than the Tuscan man of letters who had made his mark as the author of several librettos and dramas during the papacy of Urban VIII (1623–44). His liberal policy toward opera, theater, and public entertainments encouraged the couple to return to spend the carnival season in Rome, eager to secure a place in the city's lively renaissance for music and theater.²⁵

Amid this rebirth of theatrical and operatic life in Rome, rumors spread that the old prison in the area of Tordinona might be transformed into a theater to host either spoken plays or opera.²⁶ At this time, the number of new composers and men of the theater active in the city increased rapidly, and following the election of the new Tuscan pope several composers and artists from Tuscany moved to Rome, eager to begin a new career under the protection of the papal family and the Roman aristocracy. The Melani brothers, Jacopo and Alessandro, relocated to Rome in 1667 after having enjoyed rather successful careers as composers, singers, and *maestri di cappella* in the Italian peninsula and abroad; Filippo Acciajoli, Florentine noble intellectual, experienced creator of theatrical machines, and well-traveled adventurer, also

and Antonio Cesti) and *Il Tito* (Nicolò Beregan and Cesti) in 1665–66; *La Dori* (Giovanni Filippo Apolloni and Cesti) and *Pompeo Magno* (Minato and Cavalli) in 1666–67. All were performed at the Teatro Grimani at SS. Giovanni e Paolo, except for Cavalli's *Pompeo Magno*, which was performed at the Teatro San Salvatore (or San Luca). Payments for the commission of scores of both *Orontea* and *La Dori* can be found in the Archivio Colonna, Biblioteca di Santa Scolastica, Subiaco (henceforth I-SUSS), I.E.14, Giornale. *Intestato al Gran Contestabile Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna, figlio ed erede di Marcantonio. 1659–1667*, to copyist Bernardino Terenzi (18 February 1661: "Spese diverse . . . a Bernardino Terenzi copista") and I-SUSS, Arch. Colonna, I.A.42, *Spogli di liste, giornali, bilanci del maestro di casa. 1642–1665* (1 September 1662: "per copiatura, e ligatura d'una comedia in musica detta La Dori").

²⁴ On Giulio Rospigliosi as author of opera librettos, see Margaret Murata, *Operas for the Papal Court, 1631–1668* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981); idem, "Rospigliosiana ovvero gli Equivoci innocenti," *Studi musicali* 4 (1975): 131–43; Frederick Hammond, *Music and Spectacle in Baroque Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 203–5, 207–8, 226–27, and 231–54; idem, "The Creation of a Roman Festival: Barberini Celebrations for Christina of Sweden," in *Life and the Arts in the Baroque Palaces of Rome: Ambiente Barocco*, ed. Stefanie Walker and Frederick Hammond (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 53–69; Maria A. Purciello, "And Dionysus Laughed: Opera, Comedy and Carnival in Seventeenth-Century Venice and Rome" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2005), especially chaps. 3 and 4.

²⁵ Personal reasons might also have prevented the couple from traveling together to Venice after 1667. See De Lucca, "Dalle sponde del Tebro alle rive dell'Adria," chaps. 3 and 4.

²⁶ Elena Tamburini, "Filippo Acciajoli: un 'avventuriere' e il teatro," in *Teatro Oriente/Occidente*, ed. Antonella Ottai (Rome: Bulzoni, 1986), 456; Cametti, *Il Teatro Tordinona*, 1:66.

settled there around this time.²⁷ The invigorated climate seemed ideal for commissioning and staging new operas. Indeed, three new operas, a *dramma pastorale*, and numerous spoken plays were performed in the palaces of the nobility during the two years of Clement IX's papacy (1667–69), while numerous *commedie* and carnival floats crowded the streets and squares of the city during the celebrations.²⁸ The Rospigliosi family began preparations to stage *La comica del cielo*, with a libretto by Giulio Rospigliosi, before Christmas 1667, and no financial effort was spared to celebrate the new pope and his family name through this morally edifying spectacle.

As Claudio Annibaldi has argued, “few musical genres were created so deliberately connected to the social status of their patrons as *opera in musica*.”²⁹ In seventeenth-century Rome, this acquired a distinctive meaning. In the fragile balance between the centripetal power of the Church and the centrifugal pursuit of autonomy of the numerous Roman aristocratic families, patronage of art, as well as that of private and public events, was a fundamental means to generate publicity and to celebrate the name, power, and wealth of the family. Furthermore, the fragmented social texture of Rome's elite classes created a competition among families that was unique to the milieu of the papal city.

Well aware of the attention that the sponsorship of a lavish musical event could generate, the Colonna decided to mark their return to public life in Rome and reestablish themselves as the city's wealthiest and most refined patrons with the production of a new opera. The negotiations for the commission of a new score, presumably to be performed during the carnival of 1668, had already begun by the end of summer 1667. In August of that year Colonna sent a new libretto to his chosen composer. The libretto was *L'Alcasta* by the poet Giovanni Filippo Apolloni, and the composer elected for this task was, not surprisingly, their old acquaintance Antonio Cesti.

²⁷ Robert L. Weaver, “Materiali per le biografie dei Melani,” *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 12 (1977): 252–95. See also Roger Freitas, *Portrait of a Castrato: Politics, Patronage, and Music in the Life of Atto Melani* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). On Filippo Acciajoli and his intense activity in the theatrical and musical life of Rome for over three decades beginning in the 1660s, see Giovanni Mario Crescimbeni, *Notizie storiche degli Arcadi morti* (Rome: A. De Rosi, 1720), 1:357–61; Tamburini, “Filippo Acciajoli: un ‘avventuriere’ e il teatro”; Clementi, *Il carnevale*, 1:462; Margaret Murata, “Il carnevale a Roma sotto Clemente IX Rospigliosi,” *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 12 (1977): 89–90.

²⁸ The new operas produced during these two years were *La comica del cielo*, *Il Girello*, and *L'empio punito*. See Murata, “Il carnevale a Roma.”

²⁹ “Pochi generi musicali nascono tanto consapevolmente legati al livello sociale dei loro committenti quanto l'opera in musica.” Claudio Annibaldi, “Uno ‘spettacolo veramente da principi’: Committenza e recezione dell'opera aulica nel primo Seicento,” in *Lo stupor dell'invenzione: Firenze e la nascita dell'opera*, ed. Piero Gargiulo (Florence: Leo S. Olshki Editore, 2001), 31.

The choice of poet and composer could not have been more appropriate to mark the return of the Colonna to the Roman cultural life. Apolloni, at that point already a member of the Chigi household, was certainly one of the most talented poets of his generation and had already established himself as a favorite librettist of the Colonna.³⁰ They had championed his librettos not only in Venice (*La Dori*, 1666) but also in Rome, where the 1661 productions of *Orontea* had featured his new prologue. And even though there is no direct evidence that Colonna commissioned the libretto of *L'Alcasta*, some of its characteristics seem to point to a "Venetian" model that would have been familiar to and appreciated by Colonna more than any other opera connoisseur in Rome.³¹ As Staffieri noted, *L'Alcasta* shares some important formal and dramaturgical features particularly with two other librettos by the poet, *La Dori* and *L'Argia*, which became staples of the Venetian repertory and long-time favorites of the Colonna.³²

As for Antonio Cesti, he was at that time at the height of his career, honorary chaplain and director of theatrical music to the Emperor Leopold I, and a coveted composer whose fame had reached the stages of the commercial theaters of Venice and beyond.³³ His international reputation was worthy of the Colonna family, whose esteem of the composer had been evident since their 1661 production of *Orontea*. In addition, Cesti's collaboration with Apolloni had already proved a great success. While Apolloni was at the Imperial court, the two had coauthored several works, including *La Dori* and *L'Argia*, and after Apolloni's move to Rome in 1659 they collaborated also on numerous cantatas.

The commission of a score for *L'Alcasta* came at a tremendously busy time for Cesti, who was not only completing *Il pomo d'oro* for Vienna, but had also already agreed to compose an opera for Venice with Nicolò Beregan.³⁴ Despite his great esteem for Apolloni and the honor

³⁰ On Giovanni Filippo Apolloni, see Giorgio Morelli, "L'Apolloni librettista di Cesti, Stradella e Pasquini," *Chigiana* 39 (1982): 211–64.

³¹ Valeria De Lucca, "The Power of the *prima donna*: Giulia Masotti and the Circulation of Giovanni Filippo Apolloni's and Antonio Cesti's Operas during the 1660s and 1670s," *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music*, forthcoming.

³² Staffieri, "La reine s'amuse," 24–36, thoroughly investigates the main dramaturgical features of these librettos, showing that for *L'Alcasta* Apolloni relied greatly on the old conventions he used in *La Dori* and *L'Argia*, but transformed them in order to enhance the effectiveness of the drama.

³³ Bianconi, "Cesti, Pietro."

