

Una fanatica per la musica di Mayr?

Angelica Catalani and *Il fanatico per la musica* in London in 1824

Alexander Weatherson

No one can really be surprised that the outrageous heroine of *Che originali* - the fantastic Donna Aristeia - who sported the headdress of Cleopatra and the sandals of Sofonisba, who swept on the stage in the robes of Semiramide or of Dido or of Ifigenia should have had such an attraction for Angelica Catalani - that irresistible *bête noire* of the operatic firmament who has come down to us as the one truly insuperable *primadonna* of the age of Mayr. A legendary soprano who sang more Semiramide, Didos and Ifigenie than anyone in existence, the one gloriously willful icon in a theatre of posture and change. The ultimate *Metastasiasta* diva *par excellence*.

She timed her appearances with perfection, and not just for Mayr, it was the French Revolution that did it. No one ever sang so many betrayed or dying queens. Her operatic tastes, like her musical garb, however pessimistically they may have been viewed by generations of vocal purists, reflected the popular events of her day. Her career, like that of Donna Aristeia was *old hat* but indisputably topical. She was a final extravagant flower of the *ancien régime* like Brigida Banti, Gertrud Elisabeth Mara and Giuseppina Grassini and utterly unlike - for example - Giuditta Pasta or Maria Malibran of the romantic era, with whom she overlapped.

But was she a fanatic for the music of Mayr? She cultivated fanaticism it is true, she counted upon fanatics to sustain her career and ran a fanatical train of existence. She opened and closed her career with Mayr, but that may be all.

The remarkable circumstances of the revival of *Il fanatico per la musica* in London in 1824, Donna Aristeia's final hilarious bow on the London stage, would certainly have entertained its author had ever he heard of it. His almost twenty-five-year-old farce was brought back without warning, together with its supreme interpreter, to the principal lyric stage in London to rescue a failed series of operas by Rossini. A staging rushed together in indecent haste to fill a half-empty house.

The *pesarese* had been lured to London with a promise of vast sums of money, there was to be six-months of his operas and he was to compose a new work on the spot, the star of the season would be his wife, Isabella Colbran-Rossini. Expectations were high. Too high as it soon transpired, neither the repertoire nor Isabella came up to scratch. Her voice was found to be on a downward slope and the Rossinian novelties on offer failed to

bring in any money. No one was happy backstage. The enormous theatre emptied rapidly after an initial opening flutter. Rossini slid off covertly to the French Embassy to sign a contract for Paris.

It was this last factor that may have played a major role in the remarkable re-emergence of the unforgettable Catalani in London. A decade earlier she had shaken off its dust for Paris in what had proved to be a major error on her part. Now, with great glee, after a series of bitter disagreements on the Gallic stage she abandoned the *vieux continent* to plant a hostile flag under the major proscenium of its major musical contender *outré Manche*.

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Its history literally embodies the rise of the incredible diva: with a newⁱ title of *Il fanatico per la musica* Mayr's one-act *farsa* of 1798ⁱⁱ *Che originali* had first been heard at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket on 19 June 1806 with the redoubtable Elizabeth Billingtonⁱⁱⁱ as Donna Aristeia. The opera had made a *furore* but a determined rival for vocal supremacy fresh to London took a poor view of local talent and it was brought back anew with the maximum publicity on 21 May 1807 with its new advocate, the all-powerful, the all-embracing and unimaginable superstar, the divine Italian diva the celebrated Angelica Catalani fresh from La Fenice, La Scala and the São Carlo in Lisbon with a mixed bag of music ready to be seen, heard and conquer. Ready to surprise and disconcert. A dazed press announced in almost fervent tones "... a new scene was introduced to allow Madame Catalani to appear in male attire, when she sang variations on Paisiello's 'Nel cor più non mi sento'"

This precocious inkling of Marlene Dietrich was the merest indication of what was to come, she returned with the same opera on 9 June 1808 and substantial fragments of her favourite repertoire came back with her - Mayr had to find a space for Paisiello, Portogallo and Pucitta and others of her regular fare. Thus begun, the pace was to quicken. On 6 March 1810 the great soprano rebounded with a Donna Aristeia in full throttle:

"Last night Madame Catalani returned to this Theatre - the proper field for the display of her talents...she was in excellent voice, and never displayed her great and admired powers with more happy effect"

this time with even further baggage from her train of war-horses and the entire score adapted to her taste and inclinations.

She repeated her *Fanatico* on 19 February 1811, and again on 27 February 1812, both editions replete with *adattamenti* and *aggiustamenti*

and with a deafening chorus of wild plaudits from her fans - but now and increasingly with an ominous descant of despair and resentment from those exhausted by inordinate trills and relentless virtuosity invoked at the drop of a hat, imposed willy-nilly at whatever moment in the plot she deigned to choose.

As a result, a covey of intrepid dissenters mounted a rival staging of Mayr's *Il caretto del venditor d'aceto* on the same night of this last *Fanatico* at the Pantheon, in Oxford Street - in the vinegary hope of suppressing all sight and sound of her triumph. They had had enough.

Then came respite for fans and antagonists. Her version of *Che originali*, distinctly tamed, was revived on 18 March 1813 at the King's Theatre but this time *without* Catalani who now had her eye on the French capital. The Siege of London was to be relieved and the French nation would open its arms to her at the end of the year - for good as far as anyone knew.

Che originali made only one more appearance on the London stage, again without her, on 1 July 1819 when it was described cynically enough as "*Il fanatico per la Musica by Mayer (and others)*" and proved to be a very damp squib indeed bereft of its pole star, especially as the mesmerising primadonna assoluta was now eclipsed in the capital's eyes and ears by such important newcomers as Joséphine Fodor, Violante Camporesi and Teresa Belloc in a glut of operas by Rossini. She had become a figure of the past. Thus her amazing return to the beleaguered King's Theatre astride her Mayrian warhorse in 1824 was a major event, an archaeological stunt, and above all, a sign of despair on the part of the management!

But this impromptu revival may also be seen as a gauge of Mayr's reputation at the height of the Rossinian summer, as well as a measure of the current status of the client composers upon whose shoulders the great Catalani had leaned for so long. Unlike Mayr they were soon to be silenced, never to find such an advocate again.

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The multiple titles of *Che originali*^{iv} were a consequence of its unpredictable structure. Operas-about-opera were legion in the eighteenth century but those in the nineteenth century that actually encouraged the interpolation of the music of others were quite uncommon. Such as it had become under her ægis, Mayr's *farsa* returned to the Kings Theatre on 28 February 1824, no details remain how it was staged - there is a print of the diva laughing in a white dress and that is all. Nothing of the décor or the costumes of the other singers survives. It was certainly cobbled

together very rapidly, the orchestra was conducted by Carlo Coccia, of that we can be sure. But there was one truly consistent factor, both for Mayr - and for the choice of this particular work at this particular time which brutally uncovered its core rationale, its hidden agenda: rivalry. The true *fons et origo* of La Catalani's enthusiasm for *Il fanatico per la musica*^v for almost two decades, the weapon that had shone in her theatrical armory in London and Paris and now was about to achieve its apogee.



