

# An oboe concerto in Lund formed from three operatic arias by Antonio Lotti

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## New works from old

There are three main ways in which a new musical composition can be forged from one or more existing ones. The most familiar, which can be succinctly described as *recomposition*, occurs when the composer or another person retains a larger or smaller portion of the parent work essentially unaltered, but substitutes newly conceived material for the rest. For the period under discussion, the first half of the eighteenth century, a good example of recomposition is Antonio Vivaldi's ripieno concerto in G minor RV 153, which underwent at least three successive revisions after its initial creation.<sup>1</sup> In this instance, the primary material remained intact, making the alterations invisible to anyone merely reading the incipits of the three movements. A quite different technique of recomposition was cultivated by Vivaldi's Venetian contemporary Tomaso Albinoni, who preferred to retain the subsidiary, episodic material in its original form while inventing new primary material. A striking instance of this procedure is a sinfonia in A major existing in dual versions (*Si 3* and *Si 3a*).<sup>2</sup> By this cunning means, which inevitably entailed the creation of new incipits, Albinoni effectively – and probably very deliberately – disguised the relationship between the two versions. Which was the earlier remains undetermined. In many cases, the urge towards recomposition was prompted less by a desire to improve on the original version (although that could certainly be a by-product) than by a change in context, function, genre or scoring.

The second form of change is describable as *arrangement*. Here, the essential musical substance remains intact – each new bar usually corresponds to an old bar – but the number or nature of the parts is altered. At its simplest the change may consist of little more than the replacement of an original instrument, voice or literary text by a new one, as occurred when Vivaldi's oboe concerto in D minor RV 454 was pressed into service as RV 236, the ninth concerto for violin contained in his Op. 8, the celebrated collection entitled *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'inventione*. Arrangement and recomposition are readily combinable, with either the first or the second process acting as a trigger for the other. Thus, Vivaldi's *introduzione* (a species of short solo motet) RV

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed commentary on the different versions of this concerto is found in Ryom, 1977, pp. 413–419.

<sup>2</sup> *Si 3* is preserved in manuscript in A-Wn, EM 109b, while *Si 3a* is the unattributed third work in the anthology *VI Sonates ou concerts à 4, 5 & 6 parties composées par Mrs. Bernardi, Torelli & autres fameux auteurs [...] livre premier*, brought out in Amsterdam by Estienne Roger around 1709–1712. Regarding this connection, see Talbot, 1990, pp. 154–155.

640, *Longe mala, umbrae, terrores*, is based on an earlier, full-length homonymous motet, RV 629, its compositional changes having been provoked by the altered genre, modifications to the literary text and the replacement of soprano voice by alto.

Finally, we have the phenomenon – probably commoner during the first half of the eighteenth century than at any other time in musical history – of the *pasticcio*: a multi-movement composition stitched together, usually by a third party, from elements (generally complete movements) taken from two or more original works, which are almost always by different composers.<sup>3</sup> Today, the use of the term ‘pasticcio’ is most familiar from their operatic manifestations,<sup>4</sup> which at one point, towards the middle of that century, saw them compete in popularity with revivals of operas by a single composer. During the same period, however, they were almost as common in the domain of the solo sonata, their production being stimulated by the constant demand for new repertoire among amateur players of the more fashionable instruments such as violin, recorder and (predominantly in the 1730s and 1740s) traverso and cello.<sup>5</sup>

One perhaps surprising feature of such pasticcios is how often their movements extracted from multiple works by possibly multiple composers appear to cohere (in style, key structure and thematic content) just as well as their purpose-written counterparts by a single composer. The ability to construct a cogent pasticcio was of course not a skill comparable with that of writing an original composition *ex novo*, but it was nonetheless an art in its own right, and one that could be practised successfully not only by professional musicians in public view but also, more privately, by music teachers, copyists and collectors with little or no training in composition. The pinnacle of what one could term ‘pasticcio culture’ was probably reached at the Hofkapelle in Dresden, where under the leadership of Johann Georg Pisendel, concertmaster from 1730 to 1755, considerable quantities of hybrid sonatas and concertos of this type were produced by and for the orchestra’s members.<sup>6</sup> As occurs elsewhere, Dresden instrumental pasticcios typically forgo adding any composer’s name: indeed, the absence of a name can in certain circumstances be a preliminary indication that a work is a pasticcio. And, as the main part of this article will reveal, being a pasticcio certainly does not preclude the added presence of arrangement and even recomposition.

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<sup>3</sup> Composers themselves can fashion what are, morphologically speaking, pasticcios comprising movements taken exclusively from their own compositions. However, these works are generally not labelled as such, probably because in the common perception the act of making a pasticcio implies intervention by a person other than (and usually unknown to) the composer or composers. A perfect example of an author-generated pasticcio conforming to this description is another anonymous oboe concerto in G minor, S-L, Saml. Engelhart 468, which turns out to be a composite of the tenth and eleventh concertos, both in A minor, of Giuseppe Valentini’s *Concerti grossi*, Op. 7. Valentini’s authorship is confirmed by a small quantity of connective material added specially for the pasticcio, which displays characteristic features of his highly idiosyncratic musical style.

<sup>4</sup> A typical instance of this narrow definition is Curtis Price’s entry ‘Pasticcio’ in *Grove Music Online*.

<sup>5</sup> On such pasticcios, see Talbot, 2021, pp. 20–46.

<sup>6</sup> There is so far no comprehensive study of this ‘pasticcio culture’ at Dresden, but several instances are noted in Lupiáñez Ruiz, 2021, *passim*.

