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## **REVERSALS OF FORTUNE: CALISTO THEN AND NOW**

BETH GLIXON

Calisto has, in recent years, become Francesco Cavalli's most popular opera; indeed, it may well be the one most often staged from the mid-seventeenth century, aside from those of Claudio Monteverdi. Sparked by Raymond Leppard's production of 1970, and by memorable performances that year by great artists such as Janet Baker and Ileana Cotrubas, several generations of opera lovers have fallen under Calisto's spell; recently René Jacobs's production at Brussels became available on DVD, and has attracted even more attention to the work. New musical editions by Jennifer Williams Brown and Álvaro Torrente have ensured that this wonderful opera will be performed on an even more frequent basis.

Calisto's success in our time seems most natural. After all, the story is one filled with passion, comedy, and, of course, beautiful music: what's not to like? My paper today puts Calisto's remarkable modern-day success in context by taking a closer look at the genesis and production of the work, which encountered significant problems.

Calisto was the tenth work of the librettist Giovanni Faustini, a young man who had begun to collaborate with Francesco Cavalli in 1641. The Cavalli/Faustini partnership was not initially one of equals. Cavalli had moved to Venice in 1616—a year after Faustini's birth—at the age of fourteen, and had become a mainstay in the Venetian musical scene almost from the time of his arrival. He performed regularly as a singer at Saint Mark's Chapel, and soon became active as an organist. In 1639 he began a long association with Venice's new opera industry as the house composer and the impresario at S. Cassiano, which had first presented public opera in 1637. Cavalli's earliest operas were settings of librettos by Giovanni Francesco Busenello and Oratio Persiani, but in 1641 he turned instead to the twenty-six year-old Giovanni Faustini, beginning a collaboration that would last for ten years, ending only with the librettist's premature death in 1651.

Faustini remains something of an enigma. The forewords he wrote for many of his librettos suggest a man of vitality, commitment, and wit, but he left behind no letters, and very few archival documents concerning him survive, so that today we have little with which we can piece together a rounded picture of his life. What we do know brings into focus not so much his every-day existence, but the more tragic and violent episodes he experienced. Giovanni was born and raised in Venice, the second son of Angelo Faustini, a member of Venice's "professional" class. As a teen he survived the devastating plague of 1630 that claimed the lives of his parents as well as his sister. Some years later, in 1639, he was the victim of a brutal, life-threatening attack in which sustained a severe wound to the head. Then, in 1649, Faustini himself killed a man, but he managed to escape prosecution altogether. Regarding matrimony and work, those two great markers of adulthood, we come up blank. Faustini never married, and as far as we know, he never practiced a profession suitable to his rank in society. Against this rather meager background of his life we have his career as one of the most successful and influential librettists in mid-seventeenth-century Venice.

It is impossible to pinpoint what factors prompted Cavalli to choose Faustini as his librettist. The composer's decision may have proved difficult initially, as during the seventeenth century nearly any well educated man or woman possessed the capability to write poetry. For most, however, poetry was a pastime rather than a profession, and in Venice, opera

librettos were written by both noblemen and non-noble citizens of high rank who normally held positions such as lawyer, accountant, or administrator. If it is true that the young Giovanni Faustini held no profession, then he may well have offered Cavalli a valuable commodity: a partner who enjoyed an abundance of leisure time in which he could carry out this new avocation. Giovanni was fortunate to live with his older brother, the lawyer Marco Faustini, who undoubtedly encouraged his creative endeavors and supported him financially. The Faustini brothers had lived for some time in the same parish as Cavalli, so that the two families may have already been acquainted through various daily activities. In any event, the composer had found a man who must have had a great enthusiasm for the world of opera; he eventually became rather compulsive in his drafting of librettos, for he left several works unfinished at the time of his death.

Whatever the reasons that had originally drawn them together, the partnership forged between Cavalli and Faustini in 1641 continued to flourish. Certainly Cavalli must have been satisfied, as their first effort, *La virtù de' strali d'Amore* was followed by a more refined and mature libretto, *L'Egisto*, and the pair continued to premier new operas on an almost yearly basis. Cavalli, with Faustini at his side, had remained at the Teatro S. Cassiano even after he had relinquished the duties and strains of running the theatre. He had also participated intermittently at the Teatro S. Moisè, where Faustini himself would become impresario at the end of the decade. When Faustini's agreement with the owner of the Teatro S. Moisè fell through, the librettist searched for another place to present his operas. S. Cassiano, his former venue, was still rented out to others; the only other opera theatre then active was that of the Grimani family, SS. Giovanni e Paolo. Evidently Faustini was unable to enter into that company, or he chose to maintain his independence. In May 1650, he rented a disused comedy theatre about the same size as S. Moisè, the small S. Aponal. There, in two seasons, Cavalli and Faustini would mount three more operas, among them *Calisto*, before the librettist's death in the autumn of 1651.

Faustini's acquisition of the Teatro S. Aponal was a shrewd move on his part, and was undoubtedly undertaken with the assistance of his brother Marco, who over several decades had honed his financial skills through a variety of professional and social activities. Giovanni Faustini was able to rent the theatre for a mere sixty ducats per year, a savings of hundreds of ducats compared with the other theatres in Venice. This advantageous business transaction would undoubtedly have increased the likelihood of financial success over more expensive venues, and Faustini, in his earliest librettos for S. Aponal, *Rosinda* and *Oristeo*, openly described how he had mounted these operas in the hopes of discharging some debts he had accrued. In those years it was more common for theatres to mount one opera rather than two per season, so Faustini must have had particular reasons for doing so; perhaps the reasonable rent indeed meant that his capital could accommodate the larger production expenses that two operas entailed.

For the next year Faustini once again planned two operas, *Calisto* and *Eritrea*. *Calisto* represented a change in direction for the librettist, as most of his previous works had been newly-invented stories that featured only brief appearances of the gods; *Eritrea* followed Faustini's typical formula more closely. Fortunately for us, the sources surrounding these two operas provide a unique view of the genesis, the creation, and the aftermath of this operatic season: the documents comprise an account book for the opera season written out in the hand of Faustini's brother, Marco; the librettos, which bear witness to the tragic events of the season; and the operatic scores that reflect some of the musical repercussions of those events, to be discussed by Jennifer Williams Brown].