Even though it was long past its *sell-by* date Mayr's "*vecchio come Noè*" farce was quite the most effective means of brandishing her flamboyant vocal superiority over every other soprano contender within range. It was an opera in which from the start she had relentlessly targeted and tormented her unhappy rivals. This belated London engagement was a revival heaven-sent, not because Rossini needed a life-belt as the management piously believed but because finally his unfortunate wife was now within her sights. There were old scores (and not only operatic scores) to be settled.^{vi}

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Since the start of the century Mayr's music had been used in London by visiting *primedonne* to spark-up the quality of the repertoire. From 1800 onwards his operas had been plundered for *arie da baule*, with the result

that in London the inoffensive Mayr had won an abrasive reputation utterly alien to his angelic reputation elsewhere. The management of the Italian Opera positively urged on the insertion of gobbets of his music into the works of rival composers and most particularly those of the genre promoted by Madame Catalani – composers like Sebastiano Nasolini, Marcos Portogallo and Vincenzo Pucitta. The motive was undisguised: it was so that a marked contrast could be made between the thin invention of the popular favorites adored by those audiences who had so consistently rejected Mozart at the King's Theatre with the qualities of a *German* composer replete with contrapuntal skills and a reliable, solid, musical structure. And in this instance sufficiently Italianate to avoid the risk of frightening away the regular patrons.

Of course this applied vice versa, no opera by Mayr had ever managed to avoid a regiment of inserted music and Angelica Catalani found herself in perfect accord, *Il fanatico per la musica* offered itself on an altar of malice, with this opera, with this plot, she could dismay and defeat her competitors. In the guise of the unwary Donna Aristeia she could insert all the favorite airs of all her more important rivals and sing them even more brilliantly.

No one ever had such a huge choice of music for insertion. It came from a vast collection of bravura pieces extracted from the quasi-identical compositions turned out on a regular basis by the same group of composers. No one ever created so many title-roles, had so many operas written for her voice, but with the exception of the two specially composed operas by Mayr they came from the same stable. [See **Appendices 1 & 2**] This is not to say that the works of Portogallo, Pucitta, Nasolini et al as favoured by the great diva are without significance, these terminal Metastasian sighs are coloured with the same impulse and momentum as those of the romantic age to come - but Catalani elected to sing for audiences unprepared for innovation in tandem with her own exorbitant views on the role of a primadonna. In consequence the same arguments keep reappearing in rapid succession: Nasolini and Portogallo both wrote versions of *La morte di Mitridate* for her (with different librettists), she also sang in that of Zingarelli; both wrote a *La morte di Semiramide*; it was Nasolini's *La morte di Cleopatra* in fact that actually inspired Portogallo's *La morte di Semiramide* its mirror image - more or less. In the Catalani mode the terminal fatal destiny of a Boadicea was not so very different from that of a Cleopatra or a Clitennestra or a Zaira, all expire in exactly the same torrent of demisemiquavers. A stone-age Queen is supplied with the same *points d'orgue* as a Greek Goddess, her *Vestale* (Pucitta) could easily be mistaken for one of the *Baccanali (di Roma)* of Nicolini). If the musical forms she favoured were entirely predictable, her

vocalism was not, she wove a web of sound that was never the same twice. No performance was ever quite identical to that of the previous evening even if the cadenzas were already in print, blame could never be entirely ascribed to the composer when all her favourite maestri were aware that there would be *aggiustamenti* at the drop of a hat. Not even such an historical icon as Cleopatra could be allowed to go to her death without captivating new variations from Madame Catalani. She did not invariably rise dramatically to such tragic archetypes: “*We have hitherto seen her small but elegant figure possessed with a load of regal ornaments, and a constant smile on her face, which neither the sorrows of Cleopatra nor the misplaced love of Semiramis, could repress.*”^{vii} Lord Mount Edgcumbe wrote in his memoirs that she “detested” Mozart because she found “*the singer too much under the control of the orchestra, and too strictly confined to time, which she is apt to violate*”^{viii} But she was perfectly ready for the challenge; in response to her Susanna the Morning Chronicle wrote tactfully: “*she so amply supplied with embellishments Mozart’s music, that it had, at least, the merit of being quite novel to those who are intimately acquainted with his works.*”^{ix}

She never had the London stage *completely* under her thumb, however, and not even on her final appearance there. That the vinegar descant was still in evidence in London in 1824 is painfully clear:

(Madame Catalani)

“...made her appearance on these boards, after an absence of ten years (sic) on Saturday 28th of February in *Il Fanatico per la Musica* an opera advertised as Mayer’s, though scarcely any of his music was now suffered to remain; but in lieu of it, a quantity of very meagre stuff was introduced, much to the annoyance of genuine amateurs. Even the beautiful aria “*Chi dice mal d’amore,*” was rejected, and something of a very humble kind substituted for it! Mad. Catalani was received as her high character and great merits entitled her to expect. The house was overflowing on the first night, and the plaudits were unanimous. But afterwards, though the appreciation did not diminish, the crowds did, and we rather think that all parties will repent of their agreements, unless this wretchedly produced opera is immediately thrown aside, and a much better system adopted.

Since Mad. Catalani last appeared here, a great change has taken place in the Italian opera; the public are no longer satisfied with one, or, at the most, two good singers, and three or four good, - that is to say, brilliant - pieces, the whole must be nearly equal, and *morceaux d’ensemble*, well performed, are absolutely required. A flimsy aria di bravura will not now suffice, and the days of Fioravanti and Pucitta are passed away.”^x

But such acid reviews, even if factually incorrect, accurately record the absence of original music in this 1824 manifestation. There was little more to her final *Fanatico* than a capricious series of interpolated arias for its star with a descant of modest ensembles for her fellow artists. That the interpolated music included arias by Fioravanti and Pucitta on this

occasion is information of value but no details of specific items are given, that the staging included arias associated with Isabella Colbran is certain, and from every phase of her rival's career. "Extras" could be included without warning, as an account by Michael Kelly makes clear, he recounts that an aria by Portogallo "*full of difficult divisions*" and "*never out of her hands*" was inserted into *Fanatico* thanks to the skills of an Irish *maestro concertatore* who was able to read and play from manuscript pages handed to him that morning for the evening performance by the Signora Catalani.

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Not only did rivalry ensure the survival of the "vocal examination" of *Che originali* in the 1824 *Il fanatico* - based upon Scena XII of the original opera - but it became the *point de repère* of the whole performance. She could flaunt her amazing technique, her rampant virtuosity to the detriment of any intrepid competitor, making only too clear to devoted fanatics the extent to which her extraordinary instrument remained untarnished. And in this particular instance pointing up the sad decline of the unfortunate Isabella, a sub-plot of humiliation pushed home with astonishing variations and cadenzas whose perfection swept the board. What she offered, indeed, was a war of attrition with a terminal vocal apotheosis. The modest Mayr - resigned no doubt when one of his operas was abused - would have been utterly horrified had he known that his *farsa* was caught up in a species of guerilla warfare.

Begun with La Billington her eagerness to confront was fundamental. Angelica Catalani, daughter of the *ancien régime*, would have been happy on the streets of London today, she sought power and loved dressing like men. Whenever she could she sang music that had been written for men. It was not necessarily a fall-out from castrato colleagues - she was usually on cordial terms with the *evirati* - it was an enthusiastic demonstration of the takeover tactics always in vogue in the City. Nothing was ever set in stone as far as she was concerned, no gender remained constant: in Cimarosa's *Gli Orazi e Curiazi* she took both sides, sometimes singing Orazia sometimes singing Curiazio, it all depended upon her mood of the moment and was quite disconcerting to fellow artists. In *Gli Sciti* she sang both the role that Mayr (who knew her tastes) had created for her, Atamaro re di Persia (his first major masculine role actually *written* for a soprano) and sometimes Atamaro's beloved Obeida (written for Teresa Doliani). Her immensely powerful soprano voice with its extraordinary low register entitled her to virile status when and if she chose. Cross-dressing was never a problem, whatever might have been the hesitation of a real-life Donna Aristeia she herself was perfectly ready to take on the garb of the entire panoply of Parnassus.

