

Tortuous Roads.

Tracing Back

the Reception

Paths



*of Apostolo Zenó's Libretto Venceslao
(1703–1754)**

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ABSTRACT

During the fifty years that mark the historical reception of Apostolo Zeno's libretto *Venceslao* (1703–1754), no less than forty-two opera productions based on this text were staged throughout Europe. In most cases, these performances are documented in the form of printed libretti. As far as I was able to establish, the text of *Venceslao* was reproduced *verbatim* only once: the Kraków print of 1725 is identical with the Venetian one of 1722. Otherwise, Zeno's *Venceslao* was subjected to constant changes; new elements were appearing in the successive versions along with older ones, which led to the emergence of *sui generis* literary pasticcis.

I have attempted to single out the versions which were crucial for *Venceslao's* reception and determined its stages of development: 1. the Milan edition (1705/06), based on the Venetian *editio princeps* (1703) and the Florentine variant (1703/04); 2. the Neapolitan edition (1714/15) based on the Florentine version and, indirectly, on the Milanese one as well, 3. Domenico Lalli's edition from Venice (1722); 4. The Turin-Prague version (1720/21–1725/26), which provided the lifeblood for later *Venceslao* operatic productions by the Mingottis' troupe in Graz, Linz, Hamburg, and Copenhagen in the late 1730s and 40s. Subsequently, I have outlined the key characteristics of several unusual late *Venceslao* versions from Florence, Venice, and Genoa.

Finally, I have distinguished two main phases in *Venceslao's* reception. The first, incorporating the first three stages, lasted till the late 1720s / early 1730s. It was characterised by strong interconnections between the successive *Venceslao* versions. The new editions were built on the principle of continuous elimination and accumulation of elements taken from earlier variants, mixed with new ones. The second phase, from the 1730s onwards, was characterised by loose interconnections, especially on the level of so-called numbers (arias and ensembles). It seems that Zeno's own original versions definitely played a minor role in *Venceslao's* reception on European stages as compared with editions prepared by third parties.

Keywords: *Venceslao*, Apostolo Zeno, libretto reception, editions, literary pasticcis

During the fifty years that mark the historical reception of Apostolo Zeno's libretto *Venceslao* (1703–1754), no less than forty-two opera productions based on this text were staged throughout Europe. These performances are documented in the form of printed libretti, most of which are well preserved (only the Brno version of 1739 titled *Vincislao* seems irretrievably lost).¹ The situation is much worse with regard to corresponding music materials (scores, aria collections, etc.). Any study of links between the various productions of this opera must therefore

be based first and foremost on the successive texts of *Venceslao*, approached as *sui generis* literary pasticcis. Concerning musical borrowings, the libretti only make it possible to propose more or less tenable hypotheses. As Alina Żórawska-Witkowska rightly observes, the presence of numbers (arias and ensembles) with identical poetic texts in two productions of a given opera (even featuring the same music composer), differing in time, place, and cast, need not automatically entail the use of the same musical setting.² In other words, though the use of the same musical setting (identical or more or less modified to suit the needs of a new singer) in such cases is very likely, we must not forget that there were exceptions to this rule, and completely new music could be composed or other pre-existent music could be fitted to the same aria text.

The study of *Venceslao's* variant texts poses a genuine challenge due to their heterogeneity. It is only on one occasion that the print accompanying a production of this opera repeated the libretto text in precisely the same form as before. This is the case with the Cracow publication of 1725 accompanying a probable performance of this work under the patronage of Prince Teodor Konstantyn Lubomirski, which faithfully reproduces the text used for the Venetian carnival of 1722, actually dedicated to the same Polish magnate. All the remaining prints of this libretto differ from one another, and the number of differences between otherwise related versions can be quite substantial (as when at least one fourth of all the closed poetic numbers set as arias or ensembles diverge from earlier variants).

A valuable tool for comparing different versions of Apostolo Zeno's *Venceslao* can be found on the website www.apostolozeno.it, which comprises the fruit of research by Silvia Urbani³ in the form of transcriptions of as many as seventeen prints of this *dramma per musica* from the years 1703–1725, from the Venetian *editio princeps* to Zeno's own new original version of the libretto prepared for performance at Vienna's imperial court, with music by

¹ Cf. J. Spáčilová, 'Současný stav libret italské opery na Moravě v 1. polovině 18. století' [The Current State of Italian Opera Librettos from the First Half of the 18th Century Kept in Moravia], *Acta Musicologica*, vol. 2, 2006, <http://acta.musicologica.cz/06-02/0602s06.html> (accessed 12 September 2021).

² A. Żórawska-Witkowska, 'O muzykologicznych pożytkach z badania librett. Kilka refleksji polskiego historyka muzyki' [On the Advantages of Libretto Studies to a Musicologist: Several Reflections of a Polish Music Historian], in E. Nowicka and A. Borkowska-Rychlewska (eds), *Libretto i przekład* [Libretto and Translation], Poznań, Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk, 2015, p. 36.

