

## 5. Haydn's *Arianna a Naxos* and the Search for an Affective Practice<sup>1</sup>

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How is it possible for performers of late eighteenth-century vocal repertoire to encourage a strong degree of affective identification in their audience? And how can performers do this without discarding historically informed performance practices, which preserve the intimate connection, implied in the compositions and in contemporary reports, between word, music, and performing body? As a performing musician and artistic researcher I am interested in finding ways of connecting historical and analytical insights with today's practices of artistic creation and performance, and ways of bringing the eighteenth-century world of embodied performance into creative dialogue with today's social and existential issues.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter provides an account of the short dramatic cantata *Arianna a Naxos*<sup>3</sup> by Joseph Haydn (1732–1809), from its conception and composition to its first performances by five of its original singers. My aim is to find out how this information might support performative flexibility, and how such flexibility might have been expressed at the time. I will consider the libretto, the music, and how they correspond with each other, and ask what kind of composition a cantata like *Arianna* was thought to be. I conclude with a new set of questions, that lead beyond the scope of this chapter. The questions suggest a direction for future research towards an affective practice for the performance of late eighteenth-century vocal music: a concern that lies at the heart of the Performing Premodernity research project.

1. Earlier versions of sections of this chapter have been presented at the following conferences: the Transnational Opera Studies Conference, Tosc@Bologna, in 2015; the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR), 'Theatre and Democracy', Hyderabad in 2015; 'Performance Analysis: A Bridge between Theory and Interpretation', Porto in 2016; 'Unstable Geographies, Multiple Theatricalities', IFTR, São Paulo in 2017; and 'Aesthetics in Late Eighteenth-Century Theatre: Living, Performing, Experiencing the Enlightenment', the concluding conference of Performing Premodernity, Stockholm University in 2018. I am grateful for the generous feedback I received on each occasion, especially from Dr János Malina.

I also acknowledge the stimulus to further research I received from reading Richard Wigmore's short but richly informative programme note (see [https://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dw.asp?dc=W6821\\_67174](https://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dw.asp?dc=W6821_67174), accessed 12 January 2023).

2. See Mieke Bal's fifth principle in 'Five Principles of Cultural Analysis' (n.d.): <https://vimeo.com/165822613> (accessed 3 February 2022).

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3. *Arianna a Naxos*, HXXVib:2. Julian Rushton, 'Viennese Amateur or London Professional? A Reconsideration of Haydn's Tragic Cantata *Arianna a Naxos*', in *Music in Eighteenth-Century Austria*, ed. David Wyn Jones (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 232–245. This is the only substantial study which places *Arianna* in the overall context of Haydn's output, presents the surviving evidence surrounding the autograph and first editions, and provides an analysis of the music. Rushton does not discuss in detail the performance of the cantata in relation to its early singers.

4. For the origin of these three expressions, see footnotes 25, 6, and 30 respectively.

5. For details of Haydn's employment at Eszterháza, and his relations with Porpora, see James Webster, 'Haydn, (Franz) Joseph', Section 3: 'Esterházy Court, 1761–90', and Section 2: 'Vienna: c1750–61' respectively, in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 25 January 2023).

6. Charles Burney, *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period* [London, 1776–1789], ed. Frank Mercer, 2 vols. (London, 1935, repr. 1957), quoted in Ian Woodfield, *Salomon and the Burneys: Private Patronage and a Public Career* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), 62.

7. The autograph was sold in 1872 and cannot be traced. See Rushton, 'Viennese Amateur', 233n5.

8. The full title is *Arianna a Naxos Cantata a Voce Sola con accompagnamento del Clavicembalo o Forte-Piano*.

9. Bland had visited Haydn in Vienna in 1789. See Ian Woodfield, 'John Bland: London Retailer of the Music of Haydn and Mozart', *Music and Letters* 81 (2000), 210–244: 223. His edition was published in June 1791.

### 'My favourite *Arianna*', 'a little drama entire' that 'touched and dissolved'<sup>4</sup>

Although better known for his many symphonies and string quartets today, Haydn in fact composed eighteen or more operas, as well as Masses and other sacred vocal music. While in the employ of Prince Nikolaus Esterházy (1714–1790) he prepared on average around eighty-five opera performances a year for the Castle Theatre in Eszterháza during the period 1776–1790. He was an experienced vocal coach, a skill he developed while a pupil of, and accompanist for, one of the most famous singing teachers of the day, Nicola Porpora (1686–1768).<sup>5</sup>

In the words of Charles Burney (1726–1814), a cantata 'contains a little drama entire, having a beginning, a middle, and an end, in which the charms of poetry are united with those of Music, and the mind is amused while the ear is gratified'.<sup>6</sup> Haydn's *Arianna a Naxos* is one such. It concentrates on a single episode in the well-known mythical story of the Cretan princess Ariadne: the moment when she awakes blissfully on the shore of the island of Naxos, expecting to see her lover Theseus whom she had helped slay the Minotaur, but instead finding he has left her and sailed away on his next adventure. When I first encountered *Arianna*, I was immediately captivated by the power and intensity of its musical conception and the simplicity and immediacy of its text.

The autograph is lost, but evidence suggests that the cantata was written in Vienna in 1789.<sup>7</sup> It was printed by Haydn's Viennese publisher, Artaria, in August 1790.<sup>8</sup> A London edition was published the following year by John Bland, under Haydn's supervision, during his first trip to London.<sup>9</sup> *Arianna* was then published many more times throughout Europe during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>10</sup>

Haydn provided the cantata with an accompaniment, for either harpsichord or fortepiano, although its character suggests that it was conceived for the sonorities of the piano. There is evidence that he planned to orchestrate the accompaniment, but of the extant orchestral versions, none is by Haydn.<sup>11</sup>

For the final concert of his second stay in London (1795) Haydn wrote another solo cantata, this time with orchestra, the *Scena di Berenice*, which again sets a text centring on the despair of a woman who was unlucky in love.<sup>12</sup> The two pieces have much in common, not least furious final movements in F minor.

It is regrettable that more is not known about the origins of the anonymous libretto, nor how Haydn came across it.<sup>13</sup> He was well acquainted with the legend of Ariadne, a fact borne out by his ownership of an edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in Latin and German.<sup>14</sup> The Italian libretto he used strips the mythical story of much of its detail, preserving just one character, one place, and one continuous episode. Those already familiar with the story could place it in its classical context. Haydn's exploration of emotion in the music, though, created a new context for the affective meaning of the story.

Another famous setting of Ariadne's lament is Claudio Monteverdi's 1608 *Lamento di Arianna*. Susanne G. Cusick claims that it demonstrates Monteverdi's sensitivity to the plight of women, but – ultimately – reveals his inability to escape from the patriarchal gaze.<sup>15</sup> Almost two hundred years later, at a time when Enlightenment values were leading inexorably towards the emancipation of women, *Arianna* provides a further example of a (male) composer's view of Ariadne. Haydn's life spans a period in which the roles of both women and musicians were undergoing fundamental change. Haydn's remarkable social journey took him from liveried servant to touring international superstar. He knew from personal experience the difference between composing what would please others (because he had to) and composing what would please others (because he wanted to). *Arianna* was written at a stage in his career when he was free from the exigencies of a commission, and able to set texts that interested him. This raises several questions: how and why was Haydn engaged by the text of *Arianna*? How far does he go to enable an audience to enter the mind and emotions of its sole protagonist, and empathise with her plight? And how might the cantata be performed today to elicit these effects?

