

# FARINELLI'S DREAM: THEATRICAL SPACE, AUDIENCE AND POLITICAL FUNCTION OF ITALIAN COURT OPERA IN 18<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY MADRID\*

Juan José Carreras

Not long ago, the Portuguese fado-singer Mariza remembered an intriguing concert. Announced in the Kingdom of Bahrein, the concert was quickly sold out and the artist expected a full house. To her great surprise, as she entered the stage, she confronted what seemed a completely empty theatre. Fortunately, she was relieved as she carefully examined the house and noticed that, in fact, there was an audience, but confined exclusively to the upper floors: only the stalls were completely deserted. Later on, it was explained to her that the stall seats were regularly reserved for the Royal Family and its guests, who on this occasion were not attending the performance. In any case, it seemed completely inappropriate to the theatre direction to fill the empty seats with other members of the audience who did not belong to the Royal Family and its entourage.<sup>2</sup>

This striking anecdote should remind us what court studies have shown us during recent decades over and over again: the distance and difference of the court experience from our own contemporary democratic views. This difference may be obvious to the historian, but it is still missing in much of the literature about Farinelli in Spain, where the singer seems to act in a space resembling much more to a sort of idealized Wagnerian Bayreuth than to an 18<sup>th</sup>-century court.<sup>3</sup> If we want to understand the influence and meaning of Farinelli's musical and theatrical practice in Spain it is therefore vital

---

\* This article was written with the support of the Spanish research project HAR2014-53143-P (Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad). My thanks to the principal investigator of this project, Miguel Ángel Marín for his assistance, and to Lorenzo Bianconi, Andrea Bombi, José María Domínguez, José-Máximo Leza and Andrea Sommer-Mathis for critical comment. I would also like to express my gratitude to Tess Knighton, who offered invaluable help with the final English version of this paper.

2 "El fútbol y la música se parecen porque juegan con las emociones," interview with Mariza, *Guía del Ocio* (Madrid) from 22 of July 2016, p. 98.

3 I allude here to some fundamental methodological approaches to the modern court such as suggested in ELIAS 1983; EVANS 1991; BERTELLI, 2006; and VÁZQUEZ GESTAL 2013 (with further bibliography). On court theatre and the importance of audiovisual entertainments from a cultural perspective, see DANIEL 1995. For the Spanish court in the 18<sup>th</sup> century much new research (including literature, arts and music) can be found in MARTÍNEZ MILLÁN / LOURENÇO 2008; MARTÍNEZ MILLÁN / RIVERO RODRÍGUEZ 2010; MARTÍNEZ MILLÁN / CAMARERO BULLÓN / LUZZI TRAFICANTE 2013, although many contributions are merely descriptive and critical surveys are still lacking. On visual arts and architecture at the Spanish court, BOTTINEAU 1986a and 1986b are still very useful and include references to Farinelli. On the social history of 18<sup>th</sup>-century court musicians in Spain, see MORALES 2007 (pp. 238-247 consider Farinelli's embedding in the existing court institutions).

to put him in his proper cultural and historical context, which means, in the first place, to consider the theatrical system of Madrid and the ceremonial and political functions of theatre and music at the Spanish court in the late 1730s. This will set the necessary frame to fully understand the dialectics between Farinelli's agency and the structures and interests he found on his arrival in Madrid. My final aim here is to question Farinelli's dream of the perfect opera theatre against the actual experience of his theatre direction at the Buen Retiro Palace in Madrid between 1747 and 1758. I propose here to approach the problematic question of the cultural meaning of these operas focusing on the audience and spaces where the operas took place. From this point of view, these performances—embedded in a complex system of management and production procedures—were, in the first place, part of a greater ensemble of festive court practices, such as acting, dancing, banqueting, gambling or masking. Among all these entertainments, opera stood out as an extraordinary and costly theatrical spectacle, with deep political implications as a social and symbolic practice.<sup>4</sup>

“Spent in the first courts of Europe,”<sup>5</sup> the extraordinary life of Carlo Broschi detto il Farinelli cannot be separated from its political background. But biographies of the singer have generally not taken great pains to integrate court politics in a coherent historical narrative.<sup>6</sup> They have rather tended to transform this essential background into a collection of more or less amusing anecdotes, extracted from a vast and colourful array of impressions supplied by diaries, letters and memoirs of courtiers and diplomats, without being always being sufficiently aware of the frequent ambiguous meanings and problematic interpretations of this sort of source.<sup>7</sup> In fact, all these discourses around what we call the court form a labyrinth of conflicting strategies, interests and ambitions in which orientation was difficult for all its agents and where concealment was an essential condition for their success.

In recent years (and largely unknown to musicology), substantial new research on the political meaning of the reign of Ferdinand VI (1746–1759) has stressed again the

---

4 See BIANCONI/WALKER 1984; REIMER 1991; RIEPE 2006; SOMMER-MATHIS 2006.

5 BURNEY 1959, pp. 152–153.

6 Farinelli's main biographies include SACCHI 1784; BOUVIER 1943; BARBIER 1994; and CAPPELLETTO 1995. For a useful outline and bibliography up to 2000, see HARRIS 2001. The last survey, with special emphasis on Farinelli's rich iconography and the key Bolognese background of Sacchi's first biography, can be found in BIANCONI/CASALI PEDRIELLI 2018.

7 The discovery of 67 autograph letters from Farinelli to his patron and friend Count Sicinio Pepoli dated between 1731 and 1749, edited by Francesca Boris and Carlo Vitali in 2000 (but partially known through different articles from the late 1980s), meant indeed a significant increase of factual information about Farinelli's personal opinions and professional strategies (see VITALI 1992 and BROSCHI 2000). The *carteggio* Pepoli modified the perspective on Farinelli's biography, a change reflected in the publication in the mid-nineties of the works by Barbier and Cappelletto and by the renewed momentum of research with regard to the legendary singer's achievements as well. But, of course, far from providing simple 'biographical truth' through the use of a *private* key to explain *public* events, the letter's successive statements weave instead a complex and changing discourse directed to a specific addressee.

almost ubiquitous political presence of Farinelli.<sup>8</sup> The figure of the powerful Marquis de la Ensenada at the helm of the luxurious vessel which transports the Spanish King and Queen with a selected group of musicians headed by Farinelli down the Tajo river is in a way a perfect metaphor for the crucial political importance of a series of spectacular feasts and celebrations which took place during these years.<sup>9</sup> In this context, political historiography of the reign of Ferdinand VI did not, even in the best case, go further than the occasional and impressionistic use of categories such as 'feast' or 'spectacle' to suggest the great importance of audiovisual entertainments in court life as representation and enactment of the Spanish Bourbon state. In the worst case, there was an anachronistic assumption of opera taken as a predominantly aesthetic artistic expression, largely unaware of relevant research done around the political meaning of opera seria as a didactic absolutist trope of sovereignty and a fundamental performative experience of courtiers.<sup>10</sup> If something similar happened at the Spanish court, it is clear that it occurred foremost during Farinelli's period of management, a decade that produced 23 different operas and serenatas for Madrid. Among these productions no fewer than 17 were composed to libretti by Metastasio, an author with the closest connection to Farinelli and whose narratives were perceived throughout the courts of Europe as an all-pervasive and saturated sign of authority and morality.

My contribution begins with some general historiographical considerations, which serve as an introduction to an outline of the theatrical landscape of Madrid in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, focusing on functional relations between its four main theatres. Secondly, I will pay special attention to the first experiences of court opera at the theatre of the Buen Retiro palace in relation to the architectonic structure and the two major reforms of the building, which took place during the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The last part of this article will be dedicated to the institutionalization of court opera under Farinelli from 1747 onwards, addressing the question of the audience for and political function of these spectacles and the difference with the previous cultivation

---

8 See the pathbreaking article by DOMÍNGUEZ RODRÍGUEZ 2015 stressing the importance of music patronage in the ambit of the Marquis de la Ensenada and his use of opera as a political tool through Farinelli's court opera, albeit, as will be shown in this essay, Domínguez's statement of the operas at the Buen Retiro being mainly directed to foreigners cannot be maintained ("el público al que se dirigen las representaciones no es tanto el local, poco acostumbrado a semejantes fastos teatrales [. . .], sino más bien todos los extranjeros que se quedaban admirados de aquellas fiestas," p. 35). Crucial general political context for Farinelli's Spanish years is found in GÓMEZ URDÁÑEZ 1996, 2001 and 2017, which includes also critical historiographical evaluation of the different images of the Spanish 18<sup>th</sup> century. For Farinelli's decisive biographical step from England to Spain, the best discussion is to be found in McGEARY 1998, an article which convincingly shows the intricate contemporary political and diplomatic implications of this move.

9 Between June and July 1754, shortly before his dramatic fall from government, Ensenada, *Ministro de Marina y Primer Timonel*, acted eleven times as first pilot of *La Real*, the luxurious flagship of the Aranjuez entertainment fleet. See BROSCHI 1991, p. 309.

10 See MORELLI 1987; FELDMAN 1995 and 2007; STROHM 1997; TRAVERSIER 2009.

of Italian opera in the 1730s. Contrary to an enduring biographical narrative, the arrival of Farinelli at the Bourbon Spanish court in the summer of 1737 did not especially promote Italian opera projects in the city of Madrid. In fact, it was rather the other way around: the famous singer arrived precisely in the context of an increasing Italian cultural and political influence at the Spanish court—and opera, as we shall see, was naturally one of its main and most prestigious emblems.<sup>11</sup> At last, court opera reveals itself as a complex cultural object, whose economical and symbolical dimensions are inextricably related to its political function as representation.

### ***Villa y corte: the Madrileñan theatrical system***

If we consider the opera management of Carlo Broschi Farinelli in Madrid and the theatrical spaces involved, we quickly reach the surprising conclusion that one of the most spectacular episodes of the theatre and music history in Madrid is still one of the least well known. The reasons for this situation are several: first, and most obvious, we can consider the perspective offered by the established music and theatrical historiography. Italian opera seria, considered as a typical expression of Ancien Régime court culture, has been widely understood from the point of view of Spanish historiography as an alien tradition of the national past and therefore excluded for a long time as a main subject of research.<sup>12</sup> Second, we can refer to the importance of memory associated with urban topography to foster interest in historical research. The circumstance that most of the spaces involved in court opera in Madrid, and specially the Coliseo del Buen Retiro, were destroyed long ago may explain its enduring neglect in historical research: in fact, the Coliseo and most of the palace disappeared with the Napoleonic Wars in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Third, we can consider the type of sources at our disposal for studies that attempt to reconstruct the performance of court opera in Madrid. Living in an age where visual presence produced by drawings and engravings largely displaces historical imagination triggered by interpretation of complex written sources, the conspicuous absence of spectacular engravings of the Coliseo del Buen Retiro is clearly a handicap, which may explain its absence in many overviews of theatrical architecture in spite of existence as the main theatre building at the Spanish court for over one and half centuries.<sup>13</sup> If iconographic sources are scarce, the written administrative archives

---

11 There has been important research in recent years on the Italian artistic emigration to the Spanish court: beside other references which will be cited later, see, for instance, SUGRANYES FOLETTI 2011.

12 For the general historiographical persistence of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century image of the court as a frivolous place not worthy of serious historical research, see VÁZQUEZ GESTAL 2005. On the political and cultural background of opera historiography in Spain, see CARRERAS 2000a, 2004 and 2010.

13 As an example, the Madrid Coliseo is not even named in the otherwise comprehensive overview of European theatrical architecture by CARLSON 1989. For an excellent study of the political and cultural

are very rich and, as we shall see, surprisingly precise in many aspects. Moreover, an important number of these sources are easily accessible as they have been for a great part thoroughly edited and studied in relation to the Spanish spoken theatre, mainly by English and American scholars who followed the path-breaking studies of Norman Shergold and John Varey in the 1970s and 1980s. Unfortunately, these valuable studies do not include the Madrid court theatres in the 18<sup>th</sup> century from the 1730s onwards, coinciding with the crucial moment when opera performances largely displaced spoken and musical Spanish plays at court.<sup>14</sup> The result is that the modern edition of the main documentary sources of the court theatre in Madrid is restricted to a chronology of between 1586 and 1724, and consequently the rest of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is excluded.<sup>15</sup> To sum up, we can say that musicological research on Spanish court opera has not been concerned with theatrical spaces and, conversely, practices and theatrical studies have not considered the history of theatres from the moment in which opera performance became the main activity of these institutions.<sup>16</sup> The result has been, paradoxically, a black hole at the heart of what has been considered one of the most brilliant cultural episodes of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Spain.