³ S. Urbani, *Il Venceslao di Zeno e Caldara (1725): invenzione del dramma, tradizione del testo, libretto e partitura*, PhD thesis, Università di Bologna, 2017.

Antonio Caldara. From this period, only the versions from Foligno (1713), London (1717), Florence/Livorno (1720), and Cracow (1725) are missing from this resource. The online collection also includes the *Venceslao* text from the Venetian edition of Zeno's collected works (Venice 1744), based on the above-mentioned Viennese variant. By means of Synopsis software one may automatically compare all these versions and view their genealogy (though the latter, as Anna Laura Bellina⁴ emphasised, differs slightly from the *stemma codicum* that would result from traditional text-critical studies). My study supplements this research by including variants missing from the www.apostolozeno.it database (those from 1703–1725 and later), indicating versions which seem crucial to the history of this libretto's use and reception, along with their brief characterisation, as well as proposing my own genealogical diagrams representing the relations between variants of the libretto. For the sake of greater clarity, each diagram corresponds to one successive stage in the reception of this text (the stages overlap) or even to one individual 'branch' of its development.

In my comparative study of links and relations between different variants of the libretto, I have taken into account, first and foremost, the following aspects:

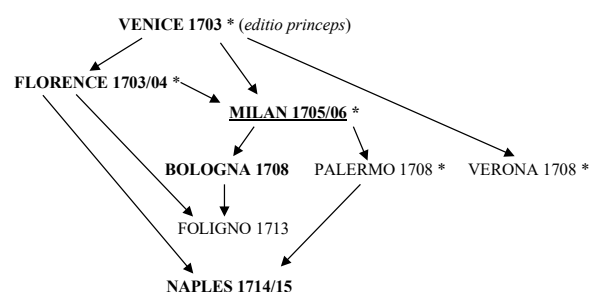
1. the presence of individual, closed poetic numbers (arias, ensembles, and choruses) written by Zeno or derived from other sources, as well as specific text variants;
2. characteristic abridgements and new text fragments appearing in the recitatives in already existing scenes;
3. the ways in which the original five-act dramatic structure was reorganised into a more traditional three-act one, and scenes were either rearranged within acts or left out altogether.

1. THE EMERGENCE OF CRUCIAL LIBRETTO VARIANTS (1703–1714) (TABLE 1)

In the first decade of *Venceslao*'s reception, the dominant musical setting was initially the Venetian one by Carlo Francesco Pollarolo (1703), which was adapted

to the technical and financial conditions encountered in the various opera houses, as well as to new casts and local tastes. Musically speaking, these were not so much pasticcis as, to use Giovanni Polin's term, *opere impasticciate*.⁵ These altered versions immediately proved as important for the reception of the text as the Venetian *editio princeps*.

Table 1. (performances with music by C.F. Pollarolo have been marked with an asterisk*; in this and the following tables, important text variants have been marked in bold; key text variants have additionally been underlined)



The most influential variant from this period is undoubtedly that of *Venceslao* staged in Milan in 1705/06. It was based on two earlier ones: the Venetian *editio princeps* and its Florentine remake titled *Vincislao*. What is more, in the Milanese edition about fifty per cent of the arias and duets were exchanged (according to the libretto print, they were selected by the singers themselves). I have identified some of these numbers as taken from operas by Antonio Caldara staged in Genoa in 1705 (*Arminio* and *Lonestà nelli amori*), where they were performed by three outstanding soloists: the castrato Luigi Albarelli and sopranos Diamante Maria Scarabelli and Santa Stella (later married name: Lotti). These three are very likely to have appeared in the Milanese *Venceslao* (though the libretto print does not give us names of performers),

⁴ A.L. Bellina, 'The Pasticci Tree: Manual and Computing Solutions', in B. Over and G. zur Nieden (eds), *Operatic Pasticcios in 18th-Century Europe: Contexts, Materials and Aesthetics*, Bielefeld, transcript Verlag, 2021, p. 720. A genealogical tree for selected variants of *Venceslao* from 1703–1725, generated using the Synopsis software, can be found on p. 730 of this paper.

⁵ Cf. G. Polin, 'Le "Opere / che al dosso degli attori non sono tagliate / riescono per ordinario impasticciate". Riflessioni sullo status del testo spettacolare melodrammatico nel Settecento', in G. Pitarresi (ed.), *Responsabilità d'autore e collaborazione nell'opera dell'Età barocca. Il Pasticcio*, Reggio Calabria, Laruffa Editore, 2011, pp. 325–363. Polin uses the term 'pasticcio' for a work whose intention it is to rearrange existing music material in order to adapt it to a new dramaturgical framework. An 'opera impasticciata', on the other hand, makes use of an existing musical setting of a given libretto but substitutes some of the arias and ensembles (usually to suit the needs of the new cast) with numbers from other vocal-instrumental works.

enacting the leading roles of Prince Casimiro, Lucinda Queen of Lithuania, and the Polish Princess Erenice. This Milanese version subsequently provided the main basis for several other productions, and its impact culminated in the Neapolitan variant.

