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978-0-521-88521-8 - Portrait of a Castrato: Politics, Patronage, and Music in the Life of Atto Melani

Roger Freitas

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Portrait of a Castrato

This book explores the fascinating life of the most documented musician of the seventeenth century. Born in 1626 into a bourgeois family in Pistoia, Italy, Atto Melani was castrated to preserve his singing voice and soon rose to both artistic and social prominence. His extant letters not only depict the musical activities of several European centers, they reveal the real-life context of music and the musician: how a singer related to patrons and colleagues, what he thought about his profession, and the role music played in his life. Whether Atto was singing, spying, having sex, composing, or even rejecting his art, his life illustrates how music-making was always also a negotiation for power. Providing a rare glimpse of the social and political contexts of seventeenth-century music, Roger Freitas sheds light on the mechanisms that generated meaning for music, clarifying what music at this time actually was.

Roger Freitas is Associate Professor in the Department of Musicology, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester. His writing has appeared in journals including the *Journal of Musicology*, *Music and Letters*, and *Opera News*. This is his first book.

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Frontmatter

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Roger Freitas

Frontmatter

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Roger Freitas

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

For my wonderful parents, Ron and Mickey Freitas

Contents

List of figures	<i>page</i> xi
List of tables	xii
List of plates	xiii
Library sigla and abbreviations	xv
Note on the original texts of translations	xvii
Note on the editing of musical examples	xviii
Acknowledgements	xix
Introduction	1
1 Creating a castrato	15
Paterfamilias	16
The question of castration	26
2 The politics of patronage: 1638–1653	33
First steps	34
Paris	41
Back in Italy	58
3 In pursuit of prestige: 1653–1655	70
Demanding center stage	71
<i>Leid und Ekstase</i>	76
Frustration at home	88
Rome 1655	93
4 The sexuality of the castrato	101
The framework	107
Sex with men	112
Sex with women?	132
The implications	141
5 Disgrace and transformation: 1656–1671	149
<i>Le chant du cygne</i>	150
Man of action	155
Risks worth taking	168
Disaster	172
Salvation	184
A new reality	191

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88521-8 - Portrait of a Castrato: Politics, Patronage, and Music in the Life of Atto Melani

Roger Freitas

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

Contents

- 6 Atto Melani and the cantata 201
 - The literary status of the cantata 205
 - The context of reception 214
 - Lyrical constructions of love 226
 - The cantatas of Atto Melani: Poetry 229
 - The cantatas of Atto Melani: Music 243
- 7 Completing the portrait: 1671–1714 286
 - Removal to France 287
 - Padrone della casa* 290
 - Music again 301
 - Honors and advancement 307
 - A respected gentleman 310
 - Death and remembrance 314

Appendices

- A The letters of Atto Melani 328
- B Letters addressed to or concerning Atto Melani 346
- C Satires 352
 - “Sopra Atto Melani Musico” 352
 - “Al Signor Atto Melani” 357
- D Excerpt from the *Recueil des défenses* of Nicolas Fouquet 358
- E Biographical sketch from Tommaso Trenta’s *Memorie* 360
- F The texts of Atto Melani’s cantatas, with analyses and translations 364
- G The wills 379
 - The Italian will 379
 - The French will 382
- H The cabinet in the “Salotto dell’Abbate Melani,” from the inventory of 1782 387

