**Part 2**

“*Dramma musicale*”

**Chapter Three**

**Cicognini: Playwright and Librettist**

G

iacinto Andrea Cicognini (1606-49), librettist of *Giasone*, spent most of his life in Florence as a playwright. He arrived in Venice in 1646, where he wrote two librettos—*Giasone* and *Orontea*—that would go on to become the most-performed operas of the seventeenth century after his untimely death in 1649. What little is known of his life can be drawn from archival documents that have been examined by Silvia Castelli, Nicola Michelassi, and others, and his legacy in both the printing and opera industry has been examined by Flavia Cancedda and Ellen Rosand. Cicognini was a man who wore many different hats throughout his life: the son of a famous playwright (Iacopo Cicognini), an actor in his youth, a lawyer throughout his adulthood, a playwright as well for most of that period, and a short-lived but wildly successful stint as a librettist near the end of his life.

Cicognini’s posthumous fame as a librettist did not outstrip his fame as a playwright: his prose works, mostly written in Florence, also enjoyed popularity in print well beyond his death, and well beyond what other dramatists of his century achieved. As I will show, his prose works formed a foundation for compositional techniques that would prove helpful, if not essential, for his eventual forays into lyrical verse-based theater in Venice, and that no doubt contributed to the immense popularity of *Giasone* and *Orontea*. For this reason, I will discuss several of his plays, almost all of which were drawn from Spanish dramas written during the “golden century” (the *siglo de oro*), a period that extended past the sixteenth century into the first decades of the seventeenth. This will serve as a basis for understanding his impact on an already maturing Venetian opera industry; a case in point is Giovanni Faustini, a professional librettist who by the mid-1640s had done much to establish the rules of this emerging genre.

At the time of Cicognini’s arrival in 1646, the opera industry in Venice had already enjoyed almost an entire decade of economic growth. Opera had first been introduced to la Serenissima during its 1637 Carnival season at the hands of Benedetto Ferrari (originally from Reggio Emilia) and the Roman Francesco Manelli, who with a traveling group of musicians performed their *L’Andromeda*. After a successful season, this same group put on another opera the following year, *La maga fulminata*, by the same authors.[[1]](#footnote-1) By 1639, other dramatists had also caught on and, hoping to ride the wave of this new genre’s popularity among the Carnival-season public, threw their own hats into the ring. Just two years after *L’Andromeda*’s premiere, the librettist Orazio Persiani (a friend of Cicognini, also from Florence, who had relocated to Venice in the 1630s) collaborated with Francesco Cavalli to create *Le nozze di Teti e di Peleo*, premiering at the same Teatro San Cassiano that ten years later would witness *Giasone*’s initial triumph.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The 1640s witnessed a remarkable growth of the opera industry[[3]](#footnote-3) in La Serenissima: as many as seven operas were performed among the four theaters operational at the time in Venice during the 1642 Carnival season (San Cassiano, Santi Giovanni e Paolo, San Moisè, and Novissimo). This trend continued well past *Giasone*’s premiere at the end of the decade: while it was not until 1666 that Carnival-goers would again enjoy the number of options available in 1642 (that is, seven productions among four theaters), at least one new opera was premiered each year during the 1650s and beyond.[[4]](#footnote-4) It was this onto stage, then—a lively and thriving culture filled with dramatic and musical innovation—that a successful Florentine dramatist by the name of Giacinto Andrea Cicognini stepped in 1646.

**From Florence to Venice**[[5]](#footnote-5)

Born on November 13, 1606 in Florence, Cicognini developed an early familiarity and eventual love for the theater thanks to his father Iacopo, himself a low-level bureaucrat at the Medici court and a playwright.[[6]](#footnote-6) At seven years of age, Giacinto was introduced to court life, brought on as a pageboy to the Grand Duchess Cristina de’ Medici, his godmother. This allowed him the opportunity for education in various cultural spheres, including the theater. Performances of spoken plays were frequent at the confraternities (the Compagnia di San Antonio da Padova, and the Compagnia dell’Arcangelo Raffaello)[[7]](#footnote-7) and Academies (the Accademia degli Infiammati, an offshoot of the Compagnia di S. Antonio da Padova; and the Accademia degli Instancabili)[[8]](#footnote-8) to which Iacopo and, by extension Giacinto, belonged, and thus played a large role in the formation of the younger Cicognini’s early interest in the dramatic arts.

Accounts from documents such as the *Libro di ricordi e partiti* of the Compagnia di S. Antonio indicate that Iacopo was closely involved in the production of several plays from the late 1610s onward. As the burden of education of the youths often fell on the author of the particular play being performed—covering stagecraft essentials such as direction and blocking, along with broader issues of drama—a great deal of Iacopo’s interactions with his son were pedagogical in nature. The year 1622 saw not only a new play by the elder Cicognini, *Sant’Agata* (recounting the torture and martyrdom of the imprisoned virgin Agatha), but also the sixteen-year-old Giacinto’s first appearance on the stage as an actor. His role was that of Laurinda, unrequited lover of Armidoro (himself the unrequited lover of Agatha). Since Laurinda’s pursuit of Armidoro involved dressing up in *panni virili* (masculine clothing) and pretending to be her twin brother Laurindo, a document from the *Libro di ricordi e partiti* containing the distribution of parts with their respective actors’ names listed the young actor thus: “Master Iacinto Cicognini played a double role: the twins Laurindo and Laurinda.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

Iacopo’s success with *Sant’Agata* and later *La finta mora* (1623) encouraged him to petition Grand Duke Ferdinand II to underwrite Giacinto’s studies at the University of Pisa. Thus, while continuing to make sporadic trips back to Florence to take part in his father’s productions, Giacinto obtained his law degree in 1627. The certification proved useful: his father immediately put him to work in his legal office. Indeed, it would continue to serve Giacinto even after his eventual move to Venice, where (in addition to his duties as a dramatist) he was employed as a secretary to Francesco Boldieri, chief administrator of the local branch of the Knights of Malta.[[10]](#footnote-10) Meanwhile, the elder Cicognini could not have been happier about his son’s trajectory as a budding attorney, writing to Andrea Cioli (Secretary of State to Grand Duke Ferdinand II) that “Giacinto thus studies, and has studied, and will bring honor to all because he knows and has judgement, carries himself well, and I hope that this will uplift our family,” and later “I thank our blessed Lord, that even though He has made me poor, he gives me some measure of happiness through other means.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

However, Giacinto continued to show a strong interest in drama, one that would result in the 1630 premiere of his first play, *L’Archibusata a San Carlo*—a “dramatic poem” with a sacred plot dealing with the activities of the Archbishop of Milan—amidst his daily duties working for his father. Three years later, Giacinto’s *Il convitato di pietra* premiered to great success on 24 March 1633 in Florence, encouraging the budding playwright to take the production to Pisa soon thereafter.[[12]](#footnote-12) Upon Iacopo’s precipitous death the following year (on 27 October 1633),[[13]](#footnote-13) his final will and testament stipulated that his son have full and open access to the manuscripts of all his plays, which were to be deposited in the archives of the Compagnia dell’Arcangelo Raffaello. Perhaps the father recognized his Giacinto’s passion, and sought to support and stimulate it by making available his most prized and precious possessions: his own endeavors on and off the stage.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Giacinto continued his day job in the field of law, taking on work as an official at the Medici court and in 1635 becoming an *ufficiale dell’Onestà*.[[15]](#footnote-15) It is likely that he held this post until August 1646, when he left Florence for Venice. His own document trail becomes sparser after his father’s death, and what we know of his activities comes mostly from confraternity and academy diaries similar to the *Libro di ricordi e partiti*, as well as from accounts of official life at the court. In 1641, for example, there are records of a performance of his *Don Gastone di Moncada*,[[16]](#footnote-16) which premiered that same year at the Teatro di Baldracca, while a manuscript of his *Pazzia di Orlando* can be dated to 1642. Two years later, in 1644, Cicognini’s *La caduta del gran capitan Belissario sotto la condanna di Giustiniano imperatore*[[17]](#footnote-17)was performed at the Baldracca by a traveling theatrical troupe known as *I comici Affezionati*,[[18]](#footnote-18) though unfortunately to lesser acclaim than his earlier productions—an anonymous entry in the *Miscellanea Medicea* collection at the Archivio di Stato in Florence states: “Friday the 4th of [November 1644]. In the great hall *Belissario* was performed, and when [the protagonist] fell into disgrace and was asked to ‘return the baton [of command],’ someone in the audience said ‘return the money for our tickets!’”[[19]](#footnote-19) *Don Gastone* was revived three years after its original premiere, as noted in an entry in the *Libro di ricordi* of the Compagnia dell’Arcangelo Raffaello from 1645.[[20]](#footnote-20)

The year 1645 was important for another reason: Giulio Strozzi and Francesco Sacrati’s *La finta pazza*, which had premiered in Venice in 1641, was brought to Florence by the Febiarmonici, the same theater troupe that would later circulate Cicognini’s own *Giasone* throughout Italy. The Teatro di Baldracca, where it was performed, would become the central venue for opera “*alla veneziana*” in the coming years as Florence underwent its own theatrical paradigm shift, away from the prevalent prose comedy culture in which first Iacopo and then Giacinto partook, and toward the public commercialization of a courtly genre that had been established and elaborated several decades earlier by intellectual circles like the Florentine Camerata.[[21]](#footnote-21)

The success of *La finta pazza* in Florence led Leopoldo de’ Medici, the Grand Duke’s younger brother, to promote the production of homegrown operas in imitation of Venice. To this end, he commissioned Cicognini to compose an opera libretto “*alla veneziana*.” *Celio* was completed later that same year, with a manuscript dated 20 July 1645 and dedicated to Leopoldo, declaring that the libretto gathered “the first offerings of my impoverished intelligence in this genre of compositions.”[[22]](#footnote-22) Cicognini’s initial essay into a brief but vastly successful career as a writer of *drammi per musica* formed a continuity of sorts with one of his prose works: Celio is the son of *Don Gastone*’s eponymous character.[[23]](#footnote-23) Set to music by Nicolò Sapiti and Baccio Baglioni,[[24]](#footnote-24) the opera premiered the following year, 1646, to great acclaim and even greater posthumous popularity: in the hands of Giulio Strozzi (working under the anagrammatical pseudonym Luigi Zorzisto), the “great ship already built on the Arno by the eccentric Master [and] likewise navigated, with great boldness, on the seas of Tuscany”[[25]](#footnote-25) became *Veremonda, l’amazzone di Aragona*. Newly set to music by Francesco Cavalli, it premiered in Venice during the Carnival season at the beginning of 1652, and then in December later that same year in Naples.[[26]](#footnote-26)

It is significant that *Celio*’s libretto[[27]](#footnote-27) was among the few of Cicognini’s works published during his lifetime. Likely issued soon after the work’s premiere, the libretto contains a note by the author to the reader indicating the differences found in the printed edition with respect to the version realized on stage:

I present to you my *Celio*. If you enjoy it, I will count myself responsible for your delight. If you do not enjoy it, we will both consider ourselves even. Remember that I compose for mere caprice. However, I expect to delight and instruct you. I believe that you can delight in this subject’s plot, which brings with it a continuous and new variety of unforeseen accidents—either serious or happy. I am sure [this work] will be beneficial to you, as it depicts a Moorish queen who becomes Christian. You will find several things in this print that will not be heard on the stage; it was better to do it this way, so that the opera’s running time in performance might be adjusted, and so several things have been added by me, beyond the intentions that I had at the outset (that is, the first scene of Act II, as well as the first scene and the beginning of the second scene of Act III, and some others) to satisfy others, whereas it was agreed to move some things to other places in order to render it perfect. In short, I pray that you appreciate my *Celio* if for no other reason, at least because he is the son of my *Don Gastone*, which has been so universally appreciated.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Of particular interest is the penultimate sentence: Cicognini indicates that cuts were made in some places (“several things in this print… will not be heard on the stage”), material was added in others (“several things have been added by me”), and his original vision for several scenes was changed at some point after he submitted a version of his libretto—perhaps the manuscript of 1645 (see Table 3.1) or a copy thereof—to the printers, Luca Franceschi and Alessandro Logi.[[29]](#footnote-29) It is entirely possible that many, if not all, of these changes were made during the rehearsal phase for *Celio*: a career playwright whose travels until then took him only as far as Pisa, with likely limited exposure to opera before 1645, might be reasonably expected to have made several missteps with plot pacing and lyrical content working in what for him was a new genre. Unfortunately, we do not know exactly who might have prompted these adjustments to the text: what little is recorded of the two composers does not give any indication that they would have had any experience writing for a *dramma musicale*, as Baglioni was a theorbo player and *Maestro di cappella* at the Livorno Cathedral, and Sapiti the *Maestro di cappella* at the Florence Cathedral.[[30]](#footnote-30) However, this revisionary pattern would repeat itself, if less drastically, three years later in Venice with his masterpiece *Giasone*.[[31]](#footnote-31)

In 1646 Cicognini left Florence for Venice.[[32]](#footnote-32) The exact cause of his departure is unknown: Castelli, citing an account by Anton Francesco Marmi, suggests that it may have been due to a violent altercation at a horse race that thoroughly disgusted our dramatist into self-imposed exile,[[33]](#footnote-33) or perhaps it was simply a yearning for greater professional freedom that the burgeoning Venetian opera economy could offer him. Nicola Michelassi has pointed out his friendship with Orazio Persiani, another Florentine who had earlier moved to Venice and gone on to collaborate with Cavalli on *Le nozze di Teti e di Peleo* (1639) as well as other composers. Even if Persiani did not exert a direct influence on Cicognini’s move, his depiction during the 1630s of the miserable conditions under which Florentine dramatists had to work is suggestive: “If you do not give me a penny / may the court enjoy one hundred good years / for I will leave for the stage to become a clown.”[[34]](#footnote-34) Whatever the cause, it was in Venice that Cicognini established his enduring legacy as a dramatist, penning *Le gelosie fortunate del re di Valenza* (a play) in 1647, *Giasone* and *Orontea* in 1649, and an incomplete draft of *Gli amori di Alessandro Magno e di Rossane* (completed by an unknown author, and staged in 1651).

Some information about Cicognini’s attitude toward his work can be gleaned from his personal epistles contained in the frontmatter of his published material, particularly as they were addressed to different types of audience—in one case, a patron rather than a collective “reader.” Because so many of Cicognini’s works were printed only after his death in 1649, the two letters he wrote in *Celio* and *Giasone* present a rare glimpse into his own thought processes on these librettos, spun though they might have been for public consumption.[[35]](#footnote-35) It is significant, for example, that in *Celio*’s “*Al Lettore*”Cicognini uses the same phrase, “io compongo per mero capriccio” (I compose for mere caprice), famously found in his *Giasone* written three years later. This was a sort of calling-card pointing to an abandonment of literary rules such as the Aristotelian unities (and almost certainly influenced by Spanish *siglo de oro* drama, as I discuss further below), as well as to accommodate his audiences’ tastes.[[36]](#footnote-36) The language he uses in *Giasone* is in many ways similar to that in *Celio*:

I compose for mere caprice; my caprice has no other purpose than to delight. To bring delight to myself is nothing other than meeting the fashions and tastes of those who listen or read. If I have accomplished this through the reading or performance of my *Giasone*, I will have achieved my intent. If I have not accomplished this, I will have wasted many days in composing it, and you a few hours in reading or listening to it, so that the greater damage will be on my part. I will not hesitate for all this to remind you that the use, or better said the abuse, of the terms “idol,” “goddess,” “deity,” “Fate,” “destiny,” etc., are mere poetic inventions. Live happily.”[[37]](#footnote-37)

While the same key words appear in both instances, “delight” (*diletto*) and “caprice” (*capriccio*), notably missing is the didactical dimension (*giovare*) present in *Celio*’s “Al Lettore.” After all, the audiences Cicognini was accustomed to writing for in Florence—members of his confraternities and academies—placed instruction at front and center when it came to artistic endeavors, but the Venetians seemed to prioritize delight, virtually to the exclusion of instruction.[[38]](#footnote-38) Of course, the carnival atmosphere surrounding each opera season may have contributed to this. Cicognini’s statement about meeting the fashions and tastes of his Venetian audiences speaks to his awareness of their relative sophistication, if not jadedness, after twelve seasons of opera productions.

Having spent “many days” writing *Giasone*, one wonders if this may be why, in the dedicatory letter to Giovanni Grimani Calergi for his *Orontea* (that premiered the same year as *Giasone* in Venice’s Teatro di Santi Apostoli), Cicognini states in turn that this particular libretto “was written by me during the past days in few strokes of my pen [and] across few turns of the sun.”[[39]](#footnote-39) There is certainly no indication of the number of days he spent writing *Giasone*, whether few or many, in Cicognini’s dedication to the same Giovanni Grimani Calergi, dated fifteen days earlier on 5 January 1649.[[40]](#footnote-40) To be sure, there is a certain amount of gamesmanship involved in portraying one’s efforts in different manners to different audiences: many and strenuous days for the benefit of a potentially jaded (if not hostile) audience, in the case of *Giasone*, or few and rushed days for the benefit of a patron who has already deigned to protect the fruits of one’s labors under his name (and for whom the haste might serve as an excuse if for some reason *Orontea* did not perform well at the box office). Then again, it would not have done Cicognini any favors to baldly present inconsistencies within *Giasone*’s libretto if he were to have similarly minimized the number of days he spent writing it in his dedication to Calergi while stating, several pages later, the exact opposite to the reader. If nothing else, the language of these personalized messages from Cicognini—again, a rare glimpse into the dramatist’s subjectivity, even if couched in varying language according to each situation—provides us with some insight into his ability to handle his different audiences, doubtless honed by his dealings with the Medicis, confraternities, and academies of his life in Florence.

Other than his duties as secretary to Francesco Boldieri, and his continuing work as a dramatist in both prose and verse genres, little is known about the last three years of Cicognini’s life in Venice. While his exact affiliation with the *Accademia degli Incogniti* is unknown, he certainly associated with the librettists among their members,[[41]](#footnote-41) and furthermore was a member of the Accademia Delfica.[[42]](#footnote-42) As I discuss further below, his dramatic pacing made an impact on Giovanni Faustini, a fellow member of the Accademia Delfica, and a librettist who from 1642 until 1651 was instrumental in helping to solidify a genre that at the time was still in flux.

*Cicognini’s Legacy*

On November 21, 1649, the Compagnia dell’Arcangelo Raffaello chanted the Office for the Dead on Cicognini’s behalf.[[43]](#footnote-43) Even after his death, however, he continued to live on in print, his fame enduring well into the end of the century and beyond—longer than his nineteen-year career as an author of dramatic works while he was alive. This phenomenon did not go unremarked by the publishers of his plays, among whom Bartolomeo Lupardi, in a dedicatory letter dated April 1, 1664 contained in his edition of Cicognini’s *Il Principe Giardiniero*, gushed that “Doctor Giacinto Andrea Cicognini’s veins were so tumid with dramatic material that, even after his death, they continue to spew out no-longer seen plays almost in a torrent.”[[44]](#footnote-44) Indeed, Cicognini’s works for the stage, listed in Table 3.1, were almost all invariably printed posthumously, with *Celio* the sole exception.