Why did the Milanese libretto, despite its heterogeneity, prove so influential? It is possible that it was considered universal. The attractive textual changes concern each of the roles to a more or less equal extent. The figure of *seconda donna*, the hapless princess Erenice, whom Zeno had outlined more than economically, not letting her show her skills in a suitable number of arias, improved her status in the Milan production. The other variants from this period were definitely less universal and purported to cover up the smaller financial and technical possibilities of the given stage, as in the Florentine variant, which may be described as economical. It reduced the number of arias for the *secondo uomo*, Ernando. Evidently Fabrizio Bertoldi found it hard to cope with a role originally composed by Pollarolo for the brilliant Francesco de Grandis. Most of the collective scenes were also removed in Florence. Some variants seem to have been adjusted to the needs of one or two performers, as in the Veronese version, which stood out for the presence of a new hero, Floro, a servant and confidant to Queen Lucinda – a serious role created for the then beginner contralto Diana Vico, a would-be star of the Italian opera, who specialised, from the very start of her career, in male parts.

The libretto printed in Bologna (1708) was based on the Milanese version but had a new original title – *Il fraticida innocente* (*An Innocent Fratricide*), while the music was composed by Giacomo Antonio Perti. Some of the texts in the closed numbers were replaced again. Those whose provenance I have been able to establish come, first and foremost, from the composer's own earlier operas, such as *Dionisio re di Portogallo* (Florence 1707), from which the duet 'Per le porte del tormento' (II, 10; Bologna 1708, III, 4) was borrowed, as well as from the most recent repertoire of the spectacle's two stars, Diamante Maria Scarabelli (Lucinda) and Maria Domenica Pini (Erenice). With discreet moderation, the composer probably availed himself of the practice of self-borrowing, drawing on well-tested numbers which the audience must have acclaimed before in other musical centres.⁶ He may also have allowed his performers to do

the same. The title *Il fraticida innocente* recurs in Foligno, with music by Luc'Antonio Predieri, 1713. This time, the text includes some numbers from the Florentine variant and restores some from Zeno's original, also present in the Florence libretto (so there was no need, it seems, to draw directly on the Venetian *editio princeps*).

2. THE DOMINANCE OF THE NEAPOLITAN VERSION (1714–1726) (TABLE 2)

Another stage in the reception of *Venceslao* begins with the already mentioned Neapolitan libretto variant, set to music by Francesco Mancini (1714/15). It was based on two main sources: the Florentine one, from which it inherited its characteristic title *Vincislao*, and the Palermitan one, via which it absorbed elements from the Milanese production. Apart from the introduction of *scene buffe*, typical of Naples, the libretto set by Mancini includes many new numbers, whose texts have so far not been identified in any other operas or cantatas from this period. This suggests that – untypically for that era – all the new numbers were probably written specially for this version of the opera. Did Mancini create a new musical setting for the entire spectacle? This is highly probable, though on the basis of the libretto alone it is impossible to trace back any purely musical borrowings.⁷

The Neapolitan variant became the basis for several other spectacles. The first, Roman performance of Mancini's opera (1716) was directed by Francesco Gasparini, who, in keeping with the customs of the day, wrote his own music for some numbers, marked in the libretto print with an asterisk. Some received new lyrics. As in the case

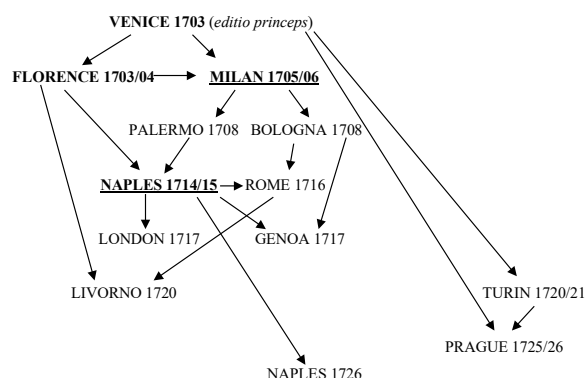
composer in the second version of *Imeneo* (Dublin 1742); cf. W. Dean, 'Handel's "Sosarme", a Puzzle Opera', in F.W. Sternfeld, N. Fortune and E. Olleson (eds), *Essays on Opera and English Music. In Honour of Sir Jack Westrup*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1975, p. 120. Antonio Salvi's text (with various modifications) reappeared in arias, ensembles, and the final cori of many Italian operas in the first three decades of the eighteenth century, possibly partly on the initiative of the librettist himself.