Studied in all its complexity and documentary detail, the theatre history of the main European capitals during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries tend to chaos, as documented by the different and contradictory interests, religious and political restrictions, ideological and architectonical reforms, and multiple and diverse practices that shape theatrical experience in a given urban context. Nevertheless, much is to be gained if we start by tracing the basic traits of its main institutions as a sort of topographical frame in which further research may unfold.

From its designation as capital city of the Spanish Empire in 1561 by Philipp II, Madrid boasted a rich theatre life.<sup>17</sup> “La villa y corte” (the town and court) developed a complex web of spaces and practices dedicated to the spoken drama and music theatre which supported the important cultural legacy known as the *Teatro del siglo de oro* of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Beside the theatrical spaces belonging to the court entertainments at the different royal residences, such as the urban palaces of the Alcázar and the Buen Retiro, the city of Madrid owned two theatres located in the city centre, the Teatro de la Cruz and the Teatro del Príncipe, which were hired to two theatre companies each year

---

importance of the Buen Retiro Palace in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, see BROWN and ELLIOTT 2003. An important catalogue of images and plans of the Buen Retiro can be found in BLASCO 2001, pp. 135–203.

14 For a reconstruction of the repertory performed at the Buen Retiro during Farinelli's management years (made mainly on the basis of the surviving libretti), see COTARELO Y MORI 1917, 101–190. The most detailed (but far from complete) calendar of performances is to be found in LEZA 2014, pp. 337–340.

15 See GREER/VAREY 1997 and LÓPEZ ALEMANY/VAREY 2006.

16 Among the few studies on theatres not related to the spoken Spanish repertoire are LÓPEZ DE JOSÉ 2006; DOMÉNECH RICO 2007.

17 For an overview see for instance FERNÁNDEZ MUÑOZ 1988 and ANDURA VARELA 1992.

in order to perform regularly at both places on a commercial basis. As in many other European cities, a part of the profits of both houses were assigned to public charities, mainly the Hospital of Madrid, a function secured by a system of performing privileges granted to the companies. These two municipal companies were part of a larger system in which the theatrical court activities were integrated in two different ways. First, rehearsal and performance at court of new elaborate theatre plays automatically implicated the suspension of the public performances at the Príncipe and Cruz theatres, as the actors and actresses of both companies were usually involved in these productions. Second, pieces conceived for an occasional performance at a court festivity could later on be adapted and transferred to the commercial theatres, initiating so a second life. *Acis y Galatea*, for instance, a lavish Spanish play with music by Antonio Literes and a libretto by José Cañizares, was first performed at court in 1708 for a unique royal birthday celebration to be later produced in six different seasons for the Madrid city theatres between 1710 and 1727.<sup>18</sup>

This theatrical system suffered a partial disruption in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century as an Italian *commedia dell'arte* company known as *Los trufaldines* arrived in Madrid in 1703 to perform for Philipp V. In addition to their acting at court, the Italian group was permitted to give public performances at a stage erected in a yard near the Royal Palace of the Buen Retiro from 1703 onwards. A few years later, in 1708, the Italian actors moved to an old public washing place near the Alcázar Royal Palace, the Lavadero de los Caños del Peral, which was set up as a theatre by the Italian company. Thirty years later, in 1738, a new theatre built in stone replaced the former structure, being the first free-standing building erected in Madrid as a theatre in contrast to the former theatres situated in yards or *patios* of private houses. It is interesting to note a similar topography and function in other European capitals in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, such as the Kärntnertortheater in Vienna. There the city council decided in 1708 to substitute the provisional wooden 'comedy-huts' used by German and Italian touring companies with a permanent theatre built in stone, placed at an open space near a well. In Madrid, the theatre used by the Italians was conceived in the Italian style using perspective scenery and artificial lightening, in contrast to the old structure of the Príncipe and Cruz theatres, which used a platform and natural illumination in a similar way to the stages of the English Elizabethan theatres.

The first Madrid public performances by Italian actors happened outside control of the city, breaking *de facto* the established acting privileges of the Spanish companies contracted yearly by the city council. But in spite of the increasing presence of Italian actors and musicians at court during the first third of the century, it was not until the end of the 1730s that Italian opera performances were regularly given in Madrid. It is

---

18 For a detailed calendar of Madrid 18<sup>th</sup>-century theatre productions, see ANDIOC/COULON 1997; excellent general surveys of Spanish musical theatre in the 18<sup>th</sup> century can be found in KLEINERTZ 2003; STEIN/LEZA 2009; LEZA 2014.

significant that these performances arrived hand in hand with profound changes in theatre architecture. In the case of the public theatres, the Cruz theatre was completely rebuilt in 1736, followed, as mentioned above, by the Teatro de los Caños del Peral two years later and finally to be finally joined by the Príncipe theatre, which reopened in 1745 totally reformed.<sup>19</sup> The transformation of the Príncipe and Cruz theatres completely changed the traditional structure. Adaptation to the Italian stage disposition was made clear by its new designation as *coliseo*, a term closely associated in Spanish with Italian opera.<sup>20</sup> If the impact of the fire of 1734, which destroyed the old and imposing Alcázar palace is added, a clear image emerges of the profound architectural transformations carried out, mainly by Italian architects and artists, in the urban landscape of Madrid along the 1730s.

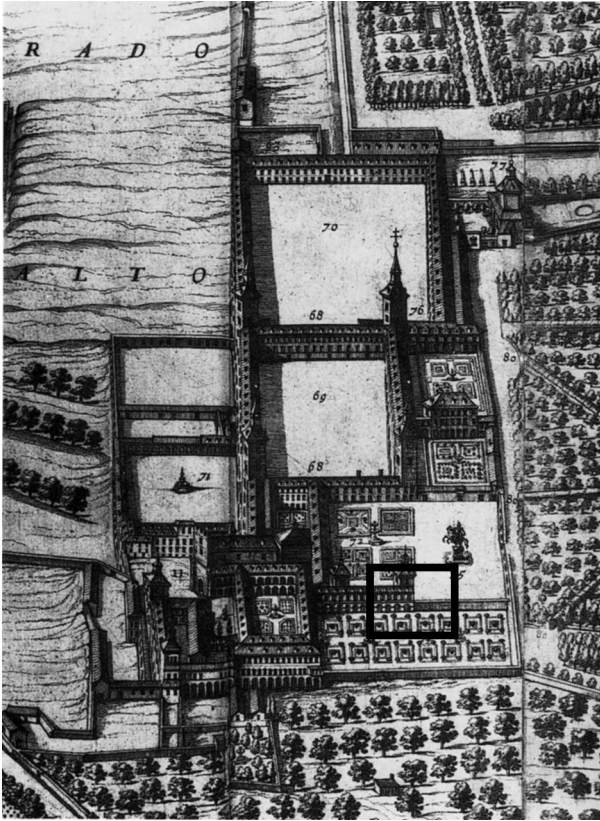
## A suitable space for opera: The Coliseo del Buen Retiro

However, the oldest theatre in Madrid in the Italian style was not from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Inaugurated in 1640, the Coliseo del Buen Retiro was located in the Buen Retiro palace, a complex of different residential buildings in the east of the city constructed around the Jeronymite Church, a site where the Spanish monarchs used to retire for Holy Week (Fig. 1). The structure of this court theatre is relatively well known for the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, several seating plans of the building give some idea of the structure of the space. At the same time as the aforementioned new building of the city theatres, the Coliseo underwent also significant changes, which remain to be explored in detail. The notable reforms here are two: 1738 and 1747, the last one being the most important reform with regard to opera, as we shall see.<sup>21</sup> Both were closely connected with the ritual function of Italian opera at court: the first reform finished just in time for the celebration of the birthday of Philipp V in December 1738 with an opera. The second reform coincided with the start of Farinelli's management, in January 1747, when the birthday of Carlo di Borbone, king of Naples and half-brother of the new Spanish king, was celebrated with a new opera. What may be called the golden decade of Spanish court opera, from 1747 to 1757, thus started so with the ascendance to the throne of Ferdinand VI and his wife, Queen Barbara de Braganza.

19 For a thorough overview of the Teatro de los Caños before its transformation in 1738 see DOMÉNECH RICO 2007. The construction and audience of the new Cruz theatre has been the object of a detailed documentary study, see THOMASON 2005. A similar study is still lacking in the case of the coliseo del Príncipe, which has been researched only for the 17<sup>th</sup> century, see ALLEN 1983 and RUANO DE LA HAZA 2000.

20 In 1726, the *Diccionario de Autoridades* published by the Real Academia de la Lengua stated that a *coliseo* was a theatre where "comedies or musical feasts, called operas, are performed" ("Colisseo. Se llama oy comunmente el lugar o teatro donde se representan las Comedias o fiestas de música, que llaman Operas").

21 On the coliseo reforms, see BARBIERI 1878, pp. XLIX–LII; VERDÚ 1989 and TORRIONE 2000b.



**Figure 1.** The Buen Retiro Palace in Madrid 1656.

Public opera seria performances began in Madrid in February 1738 given by an Italian company at the Caños theatre.<sup>22</sup> A few weeks later, the announcement of the royal wedding of Carlo di Borbone with Princess Maria Amalia, daughter of Friedrich August II, Prince elector of Saxony, was the occasion of great public festivities in Madrid. For the first time, instead of the customary spoken play, the production of an Italian opera at the Coliseo del Buen Retiro was planned to commemorate the wedding. The opera, *Alessandro nell'Indie* with a libretto by Pietro Metastasio and music by the royal chapel master Francesco Corselli, was performed on 8 July. A year later, a new opera production at court celebrated another royal wedding, this time between the Infante Philip of Bourbon and the French princess, Louise Élisabeth, the future Duchess of Parma. *Farnace*, with libretto by Antonio Maria Lucchini and music again by Corselli, was produced at the Coliseo del Buen Retiro. If in 1738 the production of the court opera was more or less improvised, using the singers who were in Madrid under contract for the commercial theatre, this second production responded to a well-planned enterprise, in-

<sup>22</sup> See CARRERAS 1996/97.



volving an important cast of singers specially hired for the celebrations, which included the Neapolitan castrato Gaetano Majorano, detto Caffarelli, the contralto Vittoria Tesi and the soprano Anna Maria Peruzzi.<sup>23</sup>

The involvement of the Spanish Queen Elisabeth Farnese in the introduction of Italian opera was considerable. It was she, for instance, who chose the libretto, which had to be put in music by Corselli, a musician, like the queen, from the Duchy of Parma. She also insisted that the performance should not exceed the length of two and a half hours (about half the time of the performance of *Achille in Sciro* in Naples when her son Charles inaugurated the Teatro di San Carlo). Farinelli saw these first opera productions with marked distance. In November 1739, he wrote to his friend, the count of Pepoli: "It goes without saying that I took care not to get involved in any way with the singers in the composition of the music nor in their usual wrong ideas."<sup>24</sup> On his behalf, the marquis Annibale Scotti, right hand to Queen Elisabeth Farnese who coordinated the whole opera, wrote in July 1739 to the mayor of Madrid, the marquis Montealto, that, in this production, Farinelli "should have no more say than to give advice when he is asked."<sup>25</sup> This situation changed completely as the new king Ferdinand VI ascended the throne. The main source which documents the theatrical activities under the direction of Farinelli is a lavish manuscript from 1758 with the title *Descripción del estado actual del Real Teatro del Buen Retiro*, on the first page, which was made on the singer's command. It appears that three copies were made, of which two are still extant: one in Bologna at the library of the *Collegio di Spagna*, an historical institution linked to the Spanish nobility, and the other in Madrid at the Royal Palace.<sup>26</sup> The *Descripción* is divided in two parts: the first documents in minutely detail the opera performances at the Buen Retiro and the second the luxurious boating activities on the Tajo river at the

23 On *Alessandro* see CARRERAS 2000b; on *Farnace* see STROHM 1997, pp. 97–117; and CARRERAS 2002, pp. 214–215.

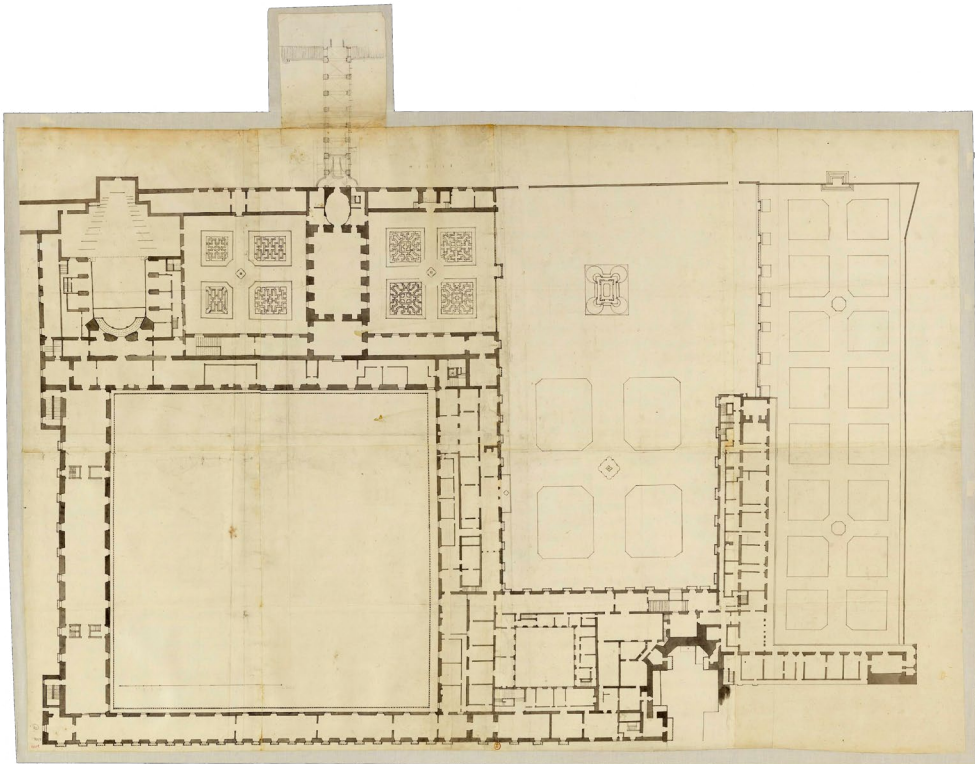
24 "Lascio con dire ch'io ho havuto molto giudizio non inserirmi in cosa alcuna col ceto canoro, sì per la composizione della musica siccome non entrare nelle loro perpetue guaste idee." (BROSCI 2000, p. 159). On Farinelli's limited involvement in the 1739 court production of *Farnace*, see CARRERAS 2002, p. 217.