**Table 3.1: List of Works by Giacinto Andrea Cicognini**

(Premiere dates in parentheses when available)

**PLAYS OPERAS**

*L’archibusata a San Carlo* (1630) *Celio* (1646)

*Il convitato di pietra* (1633) *L’Orontea* (1649)

*Il Don Gastone di Moncada* (1641) *Giasone* (1649)

*L’amorose furie d’Orlando* (1642) *Gli amori di Alessandro Magno*

*La caduta del gran capitan Belissario sotto e di Rossane* (1651)

*la condanna di Giustiniano imperatore* (1644)

*Le gelosie fortunate del prencipe Rodrigo* (1647)

*L’Adamira*

*L’Amicizia riconosciuta*

*L’amor vuol suoi pari*

*Il Cipriano convertito*

*Il cornuto nella propria opinione*

*La disposizione e forza del destino*

*La donna più sagace fra l’altre*

*I due prodigi ammirati*

*La forza del fato*

*La forza dell’amicizia*

*La forza dell’innocenza ne’ successi di Papirio*

*L’innocente giustificato*

*L’innocenza calunniata*

*L’innocenza difesa nel castigo dell’empio*

*La Mariene*

*Il maritarsi per vendetta*

*Il marito delle due moglie*

*La moglie di quattro mariti*

*Nella bugia si trova la verità*

*Il Pietro Celestino*

*Il principe giardiniero*

*Santa Maria Egizziaca*

*Il segreto in publico*

*La tragedia di Giuditta*

*La vita è un sogno*

A more complete version of this table, containing information on the extensive publication history of the majority of these works, can be found in Appendix III. But the sheer abundance of his prose plays, in comparison to the four librettos he wrote, is apparent in Table 3.1. A large number of these plays survive as manuscripts; Castelli has suggested that many of these manuscripts were initially circulated only among those responsible for the particular play—that is, those in charge of staging, the actors, and enthusiasts among the elders of the academies that hosted the performances—and that later they were circulated further outward, perhaps to noblemen, as in the case of *Don Gastone*.[[45]](#footnote-45) More significantly, however, these manuscripts are outnumbered overwhelmingly by print editions of both plays and librettos, almost all published after Cicognini’s death (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Cicognini Publications By Year

Testimony found in the frontmatter of these printed texts seems to indicate that the popularity of Cicognini’s works—that is, their warm reception by audiences—spurred the publication of such editions.[[46]](#footnote-46) Certainly, *Giasone*’s history in the press is proof that publishers sought to profit from its many performances, especially in the months immediately following its premiere. Indeed, *Giasone*’s premiere proved to be so popular that Andrea Giuliani, publisher of the libretto’s first edition, had to print two subsequent editions that year, and a fourth the following year, to meet the public’s demand. Furthermore, a passage from the dedication letter of the Florence 1650 edition of *Giasone* seems to exaggerate its short-term popularity: “Doctor Giacinto Andrea Cicognini’s *Giasone* [has been] performed many times in the most famous cities of Italy, always honored by the spectators with testimonies of applause and praise.”[[47]](#footnote-47) The “many” cities mentioned by the author(s) of this dedication (signed as the *Accademici Ineguali*) were, at that point in 1650, only Venice, Milan, and Florence. Bologna, the other major publishing center, would not see a performance of *Giasone* until 1651.[[48]](#footnote-48)

The phenomenon of Cicognini in the press seems to have steadily grown during the 1650s after the successes of *Giasone*, *Orontea*, and *Gli amori* on Venetian stages, creating a sort of feedback loop in which success on stage led to success in print, which in turn led to further success on the stage. From the chart below, we can see that publications of Cicognini’s works were mostly limited to his operas during the early 1650s, as his verse works comprise the balance of his published output during that period. Increased demand for more literature by this librettist likely led printers to find his prose works and provide them to the public in quantity, a trend that began in 1652 with the publication of *La forza del fato* (Florence, Onofri). The prose works began to quickly outpace Cicognini’s librettos by the late 1650s—the disparity is apparent beginning in 1658, when one libretto—*Giasone* (Vicenza, Amadio)—and six plays were published.

Indeed, Cicognini’s popularity as both librettist and playwright seems to have reached a critical mass in the 1660s, peaking in 1664 with thirty-one publications. In Rome, for example, only one work by Cicognini was published in the 1650s (*Don Gastone*, printed by Angelo Bernabò in 1658), whereas eight plays appeared in the presses there the following decade.[[49]](#footnote-49) For the sake of clarity, the data in Table 3.1 omits Cicognini’s manuscripts (of which 3 are dated), works erroneously attributed to Cicognini (of which there are forty editions),[[50]](#footnote-50) editions after the seventeenth century (of which there are nineteen), as well as undated publications (of which there are seventy-one).[[51]](#footnote-51) An important distinction between the verse and prose works is that while the majority of Cicognini’s printed librettos contain information on the title page indicating a performance, whether upcoming or one already having taken place, the play texts do not bear similar information. To be sure, publications in prose are more readily consumable, a stage and accompanying music not being a part of the work’s fabric in the same way that it would be for a libretto.

If the year 1663 represented the peak of Cicognini’s publishing output (according to Figure 3.1), the following year was no less important, as it saw the completion of an omnibus edition consisting of seven volumes of all of our dramatist’s works.[[52]](#footnote-52) This was a collaborative enterprise headed by the Roman bookseller Bartolomeo Lupardi[[53]](#footnote-53) (author of several dedications in Cicognini’s printed dramas) and consisting of collations of already-existing editions. During this decade, another phenomenon reared its head: printed works falsely attributed to Cicognini by unscrupulous publishers seeking a bump in sales.[[54]](#footnote-54) It reached such a point (Cancedda/Castelli identify ten plays, covering roughly forty unique prints) that a younger Florentine playwright, Mattias Maria Bartolommei (1640-95), felt the need to step in and set the record straight. In a printed version of his play *Amore opera a caso*, the Florentine dramatist pens an extensive letter to the “erudite readers” (*eruditi lettori*) containing a preliminary catalog of all works certifiably attributed to Cicognini:

If the comedies (which still come forth into the light of the world under the name of Dottore Iacinto Andrea Cicognini) multiply into the future at the same rate that they have been going for the past few years since they started here [Florence], I am of the opinion, erudite reader, that in a brief span of time they will reach such a number that whoever might then be desirous of reading them all (even in devouring the books), a new critic, scared of their sheer abundance, would have to deem the reading of them an entirely hopeless enterprise, so much so that he would never be able to do so—just as a single man occupied with many other things (as had been our Cicognini) and taken from us, it can be said, before his time, could never have been able to write so many works.

And so, in sending to the press the present comedy (of which it has already been many years from when, for my own entertainment, I wrote it, and in this city performed to no little applause by the gentlemen Academics of the Infocati on their stages), I have judged it a good idea, at the same time, to make known unto you the true comedies of the aforementioned Cicognini; yes, so that you all, being by chance desirous of this author’s compositions, might with more certainty and thus with more gusto relish them; and yet again yes, so that if, by chance, among so many of the comedies falsely ascribed to him there were several that were not completely worthy of his name, he would not have to be censured for works that were not his fault.

Therefore, the comedies that are truly by Dottore Andrea Cicognini—although not all have been printed (or if so, who knows)—are mentioned below:

1. *Archibusata a S. Carlo*

2. *S. Pietro Celestino*

3. *Santi Cipriano, e Giustina*

4. [*Santa*] *Maria Egiziaca*

5. *Il Don Gastone*

6. *La Iuditta* [*La tragedia di Giuditta*]

7. *La Mariene*

8. [*La forza dell’innocenza ne’ successi de] Il Papirio*

9. *La pazzia d’Orlando*

10. *Il Celio dramma musicale*

11. *La forza del fato*

12. *La statua dell’onore* [*L’Adamira*]

13. *Il ruffiano onorato* [*La forza dell’amicizia*]

14. *Le fortunate gelosie del re di Valenza*

15. *Gl’amori d’Alessandro, e Rosane*

16. The same *Amori* [as above] in *dramma musicale*

17. *Il Giasone dramma*

18. *L’Orontea*

The first ten of these he composed while he was in Florence, and the other remaining eight during the time in which he lived in Venice; more for satisfying the tastes and requests of friends than for having the idea that they should be brought to print, and more often declared as among the most well-known. And even though *D. Gastone*, *La Iuditta*, *La Mariene*, *La forza del fato*, *La statua dell’onore*, *Il Ruffiano onorato*, and *Le fortunate gelosie del rè di Valenza*, are taken from the Spanish, and *La pazzia d’Orlando* from the actors, they identify however as having acquired, by Cicognini’s hand, so much charm in ornamentation, and splendor, that [they are] rather his own, and do not love being called the world’s.

Thus I pray that you accept the above news, perhaps of no little use, and of satisfaction to many, while I present to you this work of mine, inferior to those many great ones; I assure you that with the words within among which I have scattered Fate, deities, and similar, I do not intend to contravene the Christian religion, but only to follow the customs of poetic compositions. Live happily.[[55]](#footnote-55) (Emphasis mine.)

It is remarkable for an author to devote so much space, in his personal missive to the reader, to the works of another author. Certainly, this indicates to some extent the shadow that Cicognini cast in the first decades of the second half of the *Seicento*. But several links exist between the two dramatists that help to explain why Bartolommei would have taken the trouble to write this clarification, as well as perhaps how he obtained such a clear overview of Cicognini’s body of work. Similar to Iacopo Cicognini, Bartolommei was the head of a “conversation of youths”[[56]](#footnote-56) (*conversazione di giovani*) that would often put on improvised performances, as well as a member of an academy, in his case the Accademici Infuocati. And like Giacinto, he had served as a youth alongside his father Girolamo Bartolommei Smeducci in the same confraternity of Arcangelo Raffaello that had witnessed the exploits of Cicogninis senior and junior (although it is unlikely that the two sons would have known each other given the age difference, as well as Cicognini’s departure to Venice when Bartolommei was only six years of age).

Perhaps the most revealing link between Bartolommei and Cicognini can be found in his specific highlighting of several of Cicognini’s works “taken from the Spanish” (“*tolte dallo spagnuolo*”). Bartolommei himself was also a proponent of Spanish plays, if filtered through Italian, as can be seen in the prefatory material to his *Le gelose caute* of 1668. In his letter to the “judicious reader” (“*giudizioso lettore*”), the younger dramatist boasts of having been “steeped in the reading of Spanish subjects” (“*applicato nella lettura de’ soggetti spagnuoli*”) and informs that the comedy, in its original language, was a work by D. Francesco de Roches (a transliteration of Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla, author of the play *Donde hay agravios no hay celos*,which specifically provided the source material for this play[[57]](#footnote-57)), “a comic author among the most renowned of the Spanish” (“*comico fra gli spagnuoli più rinomati*”).[[58]](#footnote-58) Bartolommei thus reveals his literary allegiance not only to the Spanish playwright, but also to Cicognini, in dedicating *Le gelose cautele* to one of Cicognini’s most important mentors and suppliers of Spanish literature, Nicolò Strozzi, whom I discuss in the following section.

The years that followed 1663 saw a gradual dropoff in publications of dramas by Cicognini, with numbers dwindling to one per year by the 1680s (and a few more than that after several years). At least until 1690, many of these prints were librettos centered around a new production of *Giasone* or *Orontea*. With the sea change in the opera industry brought about by the Arcadian reforms around this time, interest in Cicognini, when it occurred, became limited mainly to literary criticism. It was in 1700 when Giovanni Maria Crescimbeni, discussing the depths to which opera as an artistic genre had sunk over the course of the century, laid much of its downfall at Cicognini’s—and specifically *Giasone*’s—feet:

…Giacinto Andrea Cicognini, around the middle of the century, with glad boldness, introduced dramas with his *Giasone*—which to tell the truth is the first, and most perfect drama that can be found—and with this he brought about the destruction of acting, and in consequence of true and good comic acting, and also of tragic acting. In order to more greatly entice with novelty the listless tastes of the audiences (nauseated equally by the vileness of comic things and the gravity of the tragic) the inventor of dramas united one and the other in them [dramas], putting into practice unheard-of monstrosities such as kings, heroes, and other illustrious characters alongside buffoons, servants, and the vilest of men. This tangle of characters was the cause for the total ruination of poetic rules, which went so far into disuse that [they] no longer took into account even locution, which, compelled to serve music, lost its purity, and became full of idiocies.[[59]](#footnote-59)

Interestingly enough, there is no mention of the Spanish model of drama that Cicognini drew from, and that served as the point of origin for most of these sins for which he apparently paved the way. Eight decades later, Stefano Arteaga would continue the assault on *Seicento* opera, now shifting the blame more squarely onto Cicognini’s shoulders; by this point his work had long disappeared from stages, and the Spanish plays of the *siglo de oro* were an even more distant memory. Arteaga’s analysis of several representative excerpts from *Giasone* is worth citing in its entirety:

In the meantime, poetry was least regarded by composers. Evenness, sentiment, character, plotting, passion, dramatization, good sense, interest in theater, were counted for nothing. Fantastical characters, loving or indecent, heroic or ridiculous or affected, but always introduced as the principal constituent of the dramas; gods and heroes mixed among buffoons, meaningless chatter among men, a mixture of tragic and comic that had neither the brilliance of this, nor the sublime of that; all were made at that time into the most conspicuous ornament. The reader can, without much effort, deduce the consequences of the general tastes of the century from the following passage in a monologue taken from a drama, that was with supreme applause performed in nearly every theater in Italy, which became the most esteemed work of a renowned poet. He [the character] is Ercole, who addresses a discourse toward women in this fashion:

*Women, with your charms,*

*what can you not achieve?*

*You fabricate within your tresses*

*labyrinths for heroes;*

*one mere tearlet*

*escaping from those magical stars*

*creates a vexing Aegean*

*that drowns all ardor, spirit and valor;*

*and the breeze of a sigh*

*exhaled from beguiling lips*

*upon the field of honor*

*uproots the palm and withers the laurel.* [I.1, vv.99-110]

If such was the kind of language reserved for a demigod, everyone can foresee in what style the men must have spoken. Not only were Pantalone, Zanne, and Brighella [*commedia dell’arte* characters] heard singing in their crude dialects, but (if such is to be believed) also the ungainly and coarse character of Tartaglia [in *commedia dell’arte*, a farsighted stutterer] had a place alongside heroes and demigods in heroic dramas. How beautiful to hear, set to music, this following little dialogue between Egeo and Demo in the much-extolled *Giasone* by the Florentine Giacinto Andrea Cicognini!

Egeo, king *And where are they going?*

Demo, stutterer *They are embarking for Co-*

*Co- Co- for Co- Co- Co-*

Egeo *For Coimbra?*

Demo *For Co- Co- Co-*[[60]](#footnote-60)

Egeo *For Coraltro?*

Demo *Oh for the love of-! for Co- Co- Co-*

Egeo *For Cosandro?*

Demo *Not at all,*

*for Co- Co- Co-*

Egeo *For Corinth?*

Demo *Ah! ah! well done, well done,*

*you’ve saved me a lot of trouble.* [II.7, vv.1286-94]

The above-mentioned Cicognini, toward the middle of the century, transferring into melodrama the usual defects that were at the time being committed in other dramatic poems, joining together events and characters that were serious and ridiculous, interrupting prose scenes with strophic poems (that are called arias), and mixing passages in prose into scenes in verse, confounded all of the rules of poetry, and wretchedly contaminated Italian melodrama. He was nonetheless, in his time, held as the restorative for theater: his dramas were reprinted not a few times, as things worthy of being held in great esteem; the literary types proposed him as a model for imitation, and even the Greek muses, the virgin muses congregated in contest in order to honor with hymns of praise the man who, more than any other, bore their shame and outrage.[[61]](#footnote-61)

Not all eighteenth-century assessments of Cicognini, however, were negative. Carlo Goldoni provided a rare instance of textual-dramatic criticism centered around Cicognini’s work itself, rather than its impact on successive dramatists of the seventeenth century:

It seems to me that of the comic authors that I have read and reread many times, Cicognini was the one I preferred most. That Florentine author, too little known by the Republic of letters, had written several comedies of intrigue, mixtures of the touching and moving with the comic and trivial; nevertheless here can be found much of interest, and he had the art of maintaining suspense, and of delighting through his denouements. I have become infinitely attached to him.[[62]](#footnote-62)

As Fausta Antonucci has pointed out,[[63]](#footnote-63) this trend continued into the nineteenth century, with scholars like Julius Leopold Klein and Alberto Lisoni, who also wrote positively of Cicognini,[[64]](#footnote-64) drowned out by a chorus of dismissive voices who found Cicognini’s translations (the Spanish sources having once again been brought out from obscurity) merely “derivative,” his imitations never at the level of the originals. Antonucci also cites general negative sentiments against the Baroque period within a post-Risorgimento culture that held Spanish theater of the *siglo de oro* as superficial and artificial with respect to Elizabethan theater.

The past twenty years have been kinder to Cicognini. A resurgence of interest in Cavalli’s operas dating back to the middle of the twentieth century has picked up the Florentine dramatist in its wake, along with a larger body of research independent of his brief sojourn in the world of lyrical verse; this latter has focused on his intensely profitable relationship with Spanish plays of the late sixteenth century, and has accorded him a place in history as not merely a translator, but an adaptor and synthesizer of Spanish drama.

**Playwright: A Student of Spanish Drama**

A discussion of Cicognini’s style as a dramatist must begin with his father Iacopo, himself a playwright and an immense influence on his son’s formation as a man of the theater, at first on stage as an actor and eventually behind the scenes as a playwright and eventual librettist. Like other playwrights in the early seventeenth century, Iacopo adhered in his plays to the Aristotelian unities, outlined originally in the Greek philosopher’s *Poetics*[[65]](#footnote-65): the unity of action dictated that there be one main plotline, the unity of place dictated that the story be limited to one geographical area, and the unity of time dictated that the story not cover more than twenty-four hours in time. Occasionally Iacopo broke the unity of action in his comedies by presenting two sets of lovers, but in his serious dramas he preserved a single central plot strand. For example, his letter from “the author to the courteous readers” (“*l’autore a cortesi lettori*”) in his *La finta mora* (1625) states that

This comedy of mine, like so many others composed by me, and performed, has all of the unities of the story, even though in several of them, other than the dramas, one can see the weaving of two sets of lovers, from which is borne the multiplicity (or variety) of parts. Thus I imitate Terence,[[66]](#footnote-66) who in [his] art surpassed all other poets of his genre… Now, as long as these other good, but exceedingly strict rules, are observed, and only one action is produced, a perfect comedy will be formed. But in tragedies, dramas, and even more in those that are composed to be performed musically, I have found that multiple sets of lovers, instead of embellishing the tale, would bring confusion to me, and tedium and disgust to the audience.[[67]](#footnote-67)

Worth noting is his preference for a unity of action within what for him would be a “perfect,” idealized comedy—his occasional reliance on a second pair of lovers in several of his plays seems to suggest either the acknowledgement of some flaw in plotting, or external pressures of some kind. Whatever the case, by 1628 he seems to have changed his mind, after a brief correspondence with the Spanish dramatist *per eccellenza*, Lope de Vega. Iacopo’s *Trionfo di David*, which premiered that year, ignores both the unity of time and that of action, in a serious drama, no less. When the play’s text was published in 1633 (the year of his death), the editor Antonio del Soldato, who wrote the foreword to the “courteous readers” (“*cortesi lettori*”), explained the reasoning behind Iacopo’s shift in style:

The author wished to end this performance with David’s victory against Goliath without going against history, and including the second victory against the Philistines, even with the elapsed time (which should not exceed a day, [something] to which Doctor Cicognini gave the greatest consideration in all of his plays, so as not to stray from verisimilitude). But omitting the second triumph necessitated also leaving out David’s marriage to Michal, which was the final accomplishment of the play. It suited the author’s intention (in order to attain his goal) to represent both victories, imitating the Spanish performances, and those of the kind by D. Lopes [*sic*] de Vega, who even with letters had advised and begged the author, known to Vega because of his fame, to become accustomed to exceeding the span of 24 hours, and to demonstrate the delight which brings with it the representation of actions that exceed the passage of not only one day, but also many months and years, to the effect that the events of history can be enjoyed not with the writing down of the prior events leading up to the play [*antefatto*], but with the demonstration of those very same actions from various times in succession.

The author followed Vega’s advice, and did not allow himself to be swayed by fashion to end the play with David’s wedding, and thus divided all of these actions into segments from one act to another, and thus successfully wove together the serious with the ridiculous, the delightful with the useful, history with invention, and in such a way engaged, or rather stimulated the choruses themselves, that the intelligent audiences confessed to have felt from it an extraordinary taste. Thus it can finally be seen that the modern taste, founded upon the pleasure of those who listen, has broadened the restricted and severe laws of Poetry, of which the author spoke abundantly in his treatise printed at the beginning of his *Finta mora*, a famous comedy, which suffices as an excuse for the same author, and as general advice.[[68]](#footnote-68)

Such techniques found in Iacopo’s play—the extension of the plot’s timeline well past a single day, as well as the mixture of serious and ridiculous—had already been standard operating procedure for Lope de Vega. In a discourse directed toward the Academy of Madrid, he established his philosophies on drama in his *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo*,[[69]](#footnote-69) published in 1609. The *comedia nueva* genre as outlined by him consists of a play in three acts, in blocks of verse consisting of various meters. Most important is the ability for comedy to “hold the mirror up to nature [that is, the life of man]”[[70]](#footnote-70)—that is, for a play to mix both the tragic and comic and to thus portray the human condition as completely as possible. Of necessity, then, this also involves freedom from Aristotle’s unities, although Lope de Vega is careful to state that some restraint is still in order when breaking those ancient rules.[[71]](#footnote-71)

Although Giacinto was already in Pisa by the time *Trionfo di David* was performed in 1628, we know that he traveled back and forth between Pisa and Florence, where he would still have opportunities to learn firsthand of his father’s changing outlook brought about by Vega.[[72]](#footnote-72) We know less about the particulars of the younger Cicognini’s relationship to Niccolò Strozzi, but Bartolommei’s words in the prefatory material for his *Le gelose caute* indicate a concrete connection,[[73]](#footnote-73) and thus another channel through which Cicognini would have acquired knowledge about Spanish drama. Abbot Niccolò Strozzi was a learned man as well as a poet who spent a significant amount of time in Spain, living in Madrid at the Palazzo della Nunziatura there from 1623-26, where he came into contact with poets and playwrights including Lope de Vega; the friendship between the two was significant enough that Vega dedicated an undated sonnet to Strozzi.[[74]](#footnote-74) Castelli has proposed that Strozzi would have certainly had the means during this period to furnish Cicognini with Spanish comedies and dramas (as a result of his interactions with playwrights in Madrid, the center of stage culture) straight from the source.[[75]](#footnote-75)

The following two analyses[[76]](#footnote-76)—of Cicognini’s *Convitato di pietra* (1632) and his *Don Gastone di Moncada* (1641)—provide insight into the dramatist’s process of assimilating and adapting a pre-existing work, in both cases Spanish plays in verse, into prose works that better suited his Florentine audiences, and that carried his own imprint in terms of pacing. Both works have been closely studied and compared to each original, the first by Laura Dolfi,[[77]](#footnote-77) and the second by Fausta Antonucci,[[78]](#footnote-78) and my discussion of these plays relies heavily upon their work.