⁷ Research on George Frideric Handel's and Antonio Vivaldi's vocal-instrumental music has provided many instructive instances of such practices. For example, in Vivaldi's *Tamerlano* there are arias whose music was borrowed from his earlier works while their texts, conversely, cannot be traced back to those compositions. Cf. E. Cross, 'Vivaldi and the Pasticcio: Text and Music in *Tamerlano*', in I. Fenlon and T. Carter (eds), *Con che soavità. Studies in Italian Opera, Song and Dance, 1580–1740*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995, pp. 285–286.

⁶ The sententious duet 'Per le porte del tormento' ('Through gates of torment / souls strive for happiness') would later be made famous by George Frideric Handel's setting for *Sosarme, re di Media* (London 1732). This number was later reused by the

of Perti's *Il fratricida innocente*, several of these texts derive from Gasparini's earlier operas: *L'Eumene* (Reggio 1714), *Amor vince l'odio, ovvero Timocrate* (Florence 1715), and *Il tartaro nella Cina* (Reggio 1715).

Table 2.



Nicola Grimaldi, the first Neapolitan Casimiro, initiated the London production of 1717, for which many arias were selected from the repertoires of Northern Italian theatres (in Ferrara, Reggio, Rome, Florence, and Venice).⁸ Though this version has been popularly referred to as a pasticcio, according to Polin's classification it was an *opera impasticciata*.

Other libretti based on the Neapolitan (Genoa 1717) or the Neapolitan-Roman variants (Livorno 1720, titled *Vincislao*) are more intriguing. None of the prints quotes the name of the music composer or even as much as alludes to any previous performances. Each of these libretti seems to be a consistent compilation of two earlier versions. They may have been pasticci whose final textual form resulted not so much from combining two variants of the libretto as from the use of two different music scores (at least so much can be deduced from the shape of the libretti). The Genoese *Venceslao* seems to combine the Neapolitan and Bolognese versions (traces of the latter are particularly strong in the recitatives). In fact, the Bolognese score could have come handy for Genoese production as the title part was sung there by a bass (as

previously in Bologna), whereas in Naples it had been entrusted to the tenor. The Livorno production, on the other hand, probably used a selection of numbers from the Neapolitan-Roman variant as well as some from the 'old' one from Florence,⁹ where a 'vintage' *Griselda* setting from the same period had been revived a year earlier (1719; probably partly with Tomaso Albinoni's music of 1703). Both these supposed pasticci also comprised a large number of new musical numbers. Of note in both of them are textual references to arias from Vivaldi's operas of 1716–1719 (Genoa: *L'incoronazione di Dario*, *Arsilda regina di Ponto*¹⁰; Livorno: *La costanza trionfante degl'amori e degl'odii/Artabano, Tieteburga, Teuzzzone, Tito Manlio*), which suggests that the Venetian master's music may have been used as well.

3. THE HERITAGE OF THE NEW LIBRETTO VERSION BY DOMENICO LALLI (1722–1739) (TABLES 3A–C)

The variant that breathed new life into the *Venceslao* productions was prepared in 1722, on the basis of the *editio princeps*, by the excellent librettist Domenico Lalli (who was, incidentally, Zeno's protégé), then working for the Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo. The music was composed by Giovanni Porta (Act I), Antonio Pollarolo (Acts II and III), and Giovanni Maria Capelli (Acts IV and V). It was a compact variant and one inexpensive to stage (because of numerous abridgements, including the removal of most collective scenes). Still, it was undeniably attractive in its dramaturgy. From the original, Lalli kept the five-act structure and a selection of the best arias. He added seven new numbers, most likely as a result of consultations with the composers and singers, who were in a hurry to prepare the spectacle since its Polish subject was a last-minute choice to honour Teodor Lubomirski,

⁸ The London version of *Venceslao* (along with earlier libretto transformations crucial for this variant) has been discussed in: A. Ryszka-Komarnicka, 'Apostolo Zeno's *Venceslao* (Venice 1703) and its Pasticcio Version *Vincislao re di Polonia* (London 1717): A Case Study with Stops in Florence, Milan and Naples', in B. Over and G. zur Nieden (eds), *Operatic Pasticcios*, pp. 621–657.

⁹ The pasticcio from Livorno, in which the sources for approximately ninety percent of aria and ensemble lyrics have been identified, has been analysed in: A. Ryszka-Komarnicka, *Pasticcio Vincislao in Livorno (1720): between Stars' Repertoires and Vivaldian Operas*, <https://www.pasticcio-project.eu/stories/vincislao> (forthcoming).

