

INTRODUCTION

The [*Dialogus*] *de Sancto Francisco* (*Dialogue of St. Francis*) might have been composed during the year that Giovanni Francesco Marcorelli served as *maestro di cappella* at the cathedral of San Rufino in the Franciscan city of Assisi, between 1644 and 1645. It may have also have been written or revised during his Roman years, in view of his connections with the oratorios of the Vallicella and the Crocifisso, in addition to the Roman context of its musical source. This short Latin oratorio which begins “Phantasma noctis” sets a scene with the saint (Canto I) in colloquy with God (Canto II) and treats an episode in his conversion, concluding with the two of them in duet. Before a look at the work itself in greater detail, a few words are in order about this active but still relatively unknown musician, with particular attention to his presence in various provincial chapels in the Papal States.¹

The Composer: Giovanni Francesco Marcorelli

A contemporary of Giacomo Carissimi who preceded him in the post at Assisi, Marcorelli (21 November 1610–31 August 1651) hailed from Spello, today in the province of Perugia. He has been found under numerous variants of his name: Marcorilli, Mercorelli, Mercurilli, Mercurelli, Marco Aurelio, and Marco Aurelli. Notice of Marcorelli’s first position appears 7 July 1627, when he was named organist at the Collegiate Church of S. Maria Maggiore in Spello for one year, from 1 July, when he was not quite seventeen years old.² He appears to have received his first musical training in his hometown from Sisto Tonio and his son Regolo who served as *maestri di cappella* from 1615 to 1621 at the collegiate church there. Regolo himself had various posts in Rome from 1606, including service as organist at S. Maria in Trastevere from 1612 to 1615 (where Marcorelli would serve in 1641). Marcorelli remained in Spello from 1627 to 1634, but in 1633–34 he was also *maestro di cappella* in Fabriano. On 11 May 1635 he was named *maestro di cappella* at the church of S. Lorenzo in Perugia, where he remained until 1639.³

In Perugia, Marcorelli also in turn began to train young musicians, among them Sante Casata from Matelica, who in 1643 would enter the Cappella Sistina in Rome.⁴ Extant

¹ For a look at both Marcorelli’s life and works, see Arnaldo Morelli, s.v. “Marcorelli, Giovanni Francesco,” in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana fondato da G. Treccani, vol. 70, 2008), 7–9. Further, see Biancamaria Brumana, “Il ‘Dialogo di S. Francesco’ di Marcorelli e altre musiche dedicate al santo nel XVII secolo,” in *Atti del convegno internazionale in occasione del centenario della fondazione del Pontificio Istituto di Musica Sacra* (Rome: PIMS), in press. This article discusses Marcorelli, the present dialogue, and other works dedicated to St. Francis more extensively.

² Spello, Archivio di S. Maria Maggiore, *Atti Capitolari 1609–1629*, f. 175r: “[7 luglio 1627] Fu proposto Giovanni Francesco Marcorilli per organista della nostra chiesa per un anno cominciato al primo luglio presente con provizione di some due di grano alla vechia, some quattro di mosto et scudi sei per un anno et con li pesi soliti.”

³ Stefano Campolucci, *La cappella musicale di S. Venanzo a Fabriano (1578–1728). Attività musicale e istituzioni religiose* (Roma: Torre d’Orfeo, 1995), 119. Perugia, Archivio di S. Lorenzo, *Atti Capitolari 1632–1640*, f. 77r: “11 maggio 1635 - Fu vinto per maestro di cappella in luoco del sig. Razzi il sig. Giovanni Francesco Marcorelli da Spello con honoribus et honeribus.” For notices of Marcorelli at Perugia, see Biancamaria Brumana and Galliano Ciliberti, *Musica e musicisti nella cattedrale di S. Lorenzo a Perugia (XIV–XVIII secolo)* (Firenze: Olschki, 1991), 212–13.

⁴ See Enrico Celani, “I cantori della Cappella Pontificia nei secoli XVI–XVIII”, *Rivista Musicale Italiana*, 14 (1907), 787. Several studies published between 1970 and 1998 cite this castrato; see also Brumana, “Dialogo di S. Francesco.”

documents record many of Marcorelli's ordinary and extraordinary musical activities.⁵ Of them, the Feast of the Epiphany in 1638 stands out, when the castrato Baldassare Ferri, returning to his home town after fourteen years at the court of the King of Poland, wanted to celebrate his name day by inviting his musician friends.⁶ For that occasion, "a Solemn Mass was sung, composed by Giovanni Francesco Mercorelli of Spello, *maestro di cappella* of said cathedral, a most able man; and we heard the most excellent singers of the city, above all of which the voice of the 'castratino' was supreme."⁷ This is a Mass, then, that must be added to Marcorelli's list of works, though lost.⁸ Composers for the Offertory, Elevation, and Vespers music are not mentioned. Marcorelli, however, directed all the performances.