The account book itself is a marvel to behold; the earliest to survive for any Venetian theatre, it tracks in minute detail the expenditures and income for both *Calisto* and *Eritrea*. The small book is organized alphabetically according to the major expenses for the production: costumes, scenery, special effects (machines), dancers, and musicians. The book's specifications for scenery include descriptions more complete than those in any of the later account books that survive for this and other Venetian theatres of the time. The scenery for *Calisto* comprises geographical features such as peaks, a plain, and a wilderness, as well as more ethereal spaces conceived by Faustini, that is the grotto of eternity, and the Emyrean, the heavenly sphere; *Eritrea*, on the other hand, featured a combination of indoor scenes depicting the palace of the rulers of Sidonia, and outdoor vistas of the seacliffs, the ocean, and wild clouds. The machines for *Calisto* include a fountain, and the serpent of eternity, as well as the chariots by which Jove, Mercury, Juno, and Diana ascended and descended, which appeared in scenes throughout the opera. Various costuming materials mentioned in the account book cannot help but bring a smile to the faces of those familiar to the opera, as they include materials appropriate for the representation of bears and satyrs. The account book charts the preparations for both operas, and through the tracking of income, it reveals the dates of the performances, showing that *Calisto* opened over a month before the traditional beginning of carnival.

Little is known during this period about how impresarios designed a two-opera theatrical season. During the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth centuries, it was common for the first opera, presented before Carnival had begun, to be written by an inexperienced composer, or at least not one of the leading names; the big guns would be brought out for the Carnival season proper, when Venice was at its liveliest. With the *Calisto/Eritrea* pair, however, we are dealing with the

same set of librettists and composers, and ones with considerable experience under their belts.

The account book for the season makes clear that Faustini had from the beginning chosen to mount *Calisto* as the first opera, and that he was prepared to make it particularly spectacular, as much as the small space of the Teatro S. Aponal would allow. One of *Calisto*'s virtues was that it told stories that would have been familiar to nearly everyone in the audience. Jove's amorous exploits were known through literature and the visual arts, so that his transformation into Diana in order to seduce *Calisto* would have been expected and, moreover, would have seemed natural. On the other hand, *Eritrea*, the opera planned for the carnival season proper, had a plot that strained the boundaries of verisimilitude in a different way: the title character, a woman, begins the opera disguised as a man who has entered into the state of marriage for less than honorable motives. As the days pass, the disguised *Eritrea* must find convincing reasons to explain to her "wife" why their marriage has not yet been consummated. Both operas, then, involve disguise and transgender couples. Faustini chose to mount *Calisto* first, and, as I mentioned earlier, set the premiere in November, well before the other opera theatres would have begun their seasons. With these schemes in place, Faustini and his business partners must have envisioned a successful run for *Calisto* and *Eritrea*.

The misfortunes that befell the operatic company at S. Aponal late in 1651, however, turned out to be significant and far-reaching. The first was serious indeed: the illness of its leading male singer, the alto castrato, Bonifacio Ceretti. Ceretti was one of the leading castrati at Saint Mark's Chapel, and he had been given the most important male roles in both *Calisto* and *Eritrea*. He fell ill around November 10th, just several weeks before the opening of the opera, and eventually died on December 5th; thus, he would already have learned the part of the love-lorn Endymion before he fell seriously ill. Ceretti's declining health and death must have dealt a severe blow to the company, both emotionally and logistically. With no other suitable contralto available, Cavalli had to change the music that had been written for him, and these changes are visible in the operatic scores of both *Calisto* and *Eritrea*. As if Bonifacio's death were not tragedy enough for one season, more would soon to follow.

Within several nights of the opera's premiere, the production company knew that *Calisto* had not captivated the Venetian public. With no contemporary criticism to aid us, we cannot know whether the story or music did not please, or if the performances simply could not overcome the loss of Bonifacio. Whatever the cause, *Calisto* was something of a flop. It is the ticket receipts themselves that tell the grim tale. *Calisto* was presented only eleven times between November 28th and December 31st, and at several of the performances only fifty-some listeners were in attendance. Even the opening night only drew 232 paying spectators, this in a theatre that could hold something over 400. To make matters worse, Giovanni Faustini, the librettist as well as the impresario of the theatre, unexpectedly died at the age of thirty-six in the midst of this theatrical failure, on 19 December, after only three days of illness. He may very well have fallen ill around the time of the opera's smallest draw, 56 spectators. Nevertheless, the show did go on, but Faustini's death does not seem to have had an immediate effect on the box office receipts, either positively or negatively. Four performances took place after Faustini's demise, and only the last of them show a marked increase of spectators, 118, certainly less than one would expect for a final performance. Clearly, *Calisto*'s many charms were not favorably received by the theatre-goers of Venice.

Faustini's company managed to put *Eritrea* into production, and the buyers of librettos were invited to share in the sense of pathos and loss that had occurred in the preceding weeks. The work's dedication to one of its patrons began:

While the feigned death of *Eritrea* will sweetly delight Your Lordship's ear, the unfortunately real one of Signor Giovanni Faustini will sadly move your soul. That celebrated author died a few days ago, and, after the weaving of eleven works, left his dear *Eritrea* while it was still being printed.

The dedication even mentioned the death of the castrato Ceretti: "(*Eritrea*) has also lost the companionship of the virtuoso Bonifacio, whose steps halted at the beginning of the path of life." Whether or not these words put the theatre-goers in a more sympathetic mood, *Eritrea* did prove much more successful on the stage than *Calisto*, though the audiences were still smaller than some the theatre would attract several years later. Moreover, *Eritrea*'s popularity outside Venice also exceeded *Calisto*'s, as it was revived in several other cities in Italy, while *Calisto* was not.

Scholars over the years have suggested various reasons as to why *Calisto* was not successful in its own age. As I described above, Faustini himself had to make a decision early on in the production process as to which opera would be mounted first. *Calisto* was special in at least three ways: it did not follow Faustini's typical plots, which were newly invented; the gods were a focus not only in the prologue of the opera, but throughout, and the representation of those gods and their environments demanded spectacular scenery. Finally, it featured Pan, Silvano, and Satirino, a trio of rustic characters who spoke their own poetic language, one that reached back to "classic" Renaissance literature: all of their poetic verses

ended with their stress on the antepenultimate syllable. As was typical for librettos of the time, the cast was filled with characters looking for love, from the gods all the way down to the rustic figures. While the disguises and themes of sexuality so prominent in *Calisto* might seem to suggest a suitability for carnivalesque entertainment, I believe that Giovanni Faustini made the right decision to have it premiere as the earlier of the two operas. As a number of scholars, perhaps most prominently Wendy Heller, have pointed out, Faustini gave *Calisto* a rather atypical ending. Whereas most operas end with two blissfully united couples, looking forward to continuing their amorous and sexual adventures, in *Calisto* we find two couples perhaps content, but not in the traditional sense. *Calisto* herself will find immortality in the heavens, but not with Diana, whom she worshiped, or even with Jove. Diana and Endymion will continue to pursue a platonic relationship. Perhaps Faustini judged *Calisto*'s ending as too rarified to satisfy Venice's carnival audiences.