*Il convitato di pietra*

One of his earliest successes, Cicognini’s *Convitato di pietra* (1632)[[79]](#footnote-79) was based on Tirso de Molina’s *Burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra* (1625).[[80]](#footnote-80) The story is that of Don Juan, which would go on to enjoy further retellings in operatic form through settings by Giovanni Bertati and Giuseppe Gazzaniga (*Don Giovanni Tenorio, o sia Il convitato di pietra*, 1787) and by Lorenzo Da Ponte and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (*Don Giovanni*, later that same year in 1787). At its core, the story remains the same between Tirso’s and Cicognini’s version: Don Juan (Don Giovanni), an inveterate womanizer, enjoys several escapades including killing Don Gonzalo, Comendador de Ulloa (the Commendatore) and father to Doña Ana (Donna Anna), before being brought to justice and eventual perdition at the hand of a statue depicting the dead Comendador/Commendatore.

The differences between both versions occur at all levels: *Convitato* is rife with elements of *commedia dell’arte*, for example, the insertion of Dottore and Pantalone in place of two comic characters in *Burlador*; the alternate usage of standard Italian and dialect; the use of the descriptor “Zanni” (buffoon) for Don Giovanni’s servant; the constant use of the stage direction “*via*” to indicate character exits; the insertion of comic breaks during the action (as in I.12); as well as the reduction of a scene into mere stage directions, with the suppression of all dialogue (III.16). Character names have been altered as well, although it is worth noting that the noble characters’ names have been merely Italianized, whereas the lower-echelon characters’ names have undergone more drastic changes (Table 3.2):

**Table 3.2: Character Conversions from *Burlador* to *Convitato***

Don Juan 🡪 Don Giovanni

Catalinón, Don Juan’s servant 🡪 Passarino

Don Pedro Tenorio, Don Juan’s uncle 🡪 Don Pietro

Doña Isabela, seductee 🡪 Donna Isabella

Don Octavio 🡪 Don Ottavio

Ripio, servant 🡪 Fichetto

Comendador de Ulloa, father to Doña Ana 🡪 Commendatore Oliola

Tisbea (fisherwoman), seductee 🡪 Rosalba (shepherdess)

Doña Ana, seductee 🡪 Donna Anna

Aminta (farmer), seductee 🡪 Brunetta (peasant)

Batricio, Aminta’s betrothed 🡪 Pantalone

Gaseneo, Aminta’s father 🡪 Dottore

Several characters have also been cut: the fisher Anfriso, in love with Tisbea; Don Juan’s father Don Diego Tenorio; and the role of the Marqués de Mota, an old friend of Don Juan’s who in the original had been instrumental in unwittingly providing the protagonist with a means to seduce Doña Ana, has instead been folded into the role of Don Ottavio, now Donna Isabella’s betrothed and later Donna Anna’s lover.

These changes are all accompanied by a rather severe contraction of the plot: whereas *Burlador* contains sixty-seven scenes (nineteen in Act I, twenty-two in Act II, and twenty-six in Act III), *Convitato* contains only forty (thirteen in Act I, sixteen in Act II, and eleven in Act III). Extensive cuts are made to several of the surviving scenes, reducing them drastically in scope, including several dialogues between Don Juan and Catalinón, as well as the King of Spain (who remains unaltered in Cicognini’s version, at least in title) and Don Diego. Restructuring occurs as well: Doña Isabela’s seduction, which becomes an oft-repeated topic throughout *Burlador* (returning as the central focus of II.1-5 and II.11 in conversations between the King, Don Ottavio, and Diego), is instead abandoned and never again mentioned in *Convitato* after I.9. Similarly, Aminta’s seduction (Don Juan’s final one) takes place over the course of several scenes, spanning the last two scenes of Act II (II.20-22) until III.8; in *Convitato*, instead, her seduction is synthesized into two scenes at the end of Act II (II.15-16)—in fact, II.16 is the scene containing only stage directions—leaving all of Act III open for the last phase of the comedy, that is, the encounter with the statue and Don Giovanni’s judgment.[[81]](#footnote-81)

The result of this compression of *Burlador*’s action—and, perhaps more importantly, dialogue—is that *Convitato* lacks the depth of psychological characterization for which Tirso and his Spanish colleagues were so famous. The characters surrounding Cicognini’s Don Giovanni are not given the space to develop complexity as they were in Tirso’s original. Doña Isabela at first accepts Don Juan with open arms, thinking him to be Don Octavio, and later spurns her betrothed, accusing him of assaulting her; this dimension is missing in *Convitato*, as Donna Isabella is “assaulted with vivid force” (“*assalita a viva forza*”) and outright violated. Don Pedro, Don Juan’s uncle and ambassador to Naples, worries for his own fate—“I’m lost if the king finds out about this—what is there to do?” (“*Perdido soy si el Rey sabe / este caso, ¿Qué he de hacer?*”)—even as he rebukes his nephew after he learns of Don Juan’s violation of Doña Isabella; in turn, Pietro thinks only of Don Giovanni’s own fate, selflessly exhorting him to flee Naples. Don Ottavio, taking on the duties of both Don Octavio and the Marqués de la Mota in *Convitato*, is in fact simplified in his character’s trajectory by the redoubling of affronts against him: Don Giovanni violates both Donna Isabella, Don Ottavio’s betrothed, and later Donna Anna, who had been promised to Don Ottavio by the king after Donna Isabella’s despoilment has rendered her unfit for marriage.

The lower-register characters fare no better. Rosalba the shepherdess is not regaled with Don Giovanni’s gallantry and amorous declarations in *Convitato* as her analog, Tisbea the fisherwoman, had been; rather her seduction is hastily accomplished by means of a vow of marriage by the womanizer. Aminta, the farmer girl in *Burlador*, is leery at the prospect of her impending marriage to Batricio, and she and the charming (and noble) Don Juan develop a ruse in which he had long ago deflowered her already, as a means to nullify her commitment to her fiancé. Brunetta, in turn is rendered entirely unidimensional, accompanied as she is by *commedia dell’arte* stock characters of Pantalone (her betrothed) and Dottore (her father) and stripped of almost all of her dialogue.[[82]](#footnote-82) Finally, Passarino represents almost an antithesis to Catalinón in their relationships to their respective masters, Don Giovanni and Don Juan. Where Catalinón, long-time servant to Don Juan, is always disposed to follow along with his master in his escapades (and eventual escapes), Passarino constantly rebels,[[83]](#footnote-83) complains, weeps, sighs for “maccheroni” and good wine, and ultimately resigns himself to obey his master only for fear of being beaten.

At the center of this all is Don Giovanni, essentially a cipher for amorality in Cicognini’s play. Where Don Juan is consistently offered the opportunity to repent throughout *Burlador*, and in turn defers the possibility of coming to terms with his sins, insisting always that there will be plenty of time to repent later, Don Giovanni draws the line clearly in *Convitato*: he outright denies the Commendatore’s offer of salvation, given thrice, and throughout Cicognini’s play insists obstinately on mockery and insult to all others, especially toward any figures of authority of principle (going so far as drawing his sword against the king after being discovered in Donna Isabella’s chamber). Don Juan’s agitation in the face of his supernatural encounter with the statue is replaced in *Convitato* with Don Giovanni’s absolute sanguinity; the original acknowledgement of the need for repentance (if only eventual) becomes now almost an explicit desire for punishment. And when it finally comes, Don Juan simply disappears at the end of *Burlador*; Cicognini instead takes pains to explicitly depict Don Giovanni’s perdition in the flames of hell.

It would seem from all of this that *Convitato di pietra* is a mere shadow of *Burlador de Sevilla*. This would not, however, explain Cicognini’s success with this play in Florence, such that it encouraged him to take the production on the road to Pisa. Indeed, Dolfi asserts that his streamlining of Tirso’s action and dialogue tightens the overall play, creating a dramatic coherence that evokes Carlo Goldoni’s assessment of Cicognini’s ability to “maintain suspense” (*ménager la suspension*)[[84]](#footnote-84) in all of his theatrical works. Dolfi also points out Cicognini’s sophisticated prose, calling to attention the presence of intentional parallelisms in the dialogue, of judicious use of rhetorical figures, and of rhythmic cadences reminiscent of precise metric scansion.[[85]](#footnote-85) Cicognini was nothing if not aware of his initial audience: the premiere was staged for the Accademia degli Instancabili, a gathering formed by the young men of the Compagnia di San Giovanni Evangelista in 1633, the year of the play’s premiere.[[86]](#footnote-86) Given the propensity for didactic programs in theatrical performances among (and for) Florence’s youths under the auspices of confraternities and academies like the Instancabili, it is not hard to hypothesize that Cicognini deliberately toned down some of the character-based ambiguities of Tirso’s original, presenting figures that were more clearly delineated in black and white.

*Don Gastone di Moncada*[[87]](#footnote-87)

Cicognini’s *Don Gastone di Moncada* (1641) presents a more synthetic approach to Spanish source plays that reflects his growing maturity as a playwright, as well as his broadened experience with that country’s theatrical repertoire a decade after having written *Convitato di pietra*. Fausta Antonucci’s analysis of this work identifies no fewer than three Spanish plays from whose elements Cicognini drew in creating his story of falsified betrayal: Lope de Vega’s *La corona merecida* (1603), Tirso de Molina’s *Cómo han de ser los amigos* (1612), and Calderón de la Barca’s *Gustos y disgustos son no más que imaginación* (1638). A plot synopsis of *Don Gastone* follows:

King Pietro d’Aragona, a tyrannical monarch, has fallen in love with Donna Violante, the wife of Don Gastone di Moncada. He invites the couple to court, naming Donna Violante the queen’s first lady-in-waiting. This love triangle is augmented by the queen, Leonora—neglected and no longer loved by the king—and by Don Merichex (Mericchej in the manuscript’s dedication, dated 1642) di Buccoi—a valiant knight who in the past was aided and saved from disgrace by Don Gastone. King Pietro decides to use Don Merichex for his own ends: he invests the knight with Don Gastone’s title, and orders him to exile his friend, and to convince Don Gastone’s wife, using any means possible, to cede to his desires. Don Merichex appears to obey all of his king’s orders: he arrives to kidnap Donna Violante’s son Celio, and then presents to her and her husband the blood of their murdered child as punishment for Donna Violante’s unbending fidelity to her husband. He reveals to King Pietro that he has engineered all of this as a hoax so that the monarch might have an intimate encounter with Donna Violante. In truth, however, Merichex (a traitor only in appearance) had arranged things so that the woman who lay with the king was in fact the queen and not Violante. Discovering the deception, the king is reformed, the two couples are reconciled, it is discovered that young Celio was not in fact killed, and all praise Merichex’s skillful and wise comportment, the “faithful traitor-friend” (*amico traditor fedele*). Below in Table 3.3 is a list of the cast for *Don Gastone*:

**Table 3.3: Cast of Characters for *Don Gastone di Moncada***

Don Pietro, King of Aragon

Leonora, Queen, wife of Don Pietro

Odoardo, advisor to the king

Tiberio, advisor to the king

Parasacco, servant and fool

Four king’s hunters

Four queen’s ladies-in-waiting

Don Gastone di Moncada, Duke of Villa Reale

Donna Violante di Moncada, wife of Don Gastone

Celio, their son, five years of age

Scappino, Don Gastone’s servant

Rosetta, Donna Violante’s handmaiden

Four of Don Gastone’s hunters

Don Merichex di Buccoi, Spanish knight

“The setting in the First Act represents the countryside of the Duchy of Villa Reale; in the Second and Third Act, the City and Palace of Aragon.”[[88]](#footnote-88)

The principal characters’ names are all Italianizations of Spanish names[[89]](#footnote-89) (similar to *Convitato di pietra*, the servants have been given Italian names like Scappino, Rosetta, and Parasacco), and share commonalities with many of the characters in the play’s three Spanish models. Of these models, Calderón’s *Gustos y disgustos son no más que imaginación*[[90]](#footnote-90) bears the closest resemblance in terms of characters and plot conceit (that of deception). As in *Don Gastone*, the king here is completely uninterested in his wife, and instead has eyes only for Doña Violante, who rebuffs his amorous advances as she remains faithful to her husband, Don Vicente. Furthermore, the central deceit in the plot results in the king believing that he has been courting Doña Violante by her window, where instead it has been his neglected queen consort the entire time.

One significant difference between the two versions is that Don Merichex does not appear in Calderón’s version, so that the king’s tyranny lacks the bite that it would have in *Don Gastone*. Rather, the king sends Don Vicente off to war, a devious maneuver meant to allow the monarch unimpeded access to Violante—like *Convitato*, then, the villain in *Don Gastone* is more direct and forceful in his actions, in comparison to the relatively respectful king in *Gustos y disgustos* (that is, maintaining a façade of honor in sending his knight off to battle). Similarly, Doña Violante in *Gustos y disgustos* is a young and insecure woman whose constancy wavers—the primary reason, in fact, that that king sees an opening for his own advances—although in the end she proves true to her husband. In *Don Gastone*, instead, Donna Violante is a mature mother, free from her father’s influence (who exists only in Calderón’s version and unwittingly plays to her insecurities), and utterly devoted to Don Gastone. Indeed, she is a woman completely secure in her love, whose unwavering fidelity is the sole reason Don Merichex felt safe in attempting his subterfuge, as he himself admits toward the end of Cicognini’s play. Furthermore, the bait-and-switch seduction of the king’s own wife by window over the course of many evenings (now orchestrated by Doña Violante) is certainly a chaster and more virtuous treatment of love than the sexual intercourse, even if only implied after the fact by the king’s report, between the king and Leonora in *Don Gastone*.

Lope de Vega’s *La corona merecida*[[91]](#footnote-91) provides another link between *Don Gastone* and its Spanish heritage. In this play, King Alfonso VIII of Castille, recently married to Doña Leonor of England, has fallen in love with Doña Sol, the wife of Don Alvaro Laín. As in *Don Gastone*, the king invites the couple to his court, conferring upon Don Alvaro an honorary position. From here, the plot veers off: the king falsely accuses Alvaro of espionage and has him arrested; Doña Sol pretends to cede to the king, but then burns a part of her body under the pretense of being disease-stricken. The king becomes disgusted by this and no longer desires her. Doña Sol then reveals her deception, earning the friendship of the queen (who had felt threatened by Doña Sol’s beauty) and the admiration and regard of the king. The deception achieved here by Don Alvaro’s wife removes the need for the presence of a Merichex-like character (as well as the theme of friendship so central to *Don Gastone*). In addition, Doña Sol’s temper, as well as her loyalty and steadfastness to her husband, bears more similarity to Cicognini’s Donna Violante than Calderón’s Doña Violante. We also find in Lope’s play the gambit of a “ruse for a good end” (“*inganno a fin di bene*”), although the form and execution are quite distinct from the other two stories.

The final piece of the puzzle, that of Don Merichex, is found in Tirso de Molina’s *Cómo han de ser los amigos*,[[92]](#footnote-92) a comedy centered on the theme of friendship between Don Gastón conde de Fox (note the connection to the eponymous character of *Don Gastone*) and Don Manrique de Lara. The plot itself bears little resemblance to Cicognini’s *Don Gastone*:both friends are in love with the same woman, Doña Armesinda (who is in love with Don Manrique), the daughter of the Duke of Narbonne and sister of Doña Violante (who is in love with Don Gastón). The duke has Don Gastón imprisoned because he opposes the duke’s plan to marry Doña Armesinda to the Count of Toulouse; Don Manrique requests military aid from the king of Aragon (of whom he is a vassal) to move against Doña Armesinda’s father and rescue his friend. The king wishes Don Gastón’s county of Fox for himself, and offers Don Manrique aid on the condition that the latter take the county from his friend and give it to his liege. Don Manrique is therefore faced with a dilemma: fail his king, or betray his friend. He decides to obey the king, but only in order to preserve the county for his friend. When he finds out that Don Manrique has taken Fox, Don Gastón accuses him of betrayal, but in order to prove his loyalty Don Manrique cedes to him not only the county, but Armesinda’s hand in marriage as well. To reciprocate his friend’s generosity, Don Gastón refuses Don Manrique’s offer of Armesinda and instead takes Violante as his wife. Along with friendship, the theme of apparent betrayal in Tirso’s play is very similar to *Don Gastone*, although it is diluted here within a plot complicated by romantic misunderstandings and political intrigue. In turn, the king who forces the dilemma onto Don Manrique is only a secondary character in *Cómo han de ser los amigos*, an avaricious figure largely whitewashed of the tyrannical characteristics that Cicognini placed in relief in his *Don Gastone*.

As in the case of *Convitato di pietra*, the linearity and straightforwardness of *Don Gastone*’splot, and above all its pacing, set it apart from its Spanish models. Tirso reveals Don Manrique’s decision to preserve the county for Don Gastón—the pivotal plot point upon which their friendship hinged—almost immediately after he was presented with the choice by the king. In turn, the decision by *Don Gastone*’s Merichex is not revealed until the very end; after an anguished and tortuous monologue in the middle of Act II, the audience does not yet know if he has chosen to obey his king (by exiling Don Gastone and blackmailing Donna Violante) or to remain loyal to his friend. Cicognini maintains the suspense throughout the rest of the act, and into Act III, by portraying his actions in such a way to lead the other characters—if not the audience as well—to believe that he has sided with the king (the king’s talkative servant, Parasacco, perpetuates this belief). It is only within the final three scenes that the suspense begins to unravel, and Don Merichex reveals his deceit for the greater good: to preserve Don Gastone and Donna Violante’s honor, to not openly disobey the king, and to reconcile his king and his estranged wife.

Cicognini’s ability to “maintain suspense” in *Don Gastone* is aided by a structural device that would appear in his librettos as well. This technique, which I call the “Cicognini crescendo,”[[93]](#footnote-93) involves the gradual accumulation of characters on stage toward the end of Act III in preparation of the final denouement. The “Cicognini crescendo” occurs on a large scale over the course of a succession of scenes, and in some ways it anticipates Corneille’s *liaisons des scènes* later in the century.

