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MOLIÈRE, DESCARTES, AND THE PRACTICE OF COMEDY IN THE INTERMEZZO

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The genesis of the comic intermezzo is a story that, at present, appears to be all sewn up. First produced in Venice in the early years of the eighteenth century, intermezzos, like the comic episodes of seventeenth-century opera that they replaced, borrowed amusing characters and funny situations from the tradition of the *commedia dell'arte*. In his comprehensive survey of the repertory the late intermezzo scholar Charles Troy remarked on the use of 'stock character types from the *commedia dell'arte*' and 'stereotyped' plots.[1] As the co-author of the *New Grove II* article on the subject (with Piero Weiss), Troy's judgement has had a wide readership.[2] Part of Troy and Weiss's argument is based on their understanding of the time constraints librettists must have been under. Comic *arte* scenarios were 'ready to hand'[3] and so librettists were happy to adapt them in the interests of efficiency. Six intermezzos that borrow their titles and plots from six plays by Molière are the exception. These works also rely on earlier material, but nevertheless constitute a superior form of dramaturgy because of their illustrious pedigree. As Gordana Lazarevich and Ortrun Landmann state in their article on the intermezzo in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, most intermezzo librettos have an uneven quality, save for a few with sincere artistic ambitions—including those six written in imitation of Molière.[4] Molière's relationship to the intermezzo is therefore a relatively distant and discrete one. The dead Frenchman provided source material from which Italian librettists borrowed when they wanted a more literary quality of comedy than the *commedia* afforded.

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[1] Charles Troy, *The Comic Intermezzo* (Ann Arbor, 1979), 83–4.

[2] Charles Troy and Piero Weiss, 'Intermezzo', *New Grove II*, xii. 488–90.

[3] Ibid. 489.

[4] Intermezzos, they write, range from a series of 'inconsequential jokes' held together by tenuous logic ('belanglosen Ulks in logisch dürftiger Verknüpfung') to 'brilliant *seria*-parodies' and comedies modelled on Molière ('bis zur geistvollen Seria-Parodie und Umsetzung literarischer Komödienstoffe [hier ist vor allem der Einfluss Molières zu nennen]'). Ortrun Landmann and Gordana Lazarevich, 'Intermezzo', in *MGG*^{2}, Sachteil, iv. 1026–48 at 1037. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

The relationship between the works of Molière and the *commedia dell'arte*, like the relationship between the intermezzo and the *commedia*, might appear to have been explored in exhaustive detail. As early as 1736, the Italian expatriate writer and *commedia* performer Luigi Riccoboni drew attention to Molière's consistent use of Italian improvised theatrical models in his plays.[5] By 1999, Claude Bourqui's book documenting the sources of Molière's plays (both certain and probable) appeared nearly exhaustive.[6] But Bourqui himself cautioned that the many *commedia* scenarios had not yet been studied in sufficient detail to reveal the full range of their implications for understanding the comic skill of Molière.[7] Enter Italianist and theatre scholar Richard Andrews, who took Bourqui's caution to heart. In a 2005 article in the *Modern Language Review* Andrews went one step further and suggested that scholars re-evaluate the notion of what constitutes a source in early modern theatre. His aim was to further break down many of the generic fences that scholars had erected around spoken and improvised comic traditions in the seventeenth century, in line with more recent scholarship on the *commedia*, which has explicitly avoided notions of 'purity' and a search for the 'independent physiognomy' of such genres as the *commedia* and Italian opera—notions that had interested mid-twentieth-century scholarship.[8]

At the heart of Andrews's argument is an appeal to scholars to pay closer attention to the methods by which both improvising actors and playwrights generated comic speech. He writes that 'what needs lingering over a little more is the fact that Italian improvisation tended to make use of identifiable *structures* of dialogue, which can be recognized independently of what the actors happen to be saying'.[9] When examining these structures in the written record of improvised comedy (scant as it may be), by Molière or any other contemporary comic playwright, Andrews suggests we will be able to recognize a similar method. In this reworked historiographic model, Molière appears not as the Gallic exception to early modern practice, but, as Andrews somewhat controversially proposes, 'the supreme Italian comic dramatist whom Italy itself never produced'.[10]

Proposing a similar reconsideration of the comic intermezzo and its method of composition is not merely a matter of updating a historical footnote. It is one of history's ironies that this rather slight genre should today be accorded a place of prominence in the historiography of Classical style. Following the pioneering work of Landmann, Lazarevich, and Troy, today's most prominent general texts on the history of music begin their discussions of the Classical era with examples taken from comic

[5] Luigi Riccoboni, *Observations sur la comédie, et sur le génie de Molière* (Paris, 1736).

[6] Claude Bourqui, *Les Sources de Molière: Répertoire critique des sources littéraires et dramatiques* (Paris, 1999).

[7] Ibid. 19.

[8] The notion of a 'pure' *commedia* comes from Gustave Attinger, who differentiated between 'pure' and 'hybrid' forms in 1950. Nino Pirrotta, writing five years later, was more interested in investigating fruitful comparisons between opera and the *commedia*, though writing in such a scholarly climate he was still careful to caution that each 'preserves its own independent physiognomy'. See Attinger, *L'Esprit de la commedia dell'arte dans le théâtre français* (Paris, 1950); Nino Pirrotta, 'Commedia dell'Arte and Opera', *Musical Quarterly*, 41 (1955), 305–24. Theatre scholars have recently become much less rigid about what constitutes the 'pure' *commedia* tradition. We can point to the work of Siro Ferrone and Robert Henke in exploring the relationship between written and improvised theatre (Ferrone, *Commedie dell'arte* (Milan, 1985); Henke, *Performance and Literature in the Commedia dell'arte* (Cambridge, 2002)). Musicologists have helped pioneer these relationships when studying some non-intermezzos. See Lorenzo Bianconi and Thomas Walker, 'Dalla *Finta pazza* alla *Veremonda*: Storie di Febiarmonici', *Rivista italiana di musicologia*, 10 (1975), 379–454, and especially Melania Bucciarelli, *Italian Opera and European Theatre, 1680–1720: Plots, Performers, Dramaturgies* (Turnhout, 2000), 33–80.

[9] Richard Andrews, 'Molière, Commedia dell'arte, and the Question of Influence in Early Modern European Theatre', *Modern Language Review*, 100 (2005), 444–63 at 459.

[10] Ibid. 449.

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intermezzos.[11] J. Peter Burkholder's update of Donald J. Grout's *History of Western Music*, long the mainstay of the college historical survey, launches a discussion of the Classical period with reference to Pergolesi's *La serva padrona* (1733). Richard Taruskin's titanic *Oxford History of Western Music* begins the history of Classical style with C. P. E and J. C. Bach, but walks back in time to trace the roots of the younger Bach's musical style to Giuseppe Maria Orlandini's fabulously popular *Il marito giocatore* (1719). Taruskin affirms that 'the later eighteenth-century style was in effect the comic style'.[12] The glories of Mozart, in other words, owe a large debt to the comic diversions of the intermezzo.

This view was profoundly shaped by French *philosophes* such as Rousseau (and later Diderot), who were entirely taken with the musical style of the comic intermezzos that arrived in Paris in 1752, some three decades and more after they were written. Comic music in the Italian mode was certainly revelatory to the French ear, but the *querelle des bouffons* tells us relatively little about Italian musical practice in the 1720s and much more about French musical culture in the 1750s. French aesthetic debates are integral to a broader discussion of eighteenth-century music in the *style galant*, concerned as it was with the natural and the naive. But by listening to the intermezzo with mid-century ears we are bound to hear the music not as it sounded to Italian audiences who heard it first, but as it sounded to foreign audiences who heard it later. Time and geographical distance distort our perceptions of history as surely as they do our own memories.

The most deleterious effect of examining the comic intermezzo retrospectively is the demotion of its artistic status that inevitably results. 'The low art of comedy was born of nature',[13] writes Taruskin—a sentiment shared in tone by nearly all who comment on the intermezzo in passing. In this conception intermezzos are not only slapdash productions pasted together from previous material, but something like street performances given a modicum of respectability by virtue of their performance in the opera house. The case for re-examining the intermezzo as an artistically and historically significant art form is not helped by the contemporary account of an intermezzo performance in Naples by Edward Wright that comments only on the slapstick gags.[14] Since it was quoted in Charles Burney's *A General History of Music*, this account has helped emphasize the wordless, gestural quality of Italian comedy, sacrificing any discussion of its literary and dramatic force.[15] But it is significant to note that Wright was a foreigner. No less than Rousseau or Diderot, he listened and watched as an outsider and not a connoisseur.

Recent scholarship on the intermezzo has painted a much more vivid and interesting portrait of the genre. Shorn of the weight of history, with its attendant teleological narratives, the intermezzo appears kinetic and complex—a genre on the move across Europe. In the last three decades scholars have documented the importance of its

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[11] Irène Mamczarz's *Les Intermèdes comiques italiens au XVIIIe siècle en France et en Italie* (Paris, 1972) also stimulated interest in the intermezzo genre. The book's breadth provides a fascinating introduction, but as Gordana Lazarevich noted in her review (*Musical Quarterly*, 60 (1974), 126–32) there are several inaccuracies, which make the text troublesome. Robert Lamar Weaver noted that it 'is as helpful as it is harmful' in his review in *Notes*, 31 (1974), 51–3.

[12] Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, ii (New York and Oxford, 2005), 437.

[13] Ibid. 437.

[14] Edward Wright, *Some Observations Made in Travelling through France, Italy, &c. in the Years 1720, 1721, and 1722*, i (London, 1730), 85.

[15] Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, iv (London, 1789), 131.

professional singers,[16] the complicated practice of revision and pastiche,[17] the growth of new traditions,[18] provided valuable composer studies,[19] and, most recently, have begun to examine the relationship between the intermezzos of Hasse and contemporary intellectual trends.[20] In addition, good scholarly editions of select intermezzos have appeared and students and professionals are performing these works in theatres and conservatories around the world.[21] And yet in the most conspicuous musicological sources the intermezzo's significance rests on its primitive, if provocative, naturalism—its embodiment of Diderot's 'animal cry of passion'.[22]

Does heeding Andrews's call for a closer examination of the underlying structures of comic dialogue help further to reorient our scholarly perspective on the intermezzo? As was the case with Molière, intermezzo composers and librettists left no papers explaining their working methods or intentions. They simply went about their work and left the task of interpretation to audiences and critics. The sheer number of intermezzo performances indicates the undeniable appeal of these works. Can it be that audiences were simply responding to the familiarity of the comic scenes—the stock nature of the characters and situations? Or were they perhaps interacting with the material in some deeper way? An examination of the 'structures' of dialogue to which Andrews refers reveals some surprising clues about the working methods of librettists and composers,

[16] Franco Piperno, 'Buffe e buffi: Considerazione sulla professionalità degli scene buffi ed intermezzi', *Rivista italiana di musicologia*, 17 (1982), 240–84; id., 'L'intermezzo comico a Napoli negli anni di Pergolesi: Gioacchino Corrado e Celeste Resse', *Studi pergolesiani*, 3 (1999), 157–72.

[17] Gordana Lazarevich, 'From Naples to Paris: Transformations of Pergolesi's Intermezzo *Livietta e Tracollo* by Contemporary Buffo Singers', *Studi pergolesiani*, 1 (1986), 149–65; ead., 'Pasticcio Revisited: Hasse and his *parti buffe*', in Edmond Strainchamps and Maria Rika Maniates in collaboration with Christopher Hatch (eds.), *Music and Civilization: Essays in Honor of Paul Henry Lang* (New York, 1984), 141–52; Herbert Schneider, '*La serva padrona* traduite et arrangée', *Studi pergolesiani*, 6 (2011), 121–55.

[18] Daniel Brandenburg, 'Zum Intermezzo in Böhmen: Ein Beispiel von František Václav Míča', in Torsten Fuchs (ed.), *Die Oper in Böhmen, Mähren und Sudetenschlesien* (Regensburg, 1996), 23–7; Mercedes Viale Ferrero, '"Heroi" e "comici" sulle rive dell'Eridano', in Maria Teresa Muraro (ed.), *Venezia e il melodramma nel Settecento* (Florence, 1978), 199–235; John A. Rice, 'The Roman Intermezzo and Sacchini's *La Contadina in Corte*', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 12 (2000), 91–107.

[19] Fabrizio Dorsi, 'Un intermezzo di Niccolò Jommelli: Don Falcone', *Nuova rivista musicale italiana*, 19 (1985), 432–57; Martin Ruhnke, 'Komische Elemente in Telemanns Opern und Intermezzi', *Bericht über den Internationalen Musikwissenschaftlichen Kongress Bayreuth, 1981,* ed. Christoph-Hellmut Mahling and Sigrid Wiesmann (Kassel, 1984), 94–107; Michael Talbot, 'Tomaso Albinoni's *Pimpinone* and the Comic Intermezzo', in Iain Fenlon and Tim Carter (eds.), *Con che Soavità: Studies in Italian Opera, Song, and Dance, 1580–1740* (Oxford and New York, 1995), 229–48.

[20] Rainer Bayreuther, 'Sentimentale Komik: Zu Tendenzen musikalischer Empfindsamkeit in Hasses Intermezzi', in Bert Siegmund (ed.), *Intermezzi per musica: Johann Adolf Hasse zum 300. Geburtstag* (Dössel, 2004), 55–66; Gordana Lazarevich, 'Satire und Karikatur im *Intermezzo comico per musica*: Spiegel der Gesellschaft des 18. Jahrhunderts', ibid. 13–29.

[21] See Johann Adolf Hasse, *L'artigiano gentiluomo*, ed. Gordana Lazarevich (Madison, Wis., 1979); Hasse, *Three Intermezzi: 1728, 1729 and 1730*, ed. Gordana Lazarevich (Laaber, 1992); Francesco Mancini, *Colombina e Pernicone: Tre intermezzi comici dal Trajano*, ed. Claudio Gallico (Milan, 1988); Giuseppe Maria Orlandini, *Serpilla e Bacocco*, ed. Giuseppe Giusta and Amos Mattio (Bologna, 2003); Domenico Scarlatti, *La Dirindina*, ed. Francesco Degrada (Milan, 1985). Kathleen and Peter van De Graaff, who brilliantly perform comic intermezzos of this period, have also edited three collections of intermezzo excerpts: *Italian Arias from 18th-Century Comic Chamber Operas*, in volumes for soprano and bass/baritone (Skokie, Ill., 2005–6) and *Italian Duets from 18th-Century Comic Chamber Operas* (Skokie, Ill., 2005).

[22] Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, ii. 437. Taruskin's translation (and historiographic interpretation more generally) come from the late Wye J. Allanbrook's 'Comic Flux and Comic Precision' lecture delivered as part of the Ernest Bloch Lectures at the University of California at Berkeley in 1994. These lectures are to be published as *The Secular Commedia: Comic Mimesis in Late Eighteenth-Century Music* (forthcoming). Allanbrook and Taruskin brilliantly trace the roots of the new *galant* style back to the intermezzo. But by historiographic necessity this limits the intermezzo's significance to one feature of its musical language while neglecting, or at least not promoting, other remarkable facets of its art.

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and the meanings and comedic force these works may have held for contemporary audiences.

In this article I examine a scene from Leonardo Vinci's second intermezzo, *Albino e Plautilla da pedante* ('Albino and Plautilla as Pedant'). It was first performed in Naples in October of 1723, embedded within a three-act serious work, *Silla dittatore*.[23] The intermezzo's text was probably supplied by Vinci's frequent collaborator Bernardo Saddumene.[24] But one scene involving a philosopher and his would-be pupil—the scene that lends the intermezzo its title—was not wholly the creation of the librettist. Until now it has gone unnoticed as a comic scenario borrowed from another work: Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1670).[25] In Part II of the intermezzo, the cunning servant Plautilla disguises herself as a pedant and attempts to teach the thickheaded if enthusiastic Albino about philosophy. As in the philosophy master's lesson to the similarly oafish Monsieur Jourdain in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, the scene soon devolves into a rudimentary lesson in the pronunciation of vowels (provided in full below). While on the surface this may appear to be yet another adaptation of a work from Molière—and therefore simply another example of the pastiche nature of the intermezzo—this scene presents several challenges to the current historiography of the genre.