Works cited 390

Index 418

Figures

- 1.1 The Melani family tree *page 21*
- 6.1 The aria “Amo Filli” from *E che cantar poss’io* by Luigi Rossi 248
- 6.2 The aria “Ardo piango” from *Scrivete, occhi dolenti* by Giacomo Carissimi 250
- 6.3 The aria “Ardo piango” from *Scrivete, occhi dolenti* by Atto Melani 251
- 6.4a The opening of *Fileno, idolo mio* 253
- 6.4b The recitative “Ahi, che tardi Fileno?” from *Fileno, idolo mio* 253
- 6.4c The recitative “Sol’indarno il mio cor” from *Fileno, idolo mio* 253
- 6.4d The opening of the aria “Vieni mio sol, sì, sì” from *Fileno, idolo mio* 253
- 6.4e The opening of the aria “Dentro coppa di rose” from *Fileno, idolo mio* 254
- 6.5 The aria “Lumi rei” from *Filli, per cui mi moro* 256
- 6.6 Cases of Atto’s common $\frac{4}{2}-\frac{6}{3}$ material 260
- 6.7 Cases of Atto’s common diminished-fourth motive 261
- 6.8 The opening recitative of Atto’s *A più sventure ancora* 263
- 6.9 The four strophic melodies of “Se il mio cor non sa ridire” from *Scrivete, occhi dolenti* 267
- 6.10 A comparison of bass lines in the two strophes of *S’io sapessi dipingere* 269
- 6.11a The aria “Da chi spero aver pietà” from *La più dolente, e misera, che viva* 273
- 6.11b The aria “Lascia pur le piaghe intatte” from *O quanto si dolea* 277
- 6.12 A comparison of bass lines between the arioso “Tra l’umane vicende” and aria “Sfioriscono gl’anni” from *Ove, tra sponde d’oro* 283
- 7.1 The descendants of the Melani family 324

Tables

- 0.1 Important rulers of Europe during the lifetime of Atto Melani *page 9*
- 1.1 Membership of Melani brothers as singers in the choir of the Cathedral of S. Zeno, Pistoia 24
- 6.1 The cantatas of Atto Melani (first lines) 202
- 6.2 A schematic of *Sempre m'affliggo più*, as set by Giacomo Carissimi 246
- 6.3 A comparative schematic of the settings of *Scrivete, occhi dolenti* by Giacomo Carissimi and Atto Melani 249
- 6.4 Occurrences of the descending tetrachord at the beginning of movements in Atto's cantatas 255
- 6.5 A schematic of "Lumi rei," from Atto's *Filli, per cui mi moro* 255
- 6.6a A schematic of "Cieco dio" from Marc'Antonio Pasqualini's *Sì, ch'io voglio languire* 258
- 6.6b A schematic of "Io lo so, che'l duol sopporto" from Marc'Antonio Pasqualini's *Un infelice core* 258
- 6.6c A schematic of the opening aria of Luigi Rossi's *Se non corre una speranza* 258
- 6.7 Occurrences of the "quatrain form" in Atto's arias 259
- 6.8 A schematic of the four strophes of the aria "Se il mio cor non sa ridire" from Atto's *Scrivete, occhi dolenti* 266
- 6.9 The two stanzas of *S'io sapessi dipingere*, showing changes of style and meter in Atto's setting 271
- 6.10a A schematic of "Da chi spero aver pietà," from Atto's *La più dolente, e misera, che viva* 272
- 6.10b A schematic of "Lascia pur le piaghe intatte," from Atto's *O quanto si dolea* 272
- 6.11 A schematic of Atto's *Ove, tra sponde d'oro* 282

Plates

- 1 Mattias de' Medici (Giusto Suttermans; Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, Florence, Italy). *Reproduced by permission of Scala / Art Resource, NY.* page 35
- 2 Cardinal Jules Mazarin (Pierre Mignard; Musée Condé, Chantilly, France). *Reproduced by permission of Giraudon / Art Resource, NY.* 42
- 3 Anne of Austria, with young Louis XIV (anonymous French; Chateaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, France). *Reproduced by permission of Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.* 43
- 4 Mount of Aeolus, from *La gara delle stagioni* (Stefano Della Bella, Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1962 [62.652.30]; image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art) 63
- 5 *Venus and Adonis* (Annibale Carracci, 1588–89; Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain). *Reproduced by permission of Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.* 119
- 6 *Rinaldo and Armida* (Domenichino, ca. 1620–21; Musée du Louvre, Paris, France). *Reproduced by permission of Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.* 119
- 7 *Pallade strappa l'Adolescenza dalle braccia di Venere* (Pietro da Cortona, 1641–42; Palazzo Pitti, Florence, Italy). *Reproduced by permission of Alinari / Art Resource, NY.* 120
- 8 Domenico Annibali (Anton Raphael Mengs, 1744; Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlung Dresden). *Reproduced by permission of the Staatliche Kunstsammlung Dresden; all rights reserved.* 126
- 9 Carlo Broschi (Farinelli) (Bartolomeo Nazzari, 1734; London, Royal College of Music). *Reproduced by permission of the Royal College of Music.* 127
- 10 Meeting of Louis XIV and Philip IV on the Isle of the Pheasants (Gobelin tapestry after Charles Lebrun; Embassy of France, Madrid, Spain). *Reproduced by permission of Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY.* 162
- 11 Hugues de Lionne (anonymous; Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, France). *Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.* 174