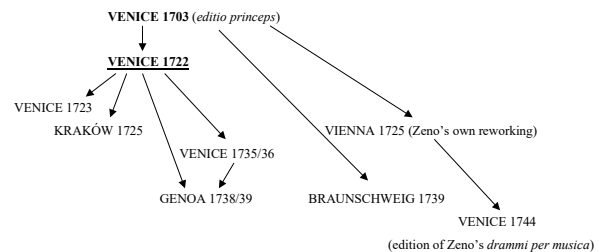
¹⁰ 'Cinto il cor di bell'ardire' (III, 9) seems to be a parody of 'Cinto il crin di verde alloro' from *L'incoronazione di Dario* (I, 10), while 'Non m'è caro amar penando' (II, 3) is a parody of an aria with the same incipit from *Arsilda* (I, 5) and 'Sento al cuor un duol vorace' (III, 5) is a parody of 'Porta amore una tal face', likewise from *Arsilda* (I, 15). On borrowings from Vivaldi's operas in Livorno, cf. Ryszka-Komarnicka, *Pasticcio Vincislao in Livorno*.

then visiting Venice.¹¹ This ostensibly economical version nevertheless answered well to the demands of the new times, which preferred spectacular arias to ensemble and collective scenes. This may be the reason why it served as the basis for the libretti of several spectacles, and these in turn for a number of others, so that its impact is evident in about a dozen later versions of *Venceslao*.

The Lalli variant was, in the case of some productions, the only foundation (Table 3a), and was reproduced either in an identical version (as in Cracow) or with minor changes (Braunschweig 1739, with new music by Giovanni Verocai). Lalli himself created another variant of *Venceslao* (1735/36), this time reducing the structure from five to three acts and preserving only a few numbers from Zeno's original. He exchanged most of the texts; several of the new ones have been identified as originating in operas with music by Johann Adolf Hasse (*Gerone, tiranno di Siracusa*, Naples 1727; *Il Tigrane* and *La sorella amante*, Naples 1729; *Arminio*, Milan 1730; *Caio Fabricio*, Rome 1732) and Giuseppe Orlandini (*Adelaide*, Venice 1729). These works had been premiered back in 1727–1732, so by 1736 they were actually old by the standards of that day's singers, who were fond of borrowing for successive opera productions arias from other recent *drammi per musica* which they had interpreted one or two seasons before¹². This 1735/36 version (which, musically speaking, was most likely a pasticcio) was probably created mainly on Lalli's initiative; the librettist could take into account both the singers' preferences (a notable, extensive title role for the outstanding tenor Angelo

Amorevoli) and the aesthetic qualities of the selected arias. Traces of Lalli's both versions can be found, among others, in the Genoese variant set to music by Baldassare Galuppi (1738/39). This Venetian master, like many of his predecessors who had composed music for *Venceslao*, discreetly included numbers from his own earlier operas: *Elisa, regina di Tiro* (Venice 1736) and *L'Alvilda* (Venice 1737).

Table 3a.



Lalli's version of 1722 was sometimes combined with elements of earlier variants (Table 3b), as in the libretto from Pesaro (probably a pasticcio), with numerous new musical numbers, but also one aria ('T'attendo in campo armato', II, 2) whose text follows its specific Milanese-Neapolitan variant. This Pesaro libretto, though published as *Il fraticida innocente*, has nothing to do with the earlier eponymous versions (although evidently someone still recalled this old title).

The most important 'heir' to the Venetian libretto, however, was the production with music by Giovanni Maria Capelli, staged in Parma, whose compiler (the composer himself?) must have had as many as four different textual variants at his disposal: apart from the Venetian one, also the prints from Pesaro, Bologna, and Milan. Traces of this Parmese libretto can subsequently be found in versions from Munich (with music by Pietro Torri), London (a pasticcio prepared by George Frideric Handel),¹³ and Mantua (music by Orazio Pollaroli). That last musical setting enjoyed some local fame (it was staged in Brescia and Crema with arias being substituted, but also sometimes restored).

¹¹ For more on the libretto choice, cf. E. Selfridge-Field, *A New Chronology of Venetian Opera and Related Genres, 1660–1760*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2007, p. 364. The hurried preparations for *Venceslao*'s Venetian premiere in 1722 are mentioned by Apostolo Zeno in his letter to Andrea Cornaro (Vienna, 14 February 1722 – for full citation, cf. Urbani, *Il Venceslao di Zeno e Caldara*, pp. 127–128). For more on Lubomirski's patronage, cf. A. Ryszka-Komarnicka, 'Between Venice, Lubowla in Spiš and Kraków: Prince Teodor Lubomirski – An Enthusiast of Italian Opera (A Preliminary Study)', *Musicologica Brunensia*, vol. 53, supplementum, 2018, pp. 189–203. Variants of *Venceslao* from 1721–25 have been discussed in: A. Ryszka-Komarnicka, *Rok 1725: 'Venceslao – opera regia Apostola Zena na zaalpejskich dworach w Pradze, Krakowie, Monachium i Wiedniu' [Venceslao – Apostolo Zeno's opera regia at the Transalpine Courts in Prague, Cracow, Munich, and Vienna]*, *Barok. Historia – Literatura – Sztuka*, no. 1 (53), 2019, pp. 73–92.

