

La Capricciosa Corretta

CHRISTOPHE ROUSSET

Vicente Martín y Soler (Valencia, 2-V-1754; St. Petersburg, 11-II-1806) is one of the most outstanding composers of stage music of eighteenth-century Spain and Europe. He exerted his musical mastery in Spain, Italy, Russia and England. Da Ponte's collaborator on five operas, Martín y Soler's works were staged, with tremendous success, in numerous European theatres and influenced the course of musical-theatrical composition in

Spain. Martín y Soler and the Circumstances surrounding the Work Following the death of the Habsburg Emperor Joseph II on 2 February 1790 Da Ponte, who had been a poet to the imperial theatres since 1783, fell into disgrace: he became Salieri's enemy and Casti, who was now court poet, advised him to move to Paris. In turn, in 1791 Martín y Soler (responsible for three Viennese hits, *I burbero di buon cuore* in January 1786, *Una cosa rara* in November 1786 and *L'arbore di Diana* in October 1787) invited him to join him in St. Petersburg, where he had held the post of

Kapellmeister of the Court of Russia since 1787. After having been persuaded by Casanova, Da Ponte set off for London, arriving in October of 1792. The Italian theatre of Haymarket, in the hands of William Taylor at the time, initially refused his services. But following a short stay in Holland, during which the poet failed in his attempts to set up an Italian theatre, at the end of 1793 Taylor himself finally called upon his services, due to the support of his sister-in-law and his Italian and English singer friends who were in London at the time: "Not having anything to detain me in Holland, I departed for London two or three days after receiving that letter. I did not fail, the moment I arrived, to pay my call on the impresario; but, from the reception he gave me, I could see that he had no great friendship for the Muses... This was not, to tell the truth, a beginning of good augury for a man who had for ten years been poet to Joseph II of Austria, a Prince who was the true model of affability, kindness, and courtesy... That was at the performance of Gazzaniga's *Don Giovanni*, an opera suggested by Federici and given to the public on his advice, in bestial preference to the *Don Giovanni* of Mozart, brought to London and proposed by me. Taylor then saw himself in danger of finding his Opera dismantled and himself ruined forever; so



La Capricciosa Corretta

©

he was pleased to send for me and ask my opinion on various points touching the enterprise, especially giving me strict orders to call Martini, who was then engaged at the Opera in St. Petersburg, to London”. [Note 1]The arrival of two divas, –Banti and Morichelli–, in the English capital led Taylor to commission Da Ponte for two libretti. The first, *Merope*, would be an *opera seria* for the soprano Brigida Banti (1757-1806) of Parma, seemingly blessed with an exceptional voice. The second, *La capricciosa corretta o sia la scuola dei maritati*, was to be an *opera buffa* for the soprano from Reggio-Emilia, Anna Bosello Morichelli (1760-1800), also blessed with an extraordinary talent for the stage; she had premiered the lead roles in *L'arbore di Diana* in Vienna and in Paisiello's *Nina pazza per amore* in Paris. *Merope* was entrusted to the composer Francesco Bianchi (1752-1810), while *La capricciosa corretta* would be for Martín y Soler, who came expressly from St. Petersburg. Sarti's nomination for the post of imperial composer of Italian opera, replacing Cimarosa, had somewhat deceived the Valencian composer, as Da Ponte explains: “Not many days had passed when Federici, who had contributed much with his good offices and with services of various sorts to the victory of that woman [Banti], gave me an order, in the name of the manager, to write two operas: one a comedy, to be set to music by Martini, who had been called to London by me; and the other, in serious vein, by Francesco Bianchi, who had been brought on by the *donna seria*. Perceiving the dangerous enterprise on which I was embarking. I studied all possible means for keeping both women friendly to me; but what hope of success in that? ‘The Lord help you’, said Banti to me one day, ‘if Morichelli gets a better reception in Martini's opera than I do in mine!’” [Note 2]The work was written in three weeks and immediately put into Martín's hands: “In less than three weeks I had the *Capricciosa corretta* ready for Martini, who, living in my house, not only gave me inspiration to write with his ever smiling face and his pleasing reminiscences of things past; but, little by little, as I wrote the words, he would be setting them to music”. [Note 4] Even prior to the rehearsals, the news of the superiority of *La capricciosa* spread through London. Due to Bianchi's delay, Bianchi himself proposed the restaging of his *Aci e Galatea*, which despite being commented on by Haydn, was only performed on two occasions: “But when the opera went on the stage, though the room was packed with hands paid to applaud, and though Banti, before the performance, ate a hundred roasted chestnuts and emptied a full bottle, not a single piece of music pleased, and, despite all efforts made, it was not performed more than twice thereafter”. [Note 4]*La capricciosa corretta* was premiered at the King's Theater in Haymarket on 27 January 1795 and Da Ponte narrated the event as follows: “Recourse was quickly had to Martini for the opera bouffe: and despite partisanship and cliques, despite a claque of two hundred or more persons sent to the theatre to hiss, despite, in the end, a satire they caused to be written and published (by whom? By Badini, who told me afterwards himself that he was paid by the manager to write it!) the opera was a success; and, despite them all, Martini, Da Ponte, and what was more important, Morichelli, triumphed spectacularly!” [Note 5]The work's success led to a second opera being commissioned from Martín and Da Ponte, *L'isola del piacere*, premiered the same season, on 26 May 1795, in the same theatre and featuring the same performers. It was a failure and Da Ponte blamed both Morichelli (who insisted on having a mad scene comparable to that found in *Nina*) and Martín. Effectively, as a result of a love affair, “Martini, nevertheless, left my house, and went to live with Moricehlli, and our long, sweet and much envied friendship grew cold. The second act of the ‘Isle of Pleasure’ was written