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88521-8 - Portrait of a Castrato: Politics, Patronage, and Music in the Life of Atto Melani

Roger Freitas

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv

Plates

- 12 Letter of Atto Melani to Carlo II Gonzaga-Nevers, duke of Mantua, from Florence, October 2, 1653 (I MAas, E.XXVIII.3, busta 1135, diversi-1653, pezzo 5). *Reproduced by permission of the Archivio di Stato di Mantova (Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali).* 316
- 13 Letter of Atto Melani to Filippo Melani, from Paris, December 1, 1698, conclusion (I Fm, Melani 3, f. 253). *Reproduced by permission of the Biblioteca Marucelliana; any further reproduction, in whole or in part, by any means is prohibited.* 317
- 14 Design for a tomb (Bartolomeo-Carlo Rastrelli, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warsaw). *Reproduced by permission of the Biblioteka Narodowa.* 319
- 15 Cenotaph for Atto Melani, before and after recent vandalism (Vittorio Barbieri, Church of S. Domenico, Pistoia). *Photo on right courtesy of Massimiliano Sala.* 322

Library sigla and abbreviations

The following library sigla and abbreviations are used throughout this study. They are adapted from the sigla used in the *Répertoire international des sources musicales*, with additions to accommodate other sources used here.

- B Belgium
 Bc Brussels, Conservatoire Royal de Musique, Bibliothèque
- D Germany
 Kl Kassel, Gesamthochschul-Bibliothek, Landesbibliothek und Murhardsche Bibliothek, Musiksammlung
 Mbs Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Musiksammlung
- F France
 Pae Paris, Archives de la Ministère des Affaires Étrangères
 Pae, CP —, Correspondence politique
 Pae, MD —, Mémoires et documents
 Pan Paris, Archives Nationales
 Pc Paris, Bibliothèque du Conservatoire National de Musique (within F Pn)
 Pm Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine
 Pn Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France
- GB Great Britain
 Cfm Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Department of Manuscripts and Printed Books
 Ckc Cambridge, King's College, Rowe Music Library
 Lbl London, British Library
 Och Oxford, Christ Church Library
- I Italy
 Bc Bologna, Museo Civico Bibliografico Musicale
 Fas Florence, Archivio di Stato
 Fas, MdP —, Archivio Mediceo del Principato
 FEas Ferrara, Archivio di Stato
 FEas, Arch. Bent. —, Archivio Bentivoglio d'Aragona, Lettere sciolte
 Fn Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale
 MAas Mantua, Archivio di Stato
 MOas Modena, Archivio di Stato

Cambridge University Press

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Roger Freitas

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xvi

Library sigla and abbreviations

MOe	Modena, Biblioteca Estense e Universitaria
Nc	Naples, Conservatorio di Musica S. Pietro a Maiella, Biblioteca
PS	Pistoia, Basilica di S. Zeno, Archivio Capitolare
PSas	Pistoia, Archivio di Stato
PSav	Pistoia, Archivio della Curia Vescovile
PSc	Pistoia, Biblioteca Comunale Forteguerriana
Rc	Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense
Rvat	Rome [Vatican City], Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
SUss	Subiaco, Monastery of Santa Scolastica
TOas	Turin, Archivio di Stato
US	United States
CHH	Chapel Hill, N.C., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Music Library
LAuc	Los Angeles, University of California at Los Angeles, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library

Note on the original texts of translations

Because this project depends so heavily on correspondence, the volume of quoted material is formidable. To avoid bloating the size (and cost) of the published volume, I agreed with Cambridge University Press to place the original language of all translations on a website operated by the Press. The URL for that site is www.cambridge.org/9780521885218. The entries are organized by chapter and then by footnote number. So, for example, to find the original Italian of the passage cited by footnote 15 in chapter 2, one would go to the web page for chapter 2 and then look under note 15.