First, the scene's dialogue is patterned on what Andrews has identified as a structure common to both written and improvised comic works of the early modern period. While music scholars have clearly stated that the intermezzo shares kinship with the *commedia dell'arte* in general and with Molière in particular cases, these relationships have largely been depicted as discrete and at the root of the varying quality of the librettos: the loosely structured intermezzos in the tradition of *commedia* are found wanting, while tautly constructed works adapted from or inspired by Molière are special exceptions. The presence of this scene in *Albino e Plautilla* suggests, rather, that intermezzo librettists, Molière, and *commedia* performers shared a common method of preparing comic dialogue. Moreover, these common structures provide the architectural blueprint for the intermezzo—shaping the musical composition of the work and guiding the composer's choices.

Second, this scene challenges the perception of the intermezzo as a broadly comic and essentially gestural genre. The pronunciation lesson was not original to the genius of Molière; he borrowed it from a French philosophical treatise by the Cartesian Géraud de Cordemoy. Cordemoy's treatise proved an attractive target to parody not only because of its seeming ridiculousness, but also because it could easily be moulded into a familiar form of comic dialogue. That an excerpt from a serious Cartesian philosophical treatise appears in an intermezzo suggests that there is more to Plautilla's pedant than the usual tricks of female transvestism and aureate pseudo-Latin pronouncements. *Albino e Plautilla* was written for Naples, a city whose troubled relationship with the New Philosophy of René Descartes offered the comic librettist many satirical possibilities. In 1722, Giuseppa Eleonora Barbapiccola translated Descartes's *Principia Philosophiae* into Italian and had it published clandestinely in Naples. The propinquity of Barbapiccola's translation and Plautilla's appearance on the stage suggests that the philosophy scene in the intermezzo may have had meaningful resonances for

[23] The manuscript score is held in the Conservatorio San Pietro a Majella in Naples (Rari 32.4.13).
[24] Kurt Markstrom, *The Operas of Leonardo Vinci, Napoletano* (Hillside, NY, 2007), 58.
[25] *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* had been adapted as a comic intermezzo by Antonio Salvi in 1722, but the philosophy scene was not included in the musical version. The relationship between these works is discussed below.

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a contemporary audience and could have been selected by the librettist precisely because it was topical and erudite.

The picture of the intermezzo that emerges is therefore not one of buffoons and servant girls acting out well-known comic scenarios on the opera stage for the benign amusement of the audience. Or, at least, not only that. *Albino e Plautilla* suggests to us that intermezzos could be creatively consistent with the practices of comic writers across genres and across Europe, and profoundly shaped by the contemporary artistic, social, and philosophical world in which they were written. Aristotle may have been right that comedy is the imitation of base persons, but, in the intermezzo at least, these base persons enact scenes that speak eloquently about the age that produced them.[26]

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SCENE STRUCTURE IN THE INTERMEZZO

Like most Neapolitan intermezzos before 1730, *Albino e Plautilla* is in three parts. The first two were performed at the ends of Acts I and II of the *opera seria* in which the intermezzo was imbedded. The final part was performed as the penultimate scene of Act III. Intermezzos of this period were not as easily separable from the *opera seria* as later two-part intermezzos were (such as *La serva padrona*). The librettos for serious operas arrived from Venice without comic episodes because mixed comic/serious works had long since fallen out of favour in that city.[27] Local composers and librettists were enlisted to insert intermezzos into the action, often using minor characters from the *opera seria* as the protagonists. *Albino* was written to be performed with *Silla dittatore*, a work based on *Il tiranno eroe*.[28] *Il tiranno* was originally written for the Venetian stage in 1711 by Vincenzo Cassiani and set by Albinoni.[29]

Silla is an invented political intrigue centring on Sulla's dictatorship during the early part of the first century BCE (with the requisite romantic entanglements added). Albino, a tenor role on the Venetian stage, was rescored for baritone. In addition to performing the small role of Sulla's military commander in the *seria* action, Albino is the main male character in the intermezzo, playing opposite Plautilla, a new character created to be the prima donna's maidservant. These roles were performed by the pre-eminent comic duo of the time, Giacchino Corrado (later the first Uberto in *La serva padrona*) and Santa Marchesini (later one of the most well-travelled intermezzo performers).[30]

[26] Aristotle defined comedy as 'mimesis phauloteron' in the second book of the *Poetics*. George Whalley translates this as 'a *mimesis* of inferior persons', in *Aristotle's Poetics* (Montreal, 1997), 63.

[27] On the earlier Venetian 'reform' of opera in the hands of Apostolo Zeno and others, see Robert S. Freeman, *Opera without Drama: Currents of Change in Italian Opera, 1675–1725* (Ann Arbor, 1981).

[28] Vinci's Neapolitan version of *Silla dittatore* was first performed on 1 Oct. 1723 in the grand hall of the vice-regal palace. The production then transferred to the Teatro San Bartolomeo for public performances beginning on 17 Oct. A prologue that had been included in the royal premiere was removed and the comic scenes were added. This is mentioned in the preface to the libretto, published as *Silla Dittatore: Dramma per musica; Da rappresentarsi nel Real Palazzo di questa Città Festeggiandosi il felicissimo giorno natalizio della Sac. Ces. Catt. Real Maestà Carlo VI Imperador Regnante* (Naples, 1723).

[29] For a thorough account of Vinci's *Silla* and an appraisal of Vinci's *seria* musical style in relation to its intermezzo, see Markstrom, *The Operas of Leonardo Vinci, Napoletano*, 49–60.

[30] Marchesini later paired with her husband Antonio Ristorini and travelled Europe with a repertory of intermezzos, including the wildly popular *Il marito giocatore*. Prior to this she performed with Corrado in at least thirty-nine intermezzo premieres between 1711 and 1726. Between 1719 and 1725, the two performed together exclusively. It is a near certainty that the roles of Albino and Plautilla were written with this comic duo in mind. For a list of their performances together see Franco Piperno, 'Buffe e buffi: Considerazione sulla professionalità degli scene buffi ed intermezzi', *Rivista italiana di musicologia*, 17 (1982), 240–84 at 264–5.

The plot of the intermezzo concerns Albino's political ambitions in the Roman senate. Though obviously unsuited to political life by virtue of his slow wit and quick temper, Albino nevertheless enlists a tutor to correct his lack of education on the advice of his servant (and love interest), Plautilla. Part I sets the scene with a slightly madcap dressing scene in which Albino prepares himself for his appearance before the senate. Part II, which will be the focus of this article, involves Albino's encounter with his tutor. Part III is a more slapstick episode in which Albino and Plautilla subject each other to a variety of indignities with the aid of a magic wand.[31] In the end, of course, they forgive each other for their faults and resolve to live happily as a married couple.

Part II is remarkable for its reliance on witty repartee for laughs in addition to some obvious physical humour. It begins with Plautilla, disguised as a tutor, announcing her intention to have a bit of fun with Albino, on whom she also has designs of marriage. She suggests her delight in his gullibility by stating that 'he is so inept / that he'll buy all that I sell to him' ('Mà è tanto moccolone / Che tutto comprerà, quel che gli vendo').[32] When Albino approaches, Plautilla greets him in Latin, which Albino mistakes for Greek (and announces so, presumably to the audience's laughter). After some awkward greetings and an agreement to speak in Latin (which Albino does very poorly, despite his protest that he speaks 'modern Latin' ['latino moderno']), Plautilla asks what Albino would like to learn. He replies that he needs to learn what would befit an aspirant to the Praetorship, but admits that he finds philosophy hard to stomach. Plautilla announces that her school has very distinct principles, the first of which is that 'you must cast doubt on everything' ('Il primo / È che si debba dubitar di tutto'). Albino is at first confused, but is required to agree to doubt all that he can touch and see. If he follows this, Albino asks how he will know if the tutor is even a man. With some questioning he is forced to admit that Plautilla's beard indicates that it is so. Plautilla then sings an aria about the need for doubting everything.

Plautilla next queries Albino about his ability to pronounce. Albino demonstrates, to comic effect. The two then repeat basic vowel sounds, guided by Plautilla's advice. She says that with her assistance, Albino will soon be able to speak as well as Cicero. Tickled with his easy mastery of the vowels, Albino sings his first aria, a swaggering celebration of his accomplishment. He then announces that it is getting on and that he must be on his way to the Palatine Hill, but invites Plautilla to come. She agrees, but won't give her hand until Albino insists. He seems confused by the delicacy of her hand and voice, and Plautilla comes up with a Little-Red-Riding-Hood-like list of excuses. In the final duet she expresses her concern that he has found her out while Albino sings about his confusion.

Part II follows the usual pattern for intermezzos of the period—a pattern in every way as rigid as that for contemporary *opera seria*. An opening monologue in recitative is followed by dialogue in recitative punctuated by a solo aria. A second passage of dialogue is punctuated with an aria for the other character, followed by a third piece of dialogue capped with a duet. Because this is a comedy, the sections of dialogue

[31] The figure of the female with occult powers had been used by the librettist Bernardo Saddumene the year before *Albino* in the comic scenes of Vinci's first intermezzo, *Ermosilla and Bacocco*. Domenico Sarro's 1727 intermezzo *Moschetta e Grullo*, by an anonymous librettist, also contains a scene in which the female protagonist tortures the *buffo* male with her powers.

[32] The pejorative 'moccolone' is used most often today to refer to a bratty child. James Howell's 1660 dictionary defines a 'moccolone' as 'Inexpert, inepte', which seems closer to the meaning here. See Howell, *Lexicon Tetraglotton, an English-French-Italian-Spanish Dictionary* (London, 1660), § 21, n. pag.

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recitative are the locus of comic action in the piece. Albino and Plautilla trade lines in rapid succession with a laugh line occurring in nearly every response. Each unit of dialogue centres on a particular conceit before being concluded with an aria. Albino and Plautilla's first dialogue concerns her Cartesian philosophy and his inability to comprehend it; the second involves the pronunciation lesson; the third covers Albino's confusion about the disguised pedant's oddly feminine features. Such scenarios are certainly akin to those found in the *commedia dell'arte*. One imagines that such a scene could have been included within an improvised play by a troupe of comic players. But the pronunciation scene in particular has a more distinguished pedigree. It appeared in an almost identical form in Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* some fifty-three years earlier. Its presence suggests that librettists not only borrowed more liberally from Molière than is currently accepted, but that the spoken theatre and the comic operatic stage may share some important compositional similarities.

A SCENE SHARED BY MOLIÈRE AND CORDEMOY

Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme was first performed for Louis XIV at his palaces of Chambord and Saint-Germain in October 1670. It then moved to the Palais-Royal in Paris for public performances in November and ran until Easter. This comédie-ballet featured extensive musical sections by Jean-Baptiste Lully, and was his first extensive foray into theatrical music.[33] The plot centres on the character of Monsieur Jourdain, a *nouveau riche* merchant who aspires to become a member of the established nobility. To this end he hires a music master, a dancing master, a fencing master, and a philosophy master to tutor him in the pastimes of the aristocracy. He also befriends the impecunious count Dorante, who wrings money out of Jourdain with his flattery, much to Madame Jourdain's chagrin. Dorante uses the borrowed funds to woo the marchioness Dorimène, whom Monsieur Jourdain hopes to take as his mistress. He holds a great feast at his house and invites the marchioness, hoping to impress her with his ostentatious display of wealth and artistic taste. Meanwhile, Madame Jourdain conspires with her daughter Lucile, and Lucile's *amant* Cléonte and his valet Covielle, to dupe Monsieur Jourdain into allowing their marriage, though Cléonte is a wealthy but non-noble suitor. Cléonte and Covielle disguise themselves as 'the Grand Turk' and his translator and grant nobility to Jourdain in an elaborate ceremony, persuading Jourdain to allow his daughter to marry 'the Grand Turk' (Cléonte in disguise). The play ends with Jourdain having no idea about his acquiescence, Lucile and and Cléonte happily headed towards marriage, the marchioness amused but interested only in the count, and Madame Jourdain pleased to have outwitted her husband.

The play features many standard plot devices familiar to audiences of eighteenth-century Italian comedy: the *senex* (Jourdain) who stands in the way of a young couple (Lucile and Cléonte), a pair of aristocratic lovers who try to stay above the fray (Dorante and Dorimène), disguise, *turquerie*, and even a witty and wise maidservant (Nicole). This is not a coincidence. Molière was deeply indebted to Italian models in both spoken and improvised theatre, and made use of many stock characters and plot devices to drive his comic narratives.[34] It is therefore no great surprise to

[33] Dietmar Fricke has suggested that the integrated use of music anticipates Lully's interest in staging full operas and so constitutes a precursor to French opera. See Fricke, 'Ein Vorform der Oper: *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* von Molière und Lully', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 148/6 (1987), 10–13.

[34] For a succinct account of Molière's debt to Italian theatre, both written and improvised, see Philip A. Wadsworth, *Molière and the Italian Theatrical Tradition* (Columbia, SC, 1977). See also Bourqui, *Les Sources de Molière*.

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find common character types and comic situations in Molière's plays and comic intermezzos of the eighteenth century. But the question of influence becomes more complicated when we have evidence of more direct borrowing—scenes that do not resemble each other, but that translate text which first appeared in a play by Molière. Such is the case with the following scene from Act II of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. Monsieur Jourdain has enlisted the help of a philosophy tutor because his parents, he says, did not properly educate him. The philosophy master asks if Jourdain would like to learn logic, but he finds it ugly. The master asks if Jourdain would like to learn morality, but he is content with his lack of scruples. Physics, too, proves to be too much for Jourdain: he just wants to learn how to spell. The philosophy master agrees, but insists on beginning as philosophy should, at the very beginning (see Table 1).

The scene reappears in 1723 as an exchange between Albino and his philosophy tutor (his servant Plautilla in disguise) in our Neapolitan intermezzo at the Teatro San Bartolomeo. What begins as a Cartesian lesson in epistemology soon devolves into a pronunciation lesson. The trajectory of the scene mirrors the version as it appears in Molière in every respect. Albino similarly begins with difficult philosophical precepts before lapsing into vowel sounds:

[Bernardo Saddumene?], *Albino e Plautilla*, Part II

Pla.	Alle vocali	To the vowels
	Bisogna star attento.	You need to pay attention.
	Per dir A, come fate?	How do you say 'A'?
Alb.	A	A
Pla.	Le labbra più aperte.	Open the lips more.
Alb.	Ah	Ah
Pla.	Troppo adesso voi le spalancate.	Now your lips are too far apart.
	Eccovi la misura	Here is the measure
	Di quanto hà da esser grande	Of how big the opening has to be
	Per dir A, l'apertura.	To say 'A'.
Alb.	Ah, Ah. Sì, sì, và bene.	Ah, Ah. Yes, yes, I'm doing well.
	Per l'E, come si fa?	For 'E', how do you do it?
Pla.	S'è aperto, un terzo meno,	If it is open, a third less,
	S'è chiuso, basta aprirne la metà.	If it is closed, just half open.
Alb.	E l'I?	And 'I'?
Pla.	L'inferior labbro	The lower lip
	Va contratto un pò in giù.	will be pulled down a bit
Alb.	Ih, Ih.	Ih, Ih.
Pla.	Giusto così.	Just so.
	Ma l'O?	But 'O'?
Alb.	Questo lo sò:	I know this:
	Oh, Oh. Veniamo all'U.	Oh, Oh. Let's move on to 'U'.
Pla.	Si pronunzia stringendo i labbri[35] in fora.	Pronounce it with the lips drawn into a pout.
Alb.	Uh, Uh.	Uh, Uh.
Pla.	Più stretti.	Tighter.
Alb.	Uh, Uh.	Uh, Uh.
Pla.	Va bene adesso.	Now that's good.
Alb.	Alla bon ora.	At last.
Pla.	Così avrete la lingua assai più sciolta.	In this way you'll have a more agile tongue.
	Ma per meglio accostumarsi,	But to get used to it,
	Tornatela a ridir più d'una volta.	You should repeat it several more times.
	ARIA	
Alb.	AEIOU	AEIOU
	Bella cosa ch'è il sapere;	What a wonderful thing wisdom is;

[35] Here the librettist uses the plural masculine form of 'lips' (in contrast to the feminine plural above), presumably to maintain the hendecasyllable (the eleven-syllable line that when paired with a seven-syllable line forms the basis for *versi sciolti*).