entirely on an Isle of Ice. As I worked on it I felt as though I were writing for Reghini, rather than for Martini, the composer of the *Cosa rara*". [Note 6] Consequently, the music to *L'isola* was judged severely by the librettist. While Da Ponte remained in London until 1805, once the 1795 season was over Martín returned to St. Petersburg, where he reformed an Italian company at the court of Catherine. They were never to meet again. At the end of the 1795 season, Morichelli also left London for her native Italy, taking the two Martín y Soler scores with her. With *La capricciosa corretta* she triumphed in Venice (1795), Florence, Genova and Udine (1796), Pisa and Naples (1797) and would restage *L'isola del piacere* in Venice and Florence (1797). These would not be the only restagings of *La capricciosa*, as the work was also performed in Turin, Milano, Dresden, Prague and Vienna (1896), Madrid [Note 7] and Lisbon (1797), London (1798), Weimar and Darmstadt (1799), etc., making it one of Martín y Soler's most performed works. A libretto from a Parisian performance staged in 1819 has even been conserved. Copies of the libretto of the Italian restagings generally do not include the name of the author yet carry the indication "The music is by the famous Vincenzo Martini". To our knowledge, only the 1796 libretto from Prague, together with that from London, gives the poet's name. **The Work's Title** The title *La capricciosa corretta* has been imposed by its presence in all the music manuscripts consulted. Despite this, the title of the libretto in Larpent's manuscript copy is *La scola del maritati*, a comic opera. Furthermore, the opera appeared with this same title for the 1798 London restagings, with slight changes made by Da Ponte himself, while he was still the poet associated with the King's Theater in Haymarket. For this reason, it is logical that Carlo Francesco Badini's attacks were published under the title *Breve notizia dell'opera buffa, intitolata la Scuola del maritati, o sia delle corna...* However, all the libretti corresponding to the Italian restagings held in Prague (1796 & 1802), Dresden (1796), Madrid (1797) and Lisbon (1797) invariably give *La capricciosa corretta*, *dramma giocoso*, except in Pisa, where it was denominated "opera buffa" and in Naples (1798), "commedia per musica". [Note 8] For the 1796 restaging in Vienna, however, a new title seems to have been preferred although it is not known why: *Gli sposi in contrasto*, an idea that was reused in the *Artaria* editions in October 1796. [Note 9] The title was then translated as: *So bessert sie sich, Die eigensinnige Frau, Die gebesserte Eigensinnige, L'épouse corrigée*. However, the most commonly used title was *La capricciosa corretta*. In his *Memoirs*, Da Ponte himself used only this last title, as we have just seen. The use of this title has a symbolic value; both the libretto and the music to *La scola del maritati* seem to have been definitively lost in their original state. The work has come down to us in the form of *La capricciosa corretta* in the majority of manuscripts and editions of the libretto and following Da Ponte himself, [Note 10] this title has therefore been adopted. **The work** As in the first Martín-Da Ponte collaboration, *La capricciosa corretta* is set in a Goldonian world. The plot is very classical. The points in common with *Così fan tutte* or *La scuola degli amanti* are obvious: here we have *La scola del maritati*, always in Naples, and the woman is once again brought back to reality and corrected through an Oriental dream. Nothing to do with Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, which reference books have persisted in citing as the source of this libretto. Rather, once again there are three social classes, as was much to Goldoni's liking: Bonario, a member of the middle class, his children Isabella and Valerio and Ciprigna Alcudi; the noblemen Count Lelio and Giglio, a kind of sponger and impostor, who inevitably recalls Count Robinson in *Il Matrimonio segreto*; and finally, the servants Cilia and Fiuta. As in

