

INTRODUCTION

Alessandro Scarlatti's setting of *Lucretia Romana* (Hanley 377) has been dated to 16 September, 1688.¹ The following detail is given by Edwin Hanley: "On the basis of documents in the Doria-Pamfili archives, Montalto...reports that Benedetto Pamfili is the author of the text of this cantata and that a copy was presented to Cardinal Giovanni Francesco Maria de' Medici in the winter of 1690."²

Cardinal Benedetto Pamphili, author of the text, was one of the principal ecclesiastical patrons of music in late seventeenth-century Rome, and his poetry was set on numerous occasions by Alessandro Scarlatti. A manuscript in the Vatican Library, Rome, of cantata and other texts for musical settings by Pamphili (*I-Rvat* Vat. lat. 10206) gives an idea of the range and involvement of the cardinal's literary interests as librettist.

Sources

Source A

Münster, Santini Collection, MS 862, ff. 1-12 (*MÜs*)

Watermark: fleur de lys in double circle

Heading: Lucretia Romana / del S. Aless^o Scarlatti.

Scribe: Roman hand.³

Contents: cantatas with instruments by

Alessandro Melani, Francesco Gasparini, Bernardo Pasquini, and Flavio Lanciani. *Lucretia* is the only setting by Scarlatti, and its tragic theme from Roman antiquity further sets it apart from the other works in the manuscript.

Source B

Naples, Biblioteca del Conservatorio, MS 33.2.4, ff. 128-138v (*Nc*)

No heading or attribution. Ornamental capital.

Source C

London, British Library, MS Add. 31488, ff. 166-185 (*Lbl*)

Watermark: 3 mountains in double circle; fleur de lys in double circle

Heading: La Lucretia Romana / del Sig^f. Scarlatti.

Scribe: Roman hand

Contents: cantatas by Cola, Bononcini, Scarlatti, Carissimi

Carissimi, Stradella. (list of composers in English hand). The volume bears the name "R.J. Stevenson, Charterhouse 1817." The name "Savage" also appears.

There is a close correspondence between the readings of sources A (*MÜs*) and B (*Nc*), and considerable variance of those with the readings and markings of C (*Lbl*). In *Nc* the title character's name is variously spelled as "Lugrezia" and "Lugretia," whereas *MÜs* and *Lbl* give "Lucretia."

Some of the aspects in which *Lbl* differs from the first two sources are: bass figures, of which many more appear; slurs in the vocal part, of which many more are given over 3- and 4-note groups; and tempo markings (see below). *Lbl* also has a number of textual errors, such as incorrect numbers of beats for the time signature, e.g. in the

¹ Malcolm Boyd, s.v. "Alessandro Scarlatti," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., 22: 392. No source is given for the date.

² Hanley, Edwin, "Alessandro Scarlatti's *Cantate da Camera*: a Bibliographical Study," Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1963, pp. 291-292.

³ The hand of *MÜs* 862 has similarities to that of *MÜs* 3933, Scarlatti's opera *La Rosmene*, performed in Rome, Palazzo Doria Pamphili, Carnival 1686 (Boyd, "Scarlatti," 22: 384).

opening recitative (m. 26) and in the arioso “Ma che farai mio cor?” (m. 160). In “Ma crudel dove n’andrai,” (m. 75) an ornament sign not typical of Scarlatti’s copyists (similar to the French *tremblement*), indicating a cadential shake in the voice, appears several times. These readings are not adopted in this edition, though the tempo markings are noted in the Editorial Notes.

Style and structure

The work makes highly virtuosic demands on the singer and has a wider range than usual for Scarlatti’s cantatas with continuo: from *d'* to *b"-flat*. It calls for a dramatic rendition, like other solo cantatas based on ancient Roman history (including Scarlatti’s *Il Coriolano*). These follow the tradition of similarly virtuosic works on ancient historical subjects by Stradella, for example *Nerone* and *Medea* (“Già languiva la notte”). All of these works appear in the British Library manuscript Add. 31488, along with the famous trio cantata of Carissimi, *I Naviganti*.

