

## Opera, Ball and Spoken Theatre at the Royal Palace of Caserta

### I.

The royal palace of Caserta was one of the most important artistic expressions of the new political course impressed on Southern Italy by Charles of Bourbon. Having ascended to the throne in 1735, Charles restored to the Two Sicilies the rank of kingdom after centuries of its subjection to foreign rule. Soon thereafter he also committed himself to enhancing his public image through a wide ranging architectural program, so as to translate his power into visible, magnificent signs (another example of this effort is the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples, which he conceived of as one of the largest operatic stages in Europe). The project for Caserta was designed by the famous architect Luigi Vanvitelli; the construction, started in 1752, went on for several decades, well beyond the departure of Charles (who in 1759 left Naples to be crowned King of Spain as Charles III) and Vanvitelli's death (1773). The site chosen for the building, at a distance of about 35 kilometres from Naples, was located in a beautiful country area, fully immersed in nature; nowadays its surroundings are very different because of a chaotic urban development that strongly contradicts the native atmosphere. Commissioned and financed by Charles, the Caserta palace was in fact inhabited by his son Ferdinand IV and his wife Maria Carolina of Austria, daughter of Maria Theresa, whom he married in 1768.

Vanvitelli carried out an expansive architectural plan,<sup>1</sup> with four courtyards, 1,200 rooms, a chapel,<sup>2</sup> and a wonderful garden with an artificial waterfall. We have to note the monumentality of this project, whose dimensions are comparable to those of the royal palace in Naples. Caserta can be considered in no way as an intimate country residence, and this is a point we must keep in mind, in so far as it foreshadows the typology of artistic activities hosted in that residence.

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1 See *Il palazzo reale di Caserta*, 3 vols., a cura di Cesare Cundari, Roma 2005.

2 Here I do not deal with sacred music in Caserta; on this subject see Rocco Gervasio: "Documenti inediti per la storia della Real Cappella della Reggia di Caserta (dal 1784 al 1801)", in: *Archivio storico di Terra di Lavoro*, 14 (1994–1995), pp. 119–139; Id.: "L'organo settecentesco della Real Cappella della Reggia di Caserta", in: *L'organo*, 30 (1996), pp. 225–253; Pietro Di Lorenzo: "Un esempio di musica liturgica per la corte borbonica a Caserta nel '700", in: *Rivista di Terra di Lavoro*, 1 (2006), n. 3, pp. 54–73 ([www.rterradilavoro.altervista.org](http://www.rterradilavoro.altervista.org), accessed: 12.2020).

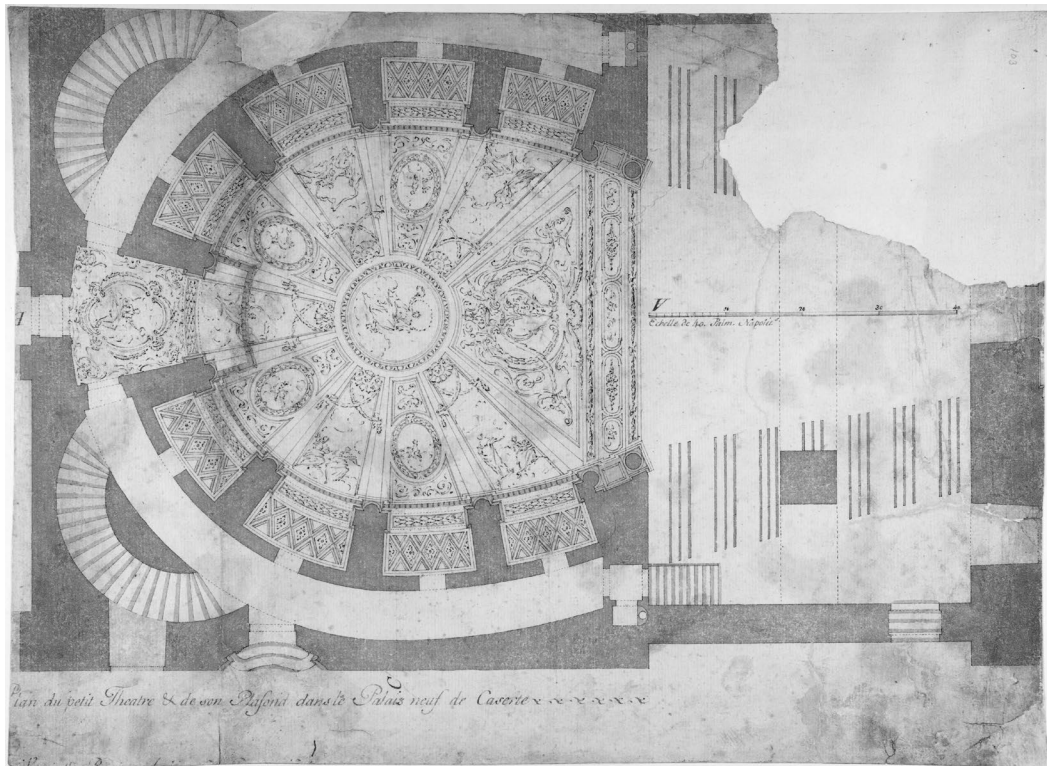


Fig. 1. School of L. Vanvitelli, Court theatre in the Royal Palace of Caserta, projection of ceiling over plan.

The original plans did not include a theatre inside the palace. The first traces of this space date from 1757, and the construction lasted eleven years. The theatre was located in the rear of the building, on the side facing the gardens. Vanvitelli adopted a horseshoe plan with five tiers of boxes and a larger central box for the king (Fig. 1–3).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The three drawings are preserved in New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, accession numbers 64.669.3 (Fig. 1), 64.669.1 (Fig. 2) and 64.669.2 (Fig. 3).

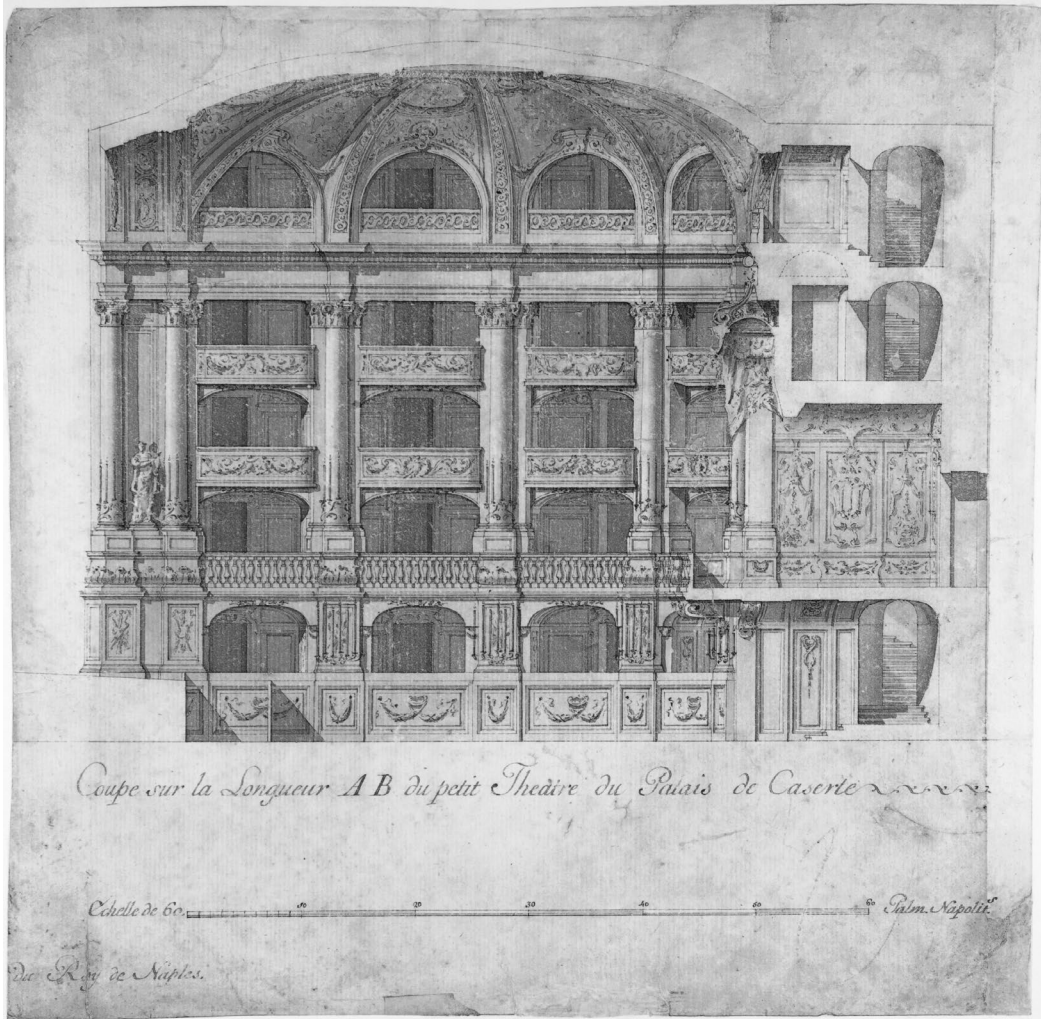


Fig. 2. School of L. Vanvitelli, Court theatre in the Royal Palace of Caserta, longitudinal section.

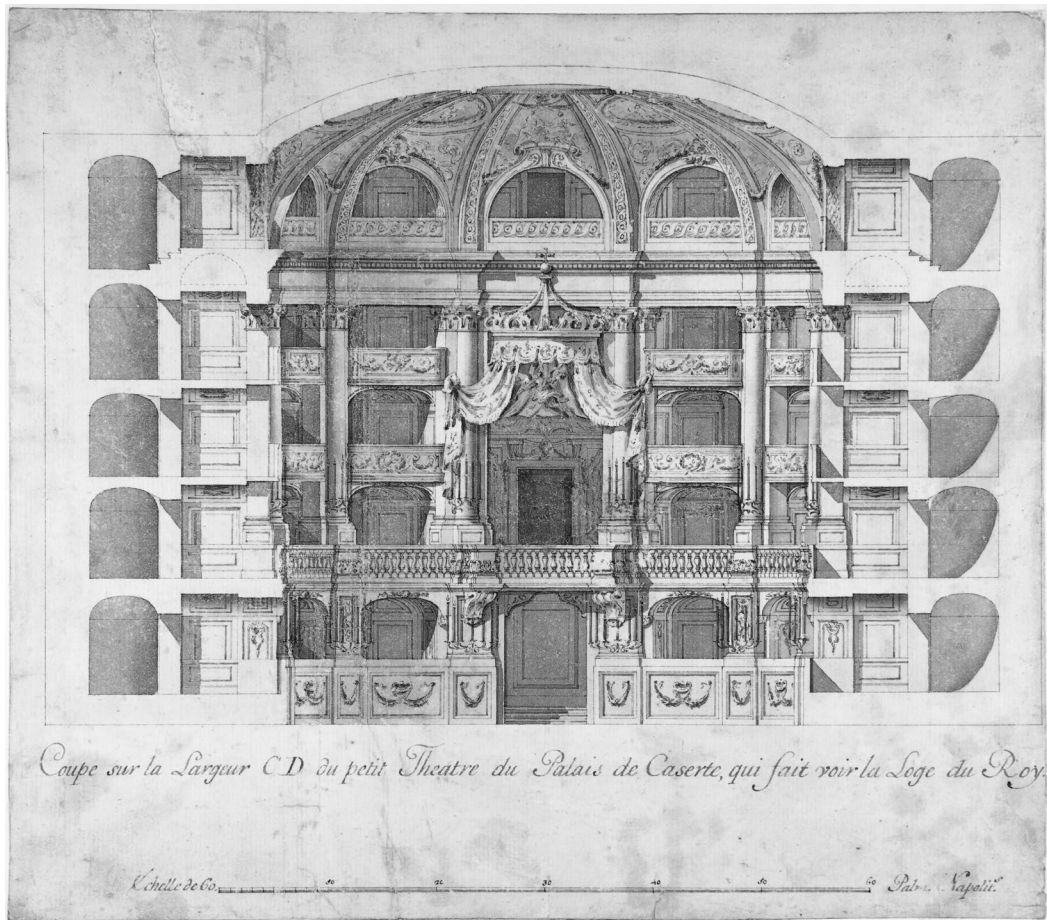


Fig. 3. School of L. Vanvitelli, Court theatre in the Royal Palace of Caserta, transverse section with a view towards the royal box.

The original equipment included six standard sceneries, useful for many different performances: a chamber, a little private room (“gabinetto”), a great hall, a garden, a square and a little forest.<sup>4</sup> The theatre is still well preserved, but it is rarely used for music performances.<sup>5</sup>

4 See Luigi Nicolini: *La Reggia di Caserta (1750–1755). Ricerche storiche*, con prefazione di Benedetto Croce, Bari 1911, p. 140; the author affirms that, in his time, the six sceneries were still extant.

5 For a complete study of the architectural and artistic features of the theatre see Pier Luigi Ciapparelli: *Luigi Vanvitelli e il teatro di corte di Caserta*, Napoli 1995; see also the miscellaneous volume *Il teatro di corte di Caserta. Storia e restauro*, Napoli 1995.

Before the court theatre had been completed, three temporary stages were used. The first one was built in some of the rooms on the ground floor, previously occupied by an artisan, to host the royal company in 1767 and again in Carnival 1768. Also in 1768 a second theatrical space was constructed in haste in a great hall of the palace for the actors of the Teatro Nuovo of Naples. In the third ephemeral theatre, made of wood, the first operatic performance documented in Caserta took place, that of Paisiello's *L'idolo cinese* in May 1768 (see below).<sup>6</sup>

In order to fully understand the kind and the function of the musical and theatrical activities in Caserta, I would like to point out an important element in the life of Neapolitan court: its remarkable mobility. With the help of contemporary newspapers, I have reconstructed in detail the travels of Ferdinand IV and Maria Carolina over the course of a single year, 1773. The royal couple spent 128 days in the capital (35%), 134 in the palace of Portici, less than 10 kilometres far from Naples (36,8%), 73 in Caserta (20%), 26 in Persano, where Ferdinand devoted himself to hunting (7,2%), and 4 in Procida, the smallest of the three islands in the Gulf (1%).<sup>7</sup> We cannot automatically extend these percentages to other years, but the chronicles testify that such frequent changes of location constituted a long-lasting trend. Caserta was neither the only, nor the principal royal residence outside of Naples. Moreover, Ferdinand and Maria Carolina did not spend the summer there: in 1773 they stayed in Caserta from 21 January to 3 April, while from June to September they were in both Portici and Naples. So Caserta is not a *Sommerresidenz*: until the end of the century, Vanvitelli's beautiful palace rarely housed the king and the queen during the warmest months.