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Gran tesoro è la virtù.	Virtue is a great treasure.
AEIOU	AEIOU
Certo sono già un altr'homo;	Certainly I'm already a different man;
Sò di prima molto più.	I know much more than before.

What seems like a straightforward borrowing from Molière is complicated by one further text. Molière did not invent this pronunciation lesson himself, but borrowed it in its entirety from Géraud de Cordemoy's *Discours physique de la parole*, a philosophical tract published two years before Molière's 1670 play:[36]

Si par exemple, on ouvre la bouche autant qu'on la peut ouvrir en criant, on ne sçauroit former qu'une voix en A. Et à cause de cela le caractère, qui dans l'écriture designe cette voix ou terminaison de son, est appellé A.	If, for example, you open the mouth as much as possible as in shouting, you cannot help but produce the sound A. For that reason the letter, which in writing designates that sound or the end of the sound, is called A.
Que si l'on ouvre un peu moins la bouche, en avançant la machoire d'embas vers celle d'enhaut, on formera une autre voix terminée en E.	If you open your mouth a little less, advancing the lower jaw towards the upper, you will form another sound ending in an E.
Et si l'on approche encore un peu d'avantage les machoires l'une de l'autre, sans toutefois que les dents se touchent, on formera une troisième voix en I.	And if you bring the jaws still closer to one another, without allowing the teeth to completely touch, you will form a third sound, I.
Mais si au contraire on vient à ouvrir les machoires, & à rapprocher en même temps les lèvres par les deux coins, le haut, & le bas, sans neantmoins les fermer tout à fait, on formera une voix en O.	But, if on the contrary, you attempt to open the jaws and bring the two corners of the lips together at the same time, the upper and lower, without quite closing them, you will form the sound O.
Enfin si on rapproche les dents sans les joindre entierement, & si en même instant on alonge les deux lèvres en les raprochant, sans les joindre tout à fait, on formera une voix en U.	Finally, if you bring the teeth together without completely joining them, and extend the two lips together without letting them quite touch, you form the sound U.

The similarity is striking considering that Molière and *Albino*'s librettist are comic writers and Cordemoy is very much a serious philosopher.

The relationship between Molière's text and that of *Albino e Plautilla* has not yet been noted in the literature. The similarity between Molière's text and Cordemoy's, however, has been the subject of some discussion over the past two centuries.[37]

Why might a passage from a philosophical treatise be quoted in a play by Molière, and then appear so much later in an Italian comic intermezzo in Naples? And how could such a thing occur in the first place? Not all philosophical arguments are so easily transferable to comedic works. And it is not immediately apparent that Cordemoy's text is itself funny. But there must be something significant about the rhythm of the philosophical argument that lends itself to adaptation in a comedic context. That is to say, it is in some ways not so much what Cordemoy is saying but how he is saying it that makes this scene funny. This was precisely Andrews's point in calling for scholars' closer attention to the methods of creating comic dialogue—the idea that there are perhaps significant and unexplored links between works that share

[36] Géraud de Cordemoy, *Un Discours physique de la parole* (Paris, 1668), transcribed in *Œuvres philosophiques*, ed. Pierre Clair and François Girbal (Paris, 1968), 70–1. An identical lesson in pronunciation, inspired by Cordemoy, is presented by Jean-Baptiste Du Hamel's *De corpore animato* of 1673, but with a comparative linguistic twist. See L. Tolmer, 'La Leçon de phonétique de J.-B. Du Hamel (1673)', *Le Français moderne*, 6 (1938), 243–51.

[37] It was first noted by Louis-Simon Auger in his publication of the complete works of Molière in 1824. *Œuvres de Molière*, viii, ed. Louis-Simon Auger (Paris, 1824), 44. The French classicist Pierre Brumoy had earlier suggested in 1730 that Molière borrowed the scene from Aristophanes' *Nephelai*. That play features a scene in which Socrates attempts to teach the buffoonish and venal Strepsiades the gender of nouns. But Socrates and Strepsiades' exchange resembles only the broad architecture of Molière's scene. They are both comic dialogues dealing with philosophy. Claude Bourqui dismisses Aristophanes as a likely source for this particular scene, but gives six other likely ancillary sources that inspired certain other scenes in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* in his exhaustive *Les Sources de Molière*. Even the general theme of the play is not original: Molière borrowed it from Francisco Manuel de Melo's 1646 Portuguese play *O Fidalgo Aprendiz* ('The Apprentice Nobleman'). See Bourqui, *Les Sources de Molière*, 294–310.

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TABLE 1. *Molière,* Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, *Act II, scene 4*

Philosophy Master	Il y a cinq voyelles ou voix: a, e, i, o, u.	There are five vowels or voiced sounds: A, E, I, O, U.
Jourdain	J'entends tout cela.	I understand all that.
Phil.	La voix A se forme en ouvrant fort la bouche: A.	The vowel A is formed by opening the mouth wide: A.
Jour.	A, A. Oui.	A. A. Right.
Phil.	La voix E se forme en rapprochant la mâchoire d'en bas de celle d'en haut: A, E.	The vowel E is formed by bringing the lower jaw close to the upper one: E.
Jour.	A, E, A, E. Ma foi! oui. Ah! que cela est beau!	A, E, A, E. My word, yes! Ah how beautiful that is!
Phil.	Et la voix I en rapprochant encore davantage les mâchoires l'une de l'autre, et écartant les deux coins de la bouche vers les oreilles: A, E, I.	And the vowel I by bringing the jaws even closer together and stretching the corners of the mouth toward the ears: A, E, I.
Jour.	A, e, i, i, i, i. Cela est vrai. Vive la science!	A, E, I, I, I, I. That's true! Long live learning!
Phil.	La voix o se forme en rouvrant les mâchoires, et rapprochant les lèvres par les deux coins, le haut et le bas: o.	The vowel O is formed by opening the jaws again and bringing the lips closer together both at the corners and above and below: O.
Jour.	O, o. Il n'y a rien de plus juste. A, e, i, o, i, o. Cela est admirable! I, o, i, o.	O, O. Nothing could be more true. A, E, I, O, I, O. That's admirable! I, O, I, O.
Phil.	L'ouverture de la bouche fait justement comme un petit rond qui représente un o.	The opening of the mouth makes precisely a sort of little circle that represents an O.
Jour.	O, o, o. Vous avez raison, o. Ah! la belle chose, que de savoir quelque chose!	O, O, O. You're right. Ah, what a beautiful thing it is to know something!
Phil.	La voix u se forme en rapprochant les dents sans les joindre entièrement, et allongeant les deux lèvres en dehors, les approchant aussi l'une de l'autre sans les rejoindre tout à fait: u.	The vowel U is is formed by bringing the teeth close together but not quite touching, and sticking out both lips, bringing them also close to each other but not quite touching: U.
Jour.	U, u. Il n'y a rien de plus véritable: u.	U, U. There's nothing better than that: U.
Phil.	Vos deux lèvres s'allongent comme si vous faisiez la moue: d'où vient que si vous la voulez faire à quelqu'un, et vous moquer de lui, vous ne sauriez lui dire que: u.	Your two lips stick out as if you were making a pout; whence it comes about that if you want to make that kind of a face at someone and deride him, all you can say to him is: U!
Jour.	U, u. Cela est vrai. Ah! que n'ai-je étudié plus tôt, pour savoir tout cela?	U, U. That's true. Ah! Why didn't I study earlier, to know all that?

SOURCE: Molière, *The Misanthrope and Other Plays*, trans. Donald M. Frame (New York, 1981), 233–4.

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more than topical allusions (though in the case of Cordemoy, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, and *Albino e Plautilla*, both the method and the topic are potent with meaning). It is for this reason that this scene is most profitably understood not only as a borrowed *lazzo*—a bit of action or dialogue that an improvising actor may use in a variety of situations[38]—but understood more specifically as what Andrews terms an 'elastic gag'.

THE 'ELASTIC GAG' FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Molière's use of standard 'gags' (*lazzi*) from the Italian improvised theatre is well documented.[39] How Molière's early education in Italian theatrical practice relates to his reading of Cordemoy, however, is not apparent until we examine the common structure that underpinned many of the *lazzi* he used. Richard Andrews's concept of the elastic gag proposes a way of understanding a particular and oft-used structure of comic dialogue that appears in both written and improvised comedy of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.[40] This structure is characterized by one topic or conceit, which can be lengthened or shortened depending on the wishes of the improvising actors (or an editing playwright). Andrews defines these elastic gags in the following way:

> They are autonomous units of dialogue, each reaching a simple conclusion (which may also involve a joke), and each is potentially usable in other situations. They can be seen as a series of beads threaded on a string, or as a set of blocks which together will build a wall—in either analogy, the structure of the scene which they compose can be described as 'modular'.
>
> In addition, the single units of the modular structure are in many cases 'elastic'; they can be made longer or shorter, in improvisation, without losing their essential point. . . . What the units have in common is that their conclusion, or punch line, is never in doubt, so the actors cannot get lost—all they need to do is to identify each sequence by its climax and get them in the right order. For a smooth performance there has to be a previously agreed cue line or gesture, which brings the sequence to an end.[41]

When we examine the pronunciation lesson from Molière we see that it follows this pattern exactly. Each vowel forms one module that is elastic. At the start, for example, Jourdain is able to reproduce 'A', 'E', and 'I' with relative ease. But Molière stretches out the 'O' and 'U' in the dialogue—the philosopher interrupts to offer Jourdain encouragement and suggest refinement of his pronunciation. One imagines that an improvising actor would be able to further expand, contract, or eliminate any one of these modules. The philosophy master would simply not direct Jourdain to pronounce a particular vowel in the sequence (if he wished to shorten it), or he could

[38] The most comprehensive catalogue of *lazzi* remains Mel Gordon, *Lazzi: The Comic Routines of the Commedia dell'Arte* (New York, 1983).

[39] See Claude Bourqui and Claudio Vinti, *Molière à l'école italienne: Le* lazzo *dans la creation moliéresque* (Paris, 2003), as well as Andrews, '*Arte* Dialogue Structures in the Comedies of Molière', in Christopher Cairns (ed.), *The Commedia dell'Arte from the Renaissance to Dario Fo* (Lewiston, NY, 1989), 141–76.

[40] The fullest account of this concept appears in Richard Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios* (Cambridge, 1993). Andrews first used the term in 'Scripted Theatre and the *Commedia dell'arte*', in J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (eds.), *Theatre of the English and Italian Renaissance* (New York, 1991), 21–54. On the 'elastic' gag's usefulness in understanding how actors memorized large amounts of text see Henke, *Performance and Literature in the Commedia dell'arte*, 34–6. On its significance for the transmission of texts between works see Cristina Marinetti, 'The Cross-Cultural Transfer of Theatre Texts: *Il Servitore di Due Padroni* in English', in Monica Boria and Linda Risso (eds.), *Laboratorio di nuova ricerca: Investigating Gender, Translation and Culture in Italian Studies* (Leicester, 2007), 217–28; Eric Nicholson, 'Ophelia Sings like a *Prima Donna Innamorata*: Ophelia's Mad Scene and the Italian Female Performer', in Robert Henke and Eric Nicholson (eds.), *Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Theater* (Aldershot, 2008), 81–98.

[41] Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios*, 178–9.

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offer more corrections to Jourdain's pronunciation (if he wished to lengthen it). These gags are in this sense elastic. They are then capped off with a cue line, which indicates the completion of the gag. As Andrews suggests, this is the climax of the sequence and is usually the funniest line of the entire gag. Molière furnishes Jourdain with a particularly ludicrous and revealing line. Jourdain exclaims that he wished he'd known all this vowel business sooner ('Ah! que n'ai-je étudié plus tôt, pour savoir tout cela?'). This laugh line finishes the elastic gag, cues the philosopher to move on, and reveals the absurd ignorance of Jourdain's character.

Molière's dialogue follows this improvisatory pattern suggested by Andrews, but it is of course inalterable on the page (if not always in performance). This, however, does not alter the significance of thinking of this dialogue as an elastic gag. What Molière has done is to capture an ideal version of an improvised sequence. It is as though he had frozen the moment of performance in amber—preserving the perfect improvisation for use in his play. When we therefore think of elastic gags not simply as tricks for improvisatory performance, but as structures that undergird a particularly rhythmic style of conversation, we begin to see that they may exist outside the realm of theatrical performance—whether texted or improvised. We see, for example, that Cordemoy's scholarly discussion of pronunciation in his *Discours* follows this very same rhythm. He sets out a pattern of describing the placement of the jaw and lips for each vowel, and then stacks up these descriptions, building up something like the 'wall' Andrews describes in his definition. When you pronounce 'A' you open your mouth wide. When you pronounce 'E' you move your lips closer together, and so on. Molière, perhaps conditioned as an actor and playwright to think in terms of such structures, saw the potential that Cordemoy's text could offer if reused in a comedic context.

There is contemporary evidence that improvising actors were encouraged to think in just this way. The Neapolitan playwright and librettist Andrea Perrucci provides many important insights into the working practices of the improvising actor in his influential *Dell'arte rappresentativa premeditata ed all'improvviso* in 1699.[42] Perrucci was himself an amateur comic actor and wrote his treatise, in part, to provide lessons on producing plays extemporaneously. He stresses that the successful comic improviser, rather than inventing scenes of dialogue anew, would memorize a trove of monologues, dialogues, and witticisms in advance. Most importantly, perhaps, he makes the case that one should memorize such passages from existing works:

[O]ne must know that it is not by stripping oneself entirely of scripted materials [qualche cosa premeditata] that one should take up the challenge [of improvising a play]; rather, one should be armed with some general compositions that can be adapted to every kind of comedy, such as *concetti* (literary conceits), soliloquies, and dialogues for the male and female

[42] My thanks to Dale Monson for referring me to Perrucci's treatise. It is available in a modern edition as Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa premeditata ed all'improvviso*, ed. Anton Giulio Bragaglia (Florence, 1961); trans. into English by Francesco Cotticelli, Anne Goodrich Heck, and Thomas F. Heck as *A Treatise on Acting, from Memory and by Improvisation (1699)* (Lanham, Md., 2008). For an appraisal of the significance of Perrucci's treatise see Pietro Spezzani, 'L'arte rappresentativa di Andrea Perrucci e la lingua della *Commedia dell'Arte*', in Luigi Vanossi (ed.), *Lingua e strutture del teatro italiano del Rinascimento* (Padua, 1970), 355–438, and Franco Carmelo Greco, 'Ideologia e pratica della scena nel primo Settecento napoletano' in *Studi pergolesiani*, 1 (1986), 33–72. On the relationship between Perrucci's treatise and Neapolitan theatrical practice see Bucciarelli, *Italian Opera and European Theatre*, 37–47. Anna Maria Testeverde has recently suggested that Perrucci's treatise testifies to the decline of vibrancy of the *commedia dell'arte* because of the recycled nature of the many conceits he describes. See the introduction to Testeverde, *I canovacci della commedia dell'arte* (Turin, 2007), p. xxx.

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lovers; or speeches of advice, discourses, greetings, speeches with double meanings, and some gallantries for the old men.[43]

Perrucci encouraged actors to compile these texts in notebooks (the so-called *zibaldoni*)[44] in order to facilitate easy reference. As other *commedia* scholars have recently emphasized in descriptive studies, and as Perrucci makes clear in a prescriptive sense here, there can be a fluid relationship between scripted and improvised works in which conceits from scripted genres can be used in different dramatic contexts in improvised comedy.[45] Andrews's concept of the elastic gag helps refine our understanding, by emphasizing the fact that many of the 'concetti' or 'soliloquii' that actors or playwrights memorized featured this modular, elastic structure, punctuated with hilarious cue lines.