Was ever an artist more combative? Complaints are legion. Her stand-off with the celebrated Girolamo Crescentini, Director of the Theatro São Carlos in Lisbon on her arrival in the city – an aggressive encounter not confined to the coulisses but actually on stage in a rehearsal of *Gli Orazi e Curiazi* in November 1801 – was both scandalous and coincidentally brought the argument vividly to life.^{xii} She consistently added arias written for Luigi Marchesi – her fellow artist in Mayr's *Lodoïska* – to her own, or written for him in Mayr's *Lauso e Lidia*. She was ready and willing to sing both Juliet and Romeo and perhaps lived up to this challenge. Even the most hallowed music was not spared: at York Minster in 1823 she scandalised the entire congregation by appropriating a tenor aria 'Comfort ye my people' in Handel's *Messiah*, and singing it a whole tone lower than written.^{xiii} Those around her (who in a celebrated riposte her husband Paul de Valabrègue had described as "poupées") often wondered aloud who was "wearing the trousers". Neither Pasta nor Malibran had to look far to find a precedent for their own challenging cross-dressing in decades to come.

With the *carte blanche* of Donna Aristeia lost in her indiscriminate musical enthusiasms she inserted into *Il fanatico per la musica* arias for every kind of voice, male and female, perfectly indiscriminately and without compunction. With another selection the following day.

That her voice was unique is in no doubt at all:

"The volume and compass of her voice are astonishing. We cannot upon a first hearing, measure with precision its extent upon the gamut, but we believe it comprehends more notes than ever have been included in the compass of any female voice. The tone of it is rich, mellow and substantial. There is no labour in her singing: she filled the whole of this immense theatre with as much apparent ease as if she had been practicing in her drawing room. For neatness and rapidity of execution she is almost equal to Billington, while in her voice, feeling and deportment we discover the combined excellencies of a Banti, a Mara and a Grassini. The power and effect with which she sustained some notes towards the top of her voice, were really astonishing. They struck and hung upon the ear like the silvery tones which are sometimes drawn from that exquisite instrument, the musical glass"^{xiv}

"Before this an English audience never heard Madame Catalani to so much advantage. She was so astonishingly great in almost every part of this Opera, that it would be superfluous to name either the particular air or passage in the execution of which she did not electrify her audience and diffuse universal delight"^{xv}

Stendhal came up with a more trenchant view:

"it is true however, that God somehow forgot to place a heart within reasonable proximity of this divine larynx"

“Heartlessness” was indeed the one common factor of every revival of her *Il fanatico per la musica*. Diffusing universal delight was not a prime motive. It is clear from the surviving printed libretto of the 1824 performances in London that her personal imprint covered the entire confection. It even makes clear that in this particular instance she intended to discard the opening *scena ed aria* of Don Febeo – her only rival for vocal glory in the original plot. The printed libretto begins with the remarkable statement:

“OMESSA PER SBAGLIO NEL PRIMO ATTO”

It would seem that she had planned to begin the opera with her cavatina but the baritone Giuseppe De Begnis – singing the title role and an old hand in the business of operatic survival - has managed to throw a spoke in her wheel, enforcing the original opening! And has had a certain revenge, his restored *sortita* has become even more eloquent with a certain snide reference to the *primadonna assoluta*, the aria now containing a cunning insertion in the form of Trojan pastiche for Enea and Jarba - sung by Biscroma and Donna Rosina - from Paisiello’s *Didone abbandonata*, an opera in which Angelica Catalani had starred in London and Dublin. A very diverting addition and perfectly appropriate to the plot - or as much of it as survives - but not easy to know whether intended to be complementary or complimentary to the diva. Maybe – as Dido came to an unhappy end – there could have been an element of wish fulfillment in the choice?

Her cavatina, however, is a surprise, it is by Mayr, a graceful compliment to the *bavarese* composer otherwise thoroughly maltreated on this occasion. It is an insert aria seemingly composed for her to sing in an opera by Generali (although it is unclear if she had sung it earlier) and printed “*in virgolati*” so that the more informed portion of the audience can be readied for a vocal surprise according to the mood of the moment.

This opera of 1824 was inordinately stretched but not with any additional dramatic content. It is now in two acts with a breathing space at its heart. It is indeed stretched socially: the protagonists are now supplied with incongruous noble titles: Don Febeo has become Baron of the Harpsichord, Donna Rosina is Countess of the Pharmaco-peja and Don Carolino is Count of Merrythought. But only Don Febeo is vocally exposed, Celestina, who remains a chambermaid, a role sung in London by Rosalbina Caradori-Allan (and not eligible for elevation to the nobility it would seem) has been allowed one aria however at the very end, appropriately for a servant-survivor it is the *rondo finale* from Rossini’s *La cenerentola*!

Don Carolino, sung in London by Alberico Curioni, has a modest role, deprived of his arias and confined mostly to duets with Donna Aristeia, but his angry confrontation with Don Febeo – the duet/trio of foolish musical interrogation which appeared in Scena VIII of the 1798 score - may perhaps have retained *some* fragments of the music by Mayr from the original score.

Two conspicuous high points remain: the first is the extended scene discussed earlier and now in Scene IX of Act I of the revised score, taking the form of a duet in which Don Febeo leads Donna Aristeia through her paces, a scene loosely based - though there is no evidence that any of the 1798 music could be heard in it - on Scena XII of the initial version quoting fragments of Metastasio. This is the extravagant sequence of vocalises for the diva to display her extraordinary voice with mordents, trills, arpeggios and so on in various different keys and in which of course she was in her element. “*Sono pronto, eccomi quà*” she says at his requests, singing ever-more astounding acuti with ever-more astonishing vocal flights revealing to anyone unaware of her truly remarkable mastery of ornaments the ease for which she was justifiably famed (and with the unflawed voice still at her disposal)

The second high point covers virtually the entire Act II of this 1824 version. It is conceived as a concert recital, an *accademia* for the entertainment of a number of extravagantly titled noble guests. In outline it follows some of the structure of the 1798 opera and with its *Trio a canone* brings the whole to a conclusion that, textually at least, approximates to the first version. But every opportunity is given for the star soprano to entertain these guests (and the audience of course) with interpolated examples from her repertoire. These, as we know from the press, were different every night. There is a mild attempt to sustain the myth of Donna Aristeia’s romance with Don Carolino which could be interpreted as a gesture to prove that love is more important than music, but everything about this version proves the reverse of course. Rivalry and a war of attrition can scarcely be equated with love.

On the evidence of this revival can Angelica Catalani be described as a *fanatic for the music of Mayr*? The question remains. He never headed her list of favorites. She scarcely ever sang *Lodoïska* after her first success, *Lauso e Lidia* was forgotten, *Gli Sciti* was repeated only once. No other opera by Mayr is traceable in her repertoire. It would appear that he was paired with Mozart, his orchestration was too inflexible, too dense, for her brand of *addatamenti* and *aggiustamenti*. Even in London where its advocacy was most extrovert Mayr's music seldom received the applause it deserved. All she did was uncover its underlying potential at the edge of the operatic universe.

