1 Naples on the Grand Tour and within the Historical Imagination

"Rome is stately and impressive; Florence is all beauty and enchantment; Genoa is picturesque; Venice is a dream city; but Naples is simply – fascinating."[1] Albeit written in 1907, this reflection by Lilian Whiting captures perfectly the enduring historical status of Naples as a mirror and center of European culture. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the War of Spanish Succession had forced a new regime and viceroy upon Naples yet perpetuated its status as a kingdom ruled as a province.[2] In July 1707, Archduke Charles captured Naples, and his subsequent ascension as Habsburg Emperor (he became Charles VI in 1712) formalized the standing of the kingdom as an Austrian possession. The Treaty of Utrecht served to legalize the Austrian dominion. Given the circumstances, Charles VI retained much of the administrative and ministerial infrastructure while reaffirming the feudal standing of the provinces. Austrian rule, however, was brief, and, through another international dispute over dynastic succession (the War of the Polish Succession), the kingdom then became an independent monarchy. The ascension to the throne of Charles III in 1734 marked a significant reorganization in the bureaucratic structure, balance, and even purpose of the nobility in the newly established Kingdom of Naples. The passing of this realm from Spanish to Austrian rule to its establishment as an independent kingdom had indelible effects not only on the vast expanse of southern Italy but also on the Italian peninsula as a whole and the continent at large.

The initial stability of the Bourbon reign and the advantages of a resident monarch rather than a Spanish or Austrian viceroy extended beyond governmental and administrative spheres. Once it was recognized as an independent capital, Naples drew the diplomatic corps and their institutional support to the city in even greater numbers than previously, a

[1] Lilian Whiting, *Italy: The Magic Land* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1910), 227.
[2] For a comprehensive history of Southern Italy, see Giuseppe Galasso and Rosario Romeo, eds, *Storia del Mezzogiorno*, 15 vols (Naples: Edizioni del Sole, 1991–); Galasso, ed., *Storia del Regno di Napoli*, 6 vols (Turin: UTET, 2006). For recent sources in English, see Tommaso Astarita, *Between Salt Water and Holy Water: A History of Southern Italy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006).

development that had lasting and tangible impacts within local social circles. The kingdom also benefitted from the relative stability on the Italian peninsula, although it often remained at the center of territorial disputes between Spain, France, and Austria, as well as the rising influence of Great Britain and later Russia.

The leadership of Charles III has been well documented, with scholars noting the period of civic renewal and beautification of the capital city following the beginning of his reign.[3] Although Naples had been a cultural – and specifically musical – capital of Europe since the previous century, the coalescence of political stability and social renewal with the intertwined network of artistic institutions (conservatories, theaters, churches, and patrons) propelled the kingdom into continental prominence. The city became a destination point for the vast number of travelers moving across the continent in search of pleasure and/or leisure (entertainment or otherwise) or of "knowledge" (which had attracted a premium from attendant Enlightenment forces, particularly regarding the reclamation of antiquity), or simply to follow prevailing fashions.[4] These travelers – often young, affluent, educated, and with ties to aristocratic birthright – headed south, for the "Grand Tour."[5] As a "must see," Naples became an obligatory stop, and the experiences of travelers were immortalized in numerous books, journals, periodicals, travelogues, memoirs, visual arts, etc. Their reflections often merged around the broad themes of natural phenomena, the patrimony of ancient civilizations, and the unprecedented diversity of entertainment (above all, opera).[6] Bolstered by exhibitions, public collections, and scholarly accounts, Naples entered the public imagination as a broad ideal of culture.

Yet visitors often experienced Naples in a fundamentally different manner than the rest of Italy. This inherent and at times visceral

[3] See Luciano Garella, ed., *Carlo. L'utopia di un regno* (Naples: artstudiopaparo, 2016). Contextual information about musical practices in early eighteenth-century Naples emerges in several publications. See Ausilia Magaudda and Danilo Costantini, *Musica e spettacolo nel Regno di Napoli attraverso lo spoglio della Gazzetta 1675–1768* (Rome: Ismez, 2009); Thomas Griffin, *Musical References in the Gazzetta di Napoli 1681–1725* (Berkeley: Fallen Leaf Press, 1993); Ulisse Prota-Giurleo, *I teatri di Napoli nel secolo XVII*, ed. Ermanno Bellucci and Giorgio Mancini, 3 vols. (Naples: Il quartiere, 2002).