Cordemoy's disquisition on the pronunciation of vowels follows the modular structure requisite for comedy of this type. But it does not, of course, end with a laugh line. At first glance this may seem to suggest that no playwright could have read Cordemoy and thought of its latent comic potential. There is, however, evidence that philosophical arguments of the type Cordemoy is offering did indeed end with a hearty laugh in a way very similar to the way elastic gags function in practice. This comic feature of philosophy is attested to by Pietro Metastasio. In a letter he wrote to the Neapolitan Carlo Valenti in 1771 he warmly recalls the instruction in Cartesian physics he received from Gregorio Caloprese.[46] Before his death in 1715, Caloprese retired from civic life in Naples to his birthplace of Scalea, where he was enlisted to tutor the young literary phenomenon by Metastasio's guardian, Gian Vincenzo Gravina (Caloprese was Gravina's cousin).[47] Caloprese was one of the leading exponents of Cartesian thought in Italy. Like Jourdain (and Albino after him), Metastasio seems to have been somewhat in awe of the philosophical lessons he received—to the apparent delight and amusement of his tutor.

I have again heard the venerated voice of the celebrated philosopher *Caloprese*, who adapting himself, in order to instruct me, to my weak state, conducted me, as it were by the hand, through the vortices of the ingenious *Descartes*, at that time in high favour with the philosophers, and of which he was a furious asserter; and indulging my childish curiosity, now demonstrating with wax, in a kind of sport, how globes were formed by the fortuitous concourse of atoms: now exciting my admiration by the enchanting experiments of Dioptrics. I seem still to see him labour to convince me that his little dog was only a machine: and that

[43] Perrucci, *A Treatise on Acting*, trans. Cotticelli, Heck, and Heck, 103. 'si deve sapere che non ignudi affatto di qualche cosa premeditata devono esporsi al cimento, ma armati di certe composizioni generali, che si possono adattare ad ogni specie di comedia, come sono per l'innamorati, e donne di concetti, soliloquii e dialoghi; per li vecchi consigli, discorsi, soliloquii e dialoghi; per li vecchi consigli, discorsi, saluti, bisquizzi, e qualche graziosita', e perché ogn'uno d'essi v'abbia qualche regola, anderemo discorrendo d'ogni parte di essa in particolare, con darne qualche esempio, acciò che ogn'uno a suo capriccio se le vada poi formando, e se ne serva secondo l'occasione'. The translation 'scripted materials' perhaps suggests literary material in a way more strongly than Perrucci's neutral 'qualche cosa premeditata', which may refer more broadly to conceits acquired orally. But the fact that Perrucci advocates *writing them down* suggests that he is thinking primarily in terms of a fixed text.

[44] Perrucci refers to one of these as a 'Chibaldone'.

[45] See above, n. 7.

[46] On the relationship between Metastasio and Caloprese see Paul Albert Ferrara, 'Gregorio Caloprese and the Subjugation of the Body in Metastasio's *Drammi per musica*', *Italica*, 73 (1996), 11–23. On Metastasio's Cartesianism more generally see Giuseppe Giarrizzo, 'L'ideologia di Metastasio tra Cartesianesimo e Illuminismo', in *Convegno indetto in occasione del II centenario della morte di Metastasio*, 25–27 May 1983 (Rome, 1985), 43–77.

[47] For more on Caloprese and Cartesianism see Silvio Suppa, *L'Accademia di Medinacoeli: Fra tradizione investigante e nuova scienza civile* (Naples, 1971), 177–212.

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the trine dimension was a sufficient definition of solid bodies. And I still see him laugh, after plunging me for a long time in a dark meditation, and making me doubt of every thing, in proving that I breathed, by his *Ego cogito, ergo sum*: an invincible argument of certainty, which I despaired of ever again demonstrating.[48]

Caloprese's laughter is quite telling. It appears that in contrast to the seriousness of physics, the process of quizzing a pupil during the proof of a philosophical (and specifically Cartesian) precept was humorous. The pattern by which Metastasio was taught, at least, seems to mirror in a significant way the structure of an elastic gag: questions and answers go back and forth before the dialogue is concluded, with the punctuation of laughter. One imagines that Molière seized on the comic potential of Cordemoy's similarly Cartesian lesson and, following the custom of improvising actors, made use of this pre-packaged text for a dialogue between Jourdain and his philosophy master.

THE 'ELASTIC GAG' IN THE PROCESS OF ADAPTATION

The self-contained nature of elastic gags allows them to move between works with relative ease. One imagines that this makes them potentially attractive devices to use in the process of writing a new work. Molière had rather little to do in adapting Cordemoy's treatise into comic dialogue. He simply had to add an interlocutor (Jourdain) to provide the requisite sounds the philosopher prescribed. The fact that the structural similarity between scholarly rhetoric and comic dialogue makes arid philosophy ripe for the theatre suggests that elastic gags could also make their way easily between spoken comedy and musical comedy. The generic divide between comic play and intermezzo is somewhat less than that between a philosophical treatise and a theatrical comedy. The leap from *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* to *Albino e Plautilla* seems a relatively small one. But an examination of how this pronunciation scene may have made its way from Paris to Naples reveals some more significant connections between the theatrical practice of Molière and the intermezzo as practised in Italy—and points to new avenues of enquiry. It suggests that the elastic gag was one of the primary building blocks of newly adapted intermezzos based on Molière. Nowhere is this clearer than the scenes from Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* that appear not only in *Albino e Plautilla*, but in another more complete adaptation as well. The Florentine librettist Antonio Salvi adapted Molière's play as the intermezzo *L'artigiano gentiluomo* in 1722, the year before *Albino*'s premiere.[49]

Molière's importance to the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Italian theatrical scene was extensively documented a century ago by Pietro Toldo in his seminal *L'Œuvre de Molière et sa fortune en Italie*.[50] The hero of Toldo's account is Goldoni, whom he saw as the first Italian playwright to fully absorb the lessons of Molière's comedy—the first Italian genius of the comedy of manners. But even before Goldoni, Toldo highlights numerous Molierean plays that dot the Italian theatrical scene in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Toldo was largely dissatisfied with playwrights such as Cosimo Villifranchi and Giovanni Battista Fagiuoli, who he felt 'never presented us with vice that would cause a shudder, the

[48] Metastasio, Letter XXXVI, trans. Charles Burney in *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Abate Metastasio*, i (London, 1796), 126–7.

[49] Hasse's 1726 setting of Salvi's text is available in a very fine edition by Lazarevich (1979; see above, n. 21).

[50] Pietro Toldo, *L'Œuvre de Molière et sa fortune en Italie* (Turin, 1910).

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indignatio that enlivened the immortal pages of the French comic'.[51] Italian plays, in other words, were too frivolous to instruct the audience properly in moral terms. Nevertheless, Toldo made clear with copious examples that Molière was often imitated and held in great esteem in the early years of the eighteenth century, a period concurrent with the rise of the intermezzo. His chief concern, however, was spoken comedy and he concentrated on highlighting characters and narrative similarities between Molière's plays and their Italian imitations. His interest was in charting the rise of the Italian comedy of manners rather than examining the means of transmission of Molière's ideas.

Gordana Lazarevich has provided the most in-depth account of the relationship between the texts of Molière and the six intermezzo librettos that are based on his plays.[52] These six are:

Intermezzo		Librettist	Molière	
L'ammalato immaginario	1707	Antonio Salvi	*Le Malade imaginaire*	1673
La preziosa ridicola	1712	Anonymous	*Les Précieuses ridicules*	1659
L'avaro	1720	Antonio Salvi	*L'Avare*	1668
L'artigiano gentiluomo	1722	Antonio Salvi	*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*	1670
Il matrimonio per forza	1723	Giuseppe Maria Buini	*Le Mariage forcé*	1664
Monsieur di Porsugnacco	1727	Marquess G. B. Trotti[53]	*Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*	1669

Lazarevich further noted that some of these intermezzos were based on *scherzi scenici*, short comic works intended to be performed by same-sex casts in an ecclesiastical or academic setting. These works were condensed versions of longer comedies that allowed for a great deal of improvisation. Many of the Italian playwrights Toldo examines (such as Villifranchi and Fagiuoli) experimented with comic performance at gatherings with their fellow academicians. Lazarevich gives the example of Fagiuoli's *scherzo scenico L'avaro punito*, written in 1699. It was rewritten as a full-length comedy by him in 1707, and then adapted as an intermezzo, *L'avaro*, by Antonio Salvi in 1720 (with music by Francesco Gasparini). Lazarevich writes that this intermezzo 'is obviously related to both Fagiuoli's and Molière's works of the same name', but does not enumerate the ways in which they are related.[54] Troy, too, highlighted the connections between the comedies of Molière and the intermezzos that bear their Italianized titles, but was circumspect in his appraisal of Molière's influence and sympathetic to the intermezzo librettist. In a commiserative mood he wrote that 'it was impossible . . . for the Italian arranger to preserve any more than the barest outlines' of a Molière play in its intermezzo incarnation.[55] A comparison of the works (*L'artigiano gentiluomo* and *Albino e Plautilla*) that adapt material from *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* provides a new picture of the broader connections between Molière's plays and the comic intermezzo. The structure that features most prominently in the adaptation of a Molière comedy is the elastic gag.

[51] 'ne nous présente jamais le vice que fait frémir, l'*indignatio* animant les pages immortelles du comique français'; ibid. 302.

[52] Troy, *The Comic Intermezzo*, 79; Lazarevich, 'The Role of the Neapolitan Intermezzo', 337.

[53] The text is attributed to Marchese Trotti by Warren Kirkendale in *The Court Musicians in Florence during the Principate of the Medici* (Florence, 1993), 528.

[54] Lazarevich, 'The Role of the Neapolitan Intermezzo', 335. Her findings are based, in part, on Mariano Bencini, *Il vero Giovan Battista Fagiuoli, e il teatro in Toscana a' suoi tempi: Studio biografico critico* (Florence, 1884), 169.

[55] Troy, *The Comic Intermezzo*, 80.

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Giuseppe Maria Orlandini provided the music for Salvi's *L'artigiano gentiluomo*.[56] He had earlier collaborated with Salvi on the enormously successful intermezzo *Il marito giocatore*. Salvi had already reworked two other comedies by Molière for use as intermezzos (*Le Malade imaginaire* in 1707 and *L'Avare* in 1720). He was a literary Francophile who adapted no fewer than nine tragedies from French sources for his opera librettos—a practice he continued when it came to writing comic intermezzos.[57] Salvi raided the works of Jean Racine, Jean Galbert de Campistron, Nicolas Pradon, and the Corneille brothers for tragic material, and Molière and Jean-François Dufresny for comedic inspiration.[58] One aspect of Salvi's art that has never been explored in detail is the degree to which his procedure for adapting a *tragédie* as a *dramma per musica* relates to his procedure for adapting a *comédie* as an *intermezzo*.[59] Salvi left no clues about his working habits or aesthetic preferences when it came to writing comedy. But he was more forthcoming when it came to his work adapting serious French tragedies. As Reinhard Strohm has pointed out, the prefaces that Salvi wrote for his serious opera librettos provide some clues about the changes he felt were most necessary when fashioning a serious operatic work from a spoken French play.[60] From here we may extract some lessons regarding the adaptation of a comedic play as an intermezzo.

Strohm pays particular attention to the *Avviso* to Salvi's *Amore e maestà* (1715). Here Salvi remarked that some changes to the French original (Thomas Corneille's *Le Comte d'Essex*) were necessary on account of 'the music, the cast, and the Italian stage'.[61] These changes included the insertion of arias, the tightening of lengthy speeches, the reduction of the number of characters, and the addition of several changes of scene.[62] What survived of the original, however, were not newly crafted paraphrases from the French. In his serious works Salvi often excised passages from the original, translated them quite faithfully, and then built new framing texts around them. 'In many cases', Strohm writes, 'he takes over more than one argument or *concetto* from the original scene, combining them with new material or omitting other original material'.[63] We can find further evidence for this procedure in a preface to another French adaptation, Salvi's *Stratonica* (1707). Here he admits that when

[56] Though Orlandini's setting of *L'artigiano* does not survive, Johann Adolf Hasse's setting of the same text does. Hasse set Salvi's text for the San Bartolomeo theatre in Naples in 1726. Hasse revised his intermezzo twice for performances in Dresden and Vienna. See Gordana Lazarevich, 'Hasse as a Comic Dramatist: The Neapolitan Intermezzi', *Analecta Musicologica*, 25 (1987), 287–303.

[57] For more on the importance of French tragedy to Salvi (and especially the importance of his patron Ferdinando de' Medici's influence), see Francesco Giuntini, 'Modelli teatrali francesi nei drammi per musica di Antonio Salvi', *Revista de musicología*, 16 (1993), 335–47, and *I drammi per musica di Antonio Salvi: Aspetti della riforma del libretto nel primo Settecento* (Bologna, 1994). Gordana Lazarevich perceptively noted a possible connection between Salvi and a Florentine culture of francophilia when she remarked 'there seems to be a link between Fagiuoli, Molière, and Salvi', in Lazarevich, 'The Role of the Neapolitan Intermezzo', 336. Salvi's penchant for French source material was certainly not unique. Bucciarelli provides an excellent table of *drammi per musica* modelled on French works as Appendix 3 in *Italian Opera and European Theatre, 1680–1720*, 185–8. See also the extended discussion of Salvi's *Astianatte*, 119–40.

[58] The importance of French theatrical models for the intermezzos and the relationship between French and Italian comedy is explored in detail in the first two chapters of my dissertation, 'È caso da intermedio! Comic Theory, Comic Style, and the Early Intermezzo' (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 2011).

[59] A very good discussion of his *L'ammalato immaginario* is nevertheless provided in Markstrom, *The Operas of Leonardo Vinci, Napoletano*, 184–7.

[60] See Reinhard Strohm, *Dramma per musica: Italian Opera Seria of the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, 1997), 177–98.

[61] 'ma dovendo questa servire alla musica, alla compagnia ed al teatro italiano'. Translated in Strohm, *Dramma per musica*, 177.

[62] Bucciarelli has argued for the importance of scene changes to all types of Italian theatre (spoken and sung), *Italian Opera and European Theatre*, 123–4.

[63] Strohm, *Dramma per musica*, 194.

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trimming scenes to better serve the music (and shorten the play) he had 'to let go of many of those beautiful sentiments with which [the French source] was dressed'. The sartorial metaphor is perhaps revealing. Salvi conceives of the process of adaptation as one in which the author has to take in ('restringere') a larger garment—a process that would maintain the integrity of the old cloth while stripping away excess material.[64] The librettist would therefore tailor existing material to fit a new form rather than recreate the outfit.

The intermezzo is naturally a different dramaturgical entity than the much longer and more serious opera in which it was embedded. Its episodic structure, short duration, and two-character ensemble precludes any of the 'reform' characteristics that were so central to the serious librettos of Salvi and his like-minded contemporaries. In adapting an intermezzo, Salvi would not have had to deal with the intricacies of the *liaison des scenes*, the Aristotelian unities, or the hierarchical treatment of the characters—the chief concerns of the 'reform' librettists of early eighteenth-century serious opera. That does not mean we should discount the fact that the librettist of *L'artigiano gentiluomo* was a serious poet first and a comedic talent second. Some skills and habits of adaptation must have had an influence on his practice as a comic librettist. Salvi's clear preference for recasting conceits from original French texts in new Italian guises suggests that he may have been more interested in preserving the comedic nuggets from Molière than attempting to reproduce 'only the barest outlines' of the plot of the French original.[65] Just as he was partial to maintaining the integrity of an 'argument or *concetto*' for a serious opera, Salvi was perhaps partial to maintaining the best comic exchanges from Molière's original text for a comedy. Indeed, when we compare Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* with Salvi's *L'artigiano gentiluomo* this is precisely what we find.