10. Later editions in chronological order include: Pierre Jean Porro (Paris, 1792); Imbault (Paris, 1794); Breitkopf & Härtel (Leipzig, 1799), in a volume also containing Haydn, XV *Airs et Chansons*; August[e] Le Duc (Paris, 1807), with text in both Italian and French; R. Birchall (London, 1811), in Italian; an anonymously arranged orchestral version for strings, woodwind, and horns published by Simrock (Bonn, 1811), with text in both Italian and German; Ricordi (Milan, ca.1820); Veuve Launer (Paris, 1840); R. Mills (London, 1850); G. Flaxland (Paris, 1865); Jouve (Paris, n.d.); Hoffmeister & Kuhnel (Leipzig, n.d.); Breitkopf & Härtel (Leipzig, n.d.).

11. In an earlier letter to Bland dated 2 April 1790 (cited by Marianne Helms in the preface to the Henle *Urtext* edition of the cantata published in 1990) Haydn promised to orchestrate the cantata. For the letter in its entirety, see H. C. Robbins Landon (ed.), *Haydn schreibt Briefe* (Vienna: Doblinger, 1993), 30–31. Early orchestrations include that by Sigismund von Neukomm (1778–1858), who had been a student of both Joseph Haydn and his younger brother Michael. Neukomm's orchestral transcription, *Arianna a Naxos Cantata a Voce sola, con accompagnamento de Clavicembalo composta dal Sign: Giuseppe Haydn accomodata per l'orchestra dal suo discepolo Sigismundo Neukomm* (1808), was, according to Rudolph Angermüller, authorised by Haydn; see Rudolph Angermüller, 'Neukomm, Sigismund Ritter von', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 25 January 2023). In 'Arianna travestita: Haydn's Kantate Arianna a Naxos in geistlichem Gewand', in *Haydn-Studien* 7 (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1998), 384–397: 397, Berthold Over

suggests that the version with a Latin text, performed at the Ospedale dei Mendicanti in Venice in 1792, was orchestrated by Simon Mayr (1763–1845). Over also mentions the existence of a string quartet version made by Giuseppe Sigismondo (1739–1826) in Naples in 1798. More recently a set of parts for strings has been discovered in the library of the Ospedale and published online: [https://imslp.org/wiki/Arianna\\_a\\_Naxos%2C\\_Hob.XXVlb:2\\_\(Haydn%2C\\_Joseph\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Arianna_a_Naxos%2C_Hob.XXVlb:2_(Haydn%2C_Joseph)) (accessed 3 February 2022).

12. Hob XXIVa:10. Unlike the stand-alone text for *Arianna*, the text for this aria is taken from act 3, scene 9 of Metastasio's popular libretto *Antigono* from 1744.

13. Over, 'Arianna travestita', 397, briefly discusses the possibility that it was written by Giuseppe Maria Foppa (1760–1845).

14. See Pierpaolo Polzonetti, 'Haydn and the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid', in *Engaging Haydn: Culture, Context, and Criticism*, ed. Mary Hunter and Richard Will (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 211–239: 216, especially footnotes 12 and 19. Polzonetti develops the thesis that Haydn's practice of thematic transformation is closely related to Ovid's concept of metamorphosis. On pp. 226–227 he writes: 'In the *Metamorphoses* both the themes and the underlying large-scale form [of symphony no. 103 in E-flat major], with its strategic shifts of voice, are organised in such a way that a symphonist like Haydn and his listeners would have been able to walk through Ovid's narrative labyrinth secured to a sort of Ariadne's thread'. Haydn may also have known the German poem *Ariadne auf Naxos*, written by Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg (1737–1823) in 1765,

## Music or theatre?

Before discussing these questions I need to take up a foundational issue is a cantata, as described by Burney, something to listen to only, or is it also to be watched? Burney terms a cantata 'a little drama entire' in which 'the mind is amused while the ear is gratified'. For the eighteenth-century listener for whom music could only be performed live, there was no option but to see a performance. In his *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), Dr Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) defines drama as 'A poem accommodated to action; a poem in which the action is not *related*, but *represented*; and in which therefore such rules are to be observed as make the representation probable'.<sup>16</sup> I suggest therefore that the visual aspect is implicit in Burney's description. This implication is also contained in the text describing the setting, published in the preface to both the anonymous libretto and Bland's London edition:<sup>17</sup>

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L' Azione si rappresenta in una spiaggia di mare circondata da scogli. Si vede la nave di Teseo che a vele spiegate s'allontana dall' Isola, ed Ariana che dorme. Ella indi v'è risvegliandosi a poco a poco.

The action takes place on a seashore, surrounded by rocks. We see Theseus' ship in full sail moving away from the isle, and Ariadne, who is asleep. She then slowly wakes up.

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While it is impossible to retrieve moving images or sound recordings from the eighteenth century, surviving examples or reconstructions of Baroque theatre machinery demonstrate that rolling waves, ships in full sail, and floating clouds, enlivened by the action on stage, create impressions reminiscent of the early forerunners of today's motion pictures. Thomas Tolley assembles persuasive evidence that Haydn had developed an interest in the visual aspects of musical performance, which was no doubt based on his extensive experience of musical theatre while living at Eszterháza, and working in the Castle Theatre (1768–1790).<sup>18</sup> We know that he was greatly excited

to see an *Eidophusikon* in London in 1794.<sup>19</sup> Invented by Philip James de Loutherbourg in 1781 and adapted to the presentation of *pièces à machines*, the *Eidophusikon* was essentially a miniature theatre. In a contemporary depiction of the London *Eidophusikon*, a hammerklavier is clearly visible on one side.<sup>20</sup> The setup resembles the silent movies of a later generation, and suggests one reason why Haydn prefaced the cantata with the text mentioning a backdrop with action: 'We see Theseus' ship in full sail moving away from the isle'.

The material documentation surrounding eighteenth-century theatrical performances is considerable. In addition to theatres (especially those with preserved stage sets), and other performing spaces, it includes images of stage productions, scores, and libretti containing stage directions, a large number of other written sources (both prescriptive and descriptive) such as instruction books and reviews, letters, and diaries, as well as costumes and costume sketches. Even if contemporary reports distinguish between the immaterial (playing, singing, and acting), and the material (costumes, lighting, stage décor, and machinery), the eighteenth-century theatre audience would have experienced a multimedia performance in which there was no disconnection between these elements. They co-existed in a symbiotic relationship, creating a complex whole. Words and music in particular were bound in an indissoluble unity, constantly reactualised in the moment of performance through the acting of the singers. To learn how any individual element functioned, it has to be considered in relation to the others; only then does the whole 'work' affectively.