[4] See Alison E. Martin and Susan Pickford, eds., *Travel Narratives in Translation, 1750–1830: Nationalism, Ideology, Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

[5] Cesare De Seta, "Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century," in *Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Wilton and Ilaria Bignamini (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1996), 13–19.

[6] Astarita, *Between Salt Water and Holy Water*, 220–249.

contradiction, as noted by Astarita, manifested itself in the broad narratives memorializing the aforementioned themes of interest. Thomas Gray penned one of the earliest "letters from Italy" to his wife, Dorothy, in 1740, recounting,

> My wonder still increased upon entering the city, which I think, for number of people, outdoes both Paris and London. The streets are one continued market, and thronged with populace so much that a coach can hardly pass. The common sort are a jolly lively kind of animals, more industrious than Italians usually are; they work till evening; then take their lute or guitar (for they all play) and walk about the city, or upon the sea-shore with it, to enjoy the fresco. One sees their little brown children jumping about stark-naked, and the bigger ones dancing with castanets, while others play on the cymbal to them. Your maps will show you the situation of Naples; it is on the most lovely bay in the world, and one of the calmest seas: It has many other beauties besides those of nature. We have spent two days in visiting the remarkable places in the country round it, such as the bay of Baiæ, and its remains of antiquity; the lake Avernus, and the Solfatara, Charon's grotto, &c. We have been in the Sybils' cave and many other strange holes under ground (I only name them, because you may consult Sandy's travels); but the strangest hole I ever was in, has been to-day at a place called Portici, where his Sicilian Majesty has a country-seat. About a year ago, as they were digging, they discovered some parts of ancient buildings above thirty feet deep in the ground: Curiosity led them on, and they have been digging ever since; the passage they have made, with all its turnings and windings, is now more than a mile long. As you walk you see parts of an amphitheatre, many houses adorned with marble columns, and incrusted with the same; the front of a temple, several arched vaults of rooms painted in fresco. Some pieces of painting have been taken out from hence, finer than any thing of the kind before discovered, and with these the King has adorned his palace; also a number of statues, medals, and gems; and more are dug out every day. This is known to be a Roman town, that in the Emperor Titus's time was overwhelmed by a furious eruption of Mount Vesuvius, which is hard by. The wood and beams remain so perfect that you may see the grain; but burnt to a coal, and dropping into dust upon the least touch. We were to-day at the foot of that mountain, which at present smokes only a little, where we saw the materials that fed the stream of fire, which about four years since ran down its side. We have but a few days longer to stay here; too little in conscience for such a place.[7]

Gray's epistle blends seamlessly the natural beauty of the city, especially its bay, the surrounding ancient cities on the cusp of excavation and study, the specter of Vesuvius, and the free spirit and natural inclination of locals

[7] Thomas Gray to Dorothy Gray, June 14, 1740, available at www.thomasgray.org/texts/letters.shtml.

towards music and leisure. It is also telling that he makes an immediate comparison with other cultural capitals, London and Paris, even stating that Naples surpasses them.

Such accounts (travelogues, memoirs, and scholarly volumes) only increased in the second half of the eighteenth century, especially during the reign of Charles's son and successor, Ferdinand IV, and his Austrian spouse, Maria Carolina Habsburg-Lorraine (1752–1813), underlining the continued attraction of Naples to Europe's most eminent personalities. Among the most important visitors was Goethe, whose letters are replete with detailed reflections on his time in the kingdom (1786–1787). Even at the conclusion of his first day in the capital, he exclaimed in the *Italienische Reise*, "Naples presents itself full of joy, of liberty, of life; the king goes hunting, the queen expects another child, and it could not be better than this."[8] Yet, like so many before him, Goethe felt an inexorable attraction to Vesuvius. On one of his first ascents, guided by his countryman – the painter, Jacob Philipp Hackert (a favorite of the sovereigns) – Goethe recounted, "The presence of danger always exercises a particular allurement and in men rouses the spirit of contradiction, [so that] the idea occurred to me in the interval between eruptions [that] there was a manner of climbing the cone up to the rim of the crater and then returning within the same break."[9] His mixture of wonder, fear, and excitement provoked by the dangers of the volcano also harbored an evident and notable scientific curiosity (as also noted in the same letter) about the different states of lava, rock formations, and other natural occurrences witnessed.

