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## “BEING DESIGN’D AS A CONCERT INTERMIX’D WITH THE PLAY”: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC FOR THE LONDON THEATRES, 1700–1740

**IZVLEČEK:** Od 60-ih let 16. stoletja so bile približno 50 let igre v londonskih gledališčih redno opremljene s sklopi instrumentalne glasbe, ki so jih sestavljali dve skupini predhodne glasbe, uvertura in “act tunes”, ki so se izvajale med dejavnji. V začetku 18. stoletja so te sklope gledaliških arij nadomestile italijanske sonate in koncerti ter sonate in koncerti v italijanskem slogu. Ta članek obravnava, kako in kdaj je prišlo do spremembe; kako, kdaj in kje se je instrumentalna glasba uporabljala v predstavah; kje so bili glasbeniki nameščeni v gledališčih in kako so bili povezani z drugimi vrstami zabavnih intermezzov, vokalno glasbo in plesi.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** sonata, koncert, uvertura, gledališče Drury Lane, gledališče Lincoln’s Inn Fields

**ABSTRACT:** For about fifty years from the 1660s plays put on in the London theatres were routinely provided with sets of instrumental music, consisting of two groups of preliminary music, an overture and “act tunes” played between the acts. In the early eighteenth century these sets of theatre airs were replaced by Italian and Italianate sonatas and concertos. This article examines how and when the transition occurred; how, when and where instrumental music was used in plays; where the musicians were placed in the theatres; and how they related to the other types of entr’acte entertainments, vocal music and dances.

**KEYWORDS:** sonata, concerto, overture, Drury Lane Theatre, Lincoln’s Inn Fields Theatre

**F**OR about fifty years from the 1660s new plays put on in the London theatres, as well as some revivals, were routinely provided with a specially composed set of theatre airs.<sup>1</sup> The

I am grateful to Olive Baldwin, Thelma Wilson, Thomas McGeary and Michael Talbot for their valuable comments on drafts of this paper. An early version was given at the Biennial Baroque Conference in Geneva on 29 June 2023.

genre is best-known today from the thirteen sets Henry Purcell wrote for plays staged between 1690 and 1695, which were collected and published after his death.<sup>2</sup> I prefer “sets of theatre airs” to the modern term “theatre suites” for this genre because the word “suite” implies that all the movements are in a single key, though that is usually not the case because they were not played in a single sequence. Sets typically consisted of nine movements: two pairs of pieces, the “First Music” and “Second Music”, were played before the play began; they were followed by the overture, usually called “Third Music” in later times; and then four pieces collectively called “Act Tunes” were played between the five acts of the play.

Around 1710 the production of specially composed sets of theatre airs slackened, and it is clear that they were eventually replaced by Italian or Italianate sonatas and concertos, often simply chosen from the published repertory. This can be seen from the advertisements for theatrical productions in the 1720s and 30s that include detailed lists of the music performed, and from comments in the later literature. For instance, according to Charles Burney, in the 1730s Richard Charke and Henry Burgess junior, respectively first violin and house harpsichordist of the Drury Lane Theatre band, used to play solo concertos as the Second Music.<sup>3</sup> Burney also wrote that William Boyce’s trio sonatas of 1747 were “not only in constant use, as chamber Music”, but, played orchestrally, they were also used “in our theatres, as act-tunes, and public gardens, as favourite pieces, during many years”.<sup>4</sup> The anonymous author of an article on the history of the violin, published in 1821, asserted that Corelli’s four sets of trio sonatas “for many years furnished the second music before the play at both the theatres in London”.<sup>5</sup>

It is clear that instrumental music was always an important attraction for theatre-goers from the 1660s onwards. For instance, the Florentine Lorenzo Magalotti, accompanying the Grand Duke of Tuscany to London in 1669, wrote that “the most delightful symphonies” encouraged many in the audience to come early to theatre performances.<sup>6</sup> The anonymous author of a prologue for Ben Jonson’s *Volpone*, apparently spoken during a revival of the play at Drury Lane on 17 February 1676, complained: “Musick, which was by Intervals design’d | To ease the weary’d Actors voice and mind, | You to the Play judiciously prefer, | ’Tis now the bus’ness of the Theatre”.<sup>7</sup> Much later, Burney remembered that violin concertos played by Charke were “the lure of the second music” at Drury Lane, and that “many lovers of music” went specially to hear them, knowing they could get a refund if they left before the curtain went up and the play began.<sup>8</sup> One piece Charke played repeatedly in the 1731 Drury Lane season was Vivaldi’s Concerto in A major “The Cuckow”, RV 335, first published in London in 1717.<sup>9</sup> This “ultra-high register” piece

<sup>1</sup> For theatre airs, see especially Price, *Music in the Restoration Theatre*; Lowerre, *Music and Musicians*; and the introduction to *Restoration Theatre Airs*.

<sup>2</sup> *A Collection of Ayres Compos’d for the Theatre and upon other Occasions* (London, 1697), RISMA/IP 5977. For modern editions, see especially Purcell, *Dramatic Music*.