This is, however, only one way of thinking about the relationship between the visual and the aural, the material and the immaterial. In the abstract of a section on Historically Informed Performance (HIP) in *The Oxford Handbook of Opera* (2014) Mary Hunter argues the following:

[T]he concept of a 'historically informed performance' is necessarily different for opera from what it is for instrumental music. Unlike most instrumental music, opera tells a more or less historically grounded story and represents a more or less historically specific time and place, where there are modern human beings in character

which was set as a chamber cantata by Johann Adolf Scheibe, and later adapted by Johann Christian Brandes for Georg Benda's melodrama *Ariadne auf Naxos, ein Duo Drama* (LorB 476), first performed on 27 January 1775 in Gotha (Schloss Friedenstein).

15. Susanne G. Cusick, "'There Was Not One Lady Who Failed to Shed a Tear": Arianna's Lament and the Construction of Modern Womanhood', *Early Music* 22, no. 1 (February 1994), 21–44.

16. Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 2 vols. (London: Knapton, Longman, Hitch, and Hawes; Millar, Dodsley, 1755). My italics.

17. The libretto (*ARIANA A NAXOS CANTATA A VOCE SOLA posta in musica Dal. Sig. Maestro Giuseppe Haydn*) in the library of the Florence Conservatorio Statale di Musica 'Luigi Cherubini' is reproduced in Over, 'Arianna travestita', 392.

18. See Thomas Tolley, *Painting the Cannon's Roar: Music, the Visual Arts and the Rise of an Attentive Public in the Age of Haydn* (Aldershot and Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2001).

19. Tolley, *Painting the Cannon's Roar*, 294. For a full description of the *Eidophusikon* see chapter XXI, 'De Loutherbourg's *Eidophusikon*', in Ephraim Hardcastle, *Wine and Walnuts; or, After Dinner Chit-Chat* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1823), 284–290.

20. For a reproduction, see Tolley, *Painting the Cannon's Roar*, Fig. 19.

on the stage, and the sympathies of the audience need to be actively engaged if the performance is to be successful. Because of these parameters, the question of historicity in opera performance can only usefully be examined by taking the visual (including gestural), sonic, and ideological domains as separate systems.<sup>21</sup>

This is based on the notion that it is possible to disconnect the ‘visual (including gestural), sonic and ideological domains’ and consider them as ‘separate systems’. She continues:

The combination of rigorously researched playing on historical instruments and strikingly modern and imaginative – and often highly physical – staging is, as of this writing, increasingly normal [...]. *The arguments for this juxtaposition of historicities are a rich mixture of commercial realism, historical justification, and ‘timeless’ performative contextualizing.*<sup>22</sup>

While agreeing that ‘the sympathies of the audience need to be actively engaged’, I would argue that Hunter’s premise has more to do with the way in which early opera culture has developed over the last fifty years than with her understanding of historically informed early opera performance. She implies that it is not only possible (which it certainly is) but also desirable (which it may not be) to separate the visual, the sonic, and the ideological. As a performer, I would argue the contrary, that these three domains are intimately connected: specifically, that it is the fundamental interdependency of word and music that bridges them, and renders them inseparable. Divorcing the sonic from the visual and the ideological leads to the following negative consequences:

1. The interpretation of the music would no longer be intimately connected with the action; its practical relevance for the artists on stage may even be reduced to basic questions of tempo and dynamics.
2. The action on stage would no longer necessarily take account of the specificities of musical dramaturgy.

21. Mary Hunter, ‘Historically Informed Performance’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Opera*, ed. Helen M. Greenwald (Oxford Handbooks Online), 606–626.

22. Hunter, ‘Historically Informed Performance’, 615. My italics.

It could be argued that, since the words are sung, the resulting vocal line itself should primarily be considered as part of the music. In

Hunter's terms the ideological domain would then be located in the acting of the singers, in the staging, and in the scenography. The acting of the singers, however, cannot but influence the character of the music, in terms of both outward vocal declamation and inner psychological motivation, which together affect the choice of dynamic and dramatic nuance, musical tempo and timing, etc. This means that the elastic connection between word and music also links the word with the body, via action, gesture, and movement. Ultimate decisions about tempo, dynamic, and character have to be made in the very moment the singer acts and the instrumentalists play, in the presence of an audience.

Performing early opera will always involve the juxtaposition of historicities, such as accepting the fact that a story may originate from one period of history, be set to music in a second, and performed in a third. Reflecting on twenty seasons working at Drottningholm, I realise that I was disturbed, in certain productions, by something else: a complex disjunction of temporalities, and this is more difficult to negotiate. What happens if today a stage action or musical interpretation negatively influences the original entwinement of word and music? To avoid this, the *sonic* must include both word and music, the *visual* (including the *gestural*) both the staged action and the scenography, and the *ideological* all of the above, plus contextual insights gained from the time and circumstances of the original composition. Even when performing in an eighteenth-century theatre such as Drottningholm there is no reason, however, why a related contemporary issue should not influence one or more of these domains. In this case the integration of word and music by the performers would take account of both the original ideology and today's social and existential issues. Is this perhaps what Hunter means by a "timeless" performative contextualizing? If so, the juxtaposition of historicities should result in *social* (rather than 'commercial') realism, require historical *knowledge* (rather than 'justification'), and performative contextualising (without the descriptor 'timeless').

Might this be possible through the flexibility of historically informed performance practices, which would become a means

of enabling performances of early vocal music (both on stage and in concert) to be tuned to today as well as to the past? This is not primarily a question of whether performers of early vocal music have a developed sense of engagement with contemporary issues. Rather it is to ask how these can be brought to the fore in a 'liminal' rehearsal space, where performance preparation would involve an examination of both the words of the libretto in their original ideological context, and the use of historically informed performance practices (musical and theatrical) to emphasise and communicate them today. Might it be possible to develop a way of working with this flexible interdependency of word and music to create a performative praxis where the jarring juxtaposition of historicities, enriched by performative action, powerfully communicates with today's audiences?

I now turn to the story of *Arianna*, as told in the anonymous libretto, and the historical sources surrounding some of the early performances of the cantata.

### **The story: Haydn's starting point**

Ariadne is asleep on the shore. In the initial recitative (which is in the style of an *accompagnato*) she wakes up, dreamily believing that her lover Theseus is still by her side. Dawn has just broken. Noticing that Theseus is not there, Ariadne assumes that he has gone hunting. Her thoughts go back to her beautiful surroundings, but she is impatient for Theseus to return, and she calls for him. In an aria ('Dove sei, mio bel tesoro') Ariadne sings of her loneliness and of the strength of her love, declaring that she will die if Theseus does not come back. She prays to the gods to bring him back to her. At the end of the aria the music seems to lose its way before merging with the opening of the next recitative which mixes *accompagnato* and *semplice* styles. Ariadne realises that a lonely echo is the only response to her cries. She decides to go and look for Theseus, and, after climbing some rocks, sees him on the prow of a Greek ship far away at sea. Suddenly everything is clear: he has betrayed her and

will never return. She screams in despair that the gods are unjust if they don't punish him. She almost faints, and in the first part of the next aria ('Ah che morir vorrei') declares that she wants to die, asking why destiny is so cruel. In the second part of the aria ('Misera abbandonata') she erupts into a furious rage, and as the music increases in tempo she curses Theseus violently for his unfaithfulness. Blissful happiness turned to anger, outrage, and suicidal despair: nothing but death awaits her.