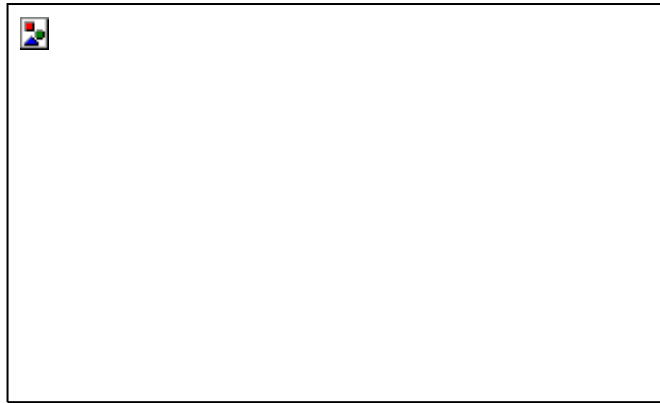
In modern times, however, fortune has smiled on *Calisto*, for it will soon enter its fifth decade of popularity. L.Cavalli's opera has found success in diverse venues, both commercial and academic; its beauties speak for themselves, and audiences respond positively to the flexibility of its musical style. Part of the opera's popularity, however, may very well derive from decisions made by musical directors in *Calisto*'s modern history. I would like to touch briefly on two standard issues regarding casts for the opera; these will be developed more fully by other speakers today.

Cavalli's score forces musical and artistic directors to make an important decision regarding who will sing the character Jove while he is transformed into the character of Diana. The score itself reveals a change from a low register to a high one, that is, Diana always sings as a soprano. Should Jove disguised as Diana be sung by Jove himself in falsetto range, or should Diana herself sing the role, making it clear that she sings as Jove rather than as Diana? The falsetto solution inevitably adds a strong comedic element to the transformation, as can be seen in the Jacobs production; Raymond Leppard decided to play down the comedy of those scenes, and had Janet Baker play both Diana and Jove disguised as Diana.

The other decision faced by directors concerns the portrayal of the nymph Linfea. I call Linfea a nymph, as did Faustini, and Cavalli wrote her music for a soprano. Following Leppard's original production, however, it has become traditional in our time to cast Linfea instead as the equivalent of the old male nurse hungry for sex so familiar to us from Monteverdi's *Poppea*. Naturally, the portrayal of Linfea as an old woman being played by a male singer adds yet another layer of comedy to the mix, but it also deprives us of a more subtle look at the question of love among Diana's followers that has been eloquently argued by Wendy Heller and Jennifer Williams Brown.

In conclusion, Faustini and Cavalli created a marvelous work that was not right for its time. Through the vision of Raymond Leppard, *Calisto* has become a mainstay of the seventeenth-century opera repertoire, has made its way to a number of Europe's most important opera theatres, and has been enjoyed by thousands of spectators. Faustini, the unfortunate impresario of 1651, would be pleased.

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## RESTORING CAVALLI TO THE THEATRE IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

ELLEN ROSAND

I. Cavalli could not have been restored to the theater in the 21st century if he had not been restored to history in the 20th. That is, prerequisite to the revival of Cavalli's operas was the revival of interest in Cavalli as a composer, and in Venetian opera as a historical subject.

(You can look at the bibliography on the screen as I mention the various authors.)

### Slide 1

Already in the 19th century, the first German musicologists recognized Cavalli's importance in the development of opera. They were spurred in their interest by the availability of sources of information going back almost to Cavalli's time itself, many of them published. These included complete annual series of librettos, carefully amassed by collectors, and annotated chronologies based on them. The chronologies of Ivanovich, Bonlini, Groppo, and Allacci, each purporting to correct as it expanded upon its predecessors, established an almost unbroken link between the period they documented and the modern era. The author of the first of these chronologies, Cristoforo Ivanovich, was actually a contemporary of some of the librettists in his catalogue and had even seen some of the works in his list. He evidently supplemented the information he garnered from the librettos themselves with material drawn from more casual or informal sources, as well as by deduction. This is significant with respect to Cavalli, because Ivanovich attributed many more works to him than the evidence provided, and his "errori" were preserved for some three-hundred years, until the early **1970s**, in fact, when a young American student, Thomas Walker, undertook to correct them. (I'll speak more about this later.)

The librettos and chronologies were hardly the only documents available to early researchers: indeed, the value of these printed sources was immeasurably increased by the survival of Cavalli's music in manuscript. For this we are indebted to two individuals: the composer himself and the patrician Marco Contarini. Cavalli's remarkable interest in preserving his own works, and probably aided by the fact that he had a copyist in the house (his wife), insured that they would survive him. And the personal collection of over a hundred mostly Venetian opera manuscripts amassed by Marco Contarini, including Cavalli's, was donated to the Biblioteca Marciana in 1843, where they were available for consultation ever since.

The interest of musicologists from the German-speaking world may also have been influenced by the presence in the Vienna Hofbibliothek of manuscript scores of several Venetian operas, including some by Cavalli. But their research was also beholden to **Italian** scholars (actually, Italian librarians) of the 19th century: Francesco Caffi's study of music at San Marco (**1854**), based on archival information, contains a substantial chapter on Cavalli in his role as San Marco musician. Even more important, however, was the work of Taddeo Wiel, librarian at the Biblioteca Marciana, who published his catalogue of the Contarini Collection in **1888**.

Meanwhile, **French** musicologists were interested in Cavalli from their own perspective, inspired by his relationship to one of their sacred cows, Lully. Lully's ballets had been included in the production of Cavalli's *Xerseand Ercole amante* for Paris in 1660 and 1662, and Henry Prunières's extensive research on the documents surrounding Italian productions in Paris (*L'Opera en France avant Lulli*, **1913**) eventually propelled him into the first monograph on Cavalli (**1931**).