25 "no debe tener más parte que decir su parecer cuando se le pida," letter from 18<sup>th</sup> August 1739, see CARRERAS 2002, p. 224.

26 See CAPPELLETTO 1995, p. 104, who states that "nel testamento, il Broschi parla di tre copie del volume, la prima lasciata a Madrid [. . .], le altre portate con sé al ritorno in Italia." The generally well informed biography by Giovenale Sacchi, published in 1784, differs from this, as he affirms the existence of "un ampio volume manoscritto, e nobilmente legato in marrocchino, che il Broschi portò seco di Spagna, avendone lasciate altre due simile copie, l'una appresso del Re, l'altra appresso al direttore del Teatro" (SACCHI 1784, p. 23). On the bindings of Farinelli's music collection, see ERRO/DOMÍNGUEZ 2008, pp. 51–52. Contrary to Cappelletto, who speaks of a "recente ritrovamento," the Italian source was known from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards through transcriptions made in Bologna by Leandro Fernández Moratín in 1793 and published in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see FERNÁNDEZ MORATÍN 1867, pp. 55–71. For a complete facsimile edition of the Madrid source, see BROSCI 1991. References of this unfoliated manuscript are given according to the pages of this edition. On this manuscript, see also MORALES BORRERO 1987.

royal residence of Aranjuez, south of Madrid. The first part is illustrated with five designs, one of which shows an opera staging at the Buen Retiro theatre, which includes a partial view of the orchestra, and four other drawings documenting the careful making of the scenery and costumes, a crucial productive aspect of opera, which Farinelli clearly wanted to emphasize.

In spite of its paramount importance in the history of theatre and opera at the Spanish court, there are no actual images of the interior or exterior of the building of the Coliseo del Buen Retiro. Unfortunately, the drawings of the *Descripción* do not show any view of the theatre itself. In fact, the only precise architectonic information about the theatrical space is a ground plan of the principal floor of the whole Buen Retiro palace, made by the French architect René Carlier in 1712 (Fig. 2). The ground plan by Carlier shows the theatre on its upper left-hand, placed as the prolongation of the north wing of the main yard of the palace, the *Plaza principal*, and so connected to the main reception hall, the *Salón de Reinos*. On the right-hand, separated by a small garden and connected to the east passage of the square, we find a big ball-room, the



**Figure 2.** Ground plan of the main floor of the Buen Retiro Palace in Madrid. Ink drawing of René Carlier's original 1712 map of the Buen Retiro.

*Casón del Buen Retiro* ('casón' meaning large house). These three spaces—salón, coliseo and casón—were frequently used for festivities, as it was customary in 18<sup>th</sup>-century European court culture. In fact, opera, dance, masquerades and banquets were frequently conceived as different parts of the same event. The British diplomat Benjamin Keene, a frequent visitor of the Buen Retiro, whose letters reveal a conspicuous interest in the operas performed there, wrote from Madrid in 1749 to a colleague: "after the opera, began the ball in the great room called the Cason, in which, you may remember, we used to get cold in waiting for Their Majesties at their return from *la chasse*. I staid there, as usual, til 3 in the morning, but went out as I pleased to refresh with all sort of waters and wines, with the same ease and plenty as at a masquerade in England." The next day, after another visit to the opera, Keene had "a supper in the sala de los Reynos, afterwards a ball."<sup>27</sup>

As can be seen in Carlier's plan, the Buen Retiro theatre is almost hidden from public view and perfectly linked to the palace complex, even if it was accessible from the outside through the garden on the right, an access which was used for public performances. The ground plan of the theatre shows an Italian distribution allowing the use of scenic perspective and separate stairs to some of the boxes (something similar to the access of the *apostas*—private rooms—of the old theatres build around a yard). Unfortunately, Carlier's design provides only the information of a ground plan of the main floor of the entire palace, leaving us completely in the dark about the building's elevation. This absence may be partially compensated by other sources, enabling us to imagine parts of the scenic space of the stage of the Buen Retiro theatre a few years after its inauguration. This is possible with the invaluable help of a collection of eleven sketches, which reproduce the sets designed in 1653 by the Florentine scenographer Baccio del Bianco for Calderón's play *Andrómeda y Perseo*. These designs include one showing a complete view of the front of the stage with a drop curtain.<sup>28</sup> For the 18<sup>th</sup> century, nine paintings by the Italian artist Francesco Battaglioli, who collaborated with Farinelli from 1754 to 1759, have been identified as pictorial representations of operatic scenes belonging to productions of the Buen Retiro. These paintings and the detailed descriptions of the *Gaceta de Madrid* give us an idea of the spectacular visual dimension of these operas.<sup>29</sup> But it should be borne in mind that, in contrast to the 1653 drawings, the paintings by Battaglioli are surely conceived as a kind of imaginative *veduta*, loosely inspired in the actual theatrical sceneries. Therefore, they cannot document directly theatrical practice, obscured in the paintings by the absence of any visual reference to the frame of the stage or to an exact perspective of the actors depicted above of the represented buildings.

27 Letter from 20 February 1749 to Abraham Castres, British consul in Lisbon (KEENE 1933, p. 95).

28 Facsimil in CALDERÓN DE LA BARCA 1994.

29 See TORRIONE 2000a.



**Figure 3.** Distribution of boxes for a performance at the Buen Retiro theatre, Madrid 30 May 1708.

To Carlier’s crucial ground plan, which as we saw gives no information about the height and disposition of the interior, we may add an invaluable series of drafts used for the distribution of the audience between 1655 and 1760, which have been only partially studied and which are of paramount importance to gain a clear idea of the structure and function of the theatrical space of the coliseo. (Fig. 3)<sup>30</sup> Most of these distribution plans are conceived for a specific performance, as notes such as “por esta vez” (for this occasion) clearly prescribe, to avoid claims of property or precedence by the invited spectators. An early example belonging to a performance planned for the 30 May 1708 at the Coliseo by the Italian Commedia del arte players may help us grasp the importance and interest of this kind of source.<sup>31</sup> The sketch clearly indicates an interior of three floors (*suelos*) with eight boxes on each floor (four on each side). Just in front of the stage are

30 For a useful survey of the surviving documentary evidence for the 17<sup>th</sup>-century interior and its public and courtly functions, see FLÓREZ ASENSIO 1998.

31 Biblioteca Nacional de España, Ms. 20273/29. Purchased by the library in 2001, this seating-plan must be added to the list of sources published in GREER/VAREY 1997, pp. 249–256. For a transcription of this document, although wrongly located at the Archivo General de Palacio (Madrid), see LÓPEZ ALEMANY/VAREY 2006, pp. 76–77.

three large tribunes: the *cazuela* (literally the casserole or stewpot) reserved for women on the first floor; the *Media luna de sus Magestades* (*media luna* meaning half-moon, alluding to its form) reserved for the king and queen, on the second floor; and finally, at the top, the *media luneta alta para la familia de mujeres de palacio a orden de mi Señora la Camarera mayor* (the high little half-moon for the community of the palace's women at order of the Head Lady-in-waiting). Another group of women of higher rank under the command of the powerful Head Lady-in-waiting, Marie Anne de la Trémoille, *princesse des Ursins*, was located in box number three on the second floor. On the ground floor, just under the *cazuela*, are the three compartments reserved to the *alojeros*, vendors selling *aloja*, a popular beverage made of fresh water, honey and spices, a typical space and function also found in the public municipal theatres. As can be seen on the drawing, half the boxes of this 1708 performance are reserved for courtiers, high officials of the administration or diplomats. The French ambassador, for instance, the key dynastic diplomat of the War of Succession, then at its height, is placed in box number eight on the first floor. Box number six of the same rank was reserved, as it was usual, for the city of Madrid (*Villa de Madrid*), and so on. As the rubric for the plan states, the rest of the boxes and the three *alojero*-compartments without any written reservation were at the disposal of the Italian actors, who were free to sell them. Nothing is said about the ground floor, which was possibly empty for this performance. But this was not always the case. In the 1720s, for instance, the different prices of tickets sold for public performances at the Buen Retiro included various sorts of seated places in the stalls. In 1679, the French traveller Madame d'Aulnoy described the use of benches on the parterre and the presence of lattices in the boxes, which were used when the monarchs were sitting in the stalls, to avoid observation from above by the rest of the audience. On these special occasions, the floor was occupied by the king on a platform, which was placed precisely in the central axis of the stage, and the grandees and higher nobility were placed on tiered-seating (*gradas*) on the right-hand side of the king.

## Farinelli's court opera audience

The 1747 reform of the Coliseo del Buen Retiro profoundly changed this structure. If the 1738 reform took about four months and affected mainly the reinforcement of the foundations of the old building, the 1747 reform greatly expanded the size of the theatre, adding two floors and forty new boxes, raising the total to 64. A document regulating the distribution of beverages and food to the spectators established that the boxes were occupied by an average of six people, making a maximum of 384 persons placed in boxes<sup>32</sup>. The central part opposite the stage had three larger spaces: a double-sized

32 VERDÚ 1989, TORRIONE 2000b, p. 359.

*Luneta de los Reyes* (a royal box extended over the second and third floors), the *Damas* section (the *cazuela* on the first floor) and a higher *cazuela* on the top floor. This distribution can easily be seen in an hitherto unknown source, which shows the distribution of the boxes at the Coliseo for an opera performed on Friday 11 of April 1755 (Fig 4).<sup>33</sup> Although the document merely mentions an arrangement of boxes ‘for the opera to be sung’ (‘para la ópera que se ha de cantar’), the distribution can be clearly identified from the *Mercurio histórico y político*, a sort of official court gazette. In the issue from April 1755, the *Mercurio* reported the theatrical activities at the Buen Retiro in the following terms:

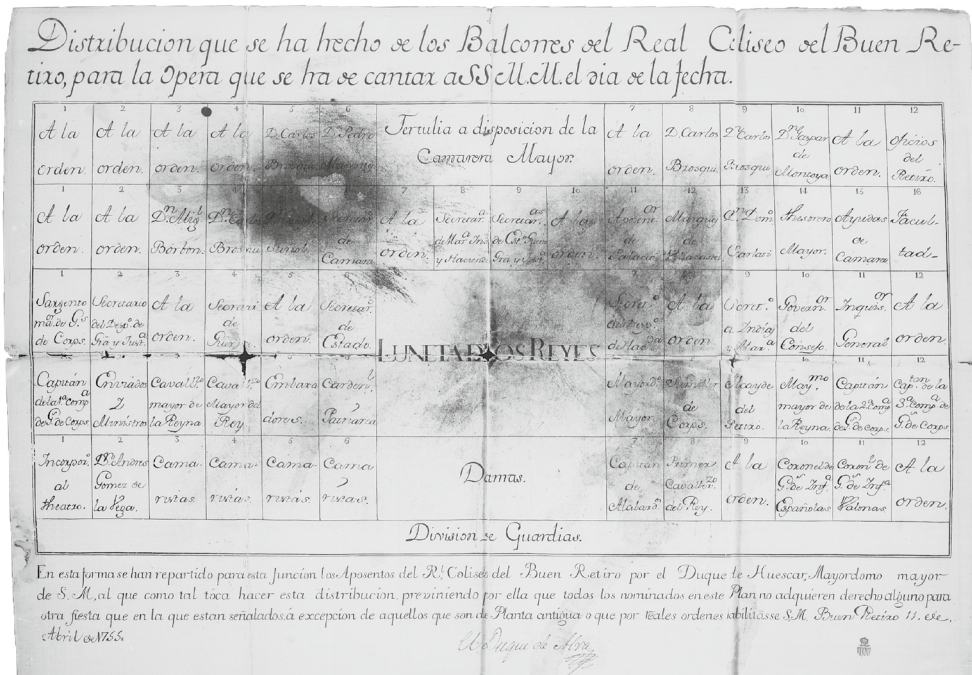
“El Domingo de *Quasimodo* oyeron Sus Magestades desde la Tribuna la Missa Mayor, que se celebró en la Iglesia de *San Geronymo*, cantada por la Música de la Real Capilla, y este día por la noche asistieron en su Real Coliseo a la representación de la Ópera intitulada, *Dido abandonada*, y el martes y viernes antecedentes a la del *Héroe de la China*; cuya diversión tuvieron también las noches de los días 7, 11 y 13 de este mes.”<sup>34</sup> (“On Quasimodo Sunday [6 April] Their Majesties heard from the tribune the Main Mass, celebrated at the Jeronymite Church [of the Buen Retiro] and sung by the royal chapel and the same day in the evening they attended the performance of an opera titled *Dido abandonada* in the royal theatre and the previous Tuesday and Friday they were present at the *Héroe de la China* [1 and 4 April]; they repeated this entertainment on the evenings of the 7, 11 and 13 of this month.”)