**Table 3.4: *Don Gastone di Moncada*, Act III Character Distribution**

(Characters are listed in speaking order; [bracketed characters] do not speak in the scene)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| III.1 | Scappino, Rosetta |
| III.2 | Don Gastone, Scappino |
| III.3 | Don Merichex, Don Gastone, [Scappino] |
| III.4 | Pages, Don Merichex, Don Gastone, [Scappino] |
| III.5 | Donna Violante, Don Gastone, Don Merichex, Rosetta, Scappino |
| III.6 | Don Gastone, Don Merichex, [Scappino] |
| III.7 | Parasacco, Don Merichex, [Soldiers, Pages] |
| III.8 | Parasacco, Don Merichex |
| III.9 | King, Parasacco, Don Merichex |
| III.10 | Don Merichex |
| III.11 | Don Gastone, Scappino |
| III.12 | Parasacco, Scappino, Don Gastone |
| **Table 3.4 (Continued)** | |
| III.13 | Don Merichex, Parasacco |
| III.14 | King, Don Merichex, Parasacco |
| III.15 | King, Don Merichex |
| III.16 | Parasacco, King, Don Merichex |
| III.17 | Donna Violante, Parasacco, King, Don Merichex, [Rosetta] |
| III.18 | King, Rosetta, Don Merichex, Donna Violante |
| III.19 | Parasacco, King, Queen, Don Merichex, Donna Violante, [Rosetta] |
| III.20 | Scappino, Don Gastone, Donna Violante, Don Merichex, Queen, King, Parasacco, [Rosetta] |
| III.21 | Don Merichex, King, Don Gastone, Donna Violante, [Queen, Rosetta] |
| III.22 | Scappino, Parasacco, Don Merichex, Don Gastone, King, Queen, Donna Violante, [Celio, Rosetta] |

Excluding the servant roles (Parasacco, Rosetta, Scappino) when they leave the stage temporarily, we can see in Table 3.4 that the Cicognini crescendo begins around III.13, a scene featuring Don Merichex and Parasacco. The king enters for the following scene (remaining on stage until the end of the play), and begins to describe his night-time tryst with the woman he thinks was Donna Violante. In the following scenes the king’s euphoria gradually diminishes, as it is brought to light that Donna Violante was not in fact the woman with whom he enjoyed sexual relations. The final turn toward the denouement begins in III.19 with the queen’s entrance and the king’s resulting displeasure, culminating at the end of the scene with Don Merichex’s revelation, finally, of his complex ruse. The following scenes, III.20 and III.21, feature the king’s reversal and reconciliation with his wife and then Don Gastone, and in the final scene Celio, who had been missing (and presumed dead since the end of Act II), is brought back onstage by Scappino and Parasacco, at Don Merichex’s request. It is significant that this revelation occurs several scenes before the very end, as some successive dramatic space was of necessity devoted to the processing the events, and the king’s eventual reconciliation and reformation. As I show in the following section, the third acts of *Celio*, *Orontea*, and *Giasone* all follow a similar dramatic formula.[[94]](#footnote-94)

**Librettist: A Florentine in Venice**

This section provides a brief overview of Cicognini’s three complete librettos—*Celio*, *Orontea*, and *Giasone*—with a focus on their character-based structure in Act III. *Celio*, of course, was written while Cicognini was still in Florence, while the latter two were written after he had arrived in Venice. The Cicognini crescendo is not as explicit in his first libretto as it is in his last two, but there seemed to have been external pressures—to such an extent that they were mentioned in the note to reader (“*Al lettore*”) of the published libretto—that may have partially accounted for revisions and a restructuring of the drama. Giovanni Faustini, one of Venice’s most prolific librettists during the 1640s (as well as Cavalli’s chief collaborator during this period), provides us with a means of contextualizing Cicognini within the world of Venetian opera upon his arrival there in 1646. As it turns out, Faustini had also employed a similar “crescendo” technique in many of his librettos even before Cicognini had arrived, although he was unique in doing so among other Venetian librettists of his time.

*Celio*

Discussions of *Celio* have invariably revolved around its relationship to Giulio Strozzi’s revision of the opera under the new name of *Veremonda*.[[95]](#footnote-95) My focus on it centers on Cicognini’s construction of Act III, specifically in its gradual accumulation of characters on stage. As we have seen, the playwright’s first attempt at a work entirely in verse was extremely well received upon its premiere. Given that Cicognini’s Venetian librettos are each amalgams of multiple Spanish plays in the same way that *Don Gastone* is, it would not be surprising if Cicognini had followed a similar procedure in creating the various plot points for *Celio*. However, no source works have yet been identified. Nonetheless, it should be noted that *Don Gastone* serves as an *antefatto* for *Celio*; as Bianconi and Walker have pointed out, a knowledge of the earlier prose work would have been almost necessary to understand the themes at play in *Celio*, which grapples with the same issues of noble and matrimonial honor.[[96]](#footnote-96) Indeed, King Pietro’s past attempt to seduce Donna Violante serves as a central plot point in the libretto, driving the young Celio to attempt a similar seduction of the wife of Pietro’s son, King Iacomo. Table 3.5 below lists the characters:

**Table 3.5: Cast of Characters for *Celio* (Opera Proper)**

Iacomo VIII, King of Aragon

Isabella, queen, his wife

Don Gastone de Moncada, his war advisor

Celio, his son, a general

Alarco, soldier (under Celio)

Ormino, page

Despina, village girl

Zoraida, Moorish queen

Idrena, nurse

Dragut, Moorish captain

Zelì, dwarf

Chorus of Aragonese soldiers

Chorus of Aragonese ladies

Chorus of Moorish soldiers

*Celio* opens with a Prologue that features Revenge, Rage, Rebellion, and Love (*Vendetta*, *Furore*, *Rebellione*, and *Amore*) discussing precisely King Pietro’s actions in *Don Gastone*, and seeking to drive Celio to avenge those misdeeds. Then the opera proper begins: the Moorish queen Zoraida and Celio have been in love for some time; this illicit relationship is already known to Zoraida’s nurse, but Celio urges his soldier Alarco to keep quiet about it once Alarco discovers its existence. In the meantime, Isabella announces to her husband the king and Don Gastone that she and her band of woman-warriors will join in his war effort against the Moorish queen. When she presents herself to Celio, the young general is struck by her beauty as well as his desire for vengeance. Celio declares his love for her, but Isabella suspects that he is only seeking revenge against her father-in-law’s past actions, and pretends to give in to him, professing her love for him with Alarco observing the proceedings. Celio asks Isabella to follow his lead so that they might be able to consummate their passion. He presents himself, and Isabella (disguised as a gentleman) as his male friend, to Zoraida at her camp, and sends Alarco back to his camp. Upon discovering his wife’s and Celio’s apparent duplicity, the king swears revenge, while Don Gastone disowns Celio and vows to find his son in order to administer punishment for his betrayal. Zoraida later finds out that Isabella is in fact a woman, confirmed by Don Gastone when he arrives to request a hostage exchange: Isabella for himself. Full of doubt and jealousy, Zoraida eavesdrops on a conversation between Celio and Isabella; Celio sees her and shifts the conversation to allay her worries, mollifying the Moorish queen. But once Don Gastone shows up and confronts the two, Isabella reveals her ruse: she had only pretended to love Celio. She and Don Gastone depart on good terms, while Celio plots revenge on them all and wishes to return to Zoraida’s embrace. Zoraida, however, has overheard all of this, and is horrified that her beloved is a traitor. Although expressing ambivalence toward Celio, as she still is attracted to him, she ultimately rejects him. After they are both captured by the king (who has learned of his wife’s innocence), Zoraida pleads for Celio’s life, moved by his plight in seeking justice for a deed not committed, and offers to convert to Christianity and to take Celio as her husband and king to absolve him of his crimes. All are equally moved by this gesture and by her wisdom and generosity.

**Table 3.6: *Celio*, Act III Character Distribution and Scene Synopsis**[[97]](#footnote-97)

([Bracketed characters] do not speak in the scene)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| III.1 | King, [Chorus of Aragonese soldiers] | The king vows vengeance upon his apparently unfaithful wife. |
| III.2 | Idrena, Zelì, Zoraida sleeping | Zoraida dreams that she converts to Christianity; Idrena reveals that Isabella is a woman and not a man; Zoraida vows vengeance. |
| III.3 | Dragut, Zoraida, [Idrena, Moorish soldiers, Zelì] | Dragut announces the arrival of Don Gastone. |
| III.4 | Dragut, Don Gastone, Zoraida, [Idrena, Moorish Soldiers] | Don Gastone explains to the queen his son and Isabella's betrayal, and offers to exchange himself as a hostage for her. Zoraida is left deeply unsettled by the doubts he has planted in her mind. |
| III.5 | Celio, Queen, (Zoraida and Idrena show up later in the scene) | Celio and Isabella profess their love for each other; when he espies Zoraida eavesdropping, he shifts the conversation to her benefit and allays her doubts; after Zoraida leaves he continues his seduction of Isabella. |
| III.6 | Don Gastone, Celio, Queen | Don Gastone interrupts, accusing his son of treason, and the two argue of past events concerning Celio's mother. Isabella eventually disavows her feelings for Celio as a ruse, and she and Don Gastone depart. |
| III.7 | Celio [solo] | Celio is left alone, seeking vengeance against all who have wronged him, and plans to return to Zoraida's arms. |
| III.8 | Zoraida, Idrena | Zoraida and her nurse have in the meantime heard everything, and realize that Celio is a traitor. Despite Idrena's and her own reservations, she remains in place upon seeing Celio approach. |
| **Table 3.6 (Continued)** | | |
| III.9 | Celio, Zoraida, Idrena | Celio attempts to win Zoraida back, and although she still has feelings for him, she ultimately rejects him. |
| III.10 | Celio solo | Celio is again left alone, now dreading punishment by his king and by God. |
| III.11 | King, Don Gastone, Queen, [Chorus of Aragonese soldiers] | The king learns of Isabella's innocence, and proceeds to have Celio and Zoraida seized. |
| III.12 | Zoraida, Celio, King, Queen, Don Gastone, [Aragonese soldiers, Moorish soldiers] | Zoraida begs for clemency, converting to Christianity and offering to take Celio as her husband and king; moved by this, the king and Don Gastone relent. |

As can be seen in Table 3.6, Zoraida’s reversal, from having rejected Celio in III.9 to suddently pleading for his life in the final scene (III.12; she does not appear in III.10 or III.11), is abrupt. It is possible, as I have said above, that the changes made during rehearsals for *Celio* might have involved some cuts to Act III (although cuts to this act are not among the alterations listed in Cicognini’s letter to the reader). Worth noting, though, is the fact that Zoraida and Celio both appear on stage for the final scene, while the Aragonese soldiers are exchanged for Moorish soldiers—a “crescendo” effect to be sure, even if a short one consisting of only two scenes.

*Orontea*

The Cicognini crescendo is much more apparent in *Orontea*, where by the final scene of the opera all of the characters of the plot proper are on stage, even if some are present only silently. Cicognini’s second-most famous libretto behind *Giasone* had a considerable number of productions and revivals throughout Italy in the seventeenth century. It has received surprisingly little direct attention amidst the revival of interest in Cicognini that has taken place among scholars in the past twenty years.[[98]](#footnote-98) Based on a pre-existing play by Cicognini titled *Adamira overo la statua dell’honore*, written sometime after 1646 (itself, like *Don Gastone*, based on elements from several Spanish plays: Lope de Vega’s *El perro del hortelano* and his *El mármol de Felisardo*, as well as Calderón de la Barca’s *Darlo todo y no dar nar nada* and *El pintor de su deshonra*),[[99]](#footnote-99) *Orontea* was apparently written hastily, after *Giasone*’s libretto had been completed, and set to music by Francesco Lucio for its 1649 premiere. It was a setting by another composer, Antonio Cesti, that saw a large number of performances outside of Venice.[[100]](#footnote-100)

**Table 3.7: Cast of Characters for *Orontea* (Opera Proper)**

Orontea, Queen of Egypt

Creonte, philosopher, tutor to queen

Silandra, lady of the court

Corindo, gentleman of the court

Gelone, buffoon

Tibrino, valet

Aristea, old woman

Alidoro, believed to be Aristea's son, and discovered to be

Floridano, son of King Sidonio of Phoenicia

Giacinta, slave girl in man's clothing under the name of Ismero

Soldiers of the royal guard

Among the cast (Table 3.7) is Orontea who, despite her strong objections to love, has fallen in love with the painter Alidoro, who reciprocates her affections (he first appeared at the palace with his mother Aristea after having been waylaid by a mysterious assassin). Silandra, up until now head over heels in love with Corindo, sees Alidoro and immediately abandons Corindo for the painter, who blithely encourages her attentions. Orontea, now threatened by Silandra’s beauty, feels herself falling helplessly in love with Alidoro, and begins to experience jealousy. In the meantime, the assassin Ismero, who is in fact Orontea’s diguised former servant Giacinta, recently escaped from slavery in a neighboring kingdom, is now being courted by Aristea (who is attracted to the person she thinks is Ismero) while at the same time is beginning herself to fall for Alidoro. Orontea, continuing to feel jealousy at Silandra’s pursuit of Alidoro, rages at the painter so forcefully that he faints. The queen, remorseful now, relents and leaves him a letter telling him she has decided to marry him. But upon consultation with her advisor Creonte, she realizes that she must marry a nobleman for the sake of the realm. Alidoro is disappointed, but immediately returns to Silandra, who now keeps him at arm’s length and wishes to be reunited with Corindo (remember him?). Giacinta, still trying to escape Aristea’s attentions, gives Alidoro a medallion that Aristea had given to Ismero. When the pendant turns out to be in fact a royal medallion, Alidoro is at first accused of theft, but upon Aristea’s explanation that she had found him as a baby with the medallion around his neck after he had been kidnapped by a band of pirates led by her husband, it is revealed that Alidoro is in fact Floridano, the long-lost son of the King of Phoenicia. Orontea is then free to marry him, and Silandra and Corindo are reconciled.

As seen in Table 3.8 illustrating Act III, the progression of the Cicognini crescendo toward the end, beginning from III.24, is purely plot-driven in a way that Zoraida’s abrupt change of heart at the end of *Celio*’s Act III did not support. The revelations in this case come piecemeal, as each character who joins the rest on stage has something to contribute to the unfolding narrative. Like *Giasone*’s terminus, in fact, the scenes in this crescendo that lead up to the final scene are short, often consisting of rapid exchanges between two characters—question and answer—before the full revelation and final denouement occurs in the extensive final scene.

**Table 3.8: *Orontea*,** **Act III Character Distribution and Scene Synopsis**

([Bracketed characters] do not speak in the scene)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| III.1 | Silandra | Silandra pines after Alidoro. |
| III.2 | Alidoro, Silandra | Alidoro, sure that he will marry Orontea and become king, lords it over Silandra and rejects her. |
| III.3 | Tibrino, Gelone | The court's valet and jester comment on the kingdom's disarray and the queen's love-induced madness. |
| III.4 | Creonte, Orontea | Creonte convinces his queen that she must not marry a commoner; she agrees to forsake Alidoro. |
| III.5 | Orontea | Alone, Orontea rages at the politics that have barred her from marrying Alidoro. |
| III.6 | Alidoro, Orontea, [Silandra aside, observing] | Orontea takes the letter that she has written to Alidoro and rips it in his presence, thereby rejecting him. |
| III.7 | Alidoro | In shock, Alidoro consoles himself with the fact that Silandra must still love him. |
| III.8 | Alidoro, Silandra | She doesn't. |
| III.9 | Alidoro | Miserable, he sings about the fallibility of a woman's constancy. |
| III.10 | Gelone | Now that Silandra is over Alidoro, she sends Gelone to give Corindo a letter she has drafted. |
| III.11 | Corindo, Gelone | Corindo reads the letter, in which she begs for his forgiveness. |
| III.12 | Tibrino, Gelone, Corindo | Unmoved, Corindo seeks only vengeance against Alidoro for having stolen Silandra’s heart. |
| III.13 | Gelone, Tibrino | The two servants share a comic interlude wondering about the repercussions of vengeance against Alidoro. |
| III.14 | Aristea | Aristea pines for Ismero. |
| III.15 | Giacinta | Giacinta/Ismero pines for Alidoro. |
| III.16 | Aristea, Giacinta | Pursuing Ismero, Aristea gifts him with a pretty medallion despite his gentle rejection of her advances, and succeeds in stealing a kiss in return for the medallion. |
| III.17 | Aristea | Aristea exults in the kiss. |
| III.18 | Corindo | Corindo continues to rage about Alidoro. |
| III.19 | Tibrino, Corindo | Tibrino brings Corindo a letter from Alidoro. |
| **Table 3.8 (Continued)** | | |
| III.20 | Corindo | In the letter, Alidoro mocks Corindo and challenges him to a duel, driving the courtier to even greater rage at the painter's presumption. |
| III.21 | Alidoro, Giacinta | Giacinta, revealing herself as a woman to Alidoro, passes onto him the medallion that his mother had given her. |
| III.22 | Alidoro, [Gelone aside, observing] | Alidoro wonders at the follies of an older woman in love. |
| III.23 | Gelone | Gelone recognizes the medallion and concludes that Alidoro has stolen it. |
| III.24 | Orontea, Corindo | Corindo complains about Alidoro's challenge to Orontea, who exasperatedly proclaims Alidoro a knight so that the two can duel. |
| III.25 | Creonte, Orontea, [Corindo] | Creonte interrupts with a dispute: Alidoro is a thief, not worthy to be a knight. |
| III.26 | Silandra, Orontea, [Creonte, Corindo] | Silandra explains that Alidoro is in possession of Orontea's royal medallion. |
| III.27 | Gelone, Orontea, [Silandra, Creonte, Corindo] | Gelone explains that he espied the painter with the medallion in hand. |
| III.28 | Tibrino, [Gelone, Silandra, Creonte, Orontea, Corindo] | Tibrino announces that Alidoro has been arrested and is being brought to her. |
| III.29 | Alidoro, Orontea, Creonte, [Tibrino, Gelone, Silandra, Corindo, Soldiers] | Alidoro demands to know what crime he has committed; Creonte points out the similarities between Alidoro’s “stolen” medallion and his own, given to him by Orontea's father; Alidoro explains that Ismero gave him the medallion in his possession. |
| III.30 | Giacinta, Orontea, Gelone, [Alidoro, Creonte, Tibrino, Corindo, Silandra, Soldiers] | Giacinta affirms that she gave Alidoro that medallion, and explains that Aristea had previously given it to her. |
| III.31 | Aristea, Orontea, Tibrino, Creonte, Silandra, [Giacinta, Gelone, Corindo, Alidoro, Soldiers] | Aristea explains the story: a kidnapped baby with medallion in hand was raised as her own son; Orontea learns that her own copy of the medallion is still in her chambers; all realize that this last copy had been given to the King of Phoenicia, and that Alidoro must be Florindo, his long-lost son. He and Orontea can now marry, and Corindo relinquishes his anger and is reconciled with Silandra. |

Unlike *Celio* and *Giasone*, or even *Don Gastone*, *Orontea*’s final scene lacks an emotional plea by a character (Zoraida, Isifile, and Don Merichex respectively) that brings about the final reconciliation. Rather, in this case the plot device—admittedly well-worn throughout the history of prose and lyrical theater—of a long-lost child in possession of a royal emblem serves to bring about the resolution of the story. Indeed, William Holmes’ discussion of the plot, if affectionate, incorporates a winking eye at the reader with comments like “[s]cenes rush by in Act III to bring the plot to its happy and somewhat forced conclusion,” or “by one of the oldest dramatic ploys,” and “in an improbable act of *noblesse oblige*….”[[101]](#footnote-101) It is worth reiterating, however, that *Orontea* was the second most performed opera during the seventeenth century, behind Cicognini’s own *Giasone*. The erstwhile playwright must have been doing something right to have achieved sustained interest in a libretto like *Orontea*; perhaps part of the caprice and delight which he publicly admitted in composing for his *Seicento*—Venetian—audiences derived from the mixture of classic plot devices with a judicious maintenance of suspense, unmatched by other librettists of his time.

*Giasone*

As in *Orontea*, the suspense in Act III of *Giasone* is built and perpetuated by a misunderstanding that occurs halfway through the act; in the former case, the misunderstanding centers around Alidoro’s possession of a royal medallion that members of Orontea’s court think belongs to her. In the latter, the misunderstanding centers on a case of mistaken identity, brought about as the result of a late arrival. *Giasone* as well, then, relies on a well-worn plot device to spin out its drama.

Cicognini’s most often performed and published libretto is a rarity within his dramatic output, in that it is based on a Greek myth—that of Jason and the Argonauts.[[102]](#footnote-102) The use of such source material for librettos was common in Venice at the time,[[103]](#footnote-103) and must have encouraged Cicognini to do the same. He continued to draw from Spanish plays, however, extracting plot elements from works such as Lope de Vega’s *La viuda valenciana*, *El vellocino de oro*, *La fuerza lastimosa*, this last of which also contains a case of mistaken identity (and, like *Giasone*, also leads to an erroneous murder attempt).[[104]](#footnote-104) Table 3.9 below lists the characters:

**Table 3.9: Cast of Characters for *Giasone* (Opera Proper)**

Giasone, leader of the Argonauts

Ercole, one of the Argonauts

Besso, captain of Giasone’s guard

Isifile, Queen of Lemnos

Oreste, her confidante

Alinda, [her] handmaiden

Medea, Queen of Colchis

Delfa, [her] nurse

Rosmina, garden girl

Egeo, King of Athens

Demo, servant[[105]](#footnote-105)

Chorus of Argonauts

Chorus of Soldiers

Chorus of Sailors

Giasone, who fathered twin sons with Isifile the queen of Lemnos, has subsequently abandoned her and traveled on to Colchis in his ongoing quest for the Godlen Fleece. There, he has enjoyed relations with an unidentified woman for a year now, fathering another set of twin sons with her. This woman is the sorceress Medea, queen of Colchis. She is deeply enamored of Giasone, having rejected her former suitor Egeo, the king of Athens, when seeing our hero for the first time. After revealing herself to Giasone and declaring their mutual adoration, she conjures fell magics and obtains an ensorcelled ring to aid him in his quest for the Golden Fleece. Meanwhile, Isifile has been searching for her husband, and arrives with her children and retinue in Caucasian Iberia. Upon finding out from her servant Oreste that Giasone has fallen in love with another woman, she resolves to kill her rival.