Various early scholars included music in their publications-Egon Wellesz included excerpts from many different operas, as did Prunières, but there was only one attempt to publish an edition of a single work: that was Robert Eitner's publication of the first act of *Giasone* in **1883** (based on the ms in Vienna)..

As far as performances are concerned, the first "official" one seems to have been that of six operatic excerpts at the Venice Conservatory in March of **1913**, under the auspices of Taddeo Wiel. After that, the records are silent (though I would suspect some Cavalli might have been heard at the Paris Conservatoire during these years.) Some sporadic and inconsequential performances took place during the late '50s and early '60s: *La Didone*, edited by Riccardo Nielson, was performed at the Maggio Musicale in Florence in 1952, under the direction of Carlo Maria Giulini, *Le nozze di Peleo e di Teti* was staged at La Fenice in Venice in 1959, followed two years later by *Ercole amante*, conducted by Ettore Gracis. The real beginning of the Cavalli revival, though, occurred in 1967, when Raymond Leppard's edition of *Ormindo* premiered at Glyndebourne.

But before getting into the question of performances, I'd like to touch on a few more of the critical moments in the development of scholarship on Cavalli's operas.

One was the 1950s, actually 1954, when Simon Townley Worsthorne published his book *Seventeenth-Century Venetian Opera* (Oxford, 1954). [Though Worsthorne was more interested in the general phenomenon of opera in Venice than in any individual, he couldn't help focusing on Cavalli, the mainstay of the first three decades of Venetian opera.] This was the same year in which Anna Amalie Abert published her doctoral dissertation, *Claudio Monteverdi und das musikalische Drama* (Lippstadt, 1954). Her work on Cavalli, like that of a number of other scholars as well as performers, was an outgrowth of her interest in Monteverdi, but it resulted in important insight into the musical dramaturgy of Cavalli's operas.

Since the '50s, scholarship on Cavalli has ballooned. I can only mention a few of the path-breaking studies, which have focused on a variety of issues: documents, manuscripts, chronology, attribution, as well as cultural context.

Thomas Walker's fundamental reexamination of the attributions to Cavalli (**1976**), which reduced his oeuvre by 25%-from 42 to 32-thereby revealing that the 28 extant scores represent most of his work; Jane Glover's **1975** Oxford dissertation on Cavalli at S. Apollinare, which led to a monograph published in **1978**, as well as her performance of several of Cavalli's operas, most notably *Rosinda* and *Eritrea* (two of the works written for S. Apollinare).

Finally, there was Peter Jeffery's study of Cavalli's autograph scores of **1980**, which provided solid information about dating, copying procedure, compositional practice, and performance practice.

I do not want to leave anyone out (myself included), but I can't mention all the important work on Cavalli that has been accomplished during the past three decades. (You will be hearing from some of the major players later on today, some of whom were barely-or not even--born in 1967 when the Cavalli revival on stage began.). Here, finally, we get to the question of performances.

## II. Performances

The key moment here, as I have said, was **1967**. That was the year in which Raymond Leppard conducted his "realization" of Cavalli's *Ormindo* at Glyndebourne, hard on the heels of a successful production of his edition of *Poppea*. (When I met him at the Biblioteca Marciana in 1962, Leppard was on a quest for lost Monteverdi operas-he even thought of visiting aristocratic country houses in the environs of Venice to search for uncatalogued manuscripts. Barring any such discoveries, and probably influenced by Worsthorne's book, he was looking for music that resembled Monteverdi's as closely as possible.) This was indeed a crucial moment in the restoration of Cavalli to the theatre. *Ormindo* was a great success and was revived the following year. Somewhat more quietly, but at the same time, across the pond, the young musicologist and harpsichordist Alan Curtis also presented a Cavalli opera, *Erismena* (in English) at the University of California, Berkeley. It is probably no coincidence that this effort too had been preceded by Curtis's *Poppea* (in 1966)

(This English *Erismena*, by the way, was based on the score that is presently under embargo, awaiting an export license here in London.) (The BBC put on a radio performance based on that same English score, edited by Lionel Salter, at around the same time.) Both the Leppard and Curtis productions were soon issued by major record companies (Decca and Vox), thus making *Cavalli* available for the first time to the record-buying public. While Leppard soon published his score, Curtis never did. [This surely explains the large number of subsequent performances of *Ormindò*, as compared with *Erismena*, which was only revived by Curtis himself in the late '70s at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.]

In keeping with their different performance contexts and aims, the *Ormindò* and *Erismena* productions differed vastly from one another. Examples from the two recordings represent the range of performance choices available in the late '60s.

**Example 1 (play later):** Leppard, *Ormindò* vs. Curtis, *Erismena*. (in English).

Leppard himself argued that his editions were intended to bring the laconic scores to life. He treated the manuscripts as if they were incomplete, needing to be "realized" in order to succeed in the theater. Curtis, in contrast, stuck closely (if not completely) to the actual written score.

In listening to the example, you should note first of all, the orchestration, tempi, vocal style, accompanimental style.

**Play example 1:** Leppard: overture and first "aria"

Curtis: overture and first recit, plus aria

Leppard continued with a succession of works: *Calisto* (1970), *Egisto* (1974), and *Orione* (1983) publishing editions of all but *Ormindò* and *Calisto* were recorded, the others not, but the availability of his editions inspired many opera companies, large and small, to perform these works.

If Leppard's "realizations" for Glyndebourne dominated the 1970s, René Jacobs's productions for the *Teatre de la Monnaie* dominated the '80s. Beginning with *Xerse* (1985), and *Giasone* (1988), he moved in the '90s to *Calisto* (1995), and in this century to *Eliogabalo* (perf. 2004, not yet released).

**For my second example**, I'd like to compare Leppard's *Calisto* with Jacobs's. I've chosen one of the most memorable moments in both productions, Giove's first appearance as *Diana*. The role of "Giove in Diana" is interpreted differently in the two productions, but it is difficult to say which one is more effective. For his *Diana*, Leppard had the collaboration of one of the great singing actresses of our time, Janet Baker. Jacobs, on the other hand, had, in Marcello Lippi, a Giove with great range and expressivity and excellent falsetto. There are still big differences in performance style, many of which emerged during the quarter century that separates the two recordings, but those differences seem less significant than those separating Leppard and Curtis, since Jacobs does a fair amount of "realizing" himself.