Although the quoted text is somewhat ambiguous, it may be argued that the performance of 11 April can be identified with *L'eroe cinese*, a libretto by Metastasio already produced for Madrid for the king's birthday in 1754, with music by Nicolò Conforto. But independently of the issue of the exact opera involved, it is clear that this extraordinary document sheds a crucial new light on a subject of which we still know very little, since it is the only located list to give information about the audience of an opera performance at the time of Farinelli's direction. Its intriguing presence between the documents collected privately by Francisco Barbieri in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and donated later to the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid points to a possible origin from an official archive such as the Archivo General de Palacio, from which the document may have been loaned for study or copying and not returned.<sup>35</sup> As one would expect, the spatial

33 See the transcription in Appendix 1.

34 *MERCURIO HISTÓRICO Y POLÍTICO*, vol. 123 (April 1755), p. 75.

35 The poor condition of the document may at least partially explain its neglect until now by historians. The question of the precise provenience and the much more important issue of the existence or not of a lost series of opera distribution lists of theatre boxes cannot be fully addressed here. The 1755 seating-plan appears listed in the source inventory published in CASARES 1986, p. 1146, among various documents and notes concerning the Buen Retiro. A similar document, albeit pertaining to a performance at the Coliseo of the Spanish spoken comedy *El triunfo mayor de Alcides* mounted to welcome



**Figure 4.** Distribution of boxes for a performance of an opera at the Buen Retiro theatre, Madrid 11 April 1755.

distribution of the audience reflects a clear hierarchy, as the higher dignities of state are distributed around the royal box (Luneta de los Reyes), starting with the five secretaries, who formed the government lead by the Irishman Richard Wall, Secretary of State at the time, who was seated on the third floor, box number 6, on the king's right. The remaining secretaries were also located on the third floor: Justice (box number 2), War (number 4), Exchequer (number 7) and Navy (number 9). The diplomatic representatives at court were also present in two boxes on the second floor, the lesser envoys (enviados y ministros in box number 2) and the higher-ranking ambassadors (embaxadores at box number 5). The high court officials were naturally present, starting with the Mayordomo Mayor (Lord Chief Butler), Fernando de Silva Álvarez de Toledo, the XII Duke of Alba (second floor, box number 7), who as head of the royal household was responsible for the distribution of the boxes and who therefore signed the document. Nearby were located other highly-placed court officials, such as the Mayordomo Mayor de la Reina (the Queen's Majordomo), the two Caballerizos (Masters of the King's and Queen's Horse, respectively), the Sumiller de Corps (the Royal Chamberlain) or the

the new king Charles III in 1760, is preserved at the Archivo General de Palacio in Madrid under the signature P6910. For a reproduction of this source, see TORRIONE 2000b, p. 312.

Cardenal Patriarca, the religious head of the royal chapel. In addition to a División de Guardias (division of soldiers) in charge of security and order, who were deployed at the stalls,<sup>36</sup> no fewer than seven boxes were reserved for army officers. Another group of four boxes of the first rank were kept for Camaristas, probably chamber servants of the queen.<sup>37</sup> Two central tribunes belonged to the first and fifth rank, the former explicitly reserved for women (damas), as with the old *cazuela* discussed above and here possibly for female servants and ladies-in-waiting. The expression ‘Tertulia a disposición de la Camarera Mayor’ (Tertulia at the disposal of the First Lady-in-Waiting) indicating the central tribune on the top floor presents a somewhat more difficult interpretation, tertulia meaning in general a gathering of people who share a common interest. In the old commercial theatres, tertulia was a balcony situated at the top of the open yard, where mainly priests and friars gathered. But the fact that admittance to this tribune was under the jurisdiction of the First Lady-in-Waiting is a good argument to identify this space with the luneta alta of the 1708 seating-plan already discussed above, a space reserved also for female court servants of minor rank. A total of sixteen boxes appear at their disposal (a la orden), which perhaps means that they remained unoccupied for this specific performance.

Individuals, identified not by their court appointments but by their names, also appear in the 1755 document as occupiers of single boxes. Such is the case of Farinelli himself (four boxes reserved for Carlo Broschi at the fourth and fifth floors), Andrés Gómez de la Vega (a quatermaster general and a key collaborator of Farinelli’s, on the first floor),<sup>38</sup> Miguel de Borbón (the queen’s doctor),<sup>39</sup> and Joseph Suñol, (the king’s doctor),<sup>40</sup> both on the fourth floor. Other names refer to different court officials, such as

36 According to Farinelli’s *Descripción*, at opera performances at the Buen Retiro, a lieutenant, a sargent and 24 soldiers were regularly on duty, see BROSCHI 1991, p. 75.

37 Detailed lists of attendance of the Queen’s Ladies-in-Waiting and *camaristas* on board of the royal vessel at the Aranjuez water entertainments exist for the years 1754–1757, see BROSCHI 1991, pp. 309–375.

38 The navy officer Andrés Gómez de la Vega appears in Farinelli’s *Descripción* as his collaborator, “cuidando y siguiendo mis propios pensamientos como lo está practicando con entera satisfacción mía” (BROSCHI 1991, p. 53). According to Sacchi, Gómez de la Vega was responsible for the financial aspects of the opera productions, see SACCHI 1784, p. 32. On 30 November 1748, Gómez de la Vega is linked to Farinelli in a regulation about the distribution of refreshments at the Coliseo, as reported in BROSCHI 1991, p. 127. In 1750 he compiled and signed Farinelli’s dossier to be admitted as a knight of the Calatrava Order, see BARBIER 1994, p. 167. Between 1754 and 1757 Gómez de la Vega was also acting as second pilot of the royal barge in the water entertainments in Aranjuez, see BROSCHI 1991, pp. 245 and 309–375. On his connection with the Marquis de la Ensenada, see his biography in TEIJEIRO DE LA ROSA 2011.

39 According to a letter of the Infanta María Antonia to the Queen mother Elisabeth Farnese dated 21 January 1749 and quoted by COTARELO Y MORI 1917, p. 136, Dr. Borbón had always to be located near the queen: “Lo cierto es que el médico Borbón estará siempre, si es en la *ópera*, en la pieza de afuera de la luneta, y si es en la *comedia*, está en nuestro callejón.” It is certainly possible that Borbon’s box may have been reserved only for his guests.

40 On the political importance during Ferdinand VI’s reign of doctor Suñol as president of the *Protomedicato*, the High Medical Examining Board, see CAMPOS DíEZ 1999, p. 317.



Pedro Marentes, Guardarropa de Su Majestad (His Majesty's Master of the Wardrobe), Gaspar de Montoya, a chamber valet to the king, or the Marquis of Villacastel, Joaquín Olivares, a gentleman-in-waiting of the king. In the middle of this colourful group of courtiers, it is an intriguing surprise to find box number 13 of the fourth floor reserved for Domenico Scarlatti, the extraordinary musician linked to the queen, who left so little documentary trace of his court life in Spain.<sup>41</sup>

Overall, the 1755 seating-plan emphasizes the central political function of opera at the Spanish court during Farinelli's management. As can be seen from the example of the opera performance of 1755, the hierarchical structuring of the space of the audience distribution inside the theatre during the opera performances was a highly political matter, representing *more geometrico* the crucial court hierarchy.<sup>42</sup> The already named British diplomat Benjamin Keene provides a good example of this, in the light of the start of his diplomatic mission at the Spanish court in the winter of 1749 and the symbolic significance of the public offering of an opera libretto at the beginning of a performance: "The next night, I was no sooner seated at the opera but their Catholic Majesties sent me the libretto by the hands of Farinelli. Judge how my confrères in the [envoy's] box lookt upon this mark of distinction."<sup>43</sup> As was typical of the vicissitudes of court life, these expressions of favour or distinction could suddenly be reversed, changing into displacement or even banishment from the symbolic space of the theatre. Such was the case two years later, when, in the middle of a long-winded conflict of protocol regarding the claim of the Imperial plenipotentiary minister to be treated as ambassador, the same diplomat pointed out:

"All I lose by this alteration is that I know not where I am to be placed at the Operas. That matter has been but indifferently managed from the beginning, but I am always easy on such *vetilles*. I have no right to demand any place at a King's private diversion, but I have a right to judge whether the place allotted for me be a proper one or not. A

---

41 As Kirkpatrick observed in his biography, Domenico Scarlatti is not mentioned in Farinelli's *Descripción*. One of the few surviving Spanish autograph documents by Scarlatti is a letter dated in Madrid in 1752, addressed to the Duke of Huéscar, Fernando de Silva Álvarez de Toledo, XII Duke of Alba from 1755 onwards, and who signed the document under discussion. See KIRKPATRICK 1953, pp. 120–121. For an updated account of Scarlatti's life, see FERNANDES 2018. On Fernando de Silva's political biography at the court of Ferdinand VI, see PAVÍA 2015.

42 That this spatial order was also painstakingly reproduced on the smallest scale is shown by the distribution in Parma of courtiers inside the ducal box following Spanish etiquette as it appears in a sketch dated probably in the early 1750s, during the reign of Philipp of Bourbon. For a reproduction of this source, see FELDMAN 2007, p. 112.

43 Letter to Castres dated 20 February 1749 (KEENE 1933, p. 95). On the translation, printing and binding of opera librettos for the Buen Retiro, see BROSCHI 1991, pp. 71–73.

Sardinian and a Venetian Ambassador have served to *barbouiller* this matter more than it was before.”<sup>44</sup>

Significantly, in Keene’s eyes the political dimension of opera performances at court appears perfectly compatible with the idea of opera as the king’s “private diversion,” an important issue to which I will return. First, we have to consider a marked change in the production of operas under Farinelli’s direction, which profoundly affected its reception: the shift from festive exception to ritual repetition. If operas were originally produced at the court of Philip V for extraordinary during Ferdinand VI’s reign were performed regularly as part of an annual court ritual, which, with reference to the San Carlo theatre in Naples, has been aptly described as a “secular liturgy of power.”<sup>45</sup> Opera performances continued to share a common frame as part of a festive court culture characteristic of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but their status as a unique event was now lost. A specific recurring ritual time-frame distinguishes the court opera from the regular *stagione* system of commercial theatres, despite of shared common traits, the most notable of which was the concentration of performances during carnival. Under Farinelli’s direction, opera was wont to start yearly with a new production to celebrate the king’s birthday on 23 September (this was regularly the case from 1748 to 1757 with the exception of 1750).<sup>46</sup> After a second production around January, the two operas were normally rotated at carnival, when opera was combined with balls.<sup>47</sup> Easter Sunday was usually celebrated with three days of performances at the Coliseo after the break caused by Lent and Holy Week, the prelude of the court’s yearly displacement to Aranjuez, where it remained for the summer. A serenata was regularly produced there for the name day of the king on 30 May. Other recurring festivities, also commemorated, though not regularly, were the queen’s birthday and name day on the 4 December and Carlo’s di Borbone birthday on 20 January. Benjamin Keene offers again a telling proof of the frequency and ritual importance of operas at the

---

44 Letter dated 2 April 1751 (KEENE 1933, pp. 291–292). For a discussion of similar diplomatic cases concerning the political importance of seating hierarchies in the theatres of the Imperial court, see SOMMER-MATHIS 1995 and 2006.

