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ARTICLE

Thomas Clayton's *Arsinoe* (1705) Reconsidered: An English Opera in the Italian Manner

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Abstract

Thomas Clayton's opera *Arsinoe, Queen of Cyprus* (1705), while acknowledged as the first opera in the Italian manner produced in England, is also possibly the most reviled opera of the era, a reputation launched in 1709 by the anonymous author of 'A Critical Discourse on Opera's and Musick in England'. The opera's success during its three-season run is at odds with its present reputation. This article offers a reconsideration of *Arsinoe* based on examining the historical sources and corrects misconceptions about Clayton's authorship and attribution of the libretto to Peter Anthony Motteux. Examined are the opera's recitative, aria forms, melodic style and dramaturgy. It argues that critics have been evaluating *Arsinoe* according to inappropriate criteria drawn from later eighteenth-century Italian-style operas of Scarlatti, Bononcini, and Handel.

After tracing the genesis of the opera, the article examines the recitatives and the structure and melodic style of the arias. The arias do not follow the usual forms of later opera. The melodic style of the short sectional arias is not 'Italianate' and is closer to the native multi-sectional English theatre song. Understanding of the opera's dramaturgy has been hindered by the graphic layout of the 1705 London wordbook. To aid comprehension of the opera and its relation to its Bologna source libretto and to readily assess the work of the librettist, three online supplements to this article present: (1) parallel texts of the London and Bologna librettos (given in translation); (2) a facsimile of the London wordbook indicating text set by Clayton as aria, duet, or chorus; and (3) a reformatted version of the London wordbook.

The article argues that *Arsinoe* should not be seen as a failed Italian-style opera but as an innovative, *sui generis* realization of the ideal of an all-sung dramatic entertainment that would meet the expectations of a London audience that had not yet become familiar with the operatic style of Bononcini and Scarlatti. One feature added to the London libretto, the Epithalamium musical entertainment, shows the opera's link to England's dramatic operatic tradition.

Keywords: Thomas Clayton; Peter Anthony Motteux; opera; *Arsinoe*; dramatic opera; Italian-style opera; English opera

Thomas Clayton's *Arsinoe, Queen of Cyprus*, premiered at Drury Lane theatre on 16 January 1705, is possibly the most reviled and misunderstood opera of the era, yet it is otherwise rightly credited as the first opera in the Italian manner produced in England. The commonly accepted verdict on the composer and opera has its origins in 'A Critical Discourse on Opera's and Musick in England', published on 27 August 1709.[1] The anonymous author, certainly a partisan for the latest in Italian music, set the tone

In preparation of this article, I have benefitted from the information and ideas shared by Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson, Peter Holman, and Bill Mann. For assistance with the translation, I thank Giulio Masetti.

[1]'A Critical Discourse upon Opera's in England, and a Means proposed for their Improvement', appended to an anonymous translation of *A Comparison Between the French and Italian Musick and Opera's … To which is added a Critical Discourse upon Opera's in England* (London: William Lewis, 1709), pp. 62–86. The exact day and month are provided by a contemporary hand

of most later opinion. 'Critical' is certainly the author's byword, for throughout the tract one can hear him vigorously grinding an axe as he savages the music of *Arsinoe*, *Li amori di Ergasto* (1705),[2] *The Temple of Love* (1706), *Rosamond* (1707), and the pasticcio *Clotilda* (1709). The author reserves some praise for the Italianate arias of *Camilla* (1706), and the bilingual *Thomyris* (1707) and *Pyrrhus and Demetrius* (1708) – operas with music by Giovanni Bononcini, Alessandro Scarlatti and Nicola Haym (although he does condemn the last for the adaptation's mangled plot).

'A Critical Discourse' infamously condemns *Arsinoe*, seeming to delight in asserting it 'little deserv'd the Name of an Opera. […] There is nothing in it but a few Sketches of antiquated Italian Airs, so mangled and sophisticated, that instead of Arsinoe, it ought to be called the Hospital of the old Decrepid Italian Opera's […] a filthy Fardle of old Italian Airs'.[3] Of this slur on Clayton, one contemporary reader noted in the margin of his copy, 'Poor Clayton what hadst thou done to vex him'.[4] The anonymous author's opinion was echoed (if not repeated verbatim) by early music historians. Sir John Hawkins in his *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music* (1776) stated with certainty that Clayton borrowed the music of the opera:

> Clayton had brought with him [from Italy] a collection of Italian airs, which he set a high value on; these he mangled and sophisticated, and adapted them to the words of an English drama, and entitled Arsinoe Queen of Cypress, called it an opera, composed by himself.[5]

In the final volume of his *A General History of Music* published in 1789, Charles Burney parrots most of Hawkins's account; he accepts Clayton's authorship of the music but turns it to an occasion to damn him and plump for Italian music, since 'nothing so mean in melody and incorrect in counterpoint' was likely to have been composed by an Italian composer of the time. Furthermore, Burney takes the opportunity to disparage English taste of the time:

> Indeed, the English must have hungered and thirsted extremely after dramatic Music at this time, to be attracted and amused by such trash. It is scarce credible, that in the course of the first year this miserable performance, which neither deserved the name of a *drama* by its poetry, nor an *opera* by its Music, should sustain twenty-four [*sic*] representations, and the second year eleven [*sic*]![6]

Burney justly notes the disparity between his judgement and *Arsinoe*'s appeal to its contemporary audience. But his judgements in his *History* and elsewhere are notoriously distorted by his advocacy of the superiority of Italian music and opera: he could not be expected to give a sympathetic, contextual, historical evaluation of Clayton's opera. These judgements on Clayton and the opera have been repeated and varied in one way or another by most modern writers; so ingrained has been the conventional

in the British Library copy. The facsimile edition with Introduction by Charles Cudworth (Farnborough: Gregg International Publishers, 1968), reproduces an annotated copy at Cambridge, University Library (W.26.72*). There is no consensus on the authorship of the 'Critical Discourse', which is variously attributed to Nicola Haym or John Ernst Galliard. John Hawkins credits Galliard, a view which is endorsed by Stoddard Lincoln; see John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, 5 vols (London: T. Payne, 1776), V, p. 136; and Stoddard Lincoln, 'J.E. Galliard and a Critical Discourse', *Musical Quarterly*, 53 (1967), 347–64. Lowell Lindgren points to a source suggesting Haym; Lowell Lindgren, 'The Accomplishments of the Learned and Ingenious Nicola Francesco Haym (1678–1729)', *Studi Musicali*, 16 (1987), 247–380 (p. 292). The attribution to Galliard is recently accepted by Alison C. DeSimone, *The Power of Pastiche: Musical Miscellany and Cultural Identity in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Clemson, SC: Clemson University Press, 2021), pp. 64, 183–84.

[2]The basis for the corrected title of the opera by Jakob Greber is set forth in Thomas McGeary, *Opera and Politics in Queen Anne's Britain, 1705–1714* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2022), p. 143 and plate 4.3.

[3]'A Critical Discourse', pp. 65, 68.

[4]'A Critical Discourse', p. 65 in facsimile edition, ed. Charles Cudworth.

[5]Hawkins, *A General History*, V, p. 136. Later, Hawkins avers that 'Arsinoe consisted of English words fitted to Italian music' (V, p. 148).

[6]Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, 4 vols (London: T. Payne, 1776–89), IV (1789), 201. It was more likely sixteen, eleven and three performances in its three seasons, respectively.

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wisdom that few scholars have been willing to grant *Arsinoe* the benefit of looking at the full manuscript score in the British Library.[7]

A full reception history of *Arsinoe* is not necessary here, but a few citations will suffice. Stoddard Lincoln, commending John Eccles's *Semele*, dismissed the music and translation of *Arsinoe* as 'inept'[8] and argued that *Arsinoe*, like other early English operas of the decade, was a 'sort of pastiche' and that the 'recitative is so awkward that one finds it difficult to believe an Englishman could have written it – even Clayton'.[9]

The judgement of 'A Critical Discourse' and subsequent writers applies a standard of musical taste and expectations for opera reflecting Italian opera of later in the century; this style is most familiar to modern listeners from the London operas of Handel, and especially his *Rinaldo* (1711). Perhaps no surer evidence of this point is Lowell Lindgren's validating the anonymous writer's opinion by pointing out that 'no more than one-third of its antiquated arias resemble a da capo aria', adding for good measure that many arias 'end and begin in different keys' and have 'two sections which end on the same chord' as obvious deficiencies.[10]

One theatre historian called it a 'right bastardization of opera',[11] while another says the 'music verges on the incompetent'.[12] Others called it 'pathetic'[13] and a 'disgrace [to] the stage'.[14] The literary scholar James Winn, one of the few who did examine the manuscript score of *Arsinoe*, faintly damns the opera with his half-hearted compliment: '*Arsinoe* succeeded in spite of its music' but 'gave audiences some idea of what an opera might be like'.[15]

Roger Fiske, *parti pris* for English opera, who seems to have contracted an antipathy to the 'virulent germs' of the 'disease' of Italian opera, savages the opera's 'cardboard characters, the involved relationships, the silly misunderstandings, and the final reconciliation' as 'nonsense' and indicts the 'silliness of both words and music'.[16] But in this regard, one must credit the libretto's plot as more streamlined and less complicated by extended subplots than its Bologna source libretto or than most Italian operas of the day – a point easily confirmed by glancing through <Online Supplement 1>, which gives parallel texts of the London and Bologna librettos (in translation).

This is not the place to debate or argue the aesthetic quality of Clayton's opera – such a judgement should await a staged performance with sympathetic and sensitive singers, staging and historic-style continuo realization. But, in the meantime, drawing upon the full range of primary sources now available and placing *Arsinoe* and its libretto against late-seventeenth-century English theatre music can lead to a sympathetic appreciation and understanding of *Arsinoe*'s operatic dramaturgy and the goals and achievement of Clayton and his unnamed librettist (see below). Clayton's *Arsinoe* must be seen as an innovative, native attempt to create an all-sung, dramatic entertainment suitable for English taste, a taste that had not yet been formed by sustained exposure to Italian-style opera and singing – and especially imported castratos – that came to dominate London opera by 1710.