<sup>3</sup> Burney, *Memoirs*, 185; Burney, *General History*, 4:664. See also Fiske, *English Theatre Music*, 259–261.

<sup>4</sup> Burney, *General History*, 3:620.

<sup>5</sup> “On the Rise and Progress”, 451.

<sup>6</sup> [Magalotti], *Travels of Cosmo the Third*, 191.

<sup>7</sup> Price, *Music in the Restoration Theatre*, 52.

<sup>8</sup> Burney, *Memoirs*, 185.

<sup>9</sup> See especially Talbot, “Migrations of a Cuckoo and a Nightingale”.

was enduring popular in England, despite being “of modest musical value”;<sup>10</sup> Michael Talbot described its textures as “exaggeratedly lean”, its harmonies veering between “the simplistic and the sometimes frankly odd”.<sup>11</sup>

We shall see that instrumental music tended to be particularly prominent in benefit performances, held towards the end of each London theatre season; they “provided a valuable part of the income of performers and the more important members of the company’s staff”, providing “essential support for the long summer vacation when the London theatres were closed”.<sup>12</sup> A benefit performance for the harpsichordist Benjamin Short of William Congreve’s comedy *The Old Batchelor*, at the Lincoln’s Inn Fields Theatre on 9 May 1732, was even advertised with the comment: “N.B. Instead of Act Tunes will be perform’d Select Pieces of Musick adapted to various Instruments. Being design’d as a Concert intermix’d with the Play”.<sup>13</sup> In this article I take a new look at the transition from sets of theatre airs to Italian and Italianate instrumental music, to try to understand how and when the change occurred; how, when and where sonatas and concertos were used in plays; how they related to the other types of entr’acte entertainments; and where the musicians who played them were placed in the theatres.

It is normally said that the production of sets of theatre airs stopped around 1710. It is true that the last surviving set is a compilation drawn mostly from Handel’s opera *Rodrigo* for a revival of Ben Jonson’s *The Alchemist* at the Queen’s Theatre in the Haymarket on 14 January 1710; it was subsequently published by John Walsh as the work of “an Italian master”.<sup>14</sup> However, Walsh continued to publish sets of theatre airs sporadically for another decade. Ten further published sets are known: by John Barrett, Nathaniel Kynaston, John Eccles, William Turner and an anonymous composer, the last being a set for John Leigh’s *The Pretenders, or Kensington Gardens*, produced at Lincoln’s Inn Fields on 26 November 1719; none of these publications is known to survive.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, sets of act tunes were still being composed in the 1730s: at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket on 20 February 1734 James Miller’s *The Mother in Law* was advertised with “a new Overture, and an entire Sett of Act-Tunes, composed for the Comedy by Mr Seedo”,<sup>16</sup> while on 21 August 1735 in the same theatre a performance of Farquhar’s *The Twin Rivals* included “A

<sup>10</sup> Talbot, *Vivaldi Compendium*, 61.

<sup>11</sup> Talbot, “Migrations of a Cuckoo and a Nightingale”, 53.

<sup>12</sup> Baldwin and Wilson, “With Several Entertainments”, 39.

<sup>13</sup> *Daily Journal*, 9 May 1732.

<sup>14</sup> Milhous and Hume, *London Stage*, 540; Price, “Handel and The Alchemist”; Price, *Music in the Restoration Theatre*, 145–146, 243; Handel, *Collected Documents*, 1:175.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, *Bibliography*, 107 (no. 347), 114 (no. 376), 117 (no. 386), 120 (no. 397), 125 (no. 416), 130 (no. 438), 132 (no. 448), 147 (no. 507), 150 (no. 516), 163 (no. 574). Smith asserted that no. 438 comprised John Eccles’s airs for Southerne’s tragedy *The Fate of Capua*, but the advertisement for the publication states that it was a set by Eccles for Addison’s *Cato*, an error corrected (with the help of Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson) in Winn, *Queen Anne*, 743 (note 31). For *The Pretenders*, see Avery, *London Stage*, 557.

<sup>16</sup> Scouten, *London Stage*, 370. For Seedo (first name unknown), see especially Fiske, *English Theatre Music*, 124.

New Medley Overture” and “A new Set of Act Tunes, never yet performed”, all by Thomas Arne.<sup>17</sup>

The evidence for the use of Italian instrumental music in the London theatres comes partly from musical sources and partly from newspaper advertisements. I have argued in a recent article that two works by Corelli outside the published sets Opp. 1–6 – the Concerto in G minor, WoO 2, for seven-part strings and continuo and the Sinfonia in D, WoO 4, for trumpet, two violins and continuo – were used at the Lincoln’s Inn Fields Theatre around 1700.<sup>18</sup> The evidence for this is a set of parts for the two pieces, today GB-Ob, Tenbury MS 1312, in the hand of the composer and violinist John Lenton (1657?–1719).<sup>19</sup> Lenton joined Thomas Betterton’s theatre company after the break-up of the United Company in 1695. He wrote at least ten sets of theatre airs for Betterton’s company at Lincoln’s Inn Fields between 1698 and 1705, and was probably the leader of its band. Corelli’s G-minor concerto also survives in GB-Lcm, MS 1172, a score copied by the person Purcell scholars call London A, who was an unidentified copyist associated with the rival Drury Lane Theatre.<sup>20</sup> These two sources suggest that the concerto was the subject of rivalry between the two theatres at an early stage of their reception of Corelli and long before the Op. 6 concertos were published.