The most obvious similarity between Molière's comedy and Salvi's intermezzo lies in the central character. Like Molière's Jourdain, Salvi's would-be gentleman (Vanesio) is a merchant who is in search of a paramour, but is unmarried in this adaptation. Larinda, a poor shopkeeper, opens the intermezzo by explaining her desire to snag the wealthy Vanesio as her husband. She disguises herself as 'Larindo', a fencing instructor, a dancing master, and a 'mezzano'—a marriage broker.[66] At the end of Part I, 'Larindo' tells Vanesio of the Baroness Stellidaura d'Arbella, who has heard of his good looks and is coming to visit him. Vanesio is smitten and the rest of Part I is dedicated to his histrionic excitement at her imminent appearance. Part II covers the arrival of the baroness (Larinda once again in disguise), Vanesio's awkward greeting, and their agreement to marry. Part III begins after their marriage, with Vanesio furious that there is no dowry. Larinda unmasks herself and offers her life as penance for her trickery. Vanesio is moved by her gesture at once, forgives her, and they resolve to live happily ever after.

[64] Antonio Salvi, *Stratonica; drama per musica rappresentato in Firenze nell'autunno dell'anno 1707* (Florence, 1707), 4. 'L'opera nel suo Idioma Francese ha già recevuto suoi Applausi. Nella traduzione no sò, se averà questa fortuna, tanto più, che dovendo servire alla Musica, ed alla brevità, è convenuto restringere, e lasciare molti di quei bellissimi sentimenti de' quali l'ha vestita l'Autore.'

[65] Lazarevich similarly writes that in the case of *L'artigiano gentiluomo*, 'although the intermezzo does not present the plot of Molière's work in summary, the source of its ideas is obvious', in *L'artigiano gentiluomo*, p. xi.

[66] In early Renaissance Italy there was a distinction between a *sensale*, a professional matchmaker, and a *mezzano* (literally, 'one who procures'), a family friend or relative who sets up a couple. See Lorenzo Fabbri, *Alleanza matrimoniale e patriziato nella Firenze del '400: Studio sulla famiglia Strozzi* (Florence, 1991), 143.

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Though Salvi borrowed the fencing instructor and the dancing instructor from Molière's original, the philosophy master is conspicuously absent. With his absence Salvi could not include the pronunciation lesson described in detail above. This fact alone is significant, since it suggests that the librettist of *Albino e Plautilla* could have adapted the scene for use in his intermezzo precisely because it had not been used in Salvi's work (which appeared one year earlier)—one should never let good material go to waste. But a brief summary of the parts that Salvi did adapt nevertheless provides an understanding of how the pronunciation elastic gag could appear in a different intermezzo, one which had nothing whatsoever to do with Molière's original text. In keeping with his stated desire to preserve certain 'sentimenti' in translation, Salvi harvested several elastic gags from *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* for use in the new intermezzo. The librettist of *Albino e Plautilla* seems to have followed an identical procedure when he took the unused pronunciation lesson and incorporated it in our Neapolitan intermezzo.

As expected, Salvi had to reduce the number of characters rather dramatically in the process of adapting *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* as the short intermezzo, *L'artigiano gentiluomo*. He did so by continuing his practice of combining characters (as in his serious librettos). But here Salvi rolls six different characters into one. Disguised as Larindo in Part I, the poor shopkeeper plays the fencing master and the dancing master, fills the role of the servant Nicole in the fencing match, and performs Count Dorante's duty of inviting a noblewoman to dinner. Disguised as the Stellidaura d'Arbella in Part II she substitutes for the marchioness Dorimène. And in Part III she finally assumes the role of Madame Jourdain. Despite the radical reorganization of characters, Salvi manages faithfully to preserve some of the best elastic gags from Molière. In fact, the first two parts of the intermezzo prominently feature gags that are reframed with some expository monologues and interspersed with reflective arias (Part III features elastic gags as well, but they are newly invented by Salvi). Examples of these adaptations will provide some clarity.

Part I opens with Larinda's monologue, in which she initiates the central conflict of the intermezzo: she will disguise herself in order to marry Vanesio. She then sings a compact da capo aria about the allure of money ('La moneta è un certo che'). Next, as Vanesio arrives, Salvi reinterprets the elastic gag involving the fencing lesson from Act II, scene 2, and the fencing match with Nicole from Act III, scene 3, of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. The first fencing lesson had been interrupted in Molière, so Salvi telescopes the intervening lessons (including the pronunciation lesson) in order to keep the action on Vanesio's inept swordsmanship. (See Table 2.)

Salvi has cannily adapted the fencing master's lesson for a musical setting. What was a lengthier speech in Molière is here divided up by Vanesio's eager interjections (a dialogic strategy used by Jourdain in his match with Nicole). Salvi has therefore threaded together two elastic gag sequences by incorporating the repetitive comic refrain in which Larindo and Vanesio say 'wait' and 'I'm waiting'. The final line, in which Larindo expresses his satisfaction with Vanesio's fencing form, constitutes the cue line, which signals the need to move on to the dancing lesson. In this next lesson Salvi again extracts Molière's elastic gag sequence from Jourdain's interaction with the dancing master. And again he allows Vanesio to interrupt for confirmation, whereas Molière's text featured lengthier instructions without interruption. A brief excerpt from the longer sequence will illustrate this.

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TABLE 2. *Scenes from* Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme *that reappear in* L'artigiano gentiluomo

Molière, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, Act II, scene 2			
Maître d'armes	Allons, Monsieur, la révérence. Votre corps droit. Un peu penché sur la cuisse gauche. Les jambes point tant écartées. Vos pieds sur une même ligne. Votre poignet à l'opposite de votre hanche. La pointe de votre épée vis-à-vis de votre épaule. Le bras pas tout à fait si étendu. La main gauche à la hauteur de l'œil. L'épaule gauche plus quartée. La tête droite. Le regard assuré. Avancez! Le corps ferme. Touchez-moi l'épée de quarte, et achevez de même! Une, deux. Remettez-vous! Redoublez de pied ferme! Une, deux. Un saut en arrière. Quand vous portez la botte, Monsieur, il faut que l'épée parte la première, et que le corps soit bien effacé. Une, deux. Allons, touchez-moi l'épée de tierce, et achevez de même. Avancez. Le corps ferme. Avancez. Partez de là. Une, deux. Remettez-vous. Redoublez. Une, deux. Un saut en arrière. En garde, Monsieur, en garde. *(Le Maître d'armes lui pousse deux ou trois bottes, en lui disant: 'En garde'.)*	Fencing master	Come, sir, the salute. Body straight. Weight a bit more on the left thigh. Legs not so far apart. Your feet on the same line. Your wrist in line with your hip. The point of your sword level with your shoulder. Arm not extended quite so far. Left hand at eye level. Left shoulder more in quart. Head up. Confident look. Forward. Body firm. Engage my foil in quart, and follow through. One, two. Recover. Thrust again, feet firm. A jump back. When you make your thrust, sir, the sword must start first, and the body must be out of the way. One, two. Come on, engage my foil in tierce, and follow through. Forward. Body firm. Forward. Lunge from there. One, two. Recover. Thrust again. A jump back. On guard, sir, on guard. *(As he calls 'On guard', the fencing master scores two or three touches.)*
Jourdain	Euh?	Jourdain	Euh?

SOURCE: Translation by Frame, *The Misanthrope and Other Plays*, 227.

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Molière, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, Act II, scene 3

Jourdain	Quand on pousse en quarte, on n'a qu'à faire cela, et quand on pousse en tierce, on n'a qu'à faire cela. Voilà le moyen de n'être jamais tué; et cela n'est-il pas beau, d'être assuré de son fait, quand on se bat contre quelqu'un? Là, pousse-moi un peu pour voir. *(Nicole lui pousse plusieurs coups).*	Jourdain	When you thrust in quart, all you have to do is this; and when you thrust in tierce, all you have to do is this. That's the way never to get killed; and isn't that fine, to be certain of how you'll come out when you fight with somebody? There, try a thrust at me, to see. *(making several thrusts at Monsieur Jourdain, and as many touches).*
Nicole	Hé bien, quoi?	Nicole	Well, what about it?
Jourdain	Tout beau, holà, oh! doucement. Diantre soit la coquine!	Jourdain	Easy now! Hold on! Oh, gently! Devil take the hussy!
Nicole	Vous me dites de pousser.	Nicole	You told me to thrust.
Jourdain	Oui; mais tu me pousses en tierce, avant que de pousser en quarte, et tu n'as pas la patience que je pare.	Jourdain	Yes, but you're thrusting in tierce before thrusting in quart, and you won't wait for me to parry.

Source: Translation ibid. 246–7.

Antonio Salvi, *L'artigiano gentiluomo*, Part I

Vanesio	Eccomi già in battaglia.	I am ready to fight.
Larindo	Aspetti.	Wait.
Van.	Aspetto.	I'm waiting.
Lar.	Bisogna far le cose	We have to do things
	Con I metodi dovuti.	the proper way.
	Ella se metta in guardia, e raschi, e sputi.	Put yourself on guard, and clear your throat, and spit.
	Tenga un pò più piegato	Bend the left knee a bit more
	Il ginocchio sinistro, e dritto il destra.	and straighten the right.
Van.	Va ben Signor Maestro?	Is this alright, master?
Lar.	Va bene, sì, va bene,	Alright, yes, alright,
	Ma però gli conviene	But it is a good idea
	Di coprir meglio il petto,	To cover most of the chest,

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	Così.	Just like that.
Van.	Sì: tiro il colpo?	OK, I'll strike a blow?
Lar.	Aspetti.	Wait.
Van.	Aspetto.	I'm waiting.
Lar.	Stendendo la stoccata	Extending the lunge
	In un momento sol libero, e franco,	In only a second, freely, and decisively
	Deve moversi il braccio, il piede, e il fianco.	You must move the arm, foot, and the hip.
	Attento: Tiri.	Careful: strike.
Van.	Ah . . . in guardia mi rimetto.	Ah . . . I'll get back on guard.
Lar.	No: fermo: aspetti.	No: stop: wait.
Van.	Aspetto.	I'm waiting.
Lar.	Volti un tantino il pugno.	Turn the wrist a little bit.
Van.	Così?	Like this?
Lar.	Così: ritornia guardia a un tratto.	Like that: get back on guard at once.
Van.	Ho ben fatto?	I've done well?
Lar.	Ha ben fatto.	You've done well.
	A l'altra: Presto.	To the next one: ready.
Van.	Ah . . .	Ah . . .
Lar.	Cavi.	Disengage.
Van.	Cavo, e ricavo.	Disengage, and reposition.[a]
Lar.	Bravo	Excellent,
	Signor Vanesio.	Mr Vanesio.

[a] 'Cavere' and 'ricavere' are deceptively named. They are the modern fencing equivalent of the 'disengage', a type of feint in which the fencer circles his blade under his opponent's in order to carry out an offensive move. See Anon., *Pallas Armata: The Gentleman's Armorie* (London, 1639), 5; and 'III. Cavare', *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* (4th edn.; Florence, 1729), i. 602.

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Molière, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, Act II, scene 1

Maître à danser	Un chapeau, Monsieur, s'il vous plait. La, la, la; la, la, la, la, la, la; la, la, la, bis; la, la, la; la, la. En cadence, s'il vous plait. La, la, la, la. La jambe droite. La, la, la. Ne remuez point tant les épaules. La, la, la, la, la; la, la, la, la, la. Vos deux bras sont estropiés. La, la, la, la, la. Haussez la tête. Tournez la pointe du pied en dehors. La, la, la. Dressez votre corps.	Dancing master	A hat, Sir, please. La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, ca, la, la, la, la, la. Keep time, if you please. La, la, la, la. Your leg straight. La, la, la. Don't move your shoulders so much. La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la. Your arms look crippled. La, la, la, la, la. Lift your head. Turn your toes out. La, la, la. Body straight.
Jourdain	Euh?	Jourdain	Euh?
Maître	Voilà qui est le mieux du monde.	Master	That couldn't be better.[67]

Antonio Salvi, *L'artigiano gentiluomo*, Part I

Larindo	(O che bella figura!) A lei: Dia moto al piede: La . . . ra . . . la . . . la . . . Su con la vita: Dritta La testa.	(Oh what a sight!) Move your feet: la . . . ra . . . la . . . la . . . Chin up: Straighten your head.
Vanesio	Questa gamba Va ben?	This leg is alright?
Lar.	Va bene	It's alright.

This sequence continues with the usual procedure, building in comic intensity until Salvi punctuates the dialogue with the necessary cue line. The gag terminates when Vanesio asks his instructor what 'he' thinks. Larindo replies: 'I see that you / have gained much in a short time. / Long live Signor Vanesio' (Osservo, ch'ella / A far profitto in poco tempo arriva. / Vive il Signor Vanesio'). This cues Vanesio to sing an aria about his accomplishment ('Gentiluomo diventano'). In a final dialogue they discuss the arrival of the marchioness Stellidaura D'Arbella and the first part of the intermezzo concludes with a duet. Table 3 provides a more succinct visual representation of the scenes Salvi reused from Molière for Part I of the intermezzo.

To summarize: the only scenes Salvi borrows from Molière are elastic gag sequences. He treats these sequences in the manner of an improvising actor, thus allowing lengthier dialogic exchange between the characters. That is to say, he preserves the subject (or conceit) of the gag, but improvises on it to better serve 'the music, the cast, and the Italian stage' (to quote the process he described regarding his serious works). Salvi then writes new dialogue to frame these sequences, which serves to advance the plot of the short intermezzo. The result is a work that resembles Molière's play in only abstract ways: middle-class striving, self-involvement, foolish admiration of aristocratic preciosity. The core resemblance between Molière's play and the intermezzo resides in the elastic gag sequences. For Salvi, the process of adapting Molière's play for the Italian operatic stage consisted mainly (in a technical rather than topical sense) in selecting and augmenting elastic gags. For the librettist of *Albino e Plautilla*, the process appears to have been identical.

THE ELASTIC GAG IN *ALBINO E PLAUTILLA*

The autonomous nature of an elastic gag, as we have seen, makes it a highly adaptable structure. The fact that the pronunciation lesson gag is absent in Salvi's intermezzo did not preclude its use in another intermezzo. In fact, the opposite may be true. A li-

[67] Translation by Frame, *The Misanthrope and Other Plays*, 226.

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TABLE 3. *Scenes from* Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme *that reappear in* L'artigiano gentiluomo

Molière, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1670)	Salvi, *L'artigiano gentiluomo* (1722)
Act II, scene 1:	Part I
dancing lesson	Larinda's monologue expressing her desire to marry
Act II, scene 2:	
	Aria: 'La moneta è un certo che'
fencing lesson	
	Vanesio discusses his invitations
fight between dancing, fencing, and music masters	fencing lesson ('elastic gag')
Act II, scene 3:	
philosopher joins the fight	dancing lesson ('elastic gag')
Act II, scene 4:	Aria: 'Gentiluomo diventano'
philosophy/pronunciation lesson	Vanesio hears of Stellidaura D'Arbella
Act II, scene 5:	Duet: 'Torna a dirmi quel'
tailor's fitting	[End of Part I]
[End of Act II]	
Act III, scene 1:	
Jourdain summons Nicole	
Act III, scene 2:	
Nicole laughs at Jourdain's outfit	
Act III, scene 3:	
Madame Jourdain reproaches her husband	
Jourdain fences with Nicole	
Act III, scene 4:	
Dorante asks for more money	
[Act continues]	

brettist may be inspired to find other comic gems in the source material of a popular intermezzo. For the librettist of *Albino e Plautilla*, this seems to be a likely scenario. Working within the milieu of the San Bartolomeo theatre in Naples, the librettist would certainly have been familiar with Perrucci's advice (given above) that reusing 'concetti' was a valid and desirable part of the improvised play. As we saw with Salvi, this seems to have been standard procedure for a comic librettist as well. Extracting

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Table 4. *Scenes from* Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme *that reappear in* Albino e Plautilla da pedante

Molière, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1670)	[Saddumene?], *Albino e Plautilla da pedante* (1723)
Act II, scene 1:	Part II
dancing lesson	Plautilla's monologue explaining her tutor disguise
Act II, scene 2:	The tutor and Albino discuss Latin and Greek
fencing lesson	The tutor introduces 'his' system of knowledge ('elastic gag)
fight between dancing, fencing, and music masters	Aria: 'Affirmare vel negare'
Act II, scene 3:	philosophy/pronunciation lesson ('elastic gag')
philosopher joins the fight	
	Aria: 'AEIOU'
Act II, scene 4:	
philosophy/pronunciation lesson	Albino asks the tutor to accompany him to the Palatine Hill
Act II, scene 5:	Duet: 'Verrete / Sì, verrò'
tailor's fitting	[End of Part II]
[End of Act II]	

the pronunciation gag from Molière may therefore have seemed like a natural and desirable thing to do. The similarities between the construction of Salvi's *L'artigiano gentiluomo* and *Albino e Plautilla* certainly suggest this is the case.