A complete study of the musical performances in all the *siti reali* – i.e. royal residences – of the Bourbon dynasty is yet to be written. Concerning the palace of Portici, for example, which also had a small internal theatre,<sup>8</sup> only a minimum amount of information is available:

6 The temporary theatres are described by Nicolini, *La Reggia di Caserta*, pp. 133–136; new details on the third of them have been added by Antonella Pascuzzi: *Feste e spettacoli di corte nella Caserta del Settecento*, Firenze 1995, p. 28. See also *Manoscritti di Luigi Vanvitelli nell'archivio della Reggia di Caserta, 1752–1773*, a cura di Antonio Gianfrotta, [Roma] 2000, nn. 122 (pp. 131 f.), 161 (pp. 161 f.) and 172–174 (pp. 181–184).

7 The data come from the *Notizie del mondo* for 1773; this source gives no information about the royal family from 3 November (when the king and the queen were in the capital) and 22 December (when they were in Portici); comments on this period are therefore speculative.

8 The theatre can be seen in the eighteenth-century plan of the first floor, destined for the royal apartments, published by Giancarlo Alisio: "Una residenza tra mare e vulcano", in: *La reggia di Portici nelle collezioni d'arte tra Sette e Ottocento*, a cura di Luisa Martorelli, Napoli 1998, pp. 9–13: 9.

comic operas and a tragicomedy were performed there in October 1775,<sup>9</sup> a ball was given in May 1779,<sup>10</sup> and French plays and dance parties were planned for October 1787.<sup>11</sup> Vicente Martín y Soler's *Una cosa rara*, which never reached a Neapolitan public theatre, was staged in Portici on 27 October 1789;<sup>12</sup> in autumn 1793 came Paisiello's *La serva padrona* and *La finta amante*.<sup>13</sup>

The situation of Caserta is better known, but the data are not homogeneous. Fundamental contributions on this topic are a book by Luigi Nicolini from 1911,<sup>14</sup> and the study published by Antonella Pascuzzi in 1995.<sup>15</sup> Both authors used rich archival materials, but their documents do not provide information beyond the early 1770s. For subsequent years, we lack a similar documentation, and this circumstance has suggested the hypothesis that entertainment in

9 See *Gazzetta universale*, II/8, 4 November 1775, p. 704: "I nostri reali monarchi godono alla villeggiatura di Portici della più perfetta salute. [...] Nelle sere di domenica e giovedì si rappresentano ordinariamente nel piccolo teatro della r. villa ora l'una, ora l'altra delle opere buffe che vanno in scena nei teatri di questa capitale. Più volte vi si è rappresentata una tragicommedia composta dal sig. principe di Canneto".

10 See *Gazzetta universale*, VI/43, 29 May 1779, p. 344: "Giovedì, ricorrendo il giorno di nascita di S.M. l'imperatrice regina madre della nostra augusta sovrana, nel castello di Portici, ove soggiorna la corte, vi fu gran gala, appartamento e festa di ballo. In tale occasione la principessa primogenita, che sta per compire i 7 anni, ballò il primo minuet col piccolo principe di Migliano con universale applauso; in seguito il sig. le Picq, maestro della R.A.S., ebbe in dono dalla regina una superba scatola di lapislazzuli guarnita d'oro e piena di monete parimente d'oro".

11 See *Gazzetta universale*, XIV/83, 16 October 1787, p. 664: "I nostri sovrani fino dal dì 3 del corr[ente] passarono dalla villeggiatura di Castellamare a quella di Portici con il principe D. Gennaro e le RR. principesse, che trovavansi in questa capitale. Le LL.MM. hanno fatto sapere ai ministri esteri e alla più distinta nobiltà, che in chiascheduna sera di venerdì si rappresenterà in quel teatro di corte commedia francese, ed in tutte le domeniche vi sarà appartamento e ballo, ai quali divertimenti vengono espressamente invitati".

12 See *Gazzetta universale*, XVI/88, 3 November 1789, p. 704: "Le maestà dei nostri sovrani e la real famiglia si trova tutt'ora in Portici, ove la villeggiatura seguita ad essere di molto concorso. In questa sera sul teatro del r. palazzo di Portici si rappresenta la celebre burletta intitolata la *Cosa rara*". The related libretto is listed by Claudio Sartori: *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800*, 7 vols., Cuneo 1990–1994, n. 6735.

13 See Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, n. 10400.

14 See Nicolini, *La Reggia di Caserta*, pp. 131–151 (corresponding to chapter VII, "Cronaca teatrale"); many archival sources consulted by the author belonged to the series *Teatri* of the Archivio di Stato of Naples, and were destroyed during World War II. A few new documents have been published by Antonio Marotta: *Il teatro di corte e l'opera buffa a Caserta*, Caserta n.d.

15 See Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*. Pascuzzi uses extant archival sources preserved in the Archivio di Stato: *Casa reale amministrativa – Conti e cautele*, 2221–2224; *Archivio farnesiano*, 1820 I–II, 1842. By the same author see also "Spettacoli teatrali e feste di corte nella reggia di Caserta", in the miscellaneous volume *Il teatro di corte di Caserta*, pp. 34–41, and "Feste, spettacoli e teatro di corte nella Caserta del Settecento", in: *Nuova rivista musicale italiana*, 31 (1997), pp. 343–365.

Caserta dropped drastically after 1774.<sup>16</sup> In fact, a decrease actually did happen: from 1769 to 1773, Ferdinand and Maria Carolina had regularly spent Carnival in Caserta, which resulted in rich theatrical offerings there; starting from 1774, they decided to stay in Naples for Carnival so as to enjoy the variety of the amusements offered by the capital city, and that choice undoubtedly penalized Caserta. But one would be wrong to assume that Vanvitelli's palace was therefore completely devoid of music, as many sources, up to now neglected, clearly show its persistent use throughout the century. The Appendix to this article collects all the data I have been able to find in this regard, drawn mainly from a nearly exhaustive perusal of the *Gazzetta universale*, the most important Italian newspaper of the period, which often includes news from the kingdom of Naples. I have occasionally consulted also the *Notizie del mondo* (merged with the *Gazzetta universale* in 1792), which contains Neapolitan news different from what is given in the *Gazzetta*. A comprehensive use of the *Notizie* – as well as of the Roman *Diario estero*, published by Chracas – is advisable in order to construct a more complete history of the royal *plaisirs* in Caserta.

In the current study my interest primarily focuses on music, but it is important to remember that this element of entertainment was part of a much broader organization of leisure time, especially during the first years under discussion. In the calendar of Carnival 1769, for example, operas alternate with balls and spoken plays (App. 5, summarized in Table 1). This strategy is based on variety: the more varied the offerings, the greater the pleasure, in order to combat boredom, the worst enemy of the *élites* in the *Ancien Régime*. The same season shows an interesting diversification of both genres and performance spaces: serious and comic operas (highlighted in bold) in the court theatre, spoken plays in a chamber theatre, and balls in a great hall (the precise location of the last two rooms inside the palace has not been established). As one can easily understand, different spaces and types of entertainment imply different audiences and degrees of involvement.

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16 See Marotta, *Il teatro di corte*, p. 28; Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, p. 66.

Table 1. The 1769 Carnival season in Caserta.

DATE	PERFORMANCE	LOCATION
Su 22 January	ball	great hall
Mo 23 "	spoken play	chamber theatre
Tu 24 "	<b>opera seria</b>	<b>court theatre</b>
We 25 "	<b>opera buffa</b>	<b>court theatre</b>
Th 26 "	ball	great hall
Fr 27 "	spoken play	chamber theatre
Sa 28 "	<b>opera buffa</b>	<b>court theatre</b>
Su 29 "	ball	great hall
Mo 30 "	spoken play	chamber theatre
Tu 31 "	<b>opera seria</b>	<b>court theatre</b>
We 1 February	<b>opera buffa</b>	<b>court theatre</b>
Th 2 "	ball	great hall
Fr 3 "	spoken play	chamber theatre
Sa 4 "	<b>opera buffa</b>	<b>court theatre</b>
Su 5 "	ball	great hall
Mo 6 "	spoken play	chamber theatre
Tu 7 "	<b>opera seria</b>	<b>court theatre</b>
	ball	great hall

## II.

Balls are a pivotal ingredient of aristocratic sociability and an indispensable element in Carnival fun. The first *festini* – i.e. dance parties – were organized in Caserta in 1769 (App. 5). Five balls took place in 1770 (App. 6), but this time they were held in the royal theatre, recently completed;<sup>17</sup> a special *Regolamento che si propone doversi tenere per il ballo in maschera nel real teatro di Caserta* was issued in advance,<sup>18</sup> and new music for minuets was composed by

17 The use of the theatre as venue for balls required carpentry works: see Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, pp. 43 f.

18 See Nicolini, *La reggia di Caserta*, p. 146, fn. 1.



Giovanni Battista Bergantino, Antonio Montori, and an unnamed oboist.<sup>19</sup> The theatre was used again for four balls in 1771 (App. 7); the English traveler Ann Riggs Miller attended one of them and wrote a detailed account, which offers a valuable view of the conventions that governed social dance, as well as choreographic and musical features:<sup>20</sup>

As soon as her Majesty & c. were come into the pit, the Queen immediately danced a minuet, and in the highest perfection; both their Majesties were dressed *en Savoiarde*, in stuff of striped sattin [*sic*]. Neither gold, silver, jewels, lace, or embroidery are permitted to be worn at these *fêtes*: a wise and benevolent regulation.

At the time I was presenting, the Queen and all the company in the box were unmasked; but when her Majesty descended into the ball-room (the pit), she entered masked, as did the others. A small black mask which covers half the face is what every body must wear.

There is no precedence observed at these balls; the King and Queen go in and out promiscuously, which is the reason why the company is not so numerous as one might expect to find it. None but such as the Queen esteems proper to receive and converse with *sans ceremonie* are ever admitted; and there are many of the Neapolitan nobility, even to the rank of dukes, who can only see the ball from the upper boxes. Do not expect a description of the King's person, suffice it to say, he is not *so handsome* as his Queen. Any of the company may dance at the same time with their Majesties. There are three or four sets of English country-dances, and when the Queen is tired of them, minuets are danced, as many as there is room for at the same time. The Queen calls out those she chooses to dance with; she did M— the honour to order him more than once that night to dance with her. His Majesty is not fond of this amusement; however, he danced a country-dance in a set he commanded, consisting of men only, that he might, I suppose, dance as high and as violently as he pleased; but he met with one young Englishman who was more than his match, Lord L—, who gave him such a twirl in return, as both surprised and pleased his Majesty.

[...] The stage was covered with the musicians upon benches, rising pyramidically one bench above the other, the top of the pyramid is crowned by the kettle-drums. The musicians are all in a livery, their coats blue, richly laced, their waistcoats red, and almost

19 See Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, p. 45.

20 On the Neapolitan trends in social dance see Anthony DelDonna: “‘Rinfreschi e composizioni poetiche’: the *feste di ballo* tradition in late Eighteenth-Century Naples”, in: *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 44 (2011), pp. 157–188.

covered with silver, small black hats, with long scarlet feathers stuck upright in them; large wax candles are placed between, so that they form a striking *coup-d'oeil* upon your entering the theatre: the whole is so artfully illuminated, that the effect is equal, and seems as if the light proceeded from a brilliant sun at the top, I imagine this may be accounted for from the reflection of the lights by the high polished marble pillars and other ornaments, into which the light seems even to pierce. The pit (which is more like an antique arena) is floored with a composition coloured red, very hard, and rather slippery; here it is company dance.<sup>21</sup>

In a sort of *post scriptum*, Lady Miller adds:

[...] there are such precautions taken by the court to prevent improper people gaining admittance, that the tickets have the royal arms engraved on them, and some private marks, also the person's name they are to admit wrote on them; and these tickets are received at the pit door by the lord of the court who happens to be in waiting during these *fêtes*.<sup>22</sup>

The description of the pyramid-shaped disposition of the instruments concurs not only with archival sources,<sup>23</sup> but also with contemporary iconographic evidence. A drawing by Ferdinando Fuga shows the court theatre of the royal palace in Naples as it should be set up for dance parties in 1768; the orchestra is placed on the stage and is arranged in the very same way described by Lady Miller, with the kettledrums player on the top.<sup>24</sup>

21 Letter dated 25 January 1771, in Ann Riggs Miller: *Letters from Italy, describing the manners, customs, antiquities, paintings, etc. of that country in the years MDCCLXX and MDCCLXXI*, the second edition revised and corrected, 2 vols., London 1777, vol. II, pp. 52–54; the right date is likely 27 January, according to the calendar of 1771 Carnival (App. 7). The text goes on describing the dinner, served in rooms close to the theatre.

22 Riggs Miller, *Letters*, p. 58. The *post scriptum* is dated 28 January, and this should confirm that the date of the principal text has to be read as 27, and not 25 January. In 1770, 2,000 tickets were printed (see Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, pp. 44 f.).

23 A document dated 1770 describes three parapets erected on the stage and the decoration of each of them (see Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, p. 44).

24 The sketch, entitled *Prospetto [...] nel quale si dimostra la bocca d'opera del teatro per le serenate, dentro la quale vedesi collocata sul proscenio del teatro orchestra de' sonatori in occasione de' reali festini*, belongs

Balls were not given during the Carnival seasons of 1772 and 1773. For subsequent years, I am able to indicate only a festive dance party organized on 20 February 1786 on the occasion of the birth of princess Maria Clotilde in the same Caserta royal palace (App. 32).

### III.

In the field of the spoken theatre, Caserta shows a large variety of comic and tragic plays, and even a series of puppet shows (App. 10). The royal *troupe*, directed by Pasquale Cirillo and later by Giambattista Lorenzi, staged both *all'improvviso* comedies (App. 1–2, 5–6) and fully written *pièces* (App. 7–9).<sup>25</sup> Some performances might have included incidental music, as suggested by the list of popular instruments used in the third play of 1770 (bagpipe, “ciaramella”, guitar and “colascione”);<sup>26</sup> a “canzonetta veneziana” was specially composed by Giuseppe Dol to be sung in Goldoni’s *Il bugiardo* (revamped by Lorenzi) in 1772.<sup>27</sup>

In 1770 the celebrated company of the late Domenico Barone marquis of Liveri, much praised by King Charles, was asked to perform an old title of its own repertoire, *La Claudia* (App. 6).<sup>28</sup> In addition, professional actors engaged in the public theatres of Naples frequently came to Caserta. The Teatro Nuovo company performed there in 1768 and 1771–1773 (App. 2, 7–9), and that of Teatro de’ Fiorentini in 1772 and 1789 (App. 8, 40). In 1773 the French company of the Fiorentini brought to the stage works such as Voltaire’s *Tancredi*, Mercier’s *Le deserteur*, Collé’s *La partie de chasse d’Henri IV* and Beaumarchais’s *Eugénie* (App. 9).<sup>29</sup> Another

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to a pair of drawings preserved in Naples, Museo di San Martino, inv. 5977, and has been published by Franco Mancini: *Feste ed apparati civili e religiosi in Napoli dal viceregno alla capitale*, Napoli 1968, p. 62, fig. 41. The drawings have been previously assigned to Luigi Vanvitelli; for the attribution to Fuga see Pierluigi Ciapparelli: “I luoghi del teatro e l’effimero. Scenografia e scenotecnica”, in: *Storia della musica e dello spettacolo a Napoli. Il Settecento*, a cura di Francesco Cotticelli e Paologiovanni Maione, 2 vols., Napoli 2009, vol. I, pp. 223–329: 246.