**Example 2:** *La Calisto*: Leppard and Jacobs

At this juncture, the end of 2008, it is difficult to keep track of all the different *Cavalli* productions in the works. Once confined to special festivals, music schools, universities, or provincial opera houses, *Cavalli* operas can now be seen in mainstream theaters around the world, such as *La Scala* (two days ago) and *Covent Garden* (tomorrow). Aside from our own Ivor Bolton, who first conducted *La Calisto* in Munich in 2005, Fabio Biondi has taken on the *Cavalli* project with *Didone* (two years ago in Venice, two nights ago at *La Scala*), and *Virtù* (next month, October, in Venice).

I'm not in a position to comment on whether *Cavalli*'s operas have yet been subjected to the pressures of *régie opéra* because I haven't seen enough productions, but I do know that *La Didone*, has been featured in a multi-media theatrical production by the avant-garde American director Elizabeth LeCompte, in which the opera is set against a science-fiction film from the 1960s, *Planet of the Vampires*. Some of you may have seen this production, which was recently staged in London. (I can show some excerpts if we have time.)

Slide 2: List of operas

If you look at the list on the screen, you will note that five of Cavalli's 32 operas are lost (they are underlined). Of those remaining, as far as I have been able to determine, all but 6 (or 9 if we count the Minato operas) have received some sort of production. Twelve (nearly half) have been recorded, and editions or facsimiles of 13 are presently available

I'm sure I haven't accounted for all the performances. For instance, Calisto was performed at least 57 different times between 1970 and 1995, mostly in Leppard's edition (it was the only one available until the mid-90s). Now there are two excellent editions available, by two scholars you will hear from later this morning, Jennifer and Alvaro.

### III. Editions

There is a strange lacuna in the history of Cavalli editions: a gap of more than half a century separates Eitner's 1883 edition of act 1 of Giasone, undertaken for purely historical reasons, and Leppard's Ormindo of 1967. And although Leppard published two further "realizations," of Egisto (1975), and Calisto (1977), no other editions appeared until the early 2000s (Christopher Mossey's Doriclea, and then the two Calistos). This meant that anyone wishing to produce a Cavalli opera had to rely on Leppard-or else make her own edition. Many conductors did so, chief among them Jane Glover. But not every conductor was equipped to do so.

In comparison with those of later composers, Cavalli's opera scores present special problems: Because they were records of performance, or even used for a particular performance by the composer, who directed from the keyboard, they are spare, lacking information that the composer himself would have supplied in rehearsal, but which subsequent performers would have needed, details that could only have been decided on during the preparation for a performance, when such elements as theater size, available singers and instrumentalists were in place. But even beyond these elements, there is no performing tradition for these works. Cavalli is long dead, and the style of his operas long forgotten. Performance practice relevant to these scores has only gradually developed, thanks to many of the scholars and performers mentioned here. Experience from more recent opera, from opera of the standard repertoire, is not transferable to 17th-century works.

**Enter Barenreiter:** In response to what seems to be a genuine demand for usable scores of these operas, Barenreiter has agreed to publish a first series of 14 operas over the next seven years, with the promise of completing the project after that. (All of us on the program today are involved in this edition.) The purpose of the series is to provide musicologically sound editions designed to be used in productions of all kinds. Even so, certain decisions will need to be left to the conductor. In particular, the conductor will have to decide how to deploy the continuo group, when and where the individual performers need to play. These features were not included in the original scores because they depended on cast, theater size, and availability and skill of particular players.

In establishing a complete edition of Cavalli's works, we hope to be meeting as well as creating a demand. Our editions are conceived as a means of facilitating Cavalli productions by laying out the basic text as clearly as possible as well as realizing the implications of the sources by, for instance, adding string parts or instrumental passages where they were implied but not written down. Our editions will be directed toward performers trained in standard repertoire, but will also leave space for those individual conductors who are experienced in this repertoire to add the kinds of performance indications they need, such as orchestration for the continuo group.

#### Slide 3: List of Barenreiter Operas

**IV Epilogue:** I'd like to close by considering the question, why Cavalli? Granted, having found a formula that attracted and satisfied audiences at the same time, he dominated the Venetian stage for almost half of the seventeenth century, producing at least one, and sometimes two or even three operas in single season. But, after 350 years of silence, why now? What makes Cavalli's operas so appealing at this point in our history? Half a century ago, Leppard was looking for a successor to Monteverdi, for works that would rival the success of Poppea at Glyndebourne. Now, the search is more general: opera theaters, anxious to expand their repertoire, are looking to resurrect old as well as commission new works. In fact, the more people become acquainted with his operas, their well-made plots, their poignant mixture of comic and serious elements, the more they recognize that Cavalli shares important features with contemporary operatic composers. For the Venetian composer, music was heightened rhetoric, the means of communicating the drama of a text. He developed an open-ended speech-song style that spoke directly to an audience, even a naive one: boundaries between speech and song were permeable, not yet fixed by the conventions of recitative and aria. Cavalli's operatic music was designed to create drama by communicating the emotions of characters as vividly as possible. Contemporary opera composers, too, seek a new musical language, one that purposely obliterates distinctions between speech and song, that hews closely to the ebb and flow of the drama without attracting attention to itself as music. What Cavalli invented, or



came upon as a natural development of text-music relationships established by composers before him, in various genres, many of today's opera composers aim to retrieve. By exploring both ends of the spectrum, today's opera houses are assuring, or attempting to assure the continuation of a tradition that may not always (or ever) have been profitable, but that, for reasons we can all appreciate, has survived for more than 400 years.