There was no Mayrian consensus in London, no resident advocate as in the outreach city of Copenhagen^{xvi}, Mayr's foot was hesitant north-of-the-Alps. Only a mixed bag of his operas had been performed in the British Isles and not one was received with any great impact. He was perceived as a singer's choice, not as a repertoire composer. When his masterpiece *Medea in Corinto* emerged at the King's Theatre two years after Catalani's valedictory *Fanatico*, with Giuditta Pasta in the title role, a reassessment began. But it was too late, *Medea in Corinto* too was regarded as a singer's choice. According to the press, Pasta was the reason for the opera's revival, not the merit of its music.

And with Pasta too there was a hidden agenda, she also took up the cudgels against Isabella Colbran who had been the first *Medea* in Naples. La Pasta, indeed, had formed part of the season of 1824 when *her* rivalry had been no less obvious than that of Angelica.^{xvii} And in the London season of 1826 which brought her to the apex of her international fame for the very first time she rubbed salt in the wound by capping her *Medea* with an unannounced *Zelmira*, the very opera that had been Isabella's downfall.

As for the remarkable Angelica, she eludes categorisation. Not in respect of her stature - she was an artist who made the reputation of composers - not the other way round. But concerning her personality, her motives, her ruthlessness, her near-contempt for the musical notes she chose to sing, her style and repertoire, no decision has ever been made. Her *modus vivendi* was obstinately neo classical thus her advocacy of Mayr was fixed at a point before - rather than after - the flood, before the romantic era. It was a matter of mindset rather than generation, a gulf which the *bavarese* composer himself barely managed to traverse. Such was the real difference between Catalani's *Il fanatico per la musica* and Pasta's *Medea in Corinto* - two Mayr operas in revival two years apart - but a world apart in style and delivery.

Mayr did not make the reputation of Angelica Catalani - nor did she make his. He looked ahead musically to the very end, she looked back. She maltreated his operas, especially his delicious comedy *Che originali* but in the end did him no disservice. What she found in this farce was life enhancing, vivid and compelling and whatever the malice and rivalry in which she indulged, a towering fantasy came though with enough charisma to ensure that she and it survived with honour.

Such a disturbing protagonist in the operatic life of the day, such a manipulator, so disrespectful, such a great iconoclast, so bold and opinioned - but she lives on with an intact reputation for independence and spirit that towered above her contemporaries. A renown that comes down to us clear and defined, fit for a modern age.

ⁱ The title was new only to the extent that it had been borrowed from an opera by Luigi Caruso given in Rome at the Teatro Aliberti on 10 February 1781

ⁱⁱ *Che originali* had its prima at the Teatro S. Benedetto in Venice on 18 October 1798

ⁱⁱⁱ Elizabeth Billington-Felissent (1765/68-1818) was the daughter of a Saxon clarinet player and English mother, born in England she had a triumphant career with a soprano voice of three octaves

^{iv} Precursors of this *Il fanatico per la musica*, in addition to the opera by Caruso of 1781, should include *La Mélomanie* by Stanislas Champein (Versailles and Paris 1781) and *La Musicomanie* by Adrien Quaisain with a text by Pixérécourt (Paris 1799); Mayr's *Che originali* was revived in Vienna with the new double title of *La musicomania / Il pazzo per la musica* on 9 May 1803; as *Il pazzo per la musica* in the Théâtre-Italien, Salle Louvois, Paris on 7 October 1805 (revived at the Tuileries on 17 September 1812); the King's Theatre performances in London as *Il fanatico per la musica* in 1806 were followed by those at the Crow Street Theatre in Dublin on 20 August 1808; and by those as *Il trionfo della musica* at the Teatro Carolino in Palermo on 25 July 1825 (with additional music by Donizetti); and finally - with the title conflating into *Il trionfo per la musica* for a staging at the Bowery Theatre in New York on 20 April 1829. As *Il fanatico per la musica* the opera was given a Spanish staging as late as 24 October also in 1829 at the Teatro Principal of Cadiz in Spain where it made a *furor* (but without the services of Catalani (who had retired at last). Under its various titles: *La musicomania*, *Il pazzo per la musica*, *Il fanatico per la musica* and *Il trionfo della [per la] musica*, together with its long-suffering original title of *Che originali* – sometimes followed by its sub-title of “*e fedeltà ed amore*” – this ingenious *farsa* spread indiscriminately throughout the European and Latin American continents. The distortions to the music and plot were far from unique to Angelica Catalani, the Salle Louvois performances of October 1805 as *Il pazzo per la musica* featured the youthful Luigi Barilli as Don Febeo: his initial Donna Aristeo was Camilla Ferlendis who sang as her cavatina ‘*Che dice mal d’amore*’, when Barilli’s wife Marianna took over the role later in the run she too sang this music but for the 1812 revivals of this opera at the Théâtre des Tuileries under the eye of Napoleon, she sang as her *aria di sortita* the original *aria finale* from *Che originali* ‘*Oh di quest’anima, delizia e amor*’ first heard in a Venice still reeling from the conquest and pillage of his rampaging army. [For the repertoire of Catalani in Paris See **Appendix 3**]

^v Mayr's *Il fanatico per la musica* set the stage for unashamed rivalry. In London in 1807 she had found a caucus of great singers already installed thanks to an eager exodus from continental wars. Some of these artists were indeed challenging, including Giuseppe Viganoni and Giuseppina Grassini, but it was Elizabeth Billington who provoked the greatest antagonism. Mrs Billington was fifteen years older than Catalani and thoroughly entrenched, she was not only ready to respond in kind but had dared to sing a *Gli Sciti* at La Scala in 1799 (to the same Rossi text that of as the opera by Mayr but with music by Giuseppe Nicolini) as well as a *Fernando nel Messico* by Portogallo at the King's Theatre in 1803 and 1804, both of which operas the newly arrived Catalani considered her own. Even more disturbingly, Sebastiano Nasolini's two most momentous operas *La morte di Mitridate* and *La morte di Cleopatra*. both Catalani warhorses, were already in the repertoire of the King's Theatre.

^{vi} Catalani had descended upon Naples in 1818, but was denied an invitation to sing at the S. Carlo - at that time fully under the domination of Colbran and Rossini - and thus was obliged to sing in concerts instead. But there was a further shadow upon their relationship, La Colbran had stepped on her toes severely a few years earlier. Rossini recorded in his old age in a conversation with Ferdinand Hiller that his wife had not only a “*predilezione*” for Marcos Portogallo but at the Teatro Valle in Rome on 7 October 1810 had sponsored a bizarre

“marriage” between *La morte di Semiramide* of Napolini with *La morte di Semiramide* of Portogallo, in which her singing of Catalani’s staggering *pezzo di bravura* by Portogallo, the Act I scena ed aria ‘Son Regina’, had caused a sensation. Rossini even insisted that Isabella had forty pieces of the Portuguese composer’s music in her repertory, and as Angelica must have noted with fury, an aria from his cantata *Ines di Castro* had been published in Turin in 1811 with the *abbellimenti* of the future Madame Colbran-Rossini. In no way could her great rival – dedicatee of ten operas by Portogallo – have overlooked such an important challenge to her supremacy. To cap it all, what had appeared in 1823? A *Semiramide* by her celebrated husband. One of his longest and most ambitious works with the failing voice of the despised Isabella in the title-role. It was simply too much.