The London production of *Arsinoe*

The modern verdicts regarding Clayton and *Arsinoe* are quite at odds with the opera's contemporary popularity and reception, with performance data suggesting that it was commercially successful and

[7]London, British Library, Egerton MS 3664.

[8]Stoddard Lincoln, 'The Librettos and Lyrics of William Congreve', in *British Theatre and the Other Arts, 1660– 1800*, ed. by Shirley Strum Kenny (Washington DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1984), pp. 116–32 (p. 126).

[9]Stoddard Lincoln, 'Congreve's "Semele"', *Music and Letters*, 44 (1963), 417– 18.

[10]Lowell Lindgren, 'A Bibliographic Scrutiny of Dramatic Works Set by Giovanni and His Brother Antonio Maria Bononcini' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1972), p. 173.

[11]Judith Milhous, 'New Light on Vanbrugh's Haymarket Theatre Project', *Theatre Survey*, 17 (1976), 143–61 (p. 153).

[12]J. Merrill Knapp, 'Eighteenth-Century Opera in London before Handel, 1705–1710', in *British Theatre and the Other Arts, 1660–1800*, pp. 92–104 (p. 94).

[13]Curtis Price, *Music in the Restoration Theatre: With a Catalogue of Instrumental Music in the Plays, 1665–1713* ([Ann Arbor, MI]: UMI Research Press, 1979), p. 115.

[14]Eugene Haun, *But Hark! More Harmony; the Libretti of Restoration Opera in English* (Ypsilanti: Eastern Michigan University Press, 1971), p. 177.

[15]James Winn, *Queen Anne: Patroness of Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 400–10; Winn does acknowledge *Arsinoe*'s contemporary popularity, 'despite its shortcomings'.

[16]Roger Fiske, *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 32–33.

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competitive. The opera was first produced in a subscription for three performances; it was so successful that thirteen more performances were called for that season. In its three seasons, *Arsinoe* had thirty performances compared to thirty-three performances for Giovanni Bononcini's *Camilla* during the same period.

Early published mentions of *Arsinoe* treat it on a par with *Camilla*. By August 1705 *Arsinoe* was well-enough known to be cited as an example of the 'Exotic Follies' that are come to charm the Town.[17] The arias were familiar enough they could be parodied or burlesqued in plays.[18] The poem *The Power of Musick* (1707) notes that while the great lords are transported to hear the two 'tuneful Rival Sisters' (Tofts and Margarita), the 'Ladies' crowd to see 'sweet *Camilla*, or *Arsinoe*'.[19] The *Muses Mercury*, in general a promoter of the new Italian-style operas, in 1707 commended 'the late Success of *Arsinoe*, Set by Mr. Clayton after the Italian manner'.[20]

Although 'Dorimant' is satirized as an ignorant critic, John Oldmixon, editor of the *Muses Mercury*, has him rank *Arsinoe* with Nicholas Rowe's celebrated play *Tamerlane* (1701; published 1702) as works he misapprehends.[21] In March 1707, Sir John Percival's brother could report from London that Joseph Addison and Clayton's opera *Rosamond* 'has not taken So well as Camilla or Arsinoe'.[22] *The Long Vacation* (1708) observes that as a result of the operas, London is devoid of customers:

> Far from the Town the fair *Camilla* fled,
> To *Tunbridge*, there the rural Grass to tread.
> *Arsinoe* the Theatre forsakes,
> And from *Augusta* far her Lodging takes.[23]

Nugæ Canoræ (1709) notes how '*Arsinoe*, the Great and Fair admir'd', until *Camilla* supplanted it.[24] The anonymous author of 'A Critical Discourse' aside, Clayton had a sufficient reputation to be called upon to set additional English texts to music,[25] including another opera libretto, Joseph Addison's *Rosamond* (1707).

Premiere

Several mistaken assumptions and errors of fact about *Arsinoe* can be corrected. Given Christopher Rich's long history of alleged disreputable management and cheating his actors at his Drury Lane theatre, it has been incorrectly assumed he somehow stole *Arsinoe* from John Vanbrugh, manager of the rival Haymarket (Queen's) theatre, or that he bribed Clayton.[26]

The chain of events leading to *Arsinoe* can be traced back to 1703. At the time, there were two competing theatre companies in London: the Patent Company at Drury Lane (with Dorset Garden used

[17]'The Epilogue. As It Ought to Have Been Spoken'; [A. Chaves], *The Cares of Love, or a Night's Adventure* (London: W. Davis, 1705), pp. 52–54.

[18]*Ibid.*, and Richard Estcourt, *Prunella: An Interlude* (London: Bernard Lintott, 1708).

[19]*The Power of Musick*, p. 12; appended to *Moral Reflections and Pleasant Remarks on the Vertues, Vices, and Humours of Mankind* (London: R. Burrough, 1707).

[20]*Muses Mercury*, January 1707, p. 10.

[21]John Oldmixon, 'The Ninth Epistle of *Boileau*', *Muses Mercury*, September 1707, pp. 198–205 (pp. 201–02).

[22]Letter from Philip Percival to Sir John Percival (later the Earl of Egmont) , 25 March 1707, London, British Library, Add. MS 47025, f. 72^{r}; also in Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont*, 2 vols (Dublin: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1909), II, 216. See also the letter from Philip Percival to Sir John Percival, 7 February 1707, f. 70^{v}: 'The Opera of Camilla has been one of the chief diversions of the Town this long time, and Arsinoe is forgot'.

[23]*The Long Vacation. A Satyr: Address'd to all Disconsolable Trades* (London: H. Hills, 1708), p. 8.

[24]*Nugæ Canoræ: or, The Taste of the Town in Poetry and Music* (London: J. Morphew, 1709), p. 27.

[25]Additional works known by Clayton are *Pastoral Masque* (premiered 3 May 1710, libretto by ?John Hughes); *The Feast of Alexander* (John Dryden/Hughes), *The Passion of Sappho* (William Harrison), and *If Wine and Music* (Matthew Prior) (all 1711); *Ode for the Prince's Birthday* and *Ode on the King* (both premiered? 13 December 1716); and a new anthem for the Chapel Royal (15 May 1720). Of these works, only the printed *Songs* (1707) survives for *Rosamond*.

[26]On Rich stealing *Arsinoe*, see Milhous, 'New Light', p. 153; for a suggestion of bribery, see Knapp, 'Eighteenth-Century Opera in London before Handel', p. 94.

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occasionally) managed by Rich, and the newer 'rebel' company at the smaller Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre, managed by the veteran actor Thomas Betterton, who led a company of many of London's experienced actors.

Sometime in the spring or summer of 1703, the playwright and budding architect John Vanbrugh set in motion plans to establish a united theatrical company and build by subscription a new theatre to house it.[27] He planned to produce both plays and operas.[28] The proposed company included a full musical establishment overseen by John Eccles (then house composer at Lincoln's Inn Fields).

By late 1703, Vanbrugh and his partner the playwright William Congreve realized that a repertoire of plays and operas was needed for his new theatre. Whether Vanbrugh contacted Clayton or it was the opportunity of a new theatre in need of new operas, either circumstance could have given Clayton, recently returned from Italy, the incentive and motive to embark on an opera, modelled on those he had seen in Italy. By 1704–05, in addition to *Arsinoe* Vanbrugh had five other potential operas lined up: *Orlando Furioso* (music by Daniel Purcell, with a libretto based on that of Philippe Quinault for Lully); *The Temple of Love* (Joseph Saggione [Giuseppe Fedeli]/Peter Anthony Motteux); *The British Enchanters* (John Eccles/George Granville); *Rosamond* (Clayton/Addison), and *Semele* (Eccles/Congreve).[29]

Vanbrugh had begun acquiring property for his theatre by early June 1703.[30] On 31 August 1704, a newsletter writer reported that an opening by Christmas 1704 was expected.[31] The *Diverting Post* for 28 October 1704 reported:

> The Play-House in the Hay-Market […] is almost finish'd, in the mean time two Opera's translated from the Italian by good Hands, are setting to Musick, one by Mr. Daniel Purcel, which is called Orlando Furioso, and the other by Mr. Clayton, both Opera's are to be perform'd by the best Artists eminent both for Vocal and Instrumental Musick at the Opening of the House.[32]

Judging from the extant drawings for the sets by Sir James Thornhill,[33] Clayton and his librettist conceived *Arsinoe* as requiring a fully-rigged theatre with moveable side-wings and back-shutters, both with upper borders.

The theatre was not open as expected for Christmas. As Clayton later explained, his friend the cellist and harpsichordist Charles Dieupart arranged (in exchange for half the profits) to have the opera produced at Rich's Drury Lane – no doubt because Vanbrugh's theatre was far from completion.[34] On 16 December the *Diverting Post* announced that Clayton's opera, 'Set after the Italian manner', would be

[27]On planning for the new theatre company, Milhous, 'New Light', and Thomas McGeary, 'More Light (and Some Speculation) on Vanbrugh's Haymarket Theatre Project', *Early Music*, 48 (2020), 91–104.

[28]In England at the time, 'opera' was an elastic term and could embrace English semi- or dramatic operas, plays with masques and spectacles, as well as all-sung works.

[29]For a revisionist account that advances the dates of these operas, see Thomas McGeary, 'A New Perspective on Opera's "Critical Decade" in London', *Early Music* (forthcoming).

[30]For an exhaustive documentary study of the progress of the building of the Haymarket theatre, the controversies surrounding it, and reconstruction of the original building, see Graham F. Barlow, 'From Tennis Court to Opera House', 3 vols (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 1983), I, pp. 256–431; summarized in Barlow, 'Vanbrugh's Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket, 1703–9', *Early Music*, 17 (1989), 515–21. Also on the theatre: Judith Milhous, 'The Capacity of Vanbrugh's Theatre in the Haymarket', *Theatre History Studies*, 4 (1984), 38–46; Philip Olleson, 'Vanbrugh and Opera at the Queen's Theatre, Haymarket', *Theatre Notebook*, 26 (1972), 94–101; and Daniel Nalbach, *The King's Theatre, 1704–1867: London's First Italian Opera House* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1972), pp. 130–42.

[31]Quoted in J. D. Alsop, 'The Quarrel between Sir John Vanbrugh and George Powell', *Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre Research*, 2nd ser., 1.1 (Summer 1990), 28–29.