This short episode in the life of Ariadne has universal resonance. Ariadne and Theseus are Everywoman and Everyman disguised in the trappings of myth. Their breakup could easily take place today: Ariadne waking up in a luxury penthouse, looking out of the floor-to-ceiling window only to see Theseus leaving in his Porsche. Or perhaps the story is told against the backdrop of today's horrendous refugee situation in the Eastern Mediterranean. It is a story with gender stereotypes that could easily be altered.

At the end of the eighteenth century, Haydn's musical telling of the story of Ariadne was considered particularly powerful, even though it was located in classical Antiquity, told in eighteenth-century formal Italian, sung by a voice trained in European classical vocal techniques, and accompanied by a solo hammerklavier. Today it still seems to have the potential to move an audience deeply.

## Five early Ariadnes: Haydn's singers

### 1. Fräulein Peperl, the teenage amateur

*Arianna* is mentioned several times in Haydn's letters to Marianne von Genzinger (1754–1793), a Viennese amateur pianist, who became a close friend. Haydn had met her in 1789, and on 9 February 1790 he wrote to her from Eszterháza:<sup>23</sup>

My good friend Fräulein Peperl will (I hope) be reminded of her teacher by singing the Cantata frequently; she should remember to have a distinct articulation and a correct vocal production, for it would be a crime if so beautiful a voice were to remain hidden in

23. Haydn was in the employ of the Esterházy family from 1761 until his death, and he lived for much of the time at one of their palaces, either Schloss Esterházy in Eisenstadt, or the newer palace Eszterháza in Fertőd (a name invented in the mid-twentieth century), situated in the countryside, ninety kilometres from Vienna.

her breast; so therefore I ask her to smile frequently, lest I be disappointed in her.<sup>24</sup>

The sixteen-year-old Fräulein Peperl, whose real name was Josepha (1774–after 1807), was Marianne’s elder daughter, one of Haydn’s pupils, and a gifted young singer. Haydn again mentioned her singing the cantata in a letter written on 14 March: ‘That my favourite *Arianna* has been successful at Schottenhof is delightful news to me, but I recommend Fraulein Peperl to articulate the words clearly, especially “chi tanto amai”’.<sup>25</sup> The Schottenhof was the family residence of the eight von Genzingers: Marianne, her husband Peter Leopold (1737–1797, one of Prince Nikolaus Esterházy’s physicians), and their six children. Haydn was a regular guest there. Despite its musical complexity, *Arianna* has a limited vocal range (just an octave and a fifth), which suits a young voice in training. One can imagine the many hours’ work this cantata would have entailed, and the great sense of achievement Josepha would have felt at mastering it, almost as if it were a rite of passage into the world of more demanding opera arias. We cannot know why Haydn mentions the words ‘Chi tanto amai’ (‘whom I loved so much’); perhaps because they are among the most frequently and expressively repeated words of the cantata’s final movement, and for this reason needed to be carefully crafted, and maybe varied at each repetition.

Earlier in the letter of 9 February Haydn had written:

Well! here I sit in my wilderness; forsaken, like some poor orphan, almost without human society; melancholy, dwelling on the memory of past glorious days. Yes; past, alas! And who can tell when these happy hours may return? those charming meetings? where the whole circle has but one heart and one soul – all those delightful musical evenings, which can only be remembered, and not described. Where are all those inspired moments? All gone – and gone for long.<sup>26</sup>

Could it be that Haydn, back at Eszterháza, unhappy in his marriage, felt abandoned, like Ariadne? He who enjoyed the society

24. Letter from Haydn to Marianne von Genzinger, 9 February 1790. English translation based on that given in J. Cuthbert Hadden’s biography *Haydn* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1902), 97. For the original German, see Robbins Landon, *Haydn schreibt Briefe*, 26–27.

25. Letter from Haydn to Marianne von Genzinger, 14 March 1790. English translation based on that in Hadden, *Haydn*, 99. For the original German, see Robbins Landon, *Haydn schreibt Briefe*, 28–29.

26. See note 24 above.

of the von Genzinger household so much, whose correspondence with Marianne suggests that he found her company especially congenial?<sup>27</sup>

It is not known whether Haydn wrote *Arianna* specifically for Josepha von Genzinger. It has been suggested that he wrote it for Bianca Sacchetti, the Venetian contralto, for whom the range and tessitura would have been particularly suitable.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps he had no specific singer in mind, and was inspired to compose the cantata by the qualities of the story encapsulated in the anonymous libretto, and its potential to move an audience.

## 2. Gasparo Pacchierotti, the middle-aged castrato

In December 1790, Haydn travelled to London, taking with him the still un-orchestrated *Arianna*.<sup>29</sup> Extensive reports of public and semi-public performances reveal that the cantata was a great success. The first report was published in the *Morning Chronicle* of Wednesday 23 February 1791. It gives a full account of an event that had taken place five days earlier, on 18 February, an occasion that seems to have been designed as a kind of teaser to promote a forthcoming concert at the Pantheon:

The Musical World is at this moment enraptured with a Composition which HAYDN has brought forth, and which has produced effects bordering on all that the Poets used to feign of the ancient lyre. Nothing is talked of – nothing sought after but HAYDN'S Cantata – or as it is called in the Italian School – his Scena.

This Scena was first brought out at the Ladies' Concert on Friday night, which, as we have said, was at Mrs BLAIR'S, in Portland Place – It is written for the Harpsichord or Harp only without any other accompaniment – and it was performed by HAYDN himself, and sung by PACCHIEROTTI.

It abounds with such variety of dramatic modulations – and is so exquisitely captivating in its larmoyant passages, that it touched and dissolved the audience. They speak of it with rapturous recollection, and HAYDN'S Cantata will accordingly be the musical desideratum for the winter.<sup>30</sup>

27. Haydn's letters to Marianne contain a rich source of information about his life and activities from 1790 until her untimely death in January 1793 at the age of thirty-eight.

28. See section 3 'Bianca Sacchetti, the invisible Prioress' below.

29. See note 11 above.

30. 'Haydn's Cantata', *Morning Chronicle* (London), issue 6775, 23 February 1791. Mary Blair (1749–1827) was a society hostess; her non-conformist husband, Alexander, was a wealthy merchant from Birmingham.

This description is amplified a few days later, on 26 February, after the concert at the Pantheon:

We have already made some mention of this very surprising novelty in Musical composition [...]. The words are happily expressive. The accompaniment on the *Piano Forte*, without any other instrumental parts, is undescribably [*sic*] charming – and the modulation is so deep and scientific, so varied and agitating – that the company was thrown into ecstasies. – Every fibre was touched by the captivating energies of the passion, and PACCHIEROTTI never, in his most brilliant age, was more successful.<sup>31</sup>

Several of the words and phrases used by the *Morning Chronicle* deserve further consideration as their meanings differ from modern usage. Johnson's *Dictionary* gives the following definitions:

- *To feign*. The first definition is 'To invent', citing Ben Jonson's *Discoveries Made Upon Men and Matter and some Poems* (published posthumously in 1640). For clarity's sake I have included the sentence prior to the one cited by Dr Johnson:

[A poem, as I have told you, is the work of the poet, the end and fruit of his labour and study. Poesy is his skill or craft of making; the very fiction itself, the reason or form of the work.] And these three voices differ, as the thing done, the doing, and the doer; the thing feigned, the feigning, and the feigner; so the poem, the poesy, and the poet.