Cfr *Protagonisti nella storia di Napoli: Rossini* Ed Elio de Rosa (Naples 1994), 37, 41-2

vii London, The Examiner 17 January 1808

viii Earl of Mount Edgcumbe *Musical Reminiscences* (London 1834), 100

ix London, The Morning Chronicle 11 March 1813

x The Harmonicon Vol II, XV March 1824, 78

xi “The song was one of Portogallo’s, a manuscript, and had never been out of Madame Catalani’s hands: therefore it was impossible that he could have seen it previously ; it was full of difficult divisions...” Michael Kelly *Reminiscences of Michael Kelly at the King’s Theatre Vol II* (London 1826), 232

xii She made up the quarrel later in life and they sang in concerts together towards the end of her career

xiii As a result of this transposition it became necessary to play the “*Overture in D minor, a change fraught with mischievous affects*” and she followed it up by singing the aria ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth’ in E flat!

xiv London, The Times 15 December 1806

xv London, The Morning Post 17 April 1807

xvi Thanks to the tenor Giuseppe Siboni

xvii There was a kind of peace-treaty before the end of the season, with a Subscription Concert at Almack’s Rooms conducted by Rossini in person. Emerging in May 1824 with the combined forces of the most imposing on the London scene, bringing together an extraordinary roster of artists, including the De Begnis couple - husband and wife, Rosalbina Carradori-Allan, Isabella Colbran, Manuel Garcia, Giuditta Pasta and Alberico Curioni together with the *pesarese* as vocalist (he sang ‘Largo al factotum’). Most especially with the remarkable inclusion of Angelica Catalani - who not only sang ‘Cruda sorte’, ‘Quell’istante’ and ‘Pensa a la patria’ - but also took part in a duet with the *pesarese* (‘Se fiato in corpo avete’ from *Il matrimonio segreto*). This belcantistic encounter must have been one of the defining moments of the decade, if not of the century. (They repeated it in July in a final concert at Cambridge). And later still there was a surprising reprise for “*Il fanatico per la musica*” or at least for its title: when a first concert for the students of the Royal Academy of Music was prepared in London in January 1829 by Giusppe De Begnis he chose this title to present a pasticcio of his own. It appeared at the Theatre Royal (the English Opera House) with splendid young voices but without even a nod, it would seem, at its birth pangs under Mayr!

Il fanatico per la musica

A comic opera in two acts

The music by Mayer

[King’s Theatre, London, 28 February 1824]

[This *Introduzione* greatly extends the original version in *Che originali*, with an extended scena for Don Febeo in which he facetiously addresses the audience and includes a species of *tempo di mezzo* performed by Biscroma, in the role of “Enea,” and Donna Rosina in that of “Jarba”, a Trojan pastiche derived from Paisiello’s *Didone abbandonata* whose title-role Catalani had sung in London, but most notably with Jarba, King of the Moors sung by the tenor Giuseppe Siboni, and Æneas, Prince of Troy by Michael Kelly in Dublin in 1808. This *Introduzione* concludes with a cabaletta of self-congratulation from Don Febeo]

‘Dentro il Teatro napse uno strepito.’

(Don Febeo)

2. **Scenes I and II** (*Scene II, III and IV of 1798 version*)

‘Evvivo D. Febeo’

[**Scene I** is a long dialogue between Biscroma, Rosina, celestina and Don Febeo,

Scene II ends with a revised arietta for Celestina

‘Un non so che mi sento’

set partially to the music of ‘Quel foco, ch’io sento’ of the original, to whose text it clearly refers. Aristeia’s cavatina immediately follows]

3. **Scene III** (*Scenes V and part of VI of 1798 version*)

Donna Aristeia, solo

No, no, pegno più grato
Offrir non mi potevi: al grand’invito
Sento l’alme avvampor: vedrai qual uso
Farò di questo acciar: dille che l’amo
Ch’io morirò per lei;
Va, ritorna, e se mai
Il vincitor son io,
Sarà sempre quell cor, l’idolo mio.
Mio ben per te quest’anima
Languisce, oh Dio! d’amore.
Idolo del mio cuore,
Non farmi più penar.
Donzelle innamorate,
Che l’arte mia vedete
Da me, da me apprendete
La donna che puo far.

[This cavatina may have been composed by Mayr for her to sing in Pietro Generali’s *L’Adelina* with a libretto by Gaetano Rossi, an opera first staged at the T. San Moisè in Venice in 1810 [though it is very unclear if she ever sang in that opera] but should not to be confused with the aria ‘*Tu di quest’anima delizia e amore*’ (autograph Biblioteca Civica Angelo Mai, Bergamo) that Marianna Barilli sang as her sortita in *Il pazzo per la musica* on its revival in Paris in 1812 and published by Consul in Paris, the latter was the *aria finale* Mayr composed for Donna Aristeia to sing before the vaudeville ending of the first version of *Che originali* at Venice in 1798]

‘Caro, caro Contino...’

(Donna Aristeia, Don Carolino)

[a part of Scene VI of the original version, beginning with the '*Ah! (Oh!) mia speranza*' of Don Carolino, which here forms a duetto to conclude this cavatina]

4. **Scene IV** (Scene VI and VII and most of Scena VIII of 1798 version)

[Both the duettino between Donna Aristeia and Don Carolino, and the terzetto '*E' forza, o caro*' which terminate Scena VI of the original version of the opera are completely missing in this 1824 *Fanatico* and the subsequent recitative completely changed, the two versions converge only with what remains of part of Scena VIII of 1798 which appears as **Scene IV** of this London version]

'Presto, Biscroma, prendi il tuo violino'

[This whole of the duet/trio, the idiotic musical interrogation of Don Carolino by Don Febeo, is more or less intact in the London edition except for the finale: where in the original version Don Carolino had a substantial and indignant aria to terminate the encounter - '*Se non foste, quel che siete*' - in its place now is an angry riposte]

***'Dunque, perchè non sono
Musico anch'io, signore'***

consisting of a *cantabile*

'Son cavalier, e amante'

'Ah per te solo, amore'

'Ma voi mi deridete'

in three discrete strophe, two sad and one furious, with rude and teasing interjections by Don Febeo

('Che belle sincopate...)

***Deh! vanne a farti musico,
Va là per carità)***

[This is undoubtedly a more lively and effective finale than that of the original version but one which diminishes Don Carolino's role quite considerably]

5. **Scene V**

Aria Donna Aristeia

'Giacchè son sola, sola'

"Ecco degli oricalchi"

'La di marte in campo armato'

"La man della figlia"

"Amici al gran cimento"

[It is in this position in *Il fanatico per la musica* that La Catalani first began interpolating her *ex novo* show-pieces, beginning with the "Variations upon *Nel cor più non mi*

senza” in the version of 1807. The above aria is in three sections, and like the Paisiello aria asks for male attire, but virtually all the text is printed in *virgolati* which makes clear to audiences that she will not sing the above but a different aria or song in its place. According to the press this substitution took place every night]

6. **Scenes VI and VII** (*Scene IX and X of 1798 version*)

‘M’avea fatto inquietare’

(Don Febeo, Biscroma, Carluccio)

Text identical with that of original version but Carluccio is deprived of his original brief but angry envoi.

