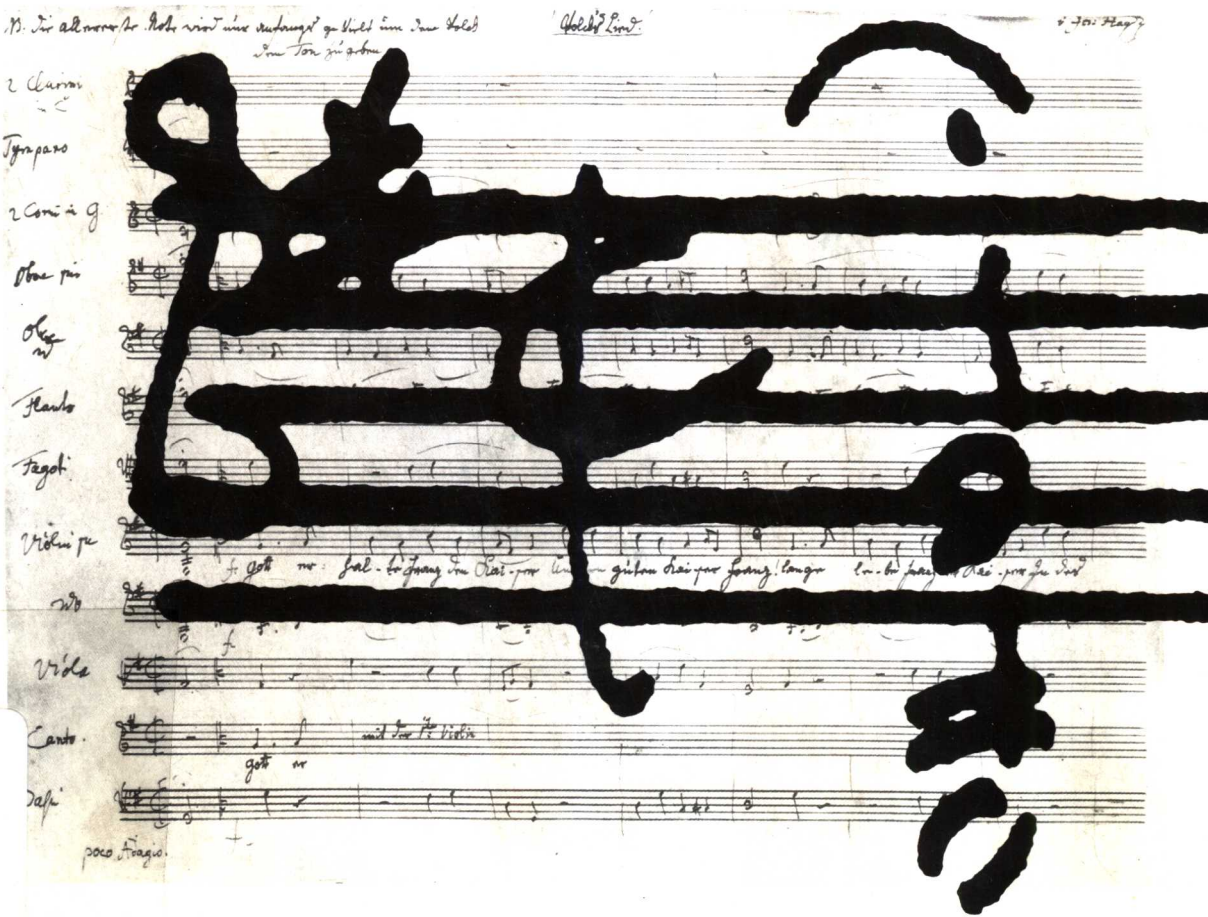
presented to

Studies in music history

H.C. Robbins Landon

on his 70th birthday

by Otto Biba, Malcolm Boyd, Walther Brauneis, A. Peter Brown, Geoffrey Chew, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Christopher Hogwood, David Wyn Jones, Gerda Mraz, Robert Münster, Christopher Raeburn, Albi Rosenthal and Jiří Sehnal. With a comprehensive bibliography compiled by Judith Agus. Edited by Otto Biba and David Wyn Jones



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with 29 illustrations and
27 music examples

Thames and Hudson

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Music examples set by IAN CHEVERTON