³⁴ The opera in question was probably *Il Genserico*. By August 1667 the only opera that Cesti had completed on a libretto by Nicolò Beregan was *Il Tito*, which was performed at the Teatro SS. Giovanni e Paolo in Venice in 1666 and dedicated to Maria Mancini, Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna, and the Duke of Nevers. The only other libretto by Nicolò Beregan partially set to music by Cesti is *Il Genserico*. Herbert Seifert has argued that Cesti began composing this opera in 1665 and never finished it; *Genserico* was performed posthumously in 1670 at the Teatro SS. Giovanni e Paolo with the rest of the

of being invited by Colonna to compose this new opera, the composer declined the offer to undertake yet another project of this magnitude. On 7 August 1667, in a missive from Vienna, he expressed his intentions to Colonna as follows:

Most Excellent Signor Prencipe

Together with the honor of Your Excellency's most kind letter, I receive the enclosed opera of *Alcasta*, poetry by Sig. Apolloni, which means that it will be incomparable for music; I confess that to properly serve and obey the wishes of Your Excellency, I would like to find myself with fewer occupations than the ones that at the present keep me very tired, as I am now in the last phase of the *grand'opera* of which I only have to complete the fifth and final act; I also have a commitment in Venice with Signor Beregani to compose an opera for this carnival. Thus I would also like to have the time to reciprocate the esteem in which Your Excellency holds my weak talents and in particular to the most kind invitation, thinking that my assistance with the direction of the opera will certainly not be too much of a necessity.

After this carnival, at the latest, I hope to be done with the obligation of the *grand'opera*, and as Your Excellency will have by now heard from the answer I gave to Signor Giuseppe Maria Donati, I await each day the decision of the Most Serene Grand Duke; wherever I will be, I will do all I can to obtain a welcome permission to come and serve Your Excellency on this occasion, to prove myself always more immutably

Of Your Excellence

Vienna 7 August 1667

most obliged and most humble servant

Antonio Cesti³⁵

music possibly by Gian Domenico Partenio. See Herbert Seifert, "Cesti and His Opera Troupe in Innsbruck and Vienna, with New Information about His Last Year and His Oeuvre," in *La figura e l'opera di Antonio Cesti nel Seicento europeo: Convegno internazionale di studio*, Arezzo, 26–27 April 2002, ed. Mariateresa Dellaborra (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2003), 42–43.

³⁵ "Eccellentissimo Signor Prencipe. Con l'onore della benignissima lettera di Vostra Eccellenza ricevo annessa l'opera dell'Alcasta, poesia del Signor Apolloni, che vale a dire impareggiabile per la musica; confesso che per ben servire e obedire ai cenni di Vostra Eccellenza vorrei ritrovarmi con meno occupazioni di quelle che al presente mi tengono molto affaticato, stringendosi ora la grand'opera della quale mi resta da terminare il quinto e ultimo atto; e sono anco di già impegnato a Venezia col Signor Beregani componendoli un'opera per questo carnevale; onde vorrei pure aver tempo per corrispondere alle grazie di Vostra Eccellenza al concetto che fa delle mie debolezze, e particolarmente all'umanissimo invito stimando certamente troppo necessaria la mia assistenza alla direzione dell'opera. Al più lungo, per tutto questo carnevale spero che qui sarò sbrigato dall'obbligo della grand'opera e come Vostra Eccellenza a quest'ora averà sentito dalla risposta ch'io diedi al Signor Giuseppe Maria Donati, attendo ogni giorno le risoluzioni del Serenissimo Gran Duca; dove io mi ritroverò, procurerò per quanto mi sarà possibile d'ottenere grata licenza per venire a servire Vostra Eccellenza in questa occasione per rimostrarmi sempre più immutabilmente. Di Vostra Eccellenza umimilissimo ed obbligatissimo servo Antonio Cesti. Vienna 7 Agosto 1667." ISUss, Arch. Colonna,

This newly discovered letter offers a wealth of information on Cesti's frantic activity of this time to complete *Il pomo d'oro* and his engagement with Beregan, as well as his desire to return to his beloved Tuscany in the service of the Medici court. In addition, this letter provides important new insight into the process by which new works were commissioned. To begin with, Colonna chose the libretto and sent it to the composer, who approved the choice by defining the quality of Apolloni's poetry as incomparable to any musical setting he could provide. In his decision to commission a score on an original libretto, Colonna clearly wanted to create a work that, unlike the *Oronthea* he had sponsored in 1661, had never been performed, heard, or dedicated to any other party before. Finally, and most importantly for our purposes, Cesti's letter reveals that the libretto of *L'Alcasta*, as we know it from the 1673 production at the Tordinona, had been neither commissioned nor inspired by personal circumstances in the life of the dedicatee, the Queen of Sweden, and that, in fact, she was not even remotely involved in its commission.

Although rumors spread around Rome that Colonna was sponsoring an opera by Cesti for the 1668 carnival, the prince actually had to set the project aside following notice of the composer's unavailability.³⁶ Instead, under the collective sponsorship of a group of aristocrats that included Prince Agostino Chigi and Cardinal Flavio Chigi, Colonna produced *Il Girello*, a new opera by Jacopo Melani on a libretto by Acciaoli and Apolloni, in his theater in Borgo (an area of Rome near Saint Peter).³⁷ The prologue of the opera was by the same Apolloni and was set to music by the young Alessandro Stradella.³⁸ The experiment of "collective" sponsorship of *Il Girello* was so successful that in 1669 the same parties, with the additional contribution of the Rospigliosi family and possibly the Queen of Sweden, organized the production of another opera at Palazzo Colonna: it was *L'empio punito* by Alessandro

Corrispondenza di Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna, busta 1667, Antonio Cesti to Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna, Vienna, 7 August 1667, note 119.

³⁶ An opera by Cesti supposedly prepared by Colonna is mentioned in Ademollo, *I teatri di Roma*, 106.

³⁷ On the theater in Borgo, see Elena Tamburini, "Da alcuni inventari di casa Colonna: i teatri," in *Il teatro a Roma nel Settecento* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1982–89), 2:617–80. On Flavio Chigi's musical activities, see Jean Lionnet, "Les activités musicales de Flavio Chigi cardinal neveu d'Alexandre VII," *Studi musicali* 9 (1980): 287–302.

³⁸ [Filippo Acciaoli and Giovanni Filippo Apolloni], *Il Girello* (Ronciglione: Bartolomeo Lupardi, 1668). On *Il Girello*, see Robert L. Weaver, "Il Girello, a 17th-Century Burlesque Opera," *Quadrivium* 12 (1971): 141–64, and Murata, "Il carnevale a Roma," 83–99. For the sponsorship of *Il Girello*, see the *avvisi* cited in Ademollo, *I teatri di Roma*, 104; Murata, "Il carnevale a Roma," 90–91; and the documents cited in Tamburini, *Due teatri*, 101–2.

Melani on another libretto by Acciaiuoli and Apolloni, the first operatic adaptation of Don Juan's adventures.³⁹

We do not know if at this point Colonna was still hoping to obtain a score for *L'Alcasta* from Cesti or if a score had been prepared. An indication that Colonna might have been in possession of a score for a new opera comes from a letter sent to Sigismondo Chigi from Siena in December 1668. In the letter, Leonardo Marsili, a member of the Accademia degli Intronati who was in charge of finding a new opera for the Sienese 1669 carnival, wrote: "If your Eminence, now that the Contestabile [Colonna] is in Rome, were to send [the deputies] that new opera you were talking about last summer, which was set to music and never performed . . . it would console everyone greatly."⁴⁰ Could this opera have been *L'Alcasta*? For now this question must remain unanswered. What we do know is that any hopes Colonna might have entertained to obtain a score from Cesti were ultimately and definitively shattered by the composer's death on 14 October 1669.

L'Alcasta, the Coveted Object

212

For a few years after the negotiations between the Colonna family and Cesti in 1667, neither the libretto nor the score of *L'Alcasta* is mentioned in contemporary sources. Plans to produce the opera in Rome, however, continued to develop. Rumors of the opening of a new theater at Tordinona were becoming more insistent, and many Roman aristocrats, including the Colonna and the Chigi families, were to take a significant part in the undertaking. Keeping the libretto of *L'Alcasta* under his control in Rome, however, proved a rather arduous task for Colonna. Its fame had already reached Venice, prompting a competition between the commercial theater of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, owned by the Grimani brothers, and the Roman prince for the first production. A crucial figure in this power struggle was soprano Giulia Masotti, whose highly valued voice and cleverness allowed her to navigate deftly between the commercial and the private worlds of opera. It is only in September 1671 that the title of *L'Alcasta* surfaces again, this time in

³⁹ [Filippo Acciaiuoli and Giovanni Filippo Apolloni], *L'empio punito* (Ronciglione: Bartolomeo Lupardi, 1669). For the sponsorship of *L'empio punito*, see Tamburini, *Due teatri*, 105–6; Murata, "Il carnevale a Roma," 94–95; Nino Pirrotta, *Don Giovanni in Musica: Dall'Empio punito a Mozart* (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 1991), 27–28; Cametti, *Il Teatro Tordinona*, 1:15 (in which he states that the Queen also participated in the financial effort for the production); and *Lettere inedite di Salvator Rosa a G. B. Ricciardi*, ed. Aldo De Rinaldis (Rome: Palombi, 1939), letters 179 and 181.