7. **Scene VIII** (*Scena XI of 1798 version*)

‘Bravo, bravo, bravissimo’

(Don Febeo, Biscroma)

More or less identical with original version

Scene IX (*Scena XII of 1798 version*)

‘Il gran genio è Biscroma’

(Don Febeo, Donna Aristeia)

[Whereas following this assertion the 1798 Scena XII contains an elaborate duetto beginning with parallel statements ‘Di tal Figlia, Eterni dei/ A tal detti, oh Dei, non moro’, quoting fragments from operas with Metastasian heroines and ending with the unisone ‘Vanne la, che equal maestra’, **Scene IX** of the 1824 London edition has a duetto in the form of a music lesson with vocalises for the primadonna requiring her to display her virtuosity with mordants, trills, arpeggios, a *volata* etc., in various different keys in which Catalani was in her element, the whole culminating in a formal stretta]

	a2	
Febeo	Do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si, do La sua voce in questo istante Pare un organo suonante, Quando il mantice ci sta, Fammi un trillo sopra l’A, E lo voglio in Elafà	
Aristea	Sono pronto, eccomi quà	(Eseguisce]
Febeo	Un passetto sopra l’E, Lo vuò in Fefaut, perchè...	
Aristea	Lasci, lasci fare a me	{Eseguisce]
Febeo	Un arpeggio sopra l’I, Questo il voglio in Elami.	
Aristea	Lo farò dunque così.	[Eseguisce]
Febeo	Sugli acuti piano adesso, Or su i bassi. Va così, Or volata sopra l’O, E in Cesolfaut la vuò.	
Aristea	Come posso la farò.	[Eseguisce]
Febeo	Un mordente sopra l’U, In quel tuono che vuoi tu.	
Aristea	Ora mai non posso più.	[Eseguisce]

Febeo Ma che figlia, che virtù!
 Via prosiegui; fa un gorgheggio,
 Che ti voglio accompagnar. [Eseguiscono]

[In the stretta Donna Aristeia is anxious to leave in pursuit of Don Carolino]

Febeo Io scommetto con chi vuole,
 Che fra tutte le figliuole
 Figlia egual non si può dar.
 Lei sa cucire, sa ricamare,
 Sa far le calze, lei sa stirare,
 Lei sa cantare, lei sa ballare,
 Tutto sa far.

Aristea (Quanto mai crudele amore,
 Quanto costi a questo core,
 Quanto, oh Dio, mi fai penar!)
 Questi elogi che mi fate,
 Non li merito, scusate,
 Deh vi prego a tralasciar.

[This last modest request addressed more to the audience than to Don Febeo!]

8. **Scenes X and XI** (*Scene XIII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI* of the 1798 version)

[In these scenes Biscroma has been deprived of his aria in *Scena XIII* and has only a perfunctory recitative with Carluccio; Celestina and Rosina have also lost their solos of the original score, instead, in **Scene XI**, Don Carolino arrives with Biscroma and then sings an impromptu love duet with Donna Aristeia]

Biscroma Aspettate, ch'io ritorni,
 State qui, non vi movete,
 Buona regola vedete,
 Necessario è d'adoprar.

Carolino Se il Baron qui si ritrova,
 Nascerà qualche scompiglio,
 Ah mi vedo in gran periglio.
 Or bisogna sopportar.

Aristea Non prova il core
 Maggior piacere
 Di quell che amore
 Gli far goder.
 Amanti teneri,
 Che lo sentite,
 Dite asserite,
 Se dico il ver.

Carlino Idolo mio.
Aristea Mio bene amato.

a 2

Nel nostro core,
Secondi il fato,
Ogni desio,

	Col suo poter.
Biscroma	Presto, presto, riparate, [Ritornado in fretta]
	Il Baron è qui che viene.
Aristea	Deh nasconditi mio bene –
Carolino	Vado via, non dubitate –
Biscroma	Se fuggite, l'incontrate, Altro mezzo è da pigliar. a 2
Carolino e Aristea	Nel momento in cui noi siamo Tu ci devi consigliar

[The centre section of this duettino is a canzone 'Non prova il core' from her concert repertoire]

9. **Scene XII** (*Scene XVII, XVIII and XIX of 1798 version*)

'Ma brava, a meraviglia'

(Don Febeo, Carluccio, Don Carolino, Celestina, Biscroma, Rosina, Donna Aristea)

[Instead of the zany invocation of Don Chisciotte of *Scene XVII* by Don Febeo ('Matti simili a questo non si danno' according to Biscroma) and a more-or-less amicable insieme at the mid point of the original one act opera, **Scena XII** becomes an angry concertato which forms the Finale primo of the two act London version. Don Febeo insults Don Carolino by offering him the task of tuning his harpsichord and the ensuing row culminates in a conventional but extended quasi-Rossinian ensemble of confusion that ends Atto primo]

Biscroma	Io più non parlo, Ve l'ho detto, e lo vedrete, Di gridar se finirete Tuttu alfin s'aggiusterà.
Don Febeo	Già la testa mi volta, mi gira, Qual palla balzando, saltando quà, e là.
Tutti	Già la testa gli volta, gli gira, Qual palla balzando, saltando quà, e là

10. **Atto Secondo**

A setting for a concert recital is depicted on the stage.

Scene I (*Scena XX of 1798 version*)

**'Vediam se tutto è in ordine,
Sedie, presto altre sedie'**

(Don Febeo, Biscroma, Carluccio)

[Instead of a repeat of a maliciously comic interrogation of Don Carolino as appears in *Scena VIII* of the original version of the opera and taken up again in *Scena XX*, there is, in its place in the London 1824 version of *Il fanatico per la musica*, a repeat of the

elaborate music lesson given by Don Febeo to Donna Aristeo in **Scene IX** but this time given by Don Febeo to Biscroma, the intention being to supply a comic parody of the supreme virtuosity of the prima donna by enforcing deliberately discordant and out-of-tune singing by the latter]

Don Febeo	Do, re
Biscroma	Do, re
Don Febeo	Tu, stuo ni Do, re, mi fà, sol, là
Biscroma	Do, re, mi, fà, sol, là [<i>Fortissimo</i>]
Don Febeo	Sei sopra almen tre tuoni. a 2 Do, re, mi, fà, sol, là.
Don Febeo	Là, sol, fà, mi, re, do.
Biscroma	Là, sol, fà, mi, re, do.
Don Febeo	No: tu cali.
Biscroma	Calo? – a 2 Do, Là, sol, fà, mi, re, do.
Don Febeo	Do D'arrechìo tu mi stai male....

[*Don Febeo prende per un'orrechio
Biscroma, e questi greda*]

[The very complicated action in Scene XX, XXI, XXII and XXIII of the 1798 version, leading up to the *Scena ultima*, including many ensembles, much imaginative recitative and musico-comico jokes, some unisone passages, a substantial quartet and at least one arietta for Donna Aristeo ['Vostra Figlia, ah non son'io' of Scena XXI] is confronted in the 1824 edition by a far simpler format: **Scene's II, III** are entirely given over to Biscroma and Don Febeo, while **Scene IV** – *the Scena ultima* in 1824 – is given an elastic format that permits the interpolation of extra music at almost every point]

11. **Scene II** includes a brief recitative by Biscroma

	Scene III
Don Febeo	'Dell' estro mio, sublime Il più felice parto'

[A long declamatory introduction to the projected accademia in semi-recitative probably supplied by Giuseppe De Begnis begins the scene and culminates in an orchestral "*Zinfonia*" to herald the invited guests. At its conclusion a series of extravagantly titled guests begin to arrive and are introduced one by one]

12. **Scene IV** (*Scena ultima* of the 1798 edition)

[If the (apparent) underlying conceit of the original libretto could be interpreted as an attempt to prove that music is more amusing than love, then the 1824 *Il fanatico per la musica* has a far more conventional aim – to effect the union of Don Carolino with Donna Aristeia]

Don Febeo	Vieni, di Don Febeo diletta figlia, L'onor del canto e della tua famiglia!
Donna Aristeia	Segui a fidarti; in questa guisa impegni A maggior fedeltà gli affetti miei. Quando Poro mi crede, Come tradir potrò sì bella fede? Se mal turbo il tuo riposo, Se m'accendo ad altro lume, Pace mai non abbia il cor. Sei tu solo il mio tesoro E sarai l'ultimo affetto Come fosti il primo amor.