After Perugia, Marcorelli served as organist at S. Maria in Trastevere in Rome from January of 1641 to April of 1642,⁹ but by May of 1644 he reappears in Umbria, where he had been named *maestro di cappella* at S. Rufino in Assisi.¹⁰ The *Atti amministrativi* there record his presence to May of 1645, with a final consignment of twenty barrels of *mosto* (new wine) in September of that year. Marcorelli had been negotiating with Perugia in April of 1645 to return there,¹¹ but the bishop of Assisi, Malatesta Baglioni (1581–1648), succeeded in blocking that appointment.¹²

At any rate, on 4 April 1646 Marcorelli was elected *maestro di cappella* of S. Maria in Vallicella in Rome, with the responsibility for music in the church and for the oratorio exercises held in various venues, where he remained until April of 1647.¹³ This year, according to Morelli, would have produced the oratorios *Il diluvio*, *S. Cecilia* and *L'angelo custode*. In 1648, Marcorelli came in contact with the Venetian musical scene, taking on the duty of recruiting singers for the nobleman Alvise Michiel, one of the founders of the Teatro Novissimo, and that of following the Roman affairs of Anna Renzi, the singer who had created the role of Ottavia in

⁵ See Brumana, "Dialogo di S. Francesco."

⁶ Biancamaria Brumana, *"Il pianto de' cigni in morte della fenice de' musici." Poesie per Baldassarre Ferri e nuove ipotesi sulla carriera del cantante* (Perugia: Deputazione di Storia Patria per l'Umbria, 2010), 14, 98.

⁷ Francesco Macinara, *Cronache di Perugia (1630–1642)*, Perugia, Biblioteca Comunale Augusta, MS 1147, 738.

⁸ Another composition to add to the list of Marcorelli's works is the motet for three voices and basso continuo *O dulcissime Jesu*, contained in an anthology lacking in RISM, for which only an incomplete canto part survives in the British Library (shelfmark C.121.a). This anthology, edited by Benedetto Pace and lacking a title page, could be the first collection entitled *Mottetti d'autori eccellentissimi*, which would have preceded the second one, which is inventoried as RISM 1646².

⁹ Graham Dixon, "The Cappella of S. Maria in Trastevere (1605–45): an Archival Study," *Music and Letters*, 62 (1981), 40.

¹⁰ Assisi, Archivio di S. Rufino, *Atti capitolari 1640–1645*, f. 107r: "6 maggio 1644 - Si propone per maestro di cappella il sig. Giovanni Francesco Mercurelli da Spello con li medesimi onori et pessi degli altri passati e colla medesima provizione del suo antecessore sub obbligo il suo tempo cominci al primo del mese di maggio 1644." The date and nomination, without citation of its source, may be found in Albino Varotti, "La cappella musicale di S. Rufino in Assisi. Contributo per una storia," *Bollettino della Deputazione di Storia Patria per l'Umbria*, 64 (1967), 41.

¹¹ Perugia, Archivio di S. Lorenzo, *Atti Capitolari 1640–1648*, f. 111v (17 April 1645). This document has been published in Brumana-Ciliberti, *Musica e musicisti nella cattedrale di S. Lorenzo*, 183–84.

¹² Assisi, Archivio di S. Rufino, *Atti amministrativi 1643–1649*, unfoliated. For the full document see Brumana, "Dialogo di S. Francesco."

¹³ Arnaldo Morelli, *Il tempio armonico. Musica nell'Oratorio dei Filippini in Roma (1575–1705)* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1991), 36–7. The 1647 terminus is valid despite his recognition as maestro at the Chiesa Nova in the Florido de Silvestris anthology (RISM 1649²).

Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*.¹⁴ The last activity for which we have notice comes from 17 December 1649, when Duke Pietro Altemps commissioned the second of the five Lenten oratorios from Marcorelli for the Roman Confraternity of the Most Holy Crucifixion at church of San Marcello, for Holy Year of 1650. Marcorelli died, perhaps on his way to Munich, on 31 August 1651, not yet 41 years old, at a location not clearly legible but plausibly in Austria.¹⁵

Marcorelli's music outlived him to a certain extent. Motets appear in two printed anthologies edited in 1653 in Milan (second edition of the *Teatro musicale de' concerti ecclesiastici* by Giorgio Rolla, RISM 1653¹), and in 1656 in Rotterdam (*Scelta di motetti di diversi eccellentissimi autori*, collected by Giovanni van Geertsom, RISM 1656²). His *Oratorio del diluvio* was heard in the chapel of the Empress Eleonora in Vienna in 1662.¹⁶

The Dialogue

That the interlocutors of the dialogue are Saint Francis and God must be inferred from the contents and not from rubrics in the source, which indicate only "A 2." Very short but of great dramaturgic efficacy is the text, which refers to episodes and key principles from the life and spiritual message of the Saint (see Text and Translations).

The "scene" opens with an episode that reminds us of the first of the frescoes by Giotto in the upper basilica of the church of S. Francesco in Assisi, the saint's "Dream of the Palace and Arms." From a nocturnal atmosphere, suspended between the world of dreams and reality, which projects a shiver of fear of the presence of mysterious entities ("Phantasma noctis est?"), follows an oasis of peace, with the invocation to Night, who reveals the secrets of Heaven ("Beata nox quae caeli abdita pandis"). Then Francis awakens: he sees war as the only means to conquer threatening enemies ("hostes truces") and, in a new crusade, he invites his followers to arm themselves under the sign of the Cross ("Canite tuba, parate currus, Martis tormenta sumite"). With respect to the opening of the dialogue, it is interesting to observe that the expression "phantasma noctis" appears in the second strophe of the hymn *Aurora iam spargit polum* in the version of the Roman Breviary revised by Urban VIII in 1632. This could have inspired the author of the dialogue and may constitute a *terminus post quem* for Marcorelli's setting.

In section no. 2, God calls Francis to himself, inviting him to be happy and to hope: darkness will be followed by light. Francis replies (no. 3), placing himself at God's service. God then announces peace (no. 4). Jerusalem will not be saved with havoc and arms, but with the wounds of love and battles of the spirit. Francis, therefore, will turn his weapons against the demons of the underworld (no. 5). God announces (no. 6) that the saint will walk on the path indicated by the Lord; he will become "militiae pauperum dux" (leader of the armies of the poor)

¹⁴ Beth L. Glixon, "Private Lives of Public Women: Prima Donnas in Mid-Seventeenth Century Venice," *Music and Letters*, 76 (1995), 516; see also Beth L. Glixon and Jonathan Emmanuel Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera: the Impresario and His World in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁵ Marginal annotation in Spello, Archivio Storico Comunale, Registri Parrocchiali, S. Maria Maggiore, *Battesimi*, vol. II (1590–1641), f. 35v: "Obiit a dì 31 agosto 1651 a Horbranto [?] nel [...] Jo lante". This may be Hörbranz, just northeast of Lake Constance. I thank Dr. Riccardo Ciliberti for this hypothetical reading, which other scholars have confirmed. This death notice makes impossible Morelli's hypothesis that two cantatas by Marcorelli sent from Rome to the Duke of Mantua in 1656 and his two pieces in the 1656 Geertsom Rotterdam anthology indicate his continuing presence in Rome. See Brumana, "Dialogo di S. Francesco."

¹⁶ For notices on the Viennese performance and analysis of the entire oratorio, see Christian Speck, *Das italienische Oratorium 1625–1665. Musik und Dichtung* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 169–82.

and repair the House of the Lord which is falling into ruin. The concluding duet (no. 7) expresses the joy that unites God and Francis in eternity. In no. 5 one can find allusion to the *Expulsion of the Demons* in Giotto's cycle, and in no. 6 to the *Dream of the Falling Lateran*, together with reminders of the social significance of the Franciscan message.

From a formal point of view, the text of the dialogue is not in verse; but its prose is highly rhythmic. It is full of assonance and rhymes—*cruces/truces* (no. 1), *caedes/sedes* (no. 4), *rebelles/imbelles* and *nomen/omen* (no. 5)—and is subdivided into sections that, even if not regularly articulated in poetic lines, sometimes are. One sees

- “Beata nox / quae caeli abdita pandis // felix o cor / si Dei oracula capis” in no. 1;
- the seven-syllable lines of no. 2, “qui te creavit vocat / qui te redimit amat”;
- the succession of 11- and 7-syllables lines in no. 6, as in Italian *versi sciolti*, “viam qua ambules notam faciam. / Qui vult venire post me / abneget semet ipsum / tollat crucem suam et sequatur me”;
- and the hendecasyllables (somewhat imperfect) that form the final duet.