25 A letter by Bernardo Tanucci to Giambattista Lorenzi dated 28 December 1768, containing provisions on the choice of subjects, casting and rehearsals, is published by Benedetto Croce: *I teatri di Napoli. Secolo XV–XVIII*, Napoli 1891, pp. 538f.

26 See Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, p. 41.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

28 The same company suggested a performance of Liveri’s *L’abbate* for the Carnival season 1771, but the proposal was rejected (see Croce, *I teatri di Napoli*, p. 541).

29 Ferdinando Galiani describes the deep interest of the Neapolitan audience in the French *troupe* in various letters to Louise d’Épinay from 16 January to 27 February 1773: see Ferdinando Galiani/Louise d’Épinay: *Correspondance*, 5 vols., présentation de Georges Dulac, texte établi par Daniel Maggetti et annoté par Daniel Maggetti in collaboration avec Georges Dulac, Paris 1992–1997, vol. III, nn. CCLXII (pp. 187–190), CCLXXIV–CCLXXV (pp. 192–197) and CCLXXX (pp. 205–210). See also Rosena Davison: “A French troupe in Naples in 1773: a theatrical curiosity”, in: *Theatre research international*, 10 (1985),

French *troupe* was in Caserta in February and March 1786, and the royal violinists played – very badly – in the *entr’actes* (App. 33); the same *troupe* was engaged again in October 1786 and in February 1787 (App. 36–37).

Only two spoken *pièces* seem to have been specially created for Caserta. In January 1772 Scipione Maffei’s *Merope* (Fig. 4) appeared in a prose version by the Neapolitan man of letters and scientist Michele Sarcone; the tragedy was staged by the court company led by Lorenzi, and required very long rehearsals.<sup>30</sup> Sarcone himself wrote an original play to fulfil a royal commission, *Teodosio il grande* (Fig. 5), given in January 1773 by the actors of the Teatro Nuovo;<sup>31</sup> the work was enhanced by incidental music played by a “banda turca”.<sup>32</sup> At an unknown date (but *post* 1779), the famous actor Tommaso Grandi had the honor “di esser chiamato alla deliziosa villa di Caserta a divertire sua maestà col *Pimmalione*, ed è stato molto gradito e generosamente con doni riconosciuto dalla regia munificenza. Alla stessa maestà napoletana ha pur egli fatto vedere un ballo spagnolo che chiamasi il *fandangh*, eseguito da lui ad occhi bendati in mezzo a un numero d’ova, che movendosi ancora restano sempre illese e non schiacciate da’ piedi”.<sup>33</sup>

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pp. 32–46; Rahul Markovits: “Da Vienna a Napoli: la *tournee* italiana della compagnia teatrale del cancelliere Kaunitz (1772–1773)”, in: *Musica e spettacolo a Napoli durante il decennio francese (1806–1815)*, a cura di Paoliovanni Maione, Napoli 2016, pp. 205–213.

30 See Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, p. 56; see also the letter by Lorenzi quoted in Croce, *I teatri di Napoli*, p. 542.

31 On the choice of a professional company for performing Sarcone’s *Teodosio*, see Croce, *I teatri di Napoli*, p. 542.

32 See Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, p. 59.

33 Francesco Bartoli: *Notizie istoriche de’ comici italiani che fiorirono intorno all’anno MDL fino a’ giorni presenti*, 2 vols., Padova 1782, vol. I, p. 274. On the Neapolitan reception of Rousseau’s *scène lyrique*, see Lucio Tufano: “Teatro musicale e massoneria: appunti sulla diffusione del melologo a Napoli (1773–1792)”, in: *Napoli 1799 fra storia e storiografia, atti del convegno (Napoli, 21–24 gennaio 1999)*, a cura di Anna Maria Rao, Napoli 2002, pp. 597–631, and “La ricezione italiana del melologo à la Rousseau e la *Pandora* di Alessandro Pepoli”, in: *D’une scène à l’autre. L’opéra italien en Europe, sous la direction de Damien Colas et Alessandro Di Profio*, 2 vols., Wavre 2009, vol. II: *La musique à l’épreuve du théâtre*, pp. 125–140.

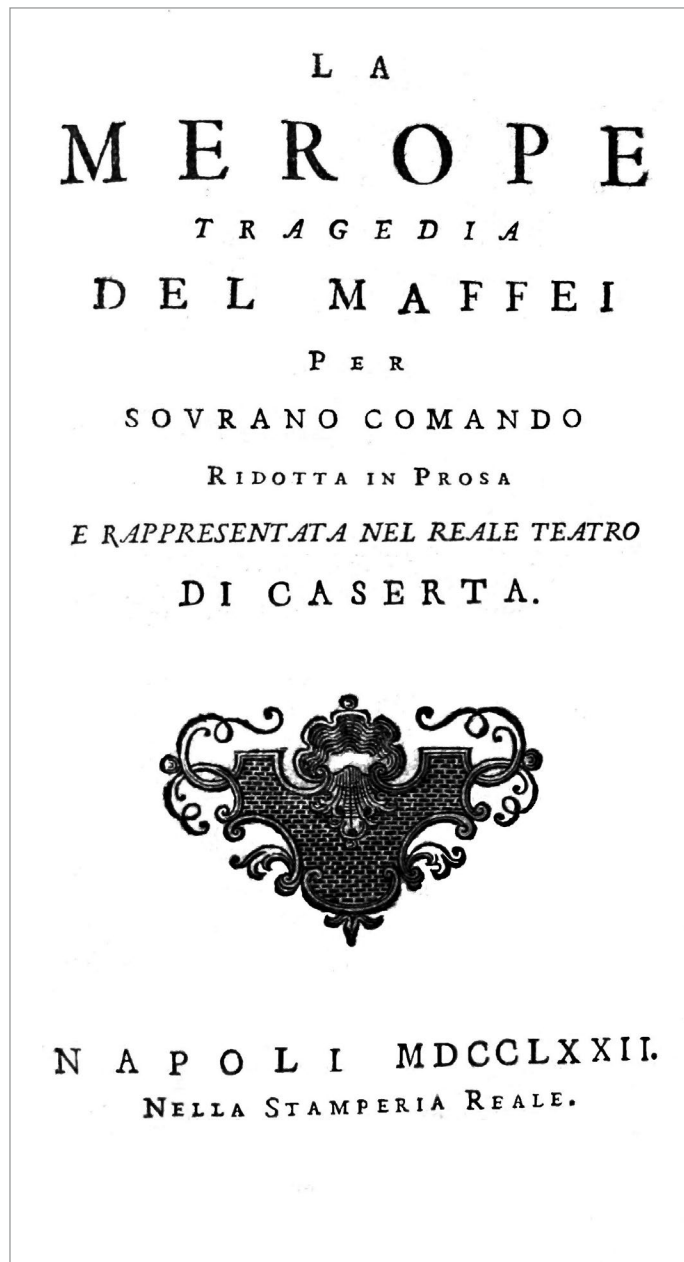


Fig. 4. S. Maffei [with alterations by M. Sarcone], *Merope*, Napoli 1772, title page.

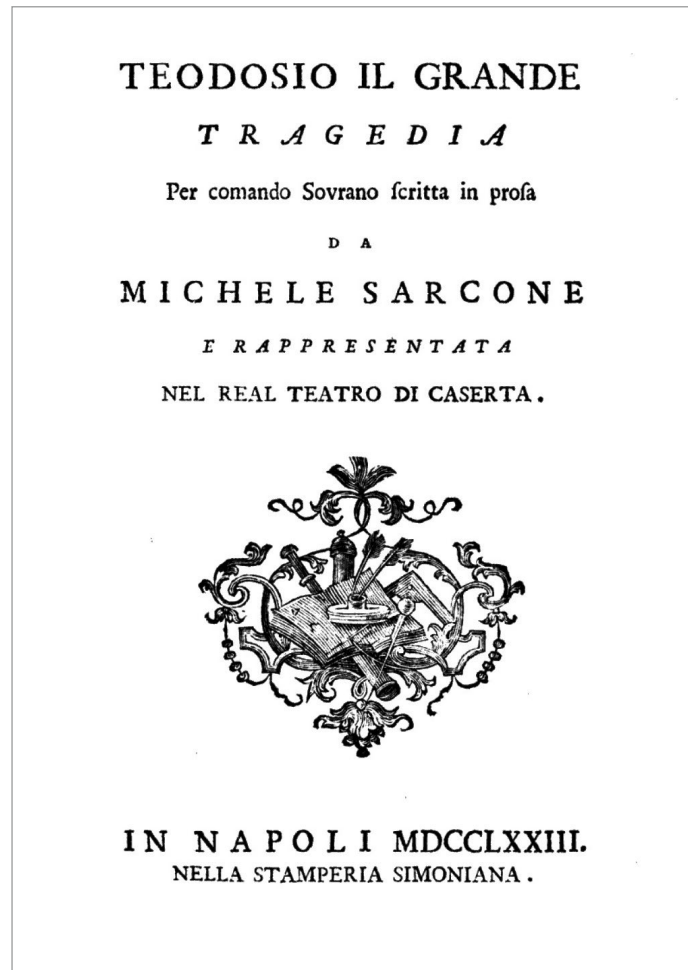


Fig. 5. M. Sarcone, *Teodosio il grande*, Napoli 1772, title page.

#### IV.

Turning our attention now to the music, the very first opera in Caserta was *L'idolo cinese* (Fig. 6) by Giovanni Paisiello, performed in May 1768 (App. 3).<sup>34</sup> The work had been premiered at the Teatro Nuovo in the spring of the previous year,<sup>35</sup> and was a great success,<sup>36</sup> so great that the king had asked to see it in the royal palace of Naples.<sup>37</sup> But the Caserta performance had a special significance, since the score was chosen to celebrate the arrival in the kingdom of the new queen Maria Carolina and her first meeting with Ferdinand IV. One could be surprised that a comic opera was used in so a solemn occasion, but we have to note that *L'idolo cinese* was just the first musical offering to the bride; later in Naples, the royal marriage would be glorified through a very conventional “festa teatrale”, *Peleo e Tetide*, set to music by Paisiello as well, and based on a libretto by Giambattista Basso Bassi full of allegorical and mythological allusions.<sup>38</sup>

I like to suppose that the choice of Paisiello's *Idolo* was also suggested by the young age of the newly-married couple (Ferdinand was 17 years old, Maria Carolina 16). The “operetta giocosa”, in other words, could be seen as a charming and exhilarating homage before the starting of the official celebrations in the capital. The singers were the same as the original Neapolitan production: Giuseppe Casaccia (Tuberone), Nicoletta Montorsi (Ergilla), Niccolò Grimaldi (Liconatte), Delia Pagano (Kametri), Grazia d'Aniello (Adolfo), Antonio Casaccia (Pilottola), Angiola Terracciano (Parmetella); only the minor role of Gilbo was performed by a different artist (Filippo Casaccia in place of Emanuela di Nardo). The frontispiece of the libretto underlines the specific destination through clear symbols: the central image shows Cupid's bow and arrows entwined with bridal torches; the *putto* on the left carries a crown of olive-branches, thus advising the royal couple to be judicious; the other *putto* on the right, by playing his trumpet, spreads the

34 Many details in Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, pp. 30–32.

35 See Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, n. 12660.

36 See the preface “L'editore ai lettori”, in: Giambattista Lorenzi: *Opere teatrali*, 4 vols., Napoli 1806–1820, vol. II, pp. III–XVI: XIV.

37 On 6 June the king, having learned that in the Teatro Nuovo there was a comic opera “de varios y graciosos acachimentos, y que en ella, ni respecto á los actores haya nada de indecente, ni contra la buena disciplina”, asked to see it in the royal palace of Naples (see Croce, *I teatri di Napoli*, p. 514).

38 *Festa teatrale in musica per solennizzare le felicissime reali nozze delle loro sacre maestà Ferdinando IV re delle due Sicilie [...] e Maria Carolina arciduchessa d'Austria [...]*, Napoli 1768; the autograph score is preserved in I-Nc, Rari 3.4.3-4 [olim 17.1.18-9]. On this work see Lucio Tufano: “La speranza de' regni”. Celebrazione e spettacolo in tre ‘feste’ napoletane: Paisiello (1768), Jommelli (1772), Cafaro (1775)”, in: *La festa teatrale nel Settecento. Dalla corte di Vienna alle corti d'Italia, atti del convegno (Reggia di Venaria, 13–14 novembre 2009)*, a cura di Annarita Colturato e Andrea Merlotti, Lucca 2011, pp. 301–321.



Fig. 6. *L'idolo cinese*, Napoli 1768, title page.

fame of the happy event (less clear is the meaning of the two sphinxes, which probably allude to fidelity). The curtain made for the temporary stage that hosted the performance reinforced the symbolism, as it represented Diana (homage paid to hunt, intensely practiced in the surroundings of Caserta) together with Amore and Imeneo (recalling the royal marriage).<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> See Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, p. 28; one can note that Diana was later represented in the sculpture which adorns the main fountain of the park, based on the myth of Actaeon's fatal passion for the goddess.



The 1768 performance of *L'idolo cinese* is marked by a characteristic that was to become standardized in subsequent years: the use of pre-existent scores. The Caserta theatre, opened in 1769, did not offer operas specially composed for it, but rather works already praised in Naples. In order to ensure the king and queen's amusement, the *troupes* working in the city theatres – San Carlo, Nuovo and Fiorentini – were invited to Caserta for one or more evenings. Archival documents show the complexity and expensiveness of moving and housing so many people (singers, orchestra players, and other professional figures involved in the operatic production). At the same time, impresarios received reimbursement for their losses.

The operas performed in Caserta were usually those given in Naples in the same period. In some cases, the performance had a retrospective character, but the possibility of scrolling back the theatrical season in order to select older titles was limited by two factors: taste (eighteenth-century audiences always craved new music) and cast (the revival of a score was strictly linked to the availability of the singers who had learned it by heart). In any case, a performance in Caserta can be seen as a good indicator of a work's success, either contemporary or recent.

The Carnival season of 1769 included three operas, one *seria* and two *buffa*, seven performances total (App. 5). Cafaro's *L'olimpiade* was on stage at the Teatro di San Carlo concurrently (premiered on 12 January).<sup>40</sup> It is interesting to note that the work was given in Caserta together with the elaborate balls between the acts that accompanied it in the capital,<sup>41</sup> a feature to recur in other titles imported from the San Carlo.<sup>42</sup> Paisiello's *La luna abitata* was a production of the Teatro Nuovo dating back to the previous summer,<sup>43</sup> and its performance required the transportation of the original scenes from Naples.<sup>44</sup> Nothing can be said about the Fiorentini comic opera, since the documents omit its title.