Having successfully acquired the Golden Fleece, Giasone and the Argonauts decide to sail to Corinth with Medea in tow. In the meanwhile, the gods have taken notice: Giove, a progenitor of Isifile, is offended both at Giasone’s treatment of his descendant, as well as his despoilment of the sacred fleece. Rather than sending a storm to drown the Argonauts, Amore convinces him to keep the Argo at Caucasian Iberia; a scorned and betrayed wife is the greatest possible punishment for a wayward husband. On their way to Corinth, then, Giasone and Medea end up in same country as Isifile. During their climactic initial confrontation, Giasone debunks Isifile’s claims that they were lovers by claiming in turn that she is a madwoman.

Later, Isifile happens upon the couple, sleeping in an open camp, and awakens Giasone, who promises to return to her if she will leave without disturbing Medea. Medea in fact overhears this, and in a whispered aside to Giasone, forces him to swear that he will have Isifile killed. Giasone then instructs Isifile to meet his henchman Besso at a nearby cliff during the night, to ask if Giasone’s orders have been carried out, and then report the answer to Giasone. The question is in fact a signal for Besso to throw the speaker off the cliff into the sea. But because Isifile is delayed by Oreste, Medea, curious to confirm her rival’s death, arrives at the location before the intended victim and asks Besso if Giasone’s orders (to kill Isifile) have been carried out. After being thrown into the sea, she is rescued by none other than her rejected suitor Egeo, who has been following her. Pledging her love to her savior, Medea goads Egeo into a frenzy by deducing that Giasone must have intended her to be killed. Just as Egeo attempts to kill a sleeping Giasone, Isifile grabs the knife from him and is promptly arrested as a murderer. Giasone, upset at seeing her still alive, is told that Medea died instead, and is then further discomfited when Medea shows up claiming that she now owes her affection to Egeo. Initially protesting Medea’s exhortation that he return to his own wife, Giasone is won over by Isifile’s emotional, guilt-inducing pleas. The opera ends with the proper pairs of lovers happily reunited.

As Table 3.10 below shows, the Cicognini crescendo at the end of Act III of *Giasone*, beginning in III.16, is somewhat shorter than that in *Orontea*, comprising six scenes instead of eight. This is partly because by this point, Medea and Egeo have already reconciled, thus removing one pair of lovers from the knot and leaving only Giasone to reconcile with Isifile. Moreover, in the final grand sweet toward the denouement of *Orontea* the servants join the action, with Gelone and Tibrino each given a scene that contributes to the unfolding drama. In *Giasone*, only Besso contributes to the developing suspense at the end of Act III, as he had been instrumental in causing it in the first place by throwing the wrong queen off a cliff, and must therefore explain himself to his boss.

**Table 3.10: *Giasone*,** **Act III Character Distribution and Scene Synopsis**

([Bracketed characters] do not speak in the scene)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| III.1 | Oreste, Delfa | Isifile’s and Medea’s servants compare notes on their mistresses. |
| III.2 | Medea, Giasone | Medea and Giasone sing each other to sleep in a glade. |
| **Table 3.10 (Continued)** | | |
| III.3 | Medea, Giasone, Oreste | While the two lovers are asleep, Oreste comes upon them and envies their bliss. |
| III.4 | Isifile, Giasone, Medea | Confronted by Isifile, Giasone promises her his love; then vows to Medea to have her killed. |
| III.5 | Besso, Giasone | Giasone orders Besso to kill the first woman (intending Isifile) to ask about his orders. |
| III.6 | Egeo, Demo | Demo encounters Egeo, who has survived an earlier storm in Act II. |
| III.7 | Isifile | Isifile rejoices at her coming reunion with Giasone, who she is convinced loves her. |
| III.8 | Oreste, Isifile | Oreste asks his mistress to feed her children first; she agrees (and is therefore delayed). |
| III.9 | Medea | Medea rages about Isifile, chafes with impatience at her death at the hands of Besso. |
| III.10 | Delfa | Delfa tries to calm her mistress. |
| III.11 | Medea, Besso, Soldiers | Medea asks if Giasone’s orders were carried out; Besso obediently has her captured to be thrown off a cliff. |
| III.12 | Isifile, Besso | Isifile arrives and asks the same question; Besso storms off, saying that he only kills one queen a day. |
| III.13 | Egeo, Medea (offstage) | Egeo hears Medea nearby curse Giasone as she is thrown off a cliff. |
| III.14 | Besso, Giasone | Besso reports he has killed a queen; thinking it to be Isifile, Giasone is nonetheless wracked with guilt. |
| III.15 | Medea, Egeo | Medea is rescued by Egeo; she pledges him her loyalty and love; he pledges to kill Giasone. |
| III.16 | Giasone | A grief-stricken Giasone faints, overcome by remorse. |
| III.17 | Egeo, Giasone | Egeo approaches a sleeping Giasone, and readies his dagger to kill him. |
| III.18 | Isifile, Egeo, Giasone | Isifile appears and seizes the dagger; Egeo flees as Giasone is awakened by the commotion. |
| III.19 | Besso, Giasone, Isifile, [Soldiers] | Giasone is confused and not a little unhappy to see Isifile alive; Besso explains that he killed Medea. |
| III.20 | Medea, Besso, Giasone, Isifile, [Soldiers] | Medea appears, and the confusion of mistaken identities is made clear. |
| III.21 | Egeo, Medea, Besso, Giasone, Isifile, [Soldiers,] (later the servants) | Egeo returns and reveals his identity as would-be assassin; Giasone yearns for Medea, but is moved by Isifile’s impassioned pleas, and is reconciled with her. |

All of the characters participate in this crescendo—there are no silent bystanders among the named cast as there are in *Don Gastone*, *Celio*, and *Orontea*—with the exception of Ercole (that is, Hercules). He is the only character to remain off-stage throughout this final push, if not the entire act, even when the servants (Alinda, Delfa, Oreste, and Demo) appear after the final reconciliation between Giasone and Isifile to add their levity to the proceedings. It is curious that Cicognini would have forgotten about Ercole, in effect writing him off the show. There is, however, a brief reference to him by Besso in III.5, advising Giasone that Ercole was awaiting him, along with the other Argonauts, by the same palace ruins that would serve as the backdrop for the opera’s denouement. The “Soldiers” (*Soldati*) indicated in III.21, then, must have included Ercole among their silent numbers; an unworthy destiny for the grizzled veteran of his own mythological story arc.

Ercole, though, essentially functions as the opera’s curmudgeon, begrudging Giasone’s amorous relationships throughout the opera (I.1, I.2, II.11), and even before the curtain rises: the *Argomento*, providing the *antefatto* material, states that it was Ercole who originally advised Giasone to leave Isifile’s loving embrace and forge ahead to Colchis and the Golden Fleece. In such a role, there would have been nothing positive for him to add, even as a straight man (to Besso, for example, as Ercole essentially was in I.1), in counterpoint to what was meant to be a jubilant celebration at the end of an opera in the midst of a raucous Carnival season. Ultimately, it may have been beyond the purview of even Cicognini, bringer of delight to his audiences, to win over Ercole, as Giasone had been, by Isifile’s moving appeal to the eponymous hero’s compassion.

**Cicognini and Giovanni Faustini: A Case Study**

How were other librettists in Venice constructing their dramas? How did Cicognini, originally a playwright from Florence with an obsession for Spanish plays, achieve such widespread circulation and performance of his works when the average opera in Venice saw the stage for only one season and rarely was brought to other cities? To answer these questions, this section takes a closer look at one of Venice’s most prolific librettists during the 1640s, Giovanni Faustini (1615-51). In an era during which libretto authors were still establishing the rules of this new public genre, and shied away from regarding themselves strictly as librettists (instead referring to themselves by their primary profession, often in the law field), he was a singular figure who avowed his career to the theater-going public: professional librettist.[[106]](#footnote-106)

Faustini’s collaboration with Francesco Cavalli resulted in ten librettos over the decade spanning 1642 to 1652, a crucial period in which plot structures in Venetian opera—until this point quite varied—were codified and standardized under Faustini’s pen. Taking pre-existing material from literary and theatrical genres such as the pastoral and romance, as well as *commedia dell’arte* and even other librettos,[[107]](#footnote-107) Faustini fashioned plots based on devices that would not have been unfamiliar to Cicognini: two pairs of lovers initially separated who are reunited after numerous obstacles, the “effeminate” hero, mistaken identities, misunderstandings, scenes of recognition, sleep, and madness, and many others. Owing to pressures from impresarios (Faustini himself would assume that function later in life) driven by a seasonal market, librettos had to be quickly produced and then subjected to the practical demands of singers and composers, in addition to those of the impresarios themselves. As a result, one can imagine a large board filled with individual cards containing premises and plot devices that the librettist would then choose at random in constructing a new and almost certainly unique story.

Having established the skeleton of the libretto, the next step would be to flesh it out with characters. Beyond the central figures forming the two pairs of lovers, there had to be ancillary ones as well, such as servants, nurses, tutors, philosophers, and advisors. Relationships had to be planned out between many, if not all of these figures, which would then be complicated in some fashion in order to create dramatic “grease” to oil the central plot’s gears. The story, taking an initial imbalance as its starting point, would then further entangle the plot by means of ambiguities and thus sustain the suspense throughout the three acts until balance was finally restored at the end; in the meantime, though, these twists and turns had to be clearly conveyed to the audience so as to allow them to follow along.

Given the multiple plots (and plot twists), as well as the two or three set changes that often took place within each act, it is clear that to Venetians like Faustini, the Aristotelian unities so valued in the Renaissance had fallen by the wayside, just as they had for the Spanish dramatists of the late sixteenth century as well as Florentine playwrights like Cicognini (both father and son). This gives the lie to the Arcadian Crescimbeni’s accusation that *Giasone* was at the root of the improprieties of *Seicento* Venetian opera: the Venetians had been mixing high and low characters well before Cicognini arrived on the scene. Of course, from Crescimbeni’s perspective, *Giasone* had been the most high-profile work of the century, and thus presented an easy target for him and his fellow Arcadians.

In any case, Faustini, working independently of Cicognini even after the erstwhile playwright arrived in Venice,[[108]](#footnote-108) seems to have already established a format for his libretto plots: motivated by an initial imbalance (usually separation), driven by a succession of misunderstandings and ambiguities, smoothed out by adroit character placement in prototypical *liaisons de scènes*, and ultimately resolved into a happy ending in keeping with the libertine atmosphere of the Venetian carnival season.

*La virtù de’ strali d’Amore*

Faustini’s first libretto was titled *La virtù de’ strali d’Amore* (1642),[[109]](#footnote-109) set to music by Cavalli and premiered the same year at the Teatro San Cassiano. Based on figures from Greek mythology, its cast of characters is truly extensive, including seven gods, two “allegories” (Caprice and Pleasure) that appear in the Prologue, fourteen humans (who themselves are divided into eight nobles and their six servants), and five “choruses” representing different factions. True to the formula described above, the plot involves two pairs of lovers, Pallante and Cleria, and Meonte and Erabena, who are initially estranged from one another. The plot’s twists and turns run the gamut: disguise, abduction, and recognition all serve to move the story along, with the central plot device being, as suggested by the title, Amore’s (Cupid’s) arrows. Unlike *Giasone*, where the gods ultimately have no impact on the story’s events, here they are involved in the plot, often interacting directly with the mortals. The final seven scenes of Act III are particularly noteworthy, as they seem to form a crescendo pattern similar to Cicognini’s Venetian librettos (Table 3.11).

**Table 3.11: *La virtù de’ strali d’Amore*, III.11-16 Character Distribution**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| III.11 | Pallante |
| III.12 | Darete, Pallante |
| III.13 | Meonte, Eumete, Pallante, Darete |
| III.14 | Cleandra, Meonte, Pallante, Eumete, Darete |
| III.15 | Evagora, Darete, Pallante, Meonte, Cleandra, Eumete |
| III.16 | Amore, Venere, Psiche |

In this seven-scene arc, Pallante rescues Darete (brother of Cleria, who now loves Pallante because she was pricked with one of Amore’s arrows) from the thrall of the sorceress Ericlea. Meonte, erstwhile lover of Cleria, arrives on the scene seeking revenge against Pallante for having taken Cleria away from him, and is accompanied by Eumete, who in reality is Erabena the daughter of the King of Athens and who is in love with Meonte. As Pallante and Meonte prepare to duel for Cleria’s hand, Cleandra, another sorceress (and a friend of Meonte), appears on stage and reveals that Pallante and Meonte are in fact long-lost brothers. Evagora, father of Cleria and Darete and King of Cyprus, then appears, is reunited with Darete (who, again, had up until this scene arc been under the thrall of the sorceress Ericlea), and accepts the now-chastened Meonte’s fealty. All seems well, as now Pallante is free to love Cleria (whom Meonte has ceded to his brother), and Meonte and Eumete/Erabena are now available for each other. The final scene features Cupid, Venus, and Psyche (Cupid’s wife), the three gods rejoicing that all is well once again.

Several issues seem to remain unresolved, or at least unaddressed: for example, where is Cleria in the midst of all of the rejoicing in the final denouement? Unlike Ercole in *Giasone*, a secondary character whose presence on stage is at least implied, Cleria, a primary character, is nowhere to be found. She was last seen in III.6, begging her restored loved Pallante to remain with her. Perhaps it is fitting, then, that Meonte and Eumete/Erabena do not have a “moment” together after it is discovered that he and Pallante are brothers. Indeed, III.14, the scene of this revelation, centers on the brothers’ reunion, and the following scene centers on another reunion—that of Evagora and Darete, capped by Meonte’s offer of fealty to the king.[[110]](#footnote-110) While it is implied that Pallante will return home to Cleria, and that Meonte and Eumete/Erabena will get together, there is no rapprochement between the second pair as there is between both pairs of lovers in either *Giasone* or *Orontea*. I would thus argue that the crescendo effect seen here does not tie up all loose ends quite as neatly as do Cicognini’s two Venetian librettos. It is worth remembering that *La virtù* was Faustini’s first libretto: all the plot elements that would eventually become standard operating procedure are present here, even if they are not executed to perfection.

*Eritrea*

To this end, it is worth examining Faustini’s last libretto, *Eritrea* (1652),[[111]](#footnote-111) written after Cicognini had arrived in Venice (and subsequently died), and credited with being the product of Cicognini’s influence (despite Faustini’s potential dig at Cicognini, discussed earlier).[[112]](#footnote-112) This work also involves a complex plot, although the number of characters has been pared down significantly from that of *La virtù*: only twelve human characters (four of them noble), and no gods except for the two that appear in the Prologue (Boreas and Iris), and eight choruses with no speaking part. Plot devices in this opera include recognition, falsely declared love, false identities (including transvestism), and a siege. Predictably, the four noble characters form the two pairs of lovers: Theramene and Eritrea, and Eurimedonte and Laodicea. Their descriptions in the list of characters is worth reproducing here in Table 3.12 for their completeness:

**Table 3.12: *Eritrea*, Partial Cast of Characters**

**Eurimedonte**: Prince of Egypt, who having secretely given Eritrea a promise of marriage, has subsequently fallen in love with Laodicea.

**Laodicea**: Queen of Phoenicia, in love with and betrothed to Eritrea, who is widely believed to be Periandro.

**Eritrea**: Assyrian Princess, disguised as Periandro (the dead king and her brother). Having been promised earlier to be the wife of Theramene, she is in love with Eurimedonte. In her guise as King Periandro, Eritrea is betrothed to Laodicea in order to draw closer to her beloved Egyptian Eurimedonte who, having forgotten her, is now in love with the Phoenician queen (Laodicea).

**Theramene**: Assyrian Prince who believes Eritrea (whose hand in marriage had been promised to him by the dead Periandro) to be dead. He still loves her, however, and from this becomes mad.[[113]](#footnote-113)

In this particular libretto, the crescendo effect begins in III.11, and as seen in Table 3.13 extends until III.15 (there is no Epilogue featuring the gods):

**Table 3.13: *Eritrea*,** **III.11-15 Character Distribution**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| III.11 | Theramene |
| III.12 | Eritrea, Theramene |
| III.13 | Laodicea, Eritrea, Theramene |
| III.14 | Eurimedonte, Laodicea, Eritrea, Theramene |
| III.[15] (Ultima) | Dione, Niconida, Misena, Eritrea, Eurimedonte, Theramene, Laodicea |

The final sweep to the opera’s denouement begins with Theramene alone, mourning the presumed death of Eritrea in the earlier Assyrian siege. Eritrea, in hiding after having faked the death of “Periandro,” reveals herself to Theramene, her husband, who rejoices upon their reunion as husband and wife. Laodicea enters, still in mourning over the death of “Periandro,” and seeing Eritrea (and believing her to be Periandro), approaches; Eritrea denies knowing Laodicea, much to the Phoenician queen’s consternation. Upon Eurimedonte’s arrival in the following scene, he accuses “Periandro” of faking his own death, and pretending to be Eritrea, in order to take Laodicea for himself. When Eritrea attempts to explain the situation, Eurimedonte raises his sword to her, but is interrupted by the entrance of Dione (the Phoenician captain), who drags in Nicomida (the defeated Assyrian captain). Nicomida, under questioning by Eritrea, explains all: that Periandro in fact died, and that Eritrea pretended to be Periandro in order to conserve the kingdom of Assyria (which had strict laws against female rulers). Eritrea asks Eurimedonte, Theramene, and Laodicea to forgive her deception, which they readily do. Laodicea agrees to accept Eurimedonte as her consort, and the two pairs of lovers rejoice.

It is apparent from this example that after a decade spent writing librettos, Faustini exerts much stronger control over the disparate threads of the plot, and (for the purposes of this discussion) is particularly conscious not only of (re)uniting the two pairs of lovers, but having them all appear on stage together. Although not all of the ancillary characters appear on stage, the important ones are present: the four nobles, as well as the two captains who are instrumental in unraveling the confusion caused by Eritrea’s reappearance (Dione in interrupting Eurimedonte’s attempted attack against Eritrea, and Nicomida in clarifying the backstory).

Although the scenes leading up to the denouement are not made up of short rapidfire exchanges in the style of Cicognini, a great deal in this six-scene arc is still reminiscent of the Florentine dramatist’s work, particularly *Giasone*. Dione’s line in III.15, “You will die, traitor” (“*Morrai tu, traditore*”) evokes Isifile’s line to Egeo in III.18 of *Giasone*, “You will die, villain!” (“*Tu morrai, scelerato!*”), a parallel that would not have gone unnoticed among audience members who had seen Cicognini’s opera. There is also the matter of the death under false pretenses in *Eritrea* and its impact on the other characters, a plot device not exactly identical to the circumstances underlying Medea’s attempted murder, but evocative of it nonetheless. While the impassioned plea by Isifile has no exact analogue here (Eurimedonte, who until now has loved Laodicea in vain, and is therefore the closest in affect to Isifile, does not have a similarly emotional monologue), Eritrea’s eloquent words move the nobles to forgiveness, just as Giasone is moved to reconcile with Isifile (and King Pietro in *Don Gastone* is moved to reform his tyrannical ways).

Most important is the mechanism of the crescendo, handled more adroitly by Faustini here, in which, one at a time, a character is added in each successive scene until the final scene in which come on stage. This may be partly attributed to the mechanism of the plot: *Eritrea*’s denouement is catalyzed by the big revelation in the final scene, whereas the dramatic burden in *Giasone*’s final scene is placed squarely on Isifile’s shoulders. That is, Faustini prioritizes his characters’ emotions over the course of the Act III crescendo in *Eritrea*, portraying first Theramene’s reaction upon seeing Eritrea (III.12), then Laodicea’s upon seeing “Periandro” (III.13), and finally Eurimedonte upon seeing “Periandro” dressed as Eritrea, reserving the final explication for the final scene. Cicognini, in contrast, emphasizes a piecemeal sequence of revelations: first that Isifile still lives (III.16-18), then why she still lives (III.20), and finally who made the attempt on Giasone’s life (III.21), reserving the emotional outpouring and reaction for that final scene.

Given Faustini’s use of a crescendo technique ten years earlier in *La virtù*, even if to more limited efficacy from a structural and a dramatic standpoint, it is safe to say that Cicognini was not the first one to have used it.[[114]](#footnote-114) I would argue, however, that the Florentine dramatist’s distinctive execution, especially in his two Venetian librettos, provisionally justifies (pending further research on other librettists, as well as a more exhaustive examination of Cicognini’s and Faustini’s dramatic output) the term “Cicognini crescendo.” As for the matter of Cicognini’s possible influence on Faustini in spite of the latter’s reservations against the Florentine’s irreverent and capricious attitude toward librettistic composition, I believe I have made a compelling argument that Faustini, in *Eritrea*, was aware of, and influenced by, *Giasone* and its author.