⁴⁰ The "new opera" from Rome was apparently never sent, and Cesti's *L'Argia* was performed instead. See Colleen Reardon, "The 1669 Sienese Production of Cesti's *L'Argia*," in *Music Observed: Studies in Memory of William C. Holmes*, ed. Colleen Reardon and Susan Parisi (Warren, Mich.: Harmonie Park Press, 2004), 417–28.

the correspondence of the Chigi family, and specifically in two letters Masotti sent to her patron, Cardinal Sigismondo Chigi.⁴¹

Giulia Masotti, who during the first part of her life was based in Rome, was well known to both the Colonna and the Chigi families. Her debut in Venice in 1663 as Dori in the eponymous opera was hailed as a memorable event marking the beginning of a quick rise to fame and a remarkably successful career.⁴² At the time of her debut in Venice, Giulia Masotti was under the patronage of the Medici family in the person of Count Montauto, who discovered her in Rome. When it came to her next engagements in Venice during the seasons of 1663–67, however, Masotti relied on Lorenzo Onofrio and Maria Mancini Colonna to assist her in the difficult task of negotiating her conditions with Marco Faustini, the impresario of the Teatro SS. Giovanni e Paolo. The Colonna were certainly familiar with this talented Roman soprano, and their periodic presence in Venice must have been reassuring to the young and inexperienced Masotti during her long stays away from home. Indeed, they went out of their way to accommodate each of Masotti's requests, particularly during the preparations for the 1666–67 opera season. They helped her negotiate the best contract, lent her money, mediated for her with her previous protector, the Duchess of Parma, and obtained for her both the lead role and a change of opera when she refused to sing in Carlo Pallavicino's *Il Meraspe* and opted for her favorite, Apolloni's and Cesti's *La Dori*, a preference she shared with the Colonna.⁴³

Beginning in 1668 her bond to the Chigi family is documented by the impressive number of letters that Giulia exchanged with various members of the family, and particularly with Cardinal Sigismondo

⁴¹ These two letters are now held in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (henceforth I-Rvat), Arch. Chigi 33, *Carteggi*, Giulia Masotti to [Sigismondo Chigi], Polesella, 22 September 1671, 602r–603v and I-Rvat, Arch. Chigi 33, *Carteggi*, Giulia Masotti to [Sigismondo Chigi], Polesella, 29 September 1671, 604r–605r. These are part of a larger group of letters held in I-Rvat, Arch. Chigi, 33 and 175, *Carteggi*, from soprano Giulia Masotti to Sigismondo Chigi and are the focus of three forthcoming articles in the *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* by Valeria De Lucca, Beth Glixon, and Colleen Reardon, first presented as papers of the panel “In Private, in Public, at Court: The Rise of the Prima Donna in Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century Italy and Austria” at the seventy-fourth annual meeting of the American Musicological Society (Nashville, TN, 6–9 November 2008). See also Sergio Monaldini, “Masotti, Vincenza Giulia,” [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/vincenza-giulia-masotti_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/vincenza-giulia-masotti_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) (accessed 14 April 2011).

⁴² On Masotti in Venice, see Glixon and Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera*, 209–14 and *passim*; Beth L. Glixon, “Private Lives of Public Women: Prima Donnas in Mid-Seventeenth-Century Venice,” *Music & Letters* 76 (1995): 524–27; and *idem*, “Giulia Masotti, Venice, and the Rise of the Prima Donna,” *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music*, forthcoming.

⁴³ Glixon and Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera*, 209–14; De Lucca, “Dalle sponde del Tebro alle rive dell’Adria,” chap. 2.

Chigi.⁴⁴ The Colonna, however, remained profoundly involved in the developments of her artistic career in Venice even after she passed under the protection of the Chigi family.⁴⁵ Although she probably did not reside in the Palazzo Chigi in Piazza SS. Apostoli, she was certainly a familiar guest of the Chigi, as well as a close acquaintance of the poet in their service, Giovanni Filippo Apolloni.⁴⁶

After the Colonna returned to Rome in 1667, the soprano continued to be engaged in opera productions in Venice. Now an indispensable fixture of the Venetian stages and an expert negotiator, Masotti was able to handle the tough world of commercial opera by herself. In July 1671, probably in preparation for the 1671–72 season at the Grimani's Teatro SS. Giovanni e Paolo, she placed a request to her patrons in Rome: she wanted a new libretto from Apolloni with a part that would do her honor above anyone else.⁴⁷ Even though Masotti and Apolloni were particularly close at that time, the soprano was clearly in no position to obtain a libretto from the poet without the permission of the Chigi family. At the same time, the Grimani brothers, for whose theater the libretto was probably intended, did not ask for the libretto themselves, and instead entrusted Masotti with the task of convincing the Chigi.

Masotti apparently never obtained a new libretto from Apolloni, and as time went by and the preparations for the imminent opera season became more frantic, she sent two letters to Sigismondo Chigi, one dated 22 September by regular mail, and another dated 29 September by special courier. She was writing from Polesella, a town near Venice where she was staying with the Grimani family, and she complained to Sigismondo because he had not been willing to satisfy her request to send her a copy of the libretto of *L'Alcasta*. Masotti begged him once again to do so as soon as possible, and with the greatest secrecy, "since these Signori Grimani obtained it from a great prince, but it seems to me very altered in the scenes, and for this reason I would like to

⁴⁴ On Masotti's relationship with Sigismondo Chigi, see Colleen Reardon, "Letters from the Road: Giulia Masotti and Cardinal Sigismondo Chigi," *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music*, forthcoming.

⁴⁵ See, for example, her engagement in Venice in 1669 to sing Apolloni's and Cesti's *L'Argia* at San Luca. Tamburini, *Due teatri*, 103–4; Glixon, "Giulia Masotti"; De Lucca, "Dalle sponde del Tebro alle rive dell'Adria," chap. 2.

⁴⁶ Apolloni's correspondence with his patrons, in which he often refers to Masotti, is found in I-Rvat, Arch. Chigi 1, *Carteggi*. The singer also refers to Apolloni in her letters to Sigismondo. See, for example, I-Rvat, Arch. Chigi 33, *Carteggi*, Giulia Masotti to [Sigismondo Chigi], Florence, 2 April 1669, 573r; I-Rvat, Arch. Chigi 33, *Carteggi*, Giulia Masotti to [Sigismondo Chigi], Bologna, 23 March 1669, 578r; and I-Rvat, Arch. Chigi 33, *Carteggi*, fol. 595v, Giulia Masotti to [Sigismondo Chigi], Polesella, 18 July 1671.

⁴⁷ I-Rvat, Arch. Chigi 33, *Carteggi*, fol. 595v, Giulia Masotti to [Sigismondo Chigi], Polesella (Venice), 18 July 1671.

compare it [to your copy].”⁴⁸ She noted that “since [copies of] this work can be found in Florence, Innsbruck, Vienna, and Rome, I do not know from where these Signori Grimani have obtained it.” Then she promised: “I can reassure you that nobody but I will know or will see the comparison.”⁴⁹

Masotti was only interested in the libretto of *L'Alcasta*, as it is clear from her indication that “if there is no music, it does not matter, because for me it is enough to have only the words.”⁵⁰ But if Masotti and the Grimani brothers were already in possession of a copy of *L'Alcasta*, why the need to compare it with another version? That Masotti was able to recognize an “altered” version of what she clearly considered an “archetypal” libretto of *L'Alcasta* comes as no surprise. She had probably seen a copy of Apolloni’s libretto before 1671, and she might well have been aware that Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna had sent the same libretto to Cesti in 1667. Masotti and Apolloni shared the same patrons and regularly exchanged information while she traveled for her singing commitments, so she probably knew that *L'Alcasta* had not yet been set to music and performed in Rome. But although it is not surprising that she asked for a copy of the libretto from the patrons of the poet (who presumably had more control over the libretto than the poet himself), it is more difficult to determine why she wanted to compare the librettos. It would be anachronistic to think that she was concerned with problems of “authenticity,” since librettos in Venice were altered regularly. It is more likely that having been invited to perform the opera in Venice, Masotti was concerned with aesthetic issues and wished to use Apolloni’s original version rather than the “altered” version that a “great prince” had given to the Grimani brothers because she regarded the former as of superior quality.⁵¹

Masotti’s two letters convey a strong sense of urgency and secrecy, revealing that she was acting against the will, or at least behind the back, of someone whose authority she feared. This impression is confirmed

⁴⁸ “Stante che questi Signori Grimani l’hanno otenuta da un prencipe grande ma a me mi pare molto alterata nelle scene, e così io la vorrei confrontare.” I-Rvat, Arch. Chigi 33, *Carteggi*, Giulia Masotti to [Sigismondo Chigi], Polesella, 22 September 1671, 602r–v.