[32]*Diverting Post*, no. 1 (28 October 1704).

[33]London, Victoria and Albert Museum, D.25–28–1891. Selected illustrations in Roger Fiske, *English Theatre Music*, and Edgar de N. Mayhew, *Sketches by Thornhill in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1967), plates 2 and 3.

[34]Clayton explains how he arranged for production at the Drury Lane in his Preface to *The Passion of Sappho, and Feast of Alexander* (1711), a wordbook for concerts at York Buildings; reprinted in Thomas McGeary, 'Thomas Clayton and the Introduction of Italian Opera to England', *Philological Quarterly*, 77 (1998), 171–86.

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performed at Drury Lane;[35] *Arsinoe* was indeed premiered there on 16 January 1705. This theatre was in fact at the time a better choice, for it had the capability for moveable scenery and had the singers, dancers, and instrumentalists needed for a full-scale opera.

An advertisement for the evening's entertainment suggests *Arsinoe* fit well (perhaps unobtrusively, despite its novelty) within the customary pattern of an evening at the theatre, with a main piece preceded and followed by songs, dances, and instrumental music:

> A New Opera never perform'd before, call'd Arsino′e Queen of Cyprus, After the Italian manner, All Sung, being set to Musick by Master Clayton. With several Entertainments of Danceing by Monsieur l'Abbee, Monsieur du Ruel, Monsieur Cherrier, Mrs. Elford, Mrs. du Ruel, Mrs. Moss, and others. And the famous Signiora Francisca Margaretta de l'Epine will, before the Beginning and after the Ending of the Opera, perform several Entertainments of Singing in Italian and English.[36]

The phrase 'after the Italian manner' would have indicated to the attentive reader not to expect an English semi- or dramatic opera. London's star soprano Margarita de l'Epine, it should be noted, did not sing in the opera, but only as an added attraction, whereas Catherine Tofts was given the title role of Queen Arsinoe.

An argument that *Arsinoe* was first presented in the midst of a play, as in the manner of an inserted masque, while the actors sat by and watched the masque, has not gained acceptance.[37]

Clayton as composer

Beginning with the insinuation of the author of 'A Critical Discourse' that *Arsinoe* was a 'hospital' of 'old Italian airs', it has often been inferred that Clayton did not compose *Arsinoe.* Assertions that Clayton was not the sole composer of *Arsinoe* have been repeated in various ways by modern writers: that it was a pasticcio of Italian arias or that Clayton adapted the music,[38] or that he had the assistance of Charless Dieupart and Nicola Haym in its composition.[39] That Clayton had their collaboration in the composition may be an extrapolation from *Spectator*, no. 258 (26 December 1711), which reported that Dieupart and Haym assisted in the introduction of *Arsinoe* and collaborated with Clayton in concerts at York Buildings in 1712. Their importance to Clayton's enterprise was their role

[35]*Diverting Post*, no. 3 (9–16 December 1704).

[36]*Daily Courant*, no. 859 (16 January 1705).

[37]Curtis Price, 'The Critical Decade for English Music Drama, 1700–1710', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 26 (1978), 38–76 (pp. 45–46); also in *Music in the Restoration Theatre*, pp. 114–15. Price points to directions in the play text of Centlivre's *Love's Contrivance* that read 'let the Diversion begin'; he thus argues 'England's first Italian opera was introduced by actors, who, once the music began, sat wordless at the side of the stage and watched the masque as did the audience proper' (p. 46). The argument rests on misreading the stage directions, and no other contemporary source mentions such an arrangement.

[38]John Caldwell, *The Oxford History of English Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991–99), I: *From the Beginnings to c.1715* (1991), p. 587, dismisses *Arsinoe* as 'a pasticcio from Italian sources'. Cf. Knapp, 'Eighteenth-Century Opera in London', 94 ('probably gathered various Italian arias together'); Ernst Walker, *A History of Music in England*, 3rd ed., rev. and ed. by J. A. Westrup (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 219 ('The music seems to have been adapted from various Italian songs'); Percy M. Young, *A History of British Music* (London: Ernest Benn, 1967), p. 282 ('Clayton adapted Italian music or composed in a pseudo-Italian style'); Henry Davey, *History of English Music*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Curwen & Sons, 1921), p. 351 ('compiled from pieces he had brought' [from Italy]). An ambiguous phrase from *Spectator*, no. 258 (26 December 1711), that Clayton 'brought over [from Italy] the Opera of *Arsinoe*', could refer just to the wordbook.

[39]An early source for collaboration is discussed in Allardyce Nicoll, 'Italian Opera in England: The First Five Years', *Anglia*, 46 (n.s. 34) (1922), 257–81 (p. 259 n.1). Eric Walter White, *The Rise of English Opera* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), p. 48, accepts Clayton as composer but states that Nicola Haym and Charles Dieupart shared in the composition. The limited information about the London professional careers of Haym and Dieupart is summarized in DeSimone, *The Power of Pastiche*, pp. 94–95, 182–83, 173–78 (Haym), and 172–73, 175–78, 187–88, 190–92, 219–21 (Dieupart).

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as harpsichordist and cellist; they formed the core of the basso continuo group that was essential to the performance of the Italian-style *secco* recitative, the operatic novelty that Clayton was introducing.[40]

Contrariwise, every contemporary document or witness credits Clayton as sole composer of the opera. The initial newspaper advertisements cited above announce 'a New Opera never perform'd before […] being set to Musick by Master Clayton',[41] and the *Muses Mercury* refers to 'the late Success of *Arsinoé*, Set by Mr. Clayton'.[42] The printed collection of arias from the opera, *Songs in the New Opera, Call'd Arsinoé Queen of Cyprus Compos'd by Mr. Tho: Clayton* (1706; hereafter *Songs*) and single printed song sheets are unanimous in crediting him as the composer.[43] Both extant manuscript full scores of the opera give Clayton as composer.[44]

In December 1705, William Cleland wrote to a friend in Scotland, 'Operas are extremlie alamode in the Italian manner[.] besides Arsinoe[,] Clayton[,] who composed it[,] has composed another the words by Mr Addison'.[45] In 1708, Clayton was sent to the Fleet prison as an insolvent debtor;[46] when a group of Whigs contributed to a subscription for his relief, the subscription list was headed 'A charitable Collection for Mr Clayton the composer of Arsinoe'.[47] The writer of marginalia in the copy reproduced in the facsimile edition of the 'Critical Discourse' also accepted Clayton as the composer, noting how unjust the printed remarks were. Richard Steele, likewise, repeatedly called Clayton 'the Author of Arsinoe'.[48]

Nevertheless, even in 1711 one of Clayton's main purposes in the Preface to the wordbook for his *Passion of Sappho* is to defend his authorship of *Arsinoe* from the insinuation made in the 'Critical Discourse'. In his defence, Clayton argues that if he had adapted the verbal text to pre-existing Italian arias, there would not be (what he takes to be) the good fit between the words and music in *Arsinoe* – what he calls 'the Mechanick part in Setting' – nor would the rests and cadences in the music match commas and periods in the poetry. Moreover, for two major portions of the opera, the Epithalamium Song and the final Chorus, Clayton would have been on his own without any ready-made Italian sources to adapt. These set pieces have solo verses alternating with orchestral symphonies and concluding with a chorus. Such a large-scale musical entertainment, characteristic of the masques and musical entertainments often found in native English semi- or dramatic operas, could not have been taken from an Italian opera of the period.

[40]On the importance of the *basso continuo* group, see Peter Holman, *Before the Baton: Musical Direction and Conducting in Stuart and Georgian Britain* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2020), pp. 215–22, and on the importance of Dieupart and Haym, pp. 215–18.

[41]*Daily Courant*, no. 859 (16 January 1705).

[42]*Muses Mercury*, no. 1 (January 1707), p. 10.

[43]The various editions are described in David Hunter, *Opera and Song Books Published in England, 1703–1726: A Descriptive Bibliography* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1997), nos 12, 12a, 26, 29–31. The edition of Walsh, no. 29, is available online <http://www.musicaneo.com/sheetmusic/sm-67203_arsinoe_queen_of_cypress.html> [accessed 22 June 2023].

[44]London, British Library, Egerton MS 3664; Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, Houghton Library, M1500.C685 A6 1705 F. The latter is available online <https://houghtonlib.tumblr.com/post/113784964428/clayton-thomas-1673-1725-arsinoe-queen-of> and <https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:49451812$1i> [both accessed 22 June 2023]. Both manuscripts are in upright format, typical of English copyists; cf. illustration of the title page of *The Indian Queen*, in Henry Purcell, *The Indian Queen*, ed. by Margaret Laurie and Andrew Pinnock, Purcell Society Edition, XIX (London: Novello, 1994), unnumbered plate, and other manuscripts cited therein.The paging and minor details in set descriptions and stage directions etc. differ between the two copies, which appear to be made by the same scribe, and all three issues of the wordbook (see below). At present it is not clear why the copies vary. That two fair copies exist may be Rich's practice to have two manuscript scores provided; his contract with Nicola Haym calls for delivery of two copies of the score for *Camilla*; see Lindgren, 'Bibliographic Scrutiny', pp. 169–70.

[45]Letter from William Cleland to James Erskine, 6 December: Edinburgh, National Records of Scotland, GD 124/15/259/3, p. 6. Calhoun Winton was the first to bring this letter to attention.

[46]London, National Archives, Commitment lists for Fleet Prison. PRIS 1/2, p. 48.

[47]London, British Library, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61,611, f. 244. The subscription sheet is transcribed and printed, and signers identified in McGeary, *Opera and Politics in Queen Anne's Britain*, Table 5.2.

[48]See note 4 (above); see also, for example, *Tatler*, no. 166 (2 May 1710): 'Mr. *Clayton*, the Author of *Arsinoe*, made me a Visit'.

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Librettist

It is commonly stated that Peter Anthony Motteux, the Huguenot refugee, author, translator, and recently editor of the *Gentleman's Journal* (1692–94), was responsible for *Arsinoe*'s English text.[49] This attribution was first made in print by, and rests solely on, John Mottley, who in 1747 listed (with no authority or documentation) *Arsinoe* among the poetic works of Motteux along with the other opera librettos that bear his name.[50] This attribution was accepted by Motteux's bibliographer,[51] who justified his acceptance on the grounds of its similarity to Motteux's other works.