45 “Liturgia laica del potere” (FABBRI 1987, p. 62). On the festive calendar of the San Carlo Theatre, see TRAVERSIER 2009, pp. 77–80.

46 The 1750 exception was caused by the mourning for the queen’s father, João V, who died on 31 July of the same year. Birthday operas were generally new productions, with the exception of the revivals in 1749 and 1755.

47 A complete and reliable chronology of the operas and serenatas performed at the Spanish court is currently lacking. For a general reconstruction based on surviving librettos and announcements of the *Gaceta de Madrid*, see LEZA 2014, pp. 337–340. As an illustration of the research still to be done, I complete and correct in Appendix 2 the year 1755 using the information available from the *Mercurio histórico y político*. Systematic extracts from the *Gaceta* of reports concerning opera performances can be found in TORRIONE 1998.

Spanish court. Writing on Friday the 4 April 1755, he mentions the *atrasos*, the delays to the regular schedule of planned performances:

"I reckon the Court will be moving to Aranjuez about the 20<sup>th</sup> [of April]. We are now paying ourselves *los arrasos* [atrasos] *de operas* we lost during Her Catholic Majesty's indisposition. We have one to night, and another on Sunday, and three I suppose in the next week."<sup>48</sup>

Another complementary perspective to Keene's is given by a series of letters of the Spanish Infanta Maria Antonia of Bourbon, who wrote regularly to her mother the widowed Queen Elisabeth Farnese, then banished from court to the royal site of San Ildefonso.<sup>49</sup> According to these letters, pervaded by her weariness of the ritual duties pertaining to her rank,<sup>50</sup> the Infanta attended to twenty performances at the Buen Retiro of two operas and two serenades between 19 December 1748 and 13 April of the following year. This sheer intensity of performances, registered as court events in the Infanta's correspondence among other entertainments such as Spanish spoken plays and balls, clearly contrasts with only three references to operas in the *Gaceta de Madrid* during the same months.<sup>51</sup> Three days before Lent, the Infanta explained to her mother that from the Sunday before Lent to Shrove Tuesday balls were planned every day after the opera and that it was "understood that the two operas would alternate with the serenata."<sup>52</sup> The number and extent of these performances were naturally subordinated to the contingencies of the ups and downs of court life, such as, for instance, the notoriously weak health of the Queen Barbara de Braganza, as the Infanta reports in detail to her mother. For this reason, for instance, on one occasion the queen "ordered that only half of the arias [of the opera] should be sung, to finish sooner."<sup>53</sup> Court opera in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was thus a compulsory iterative performance for many courtiers, an

---

48 Letter dated 4 April 1755 (KEENE 1933, p. 401). I read *atrasos* in place of *arrasos*, which makes no sense in Spanish.

49 Extracts of these letters were published by COTARELO Y MORI 1917, pp. 134–139.

50 In addition to repeated complaints about the temperature and narrowness of the boxes of the Coliseo, the Infanta reports of one performance causing overwhelming sleepiness ("me da un sueño terrible") or being terribly boring ("me cansa infinito"), see COTARELO Y MORI 1917, pp. 137–138.

51 The *Gaceta* reports on 7 January 1749 on the Twelfth Night performance of "la nueva Opera en Música intitulada *Artaxerges*." On 21 January, the same paper mentions "la Opera intitulada *Poliphemo y Galathea*, últimamente mejorada con la variación de su Música, y nuevas Partes" performed the day before to celebrate Carlo di Borbone's birthday. On 25 February, the *Gaceta* reports generically on "la diversión de Comedias Españolas, Operas Italianas, y Bayles Franceses" at the Buen Retiro palace.

52 "Hasta aquí no habíamos tenido baile: mañana los habrá después de la *ópera*, que se hará también los tres días: se entiende alternando las dos *óperas* con la *Serenata*," Letter from 15 February 1749, cited by COTARELO Y MORI 1917, p. 138.

53 "anoche en la *ópera* (...) envió a decir que no cantasen más que la mitad de las arias para despachar más pronto," cited by COTARELO Y MORI 1917, p. 137.

“customary fodder” to use the weary words of José de Carvajal y Lancaster, a frequent visitor of the Coliseo as a minister of the government.<sup>54</sup>

The 1755 Buen Retiro document has a significant gap in the stalls where attendees of lower rank would normally be present at public performances at the Coliseo between the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the 1730s. The absence of any information points to an exclusion of all those who were not attached to court and government circles. This interpretation is supported by the absence in the 1755 seating-plan of a box reserved to the city council of Madrid, which, as we have seen, was a long-standing privilege regularly granted in previous years. The same conclusion is sustained by the announcements of operas in the press, which invariably appear accompanied by formulas which emphasize the magnificence and exclusivity of the performance like, for instance, “en Palacio [con] numeroso, y lucido el concurso de Grandes, y Ministros Estrangeros” (“at the palace, with numerous and brilliant presence of grandees and foreign ministers”), or “en presencia de sus Magestades y de toda la Corte” (“in the presence of Their Majesties and all the Court”).<sup>55</sup> In contrast, in January 1740, the already mentioned opera *Farnace* was performed not only for courtiers, but also, on separate occasions, for the city and government councils.<sup>56</sup>

Taking all this into account and being aware that my argument is directly based on a singular source (and many others which indirectly support or at least do not contradict my interpretation), I would argue that the 1755 document sheds new light not only on one particular opera performance, but also on the whole court opera productions in the reign of Ferdinand VI. The period of court opera at the Buen Retiro under Farinelli’s management thus appears to be unique, the first radically to restrict the audience.<sup>57</sup>

In contrast to the Spanish case, other European courts appear far less restrictive in their admission and more flexible in the distribution of theatre audiences than Madrid. In Naples, for instance, the court and civic functions of the San Carlo theatre were si-

---

54 “ópera es el pasto ordinario” (Letter to Huéscar dated 25 November 1748, cited by OZANAM 1975, p. 411). For this and other similar statements, see DOMÍNGUEZ RODRÍGUEZ 2015, p. 30.

55 See *Gaceta de Madrid* 6 January 1750 and 2 February 1751.

56 “Aquel mismo día [20 January 1740] por la noche se representó, de orden de SM en el Theatro del Buen-Retiro, la Opera *Pharnace*, en presencia de todos los Consejos; y el Viernes por la noche se repitió en la del Ayuntamiento de esta Villa.” *Gaceta de Madrid*, 26 January 1740. On the attendance at this production, see CARRERAS 2002, pp. 224–225.

57 The question of the exact opera audience at the Buen Retiro during the reign of Ferdinand VI has rarely been addressed. Current research seems to assume tacitly a continuity with the traditional mixed admission procedure of the Coliseo. Margarita Torrión’s essay on Farinelli’s opera productions addresses the question freely, and confuses the hybrid system of Philip V with its successor since she argues for open public performances during the court opera period under discussion. “Los estrenos se reservaban a los reyes, casa, consejos, ministros y embajadores, y a la ‘función pública’ de los días siguientes asistía la villa de Madrid.” (TORRIÓN 2002, p. 186).

multaneously present from its foundation in 1737.<sup>58</sup> At the nearby Portuguese court, provenance of the Spanish Queen Maria Barbara, high court officials shared the stalls with businessmen and foreigners at the splendid *Opera do Tejo*, according to contemporary descriptions of travellers, who visited the opera house just before the terrible earthquake of 1755.<sup>59</sup> In Vienna, opera performances at court ceased to be restricted to courtiers from 1741 and the opening of the Burgtheater by Empress Maria Theresa implied a shift of management and financial risk from the Imperial court to an impresario or *appaltatore*. In addition to the restricted *Cammer-musique*, where the Imperial family and higher aristocracy continued to gather privately *par grande distinction* to hear or perform brief comedies, cantatas and ballets, the Empress occasionally financed lavish opera seria performances at the Burgtheater. There the nobility shared their space with the *Publico* to celebrate important dynastic events. In these performances admittance was free for everyone observing the rules of public decency<sup>60</sup>.

From this European perspective, what now may be considered the proper foundation of a Madrid court opera in 1747 clearly reminds us—within the specific Spanish cultural and political context outlined here—of the later new foundations of exclusive court opera in Germany in the years around 1740, such as Bayreuth in 1737, Stuttgart in the same year or Berlin in 1741.<sup>61</sup> But even in this type of aristocratic theatre, admittance seems to have been less restricted than in Madrid. The Saxon court in Dresden, the home from 1733 onwards of a new, stable exclusive opera organized around the composer Johann Adolf Hasse, may be regarded, as it was in its own time, as an excellent example of this type of late *Hofoper*. Comparison between Madrid and Dresden may prove particularly instructive, since we have a detailed seating-plan from the same year 1755. In Dresden, the financing of the costly opera depended entirely on the king's personal budget, and could therefore be considered the “King's private diversion” in ambassador Keene's apt description. Officially dependent on the King's Chamberlain (Oberkammerer), the opera finances were in fact controlled by the powerful statesman Count Heinrich von Brühl, who saw in opera a prestigious sign

58 See MORELLI 1987, p. 36; FABBRI 1987.

59 BRITO 1989, pp. 24–28. For a seating-plan of the inauguration of the Lisbon court opera theatre on 31 March 1755, see GALLASH-HALL/JANUÁRIO 2009, p. 268; to be completed with the discussion of the Lisbon audience in GALLASH-HALL 2016, pp. 79–88. I'm grateful to Cristina Fernandes (Lisbon) for bringing this source to my attention.

60 Although doubts have been expressed as regards the effectiveness of the inclusion of non-noble members of the audience in WALTER 2016, p. 200, the information provided by Obersthofmeister Khevenhüller is conclusive about the inclusiveness of the opera audience at the Burgtheater, see, for instance, Khevenhüller's remark about the pressing throng of people (“zudringenden Volck”) on 15 October 1744 to see an opera by Caldara resulting from the received instruction ‘to let everyone in’ (jedermann die Entrée frei stehen [zu lassen]). ‘Volck’ is here taken to mean non-noble audience. See GROSSEGGER 1985, p. 154.

61 See STROHM 1997, pp. 84–89; and RIEPE 2006, pp. 160–162. New opera theatres were built in Bayreuth in 1748 and in Stuttgart in 1750.

of royal magnificence. As in Madrid, the administration of the free admissions to the opera, here on a yearly basis, lay in the hands of the Lord Chief Butler (Oberhofmarschall). From the theatre's four floors of boxes, the exclusive first and second ranks were mainly reserved, as would be expected, for the royal family, courtiers of higher rank, ambassadors and government ministers. On the upper third and fourth floors, court servants, librarians, the liberal professions and theatre staff such as stagehands, tailors, carpenters and opera singers were present, suggesting a broader social range than in Madrid. The crucial difference is apparent in the crowded stalls, where more than four hundred spectators of lesser rank "from the court and the city" ("vom Hof und aus der Stadt") were accommodated on benches and in galleries set up in the parterre.<sup>62</sup>

### ***Fallen from heaven upon the earth***

However, opera in the reign of Ferdinand VI was unique among all other court operas for the presence of a great singer as its director. This occurred in absence of any official appointment detailing Farinelli's new extraordinary capacities. Expressed in current terms, Farinelli's position as head of the Buen Retiro opera joined simultaneously the responsibility of a theatre's artistic director (with ample financial powers) and that of a stage director (with important musical prerogatives). Contemporaries were obviously well aware of Farinelli's new position. Anna Maria Peruzzi, a famous Italian soprano active in Madrid in Farinelli's time, refers to the castrato in a missive as "el Intendente de la Música," a position he ostensibly never possessed but effectively fulfilled.<sup>63</sup> Titles such as "Intendant des spectacles" or "Directeur des plaisirs" were current in courts from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards as a result of the growing importance of opera as a princely entertainment. These posts were always given to a nobleman, since it would have been unthinkable in the strongly hierarchical world of an absolutist court that such an influential post would have been held in other hands. Despite all the honours bestowed on Farinelli by the Spanish Crown, he was never a member of the higher court nobility.<sup>64</sup> In

---

62 For an excellent discussion on the audience and spaces of the court opera in Dresden on the basis of exceptionally detailed documentation, see MÜCKE 2003, pp. 70–79; p. 73 reproduces the seating-plan ('Arrangement') for the year 1755. The author notes a clear progressive increase in non-noble spectators from the 1730s to the 1750s at the Saxon court opera (p. 74). The court opera of Dresden is named together with the German court operas of Vienna and Berlin in Farinelli's *Descripción*, see BROSCI 1991, p. 69. It is also interesting to note that the Spanish court tried to hire Johann Adolf Hasse and his wife Faustina Bordoni for the royal wedding celebrations of 1739, see the detailed memorandum by the marquis Annibale Scotti, published in CARRERAS 2002, p. 222.