Ultimately, Cicognini was not solely responsible for the abuses directed toward drama and acting of which Crescimbeni and his colleagues accused him, nor was he entirely responsible for Faustini’s development and growth as a librettist in the late 1640s. However, he did leave another legacy that remained long after his death. Rosand attributes to the Florentine dramatist the first clear distinction between recitative (*versi sciolti*) and aria (*versi misurati*) in his *Giasone*.[[115]](#footnote-115) Perhaps a playwright, working methodically in translating prose to verse as he seems to have done for his Venetian librettos, would have used such a distinction as a compositional aid. And perhaps other librettists (and composers) saw the value in this and adopted it for their own works. In turn, his recognition of the power of music to augment his text’s emotional value gave us figures like Isifile, the heroine and emotional linchpin of *Giasone*, andmore complex in her characterization than any of his prose-based characters.[[116]](#footnote-116) If nothing else, Cicognini injected a breath of fresh air to an industry that, while not stagnant, was already becoming ossified in its procedures.

1. While the majority of these performers were not Venetian by birth, many were at the time already employed in Venice. For a more thorough history of early opera in Venice, see Lorenzo Bianconi, *Il seicento*, trans. David Bryant as *Music in the Seventeenth Century* (Turin: Edizioni di Torino, 1982; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 161-204; as well as Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), especially Chapter 3, 66-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. That same year, a newly-opened theater, the Teatro Santi Giovanni e Paolo, premiered *Delia* and *Armida* at the hands of Ferrari and Manelli’s troupe of performers. Like *Le nozze*, *Delia*’s librettos was written by a Venetian—Giulio Strozzi—although it was still set to music by Manelli (*Armida*’s text and music were both written by Ferrari). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For more information on the rise of opera *as* industry, see Beth L. and Jonathan E. Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera: The Impresario and His World in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Figures taken from Cristoforo Ivanovich’s *Minerva al tavolino* (originally published in Venice, 1681 by Nicolò Pezzana, with a second volume added in 1688, and more recently appearing in facsimile—see Norbert Dubowy, ed. *Memorie teatrali di Venezia: contengono diversi trattenimenti piacevoli della città, introduzione de’ teatri, il titolo di tutti i drami rappresentati, col nome degli autori di poesia, e di musica sino a questo anno 1687* [Lucca: Libreria musicale italiana, 1993]), with Thomas Walker’s corrections in mind (“Gli errori di ‘Minerva al tavolino’: osservazioni sulla cronologia delle prime opere veneziane,” in *Venezia e il melodramma nel Seicento*, ed. Maria Teresa Muraro [Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1976], 7-20). Beth and Jonathan Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera*, 325-337, provide an updated chronology of opera performances in Venice from 1651-68 (Appendix 1: “A Brief Chronicle of Opera Productions in Venice from 1651 to 1658”), while Eleanor Selfridge-Field provides a nearly complementary chronology of the rest of the century and beyond in *A New Chronology of Venetian Opera and Related Genres, 1660-1760* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. What little is known of Cicognini’s life has been brought to light most recently by Silvia Castelli, “Giacinto Andrea Cicognini: un figlio d’arte nella Firenze secentesca,” in Flavia Cancedda and Silvia Castelli, *Per una bibliografia di Giacinto Andrea Cicognini: Successo teatrale e fortuna editoriale di un drammaturgo del Seicento* (Florence: Alinea, 2001), 25-78, a monograph on the playwright and librettist’s works. This section draws from Castelli’s work (available only in Italian) to provide some background regarding Cicognini’s upbringing and formation as a dramatist in his early years in Florence and his eventual arrival in Venice in the late 1640s, as well as from Anna Crinò, “Documenti inediti sulla vita e l’opera di Jacopo e di Giacinto Andrea Cicognini,” *Studi secenteschi* 2 (1961): 255-86, and Nicola Michelassi, “*La finta pazza* a Firenze: commedie ‘spagnole’ e ‘veneziane’ nel Teatro di Baldracca (1641-1665),” *Studi secenteschi* 41 (2000), 313-53. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For more on Iacopo’s illustrious career (beyond Crinò’s and Castelli’s work, cited above), see the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, s.v. “Cicognini, Iacopo” (by Magda Vigilante), http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/iacopo-cicognini\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/ (accessed 6 December 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Broadly speaking, confraternities—“brotherhoods”—were religious societies that provided an organized social structure for laypeople that often revolved around charity-based work. The two confraternities to which the elder and younger Cicognini belonged, both with illustrious histories extending back several centuries, were aimed at educating and socializing the youth of Florence. For more on confraternities, particularly the Compagnia dell’Arcangelo Raffaello, see Konrad Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael: A Youth Confraternity in Florence, 1411-1785* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), especially Chapters 16 (“Theatre in the Confraternity”) and 17 (“Theatre in the Seventeenth Century”). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. In turn, Academies were largely secular organizations that began to appear as early as the late fifteenth century, geared toward any number of intellectual, artistic, or scientific pursuits, and numbered among them the famous Accademia della Crusca (founded in Florence, 1583) as well as, within the context of this dissertation, the Accademia degli Incogniti (founded in Venice, 1630), with whose members Cicognini enjoyed stimulating intellectual exchanges. For more on the two Florentine academies of which Cicognini was a member, see Michele Maylender, *Storia delle accademie d’Italia*, vol. 3 (Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1976), 265, 317-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. “*Messere Iacinto Cicognini fece parte doppia*,” Archivio di stato, Florence, “Compagnie Religiose Soppresse da Pietro Leopoldo,” n.134, *Libro di Ricordi e Partiti*, c. 25r; cited in Cancedda/Castelli, 34n30. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera*, 111-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. “*Jacinto poi studia, et ha dello studiato et farà onore a tutti perché sa et ha giudizio, et si porta benissimo e questo spero che solleverà la casa*,” from a letter dated 14 September 1626 (Crinò, “Documenti inediti,” 269-70), and later that same year “[*r*]*ingrazio Dio benedetto, che se bene mi ha fatto povero mi da qualche contento per altro verso*,” from a letter dated 26 October 1626 (*Ibid*., 270-71). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. For more on the circumstances surrounding this play, as well as Iacopo’s reservations about his son’s continuing interest in the theater (and resulting letter to Cioli pleading for an intervention in Pisa), see Nicola Michelassi and Salomé Vuelta García, “Il teatro spagnolo sulla scena fiorentina del Seicento,” *Studi secenteschi* 45 (2004), 67-137: 92; Cancedda/Castelli, 50-52; and Crinò, “Documenti inediti,” 281-82. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. This unhappy event came about as a result of incipient symptoms of a plague that was raging at the time in Florence; awareness of this drove him to jump from his window to his death. See Cancedda/Castelli, 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Indeed, these manuscripts, along with a portrait of him, were the only belongings mentioned in the same document that outlined the final disposition of his body: “Honorable fathers and brothers of the Compagnia dell’Arcangelo Raffaello… I bestow upon you all of my comedies, performances, and other manuscripts written by me at various times so that they may remain with you for the service of the Compagnia, also so that Giacinto my son may always have copies of them at hand, and may also bring some plays home, so long as the Compagnia can rest secure that he must return them to the house or the archives to which they are bound…” (“*Onorandi padri e fratelli della Compagnia dell’Arcangelo Raffaello… Io vi dono tutte le mie commedie, le rappresentazioni ed altre cose scritte a mano composte da me in diversi tempi perché restino appresso di voi per servizio della compagnia pur che Giacinto mio figliuolo ne possa sempre avere vista e copia ed anco portare a casa qualche opera purché la compagnia resti sicura che deva ritornare nella casa o vero armdio da destinarsi*…”). Archivio di stato, Florence, “Compagnie Religiose Soppresse da Pietro Leopoldo,” n. 162, *Libro di Ricordi e Partiti*, cc. 63v-64r; cited in Cancedda/Castelli, 49n79. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The *ufficiali dell’Onestà* were employed as overseers of the night life in Florence, specifically of prostitutes and their proper taxation. See Cancedda/Castelli, 53n91. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Of this performance we have a letter from Leopoldo de’ Medici to Mattias de’ Medici communicating its success, albeit without mentioning its author (who by then would already have been a well-known figure at the Medicean court): “I was detained in the evening with playing dice in my room, and with a comedy; tonight with a great crowd including women, once more was performed—for the third time—a comedy called *Don Gastone di Moncada*, a play truly beautiful and performed well, and from [the fact that] there were more people there this third time than the first, Your Highness, one can imagine that it went well. The comedy’s running time ended early because on Saturday the comic actors are leaving. Your Highness’ humble servant. From Florence, 10 December 1641.” (“*Mi son trattenuto la sera a giocare a dadi nella mia stanza e alla commedia, e stasera con gran concorso e di dame ancora si è recitata per la terza volta una commedia nominata Don Gastone di Moncada, opera veramente bella e recitata bene, e dall’esserci più gente questa terza volta che la prima Vostra Altezza si può immaginare che sia riuscita bene. Il passatempo della commedia finisce presto perché sabato vanno via i commedianti. Di Vostra Altezza. Di Firenze 10 decembre 1641*”). Leopoldo de’ Medici to Mattias de’ Medici, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, *MdP* 4560, c.40r; cited in Michelassi, “La *finta pazza* a Firenze,” 318. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. For more on this play, see its entry below in Table 3.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See Michelassi, “La *finta pazza* a Firenze,” 324n35. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. “*Venerdì 4 detto* [*novembre 1644*]. *Al stanzone si recitò* Belissario *e quando cascò in disgrazia che disse ‘rendi lo bastone,’ uno del stanzone disse: ‘rendi quel bulletto!’*” Cited in Michelassi, *Ibid*., 325. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. “During the current Carnival, the regular youths and brothers of our company attend our sessions, with the permission of our father correctors and guardians—as well as by their will and advice—they meet in order to be employed and to train the children, in order to distance themselves further from occasions that would ordinarily make them uselessly pass their time, straying from virtue and following the vices. They resolved to stage a comedy titled *Don Gastone*, a moral play and exemplary composition by Doctor Giacinto Cicognini, our brother; requiring the brothers who were most appropriate for the parts and the subject, they reduced it to perfection.. It was performed five times: the first, second and third for the ladies and relatives of the brothers and actors on the 12th, 15th, and 19th, and on one of these days the Duke of Vandomo attended with all of his courtiers; and on the 22nd and 24th of the same month, the former for the ladies and their husbands, and the third—or rather, the second—for the men at the house where currently resides Doctor M. Giulio Guazzini, our guardian. It was a place very capable and apt for such an enterprise, and all those who labored and worked came together to pay for the expenses. The work was perfection, with the noblest and richest costumes, and with music done by the same brothers under the supervision of our Maestro di Cappella. It was executed to the universal satisfaction not only of those who performed [on stage], but by all of the others who attended and who were among the audience. This present record was made of this work in order to give an opportunity for [our future] successors to employ themselves with similar virtuous deeds.”

    (“*Nel presente carnovale li giovani e fratelli di nostra compagnia soliti frequentare le nostre tornate, con licenza delli nostri padri correttore e guardiano et di volere e consiglio de’ medesimi si unirono per restar inpiegati et esercitar ancor li giovanetti et per allontanarsi ancora dall’occasioni che per un ordinario fanno passare inutilmente il tempo traviandosi bene spesso dalle virtù et seguitando i vitii, et risolverono di recitare una commedia intitolata* D. Gastone *opera morale et esemplare compositione del Dottore Giacinto Cicognini nostro confratello et impiegando li fratelli più atti alle parti et al suggetto quelli ridussero ad intera perfettione. Fu rappresentata 5 volte. La prima, seconda e terza alle gentildonne et parenti de’ fratelli et recitanti il dì 12 15 et 19 stante et in uno di detti giorni fu spettatore il Duca di Vandomo con tutti li suoi cortigiani et il dì 22 et 24 del medesimo la prima alle gentildonne con il loro mariti et la terza anzi seconda alli huomini et seguì nella casa ove di presente abita il Dottore M. Giulio Guazzini nostro guardiano luogo molto capace et atto per simil impiego et alla spesa concorsero li medesimi che si affaticarono et impiegarono. Fu ridotta a somma perfettione con abiti nobilissimi et ricchissimi, con musiche fatte da’ medesimi fratelli con la sopraintendenza del nostro maestro di cappella et seguì con satisfattione universale non solo di quelli che restarono impiegati, ma di tutti li altri che vi intervennero et ne furono spettatori. Di che se n’è fatto la presente memoria per dar occasione a’, successori d’impiegarsi in simili azzioni virtudiose*.”) Archivio di stato, Florence, “Compagnie Religiose Soppresse da Pietro Leopoldo,” n. 164, *Libro di Ricordi e Partiti*, cc. 43v-44r; cited in Cancedda/Castelli, 58n106. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. The Medicis had been interested in Venice’s “commedie in musica” as a new medium for entertainment for several years at this point; Prince Mattias de’ Medici attended the carnival season of 1641 in Venice, when *La finta pazza* premiered. Alfonso Antinori, a courtier in his retinue tasked with reporting the events of this season to Mattias’ brother Giovan Carlo, wrote of the opera’s great success: “A comedy was performed most beautifully, well sung and with several beautiful [stage] machines... we ought to have attended this comedy twice, but truly it is beautiful.” (“*Si è fatto una com*[*m*]*edia bellissima, ben cantata e qualche macchina bella… ci convenne sentire due volte questa commedia, ma veramente è bella*.”) For more on this, *La finta pazza*’s tour through Italy that culminated in its 1645 performance in Florence, and the commercialization process of opera in that city, as well as the central role that the repertory at the Teatro di Balracca played in it, see Michelassi, “La *finta pazza* a Firenze,” *op*. *cit*. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. “…[*P*]*rimizie del mio povero ingegno in questo genere di composizioni*.” Cicognini, *Celio di Don Gastone: Dramma musicale di Hiacint’Andrea Cicognini al Serenissimo Signore Principe Leopoldo di Toscana*, located in I-Vnm (MS.It.IX.55), cited in Michelassi, “La *finta pazza* a Firenze,” 335n74. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See Cancedda/Castelli, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. The score manuscript is located at I-Fn (MS.II.I.292). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. “[*U*]*n* *gran naviglio fabbricato già su l’Arno da bizzarro Maestro, che navigò similmente con molta arditezza ne’ mari di Toscana*,” dedication letter by Giovan Battista Balbi to Jacques Bretel de Grémonville, French ambassador to Venice, dated 28 January 1653 (1652 in *more veneto*), Luigi Zorzisto, *Veremonda* (Venice: Andrea Giuliani, 1653), 5-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. For more on the relationship between *Celio* and *Veremonda*, see Lorenzo Bianconi and Thomas Walker, “Dalla *finta pazza* alla *Veremonda*: Storie di Febiarmonici,” *Rivista Italiana di musicologia* 10 (1975), 379-454: 394; and Wendy Heller, “Amazons, Astrology, and the House of Aragon: *Veremonda* tra Venezia e Napoli,” in *Francesco Cavalli: La circolazione dell’opera veneziana nel Seicento*, ed. Dinko Fabris (Naples: Turchini Edizioni, 2005): 147-64. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Giacinto Andrea Cicognini, *Il Celio: Dramma musicale del Dottor Iacinto Andrea Cicognini; Rappresentato in Firenza* *l’anno 1646* (Florence: Luca Franceschi and Alessandro Logi, 1646). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. “*T’appresento il mio Celio. Se ti aggrada metterò in mio avanzo il tuo diletto. Se non ti aggrada staremo ambidue in capitale. Ricordati, che io compongo per mero capriccio. Ho però preteso di dilettarti e di giovarti insieme. Ho creduto che ti possa dilettare l’intrecciatura di questo soggetto che porta seco una continua e nuova varietà di impensati accidenti or serii or allegri. Ho confidato di giovarti, rappresentandoti una regina mora che divien cristiana. Troverai alcuna cosa nella stampa, che non si sentirà sulla scena; così è convenuto fare, perché l’opera nel rappresentarsi si renda aggiustata di tempo, già che alcune cose vi sono state da me aggiunte, oltre l’intenzione che ebbi a principio (come sarebbe la prima scena del II atto, la prima scena ed il principio della seconda del III atto et alcun’altra) per compiacere ad altri, ond’è convenuto levare qualche cosa in altri luoghi per ridurla al giusto segno. Insomma ti prego a gradire Celio mio se non per altro, almeno perché è figlio del mio Don Gastone, che è stato all’universale così gradito. Vivi felice*,” cited in Cancedda/Castelli, 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. A full accounting of these changes would require a thorough examination of both manuscript and print versions of the libretto as well as the manuscript score, although depending on when the score was created, the investigation might still be impeded by the lack of any records indicating what exactly had been changed for the performance—we have no “seconda impressione” reflecting a “rappresentata” version like we do with *Giasone*; the only subsequent printing occurred almost two decades later (Rome: Iacomo Dragondello, 1664), and its relationship to the Florence sources currently remains unclear. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. See Vittorio Ricci, “Un melodramma ignoto della prima metà del ‘600,” *Rivista musicale Italiana* 32 (1925), 51-79; 56ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Elsewhere I have speculated on the creative process between Cicognini and Cavalli; the prose version of *Giasone* served as a continuing source of ideas for the librettist, but I suggest that Cavalli, who was by 1649 a veteran opera composer, was influential in driving many of the changes that occurred between the First Impression (the early pre-premiere release of the libretto) and the Second Impression (the more definitive version of the libretto): “Creating a Hit: In the Workshop of Cicognini/Cavalli’s *Giasone*” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society, Milwaukee, WI, November 7, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Specifically, he left in August, per an annotation written in small print found at the bottom of the left margin in the *Informatione per il nuovo negotio per l’ufficio dell’onestà*: “Cicognini leaves. August 1646” (“*Il Cicognino si parte. Agosto 1646*”), Archivio di stato, Florence, “Miscellanea Medicea,” 26/19, c. 2r; cited in Cancedda/Castelli, 54n92. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. The account is as follows: “Giacinto Andrea Cicognini, famous composer of comedies, having been in Florence his homeland at the public horse track, was assaulted by a certain famous Boccardino, a crony of Cardinal Giovan Carlo de’ Medici and of other princes of Tuscany, for having found out that he [Cicognini] insulted him [Boccardino] for said profession. The following day, Cicognini left for Venice, and there composed the majority of his comedies, without any desire to ever return to his homeland.” (“*Diacinto [*sic*] Andrea Cicognini famoso compositore di commedie, essendo stato in Firenze sua patria in pubblico corso del palio bastonato da un certo famoso Boccardino ruffiano del Cardinale Giovan Carlo de’ Medici e d’altri Principi di Toscana, per aver saputo che egli l’avesse vituperato per detto mestiero, il giorno appresso il Cicognini se ne passò a Venezia e quivi compose buona parte delle sue commedie senza volere mai più far ritorno alla patria.*”) Anton Francesco Marmi, *Miscellanea di diverse notizie letterarie e storiche raccolte per lo più dagli eruditissimi discorsi del Signor Antonio Magliabechi tenuti col Cavaliere Anton Francesco Marmi*, Vol. I, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale a Firenze, Magl., cl. VIII, 15; cited in Cancedda/Castelli, 63n128. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. “*Se non mi date ormai qualche quattrino / stiasi la corte con cento buon anni / ch’io me ne vo su ‘l palco a far da zanni*,” Persiani, *Canzone al Gran Duca Ferdinando II* (I-Fn, MS.II.II.285, c.113v), cited in Michelassi, “La *finta pazza*,” 337. Little else is known about this librettist. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. *Gl’amori di Alessandro magno e di Rossane*, completed after his death, contains an “Al Lettore” not written by Cicognini, whereas the play that he wrote in Venice, *Le gelosie fortunate del prencipe Rodrigo*, remained in manuscript form until after his death. The unknown author of *Gl’amori*’s “Al Lettore,” perhaps the impresario of the Teatro di Santi Apostoli where it premiered on 26 January 1651, uses similar language to Cicognini’s: “I boast of drawing some glory, if not from the actual [work] then at least from my exertions…. You, reader, enjoy here a body with two souls, and in my theater a soul with two bodies desirous of satisfying you, and arduous to please you.” (“*Mi vanto di trar qualche gloria, se non dal vero almeno dall’ardire…. Tu lettore qui godi un corpo di due anime, e nel mio teatro un’anima di due corpi desiderio di sodisfarti, ed ardire per compiacerti*.”) *Gl’amori di Alessandro Magno e di Rossane: Dramma musicale posthumo del Dottore Hiacint’ Andrea Cicognini, accademico instancabile* (Venice: Giovanni Pietro Pinelli, 1651), 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Cicognini was not alone in evoking caprice: perhaps the first librettist to use a similar phrase in his *Sidonio e Dorisbe* (Venice, 1642) was Francesco Melosio. See Rosand, *Opera*, 168-69. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. “*Io compongo per mero capriccio; il mio capriccio non ha altra fine che dilettare. L’apportar diletto appresso di me non è altro che l’incontrare il genio ed il gusto di chi ascolta o legge. Se ciò mi sortirà, con la lettura o recita del mio* Giasone*, avrò conseguito il mio intento. Se non mi sortirà, io avrò gettato via molti giorni in comporlo, e voi poche ore in leggerlo, o ascoltarlo, sicché il danno maggiore sarà il mio. Non resterò per questo di ricordarvi che l’uso, o per meglio dire abuso dei nomi ‘idolo,’ ‘dea,’ ‘deità,’ ‘fato,’ ‘destino’ e simili, son mere invenzioni poetiche. Vivete felici.*” Venice 1649A, 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Alessandra Chiarelli and Angelo Pompilio, in their survey of frontmatter material in Venetian librettos (*“Or vaghi or fieri”: Cenni di poetica nei libretti veneziani (circa 1640-1740)* [Bologna: Cooperativa Libraria Universitaria Editrice Bologna, 2004]), have deduced that only rarely did librettists explicitly speak of “elevation of the spirit by means of art as a universal end for poetry,” (“*elevazione dello spirito attraverso l’arte in quanto fine universale della poesia*,” 23) but that more often than not they focused on delighting and pleasing the public. Discussion of loftier goals was reserved for academic circles. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. The dedication letter in full reads as follows: “Most Illustrious Lord, my Lord and most distinguished patron: With my heart’s most reverent spirit I present to Your Most Illustrious Lordship my *Orontea*. If ever an effort [of mine] has had need of being protected by a guardian deity, this one has painstaking need of it, because (other than being born of my sterile and weary mind), it was written by me during the past days in few strokes of my pen [and] across few turns of the sun. Well do I know that to venture forth one’s own compositions in this manner is not the act of a prudent man, but whoever sees this, my drama, appear in the light of day, and that upon it shines the name of Your Most Illustrious Lordship, who himself will see if I was ill-advised in subjecting myself to the narrow window of time in composing it, [will see that] I was however anything but [ill-advised], and rather shrewd in consecrating it to Your greatness, to immortalize the weakness of the work with Your protection. I beg of Your Most Illustrious Lordship to not disdain this, my most humble gift. The gods appreciate the purest of sacrifices, so long as they are accompanied by an adoring and devoted soul. To you I commend my immortal and most grateful servitude, and to Your Most Illustrious Lordship most humbly I bow. Venice, 20 January 1649.”