[These Metastasian intimations are succeeded by a far more surprising intervention from Celestina (Rosalbina Carradori-Allen in 1824) to the accademia and her only substantial contribution to the opera]

Don Febeo	Or tocc' à voi, signora.
Celestina	Ad un amato oggetto. Fedel serbavà il core Ardea d'eguale affetto, Con noi regnava amore. Come un baleno rapido La sorte mio cangiò Nò nò donna infelice Al par di me non v'è! E qual baleno rapido Calma speranza e pace Tutto sparì da me. Sempre mesta in questo loco L'alma in sen palpiterà. Ah! Fu un lampo, un sogno, un gioco, Sol la mia felicità
Don Febeo	Quest'è un pezzo di musica perfetto?

[This amended version of Angelina's apotheosis in *La cenerentola* would seem to have been offered for ironic reasons as Don Febeo's comment implies. There is no echo in the press of the day]

Trio a canone

(Don Febeo, Donna Aristeia, Don Carolino)

[The text of this trio appears to have been assembled from diverse sources, centred upon two cantabile strophe from Aristeia, it only manages to approximate to the actual ending of *Che originali* with the entry of Don Carolino]

Don Carolino	Concludiamo, Baron, Stipuliamo,
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	Più frenarsi non sa il mio contento: Se volete anche in questo momento La mia mano, ed il cor le darò.
Followed by	
Biscroma	Viva sempre il Baron Don Febeo
Don Carolino	Viva sempre gli sposi beati
Don Febeo	Un prodotto musicale Da voi sempre voglio ogn'anno Quando venti almen saranno Che accademie s'han da far!
Aristea/Carolino	Sempre mi ^o / _a io sempre tua Caro ben alfin sarai Morir possa se un istante Io cessassi d'adorar!
Tutti	Fra il piacer de suoni, e canti Vogliam tutti giubbilar.

[Which more or less equates, textually at least, with the original ending of 1798]

Appendix 1

Catalani's first repertoire

Born in Senigallia on 10 May 1780 and educated in a convent at Gubbio she passed directly, or so it would seem, from cloister to the stage making her official début at La Fenice in Venice in the title role in a revival of Mayr's *La Lodoïska* on 5 November 1797, with such success that in the following season he wrote for her the role of Lidia in his *Lauso e Lidia* on 14 February 1798. In the March that immediately followed at La Fenice, she created the role of Carolina (with Luigi Marchesi as Mexicow) in Nicola Zingarelli's *Carolina e Mexicow* whose libretto was by Gaetano Rossi; she sang the role of Cimene in a revival of Zingarelli's *Il conte di Saldagna* at La Fenice on 10 April, and the title role of Andromaca in Paisiello's *Andromaca* with Giacomo David as Ulisse on 16 May. In the next years there were brief excursions to Florence, Livorno, Rome and Trieste in which there were some new operas (at the Pergola in Florence she created the role of Eglia in Giuseppe Moneta's sacred opera *Il trionfo di Gedeone* and sang Monima in a version of Nasolini's *La morte di Mitridate*; at the Teatro Argentina in Rome she sang the title role in an *Ifigenia in Aulide* by Mosca as well as in a revival of Zingarelli's *Pirro re di Epiro* in which she sang the role of Polissena). Back at La Fenice she created the musico role of Mezio Curzio at the prima of Zingarelli's *Il ratto delle Sabine* on 26 December 1799 also with verses by Rossi; she sang Curiazio in Domenico Cimarosa's *Gli Orazi e i Curiazi*; she created the role of Atamaro (yet another male role) in Mayr's *Gli Sciti* (lib. Rossi, a text first supplied to Giuseppe Nicolini) on 21 February 1800, following this up at La Fenice, by singing the title role in a revision (with a new text by Gaetano Rossi) of Sebastiano Nasolini's *La morte di Cleopatra* the following May. She created two new title roles in the following carnival season at La

Scala in Milan in 1801: that of Clitennestra in Nicola Zingarelli's *Clitennestra* on 26 December 1800 and that of Fecennia in Giuseppe Nicolini's *I baccanali di Roma* on 21 January 1801. After this came a dramatic exodus from Italy: she began a long series of performances at the Teatro São Carlos of Lisbon in September of that same year beginning with Nasolini's *La morte di Cleopatra* on 27 September 1801; following which the native maestro - soon to be her niche composer, Marcos Antonio da Fonseca (domesticated in Italy as "Portogallo") - made his riposte with a dead queen of his own and his *La morte di Semiramide* on 23 December. Between those dates and the beginning of 1806 she created an extraordinary series of new operas for that theatre and that country, with some ten important serious works by Portogallo: including the title roles in two versions of his *Zaira* (1802), *Il trionfo di Clelia* (1802), *Sofonisba* (1803) and *Merope* (1804), as well as the role of Zulmira in his *Fernando nell' Messico* (together with Domenico Mombelli) at the beginning of 1805 (it had first appeared in Venice in 1798 with a different libretto and other singers). New repertoire included the azione sacra *Deborah e Sisara* by Pietro Guglielmi (1802), she sang Idalide in a revival of Cimarosa's *La vergine del sole* (1802); she sang in *Gli americani* by Tritto (1803), she sang Jella in the prima of Valentino Fioravanti's *La pulcella di Raab* (1804); but also appeared in more predictable revivals like that of *Gli Sciti* of Mayr in which (prudently, possibly, as there was a castrato conflict at the time) she elected to sing the role of Obeida instead of that of Atamaro (1803). She sang the title role in Paisiello's *Andromaca*; in Pietro Carlo Guglielmi's *La distruzione di Gerusalemme* she sang the role of Semira; she sang the title role in G.M.Curcio's 1799 Florentine opera *Ifigenia in Aulide*; she sang Argenide in Portogallo's *Il ritorno di Serse*; in his *Il duca di Foix* she sang Amelia; in his *Ginevra di Scozia* she sang the title role; following this by singing the title role in *La Circe* of Cimarosa (all these in 1805). It was in Lisbon that she met her husband Paul de Valabrègue who was in some way attached to the French Embassy (though diplomacy was scarcely his *forte* in later years) and who she married on the eve of her departure. Her Lisbon period ended on the last day of January 1806 when she starred in a valedictory performance of Portogallo's brand new version of *La morte di Mitridate* after which she left for London via Madrid, Bordeaux and Paris (where she appeared in a recital hosted by the returned émigrée Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun who also painted her portrait)

Appendix 2

Her London repertoire

She appeared first at the King's Theatre on 13 December 1806, singing the title role in Portogallo's *La morte di Semiramide*, it was given seventeen times, then reappearing as Argenide in a revival of his *Il ritorno di Serse* on 24 February 1807 (in which, however, and certainly to the composer's dismay if he ever heard of it, she not only sang the aria 'Oh! Come scorrano tardi i momenti' written for her by Mayr, but also Mayr's cavatina 'Oh quanto l'anima or mi consoli' written for Luigi Marchesi to sing in his role of Lauso in *Lauso e Lidia*). She launched the first London performances of his