63 CARRERAS 2002, p. 227.

64 As is well known, patronage was a recognized means of entering the lower ranks of nobility by artists and musicians pertaining to the personal sphere of the monarchs, see for instance ÁLVAREZ-OSSORIO 2002, pp. 74–75; on the important research produced in recent years on the promotion and social mo-

1740, writing to his friend the Count Sicinio Pepoli, he presented himself as a wealthy man, “the son of a good citizen and gentleman.”<sup>65</sup> Ten years later, in September 1750, he was appointed knight of the prestigious military order of Calatrava, which was a great honour for a singer. His ideology was clearly aristocratic, coloured, on the one hand, by nostalgia for the old patronage system he had known in Vienna in the 1730s and, on the other hand, by a wary distance in the face of the expanding modern public sphere which he had experienced in the London theatres. This attitude is perfectly reflected in one of Farinelli's most famous paintings, the *portrait d'apparat* by Corrado Giaquinto, which shows the singer proudly posing with the white habit of the order of Calatrava under the protective gaze of the Spanish monarchs.<sup>66</sup> A few months after his arrival in Spain, he wrote to the same Count Pepoli, the thoughtful words “I had already decided from next year not to sing any more in theatres, as I can no longer stand neither the weariness nor the theatre nor the behaviour of the populace.”<sup>67</sup> Farinelli's ideal of an opera theatre thus emerges so as the opposite of the cheering and stomping public typical of the London stage from which he had been literally snatched by the Spanish monarchy in 1737.<sup>68</sup> Rather than the noisy Buen Retiro theatre of the 1730s, the empty stalls and the exclusive audience suggested by the 1755 seating-plan are indeed much closer to his experiences during his sojourn in Vienna in 1732. There, admired by connoisseurs and wealthy patrons, he had sung privately for the Emperor Charles VI and visited the salons of the most select Imperial nobility, a world, of course, which would deeply change in 1740, at the emperor's death. The same enlightened shift took place in Vienna as happened in Spain some time later, a shift due as much to economical as to ideological factors: the cost of court opera eventually became too great a financial burden even for a state monarchy as the Spanish, especially as the political function of opera seria as absolutist trope declined, and was subjected to growing dissidence

---

bility of the minor nobility of the reign of Philip V, see FELICES DE LA FUENTE 2016. On the resistance of the established nobility to recognizing the privileges earned by singers such as Farinelli, see ROSSELLI 1993, pp. 63–64.

65 “figlio di buon cittadino e galantuomo” (Letter from San Ildefonso dated 8 September 1740, BROSCHI 2000, p. 164).

66 On this particular painting, see BIANCONI/PEDRIELLI 2018, pp. 111–115. Bianconi rightly points out the unusual character of this image of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century musician (“un pezzo senza eguali nell'iconografia dei musicisti del suo secolo,” p. 111) and argues for a political reading of the portrait, which would show the singer around 1755 exclusively devoted to his musical responsibilities and aloof from any charge of corruption which involved Ensenada's fall the year before. On the complex and rich Farinelli iconography, see JONCUS 2005.

67 “l'anno prossimo avevo di già fissato il non cantar più in Teatri, non potendo ne più soffrire né le fatiche né il Teatro, né il costume della turba.” (Letter from El Pardo dated 16 February 1738, BROSCHI 2000, p. 143). On retirement strategies of castrati from the opera business, see ROSSELLI 1993, pp. 64–65.

68 McGEARY 1998.

and criticism (as also happened with the figure of the castrato).<sup>69</sup> Farinelli's own voice seems to arise from Sacchi's words from his famous 1784 biography,<sup>70</sup> reflecting on the inevitable fate of his dream:

“And after his [Farinelli's] leaving [from Spain], balls were admitted, at the time when the theatre became commercial, because before, it was open at the sole cost of the king, and no other people were admitted there than the King's and the Royal Family's official deputies, the foreign ministers, some persons of the highest quality, and a few others as a token of special favour. If theatre can be innocent, then it was under these wise rules. But without any doubt in no other place could the sweetness of singing be better appreciated, because never was heard there the noise that is so frequent in other theatres and is perhaps an expression of amusement but is also the behaviour of the common people, and indeed contrary to the aim of the theatre performances, whether serious or comic, but much more of serious drama. There, all attended in perfect silence, just a controlled and brief murmur was heard to support the king's and queen's applause, when they bestowed it on some of the actors.”<sup>71</sup>

In the eyes of many contemporaries, Italian opera in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century faced an inevitable decline caused by the greed of singers, who irresponsibly gave way to the demands of roaring ‘plebeian’ audiences. Growing urban audiences were undoubtedly a crucial part of the European expansion of opera, a growth that went at the same time hand in hand with the establishment of an international market for singers, who nat-

---

69 On criticism and satire as markers of the end of a castrato era, see ROSSELLI 1993, pp. 72–73. Reconsidering the actual influence of enlightened discourse, Rosselli rightly underlines the importance of structural factors such as the 1620 economic crisis and the general recovery of the 1730s as a determining factor in the growth and decline of castration in Italy.

70 The Barnabite scholar Giovenale Sacchi, who actually never met the singer, wrote Farinelli's biography in Milan based mainly on information transmitted to him by the Bolognese musicologist Giovanni Battista Martini, who was closely connected to Farinelli during his last twenty years or so. On the high degree of reliability of Sacchi's informants in Bologna, see BIANCONI / PEDRIELLI 2018, pp. 119–120.

71 “Furono poi ammessi i balli dopo la sua partenza, quando il Teatro divenne venale, perchè avanti aprivasi a spese del Re solo, e non vi si ammettevano, che gli Ufficiali deputati a servizio del Re, e della Real Famiglia, i Ministri esteri, i Personaggi più distinti, e pochi altri per favore. Se il Teatro può essere innocente, allora il fu sotto quel savio regolamento. Ma senza nessun dubbio in nessun altro potè meglio gustarsi la dolcezza del canto; perchè ivi non si udì mai quello strepito, che oggi è frequente negli altri, e che forse è una parte dell'allegrezza, ma anche è cosa plebea, e affatto contraria al fine delle rappresentazioni teatrali, o serie, o giucose che sieno, e molto più delle serie. Ivi tutti attendevano con perfetto silenzio; appena udivasi un somesso, e breve bisbiglio, per secondare l'applauso dell Re, e della Regina, quado a taluno degli attori lo davano.” (SACCHI 1784, p. 22.) This impressive testimony of what we may call the invention of silence through the king's ear has remained to my knowledge unnoticed. On silence and listening in opera theatres of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, see FELDMAN 2007, pp. 11–13; WEBER 1997; JOHNSON 1995, pp. 9–34; on applause as a mode of expression restricted mainly to the stalls in 18<sup>th</sup>-century public theatres, see VICTOROFF 1955, p. 151–152.



urally tried to make the highest possible profit from their careers.<sup>72</sup> From the point of view of Farinelli's generation, the business of opera drifted inescapably away from the old ideal of poetic expression, to merely enhance the empty virtuosity of vain opera stars. In 1750, Metastasio, Farinelli's intimate friend, wrote to him from Vienna along these very lines, reiterating in a recurring argument that was widely shared by the singer. Criticizing the *stravaganze* of contemporary singers indulging in showy vocal acrobatics, he also lamented that "in all the theatres, the musicians and chapel masters, who now busy themselves exclusively with tickling the ears without paying attention to the hearts of the audience, are mostly relegated to the shameful position of serving up intermezzi for the dancers who already occupy most of the public's attention of the people and most of the spectacle."<sup>73</sup>

In this declining context, the aristocratic origins of opera appeared like a lost paradise. For some attentive contemporary critics, from court to public theatre, "the opera may be said to have fallen from heaven upon the earth."<sup>74</sup> In this sense, Farinelli's famous memorial manuscript can be understood as a monument to his efforts to return opera to the lost haven of a theatre of magnificence and splendour. In addition to its potential use as a *pièce justificative* to allay possible criticisms as regards his management, the *Descripción* reveals itself as a magnificent display of the kind of 'conspicuous consumption' that so aptly characterized the absolutist court. The detailed and almost obsessive listing by Farinelli of the amounts of generous payments and costly gifts offered to the various contracted opera singers are not a mere collection of futile or absurd anecdotes as they have been sometimes interpreted, but offer an essential information on the singers' reputations, in other words, an expression of their symbolic capital as artists, which naturally also involved the court that engaged them.<sup>75</sup> As pre-eminent as they were, singers comprised just one of the many elements revealed by this sumptuous volume, which includes references to the orchestra, wind band, choir, extras, librettists, tailors, producers, stage hands, refreshments and lighting (not to speak of the second part of the manuscript devoted to the amazing water entertainments at the Aranjuez palace).

72 On the rise of a singer's market, see ROSSELLI 1993, pp. 101–117; and WALTER 2016, pp. 283–297. For a useful outline of opera expansion in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Europe, see BIANCONI 1993, pp. 40–45.

73 "Già a quest'ora I musici ed I maestri, unicamente occupati a grattar le orecchia e nulla curando il core degli spettatori, sono per lo più condannati in tutti I teatri alla vergognosa condizione di servir d'intermezzi ai ballerini, che occupano ormai la maggiore attenzione del popolo e la maggior parte degli spettacoli." (Letter to Farinelli dated 1 August 1750, METASTASIO 1951, vol. 3, p. 555). I quote from the English translation in SOMMER-MATHIS 1997, p. 78.

74 Francesco Algarotti, *Saggio sopra l'opera in musica* (1755), quoted through STRUNK 1998, p. 911, who uses the anonymous English translation *An Essay on Opera* of 1767.

75 Beside precise data on salaries, Farinelli's manuscript informs about further privileges such as accommodation, furnishing, dressing and transport offered to each singer. See for instance, BROSCI 1991, pp. 57–60 (on lodging); pp. 129–160 (gifts and payments). On the notion of symbolic capital applied to singers, see WALTER 2016, pp. 283–288.

The closure of Farinelli's opera on Ferdinand VI's death has habitually been explained by the cliché of a new king more interested in hunting than opera, confirming once again the extraordinary persistence of anachronistic commonplaces in the historiography of court opera. As has rightly been emphasized, "the prince's amusement was not a private matter, but an affair of state" and therefore, from this point of view, personal inclinations should be considered to be secondary.<sup>76</sup> In the case of the new king Carlo di Borbone (Charles III of Spain)—the same king who founded the splendid Neapolitan Teatro di San Carlo<sup>77</sup>—, his decision to close Farinelli's opera was eminently political, as it related not only to a costly "private diversion" of the former king but also to a kind of entertainment that was losing its original foundational meaning in a rapidly changing world.

---

76 RIEPE 2006, pp. 148–149.

77 On Carlo's rich and varied opera experiences in Naples precisely documented through his correspondence, see ASCIONE 2006, pp. 59–69.