I also suggested in the same article that Corelli’s trumpet sinfonia WoO 4 was one of “several Italian Trumpet Sonatas being intirely new” played at Lincoln’s Inn Fields during a special performance of Thomas Porter’s tragedy *The Villain* on 14 June 1703 for an ambassador from Portugal.<sup>21</sup> Walsh published WoO 4 in April 1704 as part of an innovative periodical series that made available Italian and Italianate instrumental music that had recently been performed in public in London.<sup>22</sup> In fact, WoO 4 was not “intirely new” in 1703: it had been circulating in manuscript in England since at least the early 1690s.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Scouten, *London Stage*, 504. See also Gilman, *Theatre Career*, 69, where it is asserted that Arne wrote act tunes for three other plays put on at Drury Lane that year, though they could have been the same pieces reused repeatedly; they do not seem to survive. For the medley overture genre, see Fiske, *English Theatre Music*, 160–164.

<sup>18</sup> Holman, “Corelli in the London Theatres”. There are critical modern editions of both pieces in Corelli, *Werke ohne Opuszahl*, 37–43, 44–50, though they need revising in the light of Tenbury MS 1312 and several other newly discovered English sources of WoO 2.

<sup>19</sup> For Lenton, see especially Ashbee, Lasocki, Holman and Kisby, *Biographical Dictionary*, 2:717–718.

<sup>20</sup> For London A, see Shay and Thompson, *Purcell Manuscripts*, especially 131–135, 312. For MS 1172, see Price, introduction to *Instrumental Music for London Theatres*; Herissone, “Appendix”.

<sup>21</sup> *Daily Courant*, 14 June 1703; Milhous and Hume, *London Stage*, 105–106.

<sup>22</sup> Smith, *Bibliography*, 48 (no. 150). I am grateful to Michael Talbot for alerting me to the importance of these periodical publications.

<sup>23</sup> Holman, “Corelli in the London Theatres”, 73, 75; see also Holman, “Arcangelo Corelli, His Trumpet Sinfonia”, especially 7–11.

## GASPARO VISCONTI AT DRURY LANE

The main impetus for the introduction of Italian instrumental music as adjuncts to the performances of plays came from Drury Lane rather than Lincoln's Inn Fields. It was led by the Cremonese violinist Gasparo Visconti (1683–1713?), known in England as "Signor Gasparini".<sup>24</sup> He is first encountered in London in a concert at York Buildings on 3 November 1702, when he was described as "newly come from Rome";<sup>25</sup> he was subsequently said to have been "five years Corelli's scholar".<sup>26</sup> He made his Drury Lane debut on 22 December 1702, when he performed "several Entertainments of Musick by himself, and in Consort with others" in the intervals of Thomas Shadwell's *The Lancashire Witches*.<sup>27</sup> Between then and his last known London appearance, in Colley Cibber's *The Careless Husband* on 3 April 1706,<sup>28</sup> he was advertised nearly eighty times performing Italian sonatas in the intervals of Drury Lane plays.

On 11 February 1703, when Visconti appeared in an entertainment of music and dancing with John Dryden's *Marriage-a-la-Mode* condensed into two acts, it was said specifically he would "perform several of Corelli's Sonatas, accompany'd by Monsieur Dupar and others".<sup>29</sup> This sounds as if Visconti played a selection from Corelli's Op. 5 with Francis Dieupart at the harpsichord, but he also took part in trio sonatas: during his own benefit on 18 May 1703, John Vanbrugh's comedy *The Relapse*, the entr'actes included "several Sonatas's on the Violin, one between Mr Paisible and him, and another between him, and a Scholar of his".<sup>30</sup> The former work was probably his own Sonata in F for recorder, violin and continuo, which Walsh published in 1706, describing it as "that Incomperable Sonata for a Flute [i.e. recorder] a Violin and a Bass Perform'd at Court and often at the Theatre by M<sup>r</sup>. Paisible and M<sup>r</sup>. Gasperine".<sup>31</sup> The partnership between Visconti and James Paisible (c. 1656–1721), the expatriate French recorder player, oboist and bass violin player who had been working in London on and off since the 1670s,<sup>32</sup> was not confined to that piece. The entr'actes for *The Maid's Tragedy* by Beaumont and Fletcher on 4 February 1704 included "a piece of Instrumental Musick composed by the great Arcangelo Corelli for a Flute and Violin";<sup>33</sup> this was presumably a Corelli trio sonata arranged or transposed so that one of the violin parts fitted on the treble recorder.

Walsh's periodical series included several other pieces performed by Visconti and his colleagues at Drury Lane. He began the series in January 1704 by publishing "That famous Sonata in Alamire [A major] for 2 Violins and a through Bass by Signior Torrelli perform'd by Signior

<sup>24</sup> See Hill, "Visconti, Gasparo".