Such a textual structure forms the base for music similarly varied, whose effects are worthy of a master like Carissimi. It is not by chance that Marcorelli's cantata *Che legge è questa, o dei* was “considered very beautiful” by his contemporaries.¹⁷ Macinara described the musician as a “valentissimo huomo,” and the canons of the cathedral of Perugia offered him a considerable salary to return and direct their chapel, “considering the good service given to our church at other times and his ability.”¹⁸

The composition extends for 334 measures in modern transcription and can be divided into seven “numbers,” which range from 12 measures for no. 5 to 104 measures for no. 7.

[Number]	Ensemble	Measures (semibreves)	Length in measures
1	CI, bc	1–80	80
2	CII, bc	81–124	44
3	CI, bc	125–147	23
4	CII, bc	148–179	32
5	CI, bc	180–191	12
6	CII, bc	192–230	39
7	CI, CII, bc	231–334	104

Furthermore, every number in its turn presents a series of shorter sections in which, with perfect adherence to the text, passages in *stile recitativo* alternate with others in arioso style, intercalated at times with brief instrumental ritornelli. In the ariosos, the music expands with text repetitions and more or less ample melismas, while the rhythm becomes systematically triple, with the exception of the passages that evoke the clangor of war, as in “Canite tuba, parate currus, Martis tormenta sumite” in no. 1 (mm. 49–54), or in the declaration of the battle against the demons in no. 5. The duet at the end is entirely in triple meter. Marcorelli's recitatives are

¹⁷ Paola Besutti, “Produzione e trasmissione di cantate romane nel mezzo del Seicento,” in *La musica a Roma attraverso le fonti d'archivio*, B.M. Antolini-A. Morelli-V. Vita Spagnuolo, eds. (Lucca: LIM, 1994), 153–54.

¹⁸ Francesco Macinara, *Cronache di Perugia (1630–1642)*, Perugia, Biblioteca Comunale Augusta, MS 1147, 738; Brumana-Ciliberti, *Musica e musicisti nella cattedrale di S. Lorenzo*, 183–84.

also lively and show his knowledge of the wizardry of verbal rhetoric: when God turns to Francis (no. 2), he repeats his name twice with the same rhythmic figure and with the same melodic profile, but the second time the motive begins a third higher (mm. 81–82).

The two interlocutors are well differentiated from a musical standpoint. Saint Francis, the first soprano, has a range of an eleventh, from *e'* to *a''*, with melismas, quick *passaggi*, and long-held tones in a medium-high register. God, the second soprano, has a range of a ninth, from *b* to *c''*, and in the duet he gives proof of the ability to sustain a long phrase. Here the two voices seem to challenge each other equally, alternating four notes each lasting four beats located “madrigalistically” on the word *aeternum*. It is given to God to pronounce the first and last lowest tone, the *g'* in mm. 309–12 and 325–28, while Francis expresses his eternal joy with the divine bond with two central tones, the *c''* of mm. 314–17 and the succeeding *d''* (a step higher) of mm. 320–23. In the dialogue as a whole, the role of God emerges as the more solemn and less rich in virtuoso figures, and less broad, leading one to presuppose that the singers had different abilities. The dialogue seems to move within a G minor or transposed Dorian orbit, with excursions toward other tonal areas with flats, most of them also in minor.

Source

The dialogue titled “De Sancto Francisco” by Marcorelli survives in manuscript Q.45 of the Museo Internazionale and Biblioteca della Musica of Bologna (I-Bc, see Figure 1). The volume constitutes the second of five codices (MSS Q.44–48) that Gaetano Gaspari, former librarian of the collection, titled *D’autori romani musica volgare e latina*.¹⁹ It is a folio-sized anthology of 189 leaves, datable to the second half of the seventeenth century, which contains thirty-four spiritual compositions in Latin and Italian. Composers who have been identified were all active in Rome, with the exception of Merula: Carlo Caprioli (2), Giacomo Carissimi (4), Francesco Foggia (3), Bonifazio Graziani (3), Venanzio Leopardi (1), Arcangelo Lori (1), Giovanni Marciani (1), Virgilio Mazzocchi (2), Tarquinio Merula (1) and Luigi Rossi (2), in addition to three by Marcorelli. These are *Exultavit cor meum*, for soprano and basso continuo (no. 27), *Exultent júbilis*, for alto and continuo (no. 30) and the present dialogue for two sopranos and continuo (no. 34), which concludes the collection on ff. 183r–189r.