In each of the Roman historical pieces, the subject is a character for whom death is the only release from dishonor and despair. The well-known subject of the rape of Lucretia provided Scarlatti—as many other composers after him, including Handel and Montéclair—with the dramatic ingredients of defiance, fury, and pathos.

Tonally as well as emotionally, Scarlatti’s *Lucretia* covers a wide trajectory, from A minor (first recitative and aria), to D major (m. 75, second aria: Lucretia calling down curses upon Sesto, her attacker), E flat (m. 122: continuation of the curse), D minor / G minor (m. 137, fourth aria with arioso: Lucretia’s sorrow and pathos) before returning to A minor for Lucretia’s farewell (m. 244).

A number of structural features are notable in this journey, from rapid virtuosic arias and extravagant recitative to the obsessive circling of the slow 3/8 strophic aria in

which Lucretia confronts the inevitable suicide demanded by her situation.

None of the arias is a *da capo* form, a common situation in Scarlatti’s work of this time. The most frequent poetic form used by Pamphili is that of a verse which returns to the first line through a preceding line that rhymes with it, e.g. first aria (m. 44): line 1 and last line, “Barbaro hai vinto”; penultimate line, “ch’ai reso estinto”. In the second aria (m.7 5), this is extended to a scheme of matching rhymes to the first two lines: “Ma crudel dove n’andrai / per fuggir le mie vendette?” and “...’e s’al ciel giunger saprai / ti rispinghin le saette.”

This form builds in an element of musical recapitulation, and also facilitates a varied treatment of the intervening text, in which the music follows freely the affect of the lines—rather than portraying a single dominant affect within a section of music. An example is the aria “Barbaro, hai vinto,” in which the music to the first (and last) lines is downward moving and dejected, but takes on a defiant quality through the *moto perpetuo* bass line and the *recitando* vocal part.

The second aria follows the first without intervening recitative, an occasional feature of Scarlatti’s works in the 1690s. Moving from the A-minor pathos of “Barbaro, hai vinto,” the voice opens unaccompanied onto a virtuosic aria in D major, in which Lucretia calls for revenge—a family vendetta from which her attacker Sesto will seek escape in vain.

In the third, equally vehement aria in E flat, Lucretia turns her anger on herself, blaming her own beauty for Sesto’s attack. Then comes the thought of suicide, with more deliberate movements (several marked *Largo* or *Adagio*—see *Tempo Markings*, below), in contrast to the rapid pace of the preceding arias.

Another original feature of the structure from this point is the intertwining of the arioso “Ma che farai mio cor?” (mm. 160, 184, 221) with the two strophes of a mournful aria in 3/8—a standard form for the

cantata of the 1690s, though rarely used with such psychological intensity. The device enables Pamphili and Scarlatti to present Lucretia as a complex character torn between duty (the repetitive patterns of the 3/8) and a more personal response “But what will my heart do?”

Her final path to death is presented in the form of a decisive recitative, and the work ends with the gasped out “I faint, I fall, I die, I breathe: Farewell.”

Editorial Notes

The vocal part is notated in the soprano clef (lowest line = *c*¹) in all sources.

MÜs has been followed as the principal text. It presents a high standard of accuracy and clarity with regard to the poetic and musical text and the textual underlay. Some performance markings from *Nc* have been added, such as the *Largo* at m. 11. *Lbl* has a larger number of scribal inaccuracies than the first two texts, such as incorrect barring in the arioso, “Ma che farai mio cor?” The tempo marking *Presto* for the second and third arias (mm. 75 and 122), found only in this source, have not been adopted.

Bass figuring

In the arias, figures that appear in one strophe but not in the other have been adopted for each strophe. Bearing in mind the consistency between the sources *MÜs* and *Nc*, and the occasional vagaries of *Lbl*, the figures shown are those from the first two, with those from *Lbl* added in italics. The exception is the first aria, “Barbaro hai vinto”, for which the figures from *Lbl* are provided, since virtually none are given in the other two sources.

Key signatures

These agree in the three sources and have been retained: two sharps for the second aria in D major (mm. 75-103); two flats for the third aria in E flat (mm. 122-147); and no key signature for the two strophes of the

final aria in D minor (mm. 164-183 and 201-220).

