

Nicola Badolato. *I drammi musicali di Giovanni Faustini per Francesco Cavalli*.

Historiae Musicae Cultores 122. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2012. 532 pp. €55. ISBN: 978-88-222-61366-6.

The year 2012 was astonishingly prolific in the editorial history of the operas of Venetian composer Francesco Cavalli (1602–76). It marked the publication of the first of a multivolume critical edition of Cavalli's works, a large-scale project spearheaded by Cavalli scholars Ellen Rosand and Álvaro Torrente. The libretto of

the published opera *La Calisto* (1651), a famous libertine opera characteristic of mid-seventeenth-century Venetian operatic production, was edited by Nicola Badolato, the author of *I drammi musicali di Giovanni Faustini per Francesco Cavalli*. These two parallel editorial projects reflect the growing interest in and enthusiastic revival of a musician who was among Venice's most famous and popular composers in the years 1639–66. Rosand's past work, together with her forthcoming essay collection on Cavalli, *Readying Cavalli's Operas for the Stage*, emphasize the composer's stage potential not only in the seventeenth, but also in the twenty-first century. Badolato's edition shifts the focus to the composer's collaboration with the librettist-lawyer (5) and future impresario of the Teatro di S. Moisè (6), Giovanni Faustini (1615–51).

Badolato's book offers a critical edition of ten librettos that Faustini wrote for Cavalli: *La virtù de' strali d'amori* (1642), *L'Egisto* (1643), *L'Ormino* (1644), *La Doriclea* (1645), *Il Titone* (1645), *L'Euripo* (1649), *L'Oristeo* (1651), *La Rosinda* (1651), *La Calisto* (1651), and *L'Eritrea* (staged after Faustini's death, in 1652). The lack of autographs of Faustini's librettos forced Badolato to rely on the editiones principes for this edition. He thus followed the typographers' graphic usage, not that of the author (46), and slightly modernized the original editions' spelling and punctuation. Here the lines are numbered and the librettos numerically and alphabetically annotated. The numbers refer to footnotes and the letters to a list of mythological figures and places that immediately precedes the librettos. One hopes that most references will prove helpful for students unfamiliar with Greek and Roman mythology, but one wonders whether it was necessary to annotate, for instance, commonly known places such as Cyprus with the explanatory note that this island "relates to the birth and the cult of Aphrodite" (60). This slight mismatch between the topic's specificity and the comments' generality raises the important question about the target audience.

The edition is preceded by a very insightful and diligent introduction and a set of appendixes ("Mutazioni sceniche," "Articolazione delle sequenze," and "Prospetti delle arie"). However, the lack of a general index and multiple cross-references make the appendixes and the librettos at times difficult to navigate. The introduction provides a historical and cultural context for the collaboration between librettists and composers in the years of the rise of the opera, when the text, not the music, was the opera's "carrying element" (45). Badolato explains, albeit rather late, in a section dedicated to editorial criteria, the metonymic value of the word *libretto* (little book) and its function as the point of departure for the composer's work. Given the paucity of extant scores, the libretto is now often the only primary source available to scholars (45).

Unlike the operatic production in cities such as Florence or Mantua, where opera was produced not for a paying audience, but within an aristocratic court system, Venetian opera was open to the public and driven by profit-minded impresarios. In Venice, "the score [was] considered a mere product of use and consumption" (4), while the libretto conveyed a "libertine aura" and "a taste of Marino" (11), typical of Venetian libertine academies often associated with opera

productions, such the Accademia degli Incogniti. Badolato elegantly surveys the idiosyncratic dynamics of the operatic market of mid-seventeenth-century Venice, which is, however, a well-studied field. It suffices to refer to standard works, such as Lorenzo Bianconi and Thomas Walker's lengthy essay "Production, Consumption and Political Function of Seventeenth-Century Opera" (1984), Ellen Rosand's *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Creation of a Genre* (1991), and Wendy Heller's *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women's Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (2004).

This meticulous edition of Faustini and Cavalli's "drammi musicali," as Faustini called his libretti (45), is most certainly an important and timely publication. One hopes that it will be useful for students and scholars who are familiar with the Italian language, but who do not have direct access to Faustini's editiones principes.

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