    “*Illustriss*[*imo*] *Signore, mio Signore e patron colendissimo: Con i più reverenti spiriti del mio core presento a V*[*ostra*] *S*[*ignoria*] *Illustrissima la mia* Orontea*. Se mai alcuna fatica ebbe bisogno di esser protetta da Nume tutelare questa ne tiene precisa necessità, perché (oltre l’esser parto del mio sterile, e affaticato ingegno) fu da me composta alli giorni passati in pochi scorsi di penna in pochi corsi di sole. Ben so, che l’avventurare le proprie composizioni in questa guisa non è atto da prudente, ma chi vedrà comparire alla luce questo mio dramma, e che gli risplende in front il nome di V*[*ostra*] *S*[*ignoria*] *Illustrissima, che conoscerà se fui mal avvisato in soggettarmi alla strettezza del tempo in comporlo, fui però altro, e tanto accorto in consacrarlo alla grandezza di Lei, per eternare la debolezza dell’opera con la sua protezzione. Supplico V*[*ostra*] *S*[*ignoria*] *Illustrissima a non sdegnare questo mio umilissimo dono. Le Deità gradiscono i sacrifizi più puri, purché siano accompagnati da un’anima adorante, e devota. Le rassegno intanto la mia immortale, ed obbligatissima servitù, ed a V*[*ostra*] *S*[*ignoria*] *Illustrissima umillissimo m’inchino. Venezia li 20 gennaio 1649.*” *Orontea: Dramma musicale* (Venice, 1649), 5-6.

    Anna Tedesco has taken Cicognini’s statement about the short number of days spent writing *Orontea* at face value, likely during rehearsals for *Giasone*. She argues that Cicognini drew from an existing play of his, *L’Adamira ovvero La statua dell’onore*, to create *Orontea*, a hypothesis consistent with Cicognini’s likely reliance on prose drafts of *Giasone* and *Gl’amori* in the process of creating each libretto (and which might also explain the longer amount of time needed to work on *Giasone*, if he first drafted out a prose version). For more on Cicognini’s compositional process, see Tedesco, “Cicognini’s *Giasone*: Between Music and Theater,” in *Readying Cavalli’s Operas for the Stage: Manuscript, Edition, Production* (London: Ashgate, 2013): 229-260; 246. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See Appendix I, an edition of the First Impression (Venice 1649A), for the text and translation of the dedication letter for *Giasone*. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Castelli (54, 60) suggests that Cicognini was indeed a member of the *Incogniti* (although not one of the fortunate ones memorialized in *Le Glorie degli Incogniti Overo Gli Huomini Illustri dell’Accademia de’ Signori Incogniti di Venezia*, ed. Francesco Valvasense [Venice: Valvasense, 1647], which included Giulio Strozzi), although Bianconi does not go as far (*Il Seicento* [Turin: EDT, 1982], 189). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. See Nicola Badolato, “‘Ecco reciso alfine il groppo de l’inganno’: Giovanni Faustini’s *Euripo* from the Sources to the Plot,” in *Readying Cavalli’s Operas for the Stage*, 261-73, 271. For more on the Accademia Delfica see Michele Maylender, *Storia delle Accademie d’Italia*, vol. 2 (Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1976), 156-57; and Mauro Calcagno, “Staging Musical Discourses in Seventeenth-Century Venice: Francesco Cavalli’s *Eliogabalo* (1667)” (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 2000), 14-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. “On the 21st in the morning, after the [litany?] of the saints, the Office for the Dead was uttered in prayer for the soul of Sir Giacinto Andrea Cicognini, our brother who has passed onto a better life.” (*A dì 21 detto la mattina dopo le tanie de’ Santi si disse l’offitio de’ morti per suffragio dell’animo di Messer Iacinto Andrea Cicognini nostro fratello passato a migliore vita*). Archivio di stato, Florence, “Compagnie e Conventi Religiosi Soppresi da Pietro Leopoldo,” n. 163, *Libro di Ricordi e Partiti*, c. 98r;cited in Cancedda/Castelli 64n129. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. “*Fu così copiosa nelle materie sceniche la vena del Dottor Giacinto Andrea Cicognini, che anco dopo la sua morte manda fuori, quasi a torrenti, opere non più vedute*.” Bartolomeo Lupardi, Dedicatory Letter to Filippo Raspone, for Giacinto Andrea Cicognini, *Il Principe Giardiniero* (Bracciano: Bartolomeo Lupardi, 1664). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. A dedication on the manuscript for *Don Gastone* (I-Fl, Fondo Antinori n. 33) was penned by Cicognini himself and addressed to Vincenzo Giraldi, a nobleman: “Here is my *Don Gastone*: I pray that you receive it under your protection, and that in Donna Violante’s constancy and Don Mericchej’s loyalty you might consider it—among so many others—a model of the devotion that I owe and profess to your Most Illustrious Lordship, to whom I bend my knee most humbly. On the 2nd of September, 1642. Of your Most Illustrious Lordship, your most obliged and devoted servant, Giacinto Andrea Cicognini” (“*Eccovi il mio Don Gastone: La supplico a riceverlo sotto la Sua protezione e nella costanza di Donna Violante e nella lealtà di Don Mericchej potrà considerare fra tanto un modello della devozione che io devo e professo a V[ostra] S[ignoria] Ill[ustrissi]ma alla quale umilis[silme]nte mi inchino. Di casa li 2 di 7mbre 1642. Di V[ostra] S[ignoria] Ill[ustrissi]ma Oblig[atissi]mo e Dev[otissi]mo Serv[itore] Hiacinto Andrea Cicognini*”). Donna Violante and Don Mericchej are characters in this work. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Among the many examples: “The compositions of Cicognini, worthily praised by the Virtuosi, were first made known more through public acclaim than through the light of the printing press.” (“*Li componimenti del Cicognini, degnamente celebrati dal numero de’ Virtuosi, sono prima comparsi a dar saggio di se stessi col commun grido che con la luce delle stampe*.”) Cicognini, *La forza dell’Amicizia: Opera Tragica di Giacinto Andrea Cicognini Fiorentino* (Viterbo: Gregorio e Giovanni Andreoli, 1659). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. “*…Il* Giasone *del Signor D. Iacinto Andrea Cicognini* [*fu*] *rappresentato molte volte nelle più celebri Città d’Italia, e sempre onorato dagli spettatori, con testimoni d’applausi e di lode*,” dedication letter in Florence 1650, *Giasone: Dramma musicale* (Florence: Giovanni Antonio Bonardi, 1650), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. See Michelassi, “Balbi’s Febiarmonici,” 314. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. In 1661, Abbot Antonio Ducci Guicciardini boasted to his friend Giovan Battista Ricciardi of having been the first to introduce the dramatic works of Tuscan authors to Rome—not through publication, but through performances held in his “accademietta” at the Trinità dei Monti. He went on to specify that “the first that I put on were the plays of Cicognini, of immortal memory, which were relished and applauded to a great extent” (*le prime che feci vedere furono le opere di Cicognini, d’immortal memoria* [*le quali*] *furono gradite e applaudite al maggior segno*). Salomè Vuelta García, “Pietro Susini e il teatro spagnuolo a Firenze nel XVII secolo” (Ph.D. dissertation, Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, 1999-2000), 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. While several of these might have been honest mistakes, it is just as likely that some of these works’ publishers had profits in mind more than authorial integrity (see Cancedda/Castelli, 79, 365-403). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. While this last number is quite significant in comparison to the figures that are present, only actual knowledge of those dates—unfortunately unavailable to us—would furnish us with usable information (that could admittedly skew the balance of the data points). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. *Commedie del Cicognini*. See Cancedda/Castelli, 91-95 for a discussion and a list of the contents of these seven volumes. Each work within this set has been accounted for in the preceding table and graph. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. On separate occasions, Lupardi also printed a catalog of Cicognini’s printed works, first in 1664 at the end of a reprint of *Celio* (Rome: Dragondelli), and later in 1668 at the end of an edition of Giovanni Andrea Moniglia’s comedy *All’Amico non si fida né la Donna né la Spada* (Rome: Dragondelli). See Cancedda/Castelli, 67-68. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Cancedda/Castelli (365-403) provide a list of known individual prints of these works. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. “*Se le commedie (le quali escono tuttavia alla luce del mondo sotto il nome del Dottor Iacinto Andrea Cicognini) moltiplicano per l’avvenire con la stessa proporzione, che hanno da poc’ anni in quà cominciato, io son di parere, erudito lettore, che in breve corso di tempo elle abbino a giungere a tanto numero, che chiunque sarà poi vago di leggerle tutte, se bene nel divorare de libri nuovo catone spaventato con tutto ciò di sì gran copia, abbia a giudicare l’intera lettura di esse, opera affatto disperata; tanto più che non saprà mai restar capace, com’un sol’uomo in molt’altre cose occupato (com’era il nostro Cicognini) e toltoci si può dire innanzi tempo; abbia potuto comporre tant’opere.*

    *“La onde nel mandar alle stampe la presente commedia (la quale ha già molt’ anni, che per mio divertimento da me composta fu, e in questa città da signori Accademici Infocati su le loro scene con non piccolo applauso recitata) ho giudicato ben fatto di rendervi note nello stesso tempo le vere commedie del sudetto Cicognini; sì, perché essendo voi per avventura bramosi de’ componimenti di questo autore, gli possiate con più certezza, e perciò con più gusto assaporare; sì ancora, perché se a caso tra tante commedie a lui falsamente ascritte ve ne fosse alcuna, che non fosse in tutto degna del suo nome, non ne abbia egli a riportar biasimo senza sua colpa.*

    *“Le commedie adunque che sono veramente del Dottor Andrea Cicognini quantunque (che è si sappia) non siano tutte alle stampe sono l’infrascritte:*

    Archibusata a S. Carlo

    S. Pietro Celestino

    Santi Cipriano, e Giustina

    Maria Egiziaca

    Il Don Gastone

    La Iuditta

    La Mariene

    Il Papirio

    La pazzia d’Orlando

    Il Celio dramma musicale

    La forza del fato

    La statua dell’onore

    Il ruffiano onorato

    Le fortunate gelosie del re di Valenza

    Gl’amori d’Alessandro, e Rossane

    Gli stessi amori in dramma musicale

    Il Giasone dramma

    L’Orontea

    *“delle quali le prime dieci egli compose, mentre fu a Firenze, e l’altre otto rimanenti nel tempo che visse a Venezia; più per soddisfare al genio, e richieste de gl’amici, che per aver concetto, che elle dovessero andare alle stampe come più, e più volte se ne dichiarò co’ suoi più familiari. E se bene il* D. Gastone*, la* Iuditta*, la* Mariene*, la* Forzadel fato*, la* Statua dell’onore*, il* Ruffiano onorato*, e le* Fortunate gelosie del re di Valenza*, sono tolte dallo spagnuolo, e la* Pazzia d’Orlando *da gl’istrioni, elle riconoscano però d’aver acquistato dal Cicognini tanto di vaghezza d’ornamento, e splendore, che, sue più tosto, anzi che non amano di esser chiamate dal mondo.*

    *“Pregovi in tanto a gradire la sudetta notizia, forse di non poca utilità, e sodisfazzione di molti, mentre porgendovi quest’opera mia, a quelle gran lunghe inferiore, v’assicuro, che con le voci che per entro v’ho sparse di Fato, Deità, e simili io non intendo di derogar punto alla Cristiana religione, ma di seguitare solamente il costume de’ poetici componimenti. Vivete felice.”* Mattias Maria Bartolommei, *Amore opera a caso: Commedia* (Florence: All’insegna della Stella, 1668; Florence and Bologna: Gioseffo Longhi, no year), 3-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Lorenzo Lippi, *Il Malmantile racquistato* (Florence: G. T. Rossi, 1676), vol. 1 c. 60r. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. For more on this adaptation by Bartolommei, as well as his comedy *Gli offesi obbligati*, see Nicola Michelassi and Salomé Vuelta-García, “Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla nella Firenze del Seicento: Due traduzioni di Mattias Maria Bartolommei,” in *Commedia e musica tra Spagna e Italia*, ed. Maria Grazia Profeti (Florence: Alinea, 2009): 119-89. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Mattias Maria Bartolommei, *Le gelose caute* (Florence: nella stampa di S. A. S., 1668), 5. Castelli (71) makes the point that Bartolommei’s open declaration of his original source material was something that Cicognini never did, although of course this might be explained by the fact that the vast majority of his publications were posthumous. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. “*…Giacinto Andrea Cicognini intorno alla metà del secolo con più felice ardimento introdusse i drammi col suo* Giasone*, il quale per vero dire è il primo, e il più perfetto dramma, che si trovi, e con esso portò l’esterminio dell’istrionica, e per conseguenza della vera, e buona comica, e della tragica stessa; imperciocchè per maggiormente lusingare con la novità lo svogliato gusto degli spettatori, nauseati egualmente la viltà delle cose comiche, e la gravità delle tragiche l’inventor de’ drammi unì l’una, e l’altra in essi, mettendo pratica con mostruosità non più udita tra re, ed eroi, ed altri illustri personaggi, e buffoni, e servi, e vilissimi uomini. Questo guazzabuglio di personaggi fu cagione del total guastamento delle regole poetiche, le quali andarono di tal maniera in disuso, che ne meno si riguardò più alla locuzione, la quale, costretta a servire alla musica, perdè la sua purità, e si riempì d’idiotismi.*” Giovanni Maria Crescimbeni, *La bellezza della volgar poesia*, Dialogue VI (Rome: Giovanni Francesco Buagni, 1700),140. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Venice 1649A: “No, for Co- Co-…” (*No, per Co- Co-…*) [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. “*Intanto la poesia era quello, cui meno si badava dai compositori. Regolarità, sentimenti, caratteri, orditura, passioni, sceneggiare, buon senso, interesse teatrale erano contati per nulla. Personaggi fantastici, amori o indecenti, o romanzeschi, o ridicoli, o ricercati, ma sempre introdotti come principale costitutivo dei drammi, numi ed eroi mischiati tra buffoni, ciarle insignificanti fra gli uomini, un miscuglio di tragico e di comico, che non aveva né la vivacità di questo, né il sublime di quello, ne facevano allora il più cospicuo ornamento. Il lettore può senza scrupolo cavare una conseguenza circa il gusto generale del secolo dal seguente squarcio di un monologo tratto da un dramma, che fu con sommo applauso rappresentato in pressoché tutti i teatri d’Italia, il quale divenne lavoro pregiatissimo di un rinomato poeta. Egli è Ercole, che indirizza in questa guisa il discorso alle donne:*

    Donne, co ‘i vostri vezzi

    che non potete voi?

    Fabricate ne i crini

    laberinti a gl’eroi;

    solo una lacrimetta,

    che da magiche stelle esca di fuore,

    fassi un Egeo cruccioso,

    che sommerge l’ardir, l’alma e ‘l valore,

    e ‘l vento d’un sospiro,

    esalato da labbri ingannatori,

    da i campi della gloria

    spiantò le palme e diseccò gl’allori.

    “*Se tal era il linguaggio riserbato ad un semideo, ognun prevede in quale stile si doveva far parlare gli uomini. Non solo s’udirono cantar Pantalone, Zanne, e Brighella ne’ rozzi loro dialetti, ma (ciò, che appena si crederebbe) anche il goffo, e sguaiato personaggio di Tartaglia ebbe luogo insiem cogli eroi, e i semidei ne’ drammi eroici. Che bel sentire in musica codesto dialoghetto fra Egeo, e Demo nel tanto decantato* Giasone *di Giacinto Andrea Ciccognini* [*sic*] *Fiorentino!*

    *Egeo, re* E verso dove andranno?

    *Demo balbuziente* S’imbarcano per Co-

    Co- Co- per Co- Co- Co-

    *Egeo* Per Coimbra?

    *Demo* Per Co- Co- Co-

    *Egeo* Per Coraltro?

    *Demo* Oibò! per Co- Co- Co-

    *Egeo* Per Cosandro?

    *Demo* Né meno,

    per Co- Co-

    *Egeo*  Per Corinto?

    *Demo* Ah, ah, o bene, o bene,

    mi cavasti di pene.