Accidentals

The usage of accidentals by Scarlatti and by contemporary copyists differs from modern usage in several ways. In general, the composer uses an accidental to apply for the duration of one note only, or for consecutive notes on a repeated pitch. Modern convention regards as redundant the repetition of accidentals applied to the same pitch within a measure; but they often serve as a useful reminder for performers, especially within a highly inflected chromatic style such as Scarlatti’s.

The use of the natural sign to cancel an accidental earlier in the bar thus appears rarely in these manuscripts, whereas modern usage requires it routinely. Here the modern convention has been adopted, so as to avoid needless ambiguity. In nearly every case Scarlatti’s notation leaves no room for doubt, when we consider together his use of key signatures, bass figures, and principles of using accidentals.

Slurs and other variant readings

Throughout the aria “Barbaro ha vinto,” *Nc* and *MÜs* agree in the treatment of the ultimate syllable of each phrase, going from the final leading-note sixteenth to the tonic resolution on the following downbeat (e.g., at *vin-to*, mm. 47-48; similarly at *orgo-glio* and *estin-to*). In addition, only *MÜs* shows the figure of two sixteenths slurred to the following quarter note, e.g. m. 47, beats 1-2. These readings have been adopted here.

Throughout the work, *MÜs* and *Nc* have fewer slurs in the vocal part than *Lbl*. This more restrained use of slurs has been preserved (e.g., the slurs in the concluding aria derive from *MÜs*).

M. 59, bass note 1 – *Nc*: A; *MÜs* and *Lbl*: c. *Nc* has been adopted, as the resulting tenth between voice and bass part matches the interval (*b'* to *d''*) on the first beat of m. 60.

Mm. 75-103: *Nc* frequently shows groups of continuous sixteenths in both voice and bass beamed together in groups of eight notes. This has been adopted only where *MÜs* and *Nc* agree in this note grouping (e.g. voice, m. 141).

Mm. 164-183 and 201-220: A small but interesting difference between the two strophes, found in all sources, concerns the descending melodic line, mm. 169 and 206 respectively. In strophe 1, the second note is *e*"-natural, descending to *e*"-flat on the next main beat, whereas in strophe 2, the *e*"-flat comes already on the second note, maybe to reflect the text "cader" (as opposed to "costante" in the first strophe).

Mm. 178-179, bass: *Nc* has two eighths followed two sixteenths rather than a dotted eighth note followed by three sixteenths, given in *MÜs*, with identical pitches. At mm. 215-216 the latter reading appears in both sources.

M. 208, voice, *MÜs* has slur over three notes; *Lbl* over the first two; *Nc* no slur.

M. 209, voice, *MÜs* and *Nc*: slur over last two notes.

Mm. 176 and 181, and the parallel passages, m. 213 and 218, voice: both *MÜs* and *Nc* give two ways of beaming the ascending scale, even though the readings are otherwise identical. In each strophe, the first occurrence (mm. 176 and 213) is given with two pairs of sixteenths, while the second (m. 107 and 144) is shown as a group of four sixteenths beamed together (i.e., eliding the first syllable). In each case *Lbl* gives the two pairs beamed together, reinforcing this reading with slurs.

Barring

All sources reflect Scarlatti's idiosyncratic barring of pieces in compound meters. At m. 164 ("Per dar fine"), the time signature is C 3/8, but most measures contain 6 eighth notes, alternating with a few of 3 eighth notes, mainly towards cadence points. This barring has been retained in the edition, since it closely reflects the composer's prac-

tice. Measure numbers have not been re-assigned here.

Tempo markings

M. 11: *Largo* in *Nc* only.

M. 44: *Aria* and *allegro* in *Lbl* only.

M. 75: *Presto* in *Lbl* only.

M. 118: *adagio* in *Lbl* only.

M. 122: *Presto* in *Lbl* only.

M. 160: *Largo* in *MÜs* and *Lbl*.

M. 164: "Per dar fine" – *Largo* in *Nc*; *adagio* in *Lbl*.

M. 184: *Largo* in *Lbl*. Text: "che dirai?" in *Lbl* only.

M. 201: *Largo* in *Lbl*.

M. 236, at "io manco": *Largo* in *MÜs* and *Nc*; *adagio* in *Lbl*.

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