Goldoni, although the tradition can be traced back to Aristóphanes and Plautus, the characters have evocative names: Ciprigna, which means the goddess of Cyprus, and therefore Venus, but also comes from the word “inciprignire”: to become embittered speaking of afflictions, to get angry, [Note 11] from “ciprigno”: bitter. Bonario, good, sweet. [Note 12] Giglio: the iris, which makes us feel all the affectation of the cicisbeo. Fiuta, from “fiutare”: to flatter. [Note 13] Cilia, its assonance leads one to think of “celia”: joke. [Note 14] Sbaraglia, the captain, taken directly from the commedia dell'arte, from “sbaraglio”: disorder, confusion. [Note 15] Other names from the commedia dell'arte: Valerio, Isabella and Lelio, who are also the young and enamoured characters in Molière. The action is domestic and takes place overnight, in a kind of “insane day” that clearly leads one to think of *Le nozze di Figaro*, in which as opposed to what occurs here, the man, the Count of Almaviva, is corrected using disguised women, but always outside and at night. As in *Gli equivoci* and *Don Giovanni*, the *lieto fine* presents the moral. However, Giglio is excluded and the family's order is restored. It is also worth mentioning the reference to the audience, at the end of the *stretta*, very characteristic of vaudeville finale in French comic opera. From a musical point of view, Martín y Soler has composed a work of the same standard as his greatest successes. The style is, however, slightly different. The overture deserves special attention, since it is a prototype for what the English call a “medley overture”, which presents a certain number of themes contained in the work. The medley overture was popularised in London by Charles Dibdin (1745-1814) at the end of the 1770's, probably taken from Monsigny (*Le déserteur* composed in 1769, presented in London in 1773 by Dibdin with many revisions in his own hand). On the other hand, Martín evidently knew the overture to *La grotta di Trofonio* by Salieri (1785), if not that to *Entführung aus dem Serail*, which had just been published in Vienna and circulated throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire. These two examples are enough to illustrate the use of thematic anticipations from important moments in the opera they pertain to. After the introduction of the storm [Note 16] theme from the end of the second act, the overture presents the theme of the duet between Bonario-Ciprigna “A me vieni, o gioia bella” (II,20), which is linked to the two themes from Ciprigna's aria No. 20 “Nel cor mi sento un giubileo” (II,12). Although, in contrast to *L'isola del piacere*, the opera does not include ballets, dance is very present. The minuet played by Fiuta (I,6); the aria sung by Cilia No. 1 “Ha un certo cervello” to a contradanse rhythm; the aria sung by Valerio No. 11 “Un fucil, un spadon” is in “a tempo de Marcia”; the aria sung by Fiuta No. 15 “Allegramente, Cilietta cara” is written in the form of a gavotte; the polonaise No. 17 “La donna ha bello il core” was the strong point of the work, to the extent that copies of the aria can be found in the majority of European libraries, and numerous editions published a version for voice and harpsichord. Isabella's aria No. 12 “Sono oppressa e sventurata” is also written over a polonaise rhythm. There are no seguidilla rhythms (which are, however, present in *Il tutore burlato* and in *Una cosa rara*). Ciprigna's arias, especially Nos. 2 “Son pur follir e vanarelli” and 9 “Guardami un poco”, require certain vocal virtuosity, in keeping with the sophisticated nature of the character. The use of the obligato violoncello in the polonaise No. 17 is a unique, but not an isolated case. It can also be seen in Zerlina's “Batti, batti bel Masetto” from *Don Giovanni*, and in Eufemio de Siracusa's aria “Pupille amorse” from *Gli equivoci*, Act II, No. 5 by Stephen Strorace/Da Ponte (Vienna, 1786). Lelio's arias are surprising for their lyricism and vocal difficulty: “Senza il caro mio

tesoro" No. 13 recalls "Il mio tesoro intanto" sung by Ottavio in Don Giovanni, it's expression is completely noble in line with Lelio's title of Count. Giglio's arias are veritable serenatas that end furiously to express his the fire of passion. The singers who premiered *La capricciosa corretta* were: Ciprigna: Anna Bosello Morichelli; Lelio: Luigi Brida; Bonario: Giovanni Morelli; Giglio: Carlo Rovedino; Fiuta: Lorenzo Cipriani; Sbaraglia: Luigi Bonfanti; Isabella: Elisabetta Colombati; Cilia: Giovanna Pastorelli; Valerio: Paolo Torreggiani. An announcement of the subscription concerts from 2 January 1795 states that "the vocal performers Madame Banti, Madame Morichelli, Signor Neri [a castrato], Sgr Morelli, Sgr Brida, Sgr Bonfanti and Sgr Rovedino are obliged not to act in another theatre". [Note 17] That is to say, they had signed contracts to work exclusively for the theatre. It is fascinating to follow the careers of these different singers to discover what sort of voice they possessed. Anna Morichelli, a soprano from Bologna, began her career in 1773 in opera buffa, and sang opera seria from 1782-87 (she played the role of Celia in Hasse's *Trionfo di Celia* in Turin, for example), and would triumph as Diana in Martín's *L'arbore di Diana* in Vienna (1787) and Milan (1788), as Livia in Cimarosa's *L'italiana* in Londra and as Nina in Paisiello's *La pazza per amore* in Paris (in 1790 and 1791, respectively). She would play Angelica in Martín's *Il burbero di buon cuore* during its restaging in London in 1794 and would end her career in Italy, where she sang *Undine la Pamela* in Gaetano Andreozzi's *Pamela nubile* the same year as her death in 1800. At the beginning of the 1790's, the tenor Luigi Bridi worked in Italy, where he played essentially serious roles, though he was *Lanterna* in Gazzaniga's *Don Giovanni* in Lucca (1792), *Masotto* in Sarti's *Fra I due litiganti* in Livorno (1794), and *Aci* in Bianchi's *Aci e Galatea* in London on 21 March 1795 (that is, after the premiere of *La capricciosa* and not before, as Da Ponte tells in his *Memoirs*). Together with Banti, he returned to Italy, where he can be found with Morichelli in Florence in 1796 in the restaging of *La capricciosa*, but also in *Nina o sia la pazza per amore* in the role of *Lindoro*. His name continued its presence on the Italian stage until 1799. Giovanni Morelli, a buffo bass from Livorno, began his career in 1770 in the role of Count Bemol in *L'impresa d'opera* by Giuseppe Guglielmi in Bologna. He can be found once again in Caserta in 1783 as *Figaro* in *Il Barbieri di Seviglia* by Paisiello, in Naples (1785) he played the role of *Piastrone* in Salieri's *La Grotta di Trofonio*, as he did in *Versailles* (1787) and in London (1788). In Venice he played *Ferramondo* in Martín's *Il burbero di buon cuore* in 1789. He can also be found in London from 1791 to 1805, once again singing the role of *Ferramondo* (1794), as well as *Doristo* in *L'arbore di Diana* (1797) and *Robinson* in Cimarosa's *Matrimonio segreto* in 1798. Carlo Rovedino, a Toscan bass, made a name for himself in Italy until 1789, playing *Lubino* in *Una cosa rara* in Milan (1787), *Basilio* in *Il Barbieri di Seviglia* in Paris (1790), the *Count* in *La pazza per amore* in 1791 along side Morichelli in Paris. From 1793 to 1805 he was in London, where he played *Geronimo* in *Matrimonio segreto* (1798) along side Morelli, and *Tita* in *Una cosa rara* (1805). Lorenzo Cipriani, bass, sang in Italy from 1783-1791. He played the role of *Figaro* in *Il barbiere di Seviglia* in Turin (1784), *Tita* in *Una cosa rara* in Milan (1787) with Rovedino, and *Ferramondo* in *Il burbero di buon cuore* in Bologna (1790). Following two visits to London in 1791 and 1795 we find in Turin again as Lelio in *La capricciosa corretta* (transposed or re-written for bass?) in 1796, and as *Figaro* in *Il barbiere di Seviglia* in Genova (1798). Luigi Bonfanti, bass, sang in Italy until 1793, when we find him in Madrid once again along side Morichelli. He performed in London from 1794-98,