This rationalist purview emerges again in Goethe's painstaking reflections on visits to the ancient cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, and then Portici (as well as later to Paestum). Regarding the first, he writes, "I went to Pompeii with Tischbein [another German expatriate and favorite of the crown], admiring on the left and the right all of those magnificent sights known today thanks to the landscape artists, and now rendered to us in their splendid array."[10] This comment is just the opening salvo in a series

[8] Johann Wolfgang van Goethe, *I miei giorni a Napoli* (Naples: Edizioni Libreria Dante & Descartes, 2016), 26: "Napoli si presenta piena d'allegria, di libertà, di vita; il re va a caccia, la regina è in attesa del lieto evento, e meglio di così non potrebbe andare."

[9] Ibid., 40–41: "la presenza del pericolo esercita sempre un certo fascino ed eccita nell'uomo lo spirito di contraddizione, mi venne l'idea che l'intervallo tra due eruzioni ci fosse modo d'ascendere il cono fino all'orlo del cratere e di tornare indietro sempre nello stesso tempo."

[10] Ibid., 47: "Mi sono recato con Tischbein a Pompei, ammirando a destra e a sinistra tutte quelle magnifiche viste già note a noi grazie ai pittori di paesaggi, e che ora ci si presentavano nel loro splendido insieme."

of extended reflections culminating in the desire to compare firsthand the ancient domiciles with those inhabited by eighteenth-century descendants living on the periphery of Pompeii, an investigation realized by the poet to his great satisfaction. Goethe also painfully acknowledged the inherent contradictions within Naples and Neapolitan life, manifested in the disparity between its natural beauty, its rich antiquarian treasures, and (in his view) the peculiar lifestyles of its residents. After a brief journey to Sicily, he mused,

> An exceptional sunset, a celestial evening regaled my return; however I feel clearly the disturbing effect of that vast contrast. The misery opposed to the beautiful, the beautiful to the misery; the two annul each other, and a feeling of detachment results. The Neapolitans would have been without doubt very different if they did not feel themselves bound between God and Satan.[11]

Yet his Germanic sense of order and propriety surfaces on more than one occasion, most notably as he exclaimed about Herculaneum, "It is a great shame that the excavations were not completed by German miners with a precise plan, as undoubtedly, in that felonious ransacking in the dark, innumerable valuable antiquities were lost."[12] Nevertheless, as his time in Naples drew to an end, Goethe vociferously defended the Neapolitan "character" against the criticisms of his countryman Johann Jacob Volkmann, whom he encountered within the large diaspora of German literati passing through (or resident in) Naples.[13]

Goethe was not the only humanist to experience these inherent, yet contradictory sensations and impulses provoked by Naples in the late part of the eighteenth century. One of the insightful observers of the city and of its cosmopolitan diplomatic corps that revolved around the Neapolitan court was the visual artist Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, who fled to Italy after the revolution in Paris. Vigée-Lebrun spent twelve years abroad, her exile beginning in October 1789 and taking her first to Italy until 1792, and then to Vienna and St. Petersburg, before she returned to Paris in

[11] Ibid., 74: "Un superbo tramonto, una sera celestiale delizarono il mio ritorno; ma sentivo chiaramente l'effetto sconvolgente di quel mostruoso contrasto. La terribilità contrapposta al bello, il bello alla terribilità: l'uno e l'altra si annullano a vicenda, e ne risulta un sentimento d'indifferenza. I napoletani sarebbero senza dubbio diversi se non si sentissero costretti fra Dio e Satana."

[12] Ibid., 67: "Gran peccato che gli scavi non sian stati eseguiti da minatori tedeschi con un piano ordinato, giacché certamente, in quel brigantesco frugacchiare alla cieca, parecchie mirabili antichità sono andate perse."

[13] See ibid., 103–105, 108–109.