Four works were chosen for Carnival 1770 (App. 6). Insanguine's *Didone* was the contemporary serious opera of the San Carlo (premiered on 20 January).<sup>45</sup> When it was given in Caserta on 25 February, a great amount of wood was used for the fire of the city of Carthage; one can assume that the burning happened outside the theatre in the garden at the rear of the building, the removal of curtains from the central window allowing the sight of the flames in

40 See Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, n. 17001.

41 See Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, p. 38.

42 See Nicolini, *La reggia di Caserta*, pp. 145 (for 1770) and 151 (for 1772); see also App. 18 and 22.

43 See Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, n. 14538.

44 See Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, p. 40.

45 See Paologiovanni Maione / Francesca Seller: *Teatro di San Carlo di Napoli. Cronologia degli spettacoli*, vol. I: 1737–1799, Napoli 2005, pp. 138–141.

perspective.<sup>46</sup> A Vanvitelli's school drawing likely depicts this stage invention (Fig. 7),<sup>47</sup> but it might also represent the performance of the same work in 1772 (App. 8). All the three *buffa* titles of 1770 came from the Teatro Nuovo: Tarantini's *La caffettiera di garbo* was running in the same season, but Paisiello's *L'arabo cortese* and Insanguine's *La finta semplice* dated back to winter and autumn of the previous year.<sup>48</sup>

We have only a little information for Carnival 1771 (App. 7); on the operatic side, the offerings were evidently very poor when compared to the previous seasons: no serious opera, and only two *buffa* performances, one from the Fiorentini (directed by Niccolò Piccinni)<sup>49</sup> and one from the Nuovo; the archival sources omit both titles.

In 1772, by contrast, we find a sort of theatrical festival (App. 8). A new San Carlo production of Insanguine's *Didone abbandonata*, with singers other than those of 1770,<sup>50</sup> was transported to Caserta on three different evenings. According to Nicolini, it was for that series of performances that the wall behind the stage was demolished, thus allowing a direct view of the gardens (the resulting arch was later closed with a big door).<sup>51</sup> This architectural solution, which can be seen as an evolution of the one of 1770, attracted the curiosity of contemporary observers,<sup>52</sup> and was considered very appealing even in the early nineteenth century.<sup>53</sup> The *troupes* of the comic theatres alternated contemporary and older titles as usual: Paisiello's *Le trame amorose* (from the Nuovo) and *L'arabo cortese* (from the Fiorentini) were on stage in the same season, while Piccinni's *La corsala* and *La donna di bell'umore* (both from the Fiorentini) dated back to autumn and spring 1771 respectively.<sup>54</sup>

46 See Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, p. 45.

47 New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, accession number 64.669.4.

48 See Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, nn. 4402, 2329 and 10552.

49 See Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, p. 47.

50 We do not know why Insanguine's work was staged again at the San Carlo, starting on 5 February; probably the revival was due to the failure of Hasse's *Ruggiero*, given on 20 January (see Maione/Seller, *Teatro di San Carlo di Napoli. Cronologia*, pp. 155f.).

51 See Nicolini, *La reggia di Caserta*, pp. 150f.

52 See "Es sind vortreffliche Italienische Sachen daselbst". *Louise von Göchhausens Tagebuch ihrer Reise mit Herzogin Anna Amalia nach Italien vom 15. August 1788 bis 18. Juni 1790*, hg. u. kommentiert von Juliane Brandsch, Göttingen 2008, p. 110: "Der Fong [sic] des Theaters kan ganz geöffnet werden und geht der Ausgang auf eine frey Aussicht in den Garden".

53 See Ferdinando Patturelli: *Caserta e San Leucio*, Napoli 1826, p. 11: "Concorre a render magnifiche le rappresentanze di questo teatro il livello del terreno, che è lo stesso del palcoscenico; di maniera che, aperto il portone posto all'occidente del palazzo, si possono avere delle vedute teatrali estesissime".

54 See Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, nn. 23399, 2330, 6693 and 8217.

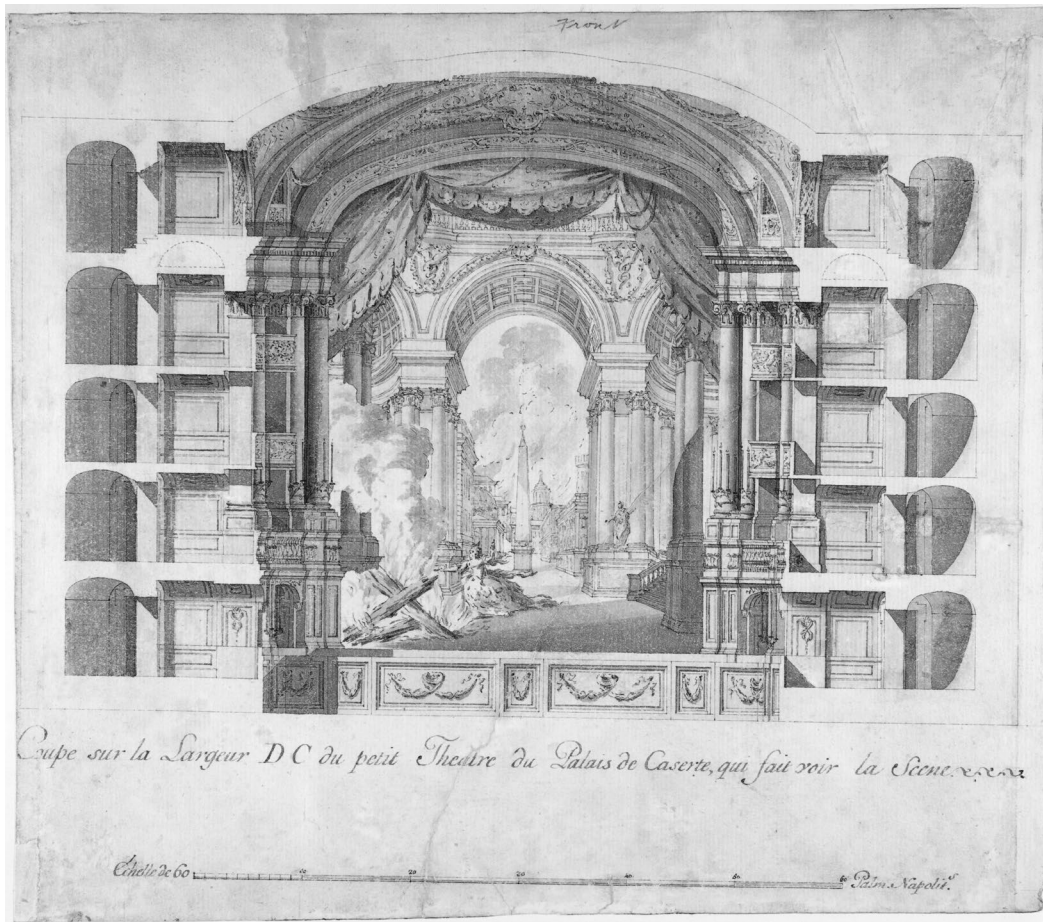


Fig. 7. School of L. Vanvitelli, Court theatre in the Royal Palace of Caserta, transverse section with a view towards the stage.

The last great season in Caserta was that of Carnival 1773 (App. 9), with three *commedie per musica*, two from the Fiorentini and one from the Nuovo: Piccinni's *Astuto balordo* was a contemporary title, while his *Donna vana* dated back to winter 1772, and Paisiello's *Gli amanti comici* to the autumn of the same year.<sup>55</sup>

What can we say in general about these data? On the one hand, Caserta calendars are not original, since all the works they include come from the Neapolitan theatrical system. On the other hand, a specific feature can be seen in the space given to previously-performed operas:

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., nn. 3345, 8276 and 1104.

putting together the most highly praised titles of the last operatic year, Caserta no longer appears as a mere appendix to the Neapolitan stages. Moreover, it has been observed that, in this relocation, “les œuvres changent de sens puisque les conditions de leur réception, les horizons d’attente sont totalement modifiés par le déplacement géographique qui est aussi un déplacement social; la translation n’est pas neutre”.<sup>56</sup>

## V.

The retrospective character of the first seasons in Caserta is strictly linked to and well explained by the fact that Ferdinand and Maria Carolina did not attend the *teatrini* devoted to comic opera during this time. Their theatrical experience had to do only with the San Carlo, which they reached through an internal passage without leaving the royal palace. So, if they did not go to the minor theatres, the minor theatres had to come to them: occasionally in Naples (as in 1768 with Paisiello’s *Idolo*) or Portici,<sup>57</sup> and more often in Caserta. It has been noted that the decline of the operatic activity in Caserta roughly coincided with the moment when the royal couple appeared in the *buffa* theatres of the capital.<sup>58</sup> Newspapers recorded this event, which happened for the first time at the end of June 1776: “Nella scorsa settimana i nostri monarchi sono intervenuti due volte al Teatro Nuovo per goder dell’opera buffa, posta in musica dal celebre Paisiello. Questa è la prima volta che si vedono i nostri sovrani ai piccoli teatri”.<sup>59</sup>

If in 1774 the king and the queen started to spend Carnival in Naples,<sup>60</sup> they did not cease to inhabit the Caserta palace. Consequently, performances continued in other periods of the year (usually from November to January), although not with the abundance and the

56 Mélanie Traversier: *Gouverner l’opéra. Une histoire politique de la musique à Naples, 1767–1815*, Roma 2009, p. 133.

57 See above, fn. 37 and 9 respectively.

58 See Traversier, *Gouverner l’opéra*, pp. 134–137.

59 *Gazzetta universale*, III/56, 13 July 1776, p. 445. The fact is emphasized by Ferdinando Galiani in a letter to Louise d’Épinay dated 6 July: “Vous dirai-je que Paisiello nous a donné un opéra bouffon d’une musique tellement supérieure, qu’elle a engagé les souverains à aller à son petit théâtre l’entendre, événement nouveau depuis l’établissement de la monarchie chez nous” (Galiani/d’Épinay, *Correspondance*, vol. V, n. CDLIX, pp. 86f.).

60 The court had initially planned to spend the 1774 Carnival in Caserta, and various productions had been scheduled for this reason, including Gluck’s *Orfeo ed Euridice* and Goldoni’s comedy *L’amante militare* (see Nicolini, *La Reggia di Caserta*, p. 153); subsequently the king and the queen changed their minds and moved to Caserta only for Lent (App. 10).

regularity of the past.<sup>61</sup> In this new phase, the general trend is – with very few exceptions – the import of contemporary works. It is clear that, during their longer stays in Caserta, Ferdinand and Maria Carolina did not wish to renounce their daily amusements, so the spectacles “followed” the court in order to recreate in province the same artistic occasions offered by the capital.

In the last months of 1774 Caserta hosted Paisiello’s *Il credulo deluso* from the Nuovo and Gluck’s *Orfeo ed Euridice* from the San Carlo (App. 11–12).<sup>62</sup> During that year Gluck’s masterpiece had appeared in Naples in two different productions: an *Orfeo* close to the version revised by the author for Parma in 1763 was performed in the court theatre of the royal palace in Carnival; then, on 4 November, the Teatro di San Carlo staged a *pasticcio* for eight characters with additions by Johann Christian Bach and other composers.<sup>63</sup> It was this latter version that reached Caserta, but archival sources mention payments for only three names of the San Carlo cast: Giusto Ferdinando Tenducci (*Orfeo*), Antonia Bernasconi (*Euridice*) and a “secondo uomo”, probably Giuseppe Pugnetti (*Amore*). One can suppose that, for the Caserta performance, the San Carlo score was shortened and reduced to a “festa teatrale”, a structure similar to that seen by the Neapolitan audience in Carnival with other singers.<sup>64</sup>

In 1776 an unnamed *opera buffa* was performed on 4 January to solemnize the birthday of the crown prince, while in May another comic work was offered to very distinguished guests (App. 13–14). In January 1781 we find Gazzaniga’s *La vendemmia* from the Teatro del Fondo (App. 17),<sup>65</sup> a stage recently opened and devoted to comic and *mezzo carattere* works. On 4 November of the same year an extraordinary event happened, the premiere of the new San Carlo opera, Francesco Bianchi’s *La Zemira*,<sup>66</sup> taking place not in the capital city’s great theatre, but in Caserta (App. 18). Despite the fact that this is an exceptional case, it confirms that the calendar of the Teatro di San Carlo was conditioned by the rhythms and

61 An early example of operatic performance in a period other than Carnival is Piccinni’s *La locandiera di spirito* in November 1768 (App. 4); the work was on stage in the same season at the Teatro Nuovo (see Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, n. 14383).

62 *Ibid.*, nn. 6871 and 17440.

63 See Lucio Tufano: “Josef Mysliveček e l’esecuzione napoletana dell’*Orfeo* di Gluck (1774)”, in: *Hudební věda*, 43 (2006), pp. 257 f.; and “La ‘riforma’ a Napoli: materiali per un capitolo di storia della ricezione”, in: *Gluck der Europäer, Kongressbericht (Nürnberg, 5.–7. März 2005)* (= *Gluck-Studien* 5), hg. von Irene Brandenburg u. Tanja Gölz, Kassel u. Basel 2009, pp. 103–144.

64 *Ibid.*, pp. 109 f.

65 See Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, n. 24501.

66 *Ibid.*, n. 25280.

desires of the court: the presence of Ferdinand and Maria Carolina attracted the shows like a magnet.<sup>67</sup> More usual is the performance, on 25 December 1782, of Bianchi's *La Zulima* (App. 22), which had been running at the San Carlo since 4 November.<sup>68</sup> In January 1783 Pietro Alessandro Guglielmi's *Il matrimonio in contrasto* arrived from the Fiorentini.<sup>69</sup> In January 1786 came another Gluck opera, *Alceste* (App. 30), staged at the Teatro del Fondo in the previous October:<sup>70</sup> this production encountered various problems due to the inadequacy of the orchestra and singers,<sup>71</sup> but its transportation to Caserta confirms the court's interest in Gluck's music. A dubious case is Guglielmi's *Debora e Sisara* of 1788: the "azione sacra per musica" enjoyed tremendous success at the San Carlo,<sup>72</sup> and sources report that the king, enthusiastic about the score,<sup>73</sup> wanted to offer special performances of the work to his wife, who was spending time in Caserta while pregnant (App. 38); however, we do not know if his plan was realized.

## VI.

From time to time Caserta abandoned its role of satellite of Naples and hosted works that, although pre-existent and not expressly composed for its stage, had never been seen in the capital city. This was the case of two operas created by Paisiello during his stay in Russia. *La finta amante* (1780) was performed in Caserta during summer 1782 and again in January 1783

67 It is interesting to note that the standard contract form used by the San Carlo management to engage the singers for the season 1784–1785 expressly mentions the duty of performing on request in one of the *siti reali*: see Traversier, *Gouverner l'opéra*, p. 388.