Resting solely on this posthumous attribution, Motteux's authorship must be strongly questioned, if not rejected. Primarily, there seems no reason why Motteux would want to keep his authorship secret. Elsewhere, Motteux claimed authorship of his many texts for masques, occasional odes and afterpieces, not all of the highest literary quality. It was, in fact, customary in England to identify librettists of operas, and Motteux's authorship was acknowledged on the title pages of the wordbooks for *The Temple of Love* (1706), *Thomyris* (1707) and *Love's Triumph* (1708). Surely he would want to claim responsibility of the even more successful and important *Arsinoe*. In the Preface to the wordbook of *Arsinoe*, Clayton was coy about his librettist. He evasively stated 'I was oblig'd to have an Italian opera translated'. Either the libretto was a work for hire and the real author was required to accept anonymity or, perhaps, Clayton devised the libretto himself (since presumably it was he who brought it back from Italy).

The work of the librettist has been variously characterized. Clayton states he had an Italian libretto translated, and many writers have stated the work was a translation, whereas other writers state the librettist adapted the Italian source libretto. An examination of <Online Supplement 1>, which presents the London libretto opposite a translation of the Bologna source libretto, readily shows that the librettist made a thorough-going *rifaccimento*: a free and complete reworking of the source libretto, in addition to freely translating the portions of the Italian text that were retained and adapted. In the process, the librettist shortened scenes of recitative,[52] deleted entire groups of scenes dealing with minor characters, disregarded some arias, transformed verses from recitative into aria text, and eliminated one minor character (Ermillo), transferring some of his lines to another character (Delbo). Clayton's librettist streamlined the plot down to its essential conflicts, events, and motivation; retained scenes of exciting stage action; accelerated the plot denouement; and avoided many of the original obscure classical mythological allusions. For the plot, he changed a suicide by poison to one by a dagger.

The librettist must share credit for a significant original addition, the Epithalamium Song and the concluding Chorus, intended, no doubt, to meet the expectations of a London audience for an opera (discussed below).

[49]There are three issues of the opera's wordbook. The first issue (1705) clarifies on the title page: 'After the Italian Manner. All Sung'; this issue, in forty-eight pages, is ESTC (English Short Title Catalogue) N30676. The second issue (also 1705), in forty pages, (ESTC T126975) was reissued with no significant variants in 1707 (ESTC T162520). The typographic layout of the second issue reduces the number of pages; the textual differences between the issues are insignificant. R. N. Cunningham describes the differences in typesetting of signatures in several copies of the wordbook. He does not specifically record the forty-page edition; Cunningham, 'A Bibliography of the Writings of Peter Anthony Motteux'. Oxford Bibliographical Society. Proceedings and Papers, 3 (1931–1933), 317–36 (pp. 329–30). What Cunningham calls 'editions' are more properly issues, since there are no significant textual changes. Wordbook of *Arsinoe. Queen of Cyprus*, first issue (London: Jacob Tonson, 1705), *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online* <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CB0130353113/ECCO> [accessed 22 June 2023]. Wordbook of *Arsinoe. Queen of Cyprus*, second issue (London: Jacob Tonson, 1705), *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online* <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0115614987/ECCO> [accessed 22 June 2023].

[50]See a list of the works of the English dramatic poets, probably compiled by John Mottley (for the publisher W. Reeve), and appended to Thomas Whincop's play *Scanderberg: or, Love and Liberty* (1747), p. 243.

[51]See Robert N. Cunningham, *Peter Anthony Motteux, 1663–1718: A Biographical and Critical Study* (Oxford: Basil Blackwood and Nott, 1933); and Cunningham, 'Bibliography of the Writings of Peter Anthony Motteux', pp. 317–36.

[52]The English aversion to recitative was remarked upon by Giuseppe Riva in a letter to Ludovico Muratori on 7 September 1726, giving advice on adapting librettos for the London stage: 'If your friend wishes to send some, he must know that in England they want few recitatives, but thirty arias and one duet at least, distributed over the three acts'. As translated in Otto Erich Deutsch, *Handel: A Documentary Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1955), pp. 185–86 (p. 186).

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Source libretto

There are two versions of the text of the opera by Tomaso Stanzani: one for a Bologna production for Carnival 1676–77[53] and one for a production in Venice the following autumn season,[54] both with music by Petronio Franceschini. There are full scores for both productions.[55] Neither was the source of music for Clayton's setting.[56]

A substitution in the cast, the inclusion of a chorus of ambassadors, courtiers and soldiers, and additional scenes with machinery in the Venetian libretto (to appeal to local taste), leave no doubt that the Bologna libretto was the basis for Clayton's opera.[57]

Removing impediments to the study of *Arsinoe*

Several impediments no doubt have prevented scholars from readily grasping an overall sense of the operatic-dramatic nature of *Arsinoe*. First has been lack of awareness of the complete manuscript scores, not consulted by most scholars until recently: one at the British Library and one at the Houghton Library, Harvard University.[58] The scores include longer versions of several arias (see Table 1), the recitatives, symphonies, instrumental accompaniments, and the Epithalamium Song and Chorus.

The only readily available musical representation of the opera has been the collection *Songs in the New Opera, Call'd Arsinoé Compos'd by Mr. Tho: Clayton* (1706).[59] As customary at the time for such collections of songs from operas, recitatives are omitted and the arias are given with only the basso continuo line, perhaps giving the impression that there was no more musical substance to the opera.

[53]*L'Arsinoe. Drama per musica da rappresentarsi nel Teatro Formagliari l'Anno MDCLXXVII* (Bologna: the heir of Benacci, 1677); the dedication is dated 26 December 1676. Claudio Sartori, *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800*, 7 vols (Cuneo: Bertola & Locatelli, 1990–94) (henceforth *Sartori*), I (1990), p. 306 (no. 2895). Eleanor Selfridge-Field dates the opening as 26 December 1676; *A New Chronology of Venetian Opera and Related Genres, 1660–1760. The Calendar of Venetian Opera* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. 123–24. The wordbook is available online at <https://www.loc.gov/item/2010666331/> [accessed 23 June 2023].

[54]*Arsinoe. Drama per musica da recitarsi nel Teatro di S. Angelo l'Anno 1678* (Venice: Francesco Nicolini, 1678); the dedication is dated 30 November 1677. *Sartori*, I, p. 306 (no. 2896). Selfridge-Field dates the opening as 29 November 1677; *A New Chronology of Venetian Opera*, pp. 123–24. The wordbook is available online at <https://mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb00048312-6> [accessed 23 June 2023].

[55]The two manuscript scores are at the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice. The score for the Bologna production is Ms. It. IV, Cod. 393 (9917); it is available online at <https://www.internetculturale.it/jmms/iccuviewer/iccu.jsp?id=oai%3A193.206.197.121%3A18%3AVE0049%3AARM0003568> [accessed 23 June 2023]. The score for the Venice production is Ms. It. IV, Cod. 392 (9916); it is available online at <https://www.internetculturale.it/it/16/search/viewresource?id=oai%3A193.206.197.121%3A18%3AVE0049%3AARM0003567> [accessed 23 June 2023].

[56]The contents of the two manuscript scores are given in Jérôme Bonnet, '*Arsinoe* de Tommaso Stanzani: voyage d'un drame lyrique de Bologna (1676) à Londres (1705)', *Musicorum* (2004), 11–42 (pp. 31–36) ; adapted from his dissertation, '*Arsinoe*: voyage d'un drame lyrique de Bologna (1676) à Londres (1705)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Université François Rabelais (Tours), 2006).

[57]The productions are compared in detail in Bonnet, '*Arsinoe*: voyage d'un drame lyrique', pp. 38–82, and the manuscript scores on pp. 128–64. The sung allegorical Prologue for Venus, Mercury, Fortuna and the spirits (Genio) of Cyprus and Athens are present in the manuscript score for the Bologna production, but not included in the wordbook. The Prologue and *intermedi* were printed separately as *Prologo, ed intermedi dell'Arsinoe da rappresentarsi nel teatro Formagliari l'anno MDCLXXVII. Poesia del sig. Tomaso Stanzani. Musica del sig. Petronio Franceschini* (Bologna: the heir of Benacci, 1677). *Sartori*, IV (1991), p. 474 (no. 19207); described in Taddeo Wiel, *I codici musicali Contariniani del secolo XVII nella R. Biblioteca di san Marco in Venezia* (Venice: F. Ongania, 1888), pp. 41–42 (no. 43). In addition to the Prologue, both productions also included two *intermedi* (*balli*), which are mentioned in the Venice wordbook, but without music in the score; the Bologna score provides music for the *balli*, but there is no indication in the wordbook.

[58]Winn, *Queen Anne and the Arts*, consulted the British Library score; he consulted only the Venice printed wordbook, so his remarks about the versions of *Arsinoe* can be disregarded. Bonnet includes a citation to the manuscript score, but did not discusss it. Both manuscripts are cited in DeSimone, *The Power of Pastiche*, p. 297 n. 118.

[59]On the publishing history, Hunter, *Opera and Song Books Published in England*, nos. 12, 12a, 26, 29–31.

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There is no indication in the *Songs* that six arias had instrumental accompaniments and that there were additional symphonies and music for the dance and chorus of the Epithalamium.[60]

Another impediment is the graphic layout of the printed English wordbook, which makes it difficult to distinguish at a glance the arias from the surrounding recitative as well as their form – the elements that are most important for determining the genre of an opera. We are accustomed to the printed layout conventions of *opera seria* wordbooks where the strophes intended for, or set as, arias are set off typographically from the lines set as recitative by block indentation or centering, spacing, use of italics, and clear indication of da capos by the words 'da capo'. This familiar manner of typographically setting out wordbooks for Italian operas was first adopted in London with those for *Li amori di Ergasto* (1705) and *The Temple of Love* (1706).