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Editors' Preface

THE YEAR 1996 marks the seventieth birthday of H.C. Robbins Landon. This collection of essays from friends and colleagues is a tribute to a man who has figured prominently in international scholarship for nearly half a century. Much of his limitless energy and enthusiasm has been devoted to his beloved Joseph Haydn and, while Robbie would be the first to acknowledge the work of several distinguished predecessors and contemporaries, his own contribution to the scholarly and popular revival of interest in the composer is unrivalled. His first book, *The Symphonies of Joseph Haydn*, appeared in 1955, and its 862 pages typify the approach that informs his work: fundamental and inquisitive scholarship coupled with unstinting love of the music. As the bibliography at the end of this celebratory volume testifies, many new – often first – editions of large tracts of Haydn's output have been produced by him, from symphonies to piano trios, and English psalms to operas; a volume of the composer's letters and London notebooks was issued in English translation; and, between 1976 and 1980, his most ambitious project came to fruition, five magisterial volumes of biography and commentary, *Haydn. Chronicle and Works*, described by one reviewer as 'One of the great documentary biographies of the century'.

Robbie's missionary work on behalf of Haydn has always been matched by an equivalent interest in the musical environment in which Haydn lived, the music of contemporaries, large and small, Ordoñez and Vanhal as well as Mozart and Beethoven. His pioneering work on several minor composers has stimulated a great deal of scholarly activity throughout the world, while his many publications on Mozart and Beethoven have invariably benefited from his unrivalled knowledge of the period in which they lived.

Yet, to concentrate on Robbie's scholarly achievement alone would be to present an incomplete picture of the man. His desire to share his knowledge with anybody who is willing to be entertained, charmed and challenged is limitless. As a motivator who relishes the cut and thrust of the music business, he has instigated numerous recordings from the earliest days of LP to the modern CD, has stimulated concerts and festivals, advised conductors, performers, writers, producers and publishers, and enlightened the general public through countless programme notes, sleeve notes, broadcast talks and public lectures. He has achieved that rare distinction: a scholar who is also a household name. This marriage of the pioneering researcher working painstakingly alone and the

eager communicator yielded its greatest product in the book *1791. Mozart's Last Year*, an international bestseller, translated into no fewer than ten languages.

In March 1789 Haydn wrote a letter to the Viennese publisher Artaria, encouraging him to issue a recently completed work, the Capriccio in C (Hob. XVII:4). In it he remarked that: '. . . In a moment of excellent good humour I have written a quite new Capriccio for the pianoforte, whose tastefulness, singularity and special construction cannot fail to win approbation from connoisseurs and amateurs alike.' Those who have had the privilege of knowing Robbie personally and professionally will recognize in him the same 'excellent good humour', that zest for life that characterized Haydn's own career; and his work fulfils one of the fundamental tenets of eighteenth-century aesthetics, articulated here by the composer, that intellectual endeavour should not preclude accessibility. H.C. Robbins Landon has, indeed, won the approbation of connoisseurs and amateurs. Happy Birthday!

Otto Biba
David Wyn Jones

MALCOLM BOYD

'The music very good indeed': Scarlatti's Tolomeo et Alessandro *recovered*

THE MODERN VISITOR to Rome who climbs the Spanish Steps to admire the view from the top or to visit the church in the Piazza della Trinità de' Monti may scarcely notice the Palazzo Zuccari, an unimposing edifice standing between the Via Sistina and the Via Gregoriana at the point where they both join the piazza. The name 'Zuccari', which is still to be seen engraved above the entrance to the palazzo in the Via Sistina, is that of the painter Federico Zuccari (*c.* 1540–1609) for whom it was built, but of more importance to the music historian is the fact that it was here that the dowager Queen Maria Casimira of Poland and her court lived from 1701 to 1714. It would be truer to say, as Roberto Pagano has pointed out,[1] that Maria Casimira took up residence on the opposite side of the Via Sistina (known then as the Strada Felice) in premises which were later connected to the Palazzo Zuccari by a bridge built on her instructions. The palazzo itself was used first to house a community of Benedictine nuns she had patronized in Poland and later, from 1708, to accommodate a domestic theatre managed on her behalf by the French-born impresario Count Giacomo d'Alibert.