¹² Singers' predilection for choosing fresh repertoire to sing in *opere impasticchiate* and pasticcio can clearly be observed in some earlier *Venceslao* productions, among others in Milan (1705/06), Genoa (1717), Livorno (1720), and Pesaro (1723/24).

¹³ Cf. R. Strohm, 'Handel's Pasticci', in R. Strohm, *Essays on Handel and Italian Opera*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 164–211.

Table 3b.

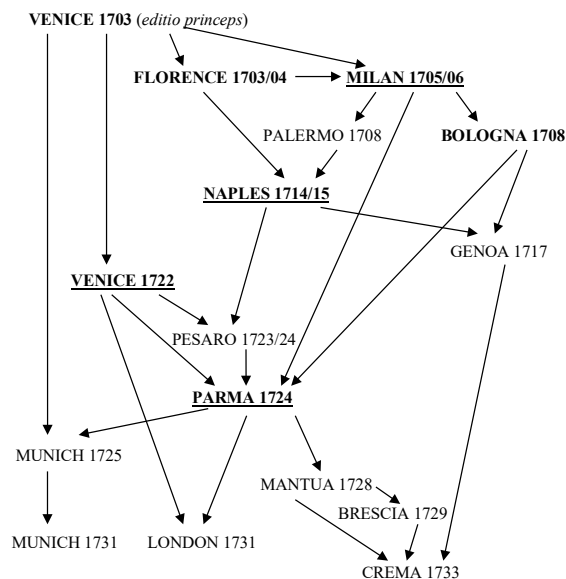
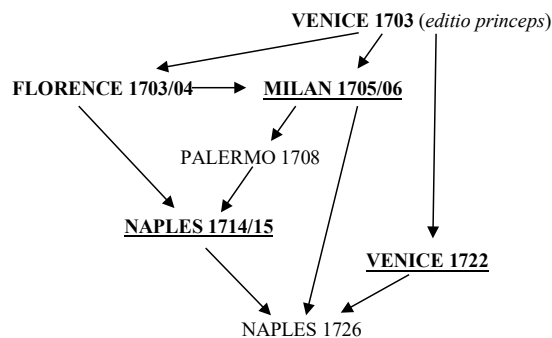


Table 3c.



Quite different was the origin of the libretto titled *La Lucinda fedele*, set to music by Giovanni Porta in 1726 at the Neapolitan Teatro San Bartolomeo (Table 3c). The text was primarily based on the 1714/15 version from the same city, but it also incorporated one of the Milanese arias absent from the original variant from Naples, elements of the Venetian libretto from 1722, and a significant proportion of new numbers. The person behind these last two types of change was mainly the music composer, who seems to have selected arias from Act I of the Venetian *Venceslao* as well as his other operas: *L'Arianna nell'isola di Nasso* (Milan 1723), *Li sforzi d'ambizione e d'amore*, and *La Mariane*¹⁴ (Venice 1724).

¹⁴ For the revival of the opera *Gli eccessi della gelosia* with

4. THE QUEST FOR ORIGINALITY (1737–1754) (TABLE 4A–C)

In the period when the Neapolitan variant of the libretto, with music by Mancini, was the dominant one, another version was created in Turin and set to music by Giuseppe Boniventi (1720/21), so to speak – on the margin of the former's success (see also Table 2). Revised in Prague (1725/26), where it was brought by singer-impresario Antonio Denzio (who took part in both productions)¹⁵, this version proved crucial to the reception of Zeno's *Venceslao* in the transalpine world. For its heyday it had to wait, however, until the 1730s and 40s, when a series of performances was prepared by the operatic troupes of Angelo and Pietro Mingottis (Table 4a). From the time of the 1744 Hamburg production onward, it is Paolo Scalabrini who is quoted as the music composer in the printed libretti. It was, however, the troupe's intention from the start to incorporate into his score as many new numbers as possible, borrowed from various operas. Many of these were arias setting texts from Metastasio's *drammi per musica*, such as *Alessandro nelle Indie*, *La clemenza di Tito*, *Demetrio*, *Demofonte*, *Didone abbandonata*, *Ipermestra*, *Semiramide riconosciuta*, and *Siroe, re di Persia*. Unfortunately, the libretti do not indicate which of the arias were set by Scalabrini.