These customary conventions were not used in the printed London wordbook for *Arsinoe*. This wordbook appears to have been based on the London librettist's fair manuscript copy, which follows the general typographic layout of the Bologna libretto's wordbook. In the Bologna wordbook, it is not readily apparent just by visually scanning the text which lines were set as (or intended as) arias: lines for arias are not distinguished by italics (which are reserved for stage directions) and are not regularly indented and spaced before and after.[61] In viewing other long passages of lines set along the left margin, it is only apparent that previous lines were intended as part of the aria when there is a repetition of the first words of an earlier line followed by '&c'. (That these preceding lines were intended as part of the aria is confirmed when upon inspection they have the characteristic rhyme and metric patterns for arias.) The London wordbook follows no consistent manner of indicating which lines of verse were set as an aria. Some lines of verse that seem to reflect the librettist's intended lines suitable for arias (for example, by concluding a strophe with a repetition of a previous line or adding 'da capo') were instead set by Clayton as recitative. In other cases, Clayton chose to set as an aria lines (or often just a single line) that the librettist left by default for recitative. Nor is it clear from the wordbook layout what form the arias took. Throughout, Clayton exercised his own judgment about which lines of verse were suitable for lyric expression (and were not always reflected as such in the wordbook). To show which lines of the libretto Clayton chose to set as aria, duet, or chorus, <Online Supplement 2> presents the second issue of the London wordbook showing the lines set by Clayton in outlines, with numbers as given in the printed *Songs*.

To further aid overall comprehension of the operatic dramaturgy of *Arsinoe*, <Online Supplement 3> is a reformatted version of the London wordbook following modern conventions. Recitative is given flush left in roman (normal) type; lines or strophes set as aria, duet, or chorus are indented as block text in italics (with corresponding numbers from the printed *Songs*). Indications of da capo are added editorially (based on actual musical realization), even though an initial line was repeated in the wordbook. Lines of text in the wordbook that were not set are struck through.

Arsinoe as English opera

Clayton's dates of travel to Italy and what motivated his trip are not certain.[62] He received a bequest from his father's will in 1697, which may have given him the financial resources for travel.[63] Writing in 1711,

[60]Editions of the printed songs for some operas of the period include the first violin part on the same staves as the vocal line.

[61]As Robert Freeman, 'Apostolo Zeno's Reform of the Libretto', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 21 (1968), 321–41, notes: 'Some Venetian librettists failed to distinguish as unambiguously as did their 18th-century successors between the rhyme schemes and metrical matterns used in recitative and aria, and since late 17th-century Venetian printers of libretti made little apparent effort to distinquish typographically between arias and recitatives, it is impossible to make absolutely accurate calculations about the number of arias in most Venetian operas of the period' (p. 327).

[62]Clayton later referred to completing his 'Studies in *Italy*'; *Spectator*, no. 258, 26 December 1711.

[63]Clayton's career is summarized in DeSimone, *The Power of Pastiche*, pp. 192–208. He likely died in late December 1724; the Lincoln's Inn Fields accounts of John Rich (Christopher Rich's son) for 30 December 1724 record, 'Given towards burying Mr. Clayton 0 10 6.' Clayton was buried at St Mary le Strand on 31 December 1724. Rich seems to have kept in touch with Clayton, for the latter's *The Passion of Sappho* was presented at Lincoln's Inn Fields on 15 November 1718 (information kindly provided by Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson).

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Clayton reported that he had been 'bred' in the art of music since his childhood, but having found the 'usual Methods taken in *England* to attain a general knowledge in this art […] very little satisfactory', he was 'at the Trouble and Charge to go into Italy to consult the greatest Masters in it, and by the study of Dead Authors, and Instruction of the greatest living', felt qualified 'to introduce the *Italian* method of composing Musick upon our *English* Stage'.[64] Certainly in Italy he became familiar with the prevailing conventions of Italian opera of the turn of the century and collected librettos and probably scores.

Since sources in late 1704 mention his opera, Clayton must have returned at least by 1703, about the time Vanbrugh was projecting his new theatre company. When he returned, he ventured to prepare an all-sung opera for England, which he announced 'in the Italian manner'. This was perhaps an unfortunate announcement, for it seems to have disposed modern writers to evaluate *Arsinoe* against the stylistic features of a later eighteenth-century Italian *dramma per musica* or *opera seria*.

In many significant ways, *Arsinoe* is an opera 'in the Italian manner': it has a heroic plot and small number of characters, the dramatic narrative is presented in dialogue carried out in *secco* recitative (*recitativo semplice*) interspersed with numerous moments of expressive arias. However, it does lack features of the later reform operas of Zeno and Metastasio, such as the highly structured scenes leading up to a da capo exit aria, high moral seriousness, and the elimination of comic characters. Nevertheless, the category does serve to highlight the salient features of recitative, aria form, and vocal style that characterize Italian opera. Against this background, we turn to a fresh consideration of *Arsinoe*.

Recitative

In the Preface to the wordbook for *Arsinoe*, Clayton claims to be introducing 'the *Italian* manner of Musick on the *English* Stage', but this may be a bit of promotional overstatement, for he is not the first to introduce recitative itself. English musicians, musical amateurs, and audiences were, of course, familiar with recitative, going back to Henry Lawes, Nicholas Lanier, William Davenant, John Blow, Henry Purcell, and more recently in Italian songs and cantatas lately introduced in London theatres and music meetings (or concerts).[65] Older audience members could have heard French-style recitative in the Grabu-Dryden *Albion and Albanius* (1685) and the Lully-Quinault *Cadmus et Hermione* (1686). Elaborated declamatory-style recitative was used in English verse anthems. Additionally, the multi-sectional Restoration theatre song (see below) often opened with a section of declamatory-style recitative over a long, sustained bass note before moving on to more 'songish' settings of subsequent lines.

The real novelty of *Arsinoe* and what did need 'general Acceptation' was the thorough-going use of *secco* recitative to carry the dialogue and action of a full-length, all-sung drama. In the conventional English semi- or dramatic opera, the narrative is conveyed in the spoken dialogue of the speaking cast of the main play (what John Dryden called the 'just Drama' and Motteux called the 'correct play').[66] The music is assigned to a separate cast of singers for inserted songs, incidental music, or multi-media musical entertainments.[67] It is presumably the style of conversational, sung, repartee-like dialogue, quickly alternating between characters, that Clayton said he had 'not been wanting, to the utmost of my Diligence, in the instructing' of the singers,[68] and which needed the collaboration of Dieupart and Haym as continuo players.

[64]Preface to *The Passion of Sappho*, [i].

[65]Use of recitative in England is surveyed in Ian Spink, *English Song: Dowland to Purcell* (London: Batsford, 1974; rev. with updated bibliography, New York: Taplinger, 1984).

[66]John Dryden, 'Of Heroique Playes. An Essay', preface to *The Conquest of Granada*, Part I, in *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. by Edward Hooker, H.T. Swedenburg and others (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956–90), XI: *Plays: The Conquest of Granada, Marriage a-la-Mode, the Assignation*, ed. by John Loftis, David Stuart Rodes, and Vinton A. Dearing (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 8–18 (p. 9); Peter Motteux, 'To the Reader', preface to *The Island Princess* (London: Richard Wellington,1699), pp. 8–9 (p. 8).

[67]There are a few exceptions to this strict segration of the dramatic and singing casts; futher on this segregation of casts, see McGeary, *Opera and Politics in Queen Anne's Britain*, pp. 44, 45, 47, 52–53, 54.

[68]Preface, *The Passion of Sappho.*

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Clayton took a flexible approach to recitative. For the conversational dialogue, as the manuscript scores reveal, Clayton used the prevailing Italian style of *secco* recitative. Addison would observe that each nation's speech has a different intonation pattern, which should be reflected in its musical recitative.[69] Here Clayton's choice of *secco* recitative for English verse, with its patter-like, regular short note values on mostly repeated pitches, could be faulted.

But at other moments of heightened emotional intensity, Clayton used what the English were familiar with: a form of declamatory recitative, such as used by Henry and Daniel Purcell, John Eccles, John Weldon, and others, where the vocal line has a wider range, a greater variety of note values, and more angular contours to reflect the shape of English dramatic speech.

What James Winn dismisses as an example of Clayton's 'incompetent' recitative is in fact an example of his flexible approach to recitative: Arsinoe's outburst, 'Help me ye Gods / Assist my Flight', is set in a heightened declamatory style, while the other characters in the scene use the *secco* style.[70]

Arias

For the arias, Clayton faced the task of setting text in a manner that would be congenial to his English audience. He chose not to make extensive use of of the Italian melodic style or da capo arias with numerous ritornellos that English audiences were becoming familiar with. Instead, he drew on the style and forms long familiar to English singers and audiences: the Restoration multi-sectional theatre song, best exemplified by the Purcells, Eccles, Weldon, and others.[71]

England's own native theatre practice was to insert songs (as well as dances and other incidental music) into plays – usually sung not by the principal actors themselves but by professional singers who had minor roles in the play. The texts were usually placed in the printed play book at the point where they were sung, and usually set off as numbered strophes; the musical setting might be given at the end of the play book or printed and sold as individual song sheets. Collections of such popular theatre songs provided the bulk of the content of music publications of the day,[72] such as the series *Choice Songs and Ayres*, *The Theatre of Music*, *The Banquet of Musick*, *Thesaurus Musicus*, and *Deliciae Musicae* – not to overlook the two books of Purcell's *Orpheus Britannicus*.

Most such theatre songs are strophic, in short binary forms, pleasantly tuneful, often using dance rhythms, and make no great demands on the singers. More ambitious are larger-scale, multi-sectional songs.[73] Their texts may appear deceptively in the play books as stanzas for strophic songs or a single Pindaric stanza, but as set they are through-composed songs, some approaching the scale of miniature *scenas* or cantatas.

Set continuously without ritornellos to demark the music–text units, their closed musical sections may disregard (or be independent of) the units suggested by the lines of verse (for example, couplets or

[69]Joseph Addison, *Spectator*, no. 29 (3 April 1711).

[70]Winn, *Queen Anne: Patroness of Arts*, pp. 400–01. His example consists of Act I, scenes 2 and 3.