It was for this theatre, designed possibly by the famous Filippo Juvarra, that Domenico Scarlatti composed at least seven operas between 1710 and 1714, when Maria Casimira left Rome to end her days in the Loire valley (she died at Blois on 29 January 1716). Juvarra designed the sets for most, if not all, of these operas, and the librettos were all the work of Maria Casimira's 'segretario delle lettere italiane e latine', Carlo Sigismondo Capece. They were put on during the period between Christmas and Lent in friendly competition with those of other Roman Maecenases, notably Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni and Prince Ruspoli.

It is evident from reports in the *Avvisi di Roma* now in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, that for the 1711 season both Ruspoli and Ottoboni had planned to put on a heroic opera followed by a pastoral.[2] At Ruspoli's residence, the Palazzo Bonelli, Antonio Caldara's *L'Anagilda, ovvero La fede ne'tradimenti* on 4 January was followed just over a month later, on 9 February, by the same composer's *La costanza in amor vince l'inganno*, a revision of a pastoral opera originally composed for Mantua in 1701. Ottoboni's serious opera in 1711, produced some time before 18 January, was Filippo Amadei's *Teodosio il giovane*; the title and composer of the pastoral that presumably followed it are unknown.[3]

Comparisons were inevitably made between the various operatic spectacles on offer. Writing on 17 January 1711, the director of the Académie de France at Rome, Charles-François Poerson, remarked that 'one should see that of Cardinal Ottoboni, hear that of Prince Ruspoli, and forgo that at the Capranica [the public theatre, at which a revival of Mancini and Orefice's *L'Engelberta* could be seen], which is frankly a failure'.[4] But this was two days before Queen Maria Casimira's theatre opened that year with Scarlatti and Capece's *Tolomeo et Alessandro, overo La corona disprezzata*; Ottoboni and Ruspoli were in the audience, along with the singers they employed. The writer of the *Avvisi di Roma* in Munich described the event in the following terms:

> *Rome, 24 January 1711*
> On Monday evening [19 January] the Queen of Poland had her opera performed for the first time at her residence at the Trinità de' Monti by good singers, male and female; it was generally applauded as superior to all the others.[5]

This opinion was echoed shortly afterwards by Giovan Mario Crescimbeni, chronicler of the Arcadian Academy, who wrote:

> the voices were pleasing, the acting distinguished, the costumes most charming and worked with marvellous design, the music very good indeed and the orchestra outstanding.[6]

Crescimbeni was reviewing a performance put on specially for members of the Arcadian Academy, and there were later revivals in Fermo (1713), Rome (1724) and possibly Jesi (1727). Not to be outdone by Ottoboni and Ruspoli, Maria Casimira followed *Tolomeo et Alessandro* with a pastoral, *L'Orlando*, in the printed libretto of which Domenico Scarlatti is for the first time mentioned as her *maestro di cappella*.

Not a note of *L'Orlando* survives, and until recently contemporary evalutions of *Tolomeo et Alessandro* could be tested only against the printed libretto (see Fig. 1) and a manuscript copy of Act 1 which remains in private hands and is therefore virtually inaccessible.[7] Now, thanks to one of those happy *trouvailles* to which the dedicatee of the present volume is no stranger, we are able to base an assessment of Scarlatti's achievements in this work on a complete full score of the opera.

* * *

Belton House is situated a few miles north of Grantham in Lincolnshire. It was built in 1685–6 for Sir John Brownlow, third baronet of Belton, who represented Grantham in Parliament. After his death (apparently by his own hand) in 1697, the house passed, along with the title, to his brother William and then to William's son, another Sir John Brownlow, who lived from 1690 to 1754. This Sir John also pursued a parliamentary career as member for Grantham, and later for Lincolnshire – a career which proved to