68 See Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, n. 25435.

69 Ibid., n. 15174.

70 Ibid., n. 599.

71 On contemporary criticism see Tufano, "La 'riforma' a Napoli", pp. 114–117.

72 See Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, n. 7256. See also *Gazzetta universale*, XV / 17, 27 February 1788, p. 136: "Nella sera de' 13 del corr[ente] andò in scena nel Teatro di S. Carlo il nuovo dramma sacro *Debora e Sisara*, posto in musica dal celebre maestro di cappella Guglielmi. Pochi esempi vi sono di un applauso simile a quello che riportò e riporta tuttora questo superbo spettacolo, specialmente per la musica che è sorprendente e che viene mirabilmente eseguita dalla virtuosa Banti e dai professori David e Crescentini. Compariscono sulla scena in gran numero cammelli e cavalli, e le decorazioni inventate e dipinte dal valoroso sig. Domenico Chelli corrispondono alla magnificenza di tutto il rimanente". For a modern edition of the score see Pietro Alessandro Guglielmi: *Debora e Sisara*, editors Anthony DelDonna, Eleonora Negri and Francesco Ermini Polacci, Louisville 2003.

73 See *Gazzetta universale*, XV / 19, 4 March 1788, p. 152: "S.M. si è degnata di onorare più volte colla sua presenza questo r. Teatro di S. Carlo per sentire il dramma sacro *Debora e Sisara*, avendo sempre dati replicati contrassegni del suo gradimento, con aver fatti per fino replicare alcuni pezzi di musica. È prodigioso il concorso che vi è in ogni sera".

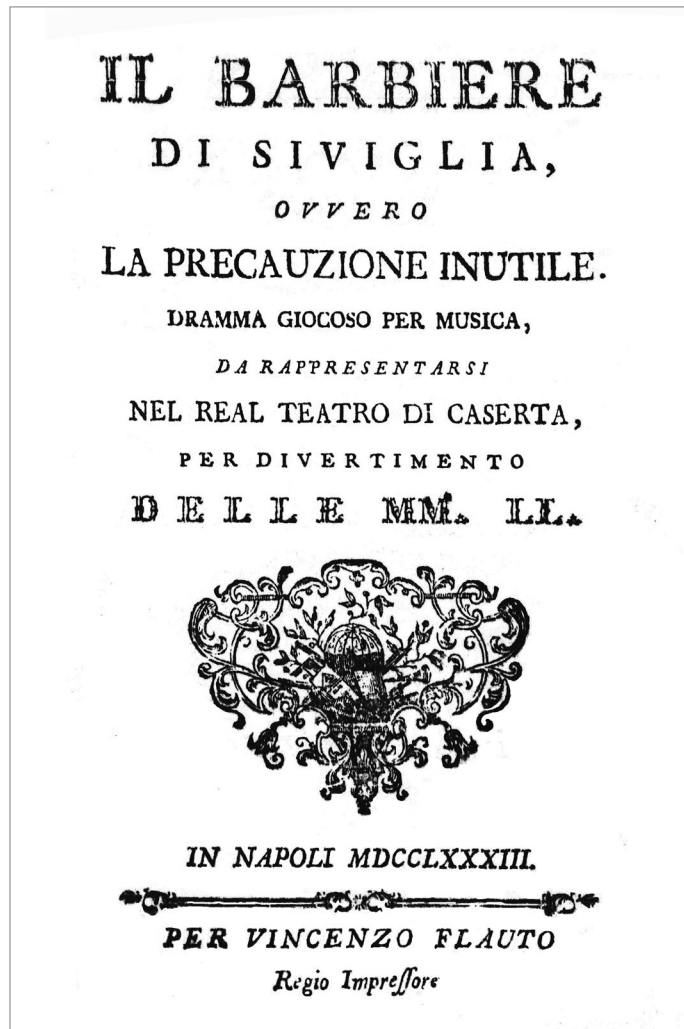


Fig. 8. *Il barbiere di Siviglia ovvero La precauzione inutile*, Napoli 1783, title page.

(App. 20, 23), and reached a Neapolitan public theatre only five years later.<sup>74</sup> In November 1783 another interesting title, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (Fig. 8), was offered to the archduchess Maria Amalia of Parma, Maria Carolina's sister, who was visiting the kingdom of the Two Sicilies (App. 25). Composed for the empress Catherine II in 1782, this famous work had been staged

<sup>74</sup> It was staged at the Teatro de' Fiorentini in 1788 (see Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, n. 10399); another performance took place in Portici (see above, fn. 13).

in Vienna in August of the subsequent year, and the Caserta performance clearly descended from the Viennese one; the Teatro de' Fiorentini production came in 1787.<sup>75</sup>

At this point we can observe that publishing the libretto of the works given in Caserta was not a usual practice. We have extant copies of only two titles, *L'idolo cinese* and *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, both linked to celebratory occasions (the arrival of Queen Maria Carolina for the former, the visit of Maria Amalia for the latter). Archival records also document payments for the librettos of Paisiello's *Le trame amorose* and *L'arabo cortese* in 1772,<sup>76</sup> but no copies have come down to us. In these cases one can suppose that the royal administration did not pay for a special edition indicating Caserta on the frontispiece, but rather for existing – or additional – copies of the librettos printed in conjunction with the performances in Naples. This conjecture appears to be confirmed by the fact that fees were not paid to a typographer, but to the impresarios Gennaro Bianchi (Nuovo) and Francesco Dolziteli (Fiorentini).

## VII.

The court theatre designed by Vanvitelli was not the only venue for music in Caserta. Newspapers and other evidence provide examples of both large open-air activities and informal entertainments held in private chambers of the palace. The great feasts organized at harvest-time in summer 1782 (App. 19) belong to the first category; during the last evenings, in particular, members of the lower class were admitted, and they brought their traditional musical instruments so as to play and dance while enjoying the superb illuminations. On the other hand, Caserta hosted several performances for a restricted audience (the royal family and few members of the court): a cantata for four voices by Paisiello – probably *Lucinda e Armidoro* – was sung on 24 December 1782 in the royal apartments (App. 21); on 28 November 1783 princess Maria Teresa, the future wife of emperor Francis II of Austria, played harpsichord with great ability in a private concert (App. 26);<sup>77</sup> on Christmas evening of 1784 there was a musical entertainment by the famous violinist Felice Giardini, newly arrived from England; in March 1786 two German musicians, Ram and Cannabich, probably played in Caserta (App. 28, 34).

75 See Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, n. 3741; for a modern edition of the score see Giovanni Paisiello: *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, edizione critica a cura di Francesco Paolo Russo, 2 vols., Laaber 2001.

76 See Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, p. 54 and “Feste, spettacoli e teatro di corte”, p. 347 (114 and 150 copies respectively).

77 The Neapolitan princess was destined to become a refined *dilettante* and a great music patron: see John A. Rice: *Empress Marie Therese and music at the Viennese court, 1792–1807*, Cambridge 2003.



In February 1786 Ferdinand and Maria Carolina's daughters performed Racine's *Esther* in the original French with choruses set to music by the castrato Vito Giuseppe Millico (App. 31);<sup>78</sup> given again in May (App. 35), the work was highly praised by the queen,<sup>79</sup> and probably contributed to the choice of Millico as singing teacher of the royal princesses.<sup>80</sup> This kind of intimate and "familiar" event recalls in some way the Viennese tradition of short dramatic works performed by Maria Theresa's young daughters, as well as their artistic and pedagogical meaning; another example is the "operetta" with dance performed by the princes and princesses in January 1797 (App. 43). Vanvitelli's palace hosted concerts too, ranging from large to minimal scale (App. 27, 45).

### VIII.

If one is looking for a musical work specially composed for Caserta, he has to leave behind the luxurious rooms of the main palace, and to cast a glance at a pleasant suburb, 4 kilometres away: San Leucio (Fig. 9). This village, with its small building called Belvedere, was Ferdinand's favourite place of respite. In fact, the Caserta royal residence, with its grand dimensions and ceremonial duties, was nothing more than a duplicate of the Neapolitan court. In San Leucio, instead, the king felt free and happy, so he decided to promote and protect the local population by stimulating the development of a silk factory. His love for San Leucio led him to promulgate a separate civil code (Fig. 10), which transformed the rural community in a sort of utopian society, considered by historians as one of the highest achievements of the Bourbon reformism.

78 A manuscript copy of Millico's score is preserved in A-Wn, Mus. Hs. 9927. Norbert Hadrava expressed a very negative judgment on the composition: "Signor M[illico], der veraltete Castrat und dermalen seyn woll[ende] Compositeur, hat von der Musick des Lulli (welch[er] die Chöre für diese Tragedie in Frankreich jehmal [in] Musick gesetzt hat) das Beste entlehnt, und das [ganze] zusammengestückt auf mosaische Art so gut al[s er] es konnte, dennoch sind viele Stellen wider d[en] Rhythmus eingeschlichen, welche jeden geübten mu[sika]lischen Ohr unertraglich zu vernehmen waren, v[on] den häufigen Fehlern in der französischen Sprache ([wel]che gar nicht des Sängers Sache ist) und d[er] Prosodie oder Sylbenmaaß ist gar nichts zu e[r]wähnen" (letter to Johan Paul Schulthesius dated Caserta 14 March 1786, in Giuliana Gialdroni: "La musica a Napoli alla fine del XVIII secolo nelle lettere di Norbert Hadrava", in: *Fonti musicali italiane*, 1 (1996), pp. 75–143: n. 11, p. 114).

79 See *Notizie del mondo*, XVIII/44, 3 June 1786, p. 352: "Avendo il celebre soprano sig. Vito Millico posta in musica per ordine della m[aestà] della regina una tragedia da cantarsi dalle reali principessine, ed avendo la musica incontrato il genio della M.S., ha dati contrassegni certi al suddetto soprano del suo gradimento con sontuosissimi regali".

80 See *Notizie del mondo*, XVIII/53, 4 July 1786, p. 424: "È stato fatto maestro di canto delle reali infante il sig. Giuseppe Millico, con lo stipendio di ducati 50 al mese".



Fig. 9. F. Patturelli, *Caserta e San Leucio*, Napoli 1826, map (detail).

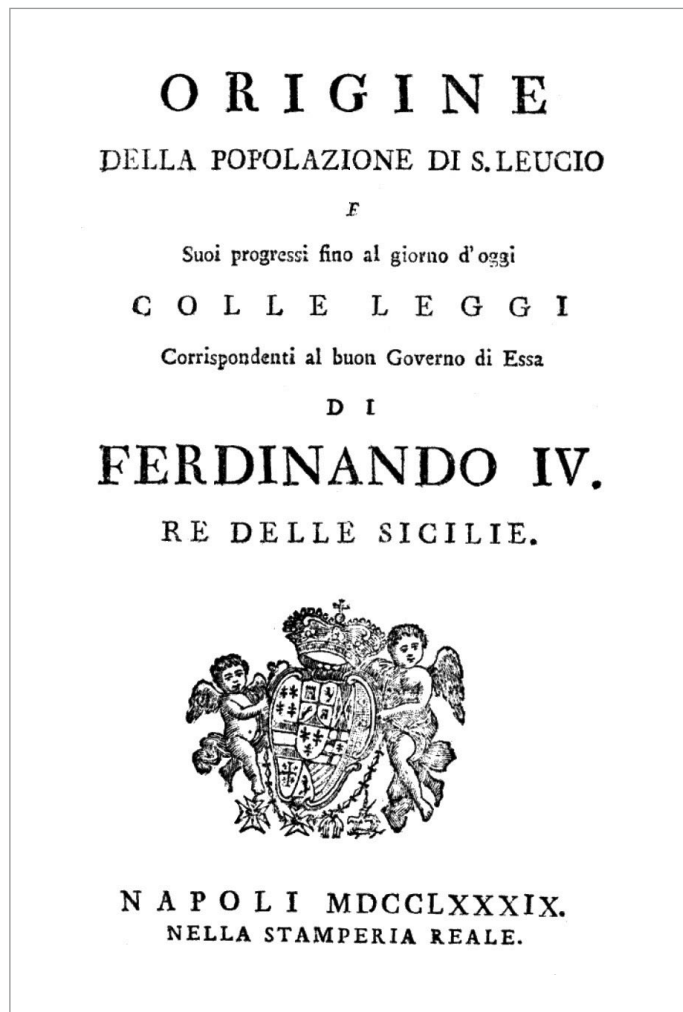


Fig. 10. *Origine della popolazione di S. Leucio*, Napoli 1789, title page.

San Leucio is the real Arcadia of the Neapolitan royal family, and for San Leucio a masterpiece of eighteenth-century music was created, Paisiello's *Nina o sia La pazza per amore* (Fig. 11). Commissioned for the first official visit of Queen Maria Carolina to the new "colony", the work was premiered on 25 June 1789, at sunset, in a temporary theatre erected in the gardens (App. 39). According to its French source (Marsollier and Dalayrac's *Nina ou La folle par amour*), Paisiello's score adopts spoken dialogue in place of recitative. The plot is extremely linear, and the composer appears to be influenced by the particular bucolic context in more than one respect. A good

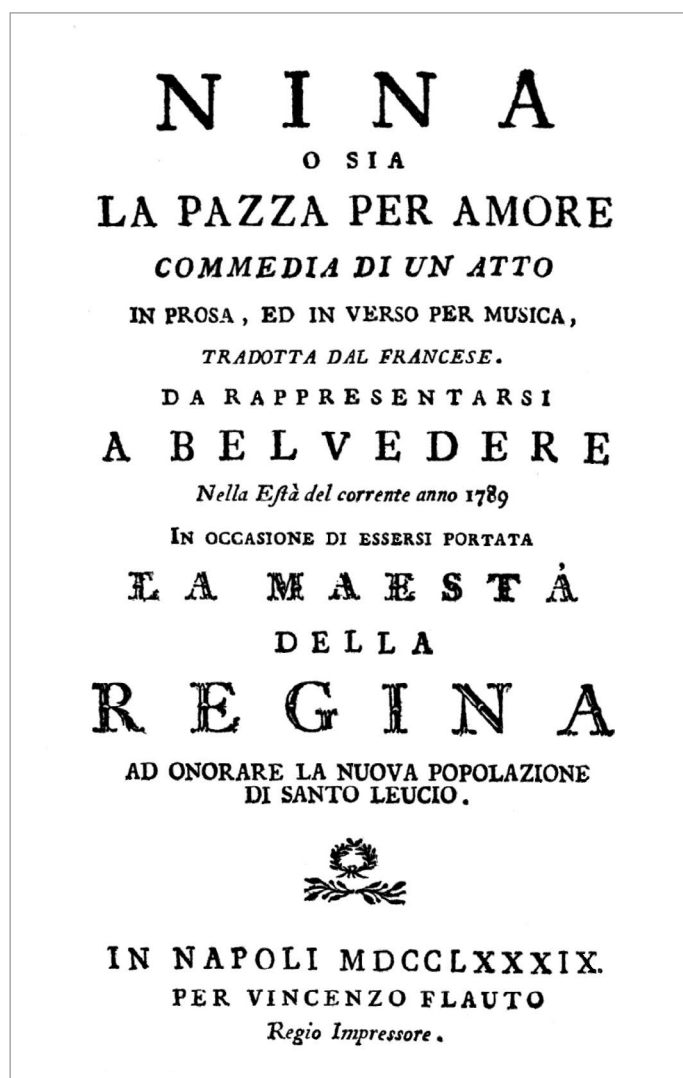


Fig. 11. *Nina o sia La pazza per amore*, Napoli 1789, title page.

example is the opera's most famous number, Nina's *Il mio ben quando verrà*. Here Paisiello reaches a great expressiveness using very simple means (Example 1). On the velvet background of triplets, flute and oboe anticipate the vocal melody; the two wind instruments embody the voice of nature, which not only surrounds the young girl, but reflects and shares her melancholy. Nina sings with the language of the heart, so her melodic line is plain and without ornamentation.