The organizational structure of Part II of *Albino e Plautilla* mirrors Part I of *L'artigiano gentiluomo* (see Table 4). An opening monologue by the female protagonist (Plautilla) sets the action in motion by describing her disguise and intent to tutor Albino. An encounter with Albino follows, which features an opening comic exchange about philosophy. This triggers an aria for the 'philosopher'. Next is the pronunciation elastic gag, which is concluded with an aria for Albino. A final short exchange in recitative is terminated with the duet finale in which Albino questions the tutor about 'his' feminine features. In both *L'artigiano gentiluomo* and *Albino e Plautilla*, the elastic gag taken from Molière culminates with an aria. There seems to be a significant relationship between the cue line of the gag and the initiation of an aria. Just as the cue line is the verbal marker that tells the actors to go on to a new topic in a spoken improvised performance, the cue line plays a structural role in the comic musical theatre by initiating an aria—a reflective pause in the narrative action, which allows for musical comedy of a different sort. This process is clearly reflected in Leonardo Vinci's musical handing of the elastic gag in *Albino e Plautilla*.

Above I explored how the comic playwright and librettist crafted the elastic gag on the page in a similar manner to the improvising actor. For *Albino* the librettist has

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done just that. The original pronunciation gag (in its more serious form in Cordemoy's treatise) was trimmed by Molière and set as dialogue. Here the librettist further prunes back the philosopher's instructions in order to create a more rapid exchange (now written in verse). But he does allow the gag to grow by having the 'philosopher' offer more corrections to Albino's pronunciation of 'A'. Whereas Molière only dwells on the 'U', the intermezzo dwells on both the 'U' and the 'A'. It seems the librettist has rather cannily manipulated the scene in order to take advantage of the fact that the sound of the vowel plays an important role in Italian prosody and prose.[68] The choice to spend so much time on 'A', for example, might be inspired in part by Pietro Bembo, the influential scholar whose *Prose della volgar lingua* (1525) did so much to legitimize Tuscan as the literary language of the Italian peninsula. Bembo ranked the vowels according to the amount of air they expelled. He waxed somewhat rhapsodic about the 'A', which 'makes the best sound because it sends forth the most air, since this air is expelled with more open lips and more towards heaven'.[69] The 'U', by contrast, 'robs the mouth and breath of dignity' ('E', 'O', and 'I' rank in between, in that order).[70] In any case, the librettist has played with the elasticity of the gag in an attempt to capture an ideal version of what might be an improvised performance.

Musical comedy has one more important layer to add—the music. Elastic gags in *Albino* (as in all intermezzos) are set as recitative and they culminate in a pause in the action to allow for an aria. There are specific musical aims that must therefore be achieved: the gag must bridge the tonal gap between the previous aria and the one that follows. But it must also be funny, placing the onus on the composer to create a setting that suggests how to perform the most amusing lines and is flexible enough to allow the performer to milk the comedy in the moment of performance. Vinci's music accomplishes this effectively, and insofar as recitative is a heightened version of spoken dialogue, he provides a rather tantalizing look at what comedy might have sounded like on the early eighteenth-century stage.

Elastic gags tend to produce parallel structures in the dialogue—each character speaks rather repetitively, in a similar register, and is never quite understood. Much of comedy is based on the inability of characters to communicate effectively. The pronunciation gag is based on this premiss. The 'philosopher' teaches the pronunciation of vowels that Albino reproduces with a comic amount of labour. It is obvious to the 'philosopher' and to the audience that this much work should not be necessary. Vinci highlights Albino's ridiculousness by setting up and then deviating from parallels in the musical lines of Plautilla (our philosopher) and Albino. He creates ironic incongruity between the vowel that is supposed to be sung and the vocal line that deviates from the pitch given.

At the start of the gag Plautilla introduces the vowel 'A' and asks Albino to sing it. (See Ex. 1.) He responds by singing an A in the middle of his register (the A below middle C). Plautilla then recommends he 'open his lips more', but Albino repeats the same A as before (but presumably with a different tone colour—Albino's 'A' has been respelled as 'Ah'). Plautilla then cautions him that this is too much of a change and shows him the exact formation of the mouth necessary to create the desired sound.

[68] My thanks to Bonnie Blackburn for pointing this out.

[69] 'Di queste tutte miglior suono rende la A; con ciò sia cosa che ella più di spirito manda fuori, per ciò che con più aperte labbra nel manda e più al cielo ne va esso spirito', in Pietro Bembo, *Prose della volgar lingua*, ed. Mario Marti (Padua, 1967), 100. Trans. Martha Feldman in *City Culture and the Madrigal at Venice* (Berkeley, 1995), 148.

[70] 'il che toglie alla bocca e allo spirito dignità', Bembo, *Prose della volgar lingua*, 100. My translation.

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Ex. 1. Leonardo Vinci, *Albino e Plautilla*, Part II, recitative (fo. $115^{r–v}$). Rari 32.4.13. Naples, Conservatorio della Musica di San Pietro a Majella

Plautilla / Albino

Al-le vo-ca-li bi-so-gna star at-ten-to. Per dir A, co-me fa-te? A

b.c.

3 Pl. / Alb. / Pl.

Le lab-bra più a-per-te. Ah Trop-po a-des-so voi la spa-lan-ca-te, ec-co-vi la mi-

6 Alb.

-su-ra di quan-to hà da es-ser gran-de per dir A, l'a-per-tu-ra. Ah, Ah. Sì,

9 Pl.

sì, va be-ne. Per l'E, co-me si fa? S'è a-per-to, un ter-zo me-no. S'è

12 Alb. / Pl.

chiu-so, bas-ta a-prir-ne la me-tà. E l'I? L'in-fe-ri-or lab-bro va con-

15 Alb. / Pl. / Alb.

-trat-to un pò in giù. Ih, Ih. Giu-sto co-sì. Ma l'O? Quest-to lo sò. Oh,

18 Pl. / Alb. / Pl.

Oh. Ve-nia-mo al-l'U. Si pro-nun-zia strin-gen-do i lab-bri in fo-ra. Uh, Uh. Più

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Ex. 1. Continued

21 Alb. Pl. Alb. Pl.

stre - ti. Uh, Uh. Va be - ne a - des - so. Al - la bon o - ra. Co -

23

- sì a - vre - te la lin - gua as - sai più sciol - ta. Ma per me - glio ac - co - stu -

25

- mar - si, tor - na - te - la a ri - dir più d'u - na vol - ta.

Albino then jumps up a fourth for a triumphant declaration of 'ah' (on the D above middle C), and announces his own satisfaction with himself. Plautilla has suggested only a small correction in his jaw placement, but Albino has compensated by deviating from the pitch quite considerably. A performer could presumably coax laughter from the audience by making a very deliberate attempt at forming the correct mouth shape and then yelping these higher notes, creating a marked visual and aural incongruity.

Vinci supports all this humour while still creating the requisite harmonic interest in the bass, articulating the structure of the gag in the continuo. Albino's first 'A', for example, is initially supported by A major harmony; his second is above D major in first inversion. An intervening resolution to D minor sets up a descending bass pattern through a dominant seventh. The resolution on G minor in first inversion serves a double purpose: it releases the tension of the dominant seventh while at the same remaining tonally unclosed. It furthers the action—and illuminates the text—in which Albino ploughs on without having properly completed the first lesson. 'Ah, Ah' he shouts before announcing that he has completed his task and is ready to move on. The harmony, as perhaps one should expect, does not reach a proper sense of arrival until the cue line of the elastic gag. Here Plautilla suggests that in order truly to grasp the lesson, Albino 'should repeat it several more times'. A half-cadence in F major confidently puts Albino on the correct tonal terrain for his subsequent aria, 'AEIOU'.

The text for the aria seems to draw directly from a line in Molière's original setting of the pronunciation gag (see Ex. 2). After mastering the 'E', Jourdain exclaims 'Ah! how beautiful that is! (Ah! que cela est beau!). Albino's aria is an extended reflection on this sentiment: 'AEIOU / What a beautiful thing knowledge is!' ('Bella cosa ch'è il sapere'). Vinci captures Albino's swagger by giving him long bellowing notes set into relief by chirping thirds in the strings. The buoyant texture and slow-moving

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Ex. 2. Leonardo Vinci, *Albino e Plautilla*, Part II, aria 'AEIOU' (fo. 115^{v}). Rari 32.4.13. Naples, Conservatorio della Musica di San Pietro a Majella

harmony give the aria a modern sensibility. Albino's long notes provide a ridiculous contrast: the very essence of the *buffo* comic aria.

WHY THIS 'ELASTIC GAG'?

The process by which composers set elastic gags is similar to the process by which librettists adopted those elastic gags from Molière. Both composers and librettists sought to capture an idealized version of an improvised conceit—a verbal and musical imprint of a live performance. But the material they adapted was not from an improvised scenario, but rather from another texted source. This does not make the practice exceptional, because this was precisely the practice that improvising actors used to create dialogue in an improvisatory context (recall Perrucci). Elastic gags could therefore exist in a rather nebulous territory, wandering from stage to page and back again in what Andrews cheekily called the 'promiscuous corpus of Italian drama'.[71] But in this way these rather conventional forms take on highly meaningful roles within the intermezzo. An elastic gag could serve not only as a useful comic scene, but also as a kind of medium for the previous works in which it was used. The pronunciation lesson in *Albino e Plautilla* is 'autonomous' in the sense that it could be extracted

[71] Andrews, 'Molière, Commedia dell'arte, and the Question of Influence in Early Modern European Theatre', 446.

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from one work and inserted into another without losing its internal coherence. But it is not 'autonomous' with regard to meaning—its previous incarnation in Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* and its past life as a philosophical lesson in Cordemoy's treatise hover like ghostly presences.[72] As, perhaps, does the knowledge of its absence from Salvi's *L'artigiano gentiluomo*. Why might a Neapolitan librettist in 1723 wish to have these associations linger? Until now we have been describing the possible means by which a serious philosophical argument could make its way into a French spoken comedy and then into an Italian musical intermezzo—the 'how'. But such descriptions are incomplete without discussing the meaning the scene may have held for librettists, composers, and audiences—the 'why'. Why might the librettist of *Albino e Plautilla* have selected this scene in particular to include in an intermezzo about an aspiring politician and his clever suitor?

Albino e Plautilla has not yet been subject to this kind of critical scrutiny. But the relationship between Molière's play and Cordemoy's treatise has been the topic of enquiry. One particular scholar's insight into that relationship yields a key piece of information for understanding *Albino e Plautilla*'s relationship to its source material and its importance to a contemporary audience. Molière's method of adaption prefigures the method of adaptation of Italian librettists, and it seems likely that his motivation for adapting Cordemoy's text similarly prefigures that of the librettist for *Albino e Plautilla*. In 1935 C. Voile examined whether Molière, by adapting a philosophical treatise, was satirizing the *Discours* of Cordemoy or making fun of Monsieur Jourdain's loutish behaviour during a serious philosophical exercise. The former affirms the notion of the intermezzo as a kind of burlesque of borrowed material—an unthinking parody of philosophy stolen from another work. The latter, however, points to a new interpretation of the intermezzo in which the intermezzo librettist engages in the same type of comic writing and social critique of which Molière was the master. The point of *Albino*'s borrowing would be not merely to ape Molière, but to make fun of the misinterpretation of Cordemoy.

Voile makes the case for the latter option. He states that the pronunciation scene does not satirize the real Cordemoy, but the fictional Jourdain. He concedes that the scene works well as a satire of a pedantic mode of philosophy, but suggests that it was in fact intended to be a satire of the merchant middle class dabbling in natural philosophy. He writes that 'for insiders, it is not so much the phonetic explanation that is out of season. It is M. Jourdain who is not in his place.'[73] For Voile, the learned and aristocratic audience at the theatre of the Château de Chambord was laughing at the ridiculous Jourdain who does not understand the importance of the lesson he is learning.

Cordemoy's purpose, after all, was not to provide a tedious practical explanation of pronunciation. In fact, he makes the point that even children readily pick up such a simple task. Rather, he gives a long and detailed explanation of the mechanics of speaking to show that the body was designed as an instrument of sound production.

[72] Scholarship of modernist and postmodernist literature has concentrated on the importance of 'pre-texts' in communicating meaning. Linda Hutcheon and others have used the term 'palimpsest' to describe works in which earlier adaptations or versions of a text exist as layers of meaning within the new text. See Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York, 2006), 6, 21–2; also Michael Alexander, *The Poetic Achievement of Ezra Pound* (London, 1979), 114, and Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, 'Agency in the Discursive Condition', *History and Theory*, 40/4 (2001), 34–58.

[73] 'Cette reserve faite, nous pouvons, sans grande crainte d'erreur, voir là une scène d'actualité, à multiples effets, parfois assez ésotériques. Chacun comprenait suivant ses capacités, ses relations, ses lectures. Pour les initiés, ce n'était pas précisément les explications phonétiques qui étaient hors de saison. C'est M. Jourdain qui n'était pas à sa place.' C. Voile, 'La Leçon d'orthographe du Bourgeois Gentilhomme' in *Le Français moderne*, 3 (1935), 55–64 at 64.

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He suggests that some animals may similarly produce such sounds, and so it is only in language that we can deduce that the body has a soul—a preoccupation of post-Cartesian thinkers such as Cordemoy. He marshals a pedantic explanation of pronunciation in order to differentiate clearly, as he states in the preface to the *Discours*, 'all that which is owed to the soul, and all that which is borrowed from the body'.[74] When Molière takes the pronunciation passage out of context it appears to be nothing but ridiculous. But if we follow Voile, we must look past this in order to see that it is Jourdain's inability to understand the broader implication of the lesson that is humorous, not the lesson itself.

Proper pronunciation seems to have been a particularly French preoccupation of the final quarter of the seventeenth century, some time and place removed from the Italian intermezzo of the 1720s.[75] Neapolitan circles would nevertheless have been familiar with Cordemoy's work by way of the philosophical writings of Nicolas Malebranche, who elaborated on the writings of Descartes and incorporated the work of several other post-Cartesians, including Cordemoy. Malebranche's *De la recherche de la verité* circulated in Naples in a Latin translation in the decades before the premiere of *Albino e Plautilla*.[76] In one passage, Malebranche makes a passing but specific reference to Cordemoy's *Discours*:

Nonetheless, in order to pronounce but a single word, it is necessary to move many muscles, such as those of the tongue, lips, throat, and diaphragm, all at once, within a certain time, and in a certain order. But one can, with little meditation, satisfy oneself on these questions, and on many other very curious and rather useful ones, and they need not detain us here.[77]

While Malebranche appears dismissive of the pedantic nature of pronunciation texts, he was nevertheless influenced by Cordemoy's more sophisticated post-Cartesian philosophy (specifically his occasionalism, which reintroduced God as an efficient cause of motion; this feature also attracted Neapolitan philosophers to Malebranche).[78] The librettist of *Albino e Plautilla*, therefore, had the opportunity to recast Molière's comic scene for Neapolitan audiences because they were both familiar with the philosophical precepts and because it had not been included in the Florentine version of Salvi's *L'artigiano gentiluomo*.

With this additional knowledge—the knowledge that this scene had been used in Molière and absent in Salvi's intermezzo—Neapolitan audiences were afforded a particularly rich comic experience when the pronunciation lesson appeared in a new guise in *Albino e Plautilla*. Uneducated audiences could laugh at the seeming absurdity of the lesson, lovers of literature could appreciate the reference to Molière, and

[74] 'je fais en ce discours un discernement exact de tout ce qu'elle tient de l'Ame, & tout ce qu'elle emprunte du Corps'; Cordemoy, *Discours*, pre. p. [11]. For a succinct interpretation of Cordemoy's importance to Cartesian philosophy see Michael Losonsky, *Linguistic Turns in Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2006), 73–5.