[71]DeSimone's discussion of *Arsinoe* in *The Power of Pastiche* (pp. 192–208) is generally compatible with the one given here, especially the need for clarity of the text; she does not discuss the recitative. Her discussion of the opera focuses on the melodic style and form of the arias. However, instead of Clayton's term 'in the Italian manner', she uses the term 'Italian style' and attends to the presence of da capo arias, which emphasize that she sees the opera's 'origins in Italian composition' with the arias as having 'Italian pedigree' and 'Italianate influences'. She does observe, though, how Clayton 'modified elements of the structure of Italian operas in order to suit English tastes' (p. 194). DeSimone considers the simpler melodic style a concession to the skills of English singers rather than arising from Clayton's desired style of text-setting; that the singers, especially Catherine Tofts, were quite capable of more virtuosic singing can be seen in the vocal lines for songs in other operas they sang in.

[72]Such songs were widely printed in the many publications of vocal music: see Cyrus L. Day and Eleonore B. Murrie, *English Song-Books 1651–1702* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1940); and Spink, *English Song*, pp. 261–73.

[73]For a detailed analysis of the Purcell multi-sectional song 'From Silent Shades', see Bruce Wood, 'Purcell and His Poets', *Early Music*, 43 (2015), 225–31. See also Spink, *English Song*, pp. 208–18; and Margaret Laurie, 'Purcell's Extended Solo Songs', *Musical Times*, 1691 (January 1984), 19–25. Spink's use of the term 'cantata' or 'cantata-like' (*English Song*, p. 215) for these songs, is misleading, since the songs do not alternate recitative and aria.

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quatrains). The resulting sections are differentiated by metre, tempo, melodic character and key, and provide new musical material as the tone, character, or expression of the text changes. Although several words or short phrases might be repeated within a phrase, the setting did not return to repeat the initial lines of the strophe or music–text unit (as in da capo practice) and cause the song setting to pause the drama's narrative progress.

Composing in such short music–text units seems to have been Clayton's default way of approaching text setting. What Clayton drew from the practice of the multi-sectional theatre song was that the musical sections of arias did not need to coincide precisely with the text units of the verses or strophes. Clayton also internalized that it was not necessary to demark the internal sections of arias by opening or concluding ritornellos that may function as transitions. As a result, arias in *Arsinoe* are built up from various arrangements of music–text units. Table 1 shows the formal structures of the arias in *Arsinoe*.[74]

While the libretto seems to instruct that twenty-one of the thirty-six arias or duets should be da capo, in fact, Clayton set only twelve (one third) with full da capo reprises, choosing not to set the others as indicated in the wordbook. As a result, in two-thirds of the arias, the music progresses through the strophe without going back to the beginning for a da capo. The first aria, 'Guide me, lead me', begins with a brief passage of declamatory-style recitative, 'Queen of darkness, sable night'. Hearing these opening moments at the very beginning of the opera, an English theatre-goer might have the impression of hearing a common multi-sectional theatre song, which often begin with such a declamatory section over a sustained bass note.

Melodic style

What seems to have aroused most negative comment by the anonymous author, Hawkins, Burney, and others is that Clayton's arias in *Arsinoe* are not tuneful and melodically Italian enough. Clayton's father William was a versatile instrumentalist, composer, and singer at court from 1660 to 1697. His son was a member of the Private Musick from 1689 and, as we have seen, had travelled in Italy.[75] It is inconceivable that Thomas was not familiar with the Italian style of vocal writing and could not imitate it, if he chose. We must credit him that he was intentionally drawing upon the long-familiar native English style of vocal writing used for the theatre – a style the English themselves recognized as contrasted to the Italian style.[76]

Melodically, these native settings were primarily syllabic but could abound with two-note slurs; virtuosic embellishment was limited more to word-painting or madrigalisms and at cadences; their vocal lines are more angular and rhythmically varied than the Italian style with its smooth, flowing, spun-out lyrical lines with long, sequence-driven melismas on single syllables and repetition of words and short text phrases. The shape, accent, inflection and emphasis of the English melody are influenced by those of the spoken text. In the Italian song, as Ian Spink observed, syllables could verge on being a medium for vocalizing.[77]

It was Clayton's style of text setting that his critics, predisposed to Italian melody, apparently did not apprehend or appreciate. Rather than considering it an indictment, as Henry Raynor opined,

[74]Clayton's arias follow neither simple, closed binary dance forms nor the expanded ritornello forms of later Italian arias. In the table, the capital letters represent distinct music-text units. Short introductions (in all but six cases just for *basso continuo*) and measures of *basso continuo* are designated by 'r'; these are not ritornellos in the usual sense in later arias. For clarity in presentation, repetitions of music-text units that are written out in the manuscript scores or *Songs* are collapsed with repeat signs. Da capos in the sources may be written out or directed.

[75]*A Biographical Dictionary of English Court Musicians, 1485–1714*, compiled by Andrew Ashbee and David Lasocki, 2 vols (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), I: pp. 257–59.

[76]On the contrast between the two styles, see Spink, *English Song*, pp. 203–23.

[77]*Ibid.*, p. 221.

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Table 1. Aria Forms in Thomas Clayton's *Arsinoe* (1705)

No.	Text incipit	Singer/Character	Form	British Library MS pages	With symphony	Notes
	Symphony		‖: A :‖ B	1–3	x	2 vlns, b.c.
			First Act			
1	[Recit.:] Queen of Darkness, Sable Night Air: Guide me, Lead me	Hughes/Ormondo	AB da capo	4–6		*Songs*: includes preceding recitative; da capo indicated by segno signs MS: da capo written out
2	Lillies, Roses, Pearly Dew	Hughes/Ormondo	Continuous	8–9		
3	As Roses show More pale with Dew	Hughes/Ormondo	AB	10–11		
4	So sweet an air/So high a Mean, was never seen	Hughes/Ormondo Tofts/Arsinoe	Duet: continuous	13–16		
5	For thy Ferry–Boat, Charon	Cook/Delbo	‖: A :‖ BA	17–19		
6	And you Dorisbe, Now forgive me	Hughes/Ormondo	‖: rA :‖ BCA′r	20–26	x	MS: First rit. labeled 'Symphony' A′ = A extended
7	[Recit.:] Happy he who void of Love Air: Never Fearing, Nor despairing	Leveridge/ Feraspe	ArA′BA	26–28		*Songs*: includes preceding recitative A′ = A extended
8	'Tis the Fashion, without passion	Lindsey/Nerina	A ‖ A′ ‖ da capo	30–32		*Songs*: 'End with the first Part'; with double bar MS: da capo written out A′ = A extended
9	But Pity/Entreaty shou'd move you	Cross/Dorisbe Hughes/Ormondo	Duet: continuous	34–35		
10	Rise, Alecto, and see with me	Cross/Dorisbe	rArBr	36–43	x	With 'motto' opening after initial ritornello
11	Ungrateful!/ Unfaithful! so to deceive me	Hughes/Ormondo Leveridge/Fersaspe	Duet: continuous	45–47		
12	Wounded I, And Sighing lie	Tofts/Arsinoe	‖: rAB :‖	49–53	x	Vln solo and accompagnato Strophic aria: AB repeated with new text
13	O Love I have gain'd a Victory sure	Tofts/Arsinoe	‖: rA: :‖: B :‖	58–61		Only libretto indicates da capo (by repetition of text) *Songs* with double bar before B with 1st and 2nd endings

Table 1. *Continued*

No.	Text incipit	Singer/Character	Form	British Library MS pages	With symphony	Notes
	Symphony			62–63	x	
			Second Act			
14	Charming Creature	Hughes/Ormondo	‖: rA :‖ BrA	65–67		MS: Repetition written out *Songs*: repetition indicated by da segno
15	Eyes that kill'd me with Disdain	Hughes/Ormondo	AB ‖da capo	68–70		MS: da capo written out *Songs*: 'Da capo'
16	A hated strife/And Rebel's Life, this soon will end.	Hughes/Ormondo Leveridge/Feraspe	'Two Voices to Violins' Duet: continuous	72–76	x	Obbligato 2 solo vlns MS: 9 mm conluding ritornello
17	Ye Gods, I only wish to die	Leveridge/Feraspe	rA ‖ BrABr	77–81		*Songs*: rA ‖ B
18	Blind God, from your Chains I am free	Hughes/Ormondo	‖: rAB :‖	82–84		*Songs*: without repetition
19	Conquering, Oh but cruell Eyes	Cross/Dorisbe	‖ rA ‖ B da capo	86–89		*Songs*: 'End with the First Part' MS: da capo written out
20	Assist ye Furies from the Deep	Cross/Dorisbe	‖: AB :‖ r	92–98	x	*Songs*: without concluding ritornello of 2 solo vlns
21	Doubtfull Heart, O tell me why; Fearful Heart, I know not why	Tofts/Arsinoe Hughes/Ormondo	A (Arsinoe); A (Ormondo)	99–101		Each part with own text in sequence Given as duet strophe in no. 22 in *Songs*
22	Doubtfull Heart, O tell me why,/ Fearful Heart, I know not why	Tofts/Arsinoe Hughes/Ormondo	A ('Two Voices)'			Strophes in no. 21 combined as duet with Mrs Tofts in thirds above Hughes
23	Was ever Fate, So hard as mine?	Tofts/Arsinoe Hughes/Ormondo	Duet: continuous	103–104		Sung twice
24	Thus sinking Mariners,	Hughes/Ormondo	‖: rA :‖ r	106–108		*Songs*: Final rit. omitted
25	Ye Stars that rul'd my Birth	Mrs. Cross/ [Dorisbe]	‖: rA :‖: B :‖ r	109–111		Set out as two numbered strophes in libretto *Songs*: without first repetiton and final ritornello
26	Delbo, if you wilt not Woe me	Lindsey/Nerina; Cook/Delbo	*Ner*: ‖: rAB :‖; *Del*: C; *Ner*: D; *Del*: C; *Ner*: D; *Del*: E	111–117		*Songs*: 'Dialogue between Nerina and Delbo' *Songs*: Delbo given to Mr Good; not complete in *Songs*