Andante moderato

The musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes Flauto, Oboe, Fagotti, Corni in fa, Violini I, Violini II, Viole, and Bassi. The second system includes Fag., Cor., N., VI. I, VI. II, Vle, and Bsi. The tempo is marked 'Andante moderato'. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. Dynamics include *p* (piano), *pp* (pianissimo), and *ppp* (pianississimo). The vocal line (N.) includes the lyrics: "Il mi - o ben quan - do ver - rà a ve - der la me - sta a - mi - ca,".

Example 1. G. Paisiello, *Nina o sia La pazza per amore*: “Il mio ben quando verrà” (bb. 1–24).

Example 1. *Continuation*

*Nina* achieved great success and soon migrated to the Teatro de' Fiorentini, where it was performed in its original one act version in July 1789,<sup>81</sup> and in a more usual form in two acts in 1790.<sup>82</sup> Such a route is symmetrically opposite to that usually travelled by the works performed in Caserta: in this case, the provincial stage has an active role and offers its own artistic product to the capital city.

We have also to spot a special feature in the first performance of *Nina* in San Leucio, *i.e.* the involvement of the local community. The chronicles describe a very unusual circumstance, the *parterre* being occupied by the court and the highest nobility, and an amphitheatre built in front of the stage hosting the humble citizens of San Leucio. Such close proximity between the two extremes of the social ladder is unimaginable elsewhere, and can be explained only by the king's deep feeling for the colony. This special atmosphere can also be recognized in the 1791 celebrations for the second anniversary of the village's founding, which show

81 See "Es sind vortreffliche Italienische Sachen daselbst". Louise von Göchhausens Tagebuch, pp. 90 and 92.

82 See Lucio Tufano: "Nina o sia La pazza per amore: note e osservazioni tra filologia e drammaturgia", in: *Giovanni Paisiello e la cultura europea del suo tempo, atti del convegno (Taranto, 20-23 giugno 2002)*, a cura di Francesco Paolo Russo, Lucca 2007, pp. 151-178.

once more a large cross-section of society participating in a joyous dance (App. 41). A similar event occurred in summer 1797 for the marriage of crown prince Francesco and Maria Clementina of Austria: a rich luncheon was given to the members of the colony while two military bands played, and the king himself supervised the rehearsals of the *contraddanza* scheduled for the evening (App. 46). The love of the court for San Leucio is also evident from the choice of the village (and not Caserta) for the site of many different balls in 1795, 1797 and 1798 (App. 42, 44, 47).<sup>83</sup>

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83 This essay was delivered to the editors before the publication of the study by Raffaella Passariello/Stefania Prisco: “Le fonti bancarie napoletane sullo spettacolo degli anni Settanta del XVIII secolo”, in: *Le stagioni di Niccolò Jommelli*, a cura di Maria Ida Biggi, Francesco Cotticelli, Palogiovanni Maione e Iskrena Yordanova, Napoli 2018, pp. 481–539, which provides extensive new information on the spectacular activity in Caserta in the Seventies.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Margaret Butler for assistance with the English text.

## Appendix

[1] 1767 – Five *all'improvviso* comedies were performed by the court company; two titles are known: *Il selvaggio* and *La moglie* (see Nicolini, *La reggia di Caserta*, p. 133).

[2] Carnival 1768 – Four *all'improvviso* comedies were performed by the court company; two comedies were performed by the Teatro Nuovo company (see Nicolini, *La reggia di Caserta*, pp. 133–135).

[3] May 1768 – Giovanni Paisiello's *L'idolo cinese* was performed on 13 (according to Nicolini, *La reggia di Caserta*, p. 136) or 14 May (according to the anonymous *Continuazione del viaggio di sua maestà Maria Carolina regina delle due Sicilie dalla terra di Marino a Cisterna e Terracina, cerimonia fattasi in detta città per la solenne consegna della maestà sua, proseguimento a Caserta e pubblico ingresso nella città di Napoli*, Roma 1768, p. [3]); other performances took place in the subsequent days, as far as the singers remained in Caserta until 18 May (see Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, p. 28; a document quoted *ibid.*, p. 30, mentions three “operas”, likely meaning three performances of the same score).

[4] November 1768 – Croce (*I teatri di Napoli*, p. 540) mentions a performance in Caserta of *La locandiera di spirito*, which is reasonably Niccolò Piccinni's opera of the same title.

[5] Carnival 1769 – The court theatre hosted three performances of Pasquale Cafaro's *L'olimpiade* by the Teatro di San Carlo company on 24 and 31 January and 7 February, two performances of Giovanni Paisiello's *La luna abitata* by the Teatro Nuovo company on 28 January and 4 February, and two performances of an unspecified comic opera by the Teatro de' Fiorentini company on 25 January and 1 February. Six balls took place in the “sala del palazzo” on 22, 26 and 29 January and 2, 5 and 7 February. Five *all'improvviso* comedies were performed by the court company in the “teatrino di camera” on 23, 27 and 30 January and 3 and 6 February (see Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, pp. 35–41; the preliminary calendar – quoted by Nicolini, *La reggia di Caserta*, p. 141 – was slightly different).

[6] Carnival 1770 – The court theatre hosted a performance of Giacomo Insanguine's *Didone* by the Teatro di San Carlo company on 25 February, while the Teatro Nuovo company staged



*La finta semplice o sia Il tutore burlato* of the same composer on 22 January, Paisiello's *L'arabo cortese* on 29 January and 8 and 22 February, and Pasquale Tarantini's *La caffettiera di garbo* on 15 February; another performance by the Nuovo singers took place on 5 February, but the title remains unspecified. Five balls took place in the court theatre on 28 January and 4, 11, 18 and 27 February. Four *all'improvviso* comedies were performed on 17 January and 3, 10 and 17 February in the "teatrino di camera", which hosted also two performances of Domenico Barone's *Claudia* on 24 and 26 February (see Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, pp. 43–46; Nicolini, *La reggia di Caserta*, p. 145 mentions only four balls).

[7] *Carnival 1771* – The court theatre hosted two unspecified *buffa* performances, one by the Teatro Nuovo company on 24 January, and one by the Teatro de' Fiorentini company on 30 January. Four balls took place in the same space on 27 January and 3, 10 and 12 February. Comedies were performed by the court *troupe* on 22 and 28 January and 4 and 11 February, by the Teatro Nuovo company on 25 January and 1 and 5 February, and by the Teatro de' Fiorentini company on 7 February (see Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, pp. 46–49; the preliminary calendar – quoted by Nicolini, *La reggia di Caserta*, p. 147 – was slightly different).

[8] *Carnival 1772* – The court theatre hosted three performances of Insanguine's *Didone abbandonata* by the Teatro di San Carlo company on 13 and 20 February and 3 March, a performance of Paisiello's *Le trame amorose* by the Teatro Nuovo company on 26 February, and three different productions of the Teatro de' Fiorentini: Piccinni's *La corsala* on 23 January, *La donna di bell'umore* of the same composer on 28 January, and Paisiello's *L'arabo cortese* on 2 and 16 February and 1 March. The court company performed Scipione Maffei's tragedy *Merope* (altered by Michele Sarcone) on 22 and 30 January and 6 and 18 February, *Il continuo di Francavigliola* on 22 February, and Carlo Goldoni's comedy *Il bugiardo* (altered by Giambattista Lorenzi) on 27 February. Francesco Cerlone's *Il tiranno cinese* was performed by the Teatro Nuovo actors on 11 February, while the Teatro de' Fiorentini *troupe* offered *La dama in cimento* on 15 February (see Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, pp. 52–56; Nicolini, *La reggia di Caserta*, pp. 148–151, omits the performances of 22 and 27 February).

[9] *Carnival 1773* – Paisiello's *Gli amanti comici* was performed by the Teatro Nuovo company on 22 January and 12 and 19 February; the Teatro de' Fiorentini company staged Piccinni's *La donna vana* on 26 January and his *L'astuto balordo* on 5 and 13 February. The court *troupe* performed *L'uomo della montagna* by Giovan Giuseppe Giron prince of Canneto on 23 January and 2, 9 and 20 February, and Goldoni's *La bottega del caffè* on 27 and 28 January and 7 February. Michele Sarcone's tragedy *Teodosio il grande* was staged by the Teatro Nuovo

company on 30 and 31 January and 11 and 21 February. The French company of the Teatro de' Fiorentini performed Voltaire's *Tancredi* on 4 February, Mercier's *Le déserteur* on 14 February, Collé's *La partie de chasse d'Henri IV* on 16 February, and Beaumerchais's *Eugénie* on 22 February (see Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, pp. 56–61; some of the dates given by Nicolini, *La reggia di Caserta*, pp. 151–153, are different).

[10] *February/March (Lent) 1774* – Gaetano Pozzi, from Rome, offered various puppet shows; on 13 March a “vayle de cuerda” was performed (Nicolini, *La reggia di Caserta*, p. 154).

[11] *24 November and 3 December 1774* – Giovanni Paisiello's *Il credulo deluso* was performed two times by the Teatro Nuovo company (Pascuzzi, *Feste e spettacoli*, pp. 64f.).

[12] *4 December 1774* – Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* was performed by the Teatro di San Carlo company (see Tufano, “La ‘riforma’ a Napoli”, pp. 109f.); a second performance in Caserta was planned for 1 January 1775, but according to Nicolini (*La reggia di Caserta*, p. 155) it was canceled because the queen was about to give birth to the crown prince.

[13] *4 January 1776* – “Ricorrendo giovedì [4 January] l'anniversario della nascita del r. principe ereditario, vi fu gran gala a Caserta essendo state le LL.MM. complimentate dagli eletti di questa città, ministri esteri, nobiltà ec. In detto giorno vi fu [...] la corsa dei barberi, e nella sera opera buffa in quel teatro” (*Gazzetta universale*, III/5, 16 January 1776, p. 38; a ball had been previously planned for the same occasion: see *Gazzetta universale*, III/2, 6 January 1776, p. 15).

[14] *2 May 1776* – “Martedì della scorsa settimana [30 April] la corte passò in Caserta co' reali ospiti [the duke Albert of Saxony-Teschen and his wife the archduchess Maria Christina of Austria]; giovedì [2 May] dopo pranzo si fece osservare a' med[esimi] la grandiosa caduta dell'acque, e nella sera vi fu opera buffa in musica con intervento di numerosa nobiltà” (*Gazzetta universale*, III/40, 18 May 1776, p. 319).

[15] *4 January 1777* – “Nel dì 4 [January], giorno natalizio del r. principe ereditario, si darà in Caserta corsa di barberi, e l'opera buffa di questo Teatro de' Fiorentini si reciterà in detta sera in quella r. villa” (*Gazzetta universale*, IV/3, 11 January 1777, pp. 23f.).

[16] *4 October 1777* – “Sabato [4 October] ricorrendo il giorno di nome del neonato secondogenito, fu dato appartamento e ballo alla nobiltà nel casino di Belvedere presso S. Leuci” (*Gazzetta universale*, IV/83, 18 October 1777, p. 664).

[17] 12 January 1781 – “Nel dì 12 [January], ricorrendo la nascita del re, fu gran gala e baciavano a Caserta, quindi la sera in quel teatro dalla compagnia buffa, detto del Fondo, fu messa in scena la burletta intitolata *La vendemmia*, già musica del sig. Gazaniga” (*Gazzetta universale*, VIII/7, 23 January 1781, pp. 55 f.).

[18] 4 November 1781 – “Ricorrendo domenica [4 November] la gran gala di S. Carlo, di cui porta il nome S.M. cattolica, fu rappresentato per la prima volta nel r. teatro di Caserta il dramma *La Zemira* messo in musica dal sig. Francesco Bianchi, il quale riportò grande applauso e dalle LL.MM., e dalla numerosa nobiltà accorsavi, e questa sera ha avuto il medesimo favorevole incontro in questo r. Teatro di S. Carlo, precisamente il terzetto, un’aria della prima donna, il quartetto e l’aria del secondo atto del primo uomo, e altri pezzi del terzo atto” (*Gazzetta universale*, VIII/92, 17 November 1781, p. 735). The performance in Caserta is confirmed by the *Notizie del mondo*, XIII/92, 17 November 1781, p. 736, which adds information about the balls: “Ebbero pure il maggiore incontro i balli, fra i quali quello intitolato *La bella Arsene*, composto ed eseguito dal celebre maestro Picq, che per la novità del soggetto, vaghezza delle situazioni e magnificenza dello spettacolo fu sommamente applaudito”.

[19] June–July 1782 – “Jeri sera [23 June] fu dato principio in Caserta a tre grandiose feste serali ordinate dalle LL.MM. per divertimento di questa nobiltà, che vi si è portata in gran numero per goderle. Sono eseguite in occasione di essersi portato il re per pochi giorni, essendo il tempo della mietitura, unitamente a’ suoi gentiluomini d’onore a mietere in un contiguo campo dalla real sua villa” (*Gazzetta universale*, IX/53, 2 July 1782, p. 432). The calendar was modified: “Le feste di Caserta non sono state eseguite nei determinati giorni come si disse, ma solo nei 30 del caduto giugno e primo del corrente [July], stante una piccola febbre sopraggiunta alla maestà della regina, che si è ora rimessa in ottimo stato di salute” (*Gazzetta universale*, IX/55, 9 July 1782, p. 448). A detailed description of the the last evenings is available: “Le prime feste di Caserta essendo restate alquanto spopolate per non esserne permesso l’ingresso altro che alla nobiltà e cittadinanza, S.M. ordinò che si facesse sapere a tutto il contado di quei contorni, che poteva venire a godere di detto spettacolo, e seco portasse gl’istrumenti di cui son soliti quegli abitanti di servirsi nelle loro allegrezze campestri. Sì grande fu il concorso nelle seguenti sere per vedere specialmente l’illuminazione del gran viale, che è uno de’ più bei colpi d’occhio che possa mai vedersi, che si vuole che ascendesse a più di 36 mila persone. Il maggior divertimento era quello di mirare un’immensa quantità di popolo assiso in terra a cenare, e chi a sonare e ballare. Le LL.MM., in compagnia de’ ministri esteri, cariche di corte e gran nobiltà, dimostrarono sommo piacere di un tale

spettacolo riuscito bellissimo in tutte le sue parti. Jeri poi si restituirono in città” (*Gazzetta universale*, IX/57, 16 July 1782, p. 464).