La morte di Mitridate on 16 April which made a *furore*; and embarked upon her very first appearance as Donna Aristeia in *Il fanatico per la musica* on 21 May (the rest of the cast being those who had sung with Mrs Billington). She sang the title role in Sebastiano Nasolini's *La morte di Cleopatra* on 9 July (with Giuseppe Siboni). She opened the season in 1808 with a repeat of Portogallo's *Semiramide* on 2 January (this time with eleven performances); pairing it with her Donna Violante in Paisiello's *La frascatana* on 9 January; she sang Didone in his *Didone abbandonata* on 26 January with thirteen performances; as Rosina in Valentino Fioravanti's *Il furbo contro il furbo* on 1 March; as Sesostri, King of Egypt, a male role, in Nasolini's *La festa d'Iside* on 21 April with a mixed reception for her masculine attire; and "with unbounded Applause" in Valentino Fioravanti's *Le virtuose in puntiglio [I puntigli per equivoco]* with "Sigr Miarteni" on 31 May. She re-appeared in *Il fanatico per la musica* on 9 June; in Giuseppe Sarti's *I contrattempi amorosi ossia Gli amanti consolati* on 23 June and made one appearance only in the title role in Paisiello's *Elfrida* on 14 July. She made a single appearance too in the 1809 season, in Portogallo's *Mitridate* on 1 May for the benefit of the dancer D'Egville. A one-act edition of *Il fanatico per la musica* reappeared on 1 June but without her. In 1810 she returned with suitably triumphant publicity as Donna Aristeia in *Il fanatico per la musica* on 6 March, afterwards singing the title role in the first performances of a *pasticcio* by Pietro Carlo Guglielmi and others entitled *Atalida* on 20 March; she sang the role of Cecchina in one single performance of fellow artist Diomiro Tramezzani's *L'ingiusta gelosia* on 5 April; for her benefit she created the title role of Giulia in Pucitta's important *La vestale* on 3 May with eleven performances; she sang in Valentino Fioravanti's *Il matrimonio per susurro* on 24 May and in the title role of Piccinni's *La buona figliuola* on 21 June (in the prima of which she interpolated a song by Dr Arne). The following year of 1811 she created the title role of Rosselane in the prima of Pucitta's opera buffa *Le tre sultane o Il trionfo di Rosselane* on 22 January; she repeated her *Semiramide* on 5 February; *Il fanatico per la musica* re-emerged anew on 19 February; she sang in Pucitta's *La vestale* again on 23 March; she sang the title role in the prima of Vittorio Trento's *Climene* on 25 April and in Paisiello's *Elfrida* again on 20 June - it was given eight times. 1812 saw repeats of *Semiramide* beginning on 14 January; *Elfrida* followed on 21 January and was given another eight times; she appeared as Marietta in Pucitta's *La caccia di Enrico IV* on 1 February for sixteen performances, followed by *Il fanatico* on 27 February with four performances. On 3 March she began sixteen performances as Vitellia in Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* with Diomiro Tramezzani as Sesto, and then sang the title role of Ginevra in Pucitta's *Ginevra di Scozia* on 16 April with a very similar cast; she sang the title role in Paër's *Camilla* on 12 May; took the role of Orazia in Cimarosa's *Gli Orazi e I Curiazi* on 21 May, and as Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* of Mozart on 18 June for eight performances (she would sing the role of the contessa in Paris a year or two later). 1813 saw repeat performances of *Il furbo contro il furbo* (19 January); *Elfrida* (6 February); *La vestale* (9 February); (as Marietta?) in Pucitta's *Enrico IV (La caccia di Enrico IV)* (16 February) Catalani refused to appear on one of the performances and there was a riot; and in Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* and *Le nozze di Figaro* in the latter of which only Catalani was praised (23 February and 9 March respectively). She sang the title role in Pucitta's new opera *Boadicea* on 23 March; the title role of Jella in a revival of Jacopo Ferrari's London opera *L'eroina di Raab* on 8 April; she repeated her *Semiramide* on 8 May; and sang in a revival of Pietro

Carlo Guglielmi's *Sidagero* on 17 June followed by two performances as Curiazio in Cimarosa's *Gli Orazi e i Curiazi* beginning on 5 July when she was supported by Diomiro Tramezzani and Camilla Ferlendis (as Orazio and Orazia respectively). Angry with the financial mismanagement of William Taylor of the King's Theatre she departed for Paris almost forthwith.

Appendix 3

Her Paris appearances

Described as "disastrous" Catalani's reign as *Directrice* of the Théâtre Italien was indeed subject to problems which many blamed upon her dominating personality but most of them in fact due to the political, economic and social gulf into which the country was plunged following the defeat of Napoléon. There was to be no operatic innovation at all at the Salle Favart as there had been earlier in Lisbon and London, there was no money and no new repertoire. Her directorial sway began with a series of concerts; the first integral opera took place on 14 October 1815 when she emerged in her celebrated role in Portogallo's *La morte di Semiramide* (supported by Gaetano Crivelli as Ninio) in which she was as extravagantly féted as could be expected; she next appeared as Marietta in Pucitta's *La caccia di Enrico IV* on 28 October; then emerged as Curiazio in Cimarosa's *Gli Orazi e Curiazi* on 8 November (with Crivelli and Ferlendis as Orazio and Orazia respectively). On 9 December she made her Paris début as Donna Aristeia in *Il fanatico per la musica* with Luigi Barilli in his remarkable interpretation of Don Febeo, the great primadonna was excessively applauded and described as "éblouissante". On 22 January 1816 was staged for the first time in Paris Pucitta's *Le tre sultane o Il trionfo di Rosselane* in which she sang the role of Rosselane of course; it was followed on 20 March by *Le nozze di Figaro* with Catalani singing the Countess for the first time anywhere (Cherubino was sung by Laura Cinti - Laure Cinthie Montalent later Cinti-Damoreau- whom Angelica had plucked from the Conservatoire). Indignant at the chauvinist Parisian press (who were constantly provoked by M. de Valabrègue) she repeated her *La morte di Semiramide* on 4 May and then promptly departed on a concert tour across the Rhine. She returned only in 1817, having left the theatre in the interval to its own unsuccessful devices (during which period Rossini had entered the Parisian operatic debate) with yet another staging of *Il fanatico per la musica* on 8 August in front of a teeming throng and had a truly superb reception, inserting – just as she had done a decade earlier in London – her insuperable variations upon Paisiello's 'Nel cor più non mi sento'. On 16 September she sang once again Portogallo's *La morte di Semiramide* (this time with Manuel Garcia in place of Crivelli), on 20 November there seems to have been a performance at the Théâtre Italien of Pucitta's *La principessa in campagna o Il marchese in imbarazzo* (a compilation of earlier music) in which she sang the stratospheric title role, while on 14 December she appeared in yet another of her key roles - as Monima in Nasolini's *La morte di Mitridate* together with her London partner Diomiro Tamezzani (who alas was whistled). She repeated her Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro* in January 1818, and then, for the very last time at the Salle Favart, sang her Donna Aristeia on 30 April 1818 in Mayr's now very well-worn *Il fanatico per la*

musica. After which deafening feat she resigned as *Directrice* of the Théâtre Italien, the doors of the theatre closed, and the city remained Catalani-free and blessedly silent while awaiting another and less contentious destiny.