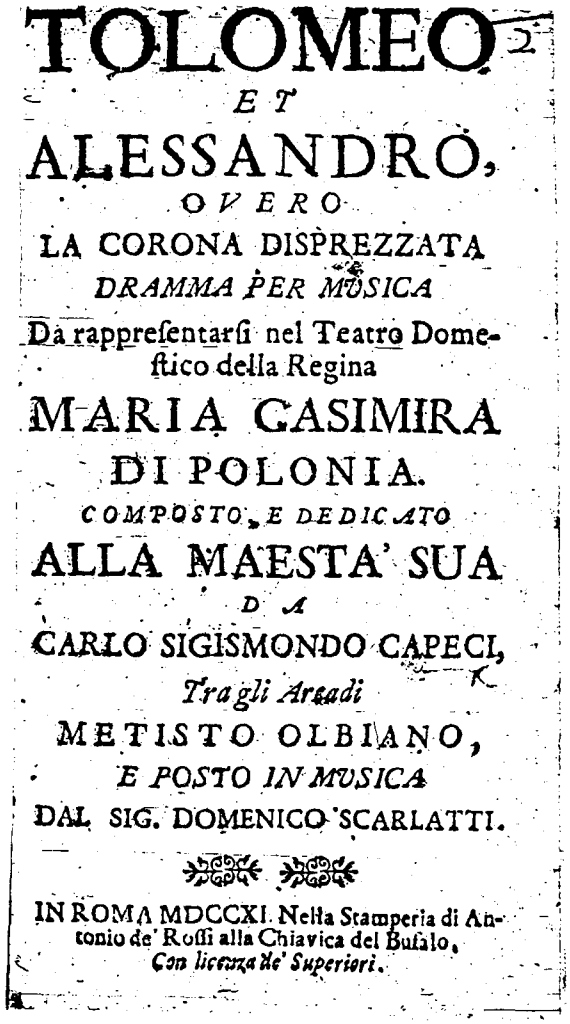

TOLOMEO
ET
ALESSANDRO,
OVERO
LA CORONA DISPREZZATA
DRAMMA PER MUSICA
Da rappreſentarſi nel Teatro Domeſtico della Regina
MARIA CASIMIRA
DI POLONIA.
COMPOSTO, E DEDICATO
ALLA MAESTA' SUA
DI
CARLO SIGISMONDO CAPECI,
Tragli Arcadi
METISTO OLBIANO,
E POSTO IN MUSICA
DAL SIG. DOMENICO SCARLATTI.
IN ROMA MDCCXI. Nella Stamperia di Antonio de' Roſſi alla Chiavica del Bufalo,
Con licenza de' Superiori.

Fig. 1 *Tolomeo et Alessandro*, title page of the libretto, Rome 1711; British Library, 905.k.8(2).

be, in the words of the Belton House guide book, 'as long as it was undistinguished'.[8] Sir John was, however, keenly interested in art and literature and assembled an important collection of books and pictures, including paintings by Guido Reni, Van Dyck and Luca Giordano. When the house and library were acquired by the National Trust in 1984 it was discovered that he had also owned a manuscript copy of the three acts of Scarlatti's *Tolomeo et Alessandro*.[9]

Brownlow's interest in music is further attested by the inclusion of his name, as Lord Tyrconnel (in 1718 he was granted an Irish peerage, becoming Viscount Tyreonnel and Baron Charleville), among subscribers to the Royal Academy of Music, the association founded in London in 1719 for the production of Italian opera,

with Handel as its leading composer; he also subscribed to the publication of the *Six Cantatas and Six Lessons for the Viola d'Amore* (London, 1724) of Attilio Ariosti, another Academy composer.[10] Brownlow's circle of music-loving friends in London included Frederick, Prince of Wales, the painter Philip Mercier and Handel's acquaintance and admirer Mrs Pendarves (to whom Brownlow proposed marriage after the death of his first wife – and first cousin – Eleanor, in 1730). It is surprising, and a little disappointing, to find that the three volumes of *Tolomeo*, together with a manuscript collection of arias from Alessandro Scarlatti's *Odoardo* and one or two printed items, represent the extent of the music that has survived in Sir John Brownlow's library. Possibly his ownership of the Domenico Scarlatti score was in some way connected with his involvement with the Royal Academy of Music, of which he evidently served as a director in 1723.[11] It may, at any rate, be inferred from the bookplates in each of the three volumes that he acquired the copy some time after he had become Viscount Tyrconnel. The manuscript itself is apparently of Italian – probably Roman – origin, and, except for nineteen pages of the aria 'Ditemi voi, dov'è' in Act 2, is written in a single hand throughout (Fig. 2). An unusual feature of the score is that the overture and many (but not all) of the arias have for some reason been numbered consecutively by a later hand, beginning at 227 for the overture and ending at 250 for the last aria in Act 3 (the final *coro* is not numbered).