### Check List of Cavalli's Operas

Le nozze di Peleo e di Teti (1639) [Venice 1959]

Gli amori di Apollo e di Dafne(1640) [Bowling Green, Zedda 2004, Garrido 2005] **RF**

La Didone (1641) [Glover, Fasano 1972, Rousset 1997, Hengelbrock 1998, Garrido 2004, Ignoti Dei 2006, Biondi 2006] **RRS**

La virtu de'strali d'Amore (1642) [Garrido 2001, Bowling Green 2007, Biondi 2008] **S**

[Amore innamorato (1642) **lost**]

Egisto 1643) [Fasano 1970, Hirsch 1973, Leppard, Santa Fe 1974, Peabody, Princeton] **RS**

Ormindo (1644) [Leppard, Glyndebourne1967, Fasano 1971, Correas 2006] **RRS**

\*Doriclea (1645) **S**

[Titone (1645) **lost**]

Giasone (1649) [Panni 1969, Jenkins, New York 1976, Echols, New York 1987, Jacobs 1988, Aspen 2006, Marcon 2007] **RSS**

[Euripo (1649) **lost**]

\*Orimonte (1650)

\*Oristeo (1651) **F**

Rosinda (1651) [Glover, Oxford 1973, Potsdam, 2008]

Calisto (1652) [1970-2006: 57 different performances] **RRRSSS**

Eritrea (1652) [Glover, Wexford 1975]

\*Veremonda (1653)

Orione (1653) [Leppard, Santa Fe 1983, Marcon, Venice 1998]**R**

\*Ciro (1654) [prologue in Jacobs, Xerse]

Xerse (1655) [Jacobs 1985, 2004] **RS**

Statira(1655) [Florio 2004] **R**

Erismena (1655) [Curtis 1968, BBC, BAM] **R**

Artemisia (1656) [Schulze]

Hipermestra (1658) [Utrecht 2006]

[Antioco (1659) **lost**]

\*Elena (1660)

Ercole amante (1662) [Gracis 1961, Corboz 1980 Boston Early Music Festival 1999, Garrido 2006] **RR S**

\*Scipione affricano(1664) **F**

\*Mutio Scevola(1665)

\*Pompeo magno(1666)

Eliogabalo (1668) [Crema 1999, Jacobs 2004, Glover, Aspen, 2007] **RS**

[Massenzio (1673) **lost**]

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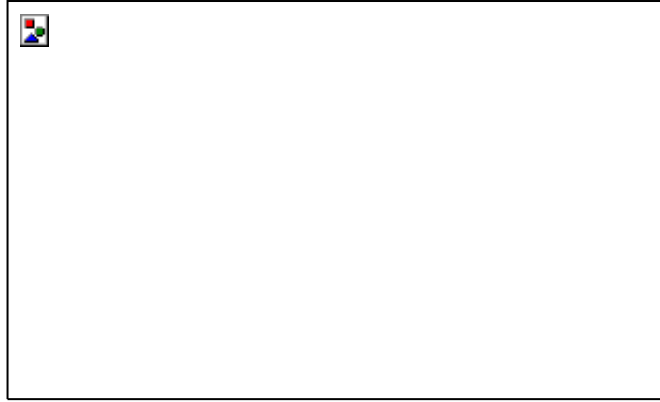
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22 SEPTEMBER 2008

**EVENTS AND EMERGENCIES:  
WHAT THE SOURCES CAN AND CANNOT TELL US ABOUT  
PERFORMING 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ITALIAN OPERA**

JENNIFER WILLIAMS-BROWN

**Introduction**

Opera is an art form that seems to attract disaster: no performance ever goes entirely as planned. I vividly remember a performance of Britten's *Turn of the Screw*, in which the boy soprano singing the role of Miles went through puberty during the first act and ended up a baritone. Of course, operatic disasters are nothing new: they've been with the genre since the very beginning. The history of opera in the seventeenth century is one of collapsing buildings and budgets, murder, political intrigue, feuds, fires, plagues, lawsuits, papal injunctions, and countless other calamities.

Although the press tends to celebrate the more colorful disasters, in fact opera directors face innumerable mundane problems on a daily basis, from props that go missing, to violinists who get stuck in traffic. And if such snafus are common in well-known works, which have been thoroughly road-tested, one can only imagine the trials of staging a new opera for the very first time. And yet, 'the show must go on': the company has to find solutions to these problems or everybody loses. [SLIDE 2] In Cavalli's day, this theatrical 'fact of life' was so well-accepted that it was written into his contract: 'signor Cavalli [is] obligated...to attend in person all the rehearsals that will be necessary, as well as to transpose, change, cut, and add whatever might be necessary in the music in service of the opera, as dictated by the events and emergencies that tend to happen on such occasions.'

This morning I want to discuss some of the ways in which seventeenth-century opera companies dealt with these 'events and emergencies,' and how their solutions shaped the sources--especially the musical manuscripts--that are the only surviving records of this music. This type of knowledge has important implications for how we conceive of opera in this period and, in particular, for how scholars prepare the editions that bring the music to the listening public. I will orient my discussion around three basic questions: 1) What sources do we have to work with, when editing a seventeenth-century opera like *La Calisto*? 2) What does it mean to make a musical edition? and 3) What can or can't the sources tell us?

**I. The Sources**

A typical premiere season in the seventeenth century generated lots of written materials. The right side of this chart shows sources with just the words; the left side has those with the music as well. The musical sources are divided into scores (which contain more or less all the music), and parts (which contain only the bits for each performer). This chart is arranged in chronological order, moving from top to bottom. The sources at the top were used in composition, the ones in the middle were used in rehearsals and performances, and the ones at the very bottom were made after the show closed. Remember that the contents of an opera usually changes over time, so each source will usually contain a different version than the one before. I've made rather a large box for the production score, since it was the main repository for notating the revisions made during rehearsals and performances.

There's just one drawback with the picture I've painted here: most of these sources are lost. To indicate the overall rate of loss across the entire repertory, I've used boxes with increasingly faint edges; sources that are lost altogether have no outline. The darkest here are the printed libretti: a libretto survives for almost every opera production in the seventeenth century. But there are only one or two examples of musical sketches and parts (shown with light grey edges). Most of the musical sources that do survive from this repertory are neat copies of the production scores; unfortunately, these are often full of mistakes.

For Cavalli, we have better musical sources than any other seventeenth-century opera composer: a handful of rare autographs, and another handful of rare production scores. Furthermore, Cavalli himself supervised the preparation of several post-production copies. For *La Calisto* (shown in yellow), there is exactly one musical source, but luckily it's a production score. This manuscript began life as a neat copy of the composer's autograph, copied partly by his principal scribe, who (interestingly enough) was his wife Maria; Francesco later wrote in many changes and corrections. Maria used this score to copy parts for the singers and instruments; Francesco used it to accompany rehearsals and performances. We also have a printed libretto for *Calisto*, which has an appendix with some added scenes. A third, invaluable source (not shown here), is an account book discovered by Beth and Jonathan Glixon; you'll hear more from them about this. Together, these three sources make *La Calisto* the best-documented opera we have from this period. [SLIDE 4]

## II. Making an Edition

To understand what it means to make a musical edition, let's start with an analogy: Imagine that you've inherited your ancestor's recipe book, and you want to publish it for people to use in modern kitchens. Not only do you have to decipher the handwriting, amid the wine and gravy stains, but you'll need to find different ways to express archaic terminology and measurements, and find alternatives for ingredients that are not commonly available today.