[20] *Summer 1782* – Giovanni Paisiello’s *La finta amante* was performed on unknown dates (see below, App. 23).

[21] *24 December 1782* – “Nel martedì 24 detto [December] li nostri sovrani se ne ritornarono a Caserta e la sera nel loro appartamento fecero cantare una cantata della musica di Paesiello a quattro voci, cioè la Balducci, la Cortellini [*sic*], il tenore ed il primo uomo del real Teatro di S. Carlo; soltanto le persone di corte furono ammesse” (undated diplomatic report, published by Alessandro Lattanzi: “Vita musicale a Napoli nei dispacci del corrispondente della Cancelleria modenese (1779–1784)”, in: *Fonti d’archivio per la storia della musica e dello spettacolo a Napoli tra XVI e XVIII secolo*, a cura di Paologiovanni Maione, Napoli 2001, pp. 386–425: n. 11, p. 411; according to Lattanzi, Paisiello’s cantata could be *Lucinda e Armidoro*).

[22] *25 December 1782* – “In quella sera [25 December] nel teatro di Caserta si rappresentò l’opera del Teatro di S. Carlo con li balli, e vi fu gran nobiltà” (same diplomatic record quoted above, App. 21, p. 411). The performance is confirmed by the *Gazzetta universale*, X/2, 7 January 1783, p. 14: “In occasione della gala, a Caserta [...] fu trasportata l’opera del teatro reale”. According to Lattanzi, the work was Giuseppe Maria Curcio’s *La Nitteti*, but the opera on stage at the Teatro di San Carlo from 10 November 1782 to January 1783 was Francesco Bianchi’s *La Zulima* (see Maione/Seller, *Teatro di San Carlo di Napoli. Cronologia*, pp. 224–228).

[23] *4 January 1783* – “Nella mattina del sabato [4 January] il re invitò il duca di Chartres a pranso [*sic*] sopra il casino di S. Leucio, e in quel giorno si fecero due caccie, una di facciani [*sic*] e l’altra di cignali; e la sera nel real palazzo di Caserta vi fu la cantata a quattro voci con la musica del Paesiello intitolata *La finta amante*, che altre volte si fece in Caserta nella passata età” (undated diplomatic report, published by Lattanzi, “Vita musicale a Napoli”, n. 12, p. 412).

[24] *20 January 1783* – “La mattina del detto passato lunedì [20 gennaio] vi fu gran gala in Caserta per la ricorrenza della nascita del re cattolico [...]. La sera in quel real teatro si rappresentò la comedia del Teatro de’ Fiorentini intitolata *Il matrimonio in contrasto*, colla musica del Guglielmi” (undated diplomatic report, published by Lattanzi, “Vita musicale a Napoli”, n. 14, p. 413).

[25] *23, 27 and 30 November 1783* – “Nel dì 22 [November] giunse a Caserta la r. duchessa di Parma a ora di pranzo, incontrata e ricevuta delle LL.MM. con i più vivi contrassegni

d'affetto; nel giorno appresso di domenica si portò colle LL.MM. a vedere diversi luoghi, e specialmente i ponti delle acque del gran Canale Carolino, che discendono per comodo di detta r. villa; nella sera poi fu fatta rappresentare in quel teatro a di lei contemplazione la burletta intitolata *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, musica del sig.<sup>r</sup> Paesiello, mandata già in regalo da S.M. l'imperatore al nostro monarca. L'opera incontrò il genio di tutta la corte non solo per l'abilità dei cantanti, quanto per il superbo nuovo scenario fatto espressamente dal rinomato sig. Domenico Chelli, che sorprese l'aspettativa di tutti" (*Gazzetta universale*, X/96, 2 December 1783, pp. 779f.). The rehearsals had started in Naples more than a month before: "Giovedì [16 October] la maestà del re, portatosi in Napoli [...], sentì il concerto del *Barbiere di Siviglia*, musica di Paesiello, che si dee rappresentare nel teatro di Caserta alla venuta della duchessa di Parma" (diplomatic report dated 19 October 1783, published by Lattanzi, "Vita musicale a Napoli", n. 23, p. 419). That the work had been specially planned for the visit of Maria Amalia of Parma is confirmed by Norbert Hadrava: "Es wird im kurzen bey Hofe eine Comische Oper von Paisiello, betitelt *Il barbiere di Sevilia*, aufgeführt werden, welche eigentlich bis zur Ankunft der Herzogin von Parma bestimmt ist" (letter dated 15 November 1783, published by Gialdroni, "La musica a Napoli", n. 2, p. 84). Two more performances took place few days after the premiere: "nel giovedì 27 [...] nel real teatro di Caserta fu replicata la burletta in musica *Il barbier di Siviglia* [...] e nella domenica 30 [...], restituitasi (all'imbrunire) la corte e tutta la nobile comitiva in Caserta, goderono nella sera dell'ultima rappresentazione della sopraddetta burletta" (*Notizie del mondo*, XV/98, 9 December 1783, p. 792).

[26] 28 November 1783 – "Nel venerdì 28 [November] vi fu privata conversazione in palazzo, e suonò mirabilmente il cimbalo la principessa Maria Teresa primogenita delle MM.LL." (*Notizie del mondo*, XV/98, 9 December 1783, p. 792).

[27] 30 November 1783 – "Tra le sontuose feste di corte che si sono tenute a Caserta a contemplazione della real duchessa di Parma, non poteva riuscire né più maestosa né più piacevole la caccia che il re dette ai cignali nel dì 30 del passato mese [of November] nel demanio di Calvi. [...] La caccia ebbe termine alle ore 23, ed allora vennero tosto preparate le mense nel luogo stesso, divise in cinque tavole sotto de' padiglioni magnificamente alzati; i commensali non furono meno di 200, e durò il convito fino all'un'ora e mezzo di notte, dopo di che le LL.MM. e r. infanta tornarono con tutta la nobile comitiva a Caserta, dove fu data una grandiosa accademia di canto e suono" (*Gazzetta universale*, X/100, 16 December 1783, p. 812).

[28] *25 December 1784* – “Nella sera [of 25 December] vi fu divertimento di musica in palazzo ove suonò il celebre professor di violino Giardini, venuto qui d’Inghilterra” (*Notizie del mondo*, XVII/2, 4 January 1785, p. 16).

[29] *4 November 1785* – “Le LL.MM. seguitano il soggiorno in Caserta, ove nelli scorsi giorni soffersero qualche leggiero incomodo di salute. Nel dì 4 poi, ricorrendo il giorno di nome dell’augusto re cattolico, ammessero al bacio della mano in quella loro residenza tutta la nobiltà di corte e ceto militare. Nella sera intervennero nel piccolo teatro a godere della rappresentanza comica” (*Gazzetta universale*, XII/92, 15 November 1785, p. 36).

[30] *12 January 1786* – “Ricorrendo nel giovedì 12 di questo mese [January] l’anniversario della nascita della maestà del nostro sovrano, vi fu qui la consueta magnifica gala, e nella sera fu data in questo teatro reale [di San Carlo in Naples], illuminato a giorno, l’ultima rappresentazione del dramma intitolato *Enea e Lavinia*. Tornò il re in detta sera da Mondragone, ove si era trattenuto alcuni giorni alla caccia, nell’attual soggiorno di Caserta, ove si trovarono i ministri di famiglia e le più distinte persone della corte; dopo ricevuti i complimenti del giorno, assisterono le MM.LL. in quel teatro di corte ad una rappresentazione dell’opera l’*Alceste*, che riscosse l’universale approvazione” (*Notizie del mondo*, XVIII/7, 24 January 1786, p. 56).

[31] *February 1786* – “È stata già fatta nel teatrino di Corte a Caserta la prima recita della tragedia l’*Ester* di Racine in francese dalle rr. infante con un leggiadro ballo rappresentante la festa delle rose di Senlis, in cui s’incorona di rose la più virtuosa fanciulla ogn’anno e si festeggia questa coronazione; le altre attrici sono cameriste; la musica dei cori nella tragedia è del sig. Millico al servizio di S.M. nella R. Cappella, ed il ballo è diretto dal sig. Montani, maestro delle rr. principesse; le persone distinte ammesse a questo spettacolo hanno ammirato lo spirito e il talento delle LL.AA.RR., e l’eleganza di tutta la rappresentazione” (*Notizie del mondo*, XVIII/13, 14 February 1786, p. 104). The performance is described also by Hadrava: “Vor einigen Wochen ist in dem Privattheater von Ihro Königliche Hoheiten denen Infantinen und einigen Cameristinen die Tragedie *Esther* in französischer Sprache aufgeführt worden, wobey sich Seine Königliche Hoheit, die Madame Terese durch ihre richtige Deklamation und Vortrag besonders ausgezeichnet hat. In diesem Stücke komen verschiedene Chöre vor, Signor Milico ha[te] das Glück, die Musick dafür zu schreiben, und d[ie] Chöre wurden von vier Cameristinen gesungen, worunter zweye sehr artige Stimmen hatten” (letter dated Caserta 14 March 1786, published by Gialdroni, “La musica a Napoli”, n. 11, pp. 113f.).

[32] *20 February 1786* – “Poco dopo le ore 10 della mattina di sabato 18 corr[ente] S. M. la nostra sovrana dette felicemente alla luce una principessa nella r. villa di Caserta, ove ricevè le acque battesimali con i nomi di Maria Clotilde ec. Fu subito intimata gran gala per tre giorni, salva reale ed illuminazioni per tutta la città. Nel lunedì susseguente fu cantato solenne *Te deum* nella cappella di corte in Caserta, vi fu gran baciamento, ed il re pranzò in pubblico. Nella sera fu data gran festa di ballo in maschera, seguita da una superba cena ove furono servite più di 500 persone a diverse tavole erette negli appartamenti contigui a quel regio teatro” (*Gazzetta universale*, XIII/ 18, 4 March 1786, p. 144).

[33] *February/March 1786* – According to Hadrava, a French company regularly performed comedies, and the court string ensemble played in the *entr’actes*: “Seitdem der Hof sich in Caserta befindet, sind dreymal die Woche hindurch auf den Königlichen Hoftheater französische Comedien unter der Direction des benannten Akteurs [Malherbe] (welcher die Zierde der Gesellschaft ware) für alle Anwesende, welche in Begleitung des Hofes sind, gratis aufgeführt worden. In denen Zwischenakten waren die Hofgeiger beordert zu spielen” (same letter quoted above, App. 31, pp. 112f.; Hadrava expresses a very negative judgement on the ensemble: see *ibid.*, pp. 113f.).

[34] *March(?) 1786* – Hadrava mentions a performance by two foreign musicians, but the location in Caserta – even if suggested by the context of his letter – is not sure: “Herr Ram und der junge Herr Cannabich hatten die Ehre, sich bey Hofe hören zu lassen, der erstere auf der Oboe, der zweyte auf der Violine, beyde sind von Seiner Majestät dem König sehr gnädig beschenkt worden” (same letter quoted above, App. 31, p. 113).

[35] *18 May 1786* – “Nella sera del giovedì 18 [May], nel piccolo teatro eretto in Caserta nell’interno degli appartamenti reali, fu data una nuova rappresentazione della tragedia francese l’*Ester*, con cori in musica e balli. Queste reali principesse figlie delle MM.LL., che la rappresentano, riscossero la più grande ammirazione da quel piccol numero di distinte persone che ebbero l’onore d’esservi ammesse, e che restarono giustamente sorprese dei rapidi progressi che han fatto anche in questa parte le LL.AA.RR.” (*Notizie del mondo*, XVIII/ 43, 30 May 1786, p. 344).

[36] *October 1786* – “Sono sempre più consolanti le notizie che si ricevono da Caserta. S.M. la regina si è ristabilita perfettamente in salute, ed ha di già riprese le udienze e le consuete sue occupazioni. Il re gode frequentemente del divertimento della caccia in quelle vicinanze; nei giorni però a ciò destinati, tiene i soliti consigli e dà pubbliche udienze. Nella sera poi

le MM.LL. assistono qualche volta alla commedia francese” (*Gazzetta universale*, XIII/89, 7 November 1786, p. 712).

[37] *February 1787* – “Nel primo giorno di Quaresima le LL.MM. con tutta la r. famiglia si restituirono in Caserta, ove godono ottima salute e regolarmente intervengono nella cappella di palazzo alle prediche e sacre funzioni. Vi si è aperto parimente il teatro per divertimento della sera, e vi si rappresentano drammi e tragedie dalla compagnia francese” (*Gazzetta universale*, XV/15, 19 February 1788, p. 120).

[38] *March 1788* – “Nella sera [of 6 March, in the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples, the king] godè del dramma sacro *Debora*, che ha sempre il massimo incontro; indi si restituì a Caserta. La regina si è astenuta dal far compagnia nelle diverse gite all’augusto consorte a motivo della sua gravidanza. Ad oggetto però che tanto la M.S. quanto la r. famiglia possa godere di detto dramma, ha risoluto il re di farlo rappresentare nella sera di Pasqua e nelle susseguenti feste sul teatro di corte in Caserta” (*Gazzetta universale*, XV/23, 18 March 1788, p. 184).