Capece's libretto is a gloss on the thirty-ninth book of Justinus's epitome of Pompeius Trogus's *Historiae Philippicae*. The background to the action is laid out in the *Argomento* of the printed libretto:

> It is imagined that Ptolemy, banished by his mother Cleopatra, is living in Cyprus disguised as a simple shepherd under the name of Osmin, and that his wife Seleuce, taken from him and sent by Cleopatra to the Syrian tyrant Tryphon, has been shipwrecked and presumed drowned; she has, however, been saved and, knowing Ptolemy to be in Cyprus, has gone there to search for him disguised as a shepherdess called Delia. Meanwhile Cleopatra has sent her other son, Alexander, to Cyprus with a powerful army in order to lay hands on Ptolemy, but Alexander's intention is to spare his brother and restore the crown to him. It is further imagined that Araspe, reigning in Cyprus and living in a delightful coastal villa with his sister Elisa, has fallen in love with 'Delia' (Seleuce) and Elisa with 'Osmin' (Ptolemy), and finally that Dorisbe, daughter of Isauro, Prince of Tyre, at one time loved by Araspe but now abandoned by him, is also living there as a *finta giardiniera* known as Clori.[12]

The scene is thus set for the various intrigues, deceptions and misunderstandings that are the common currency of late Baroque opera plots.