[75] For a list of French spelling and pronunciation texts contemporary with Molière see Georges Mounin, *Histoire de la linguistique: Des origines au 20ᵉ siècle* (Paris, 1967), 124.

[76] Neapolitans read Malebranche in Latin translation. See John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples, 1680–1760* (Cambridge, 2005), 126.

[77] Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search after Truth*, book 2, pt. 1, ch. 5, trans. and ed. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp (Cambridge, 1997), 108.

[78] For more on Malebranche and occasionalism see Richard A. Watson, 'Malebranche, Models, and Causation', in Steven Nadler (ed.), *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy: Cartesianism, Occasionalism, and Preestablished Harmony* (University Park, Pa., 1993), 76–92. Regarding the attractiveness of occasionalism to Neapolitans and Italians more generally, see Vincenzo Ferrone, *The Intellectual Roots of the Italian Enlightenment: Newtonian Science, Religion and Politics in the Early Eighteenth Century*, trans. Sue Brotherton (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1995), 131–45.

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cultured elites could marvel at the timeliness of the philosophical discussion. The degree to which philosophy could inform the practice of civic life was of profound concern to Neapolitans in the years before *Albino e Plautilla*'s performance. For decades serious operas at the court theatre had been an important venue for representing political discussions. With *Albino e Plautilla*, we have an example of an intermezzo that may have had significant political resonances for an audience accustomed to the contentious but often covert debates about philosophy, religion, and the state.

THE NEW PHILOSOPHY AS COMIC MUSE

Plautilla's pedant is clearly a Cartesian philosopher. Her declaration that her first rule is 'to cast doubt on everything' ('Il primo / È che si debba dubitar di tutto') is remarkably similar to Descartes's first rule of his *Discours de la méthode* of 1637, which was

> to accept nothing as true which I did not clearly recognize to be so: that is to say, carefully to avoid precipitation and prejudice in judgments, and to accept in them nothing more than what was presented to my mind so clearly and distinctly that I could have no occasion to doubt it.[79]

She questions Albino to the point that he can no longer be sure whether it is night or day ('Non saper dir se sia di giorno, o notte'). The state of confusion brought on by philosophy was a state that many Neapolitans were familiar with in the decades leading up to the intermezzo's performance. It is this history of intellectual and political strife that forms the backdrop to the pronunciation lesson as it appears in the intermezzo. Opera and politics had been wedded in Neapolitan public life for as long as philosophical debates had embroiled the state. The scene's parody of Cartesianism made it a timely elastic gag to include in an intermezzo of the second decade of the eighteenth century. It was this precise historical moment that allowed the audience to find humour in the work.

In 1723 Naples was re-emerging from its slumber as a cultural and intellectual powerhouse. Dogged by political instability within the city state (and hemmed in by roving bandits outside), Naples in the mid-seventeenth through to the early eighteenth century underwent a tortuous phase of unrest.[80] The Masaniello revolt of 1647 provided the catalyst for this period of instability. Tommaso Aniello, a lowly fisherman, led the people in an uprising against vice-regal Spanish rule.[81] The bloodiness that followed invited an opportunistic invasion by the French, establishing a Neapolitan outpost for their empire. The French occupation was brief. In April of 1648 the French forces were expelled and Spanish rule was re-established with the arrival of a new viceroy from Rome: Íñigo Vélez de Guevara Tasis, conde de Oñate (1597–1658). Oñate had learned about the value of public spectacle as propaganda from his time in Rome. He immediately set about importing operas to Naples and placing them at the centre of a new public culture of festivals presided over by his court.[82] Opera therefore

[79] René Descartes, 'Discourse on Method', in *Philosophical Works*, i, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (Cambridge, 1911), 86–7.

[80] The threat of *banditi* remained a significant problem for the environs of Naples through the 1680s. See Pietro Giannone, *Istoria civile del Regno di Napoli*, ix (Milan, 1821), 323–4; Christopher F. Black, *Early Modern Italy: A Social History* (London, 2001), 191.

[81] The most exhaustive study of the Masaniello revolt remains Rosario Villari, *La rivolta antispagnola a Napoli: Le origini (1585–1647)* (Bari, 1967); translated as *The Revolt of Naples* by James Newell and John A. Marino (Cambridge, 1993).

[82] Lorenzo Bianconi and Thomas Walker, 'Dalla *Finta pazza* alla *Veremonda*: Storie di Febiarmonici', *Rivista italiana di musicologia*, 10 (1975), 379–454.

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occupied an important place in Neapolitan social life—a place where social, intellectual, and political concerns could be expressed in drama. As Dinko Fabris has suggested, 'from then on, the Neapolitan public still participated in battles, but only by way of stage fiction'.[83]

But the Masaniello revolt also left a deep psychological scar on the minds of Neapolitan intellectuals. Though they were quietly opposed to the status quo—poised as they were between heavy-handed and sometimes fickle viceroyalty and the suspicious and powerful Church—intellectuals did not eagerly embrace fully republican forms of government. They had been made cautious by the lingering memory of the bloody revolt.[84] Many of the intellectual class, however, sought to increase the power of Naples's bourgeois class, the *ceto civile*.[85] What is remarkable is the degree to which philosophy played into their designs for statecraft. The first two decades of the Settecento mark a period in which intellectuals wrestled to fuse morality with politics in order to conceive of a more perfect political union. Much of the Neapolitan reaction focused on what Harold Samuel Stone has referred to as the supposed 'metaphysical bankruptcy of modern philosophy and mathematics'.[86] In the first two decades of the eighteenth century, following his disenchantment with Cartesianism more generally, the philosopher and friend of Giambattista Vico, Paolo Mattia Doria, set out to outline a statecraft founded upon virtue that could mitigate the recklessness of pure republicanism while still granting personal liberties greater than those offered by Machiavellian statism. Doria's *La vita civile*, published in 1710, was written to accomplish this task. The historian John Robertson defined Doria's aims succinctly:

> In effect what Doria sought to supply in these early chapters of the *Vita Civile* was what Descartes had failed to provide: a Cartesian ethics, skeptical without being Epicurean in its recognition of the strength of sense impressions and the force of the passions, rational but not Stoic in the conviction that virtue could be identified and pursued.[87]

Albino, ridiculous a figure as he may appear to be, is nevertheless an aspiring politician attempting to be properly educated in order to serve the public good in the Roman senate. The librettist of *Albino* has, in a way, crafted a fascinating parallel between Rome in the last days of the Republic and Naples in its early rebirth as a European capital of economic and political influence.[88] For Doria and others, the success of Naples was contingent upon the morality of the public, fostered through the

[83] Dinko Fabris, *Music in Seventeenth-Century Naples: Francesco Provenzale (1624–1704)* (Aldershot, 2007), 36.

[84] This view is advanced by Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, 198.

[85] See Koen Stapelbroek, *Love, Self-Deceit, and Money: Commerce and Morality in the Early Neapolitan Enlightenment* (Toronto, 2008), 19–20.

[86] Harold Samuel Stone, *Vico's Cultural History: The Production and Transmission of Ideas in Naples* (New York, 1997), 172.

[87] Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, 193. An identical reading is presented by Enrico Nuzzo in *Verso la 'vita civile': Antropologia e politica nelle lezioni accademiche di Gregorio Caloprese e Paolo Mattia Doria* (Naples, 1984), 14–16. On the indebtedness of Doria's work to Cartesianism more generally, see Silvia Contarini, 'Descartes in Naples: The Reception of *Passions de l'âme*', in David R. Castillo and Massimo Lollini (eds.), *Reason and its Others: Italy, Spain and the New World* (Nashville, Tenn., 2006), 39–60, 53. Drafted concurrently with his *Vita civile*, the *Massime* is a history of Spanish Naples's rule in the period after the Masaniello revolt. He concludes that the viceroys had essentially promoted personal vice as a divide-and-conquer strategy for the kingdom. The *Massime* circulated in manuscript form until being published in a modern edition: *Massime del governo spagnolo a Napoli* (Naples, 1973).

[88] Eluggero Pii remarks that an engagement with pre-imperial Rome, in addition to the living proof of republicanism in the states of Venice, Lucca, Genoa, and San Marino, was a preoccupation of literary academies, which interacted with 'the memory of republican Rome transmitted through the literary genres and styles of the local academies'; 'Republicanism and Commercial Society in Eighteenth-Century Italy', in Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (eds.), *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, ii (Cambridge, 2002), 249–54 at 249.

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cultivation of philosophy and, one imagines, reinforced in the theatrical dramas of the day.

The philosophic project of creating a moral vision of man was by no means a simple one. Neapolitan philosophers of the first two decades of the eighteenth century were faced with knitting together a metaphysical conception of man based on the frayed threads of seventeenth-century philosophical debates. Especially in Naples, the philosophies of Descartes, Pierre Gassendi, and others competed for a viable successor to the Aristotelianism that dominated through the late medieval and Renaissance periods. The situation is complicated by the fact that few of these philosophies were accepted by the Church, and alliance with any one of them could lead one to be derided as an apostate or atheist.

The latter half of the seventeenth century had already featured an aborted attempt to modernize the philosophical landscape of Naples. The scientific and philosophic academy founded by Tommaso Cornelio and other luminaries, the Investiganti, for instance, lost its drive in the closing decade of the Seicento in a quest to unseat the philosophical conservatives.[89] Their strict adherence to the scientific method as the only viable method of explaining phenomena left them vulnerable to attack from the authorities. As Vincenzo Ferrone suggested vividly,

> The group's professed naturalism so naively disposed towards any dangerous overture—even materialist atomism and Spinozan theories—had become an embarrassing burden at the very moment when Rome had decided on a drastic turn of the inquisitorial screw for Italian culture, obliging the *novatores* to abandon their cause.[90]

The danger of flirting with modern philosophy was solidified in the minds of the 'new thinkers' in Naples with the infamous 'trial of the atheists' of the 1690s in which three individuals were imprisoned and tried for their supposed denial of the divinity of Christ, of miracles, and of the immortality of the soul.[91] The three men were admonished and released—making the event a rather tepid one in the history of the Inquisition. But the spectacle showed the Church's eagerness to tamp down the freedom to philosophize for fear the *novatores* could encourage other dangerous attitudes.

Scholarly opinion remains split on the significance of the trial. Did it represent the vitality of philosophical debate and embolden the followers of the New Philosophy? Or did it mark a turn away from radicalism towards conciliation, defensiveness, and weakness?[92] Either way, the trial unleashed a debate in print about the value of philosophy, with defenders and proponents of the New Philosophy writing sharp attacks on the other side.

Reactionaries had been notified early of the coming storm. Church authorities warned the archbishop of Naples in 1671 that 'a certain Renato De Cartes' had been

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[89] For more on the importance of Cornelio see Maurizio Torrini, *Tommaso Cornelio e la ricostruzione della scienza* (Naples, 1977).

[90] Ferrone, *The Intellectual Roots of the Italian Enlightenment*, 184.

[91] Luciano Osbat, *L'inquisizione a Napoli: Il processo agli ateisti, 1688–1697* (Rome, 1974), 255–6, 265–6, 271; Robertson, 94–101; Stone, *Vico's Cultural History*, 42–3; Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford and New York, 2001), 50.

[92] Robertson emphasizes the positive aspects of the trials, including the emboldening of the *novatores* to take on ecclesiastical authorities; *The Case for the Enlightenment*, 100. Comparato and Ferrone emphasize the strong message sent by the Church and suggest that the *investiganti* were, as Israel summarizes, 'firmly pinned on the defensive', 51. Vittor Ivo Comparato, *Giuseppe Valletta, un intellettuale napoletano della fine del Seicento* (Naples, 1970), 143–8; Ferrone, *The Intellectual Roots of the Italian Enlightenment*, 17–18.

stirring up talk concerning atoms.[93] Descartes had been a controversial figure within philosophical circles, but soon assumed metonymic status among reactionaries in Naples.[94] Descartes was to them not the author of a discrete philosophy, but the representative of the entire body of New Philosophy—even radical atomist philosophy—that circulated in Europe at the turn of the century. He represented the first trickle down the slippery philosophical slope towards blasphemy. The conservatives, clinging to the Aristotelianism that had nurtured generations of Italian thought, attempted to shore up their Neapolitan fortress from the northern invaders. 'Aristotle may have said some things that were false', wrote the conservative Giovanni Battista Benedetti, 'but "Renato" has said not one thing that is true.'[95] A volley of ripostes followed with neither side coming to a consensus other than agreeing that Spinoza was perhaps the most godless ingrate Western civilization had yet produced.[96] Against this contentious background the librettist of *Albino e Plautilla* made his career. The opera *Silla dittatore* offered an opportunity to write an intermezzo set in late republican Rome. On the stage, therefore, Neapolitan audiences could see a classical reflection of their own struggles for political stability and moral correctness acted out in the form of the comic intermezzo.[97]

THE FEMALE PHILOSOPHER IN NAPLES

It is perhaps significant that the Cartesian lesson in *Albino e Plautilla* is taught by a woman. If the fierce debates about the New Philosophy had not been enough to inspire the librettist to borrow Molière's scene, the translation and publication of Descartes's *Principia Philosophiae* in 1722 may have been. It was a task completed by Giuseppa Eleonora Barbapiccola, an extraordinarily learned woman, friend of Vico's daughter Luisa, and future Arcadian poet.[98] We know nothing of her education and

[93] 'D'un certo Renato de Cartes' risveglia le antiche opinioni di Greci intorno a gli Atomi', quoted in Comparato, *Giuseppe Valletta*, 140. Original letter in Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele III, MS XI. Aa. 22, fo. 71^{r}.

[94] Raffaele Ajello writes that the term 'Cartesian' was more often 'attributed by the *veteres* than recognized without reservation by the *juvenes*, and it came to designate all the moderns' positions in the dispute, even if they were quite far from those of Descartes'. See Ajello, *Arcana Juris: Diritto e politica nel Settecento italiano* (Naples, 1976), 169.

[95] 'Aristotele ha detto qualche cosa di falso, ma Renato non ne ha detta niuna di vero.' Giovanni Battista Benedetti, *Lettere apologetiche in difesa della teologia scolastica* (Naples, 1694), 185. Benedetti published these four letters under the pseudonym 'Benedetto Aletino'.

[96] Though Spinoza was regarded as the worst exemplar of modern philosophy, he was nevertheless read in Naples clandestinely and had a clear influence on the later writings of Vico. See James C. Morrison, 'Vico and Spinoza', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 41 (1980), 49–68; and Frederick Vaughan, '*La Scienza Nuova*: Orthodoxy and the Art of Writing', *Forum Italicum*, 2 (1968), 332–57.

[97] The attitudes and economic complexion of the audience of the San Bartolomeo (where *Albino e Plautilla* was performed) are not known in perfect detail. But the Bartolomeo, in contrast to the Teatro Nuovo or the Fiorentini, had a reputation for being the theatre of the elite in Naples. We may assume that audiences were not uniformly aristocratic—it was a public theatre—but drawn from the wealthy members of the nobility and the *ceto civile* (Neapolitan professional class). See Michael Robinson, *Naples and Neapolitan Opera* (Oxford, 1972), 11. For more on the Teatro San Bartolomeo, see Alba Cappellieri, 'Il teatro di San Bartolomeo da Scarlatti a Pergolesi', *Studi pergolesiani*, 4 (2000), 131–56, and the very informative archival work of Francesco Cotticelli, 'La fine della fascinazione: Il teatro di San Bartolomeo durante il viceregno austriaco', *Rivista italiana di musicologia*, 33 (1998), 77–88; Cotticelli and Paologiovane Maione, 'La nascita dell'istituzione teatrale a Napoli: Il Teatro di San Bartolomeo (1707–1737)', in Franco Carmelo Greco (ed.), *I percorsi della scena: Cultura e communicazione del teatro nell'Europa del Settecento* (Naples, 2001), 373–478. For a general overview of theatres and their audiences during this period see Margaret Butler, 'Italian Opera in the Eighteenth Century', in Anthony DelDonna and Pierpaolo Polzonetti (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge, 2009), 203–71.