1802.[14] Her writings about her extended residence in Naples – in fact, not significantly after Goethe – recount similar themes: the visual splendor of the capital often intertwined with references to antiquity and nights in the famed theaters of Naples. Her first recorded impressions capture the sense of wonder:

> It is difficult to express the emotion I experienced while entering the city. The sun so dazzling, the expanse of sea, the islands that one notices in the distance, Vesuvius from which rose in that very moment a large column of smoke, and finally all those people so alive, so loud, so different from what one sees in Rome, which seems to be a thousand miles away![15]

Vigée-Lebrun also found herself immersed within a cosmopolitan city, whose diplomatic sector vied for her artistic talents from the very first day. The Russian Ambassador, Count Pavel Scawronski (1757–1793), a noted patron of the arts, invited her to dine at his residence on the evening of her arrival and this began a close personal and professional rapport with his family. Not to be outdone, the British Ambassador, Sir William Hamilton, approached Vigée-Lebrun at virtually the same moment to seek commissions of his then consort and future wife, Emma Hart, imploring the artist "the courtesy of not painting any other portrait in the city first than that of a stupendous woman, whom he presented to me on the spot."[16] This intense competition for Vigée-Lebrun's services reflected the larger, diverse artistic climate of Naples, in which patronage of music, theater, and dance, as well as the visual arts, played a critical role in defining not only political and social standing but also influence. The premium placed on patronage reflected the importance accorded to it by the sovereigns, Ferdinand and Maria Carolina, who developed a highly productive association with Vigée-Lebrun.

Vigée-Lebrun's letters also divulge how music permeated the culture of Naples. Describing a passage by boat to Capri at night under a "splendid, clear moon," she recounts that her hosts had "hired two musicians, one to sing and the other to play the guitar."[17] This seemingly curious

[14] Fernando Mazzocca, ed., *Viaggio in Italia di una donna artista. I "Souvenirs" di Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun 1789–1792* (Milan: Electa, 2004), 7–29.

[15] Ibid., 106: "Mi è difficile esprimere l'emozione che provai entrando in città. Quel sole talmente brillante, quella distesa di mare, quelle isole che so scorgono in lontananza, quel Vesuvio dal quale si alzava in quel momento una grossa colonna di fumo, e infine tutta quella gente talmente viva, talmente rumorosa, talmente diversa da quella che si vedeva a Roma, che pareva di essere a mille miglia di distanza!"

[16] Ibid., 112: "mi chiede il favore di fare prima di ogni altro ritratto in quella città quello di una stupenda donna che mi presenta lì per lì."

[17] Ibid., 126: "Essi avevano assoldato due musici, di cui l'uno doveva cantare e l'altro suonare la chitarra."

arrangement was not by any means unusual in the city of music, as the artist elsewhere mentions the presence of musicians on visits to the islands of Ischia and Procida with the Hamiltons, as part of the ambassador's formal retinue.[18] Vigée-Lebrun's interest in music led to the creation of the famed portrait of Giovanni Paisiello,[19] who had recently returned from an extended appointment in St. Petersburg. At that time, Paisiello was recognized as the leading opera composer in Europe, and he had come back to Naples in the personal service of Ferdinand and Maria Carolina. Vigée-Lebrun comments, "Finding myself in Italy, one can imagine how I could not neglect to find a music teacher for my daughter. I also took lessons from him."[20] And in writing about the peculiar habits of this musician, and of Neapolitans in general, she reflects (although clearly tinged by hyperbole) that, at nine o'clock in the evening, "almost all of Naples is in the theater"; hence, the streets are deserted.[21] Many of Vigée-Lebrun's observations parallel those of Goethe: a fascination with the quotidian sights, sounds, and communities of the capital and a city teeming with energy, contradictions, and a vibrant artistic culture.