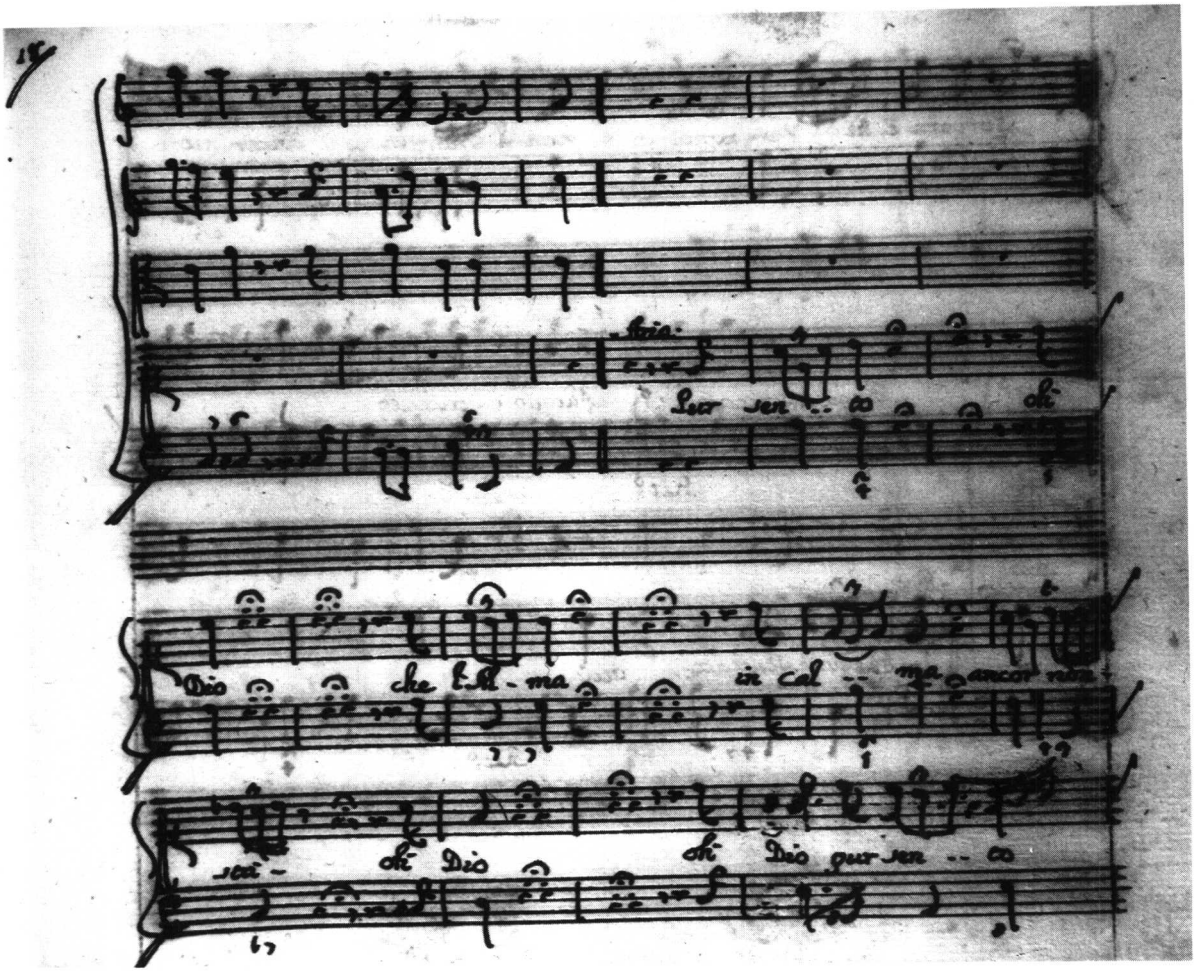
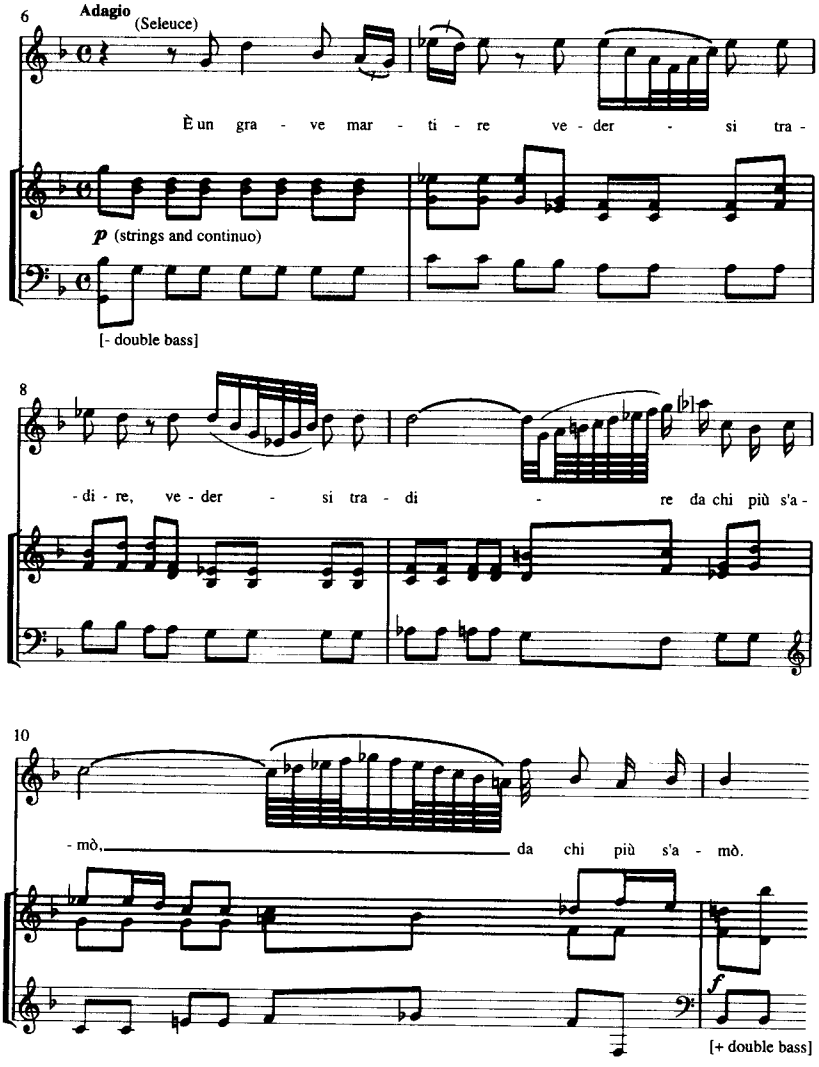


Fig. 2 Extract from the aria 'Pur sento (oh Dio)' in Act 2 of Scarlatti's *Tolomeo et Alessandro* (from the score at Belton House, Lincolnshire, now owned by the National Trust).