<sup>25</sup> *London Gazette*, 29 October–2 November 1702; Milhous and Hume, *London Stage*, 78–79.

<sup>26</sup> Hill, "Visconti, Gasparo".

<sup>27</sup> *Daily Courant*, 22 December 1702; Milhous and Hume, *London Stage*, 83.

<sup>28</sup> *Daily Courant*, 3 April 1706; Milhous and Hume, *London Stage*, 291.

<sup>29</sup> *Daily Courant*, 10 February 1703; Milhous and Hume, *London Stage*, 88–89.

<sup>30</sup> This performance is known only from a playbill in the Harvard Theatre Collection, transcribed in Milhous and Hume, *London Stage*, 101.

<sup>31</sup> RISM B/II 71; Smith, *Bibliography*, 63–64 (no. 198). The recorder and bass parts are at GB-Lbl, h. 17 (5).

<sup>32</sup> For Paisible, see especially Ashbee, Lasocki, Holman and Kisby, *Biographical Dictionary*, 2:852–866.

<sup>33</sup> *Daily Courant*, 4 February 1704; Milhous and Hume, *London Stage*, 144.

Gasperini and Mr [Thomas] Dean at the Theatre”;<sup>34</sup> and the instalment for that July was “A Sonata Concerto Grosse for Violins, in 5, 6, and 7 parts, Compos’d by Signior Albinoni, perform’d by Signior Gasperini and others, at the Theatre”.<sup>35</sup> These publications are both lost (and the sonata by Torelli is unidentified), though Michael Talbot pointed out many years ago that in Walsh’s edition of the concertos from Albinoni’s Op. 2, published in 1709, there are signs that the plates of no. 6 in D major were altered.<sup>36</sup> This can be seen most clearly in the violoncello part, where behind the heading “CONCERTO | VI” there is the partly erased word “ALBINONI”, below it an illegible word – perhaps “Sonata” – and below that the word “CONCERTO”, also partially erased. It seems therefore that this was the work performed by Visconti and his colleagues at Drury Lane; that Walsh published it separately in 1704; and then just reused its engraved plates for the 1709 edition, altering the heading.

## THE ROLE OF CONCERTOS AND SONATAS IN THE THEATRE

The years following Gasparo Visconti’s departure from England in 1706 were an unsettled time for London’s theatres, and perhaps because of this there was a marked reduction in advertisements for plays mentioning sonatas and concertos. However, some advertisements for performances at a theatre in Greenwich (on the south bank of the Thames five miles downstream from central London) do mention instrumental music; it offered summer seasons of plays between 1709 and 1712. On 19 August 1710 the advertisement for the benefit of the actor John Leigh, Vanbrugh’s *The Mistake*, mentioned that “for the better Entertaining his Friends” Leigh would provide “a new Consort of Musick, Compos’d of Trumpets, Hautboys [oboes], Kettle-Drums, Double Courtal [bassoon], and Violins, which will perform several select Sonata’s before the Play begins”.<sup>37</sup>

An advertisement for Shakespeare’s *Timon of Athens* at Greenwich on 27 August 1711 mentioned specific pieces.<sup>38</sup> They were: “A Celebrated Concerto, or full Piece” by Albinoni, perhaps another performance of Concerto no. 6 from Op. 2; “A Sonata out of the last Works of that great Master Tibaldi”, presumably one of the Op. 2 trio sonatas by the Roman violinist Giovanni Battista Tibaldi, published in Rome in 1704 and by Roger in Amsterdam in 1707–1708;<sup>39</sup> and “That excellent Piece for the Violin and Flute of Seignior Gasperines”, presumably another outing for Visconti’s trio sonata. On 19 June 1712 “the Loves of Baldo and Media after the Italian Manner” was “Intermixt with several Concertos and Dances between the Acts”.<sup>40</sup> *The Loves of Baldo and Media* was evidently the comic scenes extracted from the pasticcio *Thomyris*, first performed at

<sup>34</sup> Smith, *Bibliography*, 46 (no. 143).

<sup>35</sup> *Post Man*, 19–22 August 1704; this publication is not recorded in Smith, *Bibliography*.

<sup>36</sup> Talbot, *Tomaso Albinoni*, 13. For Walsh’s edition of the concertos from Albinoni’s Op. 2, see RISM A/IA 707, AA 707; Smith, *Bibliography*, 100 (no. 328). There are digital copies at the IMSLP website: <https://imslp.org>.

<sup>37</sup> *Daily Courant*, 19 August 1710; Milhous and Hume, *London Stage*, 589–590.

<sup>38</sup> *Daily Courant*, 27 August 1711; Milhous and Hume, *London Stage*, 649.

<sup>39</sup> RISM A/IT 767, T 768; see also Rasch, “Part 4: The Catalogue”, s.v. “Taglietti-Trios”, 23–24.

<sup>40</sup> *Spectator*, 19 July 1712.