- *Lyre*. 'A harp; a musical instrument to which poetry is, by poetical writers, supposed to be sung'.
- *Charming*. 'Pleasing in the highest degree'.
- *Modulation*. 'Sound modulated [*sic*]. Agreeable harmony'.
- *Scientific*. 'Producing demonstrative knowledge; producing certainty'.
- *Ecstasy*. The first definition is 'Any passion by which the thoughts are absorbed, and in which the mind is for a time lost'.

31. 'Haydn's Cantata', *Morning Chronicle* (London), issue 6778, 26 February 1791.

Likening the effects of *Arianna* to those engendered by the classical poets (when they feigned on their ancient lyres), even allowing for the evident hyperbole of the language, is to place the performance of the cantata by Pacchierotti and Haydn on the borders of myth. Moreover, to link Haydn's choice of harmonies with profound scientific knowledge which at the same time caused the company to lose their minds, is to suggest that the myth had come true. The passion of Pacchierotti's singing was undoubtedly the catalyst.

The Pantheon was a recently opened opera house, converted from the Pantheon Exhibition Hall on Oxford Street. It was one of the most fashionable locations in London, described by Richard, Earl of Mount Edgumbe (1764–1839) as 'one of the prettiest, and by far the most genteel and comfortable theatre I ever saw, of a moderate size and excellent shape, and admirably adapted both for seeing and hearing'.<sup>32</sup> The stage was not large, although the 'glamorous but [...] very small'<sup>33</sup> auditorium seated over 1200. There must have been considerable excitement that *Arianna a Naxos* was to be performed by two of Europe's greatest musical stars, Haydn at the hammerklavier, and his new colleague, the Italian mezzosoprano Gasparo Pacchierotti (1740–1821) (Fig. 1), one of the greatest of all the castrati. Both were experienced gentlemen performers in their fifties. I have not come across any evidence that the stage setting described in the Bland edition was ever created in the Pantheon, or anywhere else, but it would have been perfectly possible to do so. The description of the locus of the 'action' is nonetheless given form and character by Haydn's music, which conjures up its every detail.

Pacchierotti's singing style was documented by many contemporaries, including Mount Edgumbe:

Pacchierotti's voice was an extensive soprano, full and sweet in the highest degree; his powers of execution were great, but he had far too good taste and too good sense to make a display of them [...], conscious that the chief delight of singing [...] lay in touching

32. Richard, Earl of Mount Edgumbe, *Musical Reminiscences, Containing an Account of the Italian Opera in England from 1773*, fourth edition (London: J. Andrews, 1834), 67. For a full discussion of the architecture and history of the Pantheon, see Curtis Price, Judith Milhous, and Robert D. Hume, 'A Plan of the Pantheon Opera House (1790–92)', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3, no. 3 (November 1991), 213–246.

33. Price, Milhous, and Hume, 'A Plan of the Pantheon Opera House', 244.



**Figure 1.** Unknown painter: Gasparo Pacchierotti. Oil on canvas, 1790s.  
License: CC-PD.

expression and exquisite pathos. Yet he was so thorough a musician that [...] he could sing [...] all songs of the most opposite characters, not merely with the facility and correctness which a complete knowledge of music must give, but entering at once into the views of the composer, and giving them all the appropriate spirit and expression. Such was his genius in his embellishments and cadences, that their variety was inexhaustible. [...] As an actor, with many disadvantages of person, for he was tall and awkward in his figure, and his features were plain, he was nevertheless forcible and impressive: for he felt warmly, had excellent judgment, and was an enthusiast in his profession. His recitative was inimitably fine, so that even those who did not understand the language could not fail to comprehend, from his countenance, voice, and action, every sentiment he expressed. [...] I have often seen his auditors, even those the least musical, moved to tears while he was singing. [...] I have more than once heard him sing a cantata of Haydn's, called *Arianna a Naxos*, composed for a single voice, with only a piano-forte accompaniment, and that was played by Haydn himself; it is needless to say the performance was perfect.<sup>34</sup>

Charles Burney sent a copy of the cantata to his daughter Susan (1755–1800), who had extensive experience of London musical life and shared her father's high estimation of Pacchierotti. She wrote in her diary on 23 March 1791, just a month after the Pantheon performance:

My dear Father has sent me a beautiful Cantata of Haydn's, the subject is Ariadne betrayed & forsaken by Theseus – Norbury [Susan's son, aged six] was extremely desirous of understanding the words, & at last I told him & Fanny [his older sister, aged nine] the story, translating a part of the poetry – It affected my poor Boy most sensibly, tho' he made the most manly efforts to restrain his tears – 'Theseus was a cruel wretch!' he exclaimed – '*killling wild beasts when he was like a wild beast himself to poor Ariadne!*' – his emotion was so great, that I was obliged to think of twenty ridiculous stories to tell him before I let him go to bed, to drive the impression from his mind. Yesterday in the midst of the most folâtre gaiety it occur'd to him again – He asked me if *M<sup>rs</sup> Billington c<sup>d</sup> sing that song about poor Ariadne, of Haydn's?*<sup>35</sup>

It is noteworthy that (according to his mother, at least) even the six-year-old Norbury (1785–1814) was moved to tears, despite his

34. Mount Edgcombe, *Musical Reminiscences*, 12–15.

35. Quoted in Woodfield, *Salomon and the Burneys*, 63. The original is in the New York Public Library, Berg Collection, Susanna E. B. Philipps, holograph diary for 1786–1792. See also Philip Olleson, *The Journals and Letters of Susan Burney: Music and Society in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 2016). Elizabeth Billington (1765–1818) was an acclaimed British opera singer.

‘manly’ effort to maintain his composure. Presumably Susan had played (and sung?) the cantata for her children.

Although well-known as historical data, the descriptions of Pacchierotti’s *Arianna* performances in London are not normally used to shed light on historical performance practice, or as a means of rediscovering how the music of the late eighteenth century might once again ‘touch and dissolve’ an audience.<sup>36</sup> Here is a summary of the essential details of the first of these 1791 performances as reported in the *Morning Chronicle*:

1. The feelings of a young girl were communicated by a voice emanating from the rather plain, tall figure of a middle-aged castrato.
2. Audience members were touched in every fibre of their beings, and they dissolved in tears; some experienced ecstasy.
3. There was weeping, perhaps even by those who had little musical experience or skill.
4. Women (it was, after all, a Ladies’ Concert) were enabled to identify deeply with Ariadne’s plight, despite the obvious disparity between Pacchierotti’s physique and that of the mythical Ariadne.
5. The music was said to contain dramatic modulation: ‘deep and scientific, [...] varied and agitating’.

If we could travel back in time to that eighteenth-century performance, would we be touched and dissolved? What caused the vivid reaction in the audience? Could it be because of what is *not* written down on the page? If so, how did Pacchierotti achieve it?

Several aspects of his performance can be adduced from Mount Edgumbe’s description:

1. *Voice quality*: he had a good voice: ‘full and sweet’.
2. *Understanding*: he performed with ‘facility and correctness’ but always entered into the ‘views of the composer’ with ‘appropriate spirit and expression’. He ‘had excellent judgement’.