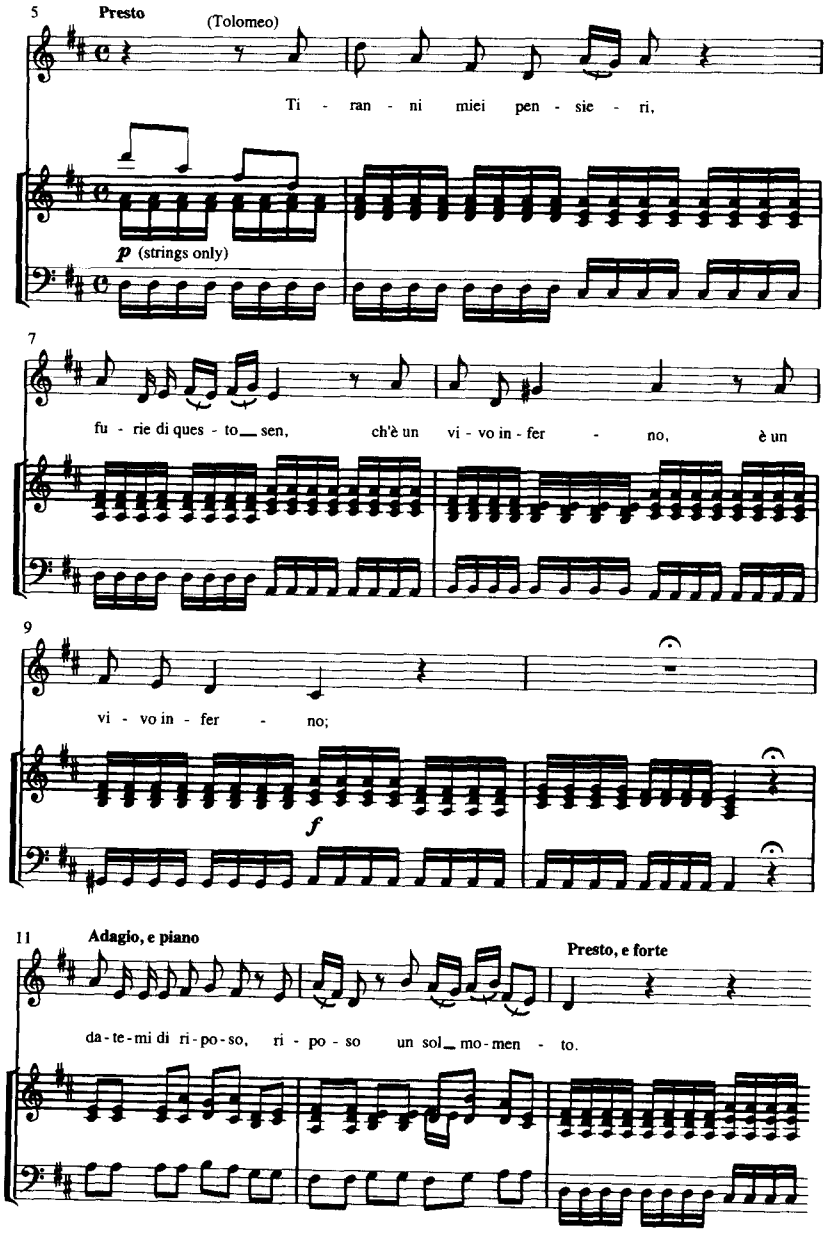
Scarlatti's setting begins with one of the finest of all his overtures,[13] a three-movement sinfonia in B flat for oboe and strings in which the opening Presto is a *moto perpetuo* of scurrying semiquavers and sudden dynamic changes that puts one in mind of Mendelssohn. The first act serves mainly to introduce the characters and to define their situations; only at the very end of the act is the action developed beyond this, when Seleuce recognizes her sleeping husband but is immediately disturbed by the jealous Araspe. In his brief comments on this act Ralph Kirkpatrick considered the first two arias, both sung by Ptolemy, to be 'in a fine grand tragic style quite worthy of Juvarra's scenery'.[14] They do indeed paint the tender and resolute aspects of the hero's character superbly well. 'Rendimi, o crudo fato' is one of several arias in which Scarlatti smoothes the rigid corners of the conventional da capo structure so that the music flows