This slide shows a bit of the manuscript of *La Calisto*, the start of Endymion's great aria that begins Act II. Let's hear a bit of this, sung by Derek Lee Ragin; the recording starts at the second system if you want to follow along. [PLAY] Although Maria Cavalli's handwriting isn't too bad, there are a couple of archaic things here: there's no key signature, the meter sign is C3, Endymion's part uses an alto clef, there are strange black minims and semibreves; there is also a funny squiggle in the margin (remember this one, we'll come back to it later). When we make a scholarly edition of a piece of music, we usually perform three basic functions: 1) we translate the symbols on the page into a format that modern musicians can read efficiently; 2) we correct mistakes, reconstruct omissions, and interpret symbols that readers might find confusing; and 3) we identify every change we have made and provide a rationale for our decisions. We also provide some background on the composer, the work, the sources, and so on.

This process sounds straightforward enough; but I want to stop here and draw your attention to a couple of pitfalls.

**PITFALL #1:** The concept of 'translation.' Just as in translating any text, or adapting a recipe, there is usually not an exact correspondence between the original and your new version: the process of translation will bring about subtle (or not so subtle) changes in the meaning. The editor has to decide if certain aspects of the original notation are important enough to retain in the edition.

For instance, most scholars would NOT put a modern key signature on this aria, since it would evoke anachronistic assumptions in the mind of a modern musician. Cavalli was writing at a transitional period in the history of harmony: this piece is about eighty percent D minor, but it's the other twenty percent that gives it that special seventeenth-century flavor. Moreover, most scholars believe that, when Cavalli does provide a signature, he's conveying something expressive that is not captured by modern conventions.

**PITFALL #2:** Music notation. Opera is really an audio-visual medium: it's designed to be conveyed through live performances, not written sources. Music notation is not very precise today, and was even less so in the seventeenth century. Production scores like this one were prepared for the composer himself to use in directing rehearsals and performances, so the notation is often informal and, by modern standards, incomplete - much as your ancestor's recipes might be somewhat rudimentary on paper, but would be supplemented in practice by advice passed down in your family's kitchen. As you can see here, this page mainly has just notes and lyrics. There are no markings for tempo, dynamics, articulation, or phrasing, and very few figures that tell the accompanist what harmonies to play. This manuscript does not tell us what tone quality, ornaments, or even what instruments to use. It includes virtually no information about the visual aspects of the opera's scenery, staging, costumes, and choreography.

Fortunately, we can reconstruct some things from other sources. The account book for *La Calisto* tells us that the orchestra consisted of only six people (2 violins, 1 violone and 3 continuo players). It provides names of singers, which allow us to deduce what voice types sang the roles. It also provides fascinating details about the scenery and costumes. Other seventeenth-century sources help us understand the overall performing style—you'll hear more about that in the afternoon session. [SLIDE 5]

**PITFALL #3:** The concept of the 'definitive text.' It's easy to imagine, when looking at nice orderly spots on nice clean pages, that a printed edition represents 'the way the composer intended the work to go.' But the concept of 'the Author's Definitive Text' is, in fact, a rather slippery one, especially in this repertory. If we accept that seventeenth-century opera is a genre designed for live performance, then we must also accept that it is vulnerable to "the events and emergencies that tend to happen on such occasions," as Cavalli's boss wrote in his contract. That is to say, the composer's job was not simply to hand over a finished piece of music, but also to resolve whatever problems arose in production, and change the opera accordingly. In short, what the audience heard was probably different every night, and rarely exactly what the composer originally wrote.

If you'll permit me to invoke the recipe metaphor once more: imagine that the day of your dinner party you learn that one of your guests is allergic to nutmeg, so you use cloves instead. What you serve will be different from your ancestor's recipe—maybe worse, maybe better, but it will still be more or less the same dish, and what's most important? it will be what's needed for that night's dinner.

Something rather more serious than a nutmeg allergy happened to *La Calisto*: as the Glixons discovered, the star castrato in the role of Endymion fell sick shortly before opening night, and died a few days later. Let's now look at how Cavalli dealt with this and other 'events and emergencies.' [SLIDE 6]

### III. Specific Examples

Although Cavalli's contract for *La Calisto* is lost, it was probably similar to the one I quoted earlier. As you remember, it required Cavalli to make four basic types of revisions: transpositions, changes (that is, rewriting), cuts, and additions. Not only does he have to think up the revisions, but he also has to notate them in a way that helps him keep track of the evolving state of the opera. Today, thanks to computer technology, it's trivial to notate changes like these: with a simple click of the mouse, you can transpose, or 'cut & paste,' any amount of music in seconds, then print out as many copies as you need. [SLIDE 7]

It was a bit different in Cavalli's day. The only materials he had were paper, pen, scissors, and paste. Furthermore, he had to pay for all the copying himself (this was probably a big reason why his wife copied his music: he didn't have to pay her!) As we read in the contract: 'signor Cavalli [is] obligated... [to have] all the copies and originals that will be necessary made at his own expense, without the theatre managers having to hear any complaints, whether about paper or copyists or anything else.' Since Cavalli had no budget, and was chronically short of time, he couldn't produce clean copies of each new version; instead he cut, pasted, and wrote over an earlier version of the score.

The *Calisto* production score contains hundreds of examples of transposition, rewriting, cuts, and additions, but for the sake of time let's focus on those related to the role of Endymion. We don't know the name of the singer who replaced the one who died, but we can tell from Cavalli's changes that he was a soprano instead of an alto. [SLIDE 8] Here again is the first example I showed you. If you remember the funny squiggle in the margin, it says 'alla quarta alta,' ('transpose this aria up a fourth'). Cavalli marked much of Endymion's music to be transposed up a fourth or a fifth to the soprano register. The accompanists were trained to transpose at sight while playing from this score; but the new singer probably had a part copied out for him in the new key and clef. [SLIDE 9] This is a case of rewriting: Cavalli crossed out the old version of this passage and copied a new one above. Note that the old version is written in alto clef, and the new one for the new singer is in soprano clef. [SLIDE 10] Here we have some cuts. One and a half scenes were cut from Endymion's role, perhaps because the new singer wasn't going over so well with the audience. [SLIDE 11] And finally, here is an example of added material. It's actually not for Endymion, but I suspect the Endymion disaster prompted this change: some comic scenes were added, probably to distract the audience from the loss of the company's star singer. (It's an old tradition in the theatre, you know: 'send in the Clowns.') The new scenes were copied on separate sheets of paper, which are lost today: all that remains of the music is Cavalli's annotation 'Qui va la scena del Bifolco' ("The shepherd scene goes here.")