In a similar manner, there was no shortage of English travelers (famous and otherwise) who visited Naples and recorded their impressions. In the aftermath of the Seven Years' War, the English descended on the Italian peninsula and were by many accounts the most numerous visitors; they also created a "tour code."[22] Yet not all visitors, especially those English ones, were complimentary of or pleased by Naples. Hester Lynch Piozzi (1741–1821) possessed an often acerbic perspective on her journeys through Italy, especially when writing of Naples. After the obligatory opening remarks recounting her impression of seeing Vesuvius for the first time (notably as it spewed fire and lava), she has an interesting exchange with a Franciscan friar about the mountain and its spectacle. When she asked him to confirm that it was indeed the famous volcano, he replied, "Yes, that's our mountain, which throws up money for us, by calling foreigners to see the extraordinary effects of so surprising a phenomenon."[23] Whether intentionally or not, Piozzi's faithful documentation of the friar's retort accurately summarizes the importance and interest of the waves of British travelers who came to Italy during the golden age of the

[18] Ibid., 131. [19] Ibid., 141–142.
[20] Ibid., 144: "Trovandomi in Italia, si può bene immaginare come non avessi trascurato di darle un maestro di musica. Io stessa prendevo lezioni da lui."
[21] Ibid., 144: "pressoché tutta Napoli a teatro." [22] De Seta, "Grand Tour," 14.
[23] Hester Lynch Piozzi, *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany*, vol. 2 (London: A. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1789), 1–2.

Tour, between 1764 and 1796. The vast British network stretched across the Italian peninsula (from Horace Mann in Florence to Hamilton in Naples), seeking not only political influence but also financial gain, based on the considerable sums invested in the purchase of art and antiquities. Piozzi echoed many of the sentiments of her fellow tourists, although she was perhaps more severe and censorious. Her critical reviews of Pompeii and Herculaneum, her fascination with the lazzaroni, her disgust with the Grotta del Cane, and her analysis of the class distinctions among the nobility serve as a prelude to her assessments of Ferdinand and Maria Carolina, as well as of the acclaimed theatrical dramas performed in the Teatro di San Carlo. Regarding the king, she notes, "They know the worst of him is that he shoots at the birds, dances with the girls, eats macaroni, and helps himself to it with his fingers."[24] She concludes that the local operas, especially the comedies, are "more rubbish than marble,"[25] an obvious reference to the antiquarian fever that gripped many of her fellow citizens and travelers. Nevertheless, Piozzi is unflinching in her praise for the British Ambassador Hamilton and his expertise on Vesuvius, the crown jewel in the tourist trade, recounting,

> Sir William Hamilton's courage, learning, and perfect skill in these matters, is more people's theme here than the Volcano itself. Bartolomeo, the Cyclops of Vesuvius as he is called, studies its effects and operations too with much attention and philosophical exactness, relating the adventures he has had with our minister on the mountain to every Englishman that goes up, with great success.[26]

Hamilton, as alluded to in the preceding quote, was the most important diplomatic and cultural mediator in late eighteenth-century Naples. He arrived in 1764 and remained for thirty-four years, until the French invasion of 1798. He maintained a high profile as a cultural entrepreneur, spanning his interests in archaeology, anthropology, conservation, art, and, of course, music.[27] His centrality to Neapolitan artistic and social life was eclipsed only by the royal court. No less a writer than Goethe praised him as "a man of universal taste," and the ambassador's residence, the Palazzo Sessa, became a meeting place for artists, writers, musicians, and the international community as a whole.[28] Hamilton was the leader of an

[24] Ibid., 25. [25] Ibid., 76. [26] Ibid., 62.

[27] Carlo Knight, *Hamilton a Napoli. Cultura, svaghi, civiltà di una grande capitale europea* (Naples: Electa, 2003), 31–56.

[28] Goethe's portrayed the Palazzo Sessa as "indescribably beautiful and the view that one enjoys from the room on the corner, perhaps singular. At its base lies the sea, directly ahead Capri, to the right Posillipo, next to it the royal promenade, to the left an old, former Jesuit college,

English network in Naples that maintained a vibrant social life, and whose members complemented the ambassador's social pursuits. In particular, Lord Fortrose maintained a keen interest in music, while Lord Dalrymple preferred theater, and Lord Tylney, gambling.[29] Hamilton's favor with the Neapolitan monarchs helped to reorient the kingdom into a long alliance with Great Britain. This personal access also helped the ambassador to receive unprecedented entrée to the antiquarian riches of the south, not to mention their excavation and export licenses, which allowed him to amass a personal fortune.