Drury Lane on 1 April 1707.<sup>41</sup> The singers in Greenwich were Mary Lindsey and Richard Leveridge, who had taken those roles in the original production of *Thomyris* and often played comic parts together.<sup>42</sup>

So far as I know, these advertisements for the summer theatre in Greenwich are the earliest to give details of the instrumental pieces performed. In general, it is not until the 1720s that advertisements for performances in London's mainstream theatres begin to identify individual instrumental pieces and to state where they were to be placed in the evening's entertainment. An early example is the benefit performance at Drury Lane on 15 May 1723 of William Wycherley's *The Plain Dealer* for the theatre's prompter, William Rufus Chetwood.<sup>43</sup> The entr'actes that evening consisted of concertos followed by dances, with a concerto by Francis Dieupart for "Hautboys, Flutes, and Violins" after Act I; a concerto by Giovanni Stefano Carbonelli after Act II; a concerto by Albinoni after Act III; and Corelli's Op. 6, no. 8 after Act IV. Of these four concertos, those by Corelli and Albinoni were presumably taken from published collections while the other two were composed by musicians on the spot: at the time Giovanni Stefano Carbonelli (1699/1700–1773) and Francis Dieupart (1676–1751) were apparently the first violin and the harpsichordist of the Drury Lane band.<sup>44</sup> No concertos by Carbonelli have survived, and there are none by Dieupart that are obviously for recorders, oboes and violins, though it is possible that Dieupart's fine Concerto in E minor for two recorders, two solo violins, strings and continuo, surviving in a large set of parts at Dresden, was performed with oboes doubling the ripieno string parts.<sup>45</sup>

Chetwood's 1723 benefit was an unusually full programme, with concertos and dances after each act. Rather more typical was his benefit on 4 May 1726, Cibber's *Love's Last Shift*.<sup>46</sup> It included dances after Acts I and II; "a Trumpet Sonata on the Stage, composed by Mons. Dieupart" played during Act III;<sup>47</sup> a dance after Act III; "a Sonata, compos'd by Signor Torelli" during Act IV; Corelli's Op. 6, no. 1 and a dance after Act IV; and "a grand Turkish Dance" at the end of the play. This must still have been much more than the norm for ordinary theatrical performances, as is suggested by the timings for stock plays given in *The Dramatic Time-Piece*, published in 1767 by John Brownsmith, prompter at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, which allocated 30 minutes to the four entr'actes, covering songs and dances as well as instrumental

<sup>41</sup> For *Thomyris*, see Fiske, *English Theatre Music*, 48; Milhous and Hume, *London Stage*, 353–354.

<sup>42</sup> For Lindsey and Leveridge, see Baldwin and Wilson, "Lindsey, Mary"; Baldwin and Wilson, "Richard Leveridge".

<sup>43</sup> *Daily Courant*, 15 May 1723; Avery, *London Stage*, 724.

<sup>44</sup> See especially Talbot, "From Giovanni Stefano Carbonelli", 269–274; Asperen, "François Dieupart's Biography Revised", 27–28.

<sup>45</sup> D-DI, Mus. 2174-O-4. There are digitised images at the IMSLP website, together with a modern edition by Andrea Marcialis, which is misleading in its layout and makes no attempt to understand what the original scoring of the piece might have been.

<sup>46</sup> *Daily Post*, 4 May 1726; Avery, *London Stage*, 868.

<sup>47</sup> This was perhaps Dieupart's Concerto in B minor for trumpet, 2 oboes, strings and continuo, preserved at D-DI, Mus. 2174-O-5. There are digitised images at the IMSLP website, together with a modern edition by Werner Jaksch.

pieces.<sup>48</sup> This was so that “any Noble-man, Gentleman, &c. who may have *Carriages*, or *Servants* in waiting, or *Appointments* to attend at any *particular* Hour, may at all Times (within a few Minutes) be assured the Time, as punctually as if minuted by their *Watches*, only by allowing for incidental *Entertainments* between the Acts, such as Songs, Dances, &c.”. The implication of Brownsmith’s allocation of 30 minutes for all the entr’acte music is that the instrumental pieces functioning as act tunes must normally have been quite short – perhaps just single movements extracted from concertos or trio sonatas.

Advertisements in the 1730s begin to list the preliminary music as well as the entr’acte entertainments. For instance, a performance of *The Relapse* on 6 October 1733 at the New or Little Theatre in the Haymarket had Corelli’s Op. 6, no.1 as Second Music; “a Trumpet Overture” as the Third Music; a concerto for two horns after Act I; vocal music after Act II; a horn solo after Act III; more vocal music after Act IV; and a grand ballet at the end of the play.<sup>49</sup> The music played as First Music is rarely mentioned in advertisements, doubtless because, with the audience still assembling, it was thought to be less important than the Second Music. However, at the Covent Garden Theatre on 8 May 1735, Dryden’s play *The Spanish Fryar* had a “A Concerto for Hautboys, &c” as First Music; a concerto by Geminiani as Second Music; and Handel’s *Arianna* overture as Third Music; with “The Act Tunes for French Horns, Trumpets, &c”; and some or all of Handel’s Water Music after Act V.<sup>50</sup> The last was a popular choice for entr’acte entertainments in the 1730s and 40s, being usually introduced by a prelude on the kettledrums by a named player.<sup>51</sup>