where he played Oronte in Bianchi's *Aci e Galatea* together with Brida (1795), Sandrino in Salieri's *La Cifra*, Fiuta in the 1798 restaging of *La capricciosa*, Geronimo in *Matrimonio segreto* in Milan (1799). Elisabetta Colombati, (mezzo) soprano, sang in Italy from 1781-94. She played Marchesina in Martín y Soler's *In amor ci vuol destrezza* in Venice in 1782 with the tenor Martin Kelly, and Ghita in *Una cosa rara* in Livorno in 1789. From 1794 onwards in London she was Marina in *Il burbero di buon cuore*, rejoining *La capricciosa* and would play Fidalma in *Matrimonio segreto* in 1798 with the above-mentioned artists. Giovanna Pastorelli (also known as Maria Teresa), soprano, sang in Italy from 1781-88. She played Clizia in *L'arbore di Diana* in Milan (1788) and found herself in London from 1794-99 playing Britomare in *L'arbore di Diana* (1797) with Morelli, Cilia in *La capricciosa* and Elisetta in *Matrimonio segreto*, also in 1798. Paolo Torreggiani, tenor, made his presentation in Italy from 1780-85. He played Count Polidoro in Gazzaniga's *Don Giovanni* in Vicenza (1785) and can be traced in London from 1789-95, where he played Tita in *Una cosa rara* (1789) and Castagna in *Il burbero di buon cuore* (1794). He did not participate in *La capricciosa* in 1798.

Reception of the work As recorded in Da Ponte's *Memoirs* cited above, *La capricciosa corretta* was a success from its premiere on 27 January 1795 in Haymarket. The reviews were very favourable: "Theatre. Opera. The King's Theatre was last night honoured with a new opera, written and entirely composed in this country, by the most ingenious and popular master, Martini. His music has been made familiar to Englishmen by his friendship of Storace, who has largely borrowed from him in the operas of Drury-Lane. The character and style of his music is peculiarly suited to our genius. Short, warm, and various, his airs recommend themselves to our taste in a very striking manner, and in the new opera of *La schola del maritati*, he has preserved and confirmed the influence which extracts from his works had procured him. More rapturous applause we never heard on any occasion, and what must be truly flattering to Martini, though he pleased the popular ear, the amateur was charmed to the most. Through the whole opera, though very long, there was not one single scene or song that dragged, and many of the songs were encored with enthusiasm, particularly a rondeau by Morichelli [probably No. 9 "Guardami un poco"], a catch in the finale of the first act, and a couple of duettos in the second". "King's Theatre. Opera. *La schola de' maritati*, with Martini at the harpsichord, did wonders on Tuesday evening; the music, which there is an infinite variety, is particularly adapted to the taste of an English audience. Morichelli's first air is an enchanting composition; that and the duet between this charming actress and Morelli had a warm encore; nor did the laughing trio pass without a similar and well-deserved compliment. The various fortes of all the performers are brought full into play; when the pruning knife shall have performed its duty, we have little doubt but this opera will have as great a run as the famous *La buona figliuola*". [Note 19] The second performance on 31 January, four days later, led to the publication of a second article in *The Morning Chronicle* on 2 February 1795: "Theatre. Opera. Martini's new opera was performed for the second time on Saturday night, and like all good music, its charm increased as it became more familiar to the ear. It is not easy to speak in adequate praise of this composition. The variety and beauty of the airs strike the most uninformed as forcibly as the most classical ear, and we are persuaded that they will all find their way to the English Theatre, and strike John Bull as pleasantly as they have the more refined taste of the Italian cognoscenti. [Note 20] It is the sure test for good music when it is seized on by popular ear, and after being for a time the delight