## Appendix 1

BNE Ms. 14004/3 (1) [see Figure 3]

*Distribución que se ha hecho de los Balcones del Real Coliseo del Buen Retiro, para la Opera que se ha de cantar a Sus Majestades el día de la fecha*

[First floor]

- 1 Incorporado al teatro
- 2 Don Andrés Gómez de la Vega
- 3 Camaristas
- 4 Camaristas
- 5 Camaristas
- 6 Camaristas

Damas

- 7 Capitán de Alabarderos
- 8 Primer Caballerizo del Rey
- 9 A la orden
- 10 Coronel de Guardias de Infantería Españolas
- 11 Coronel de Guardias de Infantería Walonas
- 12 A la orden

[Second floor]

- 1 Capitán de la 1<sup>a</sup> Compañía de Guardias de Corps
- 2 Enviados y Ministros
- 3 Caballerizo Mayor de la Reyna
- 4 Caballerizo Mayor del Rey
- 5 Embajadores
- 6 Cardenal Patriarca

Luneta de los Reyes

- 7 Mayordomo Mayor
- 8 Sumiller de Corps
- 9 Alcaide del Retiro
- 10 Mayordomo Mayor de la Reina
- 11 Capitán de la 2<sup>a</sup> Compañía de Guardias de Corps
- 12 Capitán de la 3<sup>a</sup> Compañía de Guardias de Corps

[Third floor]

- 1 Sargento Mayor de Guardias de Corps
- 2 Secretario del Despacho de Gracia y Justicia
- 3 A la orden
- 4 Secretario de Guerra
- 5 A la orden
- 6 Secretario de Estado

Luneta de los reyes

- 7 Secretario del Despacho de Hacienda
- 8 A la orden
- 9 Secretaría de Indias y Marina
- 10 Gobernador del Consejo
- 11 Inquisidor General
- 12 A la orden

[Fourth floor]

- 1 A la orden
- 2 A la orden
- 3 Don Miguel de Borbón
- 4 Don Carlos Brosqui
- 5 Don Joseph Suñol
- 6 Secretario de Cámara
- 7 A la orden
- 8 Secretarías de Marina, India y Hacienda
- 9 Secretarías de Estado, Guerra, Gracia y Justicia
- 10 A la orden
- 11 Aposentador de Palacio
- 12 Marques de Villacastel
- 13 Don Domenico Scarlati
- 14 Tesorero Mayor
- 15 Ayudas de Cámara
- 16 Facultad

[Fifth floor]

- 1 A la orden
- 2 A la orden
- 3 A la orden
- 4 A la orden
- 5 Don Carlos Brosqui
- 6 Don Pedro Marentes

Tertulia a disposición de la Camarera Mayor

- 7 A la orden
- 8 Don Carlos Brosqui
- 9 Don Carlos Brosqui
- 10 Don Gaspar de Montoya
- 11 A la orden
- 12 Oficios del Retiro

En esta forma se han repartido para esta función los Aposentos del Real Coliseo del Buen Retiro por el Duque de Huéscar, Mayordomo Mayor de Su Majestad al que como tal toca hacer esta distribución, previniendo por ella que todos los nominados en este Plan no adquieren derecho alguno para otra fiesta que en la que están señalados, a excepción de aquellos que son de Planta antigua o que por reales ordenes habilítase Su Majestad, Buen Retiro 11 de Abril de 1755=

El Duque de Alba

## Appendix 2

Documented opera performances at the Buen Retiro (1754/1755)

23.9.1754	<i>L'eroe cinese</i>	King's birthday		
4.12	<i>L'eroe cinese</i>	Queen's birthday		
18.12	<i>Didone abbandonata</i>			
25.12	<i>Didone abbandonata</i>			
31.12	<i>Didone abbandonata</i>			
6.1.1755	<i>L'eroe cinese</i>		First performance, Buen Retiro 23.9. 1754	Metastasio / Conforto
10.1	<i>L'eroe cinese</i>			
12.1	<i>Didone abbandonata</i>		First performance, Buen Retiro 23.9. 1752	Metastasio / Galuppi
19.1	<i>L'eroe cinese</i>			
20.1	<i>Didone abbandonata</i>	40 <sup>th</sup> birthday of Carlo di Borbone		
28.1	"ópera"			
30.1	"ópera"			
31.1	"ópera"			
2.2	"ópera"			
30.3	<i>Didone abbandonata</i>			
31.3	<i>Didone abbandonata</i>			
1.4	<i>L'eroe cinese</i>			
4.4	<i>L'eroe cinese</i>			
6.4	<i>Didone abbandonata</i>			
7.4	<i>L'eroe cinese</i>			
11.4	<i>L'eroe cinese</i>			
13.4	<i>L'eroe cinese</i>			
23.9	<i>Demofonte</i>	King's birthday		
18.10	<i>Demofonte</i>			

## Figurelist

- Fig. 1 Detail from sheet 14 of the print *Topographia de la villa de Madrid descrita por Don Pedro Teixeira, año 1656*. Number 76 of the map corresponds to the *Coliseo de las Comedias* (© Usuario Gato).
- Fig. 2 BNF, Fonds Robert de Cotte: Robert de Cotte, 1001 (AG-294 (5)-GRAND ROUL) (© Bibliothèque nationale de France).
- Fig. 3 BNE, Ms. 20273/29 (© Biblioteca Nacional de España).
- Fig. 4 BNE, Ms. 14004/3 (1) (© Biblioteca Nacional de España).

## Bibliography

- ALLEN 1983: Allen, John J.: *The Reconstruction of a Spanish Golden Age Playhouse: El Corral del Príncipe 1583–1744*, Gainesville 1983.
- ÁLVAREZ-OSSORIO 2002: Álvarez-Ossorio Alvariño, Antonio: *Las esferas de la corte: príncipe, nobleza y mudanza en la jerarquía en la monarquía en España*, in: *Anali di Storia moderna e contemporanea* 8/2002, pp. 47–110.
- ANDIOC/COULON 1997: Andioc, René; Coulon, Mireille: *Cartelera teatral madrileña del siglo XVIII, 1708–1808*, Toulouse 1997.
- ANDURA VARELA 1992: Andura Varela, Fernanda (Ed.): *Cuatro siglos de teatro en Madrid*, Madrid 1992.
- ASCIONE 2006: Ascione, Imma: *Un contributo alla storia della fortuna di Pergolesi: il giudizio di Carlo di Borbone sull'Adriano in Siria*, in: *Studi Pergolesiani* 5/2006, pp. 55–69.
- BARBIER 1994: Barbier, Patrick: *Farinelli. Le castrat des Lumières*, Paris 1994.
- BARBIERI 1878: Barbieri, Francisco A.: *Prólogo*, in: *Carmena y Millán, Luis: Crónica de la ópera italiana en Madrid desde 1738 hasta nuestros días*, Madrid 1878, pp. V–LXI.
- BERTELLI 2006: Bertelli, Sergio: *La corte come problema storiografico*, in: *Archivio Storico Italiano* 164/2006, pp. 129–163.
- BIANCONI 1993: Bianconi, Lorenzo: *Il teatro d'opera in Italia: Geografia, caratteri, storia*, Bologna 1993.
- BIANCONI/CASALI PEDRIELLI 2018: Bianconi, Lorenzo; Casali Pedrielli, Maria Cristina; Corrado Giaquinto: *Carlo Broschi detto Il Farinelli*, in: *Bianconi, Lorenzo u. a. (Ed.): I ritratti del museo della musica di Bologna da Padre Martini al Liceo musicale*, Florenz 2018, pp. 103–124.
- BIANCONI/WALKER 1984: Bianconi, Lorenzo; Walker, Thomas: *Production, Consumption and Political Function of Seventeenth-Century Italian Opera*, in: *Early Music History* 4/1984, pp. 209–296.

- BLASCO 2001: Blasco, Carmen: El Palacio del Buen Retiro de Madrid. Un proyecto hacia el pasado, Madrid 2001.
- BOTTINEAU 1986a: Bottineau, Yves: El arte cortesano en la España de Felipe V (1700–1746), Madrid 1986.
- BOTTINEAU 1986b: Bottineau, Yves: L'art de cour dans l'Espagne des Lumières 1746–1808, Paris 1986.
- BOUVIER 1943: Bouvier, René: Farinelli le chanteur des rois, Paris 1943.
- BRITO 1989: Brito, Manuel Carlos de: Opera in Portugal in the Eighteenth Century, Cambridge 1989.
- BROSCI 1991: Broschi, Carlo gen. Farinelli: Descripción del estado actual del Real Teatro del Buen Retiro, [1758], Facsimile, Madrid 1991.
- BROSCI 2000: Broschi, Carlo gen. Farinelli: La solitudine amica. Lettere al conte Sicinio Pepoli, ed. Carlo Vitali, Palermo 2000.
- BROWN/ELLIOTT 2003: Brown, Jonhatan; Elliott, John H.: A Palace for a King. The Buen Retiro and the Court of Philip IV, New Haven/London 2003.
- BURNEY 1959: Burney, Charles: Dr. Burney's Musical Tours in Europe (Volume I: An Eighteenth-Century Musical Tour in France and Italy), ed. Percy A. Scholes, London 1959.
- CALDERÓN DE LA BARCA 1994: Calderón de la Barca, Pedro: Andrómeda y Perseo, ed. Rafael Maestre, Almagro 1994.
- CAMPOS DÍEZ 1999: Campos Díez, María Soledad: El Real Tribunal del Protomedicato castellano (siglos XIV–XIX), Cuenca 1999.
- CAPPELLETTO 1995: Cappelletto, Sandro: La voce perduta. Vita di Farinelli e virato cantore, Torino 1995.
- CARLSON 1989: Carlson, Marvin: Places of Performance. The semiotics of Theatre Architecture, Ithaca/London 1989.
- CARRERAS 1996/97: Carreras, Juan José: 'Terminare a schiaffoni': La primera compañía de ópera italiana en Madrid (1738/39), in: Artigrama 12/1996/97, pp. 99–121.
- CARRERAS 2000a: Carreras, Juan José: L'opera di corte a Madrid (1700–1759), in: Bellina, Anna Laura (Ed.): Il teatro dei due mondi. L'opera italiana nei paesi di lingua iberica, Treviso 2000, pp. 11–35.
- CARRERAS 2000b: Carreras, Juan José: En torno a la introducción de la ópera de corte en España: *Alessandro nell'Indie* (1738), in: Torrión, Margarita (Ed.): España festejante. El siglo XVIII, Málaga 2000, pp. 323–347.
- CARRERAS 2002: Carreras, Juan José: Amores difíciles: La ópera de corte en la España del siglo XVIII, in: Casares, Emilio; Torrente, Álvaro (Ed.): La ópera en España e Hispanoamérica, Bd. 1, Madrid 2002, pp. 205–230.
- CARRERAS 2004: Carreras, Juan José: Introducción, in: Emilio Cotarelo y Mori, Orígenes y establecimiento de la ópera en España hasta 1800, Madrid 2004 [Originalausgabe Madrid 1917], pp. IX–XXIII.



- CARRERAS 2010: Carreras, Juan José: Política, música, musicología: la ópera de corte en la historiografía catalana, in: Knighton, Tess; Mazuela, Ascensión (Ed.): Música i política a l'època de l'arxiduc Carles en el context europeu, Barcelona, 2010, pp. 13–27.
- CASARES 1986: Casares, Emilio (Ed.): Documentos sobre música española y epistolario (= Legado Barbieri, Bd. 2), Madrid 1986.
- COTARELO Y MORI 1917: Cotarelo y Mori, Emilio: Orígenes y establecimiento de la ópera en España hasta 1800, Madrid 1917.
- DANIEL 1995: Daniel, Ute: Hoftheater. Zur Geschichte des Theaters und der Höfe im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert, Stuttgart 1995.
- DOMÉNECH RICO 2007: Doménech Rico, Francisco: Los trufaldines y el teatro de los Caños del Peral, Madrid 2007.
- DOMÍNGUEZ RODRÍGUEZ 2015: Domínguez Rodríguez, José María: 'Todos los extranjeros admiraron la fiesta': Farinelli, la música y la red política del marqués de la Ensenada, in: Berceo 169/2015, pp. 11–53.
- ELIAS 1983: Elias, Norbert: Die höfische Gesellschaft. Untersuchungen zur Soziologie des Königtums und der höfischen Aristokratie, Frankfurt am Main 1983.
- ERRO/DOMÍNGUEZ 2008: Erro, Sara; Domínguez, José María, Las sonatas de Scarlatti y su entorno: análisis contextual desde una perspectiva codicológica, in: Reales Sitios 177/2008, pp. 48–64.
- EVANS 1991: Evans, Robert J. W.: The Court. A Protean Institution and an Elusive Subject, in: Asch, Ronald G. (Ed.): Princes, Patronage and the Nobility. The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age, London/Oxford 1991, pp. 481–491.
- FABBRI 1987: Fabbri, Paolo: Vita e funzioni di un teatro pubblico e di corte nel Settecento, in: Cagli, Bruno; Ziino, Agostino (Ed.): Il Teatro di San Carlo, Bd. 2, Napoli 1987, pp. 61–75.
- FELDMAN 1995: Feldman, Martha: Magic Mirrors and the Seria Stage: Thoughts Toward a Ritual View, in: Journal of the American Musicological Society 48/1995, pp. 423–484.
- FELDMAN 2007: Feldman, Martha: Opera and Sovereignty. Transforming Myths in Eighteenth-Century Italy, Chicago/London 2007.
- FELICES DE LA FUENTE 2016: Felices de la Fuente, María del Mar: La nobleza titulada en tiempos de Felipe V. Un balance historiográfico, in: Revista de Historiografía 24/2016, pp. 221–244.
- FERNANDES 2018: Fernandes, Cristina: Domenico Scarlatti, in: Dizionario Biografico Italiano, Bd. 91, Rom 2018, pp. 345–352.
- FERNÁNDEZ MORATÍN 1867: Fernández Moratín, Leandro, *Obras póstumas*, Bd. 2, Madrid 1867.
- FERNÁNDEZ MUÑOZ 1988: Fernández Muñoz, Angel Luis: Arquitectura teatral en Madrid. Del corral de comedias al cinematógrafo, Madrid 1988.