On 3 June 1735 at Drury Lane a benefit performance of *The Relapse* was preceded by “A Concerto for Two Hautboys” by Pepusch as First Music; “The third Concerto of the First Opera of Geminiani” (i.e. Op. 2, no. 3) as Second Music; and Handel’s *Arianna* overture again as Third Music; with “Select Pieces between the Acts composed by Handel, Geminiani, and others”.<sup>52</sup> By then, the few minutes taken up by the First Music and Second Music in sets of Restoration theatre airs had expanded to about 25 minutes, the time typically taken by two early eighteenth-century concertos and an overture. Again, the instrumental pieces were apparently a mixture of those taken from the published repertory, doubtless mostly familiar to the music lovers present, and those composed on the spot by theatre musicians. By 1735 John Christopher Pepusch (1667–1752) had retired from his role as a harpsichordist and musical director in London’s theatres, though it is possible that performing material for his “Concerto for Two Hautboys” had remained at Drury Lane after his time there between 1714 and 1716.<sup>53</sup> No concertos for two oboes

<sup>48</sup> Brownsmith, preface to *Dramatic Time-Piece*. I am grateful to Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson for drawing this publication to my attention; it is discussed in Baldwin and Wilson, “Handel between the Acts”.

<sup>49</sup> *Daily Journal*, 6 October 1733; Scouten, *London Stage*, 323–324.

<sup>50</sup> Scouten, *London Stage*, CLVII, 489. I have been unable to find the original source of this newspaper advertisement.

<sup>51</sup> Baldwin and Wilson, “Handel between the Acts”.

<sup>52</sup> Scouten, *London Stage*, 497. I have been unable to find the original source of this newspaper advertisement.

<sup>53</sup> Cook, “Life and Works of Johann Christoph Pepusch”, especially 1:102–183 (ch. 3); Holman, *Before the Baton*, 242–246. A “Concerto for Two Hautboys Composed by Dr Pepusch”, perhaps the same piece, was performed at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket on 1 December 1733; see Scouten, *London Stage*, 343.



by Pepusch seem to survive, though some of the concertos for four soprano instruments and continuo he published in 1718 could have been played by two oboes and two violins.<sup>54</sup>

## WHERE WERE CONCERTOS AND SONATAS PLAYED IN THE THEATRES?

Nearly all sets of Restoration theatre airs written for ordinary spoken plays circulated in versions just for four-part strings, without continuo parts or figured basses in the primary sources; they were probably performed just by a string quartet in the small music rooms or galleries of Restoration theatres.<sup>55</sup> Significantly, John Lenton and London A copied Corelli's seven-part Concerto in G minor as a four-part piece, without the ripieno violins and with only one bass part, perhaps intending it to be played at Lincoln's Inn Fields and Drury Lane by just such a quartet.<sup>56</sup>

However, the much larger orchestras needed for English dramatic operas and all-sung Italian and Italianate operas required most if not all the instrumentalists to be in front of the stage, as in continental practice; it was certainly essential in operas for the *maestro al cembalo* and his continuo team to be close to the stage.<sup>57</sup> That had certainly been so at the Dorset Garden Theatre from the 1670s, where dramatic operas, including most of Purcell's, were put on.<sup>58</sup> It may also have been so at Drury Lane, where the dramatic opera *The Island Princess* was produced in 1699, and where all-sung operas were put on from 1704.<sup>59</sup> The Queen's (later King's) Theatre in the Haymarket, built by Vanbrugh in 1705 and the home of Italian opera from 1709, presumably had an orchestra pit from the beginning; there is certainly one shown in a plan of the theatre published in 1764, possibly showing it in its 1709 form.<sup>60</sup> It was not long before theatre bands were routinely placed in front of the stage in all playhouses.

However, there are many references to individual instrumentalists appearing on the stage. For instance, Gasparo Visconti's last appearance at Drury Lane on 3 April 1706, already mentioned, featured "a new Sola never yet perform'd" by the cellist Nicola Haym; it was "perform'd on the Stage by him and Signior Gasperini". A decade later, there was a spate of concerto performances in plays, with advertisements sometimes mentioning that the soloist would be placed on the stage, as happened during *The Island Princess* at Lincoln's Inn Fields on 10 May 1716, which

<sup>54</sup> *VI Concerts*, Op. 8, RISMA/IP 1260; Rasch, "Part 4: The Catalogue", s.v. "Paghetti-Purcell", 9–10. Digital images of the sole surviving copy are available at the IMSLP website.

<sup>55</sup> This is argued in the introduction to *Restoration Theatre Airs*. See also Holman, "Corelli in the London Theatres", 86.

<sup>56</sup> See Holman, "Corelli in the London Theatres", 76–80, 85–86.

<sup>57</sup> For the placing and layout of theatre orchestras, see especially Holman, *Before the Baton*, 26–37, 201–212, 215–222, 239–242.