Transcription revealed that the manuscript was not a performing score. The music in fact is neither in score nor in separate parts; rather, the first and second canto parts follow each other consecutively. On folio 183r one reads “A 2. For singing one after the other written [part].” After the first soprano part finishes, the last system on f. 186r begins with the rubric “Here begins the second [soprano].”

The part of the second canto, furthermore, contains various errors in the order of items. The duet (no. 7) appears before no. 6, whose location, however, is given explicitly by the rubric “After *Deus felicitatis omen* [a modified version of the text at the end of no. 5] follows” *Francisce viam* (f. 188v). And no. 4 occurs after no. 2 (f. 187r) without indication that the second canto must be silent during the execution of no. 3, a solo for the first canto. The last eight measures of the basso continuo part for no. 3 indeed separate nos. 2 and 4; but without a rubric, the second canto would enter fifteen measures too soon.

¹⁹ Gaetano Gaspari, *Catalogo della biblioteca musicale G. B. Martini di Bologna* (facsim. reprint with integrated corrections, Bologna: Forni, 1961), vol. II, 342, vol. III, 196–97. Codex MS Q.45 is the sole volume of the set dedicated to spiritual music; the other four contain by and large secular compositions.

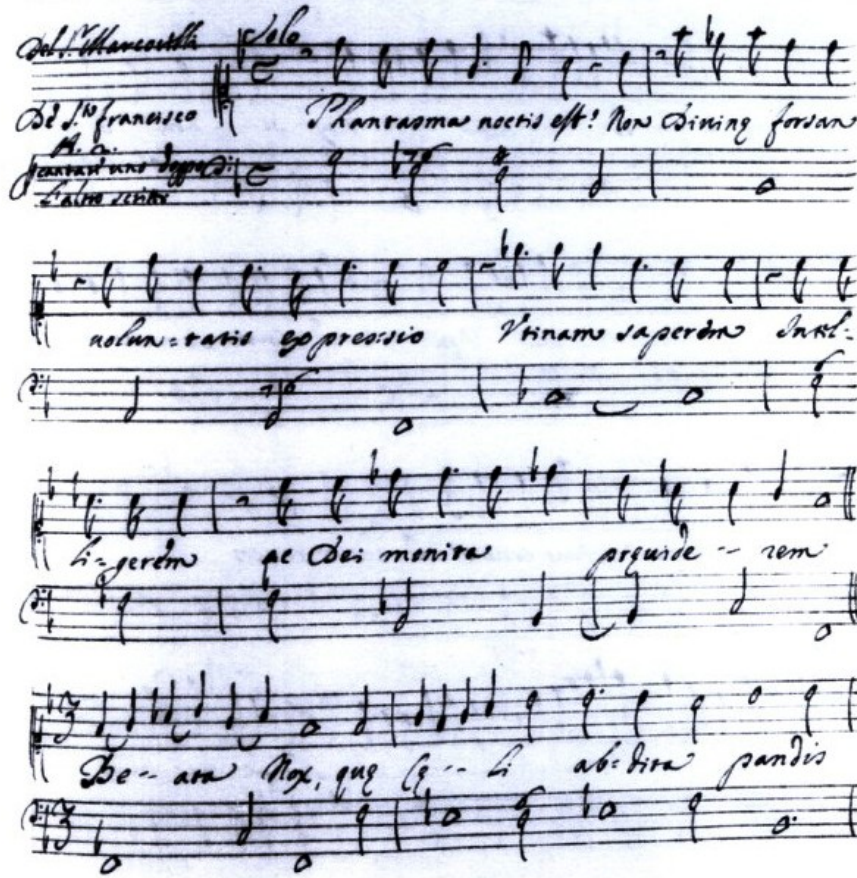


Fig. 1: G. F. Marcorelli, *[Dialogus] de Sancto Francisco*, beginning of the composition (I-Bc, MS Q.45, f. 183r, detail). Reproduced with permission Museo Internazionale e Biblioteca della Musica, Bologna.

Editorial Procedures

The barring in the edition adopts a uniform transcription in c for duple meters and $\frac{3}{2}$ for triple meters. While these prevail in the original, barrings that encompass two or three, and even four or five semibreves occur. The high rate of measures of four semibreves in the CII part in the duet, copied more hastily than other parts of the Dialogue, demonstrates that the insertion of barlines was considered useful but was still not indispensable.