of select society, comes at length into the streets. It is a curious proof of the character of a nation where he has been so short time a resident, that many pieces of his first essay will assuredly come to the barrel organ. Of this kind was a new air, introduced on Saturday night, which has the vivacity of our hornpipe, [Note 21] with a turn of delicacy that is rapturous". *La capricciosa corretta* also provoked a duel of pamphlets between Francesco Badini, the former librettist of the King's Theatre (from 1769 to 1791, the year in which his *Orfeo ed Euridice ossia l'anima del filosofo* with music by Haydn) and Da Ponte, who would answer the former's virulent attacks point by point. Some of them will be examined. "And the third, which is *La suola delle corna*, would have had an even more unfortunate premiere without the support of Signora Morichelli, who cannot be praised enough for her comic talents. It would be appropriate to add the universally recognised talent of Mr. Rovedino, Morelli, Cirpiani and Buonfanti. With these figures it wasn't easy for the opera to fail, especially since Maestro Martini had very wisely commissioned the music from Buranello [Galuppi], Guglielmi, Paesiello and Bianchi. The audience, fascinated by the delightful harmonies, opened its ears and closed its eyes at the bestialities of the text". [Note 22] Da Ponte's response was: "Is this our excellent Marichelli, because the applause she received in *La scuola de' maritati* was not forthcoming in the *Fascatana* [by Paisiello], *Zingari* [by Rinaldo di Capua] or the other works she performed over the last two years? Why didn't your mercenary pen triumph over the maliciousness and the gossip before reciting the part written by Da Ponte, before Martini's music was sung? Don't you see, buffoon, that this woman's success is the work of someone who was able to present her true merit? ... Signor Martini, oh tone-deaf Signor Cigno, has never stolen, nor does he need to steal motives or melodies from Guglielmi, Burnello, Paisiello, Bianchi, or any other composer of this world. Sweet songs, gentle phrases, sincere expression, full of inspiration, passion, beauty, he charmed the most harmonious nations with the beauty and novelty of his very affectionate music, which for its universal sentiments, characteristic of him, reflects a very different style to all the others. His *Cosa Rara* and *Arbore di Diana* (with texts by Da Ponte) formed a period in the musical Republic. There is not a theatre that has not enthusiastically and fanatically staged them in their original form or in translation. The very ingenious and gifted Maestro Storace entertained the English with several beautiful songs in the national language and they were truly delighted. What could be more original ... than so many pieces of music that can be found in all the theatres and all the harpsichords of the world, being admired and eternal? And you have the courage, oh impostor, to accuse such a man of plagiarism? In the wine cellars of London you will find the arias he wrote for Morichelli". [Note 23] This is probably the most beautiful tribute to Martín y Soler's music ever written. There are some interesting reviews of the concerts at the King's Theatre in 1795: on 16 February "Martini's new song was given with taste and gaiety by Morichelli and was encored", [Note 24] "Morichelli in a pretty air of Martini, had the luck to get an encore". [Note 25] "Signora Morichelli received some applause in a new song, set by Signor Martini, the harmony of which afforded an exquisite delight to the connoisseurs. We cannot however help observing, that the modulations were not sufficiently disguised, for we had an opportunity of tracing them to the celebrated Polacca, sung by Sgra Banti, in [the pasticcio of] *La Serva Padrona*. This circumstance was certainly note very favourable to the singer, and did more honour to the judgement of the composer than to his invention; yet while Sgr. Martini borrowed from such a

composer as Bianchi, we shall never be ready to excuse his plagiarism". [Note 26] In regard to 2 March "Banti is unfortunately ill: but Morichelli was no unworthy substitute. She is now better acquainted with her auditors; the timidity, which at first repressed her powers, is worn off, and she displays much science, taste and feeling.... The new terzetto by Martini [Note 27] was charmingly sung by Brida, Morelli and Madame Morichelli and is composed to the best Italian style, and adds to the well established reputation of its author". [Note 28] Regarding the concert given on 13 April: "Martini wrote a new song for Madame Morichelli, which was remarkable rather for its energy, than for that playful gaiety which is the general character of his compositions". La capricciosa corretta seems to have been a considerable success. There is information relating to restagings of the work until 1824. [Note 30] In addition to the editions mentioned above (Joseph Dale, London, Artaria, Vienna and Simrock, Bonn), RISM gives the following details for vocal editions with piano or harp accompaniment: Paris (Imbault, Porro, Melle Erard, Carli, Duhan & Co., Naderman), Amsterdam (H. C. Steup), Berlin (Rellstab), Mainz (Schott), Vienna (Thadé-Weigl), as well as a collection of harmonised pieces (13th collection) extracted from the opera La Capricciosa Corretta, Johann André, Offenbach. **Sources** It is paradoxical to note the success of La capricciosa corretta throughout Europe, the many details we are aware of surrounding the creation of the work and, yet, the complete absence of primary sources by either Martín y Soler or Da Ponte. We know that Da Ponte expected to make a lot of money from the sale of his libretti: "I received a letter from the London impresario offering me 120 guineas and the sale of libretti to my benefit... Next autumn, Martín will have to compose two operas; then things will go much better for me, as the libretti are paid separately". [Note 31] No trace of the libretto pertaining to the London premiere, held on 27 January 1795 remains, nor of the further 11 performances held during the London season. Not even the slightest trace of the autograph manuscript of the music has been found. The only surviving material from these London performances are isolated arias, three duets and a trio, published for voice and harpsichord by Joseph Dale shortly after the premiere and sold at the composer's home, as well as a manuscript copy of the libretto titled La Scuola del maritimi made for the censorship board [Note 32] and dated 24 January 1795. A large number of music manuscripts and libretti corresponding to the different European restagings of the work and unfortunately almost all of which are different, have nevertheless been able to be located. The music manuscripts which have been used are: I-Fc, B275, and I-Fc, fondo Pitti T198, both from Florence; Accademia Chigiana de Siena, I-Sc Ms VII E 4-5; Vienna A-Wn KT 77; Darmstadt, copied in 1907 by the Library of Congress of Washington, US-Wc M1500 M 35 C3; Genova I-G1 SS. Bb.3 1; Naples I-Nc; and Paris F-Pc 2264. At times, there are significant differences between them: there are cuts, alternative arias, changes in the order of the scenes, rewriting of some numbers. As mentioned above, Morichelli, a prima donna who had been as successful as she was talented, performed the work in Italy until at least 1798. [Note 33] And it is her steps that must be followed in order to rediscover a work lost forever. This is the option chosen by Dorothea Link in the most important study of the theme, The Da Ponte operas of Vicente Martín y Soler. In effect, the Larpent manuscript copy of the libretto is unfortunately not a primary source. Ciprigna's arias, composed for Anna Morichelli and immediately published in London, are not included. Two days after the premiere, The Times article dated 29 January 1795 states: "the duetto between this delightful actress [Morichelli as Ciprigna] and Morelli [as