Table 1. *Continued*

No.	Text incipit	Singer/Character	Form	British Library MS pages	With symphony	Notes
27	To War, my Thoughts! to War!	Tofts/Arsinoe	‖: rA :‖ Br	117–119		*Songs*: without repetitions
28	Boiling Passions rage no more	Leveridge/ Feraspe	rA ‖ B ‖ da capo	126–130		*Songs*: 'Da capo' with double bar MS: Da capo written out A = text strophe I B = text strophe II
	Symphony			130–132		
			Third Act			
29	Greatness, leave me, Undeceive me	Tofts/Arsinoe	‖: rAB :‖ r	133–136		A has 'motto opening after initial ritornello
30	But how can I live	Tofts/Arsinoe	‖: rA :‖ r	140–142		
31	Wanton Zephyrs, Softly blowing	Tofts/Arsinoe	A ‖ B ‖ da capo	143–146		*Songs*: 'End with the 1st strain'; with double bar MS: da capo written out
	Symphony			146	x	MS: Symphony is harmonized re–statement of A of no. 31
32	Conscious Dungeon, Walls of Stone	Hughes/Ormondo	‖: rA :‖ BrACr	147–151		C uses text of A
33	Sleep, Ormondo, void of Fear	Tofts/Arsinoe	‖: A :‖ BA'	152–155		A′ = shortened A
34	Cruel stars who all conspire	Cross/Dorisbe	rArA'BCr	158–160		A′ = extended A
35	My dear my Joy/My life, my Goddess	Tofts/Arsinoe Hughes/Ormondo	Duet: ‖: A :‖ B	167–168		*Songs*: 'A Two part Song'
36	Epithalamium Song		(See Table 2)	173–203	x	Symphonies, solos, chorus
37	Then tell it in the Cyprian Groves			207–218	x	Soloist and chorus alternating *Songs*: For Mr Hughes only
	Note: Role of Delbo is variously assigned to Mr Cook, Mr Good, or Raimondon					

that 'Clayton's models were not those which would help him to write for English audiences',[78] we can see that he was writing in a style familiar to his English audience (though one soon to be superseded).

English song aesthetic

Clayton's approach to recitative, aria form, and melody can be seen not as a clumsy, inept attempt at the Italian style, but as hewing to a fundamental aesthetic tenet of vocal English music: primacy of the text.[79] Throughout early eighteenth-century English critical essays, prologues and epilogues, satires, and essays dealing with dramatic music is found a fundamental desideratum: clear, intelligible presentation of text is paramount; the song must be rational ('masculine') and understood by the audience.[80] The text must be prominent; music must be a handmaid to the text; the music's role is to add an expressive dimension to the words – not to be an occasion for virtuosic, sensuous ('feminine') vocalization on the part of the singer.

But most obviously, the text must be sung in English. This desideratum for non-academic public events, entertainments, and liturgy taps into English insistence that essential to a Protestant nation – and a point of great contrast to the church of Rome – was, as stated in the twenty-fourth Article of Religion of the Book of Common Prayer, that 'It is a Thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the Custom of the Primitive Church, to have Publick Prayer in the Church, or to Minister the Sacraments in a Tongue not understanded [*sic*] of the People'. The point could not be put better for our purpose than by Bishop Gilbert Burnet in his gloss on this Article:

> if the Worship of God [is] […] nothing but noise and shew to amuse them, which how much soever they may strike upon and entertain the Senses, yet they cannot affect the Heart, nor excite the Mind: So that the natural effect of such a way of Worship is to make Religion a Pageantry, and the Publick Service of God an *Opera*.[81]

What was essential to English Protestantism must be central as well to British theatrical entertainment. English composers met this goal by careful and sensitive presentation of the text in song settings.

Of course, vocal music must instruct and carry meaning as well as provide pleasure, and singers (and audiences as well) desired vehicles for displays of their skill. English music could still be a handmaid to the text by applying 'word painting' or melodic patterns (such as rising and falling melodic shapes) to mimic or illustrate the meaning of the text. In Pope's words, 'the *Sound* must seem an *Eccho* to the *Sense*'.[82] Hence characterizable words (rise, flee, etc.) were adorned with suitable melodic shapes and

[78]Henry Raynor, *Music in England* (London: Robert Hale, 1980), p. 109.

[79]DeSimone (see note 69) gives a good discussion of Clayton's ideas on text setting.

[80]The primary sources for articulations of this English aesthetic can be found in numerous surveys of English opera (in addition to Clayton's own writings); for example, Lowell Lindgren, 'Critiques of Opera in London, 1705–1719', in *Il melodramma italiano in Italia e in Germania nell' età barocca*, Contributi musicologici del Centro Ricerche dell' A.M.I.S.-Como, 9 (Como: A.M.I.S., 1995), pp. 145–65; Xavier Cervantes, '"Tuneful Monsters": The Castrati and the London Operatic Public, 1667–1737', *Restoration and 18th Century Theatre Research*, 2nd ser., 13 (1998), 1–24; and Todd S. Gilman, 'The Italian (Castrato) in London', in *The Work of Opera: Genre, Nationhood, and Sexual Difference*, ed. by Richard Dellamora and Daniel Fischlin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 49–70. For a reconsideration of Addison's well-known writings, see McGeary, *Opera and Politics in Queen Anne's Britain*, pp. 286–303.

[81]Gilbert Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England* (London: Richard Chiswell, 1699), pp. 262–65 (p. 262). See also Samson Estwick, *The Usefulness of Church-Musick: A Sermon* (London: Thomas Bennet, 1696), p. 20; Arthur Bedford, *The Temple Musick* (Bristol: William Bonny, 1706), p. 220; and Bedford, *The Great Abuse of Musick* (London: John Wyatt, 1711), p. 252. Beford cites specific instances from operas and dramatic operas up through the Italian *Almahide* and *Hydaspes* of January and March 1710 (pp. 104–34). Bedford's key text is I Corinthians 14. 15: 'I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing with the Understanding also'.

[82]Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* (written *c.*1709; pub. London: William Lewis, 1711), line 365. On the afterlife of the conceit, Richard Terry, '"The *Sound* must seem an *Eccho* to the *Sense*"', *Modern Language Review*, 94 (1999), 940–54.

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vocal embellishments. In addition to word painting, English protocol allowed virtuosic melismas on syllables at the close of phrases or at ends of musical sections, where they also serve as a semiotic indication of ends of sections. In general, though, Clayton's settings tend to eschew longer melismas. It was the Italian da capo aria that most violated the principle of keeping the text paramount by interrupting the forward logical presentation of the text and instead creating an abstract, sensuous musical form dominated by music.

To keep attention focused on the sung text without the distraction or interference of accompanying instruments, Clayton set most arias or duets as *basso continuo* arias where the voice is accompanied by the bass line (played by cello or double bass), with harmonies supplied by harpsichord or theorbo-lutes.[83] To only seven numbers did Clayton add orchestral accompaniment. Such preference for *basso continuo* arias was prevalent in late seventeenth-century Italian operas.

Epithalamium Song

Another means of tying *Arsinoe* to an English audience's expectations for an operatic work, and a departure from the Bologna source libretto, was the wholesale invention of a musical entertainment, or the Epithalamium Song, toward the end of the last act. Toward the end of Act III, Ormondo (whom Arsinoe secretly loves, and who has fallen in love with her, but who has been falsely accused of attempting her murder) is revealed not as her assassin but as her rescuer and as Pelops, prince of Athens. In the Bologna version, here begins a further series of dramatic discoveries, reconciliations and pardons. At this point (Act III, scene 8) the London version advances to the denouement and reveals Arsinoe and Pelops on a throne, having been, or about to be, married. There is then presented for the entertainment of Arsinoe and Pelops (and the theatre audience, too) the Epithalamium Song, with symphonies, songs, dances and chorus (see Tables 1 and 2).

This addition – no doubt with an eye toward playing to Thomas Betterton's experience in mounting such stage spectacles – is modelled on such royal entertainments in recent English operatic works such as *The Prophetess: or the History of Dioclesian* (Henry Purcell/Thomas Betterton, 1690), *The Fairy Queen* (Purcell's setting of an anonymous libretto, 1693), *The Indian Queen* (Purcell/Betterton, 1695), and *The Virgin Prophetess, or the Fate of Troy* (Gottfried Finger/Elkanah Settle, 1701), as well as plays that do not rise to the level of operatic.[84]

Dramatic effectiveness

As noted, *Arsinoe* had what for the time was a successful run on the stage and must have provided good dramatic entertainment. Clayton and his librettist must be given credit for a sense of the

[83]According to contemporary rosters, a pit orchestra for the period 1704–07 would have comprised twenty to twenty-eight musicians: eight to twelve violins; two to four violas; four or five winds (oboes and bassoons); five to eight cellos and double basses; one or two harpsichords; and a trumpet. Although there is no indication for winds in the manuscript scores of *Arsinoe*, oboes and bassoons may have doubled the strings. Sample orchestra rosters: (a) draft roster compiled about 1703, in Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama, 1660–1900*, 3rd edn, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 276–78 (Nicoll misdates this to 1707; the correct date is given by Milhous 'New Light'); (b) draft rosters compiled about late 1707, in Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *Vice Chamberlain Coke's Theatrical Papers 1706–1715* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), documents 17 and 18.

[84]For example, musical entertainments are presented before guests or a court in Colley Cibber, *Love's Last Shift* (premiered at Drury Lane, 1696); Abel Roper, *The Triumphs of Virtue* (Drury Lane, 1697) [an entertainment before a duke]; George Powell, *The Imposture Defeated* (Drury Lane, 1697/1698) [masques presented before a duke and his court]; Vanbrugh's adaptation of Fletcher's *The Pilgrim* (Drury Lane, 1700), with Dryden's 'Secular Masque'; Charles Gildon, *Measure for Measure* (Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1700) [acts of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* inserted as entertainments before the duke]; George Granville, *The Jew of Malta* (Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1701) [masque of Peleus and Thetis]; and Thomas Baker, *The Humour of the Age* (Drury Lane, 1701). A masque was written for William Burnaby, *Love Betray'd* (Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1703), but not set to music by the management.