[98] For a more complete biographical picture see Enzo Grillo, 'Barbapiccola, Giuseppa Eleonora', in the *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vi (Rome, 1964), 39. Regarding her relationship with Vico's daughter, Luisa, see Manuela Sanna, 'Un'amicizia alla luce del Cartesianesimo: Giuseppa Eleonora Barbapiccola e Luisa Vico', in Pina Totaro (ed.), *Donne filosofa e cultura nel Seicento* (Rome, 1999), 173–8. For an overview of her place among female intellectuals

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Pl. I. Engraving of Giuseppa Eleonora Barbapiccola by Francesco de Grado. Frontispiece to her translation of Descartes's *Principia Philosophiae* (1722). Reproduced with permission from the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.

little of her life besides the monumental task she completed in translating Descartes's treatise. Like the other pro-Cartesian writers in Naples in the early eighteenth century, Barbapiccola had to falsify her publishing location to avoid the censors, replacing 'Naples' with 'Turin' on the title page of her translation.[99] But unlike the sometimes cautious and clandestine support offered to Cartesianism by the Neapolitan intelligentsia, Barbapiccola fearlessly carried the torch for the French philosopher's writings. Her translation was published with a full-page engraving of herself as a frontispiece (see Pl. 1).[100] In it she appears in all her youthful splendour with enormous eyes, plump cheeks, an impossibly small mouth, and ringlets trickling over her shoulders. But her cherubic countenance is framed by sobriety. Dark curtains behind are gathered back to reveal a bookcase behind her right shoulder. In her hand she holds a book—presumably Descartes's *Principia*—and marks a page with her

in southern Italy see Raffaella Simili, 'In punta di penna: Donne di scienza e di cultura fra cosmopolitismo e intimità meridionale', in *La scienza nel mezzogiorno dopo l'Unità d'Italia* (Naples, 2008), 27–89.

[99] The historian Paula Findlen suggests this is the case. The engraver was a Neapolitan and clandestinely publishing in Naples was not without precedent. See Giuseppa Eleonora Barbapiccola, 'Preface to Rene Descartes's *Principles of Philosophy*', trans. Rebecca Messbarger and Paula Findlen in *The Contest for Knowledge: Debates over Women's Learning in Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago, 2005), 47 n. 27.

[100] René Descartes, *I principj della filosofia di Renato Des-Cartes* (Torino [Naples]: Gio. Francesco Mairesse, 1722), [4].

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finger. And while loose-fitting *sacque*-back gowns were notoriously popular in the teens and twenties (think of Watteau), Barbapiccola appears in what looks like a 'wrapping gown' (albeit a beautifully patterned one).[101] This is the young Barbapiccola as philosopher.

The translation is prefaced by a lengthy essay written by Barbapiccola. In addition to defending the merits of Cartesian thought, she defended with vigour the right of women to participate in philosophy. Her first sentence puts this desire pointedly: 'I would not like it if you, first encountering the title of this book and seeing that it is the work of a woman, were to consign it to the distaffs, spindles, and linens . . . '.[102] She goes on to provide an extensive list of famous female philosophers and poets and their admirers, as well as holding up Descartes as a proponent of women's education. She cites the correspondence between Descartes and Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, one of the few women of philosophical accomplishment who received training from professional philosophy tutors, rather than being self-taught.[103] Naples itself had a woman of philosophical training in the aristocrat Aurelia d'Este (1683–1719). She had been a student of Doria and the dedicatee of his 1716 treatise, 'which demonstrates that woman, in almost all the important virtues, is not inferior to man'.[104] With the duchess d'Este newly deceased, it would appear that Barbapiccola asserted herself as the heir to her reputation, and embarked on a new project to spread Cartesian ideas to the masses through a translation of Descartes's *Principia* into the vernacular. The historian Paula Findlen characterizes Barbapiccola's preface to the *Principia* in the following manner: 'Barbapiccola's preface brought together several different strands of intellectual debate then preoccupying scholars in Naples. . . . It sought to integrate some of the new philosophical insights of Neapolitan scholars into a fresh reading of Descartes.'[105] One of the 'new philosophical insights' was provided by Cordemoy—not a Neapolitan, but still a follower of Descartes whose work was mentioned in the influential *De la recherche de la verité* of Malebranche.

We have no direct evidence that the librettist of *Albino e Plautilla* wanted or expected an audience to associate the pronunciation lesson with the complicated history of Descartes in Naples. The life of the likely librettist (Saddumene) is completely unknown, though his other works attest to his skill and originality as a comic librettist in both Tuscan and Neapolitan dialects.[106] There is no evidence to support claims that he

[101] For more on women's fashion see Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe, 1715–1789* (New Haven, 1984), 37–42; Ferruccia Cappi Bentivegna, *Abbigliamento e costume nella pittura italiana* (Rome, 1964), 258–9; Marion Sichel, *History of Women's Costume* (London, 1989), 32–3.

[102] Giuseppa Eleonora Barbapiccola, 'Preface to Rene Descartes's *Principles of Philosophy*', 47.

[103] For an account of this correspondence see Margaret Atherton, *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1994), 9–21; for a critical perspective see Jacqueline Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 2002), 13–34.

[104] Paolo Mattia Doria, *Ragionamenti di Paolo Mattia D'Oria indirizzati alla Signora D'Aurelia D'Este Duchessa di Limatola: Ne' quali dimostra la donna, in quasi che tutte le virtù più grandi, non essere all'uomo inferiore* (Frankfurt, 1716).

[105] Findlen, *The Contest for Knowledge*, 41.

[106] Saddumene's work has never been studied in detail. Michele Scherillo provided a (typically 19th-c.) critical perspective, informed by his Neapolitan comedies. See Scherillo, *L'opera buffa napoletana durante il Settecento: Storia letteraria* (Naples, 1883), 105–28. An investigation of female cross-dressing in another work by Vinci (completed the year before *Albino*) was published by Nina Treadwell, 'Female Operatic Cross-Dressing: Bernardo Saddumene's Libretto for Leonardo Vinci's *Li zite 'n galera* (1722)', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 10 (1998), 131–56. Treadwell's article engages with the work in a critical mode different from this article. A paper by Zoey Mariniello Cochran suggests some of the ways in which Saddumene's satirical use of Tuscan would have appealed to Neapolitan elites: 'Resisting Foreign Domination through Laughter: The Nationalistic Implications of Multilingualism and Musical Characterization in Pergolesi's *Lo Frate 'nnamorato*', given at the annual meeting of the Canadian University Music Society/Société de musique des universités canadiennes, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, 31 May–3 June, 2012.

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participated in philosophical discussions with Barbapiccola, that he read Cordemoy, or Malebranche, or even Molière (though the latter seems almost certain). The pronunciation scene in *Albino e Plautilla* nevertheless touches on all of these texts in a remarkably timely way.

There is one last piece of evidence that suggests that Barbapiccola and her work were explicitly associated with the importation of French philosophical thought. Barbapiccola became a member of the Arcadian Academy in 1728, though her Arcadian pseudonym (Mirista) already appears on the frontispiece to her translation of Descartes (suggesting she was active within academy circles in an unofficial capacity).[107] Her work as a poet is limited to three poems she published after joining the academy.[108] But by 1727 her legacy as the bringer of Descartes to Naples had already been cemented. That year the Neapolitan Gherardo de Angelis published his first collection of poetry, including a paean to the young Barbapiccola. 'This is she, who adds splendour / To the great René' he enthused, 'come admire her, proud France'.[109] In de Angelis's mind, at least, Barbapiccola was firmly associated with the advancement of French philosophy in Naples. In Findlen's sapient reading of this poem she makes a fascinating comparison when discussing the ways in which de Angelis reflects the attitudes of Neapolitans of the 1720s:

> [T]he production of learned women who eclipsed the *femmes savantes* made famous by Molière was viewed as tangible evidence that Naples had indeed become more modern than France. . . . Perhaps, in their own way, the Italians also aspired to see their learned women in print as part of their imitation of French culture.[110]

The imitation of French culture occurred on a number of fronts. The imitation of Molière was an important stimulant for the comedy of the intermezzo, not only in direct adaption (as in Salvi's *L'artigiano gentiluomo*), but also, as we now know, in more oblique cases (such as *Albino e Plautilla*'s pronunciation scene). In this the intermezzo shared a similar practice with serious librettists (such as Salvi) who instituted dramatic 'reforms' based on French ideals under the aegis of the Arcadian Academy.[111] The French influence on the Academy was not limited to matters of theatre, however: Arcadian intellectuals admired French scientific achievements and drama in equal measure.[112] Here Barbapiccola stood out front as the translator and promoter of one of the most contested French imports—the philosophy of Descartes. It is possible to imagine a literate audience being wise to the librettist's allusion. On stage they witnessed a woman, dressed as a man, giving a Cartesian philosophy lesson borrowed from a

[107] See Findlen, *The Contest for Knowledge*, 45. She points out that 'Mirista' means 'fragrant' in Greek.

[108] The poems are reproduced in Giovanni Gentile, *Studi vichiani* (3rd edn.; Florence, 1968), 200, 203; See also Giambattista Vico, *Scritti vari e pagine sparse*, ed. Fausto Nicolini (Bari, 1940), 254, 327.

[109] 'colei, che aggiunse altro splendore / al gran Renato, del ver tanto amico'. Translation by Paula Findlen, 'Translating the New Science: Women and the Circulation of Knowledge in Enlightenment Italy', *Configurations*, 3 (1995), 167–206 at 176–7. Gherardo de Angelis's original poem was published in his *Rime scelte* (1727), and republished in Gentile, *Studi vichiani*, 199.

[110] Findlen, 'Translating the New Science', 177.

[111] The fullest account of the French influence on Arcadian ideas is Piero Weiss's 'Teorie drammatiche e "infranciosamento": Motivi della "riforma" melodrammatica nel primo Settecento', in Lorenzo Bianconi and Giovanni Morelli (eds.), *Antonio Vivaldi: Teatro musicale, cultura, e società* (Florence, 1982), 168–88. See also Freeman, *Opera without Drama*, 4–6.

[112] The relationship between the French models and late 17th- and 18th-c. Italian intellectual life is explored in Françoise Waquet, *Le Modèle français et l'Italie savante: Conscience de soi et perception de l'autre dans la République des Lettres (1660–1750)* (Rome, 1989).

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French play. When they saw Santa Marchesini don a philosopher's gown and beard, might they have seen the comely Barbapiccola gazing out from underneath the costume?

CONCLUSION

The intermezzo and Naples have something in common: their international character and erudition have often been underestimated. The intermezzo has sometimes been valorized for its associations with the supposed naturalism of Italy's *commedia dell'arte* street performances. Naples has similarly been romanticized as the fount of a new musical style of 'feelings, emotions, and passions', as Joseph Schlüter put it, 'which had its origin in popular melody'.[113] In spite of these common perceptions, however, both the intermezzo and Naples were at the forefront of post-Cartesian thinking about philosophy, civic life, and women's equality.

One short scene from the little-known intermezzo *Albino e Plautilla* helps paint a rich picture of the artistic practice of intermezzo librettists and composers, and the intellectual life of opera patrons. It suggests that Italian comic librettists did not slavishly adapt the plots of Molière's plays for use on the comic operatic stage. Instead, Salvi and the librettist of *Albino e Plautilla* appear to have taken inspiration from Molière's treatment of elastic gags. Through a creative process of extraction and reframing, they fashioned new works that maintained the comic spirit of their forebears while being something quite new and entertaining all on their own.

The elastic gag pronunciation scene in *Albino e Plautilla* also provides us with a different perspective on the comedic and intellectual ambitions of the intermezzo. The scene resonates with meaning regarding the influence of French theatre, philosophy, and its promotion and contestation in Naples. This contrasts markedly with the notion of the intermezzo as a vehicle for unmediated musical expression. Intermezzos may have appeared that way to mid-eighteenth-century commentators and foreign visitors, but to local audiences these works could have been theatrical creations every bit as artful as the specimens of high tragedy with which they were performed.

In the years after *Albino e Plautilla*'s premiere other intermezzos stormed across Europe, taking with them the Ubertos and Serpinas—the clownish dupes and silver-tongued schemers—of *commedia*-inspired domestic comedy. Poor Albino, who aspired to great things, was left behind. Vinci's intermezzo would not be performed again. This seems surprising given that *Albino*'s libretto and music are representative and indeed very fine examples of intermezzo craftsmanship. Borrowing a scene from Molière was commonplace and the use of the elastic gag seems to have been a

[113] Joseph Schlüter, *A General History of Music*, trans. Mrs Robert Tubbs (London, 1865), 47; original German edition published as *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik in übersichtlicher Darstellung* (Leipzig, 1863). The notion of a 'Neapolitan school' has been regarded as dubious for at least forty years. For sceptical views see Michael Robinson, *Naples and Neapolitan Opera* (Oxford, 1972); Francesco Degrada, '"Scuola napoletana" e "opera napoletana": Nascita, sviluppo e prospettive di un concetto storiografico', in Carlo Marinelli Roscioni (ed.), *Il teatro di S. Carlo: La cronologia 1737–1987* (Naples, 1987), 9–20; and Reinhard Strohm, 'The Neapolitans in Venice', in Iain Fenlon and Tim Carter (eds.), *'Con che soavità': Studies in Italian Opera, Song, and Dance, 1500–1740* (Oxford, 1995). An excellent historiographic summary of this notion is provided by Dinko Fabris and Giulia Veneziano, 'Mito e realtà della cosiddetta "scuola napoletana"', in Fulvio Artiano and Clementina Cantillo (eds.), *Forme del linguaggio musicale tra contemporaneità e tradizione* (Potenza, 2009), 33–48. As opposed to an exotic locale of unsophisticated music-making, Anthony DelDonna compares early 18th-c. Naples to the Vienna of the late 18th c.: 'Opera in eighteenth-century Naples, similar to Viennese Classicism (as espoused by Haydn and Mozart at the end of the century) was the fullest expression of a cultural matrix of creators, practitioners, theorists, patrons, and entrepreneurs (whether aristocratic, public, or sacred), which not only benefited from prodigious local talent, but also the dense nexus of theatrical establishments, conservatories, and culture at large', in 'Opera in Naples', in DelDonna and Polzonetti (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Opera*, 214.

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practice shared by intermezzo librettists and French playwrights alike. It is therefore tempting to speculate that the very things that make this work such a rich and fascinating historical document could be the reasons the work had no comedic currency beyond the walls of Naples. Cordemoy's philosophy lesson, adapted by Molière and then imported to Italy in 1723, seems to intersect with many specifically Neapolitan concerns about the place of Cartesian philosophy in education and civic life—concerns addressed in Barbapiccola's translation of Descartes's *Principia* in 1722. This scene perhaps hints at the wit and intelligence that lies behind the boisterous comedy of the intermezzo. But if the creators of *Albino e Plautilla* did intend to remark on contemporary events, their allusion may have been a short-term comic success. Elastic gags and elegantly crafted music had universal appeal, but this caricature of Cartesianism was perhaps only hilarious in Naples.

ABSTRACT

The comic intermezzo currently holds a prominent place in the historiography of eighteenth-century music. The comic music contained in these short entertainments provides evidence of a burgeoning musical style that came to dominate the opera house and the chamber in the Age of Enlightenment. But by examining these works retrospectively, musicologists have produced a distorted portrait of the genre itself, downplaying the artistic merit of the works in favour of promoting their supposed naive comic naturalism. This article examines the working methods of intermezzo librettists and composers through the example of a remarkable scene contained in Leonardo Vinci's second intermezzo, *Albino e Plautilla da pedante*, produced in Naples in 1723. This scene recreates an exchange about philosophy from Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. While scholars have known of six intermezzo adaptations of Molière for some time, the discovery of this scene provides new insights into the nature of the comic intermezzo. It suggests that the genre was highly literate by drawing on the works of Molière, and highly erudite by drawing on contemporary debates about Cartesianism and the role of women in the New Philosophy.

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