<sup>58</sup> For the placing of instrumentalists in the Dorset Garden Theatre, see especially Burden, "Where did Purcell Keep his Theatre Band?", 434–438.

<sup>59</sup> See Price and Hume, introduction to *Island Princess*; also Fiske, *English Theatre Music*, 39; Leacroft, *Development of the English Playhouse*, 89–112.

<sup>60</sup> Reproduced in Barlow, "Vanbrugh's Queen's Theatre", 518; Burden, "Where did Purcell Keep his Theatre Band?", 433.

included a concerto played by the oboist J. C. Kytch “upon the Stage”;<sup>61</sup> or Aphra Behn’s *The Emperor of the Moon* at Lincoln’s Inn Fields on 17 October 1716, which included “A Concerto on the Violin and Flute compos’d by Mr. John Baston, and to be perform’d on the Stage by him and his Brother” – the violinist Thomas Baston.<sup>62</sup>

At this period the two theatre companies were competing by putting on performances of concertos featuring small sizes of recorder, played by John Baston at Lincoln’s Inn Fields and James Paisible at Drury Lane.<sup>63</sup> On 2 June 1716 the Drury Lane managers, perhaps worried that the latter might defect to Lincoln’s Inn Fields, instructed their treasurer to “let Mr Paisible know that he might have five shillings per diem, and one guinea every time he performs anything on the stage”.<sup>64</sup> Four days later, on 6 June, Paisible played “a New Concerto for the little-Flute” at Drury Lane during Cibber’s *Love’s Last Shift*.<sup>65</sup>

One of the recorder concertos apparently written for John Baston, William Babell’s Op. 3, no. 2, was seemingly devised to allow him to make a dramatic entrance on to the stage of the Lincoln’s Inn Fields theatre.<sup>66</sup> Babell (1688–1723), a virtuoso harpsichordist and violinist, was a colleague of John and Thomas Baston in the Lincoln’s Inn Fields Theatre band; his set is said on the title-page to have been “Performed at the Theatre with great applause”.<sup>67</sup> Op. 3, no. 2, for sixth flute (recorder in D), solo and ripieno violins and continuo, begins most unusually with two sections for the strings alone, the first just for two solo violins; the soloist only enters in the third section, holding a single note over seven bars of pulsating string accompaniment and following this with spectacular bursts of Italianate ornamentation – which Babell had doubtless imbibed during his years playing in London’s Italian opera orchestra. It is easy to imagine John Baston waiting in the wings of the Lincoln’s Inn Theatre during the first two sections of what the audience would have taken to be a string concerto, only to confound expectations by striding on to the stage playing a piercing held note on the sixth flute, doubtless bringing the house down as he did so (Music example 1).<sup>68</sup>

<sup>61</sup> *Daily Courant*, 10 May 1716; Avery, *London Stage*, 402.

<sup>62</sup> *Daily Courant*, 17 October 1717; Avery, *London Stage*, 416. For the Bastons, see Macmillan, *Small Flute Concerto*, 34–35.

<sup>63</sup> For these instruments and the repertory for them, see especially Macmillan, *Small Flute Concerto*.

<sup>64</sup> Ashbee, Lasocki, Holman and Kisby, *Biographical Dictionary*, 2:864.

<sup>65</sup> *Daily Courant*, 6 June 1716; Avery, *London Stage*, 406.

<sup>66</sup> *Babell’s Concertos in 7 Parts*, Op. 3 (London, 1726), RISM A/1B 6, BB 6. The collection is available in digital form at the IMSLP website, where there are also modern editions of no. 2 edited by Hans-Thomas Müller-Schmidt and Richard Maunder. See also Macmillan, *Small Flute Concerto*, 31–34, 52.

<sup>67</sup> The most recent and complete biography of him is in Babell, *Toccatas, Suites and Preludes*, I–V.

<sup>68</sup> The recorder player Tabea Debus made an entrance of this sort in this concerto during a concert given by Leeds Baroque under my direction at the Old Woollen, Sunny Bank Mills in Farsley near Leeds on 9 July 2023. It had the desired effect.

Music example 1 | William Babell, Concerto in D major, Op. 3, no. 2, Adagio, bb. 1–12

Adagio

Sixth Flute

Violin 1  
Concertino  
/ Ripieno

Violin 2  
Concertino  
/ Ripieno

Basso  
Continuo

5

10

*tr*

## CONCLUSION

The change in the London theatres from specially composed sets of theatre airs to the use of Italian or Italianate concertos and sonatas evidently occurred over an extended period, from before 1710 to about 1720 or even later. The new repertory mixed pieces written by musicians employed by the theatres, such as Visconti, Paisible, Pepusch, Baston and Babell, with those drawn from printed collections, with Corelli and Albinoni featured initially and Handel and Geminiani coming to the fore later. When, in the 1730s, advertisements begin to list the instrumental music to be performed as preliminary music, it becomes apparent that the seven-part string concertos by Corelli and Geminiani were commonly used for First and Second Music, and Handel's opera overtures for the Third Music.