As readers will quickly discern, I have not modernized the spelling and punctuation of the original-language materials. While I recognize that such updating is standard, especially in Italian, I do not pretend to the necessary text-editing skill, especially for so large and diverse a body of material. The issues go far beyond orthography, and in several cases the actual sense of passages depends on interpretations of the intended words. Instead, I have modified the text only in the following ways: I have tacitly expanded all abbreviations when their meaning was not in doubt (as is usually the case). The only exception has been in the use of honorifics (e.g., S.A.S.ma for Sua Altezza Serenissima), which, for reasons of space, I have left abbreviated. I have converted the sometimes variable use of diacritical marks to modern practice, but I have not altered diacriticals in situations where a modern word has been written as two: for example, I convert “perche” to “perché,” but leave “per che” alone. Original punctuation and capitalization have been retained.

Citations of all the letters have been simplified in the body of the text to save space. For each letter, I give the author, addressee, place of origin, and date. This information can then be compared to either Appendix A (for Atto’s letters) or Appendix B (for the letters of others), where full bibliographic information is provided.

Note on the editing of musical examples

For all of the musical examples and associated texts in this volume (which appear in chapter 6), I have followed the principles I adopted in my edition of Atto Melani's cantatas, published as Atto Melani, *Complete Cantatas*, Collegium Musicum: Yale University, series 2, vol. 15 (Middleton, Wis.: A-R Editions, 2006). Please see pages 95–97 of that edition for a full statement of the methodology. Fundamentally, the edition follows a “best-text” approach rather than tracing sources back to a theoretical, composer-approved version. The specific procedures used are fairly standard, and so few additional comments are necessary. I do use four types of accidentals: (1) normal accidentals generally render all accidentals present in a source, including those considered redundant by modern standards; (2) accidentals in square brackets correct conflicts between seventeenth-century and modern usage (e.g., regarding the length of time an accidental might apply); (3) small accidentals represent purely editorial suggestions; (4) accidentals in parentheses are purely cautionary. In a slight divergence from my published edition (where brackets were used), I have employed a larger and smaller font in the bass figures to indicate original versus editorial figures, respectively. Finally, all solid slurs are original, while dotted slurs are editorial. Again, the complete edition provides fuller information.

Figures 6.1 and 6.2 present the music of Luigi Rossi and Giacomo Carissimi and so do not stem from my edition, but I have retained the same basic approach. My sources for this music are as follows:

- Figure 6.1 GB Och, Mus. Ms. 949, ff. 49–54; as reproduced in Luigi Rossi, *Cantatas by Luigi Rossi c. 1597–1653*, vol. I of *The Italian Cantata in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Francesco Luisi (New York: Garland, 1986), 5–9.
- Figure 6.2 I Bc, MS X.234; as edited in Robert Rau Holzer, “Music and Poetry in Seventeenth-Century Rome: Settings of the Canzonetta and Cantata Texts of Francesco Balducci, Domenico Benigni, Francesco Melosio, and Antonio Abati” (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1990), 933–45.

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I am especially in the debt of a circle of friends and associates who have offered their advice about translations. Anything worthy about the translations in this book is owed to the help of Mauro Calcagno, Sergio Parussa, Pietro Moretti, Thomas DiPiero, and Timothy Scheie. The remaining shortcomings are mine alone.

For this project, I have depended heavily on the good will and assistance of librarians and archivists, and so I am happy to be able to thank the directors and staffs of the following institutions in which I conducted research; although not all these libraries are represented in the text, the work I did in them was essential: the Archivio di Stato, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, and Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana in Florence; the Biblioteca Forteguerriana and Archivio

Cambridge University Press

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Roger Freitas

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xx

Acknowledgements

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