    “*Il mentovato Ciccognini* [*sic*] *verso la metà del secolo trasferendo al melodramma i difetti soliti allora a commettersi nelle altre poesie drammatiche, accoppiando in uno avvenimenti, e personaggi seri coi ridicoli, interrompendo le scene in prosa colle poetiche strofi, che arie s’appellano, e mischiando squarci di prosa alle scene in verso, confuse tutti gli ordini della poesia, e il melodramma Italiano miseramente contaminò. Fu nondimeno tenuto a’ suoi tempi per ristorator del teatro; i suoi drammi furono ristampati non poche volte come cose degne di tenersi in gran pregio: i letterati sel proponevano per modello d’imitazione, e le muse anche elleno, le vergini muse concorsero a gara per onorar con inni di laude chi più d’ogni altro recava loro vergogna ed oltraggio.*” Stefano Arteaga, *Le rivoluzioni del teatro musicale italiano*, vol. 1 (Bologna: Carlo Trenti, 1783), 254-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. “*Parmi les Auteurs comiques que je lisois et que je relisois très souvent, Cicognini étoit celui que je préferois. Cet Auteur Florentin, très-peu connu dans la République des lettres, avoit fait plusieurs Comédies d’intrigue, mêlées de pathétique larmoyant et de comique trivial; on y trouvoit cependant beaucoup d’intéret, et il avoit l’art de ménager la suspension, et de plaire par le dénouement. Je m’y attachai infiniment.*” Carlo Goldoni, *Memoires pour servir a l’histoire de sa vie et a celle de son théatre* (Paris: Chez la Veuve Duchesne, 1787), vol. 1, 11. Cited in Laura Dolfi, “Il ‘convitato di pietra’ di G. A. Cicognini e la sua fonte spagnola,” *Studi secenteschi* 37 (1996), 135-55; 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Fausta Antonucci, “Spunti tematici e rielaborazione di modelli spagnoli nel *Don Gastone di Moncada* di Giacinto Andrea Cicognini,” in *Tradurre, riscrevere, mettere in scena*, ed. Maria Grazia Profeti (Florence: Alinea, 1996): 65-84, especially 65-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Julius Leopold Klein, *Geschichte des Dramas*, vol. 5, “Geschichte des Italienischen Dramas” (Leipzig: Weigel, 1867), 666-719, and Alberto Lisoni, *La drammatica italiana nel XVII secolo* (Parma: Pellegrini, 1898), 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. See Anna Crinò, “Lope de Vega’s Exertions for the Abolition of the Unities in Dramatic Practice,” *Modern Language Notes* 76 (March 1961), 259-61. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Publius Terentius Afer, a Berber writer of comedies who was active in Rome from 166 B.C. to 160 B. C. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. “*…Questa mia Commedia, come tante altre da me composte, e rappresentate, hanno tutte l’unità della favola ancor che in alcune di esse, fuori delle drammatiche, vi si scorga l’intrecciamento di due amori, del che nasce la multiplicità, o varietà delle parti, imitando in ciò Terenzio, che nell’arte ha avanzato tutti gli altri poeti del suo genere… Or mentre si osservino queste altre buone, ma strettisime regole, e che una sola azzione venga determinata, si verrà a formare una perfetta commedia…. Ma nelle tragedie, nelle drammatiche, e più in quelle che si compongono per rappresentarsi musicalmente, ho trovato che la duplicità degl’innamoramenti invece di abbellire la favola avrebbe apportato a me confusione, e tedio e disgusto alli spettatori.*” *La finta mora* (Florence: I Giunti, 1625), 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. “*Avrebbe volsuto l’autore terminare questa rappresentazione nella vittoria di David contro Golia sensa prosequire l’istoria, & abbracciare la seconda vittoria contro i Filistei, attesa la distanza del tempo, che non dovrebbe eccedere un giro di Sole, al che in tutte le sue opere ha hauto il Dottor Cicognini grandissima avvertenza, per non uscire del verisimile, ma ommettendosi il secondo trionfo, bisognava anco tralasciare le nozze di David con Micol, che era tutto il complimento dell’opera, e l’intenzione dell’autore, al quale (per conseguire il suo fine) convenne rappresentare l’una e l’altra vittoria, imitando le rappresentazioni spagnuole, e quelle in specie del D. Lopes de Vega, il quale fin con lettere aveva consigliato, e pregato l’autore per fama da lui conosciuto, ad avvezzarsi a passare il giro delle 24. ore, e far prova del diletto, che porta seco il rappresentare azzioni, che passino lo spazio non solo di un giorno, ma anco di molti mesi, &anni, acciò si goda de gli accidenti dell’Istoria, non con la narrativa dell’antefatto, ma con il dimostrare l’istesse azzioni in vari tempi seguite.*

    *“Si attenne l’autore al consiglio del Vega, nè si lasciò trasportare dal gusto di terminare l’opra con le nozze di David, e così bene divise queste azzioni con l’intervallo da un atto al’altro, e così bene intrecciò il grave con il ridicolo, il diletto con l’utile, l’istoria con l’invenzione, e così a proposito vi innestò, anzi interessò gli stessi cori, che li spettatori intelligenti confessorno averne sentito gusto non ordinario, e finalmente si vede che l’uso de’moderni, fondato nella compiacenza di chi ascolta, ha dilatato l’anguste e severe leggi della poetica, del che l’autore ne discorre diffusamente nel suo trattato stampato nel principio della sua* Finta mora*, commedia famosa, e* *tanto basti per scusa del medesimo autore, e per avvertimento ancora.*” *Il trionfo di David* (Florence: Zanobi Pignoni, 1633), 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. For a multilingual edition of this work (containing translations into Italian, Portuguese, French, English, German, and Polish, see *Lope de Vega: Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal de Commemoraciones Culturales, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Translation by Victor Dixon, *Ibid.*, 186. The original phrase, presented rhetorically by Lope in Latin, reads: “Humanae cur sit speculum comedia vitae…” (*Ibid.*, 91). [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. For example: “The events should happen in as short a time as possible, unless, that is, the plot is based on history, and some years must pass, or if a character must make a journey…” (“*Pase en el menos tiempo que ser pueda, si no es cuando el poeta escriba historia en que hayan de pasar algunos años… o si fuere fuerza hacer algún camino una figura*”), *Ibid.*, 180; 81. For more on Lope de Vega and his successors, as well as theater (including operas and zarzuelas) in Spain in the seventeenth century, see Louise Stein, *Songs of Mortals, Dialogues of the Gods: Music and Theatre in Seventeenth-Century Spain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Cancedda/Castelli, 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. The relevant excerpt from Bartolommei’s dedicatory letter to Niccolò Strozzi reads as follows: “…for the advancement of this [‘the exquisite and delicate taste and the perfect intelligence which You possess of such a noble and delightful poetry’] You have well often made clear the extraordinary effects of your liberal magnanimity, the fruits of which were harvested, more than anyone else, by Doctor Diacinto [*sic*] Andrea Cicognini, who, because he lived with the efficacious protection of Your Most Illustrious Lordship, was able to sneer at the biting teeth of others’ envy…” (“*…per l’avanzamento di questa* [*‘lo squisito e delicato gusto e la perfetta intelligenza ch’Ella tiene di così nobile e dilettevole poesia’*] *Ella ha bene spesso fatti riconoscere effetti non ordinari della sua liberal magnificenza, i frutti di cui colse più d’ogn’altro il dottor Diacinto* [*sic*] *Andrea Cicognini, il quale, siccome vivendo con la protezione efficace di Vostra Signoria Illustrissima, poté schernirsi dal dente mordace dell’altrui invidia*…”) *Le gelose cautele*, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. *Al Señor Nicolo Strozzi / Lope de Vega Carpio*. Its autograph is located in the Archivio di Stato in Florence (ASF, Carte Strozziane, III, Cod. 222, c. 3r), and was published by Luigi Fassò, “Dal carteggio di un ignoto lirico fiorentino,” in *Scritti varii di erudizione e critica in onore di Rodolfo Renier* (Turin: Bocca, 1912), 401-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Cancedda/Castelli, 72-73. Castelli has also proposed that itinerant Spanish actors in Italy might have introduced their country’s plays to the populace—another means of access for Cicognini to Spanish source material. Michelassi/García, however, argue that their role was minimal in the dissemination of these plays, instead placing the burden of distribution more squarely on the shoulders of traveling companies originating in Italy, such as the Febiarmonici (“Il teatro spagnolo,” 69). Indeed, their article provides a vast amount of context for the spread of Spanish theater in Florence during the early decades of the Seicento, in which Cicognini was merely a cog, albeit a pivotal and influential one. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. For another comparison between a Cicognini play and its Spanish model, see Diego Símini, “*Casarse por vengarse* di Rojas Zorrilla nella traduzione di Giacinto Andrea Cicognini: *Maritarsi per vendetta*,” in *Tradurre, riscrivere, mettere in scena*, ed. Maria Grazia Profeti (Florence: Alinea, 1996): 95-116. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Laura Dolfi, “Tirso e Cicognini: Due don Giovanni a confronto” in *La festa teatrale ispanica: Atti del Convegno di studi, Napoli, 1-3 dicembre 1994*, ed. Giovanni Battista De Cesare (Naples: Istituto universitario orientale, 1995), 129-62, provides a close textual analysis of both works, while Laura Dolfi, “Il ‘convitato di pietra’ di G. A. Cicognini e la sua fonte spagnola,” *Studi secenteschi* 37 (1996), 135-55, discusses larger thematic differences between the two plays. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Fausta Antonucci, “Spunti tematici e rielaborazione di modelli spagnoli nel *Don Gastone di Moncada* di Giacinto Andrea Cicognini,” in *Tradurre, riscrivere, mettere in scena*, ed. Maria Grazia Profeti (Florence: Alinea, 1996): 65-84. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. The earliest surviving version of *Convitato* is from 1671 (Rome: Lupardi), as no manuscript or performance materials survive from its earlier incarnations in Florence or Pisa. As such, there is an element of uncertainty as to how much this version differs from what Cicognini had originally planned. Furthermore, I was unable to procure a copy of either text (Cicognini’s or Tirso’s) in time for this study. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Not much is known of *Burlador*’s performance history in Italy, beyond that it premiered in Naples in 1625 at the hands of Pietro Osorio to great acclaim, and then again in the same city in 1636 by Roque de Figueroa, who had been responsible for its earlier performances in Spain. There is no doubt, however, that Cicognini had obtained access to this work, although how remains uncertain. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. The settings remain largely the same, as the action begins in Naples and then shifts to Castille. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. It is worth noting as well that the male servant-type characters all use dialect at times, as they do in *commedia dell’arte*: Pantalone in Venetian, Dottore in Bolognese, Passarino in Bergamasque, and Fichetto in Lombardian. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. In her discussion, Dolfi postulates that Passarino was a recent local (Neapolitan) acquisition by Don Giovanni, probably in keeping with a custom prevalent at the time for Spanish nobles residing at the Neapolitan court (Dolfi, 154-55). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Carlo Goldoni, *Memoires*, see n62. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. See Dolfi, 145-49, for her discussion of the frequent allusions to *ottonari* and other scansions in Cicognini’s text. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Maylender, *Storia delle accademie d’Italia*, vol. 3, 317. For more on the circumstances (known to us) surrounding *Convitato*’s premiere, see Michelassi/García, 90-91. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. The earliest publication date for this play is 1658, a year that saw publishers in three cities—Rome, Perugia, and Venice—independently issue prints of this work. For more on this, see Table 3.1, as well as Fausta Antonucci, “Spunti tematici,” 67-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. “*La scena nel Primo Atto rappresenta la Campagna della Ducea di Villa Reale. Nel Secondo, e Terzo Atto città, e Palazzo di Aragona.*” Giacinto Andrea Cicognini, *Don Gastone di Moncada* (Rome: Giuseppe Corvo and Bartolomeo Lupardi, 1675), 5. The Prologue features Love, Vulcan, Betrayal, and Death (*Amore, Vulcano, Tradimento, Morte*), and the final scene ends with a dialogue between Hymen (Imeneo) and Love; these appeared in the original manuscript of 1642 as well (Cancedda/Castelli, 164-66), although they are immaterial to the plot proper. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. The sole exception is “Merichex” (which appears this way in the Perugia 1658 print, although as “Meriches” in the Rome 1658 and 1675 prints), a name whose origin is unclear; Antonucci has postulated that it is derived from “Meríquez” or perhaps “Manríquez,” a variant of Manrique, the analogous character in Tirso’s *Cómo han de ser los amigos* (discussed further below). See Antonucci, 72. Manríquez, it should be noted, might have been Italianized into “Manrico,” although perhaps Cicognini wished to retain an exotic flavor for the central character of this play. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Although *Gustos y disgustos* premiered only three years before *Don Gastone* was completed, Antonucci argues convincingly, based on the plot similarities, that Cicognini must have had access to a manuscript or perhaps a lost print of the play (the first surviving Italian publication of *Gustos y disgustos* is from 1657, although its edition license, dated 21 October 1656, indicates that it was given for this “printing a second time” [“*imprimirlas segunda vez*”]); *Ibid.*, 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. For more on this work, see Antonucci, 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. For a more in-depth discussion of this play, see Matthew A. Wyszynski, “‘Cupido atropellado’: The Dominance of Friendship in Tirso de Molina’s *Cómo han de ser los amigos*,” *Bulletin of the Comediantes* 63 (2011), 59-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. In using this term I reference the “Rossini crescendo,” a technique involving added instruments and repeated phrases employed by the nineteenth-century opera composer in many of his overtures and first act finales (see Philip Gossett’s discussion of the crescendo in the Overture to *Maometto II* in “The Overtures of Rossini,” *19th-Century Music* 3 [1979]: 3-31; 10-11) Of course, the Cicognini crescendo does not rely on music, but on the addition of and interaction between a growing number of characters on stage, mirroring the forward drive of the plot. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. As does *Le gelosie fortunate del Principe Rodrigo* (III.18-III.21), written in 1647; *La moglie di quattro mariti* (III.8-12); *Il marito delle due mogli* (III.14-18); and *Il pietro celestino* (III.5-9), of the plays I have had access to. It should be noted that others of his works do not follow this scheme (*La forza dell’amicizia*, or *Il maritarsi per vendetta*). [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. See, for example, Bianconi/Walker, “Dalla *finta pazza* alla *Veremonda*,” *op*. *cit*.; Wendy Heller’s discussion of both operas in her dissertation, “Chastity, Heroism, and Allure: Women in the Opera of Seventeenth-Century Venice” (Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1995), 303-62; and Heller, “Amazons, Astrology and the House of Aragon,” *op*. *cit*. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Bianconi/Walker, 450. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. See Heller, “Chastity, Heroism and Allure,” 316-23, for a more detailed scene-by-scene synopsis of the entire opera. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. The most recent study of *Orontea*, now nearly half a century old, was by William Holmes, with an essay and an edition of its libretto and then score by Antonio Cesti both published in 1968: “Giacinto Andrea Cicognini’s and Antonio Cesti’s *Orontea* (1649),” in *New Looks at Italian Opera: Esssays in Honor of Donald J. Grout*, ed. William W. Austin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968): 108-32; *Orontea, regina d’Egitto: An Opera in Three Acts*, ed. and trans. William Holmes (Ithaca: Cornell University Theatre, 1968); and *Orontea*, ed. William Holmes (Wellesley: Wellesley College, 1973). [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. See Anna Tedesco, “Cicognini’s *Giasone*: Between Music and Theater,” especially 241-49, for a more detailed discussion of these sources as well as Cicognini’s working method in adapting the prose *Adamira* into the libretto for *Orontea*. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. See Jane Glover, review of *Orontea*, ed. William C. Holmes, *Music & Letters* 55/3 (1974), 355-57. Glover dates the earliest known performance of Cesti’s setting of *Orontea* to 1656. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Holmes, “Cicognini’s and Cesti’s *Orontea*,” 121-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Fausta Antonucci and Lorenzo Bianconi (“Plotting the Myth of *Giasone*,” in *Readying Cavalli’s Operas for the Stage*, 201-27) have identified many, if not all, of the sources of Greek mythology that would have been available to a librettist in the 1640s, which would have included Remigio Nannini’s version of Ovid’s *Heroides* (Venice: Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari and Brothers, 1555), Giovanni Andrea dell’Anguillara’s version of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (Venice: Griffio, 1561), and Natale Conti’s *Mythologiae* (Venice: Comin da Trino, 1568). [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. For more on this topic see Rosand, *Opera*, 59-65, 125-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. See Antonucci/Bianconi, 213-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. It is worth noting that Demo the stuttering hunchback, one of *Giasone*’s most famous figures (and a character whose scenes were rarely touched in successive productions—see Chapter 1), was not in fact an original idea by Cicognini: Nicolò Fontei and Francesco Melosio’s *Sidonio e Dorisbe* (1642) features a hunchback named Grimora (see Paolo Fabbri, *Il secolo cantante: Per una storia del libretto d’opera in Italia nel Seicento* (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 2003), 92. Indeed, making Demo a hunchback may not even have been Cicognini’s own idea, but Cavalli’s or that of someone else present during the revision/rehearsal stage; Demo’s original incarnation in the prose version (likely a preliminary draft for the libretto—see Chapter 4, also Anna Tedesco, “Cicognini’s *Giasone*,” and “Il metodo compositivo di Giacinto Andrea Cicognini”) was simply Truffaldino, a *commedia dell’arte* stock character. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. For more on Faustini’s life and career, as well as his turn to impresarial duties in 1650, see Rosand, *Opera*, 169-75. Nicola Badolato, *I drammi musicali di Giovanni Faustini per Francesco Cavalli* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2012), presents editions of his ten librettos set to music by Cavalli from 1642-52, as well as a closer analysis of Faustini’s writing procedures that I largely draw from in this section. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. See Nicola Badolato, “Sulle fonti dei drammi per musica di Giovanni Faustini per Francesco Cavalli: alcuni esempi di ‘ars combinatoria,’” *Musica e Storia* 16 (2008), 341-84. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Rosand (*Opera*, 169)plausibly suggests that Faustini’s statement (made in 1651 in the prefatory material to his *Oristeo*) that “I am not one of those… who write to please their own caprices” (*Io non son di quelli… che scrivono per dilettare il proprio capriccio*) is a dig aimed directly at Cicognini, invoking the Florentine playwright’s own choice of words used in the “al lettore” of his *Giasone*. Faustini, as a self-professed librettist, took himself and his work too seriously to partake of the whimsical culture of libretto composition that his Venetian peers were a part of. This would seem to indicate that perhaps the two librettists did not often meet to share ideas over tea and crumpets, even if, as Badolato has suggested, the two librettists likely rubbed shoulders on occasion (“‘Ecco reciso alfine,’” 271-72). [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Editions consulted: Giovanni Faustini, *La virtù de’ strali d’amore* (Venice: Pietro Miloco, 1642), and the critical edition contained within Badolato, *I drammi musicali*, 65-115. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. There may be a typography-related issue at play here: in the original libretto of 1642, Evagora appears on the page initially as “Euag.” (*La virtù de’ strali d’amore*, 92), and then later the pages are filled with “Eu.,” which might be interpreted as a further abbreviation of “Euagora,” or an indication that “Eumete” is speaking. The final lines of the scene, however, are given to an “Eum.” The initial exchange between Evagora and his son is as follows (character name abbreviations reproduced from original libretto, text from Badolato, *I drammi*, 113):

     Euag. *Darete? amato figlio?* Darete? Beloved son?

     Dar. *Genitor riverito?* Revered parent?

     Eu. *Io pur t’abbraccio, io pur t’unisco al seno* I truly embrace you, I truly join you to my bosom

     *ad onta di colei,* in spite of her,

     *che fece scaturir, come da un fonte,* who caused to gush forth, like a fountain,

     *da’ tuoi martiri indegni, i pianti miei.* from your undeserving torments, my tears.

     Dar. *Ch’io respiri, Signore,* The fact that I breathe, my Lord,

     *libero dagl’incanti* free from those enchantments

     *è qui del trace prencipe valore.* is due to the valor of this Thracian prince.

     Eu. *Oh quanto devo a la tua destra invitta,* Oh how I am indebted to your dextrous might,

     *invittissimo eroe, per te sen cade* you indomitable hero; you have caused to fall away

     *ogni mia doglia lacera, e trafitta…* all my lacerating and tearing pain…

     From this excerpt, one might imagine that “Eu.” was in fact Evagora, first rejoicing at his reunion with his son, and then praising the hero Pallante for his role in rescuing Darete. Badolato’s edition, however, gives all lines of dialogue assigned to “Eu.” in the libretto to Eumete. The scene reads quite differently if it is Eumete/Erabena, daughter of the King of Athens and thus of no direct relation to Darete, speaking to Evagora’s son (indeed, the Athenian princess and the Cypriate prince never share a scene in this opera before III.15). Perhaps Meonte’s subsequent offer of fealty might be interpreted differently if directed at Eumete rather than Evagora, but there is no romantic language contained within this scene until Eumete’s (that is, “Eum.”) final aria, “Breath, my heart, rejoice!” (*Mio core respira, gioisci sù, sù*). [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. For a more thorough discussion of this libretto, see Christopher John Mossey, “‘Human after all’: Character and Self-Understanding in Operas by Giovanni Faustini and Francesco Cavalli, 1644-52” (Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1999), 371-515 (scene-by-scene plot synopsis from 380-86). [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. *Grove Music Online*, s.v. “Faustini, Giovanni” (by Thomas Walker, Beth L. Glixon and Jonathan E. Glixon), http://www.oxfordmusic online/ (accessed December 16, 2013). Of the bibliographical references listed in the article, the only work mentioning Faustini and Cicognini in the same breath is Paolo Fabbri, *Il secolo cantante*, 83n17, 165-66. However, in neither instance is link between librettists strongly asserted. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. “***Eurimedonte*** *Prencipe d’Egitto, che data la fede secretamente di maritaggio ad Eritrea, erasi poscia innamorato di Laodicea*. / ***Laodicea*** *Reina di Fenicia, innamorata, e sposa di Eritrea creduta Periandro.* / ***Eritrea*** *Prencipessa Assiria creduta Periandro, il Re morto suo fratello. Questa, già destinata moglie di Theramene, innamoratasi di Eurimedonte, se ne passa alle nozze di Laodicea come Re, per levarla all’amato egizio che, scordatosi di lei, amava la prencipessa fenicia.* / ***Theramene*** *Prencipe Assirio, che credendo morta Eritrea, al cui letto era stato chiamato dal morto Periandro, adorava anco le bellezze giudicate defonte e con esse delirava.*” Giovanni Faustini, *Ericlea* (Venice: Andrea Giuliani, 1652), 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. A preliminary survey of other librettos from the late 1630s until the late 1640s from the *Raccolta di Drammi* (Venetian opera libretto collection) located at the University of California, Los Angeles, including works by Benedetto Ferrari, Orazio Persiani, Paolo Vendramin, Giacomo Badoaro, Giulio Strozzi, and Giovanni Francesco Busenello (and made possible by a generous grant from the William Holmes and Frank D’Accone Fund under the auspices of the American Musicological Society) has shown that Faustini and Cicognini were likely unique in attempting this crescendo technique, although further research will be required to ascertain this fully, as well as to see how librettists like Nicolò Minato and Aurelio Aureli, during the 1650s and beyond, treated their Act III character structures. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Rosand, *Opera*, 275-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. I discuss Cavalli’s musical treatment of Isifile and *Giasone*’s other characters in Chapter 5 of this dissertation. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)