[39] *25 giugno 1789* – “Nel giovedì 25 del corr[ente] [June] fu eseguita la festa che in nome dei capi e seniori della nuova colonia di San Leuce dette il re nel r. palazzo e giardini di Belvedere, e riuscì della massima vaghezza e magnificenza. Vi erano stati invitati con biglietto i capi di corte, segretari di stato, generalità, ministri esteri con i cavalieri delle loro rispettive nazioni presentati a corte, la s[erenissi]ma duchessa di Saxe-Weymar, il card. Spinelli, i comandanti della Squadra Spagnola con circa 50 degli ufiziali di essa, e altrettante dame e cavalieri, in tutti non più di 240 persone. Si dette principio dall’osservare gli stabilimenti e manifatture introdotte in quel luogo, essendo tutti gl’individui de’ due sessi della nuova colonia applicati ciascuno ai rispettivi lavori. Indi si passò ai giardini, che sono molti e vari, poi al palazzo di Belvedere, mobiliato con la maggiore eleganza, ove le MM.LL. e r. famiglia fecero ad ognuno la più graziosa accoglienza. Vi fu di continovo profusione di rinfreschi. All’imbrunire della sera si trasferirono al teatro nuovamente eretto in qualche distanza dal palazzo sotto la direzione dell’architetto e pittor teatrale sig. Domenico Chelli, che ne aveva dipinte le superbe decorazioni; vi fu rappresentato il dramma *La Nina o sia La pazza per amore*, parte recitato e parte cantato. Riuscì d’una bellezza sorprendente la musica composta espressamente dal celebre Paisiello, e la virtuosa Coltellini, non meno che gli altri cantanti, riscosero l’universale ammirazione. In faccia alla scena era un altro teatro separato dalla platea, vagamente decorato, in cui stavano disposti in anfiteatro gl’individui della colonia dei due sessi in abito uniforme, lo che faceva la più leggiadra comparsa. In somma lo spettacolo tutto ebbe un applauso straordinario. Terminato il dramma, si portarono nuovamente a palazzo, ove in



5 tavole furono trattati i convitati a laute e splendide cene, finite le quali si passò nella gran galleria, ove fu aperto il ballo, in cui il nostro principe reale e le tre prime principesse fecero ammirare la loro agilità e leggiadria, essendo stata in special modo ammirata la principessa Maria Teresa, primogenita tra le nostre infante. Terminò la festa verso le ore 2 dopo mezza notte, con un applauso straordinario. Le MM.LL. hanno generosamente ricompensati tutti quelli che operarono in detta festa, e particolarmente il professor Chelli ha avuta una ricca tabacchiera d'oro, e altra tabacchiera ed un anello la virtuosa Coltellini" (*Gazzetta universale*, XVI/54, 7 July 1789, p. 432). Another interesting account of the *soirée* can be found in the diary of Louise von Göchhausen, who accompanied princess Anna Amalia con Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach in her Italian tour: "War der Tag des Festes in Sankt Leucio. Wir fuhren nach 4 Uhr von Portici ab, wechselten in Neapel Pferde und kamen gegen 8 Uhr an. Der Chevalier Hamilton und einige andere Herren erwarteten die Herzogin sie besah einige von die Manufacturen, kaufte ein Stück Flohr und ging zur Königin, die mit ihren Kindern den Chevalier Acton, den französischen Minister und seiner Frau und den Spanischen Admiral in den Zimmer waren. Der König kam auch, hier warteten wir eine halbe Stunde als dann gings durch einen artig illumirten Gang in die Oper: *Nina ossia La Pazza per amore*, Musick von Paisiello, die Musick war vortrefflich, die Coltelline spielte sehr gut, der Tenor Lazzarini, der Bass Tasca und der Buffo Trabalzo war alle gut, auch die Susanne spielte nicht übel. Das Theater war in wenig Tagen von Latten und grünen Reiseren erbaut, der Plafon artig gemalt und wie alles versammelt war, ging hinten im Parterr ein Vorhang auf hinter welchen alle die Landleute von der Collonie saßen. Ich saß zwischen Acton und den Malteser Gesanden. Als dann gings zum Supée. An der Königlichen tafel waren ohngefehr 36 Couverrti, ich saß neben den Marchese Corletto und einen Spanischen Oficier. Der Ball darauf dauerte ohngefehr 1 Stunde, früh um ½ 6 Uhr waren wir wieder zu hauß" ("*Es sind vortreffliche Ialienische Sachen daselbst*". *Louise von Göchhausens Tagebuch*, pp. 88 f.). A good description of the venue is given by the architect Ferdinando Patturelli: "poco lungi verso oriente dal Casino [di Belvedere], in fondo di uno stradone, propriamente nel giardino di una casetta addetta al direttore delle vigne, fu costruito di legno un teatro diretto dal fu d. Domenico Chelli, ove la prima volta venne messa in iscena la celebre *Nina*, composizione del nostro famoso Paisiello [...]. Dal Casino fino al teatro fu tutto illuminato a giorno il detto viale, ricoverto di centine di verdura figurante un grottone, e 'l prospetto del Casino fu ancor esso illuminato, ma a cera" (Patturelli, *Caserta e San Lucio*, pp. 78 f.).

[40] *November 1789* – "Avendo il comico Francesco Pinotti più volte supplicato il re che si degnasse incaricarlo della formazione di una compagnia comica per il divertimento delle rr.

villeggiature, è stato finalmente graziato, ed ha accettata la M.S. la compagnia de' Lombardi, che recita nel teatro detto dei Fiorentini, e nella quale il Pinotti occupa il luogo di caratterista. Un decoroso assegnamento accordato alla compagnia suddetta farà sì che prenda il maggiore impegno per sodisfare e ben servire i rr. sovrani, presso i quali si porta in Caserta due o tre volte la settimana a rappresentare tragedie e commedie” (*Gazzetta universale*, XVI/96, 1 December 1789, p. 788). Croce, *I teatri di Napoli*, p. 631, mentions some of the titles staged by this company at the end of the same year: Albergati Capacelli's *Clementina e Dorvigni* (translation of Monvel's *Clémentine et Désormes*) with the farsa *Il pazzo ragionevole* (after Patrat's *L'anglais ou Le fou raisonnable?*), *Il successo curioso*, *Il tartuffo* (after Molière?), *Il disertore tedesco* with the farsa *Il gazzettino*, and Baculard d'Arnaud's *Il conte di Commingio* with the farsa *Le convulsioni*.

[41] *June 1791* – “Il soggiorno ordinario del re è stato quasi sempre a S. Leuce, essendosi soltanto trasferito in questa capitale alcune volte per dare udienza e tener consiglio. La M.S. dimostra tanto affetto e premura per quella nuova colonia, che nel giorno di Pentecoste vi celebrò solennemente l'anniversario della di lei istituzione, sodisfattissimo di vederla sempre più accrescere di numero. Dopo il divino servizio si effettuarono diversi sponsali fra quelli abitanti, avendo la munificenza reale supplito alle rispettive doti; quindi tutta la colonia composta di circa 600 individui fu trattata a lauta mensa a più tavole simetricamente erette nei cortili di Belvedere. Vi assisté anche la regina, che nel giorno antecedente si era colà trasferita; i reali sovrani pranzarono con una scelta compagnia di 46 convitati, fra' quali l'ambasciator cesareo principe Ruspoli colla consorte ed il ministro di Spagna marchese di Matallana, che furono i soli del corpo diplomatico. Nella sera poi fu data lietissima festa di ballo in divertimento di quelli abitanti” (*Gazzetta universale*, XVIII/50, 21 June 1791, p. 400).

[42] *3 February 1795* – “Martedì scorso [3 February], essendo giorno di nascita del real principe d'Inghilterra, dette il re a sua contemplazione un magnifico pranzo nel palazzo di Belvedere a S. Leuce, ove furono ammessi a tre tavole le cariche di corte, i gentiluomini di camera con le loro consorti, l'ambasciator cesareo, il principe e principessa Esterhazy, il cav. Hamilton con la consorte, il senatore di Roma e vari distinti inglesi. Nella sera poi vi fu una brillante festa di ballo. Il prelodato principe Augusto godé di tutti questi trattenimenti, e nel dì 29 si pose in viaggio di ritorno a Roma” (*Gazzetta universale*, XXII/12, 10 February 1795, p. 96).

[43] *8 January 1797* – “siamo partiti per Caserta, dove arrivati alle due. Sono stato ricevuto da mia moglie con mille finezze [...]. Alle tre e mezza andato a mettere in ordine le mie carte, e poi scritto fino al calar del sole, che presa la S.<sup>ta</sup> Benedizione [*sic*]. Parlato con Acton, dato

udienza e poi assistito ad un'operetta in musica con ballo rappresentata dai figlioli, terminata la quale alle nove e mezza a letto" (*Diario di Ferdinando IV di Borbone (1796–1799)*, a cura di Umberto Caldora, Napoli 1965, p. 123).

[44] *Carnival 1797* – Four balls took place in San Leucio on 9 ("Alle otto salito a Belvedere, dove pranzato e passata la giornata ne' preparativi per la festa. Alle due e mezza incominciata a venir gente; presa la S.<sup>ta</sup> Benedizione [*sic*], venuta mia moglie. Alle sei venuti i figlioli, si è dato principio alla festa di ballo che è riuscita molto bella e animata; alle dieci e mezza si è servita la cena. All'una siamo ritornati a casa ed alle due a letto", *Diario di Ferdinando IV*, p. 132), 16 ("alle otto entrato a dar il buon giorno a mia moglie, e poi salito su a Belvedere dove passata la giornata occupato nelle disposizioni della festa. Alle quattro incominciato a venir gente, al calar del sole presa la S.<sup>ta</sup> Benedizione [*sic*], alle sei venuta mia moglie, ed alle sette incominciato il ballo che è riuscito niente meno allegro dell'antecedente. Terminato alla mezza, calato giù all'una; all'una e mezza a letto", *ibid.*, p. 134), 25 ("Alle otto e mezza salito a Belvedere, dove pranzato e passata quietamente la mia giornata. Alle quattro incominciata a venir la gente per la festa di ballo, presa la S.<sup>ta</sup> Benedizione [*sic*]. Alle sei e mezza venuta mia moglie colle figlie e Leopoldo, Francesco essendo rimasto in casa trovandosi incomodato col solito mal di gola e febbre. Alle otto e mezza andato via Leopoldo. All'una è terminata la festa che è riescita molto allegra, come le antecedenti; all'una e mezza ritornati in casa ed a letto", *ibid.*, p. 138) and 28 February ("alle dieci andato a veder Francesco che trovato molto meglio, e poi salito a Belvedere. [...] Alle quattro cominciata a venir la gente per la festa. Presa la S.<sup>ta</sup> Benedizione [*sic*], alle sette venuta mia moglie colle figlie, incominciata la festa che è riuscita allegrissima e terminata all'una", *ibid.*, pp. 138 f.).

[45] *26 February 1797* – "Terminato il pranzo alle tre e mezza, ò preso il caffè; si è fatta musica nell'appartamento di mia moglie" (*Diario di Ferdinando IV*, p. 138).

[46] *August 1797* – Balls were scheduled in San Leucio on the occasion of the marriage of the crown prince Francesco with the archduchess Maria Clementina of Austria: "Colle ultime lettere di Napoli, date del 22 stante [August], si è avuta notizia di essere stata data una superba e magnifica festa di ballo la sera del 19 al real soggiorno di S. Leuce, in contemplazione e festeggiamento de' seguiti reali sponsali; altra se ne preparava per la sera de' 23 dal principe ereditario in Caserta; ed una terza nel dì 25 al suddetto luogo di S. Leuce" (*Gazzetta universale*, XXIV / 69, 29 August 1797, p. 552). The party of 19 August is described by Ferdinand IV in his diary: "Stato a veder venire la gente [a Belvedere] per la festa [...]. Alle sette e mezza venuta mia moglie coi figlioli, ad un'ora di notte ci è stato il fuoco che è riuscito benissimo e

poi la festa di ballo che è andata molto animata ed allegra. Tutti sono rimasti contenti dell'illuminazione interna ed esterna che era molto bella. [...] La festa è terminata alle tre e mezza e noi siamo calati a Caserta alle quattro” (*Diario di Ferdinando IV*, p. 220; previous entries refer to the preparations of the event: see *ibid.*, pp. 219 f.). Probably the ball of 23 August was canceled; the one of 25 August is remembered by both the newspapers (“Colle ultime lettere di Napoli del 29 caduto si è saputo che nella sera del 25 fu data l’ultima festa di ballo a San Leuce in contemplazione delle reali nozze, essendo riescita magnifica e brillante”, *Gazzetta universale*, XXIV / 71, 5 September 1797, p. 567) and the king (“ad un’ora di notte sonata, venuta mia moglie con tutta la famiglia [a Belvedere]. Alle nove si è dato principio colla contradanza, che è riuscita molto bene, alla festa che è riuscita molto bene ed è durata fino alle tre e mezza. Ritornato in casa alle quattro”, *Diario di Ferdinando IV*, p. 222; previous entries refer to the rehearsals of the “contradanza”: see *ivi*, pp. 221 f.). A detailed description of one of these events is given by Ferdinando Patturelli, who erroneously dates it to July: “Tutto il cortile venne decorato nel giro con uno spazioso portico adorno di colonne doriche isolate col corrispondente intavolamento che sosteneva la soffitta di tela dipinta, e di sopra il cornicione, nel giro del medesimo, percorreva un attico con vasi ripieni di fiori situati a piombo delle colonne. Nel lato più breve del cortile in visuale del portone, senza interrompere il porticato, vi era un gran tosello co’ ritratti de’ reali sposi situati sotto un panneggio alla reale ricamato in oro che cascava da una gran corona, ed in ciascun angolo del porticato eranvi differenti quadri di vedute dipinte al naturale. Le tavole erano disposte nel seguente modo: alla dritta del tosello vi era la tavola del parroco del luogo con tutti gli altri sacerdoti, cappellani e chierici; alla sinistra quella dei seniori e di tutti i capi d’ufficio; in seguito poi le tavole degli sposi della colonia co’ rispettivi genitori, e nel resto del giro le tavole degli altri artieri, che in uno formavano circa 600 persone tutte servite in argento. Bel colpo d’occhio era allora il vedere in questo sito banchettare la popolazione leuciana al suono de’ migliori pezzi musicali eseguiti da due bande militari situate nel centro del cortile. Ma più sorprendente fu l’illusione della sera, quando, dopo essere stato illuminato il porticato e ’l cortile colla facciata del casino tutto a cera ed essere stato eseguito dagli stessi giovani leuciani un grazioso intreccio di danza appostatamente concertato per ordine di S.M., all’improvviso, per sorprendere in un modo singolare la reale sposa, si vider nella sottoposta campagna fuori del recinto dirimpetto al real casino ad un cenno del monarca per via di fuochi artificiali graziosissimi tre prospetti l’uno dopo l’altro: il primo, di un ponte per cui si passava da luoghi abbondantissimi di acque e fontane ad un sito ameno e brillante; il secondo, di un tempio innanzi al quale vedevasi lo sponsalizio di Amore e Psiche accompagnato da due genii festeggianti; e ’l terzo, di una deliziosa veduta all’uso cinese allusiva alla vaghezza ed ubertà de’ campi di Terra di Lavoro.

Questa festa fu diretta dall'architetto D. Francesco Collecini, e 'l machinista ed esecutore de' fuochi fu D. Vincenzo Ardito" (Patturelli, *Caserta e San Leucio*, pp. 81f.).

[47] 27 May 1798 – “Alle dieci e mezza venuta mia moglie coi figlioli [a Belvedere], assistito alla funzione delle rose e pranzo della popolazione e poi alla mezza ritornato giù, io pranzato in compagnia, riposato fino alle quattro, giuocato sino alle sei. Stato nel giardino a vedere la gente, che veniva per la festa [...]. Alle otto e mezza venuta mia Moglie colla famiglia, incominciato il ballo ed a mezza notte si è cenato ed alle due e tre quarti, terminata la festa, siamo ritornati in Caserta” (*Diario di Ferdinando IV*, pp. 322f.).