⁴⁹ “Perché ritrovandosi la detta opera in Fiorenza, in Spruch [*sic*], in Vienna, e in Roma, non so di dove questi Signori Grimani l’hanno ottenuta . . . assicurandola che nessuno lo saprà e vedrà, se non io, il paragone.” I-Rvat, Arch. Chigi, 33, *Carteggi*, Giulia Masotti to [Sigismondo Chigi], Polesella, 29 September 1671, 604r.

⁵⁰ “Per aviso di Vostra Eminenza, se non v’è la musica non importa perché a me bastan le parole sole.” I-Rvat, Arch. Chigi 33, *Carteggi*, Giulia Masotti to [Sigismondo Chigi], Polesella, 22 September 1671, 602v.

⁵¹ On Giulia Masotti and her influence on the repertoire she performed and its circulation during the 1660s and 1670s, see De Lucca, “The Power of the *prima donna*,” and Glixon, “Giulia Masotti.”

by a letter from Guido Passionei, a member of the Chigi household, to a Cardinal Chigi (Sigismondo or Flavio) on 10 October 1671, a few days after Masotti's own letters to Sigismondo. Passionei's letter shows that she was still waiting for her copy of *L'Alcasta* not because Sigismondo refused to help her, but simply because he did not have control over the libretto:

I immediately asked the prince for *L'Alcasta* so as to send it to Venice in the highest secrecy, but the prince told me that he would have replied to Your Eminence himself about this, since he had some difficulties with the Signor Contestabile, who last night was at the princess's, and at the table where Cardinal Caraffa was playing *toccatiglio*, they started talking about Venetian *comedie* and the Contestabile said that Signora Giulia [Masotti] had asked him for *L'Alcasta*, but he was forced to refuse her, because for its premiere either His Excellency [Chigi] will do it, or he wants to have it performed in Rome; in addition he was forced to refuse her also for two other reasons, one because Signora Giulia was lying when she said that the libretto was being set to music by the maestro di cappella of the Emperor in Vienna, and also because His Excellency [Colonna] is not on good terms with the Grimani, for whom this opera was meant, since they treated Nina *Muta a sei* so badly, despite the fact that she had been recommended by His Excellency [Colonna].⁵²

Colonna clearly had complete power over the libretto. If he did not agree to send it to Venice, not even the Chigi, the patrons of the librettist, could oppose or influence his decision. Aware of Colonna's control, Masotti had resorted to Sigismondo Chigi only after she had been denied this favor by Colonna himself. Probably on that occasion she had told Colonna that the Grimani wanted to stage the opera and that numerous copies of *L'Alcasta* (very likely manuscript librettos) circulated in Vienna, Innsbruck, Florence, and Rome. During her first

⁵² "Domandai subito al Signor Principe l'Alcasta per inviarla a Venezia con segretezza, ma il Signor Principe disse che averebbe risposto egli medesimo a Vostra Eminenza, avendovi qualche difficoltà in riguardo del Signor Contestabile, il quale ieri sera fu dalla Signora Principessa, e al tavolino dove giocava il Signor Cardinal Caraffa a *toccatiglio* fu accorso discorso sopra le comedie di Venezia, e il Signor Contestabile uscì in dire che la Signora Giulia gli aveva domandata l'Alcasta, ma ch'egli fu costretto a negargliela, perché la prima volta, o la vuol far Sua Eccellenza o vuol che si faccia in Roma; e gliela negò anche per due altri capi, uno perché la Signora Giulia gli diceva una bugia affermando che già si metteva in musica in Vienna dal Maestro di Capella dell'Imperatore e l'altro perché Sua Eccellenza ha poco buon animo verso i Grimani, per i quali doveva servire, avendo una volta sì maltrattata Nina *Muta a sei*, benché fosse loro stata raccomandata da Sua Eccellenza. Onde sopra vo' dui rimetto a quanto risponderà a Vostra Eminenza il Principe medesimo." I-Rvat, Arch. Chigi 280, *Lettere ed avvisi da Roma di Fr. Paolo Passionei e Guido Passionei*, Guido Passionei to [Sigismondo or Flavio Chigi], Rome, 10 October 1671, 153r-v.

engagements in Venice in the 1660s, Colonna had always been a patient and helpful protector, granting Masotti's every request. However, in this case he was not willing to help her or, especially, the Grimani brothers, who had probably pressured the singer to obtain the libretto from Rome. First, according to Colonna, they had mistreated "Nina," and second, to make matters worse, Masotti was spreading the false rumor that *L'Alcasta* was being set to music in Vienna by the Emperor's *maestro di cappella*—clearly without Colonna's permission or awareness.⁵³

It would be difficult to believe, however, that Lorenzo Onofrio's decision not to send the libretto to Venice was motivated exclusively by this misunderstanding with both the Grimani family and Giulia Masotti. The reasons for his denial must be sought elsewhere. In the new Roman cultural climate, and despite the difficulties in finding a suitable composer, the original libretto by Apolloni constituted an invaluable asset for Colonna, providing the opportunity to stage a successful new opera in his city of residence. Passionei's letter also reinforces the sense that the Chigi and the Colonna were involved in some form of collective ownership of the "rights" to perform *L'Alcasta*. Even though Colonna maintained absolute control over the libretto, he could envision either a production staged by Prince Agostino Chigi outside of Rome, or one under his own auspices in Rome. Plans for staging *L'Alcasta* were thus on their way in October 1671, and Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna seemed to have very clear ideas about the venue for the much awaited event.

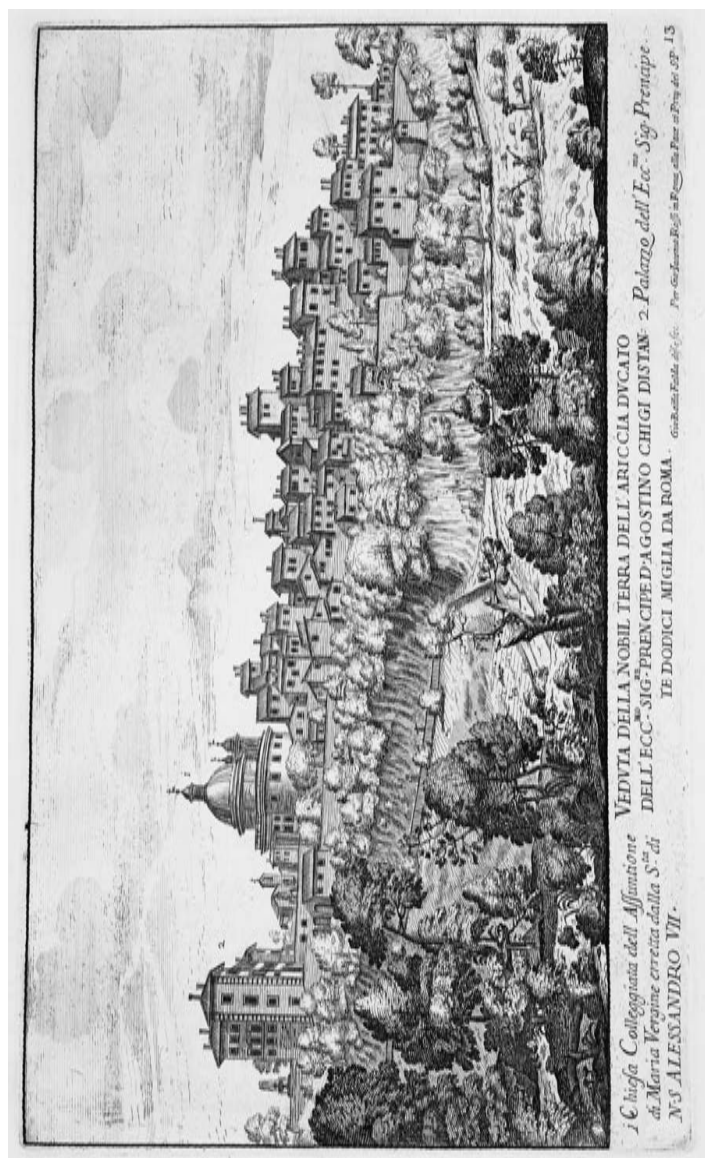
Production and Dedication

There are reasons to believe that a performance of *L'Alcasta* involving Prince Agostino Chigi would have taken place at the Palazzo Chigi in Ariccia, the family's summer retreat just south of Rome (fig. 4).⁵⁴

⁵³ Nina is almost certainly the singer Caterina Tomei, who was commonly referred to as "Nina." As for the meaning of "muta a sei," a large and most magnificent carriage pulled by six horses, we might remember that two Roman courtesans and singers had the nickname of Pimpe Carrettiere, another one was known as Nina Barcarola, and another singer in Venice had the nickname of La Guardarobba. In the case of the nickname Pimpe Carrettiere, Amy Brosius, "Il suon, lo sguardo, il canto: *Virtuose* of the Roman *Conversazioni* in the Mid-Seventeenth Century" (PhD diss., New York University, 2009), 176, has proposed that it might refer to "those who ride in carriages, something that despite its illegality was associated with high-class courtesans who catered to the elite." "Muta a sei" could thus be a nickname used in the Chigi entourage to refer to Tomei. For references to "La Guardarobba," see Glixon and Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera*, 178 and 189.