36. In addition to those performances already mentioned, Pacchierotti and Haydn performed *Arianna* at a Nobility Concert arranged by Count Cholmondeley, and on 16 May at the Hanover Square Rooms at a benefit concert for Haydn. See Stephen Willier, ‘The Illustrious *musico* Gasparo Pacchierotti: Final Triumphs and Retirement Years’, *Studi musicali* 38 (2009), 409–443: 409.

3. *Technique*: he had great 'powers of execution' but did not vaunt them, owing to his 'good taste and [...] good sense'. He had 'genius in his embellishments and cadences', whose 'variety was inexhaustible'.
4. *Expression*: he was mostly concerned to sing with 'touching expression and exquisite pathos' and could move people to tears. He 'felt warmly'.
5. *Acting skills*: he was a 'forceful and impressive' actor (despite not being handsome). He expressed Italian recitative not only in word, but also by means of his 'countenance, voice, and action' in such a way that everyone could understand, even those who could not understand Italian.
6. *Attitude*: He 'was an enthusiast'.

Even assuming some bias in Mount Edgcumbe's judgement, this is a catalogue of song-craft that tells us much about which aspects of performance were appreciated by a contemporary commentator. What seems to have impressed him above all is that Pacchierotti combined faithfulness to the text (both musical and literary) with an exquisite freedom of expression and embellishment.

Once Pacchierotti had fully retired from the life of an active performer in 1797, he entrusted a selection of his embellishments to the theorist and composer Antonio Calegari (1757–1828). The resulting 1809 manuscript was published in 1836 by Ricordi.<sup>37</sup> It would be instructive to try and apply some of the examples given in the treatise to *Arianna*. As Vernon Lee wrote in 1880:

[I]n that day of artistic strength and riches, the genius spent in an extemporised vocal ornament which was never transmitted to paper, in the delivery of a few notes which lasted but a second; the genius squandered in the most evanescent performance, the memory of which died with those who had heard it – all this seemed no waste, and indeed it could well be afforded.<sup>38</sup>

Such an experiment might enable us to re-enter a world where performing according to 'the views of the composer' involved performing what was *not* on the page. This is not new to those familiar with the

37. *Modi generali del canto premessi alle Maniere parziale onde adornare o rifiorire le nude o semplici Melodie o Cantilene giusta il metodo di Gaspare [sic] Pacchiarotti [sic]* (Milan: Ricordi, 1836). Further editions were published in 1853 and 1878. For more details about Calegari and his links with Pacchierotti, see Stephen A. Willier, 'A Celebrated Eighteenth-Century Castrato: Gasparo Pacchierotti's Life and Career', *The Opera Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (1995), 96–102.

38. Vernon Lee, *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* (London: Satchell and Co., 1880), 120, cited in Willier, 'A Celebrated Eighteenth-Century Castrato', 95.

39. See Alberto Zanatta, Fabio Zampieri, Giuliano Scattolin, and Maurizio Ripa Bonati, 'Occupational Markers and Pathology of the Castrato Singer Gaspare Pacchierotti (1740–1821)', *Sci Rep* 6, 28463 (2016): <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep28463> (accessed 3 February 2022).

40. Rushton, 'Viennese Amateur', 233–234. In note 8 he gives Hoboken's *Werkverzeichnis*, 299, and *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 2, (1799), col. 336, as the source of this information, citing J. L. Baldauf-Berdes, *Women Musicians of Venice: Musical Foundations, 1525–1855* (Oxford University Press, 1993), 123–124. I am grateful to Dr Ruth Tatlow for pointing out that the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* reference in both Rushton and Baldauf-Berdes should refer to vol. 2, no. 19, published on 5 February 1800 (not 1799), col. 366. The confusion stems from the fact that vol. 2 covers 1 October 1799 to 24 September 1800.

41. See Over, 'Arianna travestita', 384–397.

42. See Caroline Giron-Panel, 'Entre Église et théâtre: La fugue de deux musiciennes vénitiennes en 1783', *Clio: Femmes, Genre, Histoire* 25 (2007), 93–113, and 'Gli ospedali: Luoghi e reti di socialità femminili': paper for the conference 'Donne a Venezia. Spazi di libertà e forme di potere (sec. XVI–XVIII)', Venezia, 8.–19. Mai 2008': [http://www.storiadivenezia.net/sito/donne/Giron-Panel\\_Ospedali.pdf](http://www.storiadivenezia.net/sito/donne/Giron-Panel_Ospedali.pdf) (accessed 14 January 2023).

practices of HIP. What is unusual is Lee's emphasis on the affective result on members of the audience, at an ephemeral event that existed only in the memory, whose effects became almost mythical.

As far as his acting style is concerned, there is evidence that Pacchierotti used his arms extensively, presumably for gestural expression. Research on Pacchierotti's skeleton, published in 2016, states:

Both scapulae had a marked infraglenoid tubercle due to a strong insertion of the long head of the triceps brachii muscle, which acts on the shoulder joint and is involved in retroversion and adduction of the arm. Probably Pacchierotti was using a lot his arms to act during his performances.<sup>39</sup>

Although Mount Edgcombe's description contains few details about Pacchierotti's acting when performing in concert, the size of the Pantheon would suggest that he did act, at least to the extent of using gesture and facial expression.

### 3. Bianca Sacchetti, the invisible prioress

There is a report in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, mentioned by Rushton, stating that *Arianna* was written for the Venetian singer, flautist, harpist, and organist Bianca Sacchetti (1768–before 1818), the last prioress of the Ospedale dei Mendicanti in Venice, and a well-known alto soloist.<sup>40</sup> As Berthold Over discovered, Sacchetti sang a parodied Latin version of the cantata in 1792, entitled *Maria Quaerit Christum Filium* (Maria Searches for Christ Her Son).<sup>41</sup> Exactly how *Arianna* found its way to Venice is not clear, and while the early part of Sacchetti's life has been documented by Caroline Giron-Panel, I am not aware of any direct reports of her Haydn performance.<sup>42</sup> There are, however, many travellers' reports of her singing, which took place behind the standard grating, separating musicians from the listeners. Goethe visited the Mendicanti on 3 October 1786, and the contralto he heard was in all likelihood Bianca Sacchetti:

An alto sung the part of King Saul, the chief personage in the poem. Of such a voice I had no notion whatever; some passages of the

music were excessively beautiful, and the words, which were Latin, most laughably Italianized in some places, were perfectly adapted for singing.<sup>43</sup>

#### 4. Anna Ascher, an indifferent soloist

On 28 June 1798, Anna Ascher (1775–1803), the second soloist at the Kärntnertheater in Vienna, sang *Arianna* ‘rather indifferently’ at a morning concert at the Augarten. Her fortepianist was the composer Ignác Václav Rafael (Wenzel Raphael, 1762–1799). This is noteworthy, mainly because it shows that an ‘indifferent’ performance of the cantata was possible, i.e. the music needed a particular kind of performance to trigger a powerful effect on the listener.<sup>44</sup>