Bonario] were warmly repeated; not even the laughing trio [“Vadassi via di qua” between Cilia, Valerio and Fiuta] went by without a similar and well-deserved complement”. In Act I Scene 11 of the Larpent manuscript this laughing trio is not present. But despite this the source is still testimony one of the earliest states of the work, which would change during the course of the performances themselves. The Larpent libretto is one of the rare testimonies of what was originally the character Sbaraglia, sung by Luigi Bonfanti (the same singer who would perform the role of Fiuta in the London restagings of 1798). This character would effectively disappear in all the restagings of the work, both on the continent and in the British Isles (in 1798, 1801 and 1802), where Da Ponte was still present to revise his own works, in contrast to Martín y Soler. [Note 34] However, there is a very interesting trace of Sbaraglia in the Artaria edition (which could be dated as being from 1796) of Vienna, almost contemporary to the performances held in the Burgtheater, with the title *Gli sposi in contrasto*: two arias headed “Allegremente” (I,2 in Larpent, No. 115 in Artaria) are attributed to Sbaraglia. On the contrary the aria “Un fucile un spadon”, attributed to Sbaraglia in Larpent (I,6), is attributed to Valerio in Artaria No. 116. [Note 35] Link [Note 36] affirms that the sung minuet “Con che bella leggiadria” was attributed to Sbaraglia in Larpent. In my opinion this aria is sung by Fiuta, who has taken on the role of a dance teacher. Moreover, in this case Sbaraglia would have to sing two arias in a row, since the above-mentioned “Un fucile un spadon”, is sung by Sbaraglia –for the coherence of the text and Badini's comments [Note 37] – and not by Bonario as D. Link proposes. It would now be appropriate to conclude this digression about the character Sbaraglia with Da Ponte's own words: “This part has been introduced into the work, obediently, once the libretto was already finished, so that it isn't surprising that Sbaraglia disturbs the order a little:- Offence: “il fucil, lo spadonA portar io men vo”.-Reply: Don't you like it? I don't either. Geniuses coincide. We could substitute the madrigaletto that was sung to such little effect in *L'Inglese in Italia* [Premiered in London at the King's Theater in Haymarket with music by Pasquale Anfossi (1727-1797) on 20 May 1786. The libretto was naturally by Badini]. It will certainly be more effective in the mouth of a Captain”. [Note 38] Thus, the character of Sbaraglia was not envisaged by Da Ponte, and logically would not reappear on the continent or in London once Da Ponte went back to work on his own libretto. Although Link prefers one of the Florence manuscripts (I-Fc, B275) which, as she shows, is the basis for the restaging of *La capricciosa corretta* in Vienna on 5 October 1795 in the San Moisè Theater, [Note 39] the same year as the premiere with Anna Morichelli in the lead role, I prefer the other Florentine source (I-Fc, fondo Pitti T198), which I have compared with the libretto to the restaging of *La capricciosa corretta* in Florence on 7 May 1796 at the Teatro della Pergola. [Note 40] What inclines me to prefer this version in preference to the Venetian is the presence of two singers in London the previous year, and not only one as in Venice: Anna Morichelli, the soprano in the role of Ciprigna, but also the tenor Luigi Brida as Lelio. The arias of this Florentine manuscript are very beautiful and present obvious vocal difficulties: it is thus likely that the tenor Lodovico Brizzi, who played the role of Lelio in Venice, would have found the arias too virtuosic and would have include alternative arias (whose authorship is unknown for now), except the last aria “Già vicin” II, 17, which is common to both scores. The manuscript that has served as our primary source was probably copied in accordance with the performances staged in Florence. It is conserved at the Accademia Chigiana de