⁵⁴ This hypothesis was advanced by Morelli, "L'Apolloni librettista," 232–34 and later mentioned by Staffieri, "La reine s'amuse," 23–24. The Chigi acquired the property in Ariccia in 1661 in an attempt to expand the family's horizons beyond the city of Rome and into the countryside. See Renato Lefevre, "Gli 'Sfaccendati,'" *Studi romani* 8, no. 2 (1960): 155.

FIGURE 4. Giovanni Battista Falda, *Veduta della Nobil Terra dell'Ariccìa*. Etching. Reprinted from *Il nuovo teatro delle fabbriche et edificii in prospettiva di Roma moderna*, vol. 3 (Rome: G. G. Rossi, ca. 1665), 13. © The British Library Board (744 b.19).



At the time Masotti sent her letters to Sigismondo Chigi, it is likely that Prince Agostino and Cardinal Flavio Chigi were already thinking of producing operas in Ariccia as one of the principal activities of their Accademia degli Sfaccendati.⁵⁵ Indeed, Bernardo Pasquini's *La sincerità con la sincerità, ovvero Il Tirinto* and Pietro Simone Agostini's *Gl'inganni innocenti, ovvero L'Adalinda*, both on librettos by Giovanni Filippo Apolloni, were staged in the Chigi summer palace in 1672 and 1673 respectively.⁵⁶ Not surprisingly, the Sfaccendati included well-known artists in the entourages of both the Colonna and the Chigi, such as Apolloni and Acciaioi, and the artists who performed in these operas included members of the Colonna household: the singers Nicola Coresi and Giuseppe Fedi, and the dancer Luca Cherubini.⁵⁷ It is thus very likely that Colonna was already thinking of Ariccia when in 1671 he considered mounting a performance of *L'Alcasta* in collaboration with members of the Chigi family. *L'Alcasta* could have thus been the first of a series of operas produced in Ariccia by the Sfaccendati. This was not to be the case, however, and *L'Alcasta* was finally destined to debut at the Teatro Tordinona.

Based on a comparison with the repertory later chosen by the Chigi family for private performances in Ariccia in 1672 and 1673, one could speculate that *L'Alcasta* was more suitable for a performance in the principal commercial theater of Rome than in the family's private palace. *L'Adalinda*, *Il Tirinto*, and *L'Alcasta* do share some common features. Both *Il Tirinto* and *L'Adalinda*, like *L'Alcasta*, are centered on the intricate adventures and travels of two sets of lovers and their family

⁵⁵ The constitution of the Accademia was made official in September 1672, but it is very likely that the same group of aristocrats and intellectuals was already active in conversations in Palazzo Chigi in Rome. See Lefevre, "Gli 'Sfaccendati,'" 155–63.

⁵⁶ [Giovanni Filippo Apolloni], *La sincerità con la sincerità, ovvero Il Tirinto* ("Cosmopoli," 1672); [Giovanni Filippo Apolloni], *Gl'inganni innocenti, ovvero L'Adalinda* (Ronciglione, 1673). The two operas were dedicated to Eleonora Boncompagni Borghese and Virginia Borghese Chigi respectively, sister-in-law and wife of Prince Agostino Chigi. On the Accademia degli Sfaccendati, see Michele Maylender, *Storia delle accademie d'Italia*, 5 vols. (Bologna: L. Cappelli, 1926–30; repr. Bologna: Forni, 1976), 5:170–71; and Lefevre, "Gli 'Sfaccendati,'" 154–65 and 288–301. On the production of *Il Tirinto* in Ariccia, see Renato Lefevre, "Il 'Tirinto' di Bernardo Pasquini all'Ariccia (1672)," in *Musica e musicisti nel Lazio*, ed. Renato Lefevre and Arnaldo Morelli (Rome: Palombi, 1985), 237–68; and Bianconi and Walker, "Production, Consumption and Political Function," 252.

⁵⁷ See Morelli, "L'Apolloni librettista," 234, and Lefevre, "Il 'Tirinto,'" 246. Lefevre, "Gli 'Sfaccendati,'" 161, offers a transcription of the document in which members of the Accademia are mentioned. Here, Apolloni is referred to as "poeta e compositore" while Acciaioi and Giuliano Capranica are mentioned as "governatore e direttore delle medesime opere e delle scene." Other members of the Accademia included, at different times, the architect Carlo Fontana and Count Giuliano Capranica. The latter would later become an active sponsor of operas at the end of the seventeenth century.

members. The plots of all three librettos are furthermore significantly complicated by the use of disguise, a device common in nearly all operas of this time, and are resolved by the recognition of the main characters' real identities. But the three librettos display also very significant differences. *L'Alcasta* presents a distinctly "royal" and "heroic" character, with its main action focusing on the queen's quest for vengeance for her brother's death; whereas the plots of *L'Adalinda* and *Il Tirinto* are centered on restoring family ties and fulfilling amorous relationships. Furthermore, *L'Alcasta* features neither the pastoral character nor the specific settings used in *Il Tirinto* and *L'Adalinda*. As Bianconi and Walker have pointed out, both *Il Tirinto* and *L'Adalinda* take place in idyllic and local settings, such as Anzio, Monte Cavo (with its Temple of Jove), Frascati, and Ariccia, set off by gardens and woods.⁵⁸ Thus, despite being penned by the same skillful poet who had created *Il Tirinto* and *L'Adalinda*, *L'Alcasta* exhibits different aesthetic concerns.

It may then be for these reasons that in 1673 *L'Alcasta* found a place on the stage of the Teatro Tordinona, the first opera theater in Rome "alla moda di Venezia," where the most successful Venetian operas—Cavalli's *Scipione affricano* and *Novello Giasone* (1671), Cesti's *La Dori* and *Il Tito*, and Sartorio's *La Prosperità di Elio Seiano* (1672)—were parading one after the other in front of a Roman audience unaccustomed to such spectacles. Notably enough, *L'Alcasta* was the only original work to premiere at the Tordinona, the repertory of which otherwise consisted entirely of operas already performed in Venice.

The Colonna were undoubtedly the most fervent champions of Venetian opera in Rome at the time. They were also familiar with a majority of the operas performed at the Tordinona, not only because they had already seen them in Venice, but also because many of the works had been dedicated to them.⁵⁹ Not surprisingly, the Colonna were greatly involved with the management and artistic production of the Tordinona as well. They built their own boxes at the theater, decorated with lavish and stunning frescoes and stuccoes of their coat of arms and family symbols. More important, their protection of the impresario of the Tordinona, the same Filippo Acciaiuoli who was involved in all the productions at Palazzo Colonna in the late 1660s and at Ariccia during

⁵⁸ Bianconi and Walker, "Production, Consumption and Political Function," 252. See also Gino Roncaglia, "Il Tirinto di B. Pasquini e i suoi 'intermezzi,'" *Rassegna musicale* 4 (1931): 331–39. For a discussion of Sigismondo Chigi's predilection for pastoral operas, see Reardon, "Letters from the Road."

⁵⁹ Operas attended by the Colonna in Venice and later performed at the Teatro Tordinona include *Scipione affricano*, *Il Novello Giasone* (in the original version as *Il Giasone*), *La Dori*, *Il Tito*, and *La prosperità di Elio Seiano*. Of these, *Scipione*, *La Dori*, and *Il Tito* were dedicated to them.

the early 1670s, probably allowed them to exert a certain degree of control over the theater's repertory.⁶⁰ Two operas were dedicated to Maria Mancini Colonna during the Tordinona's first two seasons: *Il Novello Giasone* (1671) and *Il Tito* (1672).⁶¹ According to the dedication in the printed libretto, the latter had been "promoted and destined for this occasion" by Maria herself, as she also confirmed in her memoirs.⁶² When in 1673 *L'Alcasta* finally reached the stage of the Tordinona, it marked the arrival of yet another opera that bore close ties with the Colonna name to the Roman theater.