Original measure length of 4 semibreves

CI: mm. 45–48, 144–47, 192–95, 270–73

CII: mm. 233–36, 237–40, 245–48, 268–71, 292–95, 300–303, 306–9, 310–13, 323–26

Original measure length of 5 semibreves

CI: mm. 283–87

CII: mm. 86–90, 153–57, 278–82, 330–34

Unique irregularities can be found in mm. 9–10, which in the original are two measures of $\frac{5}{4}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$, respectively; and mm. 201–3 in the original are two measures of $\frac{3}{4}$. The presence of

single or double barlines before internal changes of metric signatures has been retained as in the source.

The transcription retains the original rhythmic values. The part of CI, written in soprano clef (C1), and the part of CII, in soprano clef (C1) for mm. 1–307, then in alto clef (C3) from mm. 308–34, are both given in treble clef. Original slurring has been retained.

A few passages in triple meter employ coloration; these are indicated with open horizontal brackets above and below the score.

Except for the instances given in the Critical Notes below, all accidentals, including those in the signatures, are given as in the source. Note that in the MS, these alterations are often placed only approximately: at incorrect lines or spaces; above or below the pitch in the vocal lines, rather than in front of it; vice versa, in the basso continuo line they may appear in front of a note although intended as a figured bass sign. Furthermore, when two notes are at the same pitch, the accidental may be found in between them, rather than in front of the first one. Sharp signs that raised the pitch one semitone have been transcribed, on a case-by-case basis, either with a natural sign or a sharp sign, following modern convention. Editorial accidentals are given in parentheses. No figures have been added to the continuo part; editorial accidentals in the figures are given in parentheses. Continuo players should improvise in the few instrumental interludes.

In the source, the basso continuo lines for the closing duet differ under the two vocal parts. The edition primarily represents the continuo part for CI; variants are given in the Critical Notes.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my friends, colleagues, and students for helping me to edit this small, but problematic score, with special thanks to my translator Margaret Murata who helped with its presentation for the Web Library series. My heartfelt appreciation also extends to the editorial staff of the series, the anonymous reviewers and, in anticipation, to those who want to perform this music, making useful our musicological efforts.

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--Translated by Margaret Murata

CRITICAL NOTES

- M. 10, bc, beats 1–2: Two tied semiminims for the B-flat instead of a minim.
- M. 47, bc, beats 2–3: The G is a minim.
- M. 127, bc, beats 1–2: The minim is a D.
- M. 154, CII, beats 1–2: The first F-sharp is given as a minim, without a dot.
- M. 171, CII, beat 1: Only a semiminim rest.
- M. 179: Both the CII and bc have fermatas.
- M. 187, CI, beats 1–2: The E-flat is a minim, without a dot.
- Mm. 197–98, bc: The C in m. 197 is not tied to the next one.
- M. 221, CII, beat 1: The D-flat is a semiminim.
- M. 228, CII: The rhythms are written as a minim, four semiminims, and two eighths.
- M. 230: Both the CII and bc have fermatas.
- Mm. 253–54, CI: Two B-flats instead of two Gs.
- M. 263, CI: The C semibreve is without a dot.
- M. 292, CII, beat 3: The G is preceded by a sharp.
- M. 297, CII, beat 3: The F is preceded by a sharp.
- Mm. 305–06, CII: A slur between the A in m. 305 and the following B-flat.
- M. 312, CI, beat 3: The A is preceded by a sharp.
- M. 332–33, CII: Lacks a tie between the two Gs.

In the basso continuo part for the duet only (CI and CII present variants in the continuo for the same ensemble.)

- M. 232: CI gives G-flat.
- M. 233, beats 1–2: CII has *c'* semiminim and *c* minim.
- M. 238, beats 1–2: CI has *c* dotted semibreve.
- M. 238, beat 3: CII has *c* and *b-flat*. The edition has chosen the higher melodic line by analogy with m. 233.
- M. 241: In CI, the continuo part is lacking.
- M. 243, beat 3: In CII, the A is a semiminim.
- M. 250: In CII, the G semibreve has a dot.
- M. 256: In CI, the D semibreve has a dot.
- M. 259: In CII, the G is an octave higher.
- M. 262: Both vocal parts place the figure 6 above the F instead of the E-flat.
- Mm. 286–87: In both vocal parts, the pitch tied over the barline is F and not G.
- M. 299: In CI, the F semibreve lacks a dot.
- M. 305, beats 2–3: CII has only an F semibreve.
- M. 313: CI has only *g* dotted semibreve.