Concertos and trio sonatas (presumably played orchestrally) were also used as act music, often preceding dances, though sets of act tunes were still occasionally being written as late as the 1730s, and *The Dramatic Time-Piece* suggests that there would only have been time for single movements. Orchestral pieces were doubtless often performed with all the musicians in the orchestra pit, though there is considerable evidence that the soloists for concertos, at least, sometimes played on the stage. They presumably hoped that the stardust of the famous actors, singers or dancers who had just vacated that space would rub off on them, something that John Baston would certainly have achieved had he made a spectacular entrance playing William Babell's sixth-flute concerto Op. 3, no. 2.

The topic of instrumental music in the eighteenth-century English theatre has been much neglected. When theatre historians discuss music at all, they tend to fasten on opera or on vocal music, while those studying concert life have traditionally focussed just on events in concert halls. However, we can now see that London's theatres played a crucial role in the English reception of the Italian sonata and concerto, partly by programming works taken from the published repertory and partly by giving their own musicians the opportunity to compose and play pieces in those genres before or between the acts of plays.

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## Povzetek

### »BEING DESIGN'D AS A CONCERT INTERMIX'D WITH THE PLAY«: KONTINUITETA IN SPREMEMBE V INSTRUMENTALNI GLASBI ZA LONDONSKA GLEDALIŠČA, 1700–1740

Od 60-ih let 16. stoletja so bile približno 50 let igre v londonskih gledališčih redno opremljene s sklopi instrumentalne glasbe, ki sta jih sestavljali dve skupini predhodne glasbe (»First Music« in »Second Music«), ki sta se izvajali pred začetkom igre, uvertura (pogosto imenovana »Third Music«) in štiri »act tunes«, ki so se izvajale med posameznimi dejanji. Produkcija posebej sestavljenih sklopov gledaliških arij (kot so jih imenovali takrat) je okoli leta 1710 upadla, sčasoma pa so jih nadomestile italijanske sonate in koncerti ter sonate in koncerti v italijanskem slogu.

Zadnji ohranjeni sklop gledaliških arij – kompilacija vzeta večinoma iz Händlove opere Rodrigo – je bil objavljen leta 1710, od takrat do leta 1719 pa je bilo objavljenih še deset drugih sklopov, vendar nobeden od njih ni ohranjen. Iz poznejšega časa je znanih še nekaj drugih sklopov, med njimi »act tunes« za igre Thomasa Arnea, ki so se uporabljale v predstavah, uprizorjenih v gledališču Drury Lane leta 1735. Vendar se je okoli leta 1700 med gledališkimi igrami začela izvajati italijanska glasba. Kremonski violinist Gasparo Visconti (1683–1713?), v Angliji znan kot »Signor Gasparini«, je prispel v London leta 1702 in 22. decembra 1702 debitiral v gledališču Drury Lane. Od takrat do njegovega zadnjega znanega nastopa 3. aprila 1706 so skoraj osemdesetkrat oglaševali njegov nastop z italijanskimi sonatami in koncerti med posameznimi predstavami v Drury Laneu. Nekatero skladbo, ki jih je tam izvajal, je John Walsh v seriji objavil leta 1704, med drugim Torellijevo trio sonato in koncert iz Albinonijevega op. 2.

Šele v 20-ih letih 18. stoletja se v oglasih za gledališke predstave začnejo omenjati posamezne instrumentalne skladbe in navajati, kje so bile uvrščene v večerno zabavo. Najbolj podrobni oglasi so običajno za dobrodelne predstave, iz katerih je razvidno, da so med dejanji včasih izvajali celotne koncerte in tudi ples. Vendar je bilo to verjetno neobičajno: *The Dramatic Time-Piece* (1767) Johna Brownsmitha, ki navaja časovne razporede predstav v Londonu, je dovoljeval 30 minut za vse vmesne točke, kar pomeni, da so morale biti skladbe, uporabljene kot »act tunes«, običajno precej kratke, morda le posamezni stavek iz trio sonat in koncertov. V 30-ih letih 18. stoletja se v oglasih začnejo pojavljati sezname predhodne glasbe, iz katerih je razvidno, da so »First Music« in »Second Music« sestavljali koncerti, nekateri prevzeti iz objavljenega repertoarja, nekatere pa so napisali lokalni gledališki glasbeniki. Zdi se, da so bile uverture pogosto prevzete iz Händlovih oper.

V obdobju restavracije so bili instrumentalisti običajno nameščeni v majhni glasbeni sobi ali galeriji, čeprav je bil orkester za angleške dramatske opere in italijanske opere potreben pred odrom, kot je bilo v navadi na celini. Kraljičino gledališče na Haymarketu, ki je bilo odprto leta 1705 in kjer je od leta 1709 domovala italijanska opera v Londonu, je imelo orkestrsko jamo verjetno že od samega začetka. Vendar pa oglasi pogosto navajajo, da so solisti v koncertih igrali na odru, nedvomno v upanju, da se bo nanje prenesel blišč slavnih igralcev in pevcev, ki so pravkar zapustili prostor.