L'Alcasta, however, was dedicated to Queen Christina, and the printed libretto does not reveal any connection to the Colonna or the Chigi.⁶³ Despite the fact that Colonna kept this libretto safe from any possible appropriation and had clear plans in 1671 to stage it in the close intellectual circles around his own family and that of Chigi, the production appeared to be under the exclusive patronage of the Queen of Sweden. No trace of its complex history, from its commission to its final destination to the Tordinona, can be detected in either the libretto or the score of the opera; nor can it be found by reading contemporary chronicles.

⁶⁰ On Filippo Acciajoli and the Teatro Tordinona, see Tamburini, "Filippo Acciajoli: un 'avventuriere' e il teatro"; Renato Lefevre, "Pippo Acciajoli: Accademico Sfiaccendato," *Strenna dei romanisti* 17 (1956): 256–61; Cametti, *Il Teatro Tordinona*, 1:45–60; and Ademollo, *I teatri di Roma*, 119–28. On the relationship between Acciajoli and the Colonna family, see De Lucca, "Dalle sponde del Tebro alle rive dell'Adria," chap. 3.

⁶¹ Cametti, *Il Teatro Tordinona*, 2:327–29, 334–36. The Teatro Tordinona opened with a production of Cavalli's *Scipione africano*, first performed in Venice and dedicated to Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna in 1664, and now dedicated to the Queen of Sweden. See Dinko Fabris, "After the Premiere: The Use of Cavalli's Scores in Past and Modern Revivals," in *Cavalli's Operas on the Modern Stage—Manuscript, Edition, Production*, ed. Ellen Rosand (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, forthcoming).

⁶² "L'ha promosso e dedicato a questo tempo," dedication by Bartolomeo Lupardi in Nicolò Beregan, *Il Tito* (Rome: Bartolomeo Lupardi, 1672), 3r–v. Mancini's intention to produce *Il Tito* at Tordinona was so clear that she even mentioned it in her autobiography: "On fit à Venise de très beaux opéra, et entre autres le Titus, où j'allais très souvent, et où je n'étais pas moins attirée par la douceur des voix, et par la manière de représenter des acteurs, et particulièrement d'un musicien de Son Altesse Royale appelé Cavagnino, et d'une de mes filles qui représentait admirablement, que par la beauté de la pièce, qui eut l'applaudissement de tout le monde, et qui était assurément des plus belles qui se soient jamais vues." Marie Mancini, *La Vérité dans son Jour* (Madrid, 1677), ed. Patricia F. Cholakian and Elizabeth C. Goldsmith (Delmar, N.Y.: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1998), 53.

⁶³ The fact that a second edition of the libretto of *L'Alcasta*, printed in the same year, 1673, bore an additional dedication to Eleonora Boncompagni Borghese, sister-in-law of Prince Agostino Chigi, corroborates the idea of the network of patrons behind this production, while also confirming that dedications at this time were becoming easily "adjustable" to different needs and purposes. This libretto is cited in Renato Lefevre, "Il principe Agostino Chigi e la sua 'Libreria di campagna' in Ariccia (fine sec. XVII)," *Archivio della società romana di storia patria* 112 (1989): 376.

What role, then, did the queen play to earn the dedication of *L'Alcasta*? The archival evidence leaves no doubt that Colonna was involved in the early history of the libretto and strongly suggests that he played a role in the choice of a venue for the performance of the opera. But what about the commission of a score from Bernardo Pasquini and the production of the opera? We still know surprisingly little about the way in which the Teatro Tordinona operated and particularly about the financial aspects of its activity. Studies of other commercial enterprises of the time show that theaters operated through a tight network of social relationships that made it possible for impresarios to find appealing librettos, obtain scores from the most appropriate composers, recruit the best singers, commission all the necessary materials in time, sell tickets and rent boxes. Without the contribution of a number of powerful patrons, staging an opera in a commercial context would have been an impossible endeavor.

The commission of a score from Bernardo Pasquini is still shrouded in mystery.⁶⁴ In 1673 Pasquini, having composed only *Il Tirinto* for the Accademia degli Sfaccendati, was still new to the genre of opera.⁶⁵ His reputation as an opera composer, however, would soon grow, and his works would be commissioned by many of the aristocratic patrons of Rome and staged in the most active theaters of the city during the 1670s and 1680s. Although the dedication of *L'Alcasta* to Christina might be an indication that, if nothing else, she was at least responsible for the commission of the score, the fact that the Chigi had commissioned Pasquini's first opera, *Il Tirinto*, makes them possible candidates for the commission of *L'Alcasta*'s score as well. Furthermore, as Morelli has shown, Pasquini, at the time in the service of Prince Giovan Battista Borghese, had previously been in the entourage of Flavio Chigi, following him during his diplomatic journey to France in 1664, and was thus particularly active in the circles of the Borghese and Chigi, at this time

⁶⁴ On Bernardo Pasquini as opera composer, see Adriano Bonaventura, *Bernardo Pasquini* (Ascoli Piceno: Società Tipo-Litografica, 1923); Cametti, *Cristina di Svezia, l'arte musicale e gli spettacoli teatrali in Roma*, 9–12; Lina Montalto, *Un mecenate in Roma barocca: il cardinale Benedetto Pamphili, 1653–1730* (Florence: Sansoni, 1955), passim; Crain, *The Operas of Bernardo Pasquini*; Carolyn Gianturco, “*Il Trespolo tutore di Stradella e di Pasquini: due diverse concezioni dell’opera comica*,” in *Venezia e il melodramma nel Settecento*, ed. Maria Teresa Muraro (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1978), 1:185–98; idem, “Evidence for a Late Roman School of Opera,” *Music & Letters* 56 (1975): 4–17; and Fabrizio Della Seta, “I Borghese (1691–1731): la musica di una generazione,” *Note d’Archivio* 1 (1983): 139–208.

⁶⁵ *Il Tirinto* was Pasquini's second collaboration with Apolloni after the oratorio *Caino e Abele*, first performed in 1671 in the chapel of Prince Giovan Battista Borghese. Arnaldo Morelli, “Gli oratori di Bernardo Pasquini: problemi di datazione e committenza,” in *Percorsi dell’oratorio romano: Da “historia sacra” a melodramma spirituale*, ed. Saverio Franchi (Rome: IBIMUS, 2002), 78.

bound by family ties.⁶⁶ Even if the queen had not been responsible for commissioning the score, however, she might have helped the impresario during the delicate phase of recruiting the singers for the production, as she certainly did on other occasions for the Teatro Tordinona.⁶⁷ Indeed, several of the most talented singers in Rome who performed in *L'Alcanta*, including Caterina Angela Botteghi, Elena Passarelli, Giuseppe Maria Donati, Carlo Ambrogio Lonati, and the celebrated Giovanni Francesco Grossi (also known as “Siface” after his memorable performance of that role in *Scipione affricano* at the Tordinona in 1671, also dedicated to Christina), were in some way connected to the circles of the Queen of Sweden.

Yet these singers were very active in the most important venues not only in Rome but also in Naples, Venice, and other major operatic stages on the Italian peninsula, and there is no evidence that they belonged to the household of the queen, since no payrolls from these years have emerged.⁶⁸ Being a member of the family, however, was not the only way to benefit from the protection of a powerful aristocrat. In 1667, when Maria Mancini Colonna was the dedicatee of Cesti's *La Dori* in Venice, she was hailed in the dedication of the libretto as the column “that sustains the temple of the Sun” and offers protection to “so many Muses, who are the singers who perform in this drama.”⁶⁹ At this point, only Antonia Coresi was a member of her household; Giulia Masotti and Giovanni Antonio Cavagna were not on the payrolls but had sought the family's protection and assistance during the negotiations with the impresario. The dedication of the libretto to the Colonna was an explicit indication of the impresario's appreciation of the fact that they had invested their prestige and family name to secure the best singers for the season. As in Venice, singers in Rome at this time were becoming very expensive and difficult-to-secure “commodities” for opera impresarios, and the newly appointed impresario of the Tordinona, Marcello De Rosis, might have had to rely greatly on Queen Christina's help.

⁶⁶ Morelli, “Gli oratori di Bernardo Pasquini,” 70.

⁶⁷ See Cametti, *Il Teatro Tordinona*, 1:10–15; 2:323–29. This is also confirmed by an *avviso di Roma* of the following year, indicating that the queen was entitled to ask Cardinal Altieri for the permission to perform the operas since she provided the singers for the production. See, for example, I-Rvat, *Avvisi di Roma*, Barb.Lat. 6376, Rome, 30 December 1673, 479r.

⁶⁸ The question of Queen Christina's patronage of singers and composers in Rome is addressed in Morelli, “Il mecenatismo musicale di Cristina di Svezia,” and idem, “Mecenatismo musicale nella Roma Barocca.”

⁶⁹ “Con essa [colonna] è fabricata la reggia del Sole, poiché la protezione che tiene di tante Muse, che sono li virtuosi rappresentanti nel drama, la fa divenire un Apollo in Parnaso.” [Giovanni Filippo Apolloni], *La Dori ovvero lo schiavo reggio* (Venice: Francesco Nicolini e Stefano Curti, 1667), dedication.