Siena, I-Sc Ms VII E 4-5, and was unknown to musicologists until now. As mentioned above, the following manuscripts were also consulted: Vienna A-Wn KT 77, Darmstadt copied by the Washington Library of Congress in 1907, US-Wc M1500 M 35 C3, Genova, I-G1 SS.Bb3.1 (copied by "Domenique maître de musique"), Naples I-Nc which is, together with Paris F-Pc 2264, the most altered copy, with interpolated numbers, cuts, rewrites (sometimes signed, such as in the case of Naples, which includes the names of Guglielmi II,3 and Pietro Raimondi I,3). The case of manuscript F-Pc 2264 is particularly lamentable. The title page reads La Capriciosa coretta [sic.]/ del Sgr Vincenzo Martini/ In S. Moisè l'autunno 1795. Only a quarter of its original state remains, some pages have been torn out, others sewn in, and others cut with scissors. It was probably just as an important source as its younger brother, F-Pc D7649, L'isola del piacere, a manuscript, by the same author-composer team and copied by the same hand in perfect state. Dorothea Link doubts the authenticity of some numbers [Note 41] such as No. 2: Ciprigna's "Son pur folli" and suggests that it could have been written for Morichelli by Martín y Soler for the restagings of the work in Italy that year [Note 42] and No. 18 Bonario's "Senza l'onesto... Mi fà questa perfida". This number differs in Siena ("Ascolta, oh figlia,"), Genova ("Da quel visetto amabile"), Naples ("Tutto il mondo"), the Florence libretto ("Ah Bonario, che malanno"), and the 1798 London libretto ("O Vecchi che avete"). This scene seems to have been problematic from the outset. The version found in Larpent ("Com'essa è vezzosetta", II,5) was perhaps never set to music by Martín, or at least has not come down to us today. The version "Senza l'onesto... Mi fa questa perfida" has finally been chosen because it appears in Venice, Bologna (libretto Sartori No. 5071), Darmstadt and Vienna, and was published by Simrock in Bonn in 1798 for voice and harpsichord. In regard to Isabella's No. 12, all the musical version coincide except I-Fc B275. I tend to agree with D. Link with regard to her doubts as to the authenticity of these four numbers. They compare unfavourably with what was presented to Italian and German audiences during the last five years of the eighteenth century and their stylistic unity differs from the rest of the work.

Synopsis Act I: In Naples, Bonario, a middle-class widower, married to his second wife Ciprigna, finds his two children, Valerio and Isabella, exasperated and about to leave home. The same occurs with his servants, Fiuta and Cilia, who ask for their wages. Bonario is compliant and promises to take control of the house again before the day is over. For her part, Ciprigna is courted by her cicisbeo Giglio, but since the first time she saw Isabella's suitor, Count Lelio, who has come to ask for the hand of his beloved, Ciprigna has not taken eyes off the new arrival. Heeding Fiuta's advice, Lelio allows himself to be courted so as to lead Ciprigna into a trap. Bonario explains to Fiuta that his wife has robbed him of the power at home and the latter decides to take advantage of the situation, arming her master with pistols and advising him to use force and intimidation. But in the end it is Ciprigna who, turning the guns on her husband, frightens him. While Valerio, Cilia and Fiuta trick Giglio, who becomes trapped in a net, Ciprigna keeps trying to seduce Lelio. The detection of the hidden Giglio provokes the great confusion at the end of the first act. Act II: While Valerio reiterates his will to leave, Isabella rejects the idea of being kidnapped by Lelio. Fiuta doesn't lose hope of gaining revenge after his first defeat, and promises to marry Cilia when her plan is over. Ciprigna rids herself of Giglio and attributes him a wife, trying to ease Lelio's suspicions, whom she thinks is jealous, lavishing him with riches and squandering Bonario's fortune. Lelio returns her gifts immediately and Bonario, moved

by his honesty, promises him his daughter's hand in marriage. Ciprigna, furious at what is being planned behind her back, allows herself to be seduced by a mysterious Oriental ambassador who pretends to come to take her away to his island, where her unusual beauty will reign forever. She decides to leave home, but not without freeing herself of Isabella, who doesn't deserve Lelio or to be rich: Giglio will put her in a convent. This plan, which Cilia uncovers, is revealed to the whole family. Taking advantage of the darkness, Lelio neutralises Giglio and rescues Isabella. Ciprigna, who is about to set off with her Oriental ambassador, is frightened by the sound of several gun shots in the middle of the night and a storm that surprises her at the front door. She goes back, but the family reproach her for her dream of becoming queen. Frightened by the storm and humiliated by this destroyed dream, she submissively returns to Bonario. Fiuta reveals himself as the mysterious ambassador and asks to be forgiven. Giglio is pardoned but asked to leave the house. Bonario attempts to put an end to everything with a dinner of reconciliation.