#### 5. Emma Hamilton, the pregnant superstar

Lady Emma Hamilton (1765–1815) rehearsed and sang the cantata with Haydn at Eisenstadt in September 1800 while on her way back to London together with her husband Sir William (1730–1803), who had just left his post as British Ambassador in Naples, and with Admiral Horatio Nelson (1758–1805), the father of her as yet unborn child. Haydn learnt of her forthcoming visit earlier in the month, and heard that she was interested in singing *Arianna*. He sent a message to Artaria in Vienna to despatch a copy of the music to him as soon as possible.<sup>45</sup> Haydn had possibly met Emma in London in 1791, and would have certainly known about her through reports of her well-known ‘Attitudes’, a new kind of performance art she had developed with the help of Sir William. It consisted of a series of fluid dramatic poses imitating well-known classical sculptures and paintings. During her time in Naples Emma had trained seriously as a singer, receiving lessons from, among others, the famed castrato Giuseppe Millico (1737–1802). Fredrik Silverstolpe (1769–1851), a musician as well as an architect and diplomat, reports in a letter of 20 September:

She is now forty-six and the fattest woman I’ve ever laid eyes on, but with the most beautiful head. A voice such as hers excelled all my expectations and I don’t think I shall ever again hear anything

43. *Goethe’s Travels in Italy*, tr. Alexander James William Morrison and Charles Nisbet (London: George Bell and Sons, 1885), 63.

44. The incident is quoted in H.C. Robbins Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works: The Years of The Creation: 1796–1800* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 325.

45. See Robbins Landon, *Haydn*, 557.

46. Quoted in Robbins Landon, *Haydn*, 560.

47. The Hungarian name for Eisenstadt.

48. ‘Nelson, Milord Hamiltonnal jött Kis-Martonba, ki is negyven esztendeig lakott Nápolyban Anglus Követ fővel. Már meg-haladta a’ hetven esztendőt. Ott vette feleségül a’ mostani Grófnéját, vagy is Miledijét, egy harmintz öt esztendő, magos, igen kellemetes képű ’s maga alkalmaztatású Anglus Aszszonyoságot. Több ritka tulajdonságai közzül való a’ tiszta hangos szava, mellyel ama’ híres Heyden-nek társaságában, olly szívre ható módon gyönyörködtette a’ hallgatókat, hogy tsak nem el ragadtatásba hozta mindnyájokat. Sokaknak Dido, ’s Calipso Isten-Aszszonyoknak; nem különben Aeneásnak ’s Telemáknak képei forgottak szemek előtt. – Nagy nevet szerzett magának a’ Miledi néma Játékaival, (Pántomimájával) mellyet a’ leg nagyobb tökéleteségre vitt, kivált a’ magános, és másokkal együtt való állásokat, az úgy nevezett attitudes, és csoportokat. Nem lehet különös érzékenység nélkül nézni azokat. Sok illyen gyönyörködtető állásai, ’s mozgásai le vannak rajzolva, ’s rézre metzsett képekben világ eleibe botsátva’. *Magyar Hírmondó*, no. 22 (12 September 1800), 343–344. I am very grateful to Dr Gergely Fazekas for his help in locating this and the following report, and for his translations from the Hungarian.

49. ‘Miledi Hamilton meg-kérte *Haydn* Jós’ef Urat, Hertzeg Esterházy esméretes tökéleteségű Musika-Directorát, hogy némelly Anglus versekre tsinálna mu’sikát. Admirális Nelsonnak vitéz tettei, tárgya a’ verseknek. Tegnap érkezett meg ide Heydn Úr Magyar Országból, a’ kész – gyönyörű mu’sikájával, azoknak, a’ kiket illett, igen nagy örömökre’. *Magyar Hírmondó*,

so heavenly. In her are combined voice as well as method, sensitivity and musical knowledge, so as to bewitch the listener.<sup>46</sup>

It should not be forgotten that Emma, who was actually thirty-five, and not forty-six, was probably five months pregnant when Silverstolpe met her, and this may have increased the impression of her size. But there is no reason to doubt his judgement of her singing. The well-known painting of Emma as Ariadne from 1790 by Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun suggests that she would have been well-versed in the legend (see Fig. 2).

While Emma’s lifestyle was considered by many as scandalous, she nevertheless had many admirers. A report of her performance at Eisenstadt in the *Magyar Hírmondó* stated:

Nelson came to Kismarton<sup>47</sup> with Milord Hamilton, who has been living in Naples for forty years as English ambassador. He is over seventy years old. He married his present countess, or milady, there, a thirty-five-year-old, tall, pretty-faced, independent English woman. One of her several rare qualities is her clear and loud voice, and she delighted the listeners in the company of that famous Heyden [*sic*] in such a heartwarming manner, that all of them were ecstatic. A lot of them saw whirling pictures of goddesses Dido and Calypso in front of their eyes, and of Aeneas and Telemachus too. The Milady won great renown for her silent acting (pantomime), which she took to the utmost perfection, above all the solo and ensemble moves, the so-called attitudes and groups. It is impossible to watch it without special feelings. Many of these moves of hers were drawn and passed on to the world in engravings.<sup>48</sup>

It is interesting that she is complimented for the clarity and strength of her voice (the word ‘loud’ here has no negative connotations) and for her acting. So it is not surprising that Haydn acceded to her demands to write another cantata for her:

Milady Hamilton asked Mr. Joseph Haydn, Prince Esterházy’s music director of well-known perfection, to make music for some English poems. The subject of the poems is the heroic deeds of Admiral Nelson. Mr. Heydn [*sic*] arrived here yesterday from Hungary with the finished, beautiful music, to the great delight of those who are concerned.<sup>49</sup>



**Figure 2.** Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun: Lady Hamilton as Ariadne. Oil on canvas, 1790. License: CC-PD.

### A catalogue of differences

This survey of five early Ariadnes shows that the cantata was sung by a wide range of voices and personalities. There was no single stereotypical singer. One can only imagine the differences in accompaniment style that Haydn might have used to support and encourage the three singers he worked with (Peperl, Pacchierotti, and Emma Hamilton), developing their highly individual vocal styles; and, had he been given the chance, how he might have transformed the ‘indifferent’ performance of Anna Ascher. In his article for *The Cambridge Haydn Encyclopedia* (2019), Erin Helyard paints a revealing picture of Haydn as a vocal coach, stressing both his interest in clear diction and musical ‘correctness’, but – once he was at the keyboard – a desire to foster healthy (Italianate) singing skills.<sup>50</sup> Helyard also cites an entry in Haydn’s first London notebook in which he describes the emotional power of four thousand children singing in St. Paul’s Cathedral. Using terms such as ‘uneasy, heart-breaking’, ‘like a floating breath’, and ‘gained in life and strength, took on light and shadow’, Haydn accesses a non-technical vocabulary that shows what moved him when he listened to the human voice.

This historical material is by no means exhaustive, but it strongly suggests that Haydn, his singers, and other contemporary performers would have been used to a high degree of performative flexibility. The different sizes and characters of performance venues, as well as the widely diverging vocal and acting styles of the singers, mean that similar differences would have been evident in the playing of the piano part. I now need to study the relationship between the piano and the voice, and the role of the piano in the narrative. Who or what, if anything, is it representing? And what does Haydn’s instrumental music do or add to the words and the character of Ariadne?

no. 25 (23 September 1800), 372–373. The occasional cantata Haydn wrote for Emma is *Lines from the Battle of the Nile*, Hob.XXVIb.4. Although not one of his finest compositions, it nevertheless demonstrates what Haydn considered Emma Hamilton could achieve vocally.