Until more definitive information emerges, we will not be able to reach any conclusion on the role played by the dedicatee in the genesis and production of *L'Alcasta*. But this uncertainty provides us nonetheless with an enticing opportunity. We might wonder at this point whether the question of the “patronage” of *L'Alcasta*—that is, of the individual agency behind its commission, production, and dedication as we are traditionally inclined to consider it—is still in fact a legitimate one. From the overview of its early history, it seems clear that *L'Alcasta* was the result not of the individual patronage of Queen Christina of Sweden or any other sponsor, but rather of the collective patronage of some of Rome’s most enthusiastic opera patrons. In this light, Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna’s efforts to keep the libretto in the city testify not only to his desire to retain some control over it but also to his vision of Rome as a new Venice, a place where commercial opera could become a successful enterprise under the collective auspices of several parties. In this process, the dedication to the queen expresses a form of gratitude for material services or support she may have provided. More importantly, it acknowledges the symbolic role of a patron who could rightfully represent the Roman aristocracy and their common efforts both to bring Venetian opera to Rome and to stage a completely original work at the Tordinona.

If we try at this stage to impose only Christina’s agency on the commission, production, and dedication of *L'Alcasta*, and very likely on other operas staged at the Tordinona and dedicated to her, we could be led down a treacherous path of misinterpretation.⁷⁰ A new, collective form of patronage rises in and outside of Rome toward the end of the century, and we witness the dissolution of the patron as the sole agent responsible for the creation of a new work that embodies and displays exclusively his or her ideals, tastes, and family name.⁷¹

But should we take this as an indication that the audience perceived no connection between the Queen of Sweden and the portrayal of Queen Alcasta? As Staffieri has argued, Pasquini emphasized the moment of the revelation of Alcasta’s real identity, in her aria “Nacqui regina” (act 3, sc. 11), with its “solemn and monumental” pacing that would have been a small but meaningful hint to the audience that

⁷⁰ Arnaldo Morelli has called for a reconsideration of Queen Christina’s patronage of music in Rome that could distinguish between works dedicated to, commissioned, and simply attended by her. See Morelli, “Il mecenatismo musicale di Cristina di Svezia,” 324.

⁷¹ This new form of patronage by a group of sponsors—often organized in academies—is discussed in Piperno, “Opera Production to 1780,” 16–28 and 31–43. See also the case of the municipal theater of Reggio Emilia discussed by Bianconi and Walker in “Production, Consumption and Political Function,” 228–34.

the patron of the opera was hiding behind Alcasta herself.⁷² It is possible that the refined audience of the Teatro Tordinona, accustomed to similar manipulations of codes of meaning in music and theater, might have grasped this musical and dramatic clue. Now we know, however, that the libretto was probably not written with Queen Christina in mind. Experienced opera librettists, like Apolloni, could play with the conventions of the time so that a libretto could serve different purposes depending on the person who commissioned it, the audience to which it was destined, the dedicatee of the opera, and the prima donna who performed it. The ability to create such a versatile, potentially multireferential, and at the same time fashionable artistic product was the first step to secure the success and circulation of an opera and to generate the fame of its creators.

After the first performance of *L'Alcasta*, Count Giacomo D'Alibert sent the libretto to the Duke of Savoy and enclosed a letter containing the following words: "This opera has received a great applause in my theater. . . . The author of this opera is a gentleman of Cardinal Chigi called l'Apollonio, who is the most celebrated poet we have."⁷³ D'Alibert mentions neither the composer Bernardo Pasquini nor the music of the opera, whose genesis remains still unknown. He only gives credit to Apolloni (and to his patron) for his valuable and highly coveted libretto of *L'Alcasta*.

L'Alcasta's Further Journeys

L'Alcasta's arrival on the stage of the Teatro Tordinona does not mark the end of its peregrinations. In 1677, at the Teatro SS. Giovanni e Paolo in Venice, an ostensibly new opera was staged with the title of *Astiage* as the first work of the season. The composer was Giovanni Bonaventura Viviani, referred to in the libretto as "Maestro di Cappella di S.M.C. in Inspruch [*sic*]" (although by that time Viviani was no longer in the service of the Emperor).⁷⁴ Viviani had already worked for the Teatro SS. Giovanni e Paolo in the past, preparing an adaptation of Cavalli's *Scipione affricano* for the 1676 season.⁷⁵ Like *Scipione*, *Astiage* was based

⁷² Staffieri, "La reine s'amuse," 43, describes "Nacqui regina" as "un'aria solenne e maestosa."

⁷³ "Cette comédie eut un très grand applaudissement dans mon théâtre. . . L'Auteur de cet ouvrage est un gentilhomme du Card. Chigi, nommé l'Apollonio, qui est l'auteurs [*sic*] plus en crédit que nous ayons." Quoted in Cametti, *Il Teatro Tordinona*, 2:339.

⁷⁴ Matteo Noris [after Giovanni Filippo Apolloni], *Astiage* (Venice: Francesco Nicolini, 1677), "Benigno lettore," 5.

⁷⁵ See Simon T. Worsthorne, *Venetian Opera in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 121.

on a preexisting libretto. In fact, Matteo Noris, a particularly prolific librettist who wrote and adapted several librettos for the Grimani during the 1670s, does not fail to pay his debt of gratitude to the author of the original drama in the preface: “to conform to current usage and taste, it was agreed to add more action to the present drama, which under another storied name was marvelously written by the fertile pen of Signor Cavalier Apolloni.”⁷⁶

A cursory glance at the libretto of *Astiage* is sufficient to reveal that the poetry is nothing other than an expanded and revised version of *L'Alcasta*: although many arias are new, some are only slightly modified (for example, Alcasta's aria “Nacqui infelice/Moro costante,” which in *Astiage* becomes “Nacqui infelice, Moro costante”); nearly all recitatives of *L'Alcasta* appear unchanged in *Astiage*; and the main plot of the two operas is identical.⁷⁷ However, the action of *L'Alcasta* is much more concentrated and the pace tighter. Noris added fourteen new preliminary scenes to the beginning of the first act of *Astiage*, all of which take place before the main action of *L'Alcasta* begins. A substantial number of new scenes in *Astiage* develop into a new subplot revolving around a new character added by Noris, the valiant warrior Cambise. As Wendy Heller has noted, Cambise serves Noris's purpose of creating an opportunity for a “homerothic innuendo” when he unknowingly falls in love with a man in disguise as a woman.⁷⁸ Noris himself probably refers to such changes in the preface of the 1677 printed libretto for Venice when he claims that they had to be made “to conform to current usage and taste.”

Thus in 1677 the Grimani finally succeeded in producing *L'Alcasta*, albeit under a different title and with a modified libretto. In this light,

⁷⁶ “Per uniformarci all'uso e genio corrente, è convenuto sopra il drama presente, già sotto altro favolleggiato nome composto con maraviglia dalla penna feconda del Signor Cavalier Appoloni, agionger intreccio.” Noris, *Astiage*, “Benigno lettore,” 5. On this phenomenon, see also Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 156–59; Harold S. Powers, “Il Serse trasformato—I,” *Musical Quarterly* 47 (1961): 481–92; idem, “Il Serse trasformato—II,” *Musical Quarterly* 48 (1962): 73–92; and Rosand, “‘Ormino travestito’ in Erismena,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 28 (1975): 268–91. In 1670 Noris reworked Moniglia's *Semiramis* (set to music by Antonio Cesti) into *Semiramide* (set to music by Andrea Ziani). See Wendy Heller, “The Queen as King: Refashioning ‘Semiramide’ for Seicento Venice,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5 (1993): 93–114; and Glixon and Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera*, 117.

⁷⁷ In the “Benigno lettore” Noris declares that he revised Apolloni's text and mentions the composer. Both Gianturco and Morelli identify the libretto of *Astiage* as a modified version of *L'Alcasta*. See Carolyn Gianturco, *Alessandro Stradella, 1639–1682: His Life and His Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 35; and Morelli, “L'Apolloni librettista,” 235 and 259. It is interesting to notice that Alessandro Ademollo records a performance of *Astiage* in Rome instead of *L'Alcasta* in 1673; see Ademollo, *I teatri di Roma*, 144.