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Table 2. Epithalamium Song in Act 3 of *Arsinoe*

	British Library MS pages	Notes
Act 3, scene VIII The Scene Opens and discovers *Arsinoe* and *Pelops* on a Throne. A Dance. After which an Epithalamium Song, as follows.		
[Symphony]	173–76	2 tpts, 2 vlns, b.c
First voice: Hail, happy, happy, happy Pair! Great *Pelops* and *Arsinoe*! For love prepare,	176–78	Alto solo + b.c.
[Symphony]	178–81	2 tpts, 2 vlns, b.c
[First voice:] Hail, happy, happy, happy Pair! Great *Pelops* and *Arsinoe*! For love prepare, No Moments spare. One happy Moment equals long Despair. *They dance again*	181–87	Alto solo + b.c.
[Symphony]	187–91	2 tpts, 2 vlns, b.c
Second voice: Bright Queen of Love ordain This Night no Lovers sigh in vain! Nymphs complying, Panting, dying, Mutual Pleasure bless each happy Swain.	191–96	Alto solo
Chorus: Hail, happy, happy, happy Pair! Great *Pelops* and *Arsinoe*! For love prepare, No Moments spare. One happy Moment equals long Despair.	196–208	Bass, alto, soprano 2 tpts, 2 vlns, b.c.

theatre. While in Italy, Clayton must have observed what one would expect from a musical-dramatic work: music is used to heighten moments of drama, assist lyric expression and characterize the persons of the drama.

The librettist provided many effective moments of theatre: a dramatic opening with the hero (Ormondo) discoving a sleeping woman (Arsinoe) whose beauty enchants him; interruption by a masked man rushing onstage to assassinate her (Act I, scene 1); a character's threatened self-stabbing that is thwarted (Act II, scene 4); an aborted stabbing of the sleeping heroine (Act II, scene 8); a prison scene and sudden revelation of hero's innocence and royal status (Act III, scene 5); another thwarted self-stabbing (Act III, scene 7); an occasion for a masque-like entertainment with instruments, singing, and dancing (Act III, scene 8); interruption of the entertainment by Dorisbe who stabs (not mortally) herself (Act III, scene 9); and a scene of reconciliation followed by a joyful chorus celebrating those 'Who live in the Realm of Love' (Act III, scene 9).

The six arias accompanied by two violins help create set pieces ('show stoppers') for the singers Catherine Tofts, Francis Hughes and Letitia Cross and to characterize the persons portrayed at important moments of the plot. Two characters are provided rage arias. Dorisbe (Cross) is given a classic rage aria with *accompagnato* violins, 'Assist ye Furies from the Deep' (no. 20), with introductory and concluding ritornellos and two six-measure measured trills asking for assistance against Arsinoe and Ormondo. Arsinoe (Tofts) sings 'To War, my Thoughts! to War!' (no. 27), as she rouses herself against Dorisbe and Ormondo.

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In 'And you Dorisbe, Now forgive me' (no. 6), an aria of three sections with introductory and closing symphonies, Ormondo (Hughes) pleads Dorisbe's forgiveness for falling in love with Arsinoe. Dorisbe forsees the fall of Arsinoe in 'Arise Alecto, and see with me' (no. 10) with introductory, internal, and concluding ritornellos and 'motto' opening. In a strophic aria marked 'very slow' with a long introductory violin solo, 'Wounded I, and Sighing lie' (no. 12), Arsinoe is torn between hope and despair over choosing between two lovers. Ormondo and Feraspe (sung by Richard Leveridge) each contemplate their following duel in the duet 'A hated strife/And rebel's Life' (no. 16), with two violins, beginning 'very soft' and with a 'loud' conclusion of agitato semiquavers. An aria that is greatly truncated in the *Songs* is 'Ye Gods, I only wish to die' (no. 17), in which Feraspe, defeated in a duel with Ormondo would rather die than live a life of dishonour.

At the opening of the third act, Arsinoe, alone weeping, sings 'Greatness, leave me, undeceive me' (no. 29), marked 'very slow', at the thought that Ormondo has betrayed her. For 'Wanton Zephyrs, Softly blowing' (no. 31), the flowing, conjunct melody of quavers and semiquavers for Arsinoe matches the imagery of the opening text. The introductory repeated bass quavers of 'Conscious dungeon, walls of Stone' (no. 32), marked 'very slow', create the sombre mood of Ormondo in his prison cell. The two comic characters Nerina (sung by Mary Lindsey) and Delbo (sung by Mr Cook) are given what is characteristic of English theatre songs, a lively dialogue song for a lovers's quarrel (no. 26).

Verisimilitude

An important innovation of *Arsinoe* that should be highlighted in terms of the English operatic tradition is the application of the principle of verisimilitude.[85] Clayton's opera, with its origins in an Italian libretto, departed from common English and French operatic practice in terms of the question 'Who may sing on the operatic stage?' [86] John Dryden in the preface to *Albion and Albanius* articulated what was appropriate for operatic treatment, a principle that was observed in English dramatic operas, masques, and many early operas in England:

> An *Opera* is a poetical Tale of Fiction, represented by Vocal and Instrumental Musick, adorn'd with Scenes, Machinery and Dancing. The suppos'd Persons of this musical Drama, are generally supernatural, as Gods and Goddesses, and *Heroes*, which at least are descended from them, and are in due time, to be adopted into their Number. The Subject therefore being extended beyond the Limits of Humane Nature, admits of that sort of marvellous and surprising conduct, which is rejected in other Plays.[87]

Dryden especially admits shepherds, the inhabitants of the Golden Age, as most suitable for those who may sing in musical entertainments.[88] Choruses of priests, soldiers, the populace (not the main characters) could also sing.

This principle that singing is only appropriate for mythological, allegorical, or fabulous characters is observed in the operatic works produced in England in the seventeenth century: *Venus and Adonis* (music by Blow, libretto possibly by Anne Fince, née Kingsmill, *c.*1683/4); *Dido and Aeneas* (Purcell/Tate, ?1684/88); *Albion and Albanius* (Grabu/Dryden; 1685); the imported productions of *Ariane, ou le mariage de Bacchus* (Grabu/ Perrin, 1674) and *Cadmus et Hermione* (Lully/Quinault, 1686); the afterpieces and masques of 1695–1704; Congreve's librettos for Eccles's *The Judgment of Paris* (1701) and

[85]Further, see McGeary, *Opera and Politics in Queen Anne's Britain*, pp. 49–52.
[86]*Ibid.*, pp. 51–52.
[87]John Dryden, *Albion and Albanius: an Opera* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1685), [i].
[88]*Ibid.*, [iii].

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Semele (unproduced, though begun as early as 1704); and other early operas on pastoral subjects following *Arsinoe*, including *Li amori di Ergasto* (1705), *The Temple of Love* (1706) and *Love's Triumph* (1708).[89]

Arsinoe abandoned the expectation that singing on the stage was reserved for pastoral, allegorical, fabulous, mythic, or minor figures. With a cast of singing real-life characters, *Arsinoe* was typical of the later *opera seria* plots with their quasi-historical plots that soon dominated opera in England.

Conclusion

Thomas Clayton's *Arsinoe* has been almost universally execrated as an Italian opera. This judgment is, as suggested, due to writers' uncritically following the biased opinions of the author of 'A Critical Discourse', Hawkins, and Burney and also applying inappropriate, anachronistic aesthetic criteria drawn from expectations habituated by later Italian arias of Scarlatti, Bononcini, and Handel. This article argues that *Arsinoe* should not be evaluated as an Italian-style opera, but as an innovative, *sui generis* musical-dramatic work composed probably in 1703–04, that aimed to create an opera suitable for the English audience who had not yet become enchanted with Italian opera, singers, and vocal style. Clayton and his librettist accepted the model of an all-sung dramatic work such as Clayton would have encountered in Italy, but modified the Italian source libretto to meet English expectations for a musical-dramatic work. As a result, it thus falls outside the trajectory of continental opera.

David Kimbell has observed that manifestations of Italian opera in non-Italian centres were 'to some extent conditioned by the local "national traditions"'.[90] For Clayton as opera composer in England, there was no pertinent 'national tradition'. *Venus and Adonis* and *Dido and Aeneas* of the 1680s, based largely on French practice with large numbers of choruses and dances, and the native all-sung odes and theatre masques, which had no long-range dramatic narrative, provided no tradition to draw upon. Nor did the English dramatic opera, which segregated the spoken narrative drama from the musical elements. What Clayton did draw on, I suggest, was the national approach to song as exemplified in the sectional theatre song – a style of text-setting quite at odds with that of the increasingly dominant Italian melodic style.

Keeping arias short, using a majority of *basso continuo* arias to keep the voice and text prominent, using a native English vocal style, and limiting the use of da capo forms, *Arsinoe* avoids being a concert on the stage (or a 'number opera') and achieves the desideratum for an all-sung musical-dramatic work: presenting the plot by recited dialogue, using music to characterize persons and dramatic action, and pausing at moments to allow singers to give lyrical expression to emotions or reactions.

Arsinoe almost rivaled Bononcini's *Camilla* of the following year in terms of contemporary popularity, so it must have satisfied an English audience's desire for dramatic entertainment, its novelty aside. That Clayton's approach to English opera did not become the model for English all-sung opera should not be seen (pace Burney) as an indictment of English taste in music or Clayton's skills as a composer, but rather as the consequence of historical contingency – that is, as the result of the English rapture over the imported castratos Valentini and Nicolini, and the need by managers for the newest style of Italian operas to provide vehicles for these highly-paid singers. The need to provide multilingual librettos (to allow the Italians to sing in their native language) was the first step – abetted by decrees by the Lord Chamberlain – down the slippery slope that in 1710 resulted in the hegemony of opera sung all in Italian, with music composed by Italians to Italian librettos, and sung by casts dominated by imported Italian singers.[91]

[89]The pastoral tradition, which lies behind the origins and subjects of many early operas, is well summarized in David Kimbell, *Italian Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 47–52.

[90]Kimbell, *Italian Opera*, p. xiii.

[91]This narrative of the early years of the fate of opera sung in English is given by Price, 'Critical Decade for English Music Drama, 1700–1710', and Price, *Music in the Restoration Theatre.* See also the season summaries in Milhous and Hume, *Vice Chamberlain Coke's Theatrical Papers 1706–1715.*

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Joseph Addison would lament in the *Spectator* in March 1711, just weeks after the première of Handel's *Rinaldo*, that 'our *English* Musick is quite rooted out, and nothing yet planted in its stead'.[92] Clayton's *Arsinoe* must have been in Addison's mind as an example of native growth that was rooted out by the cultivators of the new Italian-style opera.

Supplementary material. The supplementary material for this article can be found at http://doi.org/10.1017/rrc.2023.4.

[92] *Spectator*, no. 18 (21 March 1711).

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