with unbroken continuity;[15] and 'Cielo ingiusto potrai fulminarmi' derives tremendous energy from the unison string phrases, with their dotted rhythms and displaced accents, that punctuate the vocal line. But no less representative of Scarlatti at his expressive best is 'È un grave martire', in which Seleuce sympathizes with Dorisbe's plight while hinting at her own graver sufferings. The vocal writing here [Ex. 1] gives some idea of the talents of one of Maria Casimira's *cantarine*, Maria Giusti, who sang the part in the early performances. In another aria characteristic of the composer (and with parallels in some of his keyboard sonatas) Ptolemy struggles with the impossibility of taking revenge on his own mother and brother for the presumed death of his wife.

Ex. 1 Aria 'È un grave martire'



Ex. 2 Aria 'Tiranni miei pensieri'



The antitheses in the verse are reinforced in the music by sudden and violent changes of tempo, dynamics and texture [Ex. 2]: there are no fewer than nine switches between *presto e forte* and *adagio e piano* during the course of the aria.

Similar contrasts, with as many oscillations of tempo and dynamics, occur in Dorisbe's Act 2 aria, 'Vorrei vendicarmi . . .' (*allegro e forte*) '. . . ma solo con l'armi che

porge l'amor' (*adagio e piano*). The first part of the act is set in the countryside near the 'delightful villa' of Araspe and Elisa; the tranquil breezes and the play of the waves are immediately conjured up in the accompaniment, for two recorders and strings, to Alexander's 'Sempre qui chiara'. In the action that follows Ptolemy and Seleuce reveal their true identities to Elisa and Dorisbe respectively, but chance prevents their recognizing each other until the very end of the act, when they are again immediately separated by the jealous Araspe. They take leave of each other in a poignantly expressive duet, 'Empia man ci divide'. Their parting, they believe, is for ever, and Scarlatti's music, permeated by a simple stepwise descent through the interval of a fifth, certainly persuades us that it may be so.

Among the other fine numbers in this act perhaps the most strikingly original is Alexander's aria 'Pur sento (oh Dio)', in which long and frequent rests convey his hesitancy as his conscience struggles between a resolve to spare his brother Ptolemy and his feelings for Ptolemy's lover, Elisa, who has urged him to fratricide (see Fig. 2). What appear to be pause signs over the rests here should more likely be understood as indicating that embellishments and other additions to the music are not to be made.[16]

Events move swiftly in the final act when Araspe and his sister Elisa scheme against Ptolemy and Seleuce (and against each other) to secure their desires. Elisa is ruthless in her pursuit of Ptolemy's love or, failing that, his death. She expresses her feelings in an aria, 'Voglio amore, o pur vendetta', in which Scarlatti again underlines the verbal antitheses, this time not only with changes of tempo and dynamics but also with alternations of metre and instrumentation: a solo flute for expressions of love, oboe and violins for those of vengeance. A dramatic climax, eliciting from Scarlatti the only passages of accompanied recitative in the opera, is reached when Ptolemy knowingly drinks from a poisoned draught prepared by Dorisbe on Araspe's orders. The key (F minor), the tempo (Adagio), the tritones of the melodic line and the suspensions in the measured accompaniment (recalling Seleuce's 'È un grave martire' in Act 1; see Ex. 2) all serve to heighten the portrayal of Ptolemy's despair at this point [Ex. 3]. Although not virgolated in the printed libretto, a further aria for Ptolemy on the point of death was not set by Scarlatti. Perhaps he felt that 'Stille amare' had said it all, and that it was more convincing to have Ptolemy expire at the end of his *stromentato* recitative where, when the music moves to the dark key of E flat minor, the strings are marked 'smorzino'.

It must have come as no surprise to Scarlatti's audiences that Ptolemy is not, in fact, dead: Dorisbe chose from the garden a plant which would merely send him into a deathlike sleep, from which he now awakes. The dénouements of Baroque opera plots are rarely convincing, and this one is no exception to that. Tyranny must give way to acceptance, enmity to reconciliation, distrust to forgiveness. Ptolemy and Seleuce are