50. See Erin Helyard, ‘Vocal Coaching and Rehearsal’, in *The Cambridge Haydn Encyclopedia*, ed. Carol Clark and Sarah Day-O’Connell (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 399–403.

## Haydn's music

Just as there are no clues as to how Haydn came across the anonymous libretto, there are no known reasons why he chose to lavish so much care and attention on the creation of the resulting cantata. *Arianna* is a compendium of compositional technique placed at the service of dramatic story-telling, and the music therefore lends itself to close analysis. Every small musical gesture can be clearly related to the text and to Ariadne's emotional responses.

The overall structure of *Arianna* reflects the form of the libretto: a single monological flow of words sung from Ariadne's point of view. We, the onlookers, hear her thoughts, both voiced and unvoiced, which are addressed (in recitative form) either to herself, the absent Theseus, or the gods. On three occasions the monologue becomes more self-reflective, self-conscious perhaps, and Ariadne expresses herself in words (set as arias) that Haydn uses to prise open her deepest feelings and reveal them to us more slowly. Recitative and aria, and their inbuilt possibilities for overlap, were the stock-in-trade of composers' vocal story-telling from Monteverdi onwards. Haydn uses them in conjunction with what the *Morning Chronicle* termed as 'dramatic action', and 'deep', 'scientific', 'varied', and with 'agitating modulations' (i.e. harmonies). It is these performative aspects of the composition that threw the company – at least when Haydn and Pacchierotti performed – into ecstasies, which 'feigned of the ancient lyre'. This can best be illustrated in a short analysis of *Arianna's* opening scene.

The cantata begins with a long and slow prelude which sets the scene for the drama to come. There is no hint of tragedy nor of what is to come. Theseus' escape from the labyrinth after killing the monster, and the nearly three-hundred-kilometre journey by sea from Knossos... all is forgotten. Nothing disturbs the peaceful atmosphere. Haydn achieves this through the creation of a musical landscape,

which mimics what might well be the experience of imagining the description that heads the music. Haydn's music slows down attentive listeners' responses. It is possible to concentrate on only one musical gesture at a time, with silence before the next. The music invites the listener to meditate on the beauty of the Naxian shore just as dawn is breaking. It is of course the pianist who initiates the meditation, and it is his or her inner eye that leads the listener. The pianist's right hand paints the foreground details, while the left brings a sense of stability, the ground on which Ariadne is sleeping. One can feel the gentle swell of the Aegean Sea, maybe sense some of the islands' rich bird life awakening to a new day. It is a paradise. Once this sense of concentration is established, through slow breathing and relaxation, the audience becomes aware of a single sail on the horizon. But then a voice is heard... Ariadne awakes, and calls for Theseus. Already familiar with the musical landscape the listener places her within it and understands that its peacefulness is also hers; that musical reminiscences of the prelude, now with words in the place of the earlier silences, reveal that she has been there all along, albeit lost to the world. At the moment Ariadne dreams that Theseus is beside her, the music darkens: 'Un lusinghiero sogno fallace m'ingannò' (A flattering dream deceived and misled me). This phrase might remind an English audience of John Fletcher's poem *Sleep* from 1606, which itself provides an apt commentary on this moment: 'Sleep, and with thy sweet deceiving / Lock me in delight awhile'. Ariadne falls back to sleep, but then notices the arrival of the dawn, which the audience first glimpse (aurally) in the music, and which is then described in words, drawing the attention of the mind's eye to the early golden rays of the sun. 'Where is Theseus? Perhaps he has gone hunting'. Ariadne imagines that she could satisfy his hunter instincts more gratefully than his prey. The music returns to the key of the deception (A-flat major) and Ariadne engages in more daydreaming, speaking of 'my faithfulness' and 'our love'. She tries to regain the peacefulness of the opening, but the music loses its anchoring and her desperate longing leads it to a pathetic full close in a related minor key.

So far the music has acted like the lens of a movie camera, enabling the listeners/onlookers to concentrate their attention on the landscape as if seen in a painting or on a postcard. Imperceptibly, however, the camera lens becomes the gaze of Ariadne, and we, the onlookers, see as she does, experience what she experiences, and feel what she feels. This is predicated on the notion that we allow the voice we hear to penetrate our bodies and lodge at the source of our perceptions. It is within this conceptual framework that the audiences at Mrs. Blair's and the Pantheon in 1791 would have 'seen' and heard Ariadne herself, rather than two middle-aged gentlemen performing *Arianna*. Or, as we might say today: that we all meet as one Ariadne in the liminal space of musical experience.

### **Releasing the affective potential of eighteenth-century music drama today: *Arianna* in performance**

What was *Arianna* about in 1789 and the early 1790s? Male unfaithfulness? Unfairness? Injustice? The failure of love? The messiness of human relationships? Men choosing war over peace? Which, if any, of these or other themes were unlocked by Pacchierotti's performances, allowing them to lodge in the hearts of the audience? Had any of the ladies at Mrs. Blair's soirée heard of, or read Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), whose influential *Vindication of the Rights of Men* had been published in London in 1790, to be followed up in 1792 by her even more influential *Vindication of the Rights of Women*? It is surely unlikely that Wollstonecraft's ideas would not have been discussed in these Ladies' circles; perhaps they even awakened emancipatory longings. I also wonder about the men present at the later concert in the Pantheon: did they feel any pity or compassion? And what about the audience at Eisenstadt?

Because of these questions, I am compelled to be sensitive to the world around me today in my research and performances. I want to find a way of reconnecting eighteenth-century music to a hurting humanity, by making it more emotionally accessible. Rather than relying on a narrow view of historically informed performance

practices, or discarding them and thereby losing the integrity of the original compositions, I prefer a third approach, one that relates to what my colleague Willmar Sauter terms aesthetic historicity: the creation of a-historical-work-of-art-in-performance-today, not despite, but because of, our temporal distance from its composition.<sup>51</sup>

My conclusion is that the wealth of material available to the student of *Arianna* indicates a hitherto overlooked dimension within the practices of historical performance: their suitability as means of ‘tuning’ performances to today. The evidence I have adduced for performative flexibility could lead to radically different results, ones that are deeply rooted in the burning issues of our own time.

## Epilogue

John Rice writes: ‘Eighteenth-century musicians in general shared with the *philosophes* ideals of clarity, elegance, accessibility, and optimism’.<sup>52</sup> Haydn’s cantata is certainly clear and elegant, and it is not inaccessible. But is it optimistic? The cantata’s final cadence is unexpectedly in the major. Had it been in the minor, it might have signified that Ariadne leaps from the rocks to her death. Haydn’s music suggests that at the very last moment she changes her mind, and decides to give life a second chance. A message we could well heed today!

51. See chapter 3 in this volume, ‘Aesthetic Historicity’.

52. John A. Rice, ‘Expression of Enlightenment Values in Viennese Instrumental Music of the 1780s’ (conference paper, University of Alberta, 23–24 September 2011): <https://sites.google.com/site/johnaricecv/enlightenment> (accessed 4 February 2022).