⁷⁸ Heller, “The Queen as King,” 107 and 107, note 32.

the rumors Masotti had been spreading about an altered version of *L'Alcasta* being set to music in 1671 by the Imperial *maestro di cappella* acquire a different meaning. In 1671, when Masotti was struck by the "altered" version of the libretto that was in Grimani hands, she may well have seen Noris's *Astiage*, and Viviani, *maestro di cappella* to the Emperor, was probably already setting that poetry to music for Grimani at that time, after which he seems to have set the opera aside for a few years. Moreover, Giulia Masotti's claims that copies of the libretto could be found in Vienna, Innsbruck, Florence, and Rome also appear more plausible: Cesti himself, who in 1667 had received this libretto from Colonna, might have brought a copy with him on his journey from Innsbruck to Vienna and subsequently to Florence in the fall of 1668, leaving behind another copy for his colleague and friend Viviani.⁷⁹

One fascinating question that arises from the tale of *L'Alcasta* is the strong desire of so many parties in Rome as well as in Venice to control its libretto. Colonna's interest in Apolloni's work is understandable if we consider that he was planning on having the libretto set to music by Cesti, whose esteem for Apolloni and experience with his poetry were well known. It is less clear why the Grimani brothers, who operated in a context in which librettists and librettos abounded, so desperately wanted a libretto by Apolloni for the 1672–73 season. Apolloni's *L'Argia* and *La Dori* had been very successful in Venice, thus making the possibility of obtaining another libretto by Apolloni particularly appealing. But the Grimani brothers' interest may also be at least a partial reflection of Giulia Masotti's own agenda. The soprano not only entertained a close, personal relationship with Apolloni, but also knew and appreciated his librettos better than anyone else, having performed *L'Argia*

⁷⁹ Two of these manuscript librettos may still survive, one in Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence, Magl.VII.175 *Amor per vendetta ovvero L'Alcasta. Dramma per musica di G.F.A.A.*, and another in I-Rvat, Chig.L.V.158 *Amor per vendetta ovvero L'Alcasta. Dramma per Musica di N.N.N.N.* The two librettos are very similar and open with the same "A chi legge," which is found in neither the Roman libretto of 1673 nor the Neapolitan libretto of 1676. In both librettos the name used by Alcasta in disguise is Mustafà instead of Celimà. The manuscript librettos mention a prologue sung by "Amore" and "Vendetta" whose text is not included. Also, the three balls of the manuscript librettos differ from the balls of the Rome 1673 and Naples 1676 librettos. The "Argomento" is the same in the manuscript and in the printed versions. The printed Roman libretto lacks some scenes of the manuscript librettos. Antonio Cesti and Giovanni Bonaventura Viviani had worked together on an opera in Innsbruck in 1653; see Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari: Notizie di spettacolo nei carteggi medicei. Carteggi di Giovan Carlo de' Medici e di Desiderio Montemagni suo segretario (1628–1664)* (Florence: Le lettere, 2003), 196. Viviani was later active in Rome and Naples, where he composed and directed operas and oratorios; see Ulisse Prota-Giurleo, "Breve storia del Teatro di corte e della musica a Napoli nei secoli XVII–XVIII," in *Il Teatro di corte del Palazzo Reale di Napoli* (Naples: Il quartiere, 1952), 36; idem, "Notizie inedite intorno a G. B. Viviani," *Archivi d'Italia*, ser. 2, 25 (1958): 225–38; and Herbert Seifert, *Giovanni Buonaventura Viviani: Leben, Instrumentalwerke, vokale Kammermusik* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1982).

(Venice 1669) and *La Dori* (Venice 1663; 1667; 1670) on several occasions. Furthermore, she also contributed significantly to the circulation of both operas, which were performed at her request in Venice (*La Dori*, 1667 and 1670) and in Siena (*L'Argia*, 1669). Masotti's desire to sing the title role of *L'Alcasta* rather than the revised (and, in her eyes, inferior) *Astiage* might very likely be the main motivation behind the Grimani brothers' requests. And we can only wonder whether Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna, too, had Giulia Masotti in mind when he first came in contact with the highly desirable libretto of *Amor per vendetta, ovvero L'Alcasta*.⁸⁰

Conclusions

The early history of *L'Alcasta* offers fascinating insights into the process of transformation that the figure of the opera patron was undergoing in Rome during the end of the 1660s and 1670s. Behind every phase of the genesis and production of this opera we can detect diverse agencies shaping its libretto and score, which had to accommodate different needs and tastes, and which could convey multiple social and political meanings. The final dedication of the libretto to Queen Christina raises the question of the meaning of dedications in the context of commercial opera. If dedications can, on one hand, convey crucial information on the process of opera production, they can also be misleading if read unidimensionally as sole proof of individual patronage and as the most important indicators of the dedicatee's artistic influence on the production.

Thus, a new trajectory emerges in the history of opera patronage in Rome during the second half of the century—one that begins with collective forms of sponsorship during the 1660s and develops further, giving rise to the first commercial opera theater in the city during the 1670s. Further studies on the Teatro Tordinona will have to take into account the complexity of the social networks behind the production of opera in Rome at this crucial juncture in the transformation of the strategies of patronage, one that would be consolidated during the eighteenth century and that would change the history of opera in unforeseen ways. As opera moved from the court to the public theater, and as the Venetian model of operatic production was adapted to suit local tastes and needs, Roman aristocratic patrons had to situate themselves

⁸⁰ *Astiage* went on to become a fairly successful opera, being performed in many important centers in Italy, especially in Spanish occupied territories. The Viceroy of the Kingdom of Naples, Fernando Fajardo y Álvarez de Toledo, was the dedicatee of both *L'Alcasta* (Naples, 1676) and *Astiage* (Naples, 1682); Anna Caterina Della Cerda, countess of Melgar, was the dedicatee of *Astiage* (Milan, 1679).

in the context of the quickly developing system of commercial opera without the centralized support of the ecclesiastical ruling class.

The competition over the libretto of *L'Alcasta* testifies, furthermore, to the power struggles between the well-established commercial theaters of Venice and the still tentative aristocratic experiment with commercial opera in Rome. Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna represented a crucial link between these two worlds, maintaining control of *L'Alcasta*'s libretto better than anyone else and ensuring that its premiere took place in Rome. Meanwhile, at the crossroads between the court and the commercial theater, singers like Giulia Masotti learned how to master their increased power and navigate the fluid space between systems of operatic production.

The Teatro Tordinona stands out as a fascinating and still underexplored episode in the process of substitution of the "court patron" with larger webs of social connections in Rome, where the local aristocracy had to struggle against the opposition of many of its "rulers" to the cultivation of the operatic genre. In this context, Christina of Sweden represented, at least nominally, the role of the missing "patron" and guarantor of the commercial theater of Rome, even though she did not fulfill any official financial or governmental function. As Arnaldo Morelli has argued, Queen Christina's direct patronage of opera (from commission to production of operatic spectacles) appears to have been rather limited despite the number of operas dedicated to her during the three decades she spent in Rome.⁸¹ Furthermore, the repertory of the Teatro Tordinona, consisting of operas previously performed in Venice and at that point fashionable all around Italy, corresponded more to the tastes of aristocratic patrons like Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna and to a certain extent the Chigi, who collected librettos and scores of that repertory, than to those of the queen, who had never been exposed to these works before.⁸² For this reason, *L'Alcasta*—the only exclusively "Roman" opera to be staged at the Tordinona—represents better than any other the perfect self-celebratory act of homage of a group of aristocratic opera enthusiasts to the Roman aristocracy as a whole, aptly represented by its chosen "ruler," Queen Christina of Sweden.

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⁸¹ Morelli, "Il mecenatismo musicale di Cristina di Svezia," 327–31.

⁸² As patrons of Giulia Masotti and Giovanni Filippo Apolloni, Flavio, Agostino and Sigismondo Chigi were very much aware of all the latest trends in Venetian opera and regularly received librettos and scores from Venice. See Lefevre, "Il principe Agostino Chigi," 341–51; Lionnet, "Les activités musicales de Flavio Chigi"; Reardon, "Letters From the Road."

ABSTRACT

This article sheds new light onto the process of transformation of the figure of the opera patron in Rome during the mid-seventeenth century. Following the travels of Giovanni Filippo Apolloni's libretto *Amor per vendetta, ovvero L'Alcasta*, I trace the dissolution of the ubiquitous individual court patron of the earlier part of the century into a network of agents behind opera production in commercial contexts. In every phase of the story of *L'Alcasta*—its commission, plans for production, staging, dedication, and subsequent revivals—we can detect diverse agencies shaping the libretto and score, which accommodated different needs and tastes and conveyed multiple social and political meanings.

Showing how the Roman aristocracy experimented with new systems of production that would radically change the history of opera, *L'Alcasta* also raises broader questions concerning the presence and functions of "patronage" in commercial opera theaters. The trajectory that emerges in the history of opera patronage in the papal city during the second half of the century begins with collective forms of sponsorship during the 1660s and develops further, giving rise to Rome's first commercial opera theater during the 1670s, the Teatro Tordinona. In this context, at a time in which opera in Rome did not find full institutional support, Queen Christina of Sweden represented, at least nominally, the missing patron, a highly representative figure who stood in as guarantor of the new theater on behalf of the aristocratic class that produced and conspicuously consumed opera.

Keywords: Opera, Patronage, Queen Christina of Sweden, Rome, Teatro Tordinona