The siren lure of Naples attracted a notable crop of musicians and those interested from nonspecialist perspectives, whether simply cultural or academic (such as Charles de Brosses, Charles Burney, and J. J. Lalande). Henry Swinburne aptly assessed this phenomena later in the century, declaring that the city was "the nursery of musical professors: a school, where the greatest masters have imbibed their principles, and acquired that knowledge of composition, which has enchanted the ears of all Europe."[30] Earlier in the century, luminaries such as Johann Joachim Quantz and Johann Adolf Hasse came to the capital city to complete their formation, as well as being drawn by the renown of its theaters.[31] While Burney's *History* became the standard historiographic portrait of Naples at the end of the century, despite at times displaying clear biases, a body of secondary sources, primarily personal letters and chronicles, helps to complete the representation of musical life in the city. Notable among these are the diary of Aldabert Gyrowetz and the letters of the Austrian attaché Norbert Hadrava (both examined in Chapter 6). Contemporary periodicals (*Gazzetta Universale*, *Notizie del Mondo*, *Diario Ordinario*) contribute to an understanding of the vivid artistic life of Naples that captivated multiple generations, dutifully reporting the musical events sponsored by Ferdinand and Maria Carolina, in addition to those within the burgeoning diplomatic circuit. And, as noted earlier, music played a part in virtually every account of the Grand Tour penned by the British, as well as by the French on their

further south the coast of Sorrento extending to the Capo Minerva." ("quanto mai delizioso, e la vista che si gode da una stanza ad angolo, forse unica. Ai piedi il mare, in faccia Capri, a destra Posillipo, a fianco la passeggiata della Villa Reale, a sinistra un vecchio edificio di gesuiti, più in là la costiera di Sorrento fino al capo Minerva.") As quoted in ibid., 35.

[29] Ibid., 91.

[30] Henry Swinburne, *Travels in the Two Sicilies, 1777–1780*, vol. 2 (London: P. Elmsly, 1783), 59.

[31] For an overview of early eighteenth-century Naples, see Daniel Heartz, *Music in European Capitals: The Galant Style, 1720–1780* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2003), 67–170.

"Voyage d'Italie"[32] and the Germans following their "Italienische Reise."[33] The shared foundation of these sources was the search for the origins of Western civilization. The broad contexts and firsthand insights of all of these materials promoted an understanding of Naples as the continent hurtled toward civil unrest and, ultimately, revolution. These writings underlined and elucidated the city's status and attraction as a capital for culture, one celebrated most for its natural beauty, as a cradle of past societies and, of course, music, the focus of this monograph.

The present inquiry, however, concerns a largely unstudied sector of Neapolitan musical culture: the cultivation of instrumental genres. The reasons for the lack of attention to instrumental music within scholarship remain varied but are primarily historiographic and practical, the latter being attributed to the difficult past of war in Naples and the concomitant problems of preservation. Nevertheless, the historical evidence demonstrates that Neapolitan instrumental music played a significant part in the cultural life of the city, thanks in large part to the interest displayed by Maria Carolina and Ferdinand as they assumed leadership of the kingdom. The formative years of the queen as she advanced to the throne of the southern kingdom explain her difficult personality as well as her astute artistic pedigree. They also provide an excellent preface to the focus on politics, patronage, and artistic culture at the heart of the cultivation of instrumental music in late eighteenth-century Naples.

The Formation of a Queen

Maria Carolina's early years in Naples (1768–1776) were marked by a strategic acquiescence choreographed in detail by her family circle (her mother, Maria Theresa, and her two brothers, Joseph II and Leopold), as well as by Austrian political advisors (most significantly Ambassador Kaunitz and Count Rosenberg). From the outset of her marriage, Maria Carolina was immersed not only in the social, cultural, and political crossfire between Naples and Austria, but also in that between Spain and

[32] See, above all, Jean Claude Richard, Abbé de Saint-Non, *Voyage pittoresque ou description des royaumes de Naples et de Sicile* (Paris: de l'Imprimerie de Clousier, 1781–1786).

[33] Ilaria Bignamini, "The Grand Tour: Open Issues," in *Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy*, ed. Wilton and Bignamini, 31–36.