So here we see Cavalli adjusting the opera to cope with a sudden change of cast, and a new singer with quite a different voice than the old one. There's just one problem with the way Cavalli altered Endymion's music: he apparently didn't fix

all of it. About twenty percent of the role was NOT marked for transposition, or adjusted in any way. Did the new singer really perform most of his role as a soprano, but occasionally drop down into the alto register? If he did, it would push the overall range of this part to two octaves'about thirty-three percent larger than most roles in this period. Such a thing might be possible physically, but it would hardly be desirable from a vocal standpoint, or from a musical standpoint: we would lose the subtle changes in tessitura that Cavalli used to convey Endymion's various moods'low for tragic; high for defiant. [SLIDE 12]

This page holds a clue to resolving this paradox. Here Cavalli rewrote the Furies duet. He crossed out the old version, but only wrote the bass line of the new version, since that's all he needed to see to accompany it during the performance. The new vocal music must have been copied straight into the singers' parts, which of course are lost.

We can deduce that something similar happened to the twenty percent of Endymion's role that seems to remain in the alto register. Cavalli must have marked in the score only those revisions that were relevant to an accompanist, who would just be playing the bass line. Therefore all the transpositions got marked, but any changes that altered just the vocal line were not marked in the score, but rather in the singer's part, which is lost. In short, the impression we get from the score that Endymion performs part of the role as a soprano and part as an alto, is really just an illusion. [SLIDE 13]

This hypothesis is confirmed by the only surviving seventeenth-century vocal part, from another opera by Cavalli, and I'd like to thank Hendrik Schulze for sharing this information, and for providing the image. Look at just the crossed-out section, ignore the rest of the music on the page. Cavalli evidently rewrote this role for a different voice type: here these bars are in the alto register, but in the corresponding passage in the score they are written for a tenor. Although the vocal melody is different in the two versions, the bass line is the same. Furthermore, there is no sign in the score that the vocal line had been revised: someone reading the score without reference to the vocal part would never know. From this it is apparent that, for seventeenth-century opera, the production score is NOT a complete record of all the revisions; the missing performers' parts contained the rest of the music.

Neat copies of the musical score are even less complete, since they generally omit or misinterpret the messy revisions in the production scores from which they were copied. Take Cavalli's *Eritrea*, premiered two months after *Calisto* in the same theatre with the same cast. In the only surviving musical source of *Eritrea* (a neat copy), the male lead Theramene appears to change from an alto into a baritone in the middle of Act III, with a drop in register of nearly an octave. There is no convincing reason for this in the plot, unlike *Calisto*, where the baritone Jove is disguised as the soprano Diana for half the opera. [i] (Moreover, I daresay Theramene wasn't meant to go through puberty during the performance, like young Miles did!)

Two facts help explain this apparent anomaly: 1) we know that the roles of both Theramene in *Eritrea* and Endymion in *Calisto* were originally meant to be sung by the same alto castrato; 2) we know that this singer died suddenly at the start of the season. Cavalli must have been in the middle of composing Act III of *Eritrea* when the singer died; he then composed the remainder of the opera for a new singer, who was evidently a baritone. In the production score, which is lost, the alto sections that Cavalli had already written for the first singer must have been transposed down using the same sorts of squiggles we saw used to transpose Endymion's role in the *Calisto* manuscript; further adaptations to the new singer's range were surely made in the vocal part, which is also lost. Yet in the neat copy that is the only surviving musical source of *Eritrea*, the scribe omitted any transposition markings or indeed any other sign of the numerous revisions that must have taken place during this disastrous season. Thus the apparent anomaly in the role of Theramene is easily explained as the result of "events and emergencies," whose resolution was incompletely recorded in the surviving neat score. The singer is manifestly not meant to sing both alto and baritone in the course of a single performance. [SLIDE 1]

## Conclusion

Well, your head is probably spinning with all this information: it's mainly for the Cavalli geeks in the crowd. But one thing is probably clear: by the end of the season, a seventeenth-century opera has weathered many an 'event and emergency,' and the production score has become a messy pile of scraps and scribbles. Furthermore, each score may be incomplete and combine different versions of the opera.

These ideas have two important implications for editors. First, when interpreting seventeenth-century opera sources, we should be wary of taking them at face value. Even seventeenth-century copyists had trouble deciphering the sources correctly: as one of Cavalli's associates complained, the production score was 'all so worked over and filled with annotations that it could not be understood.' Instead, we need to find ways to scratch beneath the surface and reconstruct

what's missing.

Second, when presenting this music to modern readers, we need to find a balance between practicality and historical accuracy. The performers depend on us to provide at least one coherent, singable version of the opera; yet we owe it to Cavalli to unpack the layers of revision as best we can. For my edition of *La Calisto*, the solution was simple: I presented the original alto version of *Endymion*, and put the revisions in an appendix. For other operas, though, it may be harder to find a viable solution.

Of course the theater today operates under many of the same conditions as it did in Cavalli's time: modern directors, too, may need to make some adjustments to these works when faced with 'events and emergencies.' Yet obviously one can go too far in that direction. In an attempt to find that tricky balance point between practicality and historical accuracy, my edition suggests ways to make transpositions, changes, cuts, and additions that are consistent with 17th-century practice. My ultimate goal has been to enable today's performers to develop new interpretations of *La Calisto*, armed with the fullest possible understanding of her original forms and contexts.

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[1] Álvaro Torrente's paper (in Part II of the Gresham College Study Day) calls attention to the fact that Theremene's shift from alto to baritone comes at an important moment in the plot--when Theremene finally recognizes his wife Eritrea. Even so, it is unclear why Cavalli would have chosen to signal this moment with a sudden and unusual drop from the alto to the baritone register. Both Cavalli and Faustini were keenly attuned to issues of dramatic verisimilitude: if they had intended such a peculiar change, Faustini would surely have introduced some lines explaining its significance--as he did with Giove's transformation in *Calisto*.