- FLÓREZ ASENSIO 1998: Flórez Asensio, María Asunción: El Coliseo del Buen Retiro en el siglo XVII: teatro público y cortesano, in: *Anales de Historia del Arte* 8/1998, pp. 171–195.
- GALLASCH-HALL 2016: Gallasch-Hall, Aline: Ressucitar a Ópera do Tejo. O desvelar do Mito, Casal de Cambra [Sintra] 2016.
- GALLASCH-HALL/JANUÁRIO 2009: Gallasch-Hall, Aline; Januário, Pedro: A Ópera do Tejo: materialização da festa como símbolo do poder régio, in: *Fundação Fronteira e Alorna, Amigos de Lisboa (Ed.): Lisboa e a Festa: Celebrações Religiosas e Civis na Cidade Medieval e Moderna*, Lissabon 2009, pp. 237–268.
- GÓMEZ URDÁÑEZ 1996: Gómez Urdáñez, José Luis: El proyecto reformista de Ensenada, Lleida 1996.
- GÓMEZ URDÁÑEZ 2001: Gómez Urdáñez, José Luis: Fernando VI, Madrid 2001.
- GÓMEZ URDÁÑEZ 2017: Gómez Urdáñez, José Luis: El Marqués de la Ensenada: el secretario de todo, Madrid 2017.
- GONZÁLEZ CAIZÁN 2004: González Caizán, Cristina: La red política del Marqués de la Ensenada, Madrid 2004.
- GROSSEGGER 1985: Grossegger, Elisabeth: Theater, Feste, Feiern und ihr Publikum zur Zeit Maria Theresias 1742–1776. Nach den Tagebucheintragungen des Fürsten Johann Joseph Khevenhüller-Metsch, Obersthofmeister der Kaiserin Maria Theresia, in: *Maske und Kothurn* 31/1985, pp. 149–172.
- HARRIS 2001: Harris, Ellen T.: Farinelli, in: *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Bd. 8, London 2001, pp. 565–569.
- JOHNSON 1995: Johnson, James H.: *Listening in Paris. A Cultural History*, Berkeley/Los Angeles 1995.
- JONCUS 2005: Joncus, Berta: One God, so many Farinellis: Mythologising the Star Castrato, in: *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28/2005, pp. 437–496.
- KEENE 1933: Keene, Benjamin: *The Private Correspondance of Sir Benjamin Keene*, ed. Richard Lodge, Cambridge 1933.
- KIRKPATRICK 1953: Kirkpatrick, Ralph: *Domenico Scarlatti*, Princeton 1953.
- KLEINERTZ 2003: Kleinertz, Rainer: *Grundzüge des spanischen Musiktheaters im 18. Jahrhundert. Ópera-Comedia-Zarzuela*, Kassel 2003.
- LEZA 2014: Leza, José Máximo (Ed.): *La música en el siglo XVIII (= Historia de la música española e hispanoamericana, Bd. 4)*, Madrid 2014.
- LÓPEZ ALEMANY/VAREY 2006: López Alemany, Ignacio; Varey John E. (Ed.): *El teatro palaciego en Madrid: 1707–1724. Estudio y documentos (= Fuentes para la Historia del Teatro en España, Bd. 32)*, Woodbridge 2006.
- LÓPEZ DE JOSÉ 2006: López de José, Alicia: *Los teatros cortesanos en el siglo XVIII: Aranjuez y San Ildefonso*, Madrid 2006.

- MARTÍNEZ MILLÁN/MARÇAL 2008: Martínez Millán, José; Marçal, Lourenço (Ed.): *Las Relaciones Discretas entre las Monarquías Hispana y Portuguesa. Las Casas de las Reinas (siglos XV–XIX)*, 3 Bde., Madrid 2008.
- MARTÍNEZ MILLÁN/RIVERO RODRÍGUEZ 2010: Martínez Millán, José; Rivero Rodríguez, Manuel (Ed.): *Centros de poder italianos en la monarquía hispánica (siglos XV–XVIII)*, 3 Bde., Madrid 2010.
- MARTÍNEZ MILLÁN/CAMARERO BULLÓN/LUZZI TRAFICANTE 2013: Martínez Millán, José; Camarero Bullón, Concepción; Luzzi Traficante, Marcelo (Ed.): *La Corte de los Borbones: Crisis del modelo cortesano*, 3 Bde., Madrid 2013.
- MCGEARY 1998: McGeary, Thomas: Farinelli in Madrid: Opera, Politics, and the War of Jenkin's Ear, in: *Musical Quarterly* 82/1998, pp. 383–421.
- MERCURIO HISTÓRICO Y POLÍTICO: *Mercurio histórico y político: en que se contiene el estado presente de la Europa: lo que passa en todas sus Cortes: los intereses de los Príncipes, y todo lo que conduce de más curioso para él*, Madrid 1738–1783.
- METASTASIO 1951: Metastasio, Pietro: *Tutte le opere* Bd. 3, ed. Bruno Brunelli, Mailand 1951.
- MORALES 2007: Morales, Nicolás: *L'artiste de cour dans l'Espagne du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Étude de la communauté des musiciens au service de Philippe V (1700–1746)*, Madrid 2007.
- MORALES BORRERO 1987: Morales Borrero, Consolación: *Fiestas Reales en el Reinado de Fernando VI. Manuscrito de Carlos Broschi Farinelli*, Madrid 1987.
- MORELLI 1987: Morelli, Giovanni: *Castrati, primedonne, e Metastasio nel felicissimo giorno del nome di Carlo*, in: Cagli, Bruno; Ziino, Agostino (Ed.): *Il Teatro di San Carlo*, Napoli 1987, pp. 33–60.
- MÜCKE 2003: Mücke, Panja: *Johann Adolf Hasses Dresdener Opern im Kontext der Hofkultur*, Laaber 2003.
- OZANAM 1975: Ozanam, Didier: *La diplomacia de Fernando VI. Correspondencia reservada entre D. José de Carvajal y el duque de Huéscar, 1746–1749*, Madrid 1975.
- PAVÍA DOPAZO 2015: Pavía Dopazo, Naiara María: *La Casa Real y la política en la corte de Fernando VI y Carlos III. Fernando de Silva Álvarez de Toledo, duque de Alba*, Diss. Universidad de La Rioja (Logroño) 2015, <http://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/tesis/44933>; [letzter Zugriff am 8.10.2018].
- REIMER 1991: Reimer, Erich: *Die Hofmusik in Deutschland 1500–1800*, Wilhelmshaven 1991.
- RICH GREER/VAREY 1997: Rich Greer, Margaret; Varey, John E. (Ed.): *El teatro palaciego en Madrid: 1586–1707. Estudio y documentos (= Fuentes para la Historia del Teatro en España, Bd. 29)*, Madrid 1997.
- RIEPE 2006: Riepe, Juliane: 'Essential to the reputation and magnificence of such high-ranking prince': Ceremonial and Italian Opera at the Court of Clemens August of Cologne and other German courts, in: Bucciarelli, Melania u. a. (Ed.):

- Italian Opera in Central Europe, Bd. 1: Institutions and Ceremonies, Berlin 2006, pp. 147–175.
- ROSSELLI 1993: Rosselli, John: *Il cantante d'opera. Storia di una professione (1600–1990)*, Bologna 1993.
- RUANO DE LA HAZA 2000: Ruano de la Haza, José María: *La puesta en escena en los teatros comerciales del siglo de oro*, Madrid 2000.
- SACCHI 1784: Sacchi, Giovenale: *Vita del cavaliere Don Carlo Broschi detto Il Farinello*, Venezia 1784.
- SOMMER-MATHIS 1995: Sommer-Mathis, Andrea: *Theatrum und Ceremoniale. Rang- und Sitzordnungen bei theatralischen Veranstaltungen am Wiener Kaiserhof im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, in: Berns, Jörg Jochen; Rahn, Thomas (Ed.): *Zeremoniell als höfische Ästhetik in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, Tübingen 1995, pp. 511–533.
- SOMMER-MATHIS 1997: Sommer-Mathis, Andrea: *Il lamento di Metastasio: Metastasio and the Viennese Theatre in a Changing Society*, in: *Studies in Music from the University of Western Ontario* 16/1997, pp. 51–109.
- SOMMER-MATHIS 2000: Sommer-Mathis, Andrea: *Entre Viena y Madrid, el tándem Mes-tatasio-Farinelli: Dirección de escena y dirección artística*, in: Torrión, Margarita (Ed.): *España festejante. El siglo XVIII*, Málaga 2000, pp. 383–401.
- SOMMER-MATHIS 2006: Sommer-Mathis, Andrea: *Opera and Ceremonial at the Imperial Court of Vienna*, in: Bucciarelli, Melania u. a. (Ed.): *Italian Opera in Central Europe*, Bd. 1: Institutions and Ceremonies, Berlin 2006, pp. 179–191.
- STEIN/LEZA 2009: Stein, Louise K.; Leza, José Máximo: *Opera, genre, and context in Spain and its American colonies*, in: DelDonna, Anthony R.; Polzonetti, Pierpaolo (Ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Opera*, Cambridge 2009, pp. 244–291.
- STROHM 1997: Strohm, Reinhard: *Dramma per Musica. Italian Opera Seria of the Eighteenth Century*, New Haven/London 1997.
- STRUNK 1998: Strunk, Oliver (Ed.): *Source Readings in Music History*, New York 1998.
- SUGRANYES FOLETTI 2011: Sugranyes Foletti, Silvia: *La colección de dibujos Raba-glio: Un ejemplo de la actividad de dos maestros emigrados italianos en España (1737–1760)*, Diss. Universidad Complutense Madrid 2011, [eprints.ucm.es/12867/1/T32681.pdf](http://eprints.ucm.es/12867/1/T32681.pdf); [letzter Zugriff am 8.10.2018].
- TEIJEIRO DE LA ROSA 2011: Teijeiro de la Rosa, Juan Miguel: *Andrés Gómez de la Vega* in: *Diccionario Biográfico Español*, Bd. 23, Madrid 2011, pp. 616–617.
- THOMASON 2005: Thomason, Phillip B.: *El Coliseo de la Cruz: 1736–1860. Estudio y documentos (= Fuentes para la Historia del Teatro en España, Bd. 22)*, Woodbridge 2005.
- TORRIONE 1998: Torrión, Margarita (Ed.): *Crónica festiva de dos reinados en la Gaceta de Madrid (1700–1759)*, Toulouse 1998.

- TORRIONE 2000a: Torrione, Margarita: Decorados teatrales para el Coliseo del Buen Retiro en tiempos de Fernando VI: cuatro óleos de Francesco Battaglioli, in: *Reales Sitios* 37/2000, pp. 40–51.
- TORRIONE 2000b: Torrione, Margarita: El Real Coliseo del Buen Retiro: Memoria de una arquitectura desaparecida, in: Torrione, Margarita (Ed.): *España festejante. El siglo XVIII*, Málaga 2000, pp. 295–322.
- TORRIONE 2002: Torrione, Margarita: La sociedad de Corte y el ritual de la ópera, in: Borraz, Arantxa; Tapiador, Francisco Javier (Ed.): *Un reinado bajo el signo de la paz. Fernando VI y Bárbara de Braganza, 1746–1759*, Ausst. Kat. Madrid, Madrid 2002, pp. 165–195.
- TRAVERSIER 2009: Traversier, Mélanie: *Gouverner l'opéra. Une histoire politique de la musique a Naples, 1767–1815*, Rom 2009.
- VÁZQUEZ GESTAL 2005: Vázquez Gestal, Pablo: *El espacio del poder. La corte en la historiografía modernista española y europea*, Valladolid 2005.
- VÁZQUEZ GESTAL 2013: Vázquez Gestal, Pablo: *Una nueva majestad. Felipe V, Isabel de Farnesio y la identidad de la monarquía (1700–1729)*, Sevilla/Madrid 2013.
- VERDÚ 1989: Verdú, Matilde: Transformaciones dieciochescas del teatro del Buen Retiro, in: *El Arte en las Cortes Europeas del siglo XVIII. Comunicaciones*, Madrid 1989, pp. 804–810.
- VICTOROFF 1955/56: Victoroff, David: L'applaudissement: une conduite sociale, in: *L'Année sociologique* 8/1955/56, pp. 131–171.
- VITALI 1992: Vitali, Carlo: Da 'schiavoletto' a 'fedele amico'. Lettere (1731–1749) di Carlo Broschi Farinelli al conte Sicinio Pepoli, in: *Nuova rivista musicale italiana* 25/1992, pp. 1–36.
- WALTER 2016: Walter, Michael: *Oper. Geschichte einer Institution*, Stuttgart/Kassel 2016.
- WEBER 1997: Weber, William: Did People Listen in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century?, in: *Early Music* 25/1997, pp. 678–691.