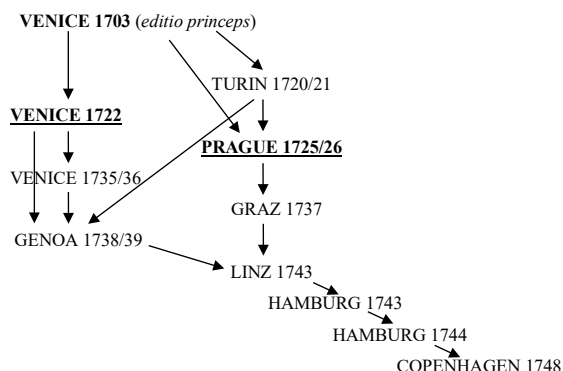
This transalpine branch of *Venceslao* revisions and revivals developed virtually independently from the opera's Italian productions. The only known link between the versions staged in and outside Italy is the aria 'Da te parto, e parto afflitto', used in Linz (1743; II, 11) in a textual variant diverging from Zeno's original but identical with that found in the Genoese libretto set to music by Baldassare Galuppi (1738/39; II, 14). It seems highly probable that the castrato Filippo Finazzi, cast in the role of Casimiro, must have been attracted by this aria and so he included it in the Linz spectacle. One specific element which the version from Genoa (1738/39) shared with that from Turin (1720/21) was the shifting of the chorus 'Comun bene, amica diva' from another place in

music by Tomaso Albinoni (Venice 1722; revived under the title *La Mariane* in 1724 and then repeated in 1725) Porta had written so many new arias that the original ones by Albinoni were marked in the libretto print with an asterisk.

¹⁵ For more on A. Denzio's role in the transmission of Italian operas to Prague (especially those in which he had previously appeared in Italy), cf. D.E. Freeman, *The Opera Theater of Count Franz Anton von Sporck in Prague* (Studies in Czech Music No. 2), Stuyvesant, N.Y., Pendragon Press, 1992, pp. 144–145.

Zeno's original libretto (Venice 1703; II,1) to the opening of Act I.

Table 4a.



Several other productions of a particular kind, musically most likely pasticcis, supplement the picture of *Venceslao's* late reception. The Florentine spectacles titled *Il fratricida innocente* (1730/31) and *Venceslao* (1741/42) were based respectively on the recitative framework of the variants from Florence (1703/04) and Bologna (1708). Did their compilers turn to those old, forgotten versions of this *dramma per musica*, rather than to more recent ones, in search of originality? Links to these old variants are also evident in some of the new aria texts, modelled on both Zeno's ones and those that had once replaced the originals in the libretti.

Similarly 'archaic' were the origins of the Viennese *Vincislao* with music by Georg Christoph Wagenseil (1750), which combined on different textual levels (recitatives, arias) different elements of the Florentine-Neapolitan, Turin-Prague, and the 1735/36 Venetian versions. This is an intriguing discovery, considering the fact that at a spectacle dedicated to Emperor Francis I in Vienna one might rather expect a remake of the 1725 libretto by the imperial poet Zeno, which, along with Antonio Caldara's music, had once been created to praise the merits of Francis' predecessor and father-in-law, Emperor Charles VI.

Venceslao's swan song consists of two libretti set to music by, respectively, Antonio Gaetano Pampani (Venice 1752) and Gaetano Latilla (Genoa 1754), both influenced by an edition of Zeno's authorised texts of his *drammi per musica*, though this impact is mainly limited to the recitatives, while Zeno's original numbers are nearly absent from these two productions.

Table 4b.

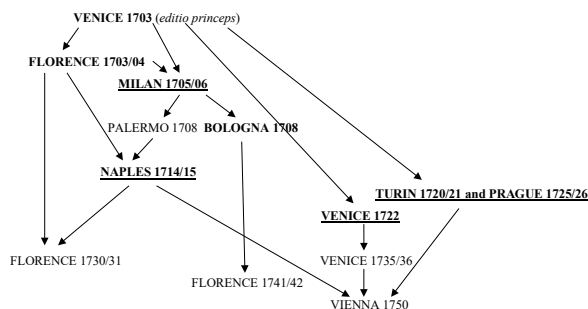
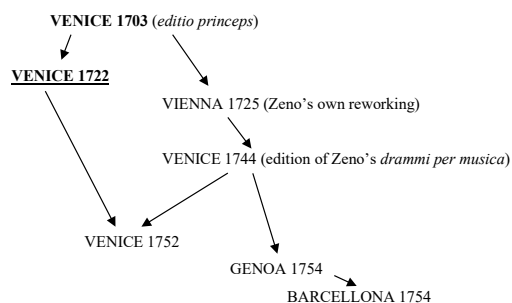


Table 4c.



CONCLUSIONS

The striking feature of the half-a-century-long reception of Zeno's *Venceslao* is just how little attention was paid in that period to the original text version. Only a few of the variants are based directly on that original, while it was the new versions, conceived actually as textual pasticcis, that attracted the authors of the successive variants. The edition of Zeno's collected *drammi per musica* (Venice, Giambattista Pasquali, 1744) probably came too late to play any major role in the revival of interest in the work among contemporary composers (other than the emergence of the two new musical settings by Pampani and Latilla).