Christophe Rousset (English translation by Yolanda Acker) **Notes**

- 1 Lorenzo da Ponte: *Memoirs*, translated by Elisabeth Abbott, edited and annotated by Arthur Livingston, Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott, 1929, pp. 250-251.
- 2 *Ibid*, p. 254.
- 3 *Ibid*, p. 255.
- 4 *Ibid*, p. 256.
- 5 *Ibid*, p. 257. The satire referred to his: Abate Vittorio Carlo Nemesini [Francesco Badini]: *Breve notizia dell'opera buffa, intitolata La Scuola de' Maritati, o sia delle corna: scritta dal celebre Lorenzo Da Ponte- il quale dopo di essere stao Ebreo, Cristiano, Sacerdote, e Poeta, in Italia e in Germania, si trova Secolare, Marito e Asino in Londra, Lisbona [London, 1795] to which Da Ponte would respond: Piacevoli Noterelle sopra il turpe Libello, intitolato Breve notizia dell'Opera Buffa, che ha per titolo la Scuola de' Maritati, composto dal sedicente Vittorio Nemesini, cioè da Carlo Francesco [London, 1795].*
- 6 *Ibid*, p. 258. Righini Vincenzo (1756-1812) composed a *Don Giovanni* (1776).⁷ The work was premiered at the Teatro de los Caños del Peral on 16 April 1797 by Prospero-Crespi, R. Pelizzoni, Panizza, Crucchiati, Praun, Antonucci and Francesco Franchi.
- 8 Claudio Sarotri: *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800: catalogo analitico con 16 indici, 7 Vols., Cuneo: Bertola & Locatelli Editori, 1990-1994, pp. 69-71, 338-ff.*
- 9 In her Ph.D. thesis *The Da Ponte operas of Vicente Martín y Soler (University of Toronto, 1991, Michigan: UMI, 1991)*, Dorothea Eva Link revealed that the extracts published by the Viennese publisher Artaria were prepared independently of the Burgtheater performances (p. 242).
- 10 The opera known today as *Così fan tutte* was referred to in its librettist's *Memoirs* as *La scola degli amanti*. It was Mozart who seems to have preferred the subtitle. I am grateful to D. Link for this information.
- 11 *Dizionario italiano italiano e francese, Lyon, Annibale Antonini, 1770.*
- 12 *Ibid*.
- 13 *Ibid*.
- 14 *Ibid*.
- 15 *Ibid*.
- 16 The idea of the storm as an overture can be found in Gluck, *L'île de Merlin*, 1785, and reused for *Iphigénie en Tauride* in 1779, and two years later by Piccini for his own *Iphigénie*. Martín would begin *L'isola del piacere* with a storm, on 26 May 1795.
- 17 H. C. Robbins Landon: *Haydn in England 1791-1795 (Haydn Chronicle and Works Vol. 3)*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1995, p. 282.
- 18 *The Morning Chronicle*, 28 January 1795.
- 19 *The Times*, 29 January 1795. During this period critics were accustomed to copying each other. As in the first article in *The Morning Chronicle*, which mentions a rondo, it refers to No. 9 as Ciprigna's first aria. Thus No. 2 was not included in the premiere and perhaps in none of the London performances. See Dorothea Eva Link: *The Da Ponte Operas of Vicente Martín y Soler...*, p. 269, note 21. The laughing trio referred to is "*Vadassi via di qua*", *Finale to Act I, b. 225*. *La buona figliuola* was composed by Niccolò Piccini and

performed 112 times in London from 1760, the year in which it was premiered in Rome, to 1815. In F. C. Petty: Italian opera in London, 1760-1800, Ann Arbor, 1980, cited by Lorenzo della Chà in "Libretti londinesi di Lorenzo Da Ponte", Il Polifilo, 2003.20 Reference to John Bull in his senses: being the second part of Law is a Bottomless Pit (London. 1712), a pamphlet by John Arbuthnot against the Duke of Marlborough. John Bull personifies the clumsiness and stubbornness of the English.21 The critic is referring to the Polonoise No. 17 "La donna he bello il core". See the previous note.22 Abate Vittorio Carlo Nemesini [Francesco Badini]: Breve notizia dell'opere buffa, intitolata La sucola de' maritati... Lisbon [London, 1795], p. 4.23 In Da Ponte: Piacevoli noterelle sopra il turpe libello... composto dal sedicente Vittorio Nemesini, cioè da Francesco..., [London, 1795], pp. 5-6.24 The Morning Chronicle, 17-II-1795, cited in Robbins Landon, op. cit., p. 291.25 The Sun, 17-II-1795, cited in Robbins Landon, op. cit., p. 291.26 The Star, 17-II-1795, cited in Robbins Landon, op. cit., p. 292. Badini's pen can almost be recognised...27 Probably the terzetto "Tu diarai i mali miei", GB-Lcm ms 704.09.28 The Morning Chronicle, 3-IV-1795, cited in Robbins Landon, op. cit., p. 295.29 The Morning Chronicle, 15-IV-1795, cited in Robbins Landon, op. cit., p. 303.30 Dorothea Eva Link: The Da Ponte operas of Vicente Martín y Soler..., p. 342.31 Letter from Da Ponte to Casanova, 9 November 1793, in Lorenzo Da Ponte: Lettere, epistole in versi, dedicatorie e lettere dei fratelli, edizione a curi di Giampaolo Zagonel, Vittorio Veneto (Treviso): D. De Bastiani, 1995, pp. 176-177.32 Larpent Collection of Manuscript Plays US-SMLA 1053.33 Dorothea Eva Link: The Da Ponte operas of Vicente Martín y Soler..., p. 340.34 The alternative arias provided for the 1798 restagings and published by Joseph Dale ("Io son capricciosetto", Lelio, I,7 and "Solitarie amiche piante", Ciprigna II,1) reveal that Da Ponte called on the collaboration of the composer Giacomo Gotifredo Ferrari (1763-1842).35 No. 11, II, 1.36 Dorothea Eva Link: The Da Ponte operas of Vicente Martín y Soler..., p. 242.37 Breve Notizia dell'Opera buffa intitolata La Scuola de' Maritati o sia delle Corna, in Lisbona [London], p. 12.38 Lorenzo Da Ponte: Piacevoli Noterelle sopra il turpe libello (...) composto da (...) Carlo Francesco..., p. 13.39 Dorothea Eva Link: The Da Ponte operas of Vicente Martín y Soler..., p. 241.40 The libretti is numbered 5073 in Claudio Sartori's I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800.41 Dorothea Eva Link: The Da Ponte operas of Vicente Martín y Soler..., p. 305.42 Ibid, p. 269.