Taking into account the character of the links between related text variants, we may distinguish two principal phases in the reception of Apostolo Zeno's libretto of *Venceslao*:

- until the late 1720s / early 1730s (stages 1–3),
- from the 1730s onwards (stage 4).

In phase one, the various *Venceslao* libretti demonstrated deep and strong links between the successive variants. New versions came into being as a result of the constant process of eliminating and accumulating elements from previous editions, combined with a smaller or greater proportion of new numbers. Apostolo Zeno's original

pieces nevertheless still played a major role in most of these versions. Minor textual ‘amendments’ were sometimes introduced, which may reflect the efforts to adjust these (frequently metrically restless and irregular) texts to pre-composed music. When the links between the arias and duets in the successive libretto variants and Zeno’s original began to be severed (as in the pasticcis from Genoa and Livorno), a new version of the text emerged (authored by Domenico Lalli, Venice 1722), which revived those connections for yet another decade. Pleasantly for researchers in Poland, the appearance of this libretto variant, so important for the reception of this *dramma per musica*, was occasioned by ‘a Polish factor’ in the form of an unexpected visit by Teodor Lubomirski to Venice.

In the second phase, the links between the successive variants of *Venceslao* and the earlier ones were of two kinds. The recitatives, apart from necessary abridgements, demonstrate rather strong affinities with earlier models, some of which were surprisingly ‘archaic’. In the sphere of closed numbers (arias and ensembles) on the other hand, these links were gradually becoming looser and looser. Zeno’s original arias came to constitute but a narrow proportion of the libretti. Arias were borrowed from all sorts of sources. Traditionally for the *drammi per musica*, other *opere serie*, serenatas, and cantatas, served as a repository of ready-made numbers, but in the late variants of *Venceslao* we also have incidental appearances of arias from *opere buffe* (though from the serious parts in those works, the *parti serie*). Awareness of such cases makes us significantly broaden the scope of our search for texts which may have infiltrated into *Venceslao* in this period, so as to take into account the growing number of *commedie in musica* and *drammi giocosi*.

Highly characteristic of this phase is also the large-scale introduction of quite new aria texts, some of which were evidently inspired both by Zeno’s originals and by the pieces borrowed from other works at various stages of the libretto’s reception. Similarly, in this period we may find in *Venceslao* arias inspired by well-known numbers by Metastasio (including recognisable incipits, metrical solutions, or even paraphrases¹⁶). In this way, each new libretto turned out to be more individual and unique,

while at the same time adopting the new Metastasian aesthetic¹⁷. The first version in which these tendencies became fully manifest was the libretto prepared for George Frideric Handel in London. Of Zeno’s original numbers, only one aria is left here (the title hero’s ‘Nel seren di quel sembiante’, II, 4), while from among numbers added by Lalli in Venice and present also in Capelli’s Parmese version, we have Venceslao’s ‘Balonar con giusta legge’ (III, 7) and Lucinda’s ‘Del caro sposo nel biondo crine’ (III, 8), though Handel entrusted this piece to a different protagonist, Princess Erenice. Casimiro’s aria ‘D’ira armato il braccio forte’ (I, 13), on the other hand, despite having a nearly similar incipit as Zeno’s original (‘D’ire armato il braccio forte’, II, 9) was a new text, though similar in content. In Italy, these tendencies, known from Handel’s production, are equally strongly present only in the libretto’s very late versions (Florence 1741/42, Venice 1752, and Genoa 1754).

SOURCES FOR THE LIBRETTI

www.apostolozeno.it (*Venceslao* versions of 1703–1725 and 1744)
www.progettometastasio.it (Metastasio’s libretti – original versions)
www.variantiallopera.it
www.corago.unibo.it (an online catalogue of Italian libretti with links to many complete texts; bibliographical references to all the *Venceslao* productions can be found there – see titles *Venceslao*, *Vincislao*, *Il fraticida innocente*, and *La Lucinda fedele*)

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¹⁶ There are such examples as ‘Dolente, sprezzata’ in the *Venceslao* variant staged in Genoa (1752) with music by Gaetano Latilla (II, 2a), modelled on ‘Tradita, sprezzata’ from *Semiramide riconosciuta* (II, 12), or ‘Per te di giubilo’ in *Venceslao* staged in Venice (1752) with music by Gaetano Pampani (I, 8), modelled on ‘Par che di giubilo’ from *Il Ciro riconosciuto* (I, 3).

¹⁷ The presence of the same trends can be observed for example in Zeno’s *Merope* with music by Domenico Terradellas, staged in Rome in 1743 (elimination of irregularities in versification and rhyming patterns in arias, introduction of words convenient for both virtuoso and cantabile singing etc.). Cf. R. Strohm, ‘Domenico Terradellas: *Merope* (Roma 1743)’, in *L’opera Italiana nel Settecento*, Venezia, Saggi Marsilio, 1991, p. 244.

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