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The anonymous oboe concerto that forms the present article's subject is remarkable for a pasticcio in three distinct ways: first, in taking its constituent movements from a wholly different genre (opera); second, in containing music by a single composer – in this instance, the Venetian master Antonio Lotti (1667–1740); third, in having been conceived and executed, in all likelihood, by the composer himself.

### **The anonymous concerto in Lund**

It would be improper not to begin this section with a word of thanks to two vital tools for research into the authorship, location and concordances of pre-1800 musical works. The first is the online RISM catalogue and especially the database of musical incipits accessible from its 'Virtual Keyboard'. The second is the more recently established ALVIN portal containing digital reproductions of, and information on, sources of older music held in major Swedish libraries and collections. Their aid is particularly invaluable when an investigator's intention is not to consolidate or expand what is at least partially known already, but rather to engage in a more open-ended and discovery-oriented mode of research that results in new findings. Such has been the case for me in the present instance, where the making of the discovery arose from what could be described as targeted browsing.

To this end, the many anonymous manuscripts of instrumental works in Swedish sources whose authorship has not yet been established constituted an ideal starting point. One such manuscript transmits a concerto in G minor for oboe, two violins, viola and 'basso' (the catch-all term for bass and contrabass instruments plus keyboard and other continuo instruments) in the Wenster family collection at the University Library in Lund (formerly known as 'Wensters Samling' and today as 'Samling Wenster'), the music of which was donated to the university in three instalments between 1832, 1836 and 1846 by the local cathedral organist and university music director Emanuel Wenster (1785–1856). Emanuel's father Christian Wenster the younger (1735–1823) had held the same posts. The latter's father Christian Wenster the elder (1704–1784), the most active composer and music collector among the members of the dynasty, started his career in as a military bandsman and civic musician (*stadsmusikant*) in Landskrona and Lund before gaining his first post as an organist in Kristianstad in 1730. Thereafter, he operated concurrently as organist and civic musician in Ystad and later (from 1741) Karlshamn. As a bandsman, Christian the elder specialized as an oboist, a fact reflected in the very large quantity of music for or with oboe in the Wenster collection. His own father, Christian Christiansson Wenster (ca. 1680–1727), was similarly a bandsman and civic musician in Karlskrona, as well as being an oboist.<sup>7</sup> Since the manuscript in question does not appear to be a holograph and contains (unlike many Wenster manuscripts) no marks of ownership, there is no way of telling whether it was acquired

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<sup>7</sup> In reference works Christian Christiansson is generally described as an immigrant to Sweden from the Northern Netherlands (United Provinces). No documentary evidence to support this belief has been adduced, and present-day opinion found on genealogical websites favours the view that he was a native of Karlskrona.

by Emanuel's great-grandfather near the end of his life (for reasons to be explained, it cannot have been copied before 1718) and was then inherited in 1727 by his grandfather, or, alternatively, came from another source into the latter's possession around the same time or later.

The anonymous concerto, shelfmarked 'Saml. Wenster L:10', is a set of five parts in the conventional oblong quarto format with hand-ruled staves. The Basso part, which acts in the customary way as a folder, is a bifolio; the other parts are single folios. The title page of the Basso, reproduced as Illustration 1, reads (ignoring library marks): 'Concerto a 5 | G.b. | Hoboe Principale. | Violino Primo. | Violino Secundo. | Viola. | et Basso Continuo[.]'<sup>8</sup> The last-named part is unfigured. This state is very common in sets of manuscript parts from this period preserved in Swedish sources.<sup>9</sup> One must remember that such parts were primarily archival copies, which in performance would most probably have been supplemented or even replaced by parts in the personal possession of players, to which figures for the continuo part might well have been added.

The present parts were definitely copied out by a Swede. Since the work belongs to an Italian genre, nearly all the lettering is in roman characters, even when the language changes to Swedish. This applies to the direction 'Final' (equivalent to Italian 'Fine') accompanying the fermatas that signify the end of da capo repetitions and to the direction 'pauseras' ('is paused') at bar 15 of the last movement on the *verso* of the Violino Secundo part; this instruction appears in the middle of the penultimate staff in Illustration 2. At the same point in the music – the start of a long, continuous passage for solo oboe and continuo alone leading to the closing ritornello of the A section – the compound rest in question is notated very precisely in the three upper string parts as a series of individual rests totalling 31 bars. Probably at a later stage, perhaps in connection with an imminent performance, a second Swedish-speaking scribe decided to bring the Violino Secundo into line. He added an extra barline just beyond the original one, extending and expanding the two barlines upwards to form a 'bubble' (as a modern cartoonist would call it), inside which he wrote '31 takter' in German-style (*nygotisk kursiv*) script.<sup>10</sup>

The notational accuracy and neatness of the parts are very deficient. Both the musical sense and a comparison with concordant sources transmitting the parent works (the concerto itself appears not to be preserved elsewhere) reveal not only instances of the very familiar *Terzverschreibung* (the placing of notes a third too high or too low) but also a multitude of displacements by a single note, such misreadings commonly arising from ambiguities in the positioning of note heads (on a line or in a space) in the music copied.

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<sup>8</sup> The extra-large capital C opening the title contains what looks like a Greek cross with rounded tips in its interior space. Could this be a form of monogram (for the collector) punning on the forename 'Christian'? The possibility would be worth investigating further.

<sup>9</sup> These include the G minor oboe concerto in the same library (Saml. Engelhart 468) cited earlier in note 3.

<sup>10</sup> That this scribe was a different person from the main one is shown by the different shape for the digit '3' he employed and by his switch to *nygotisk kursiv*.

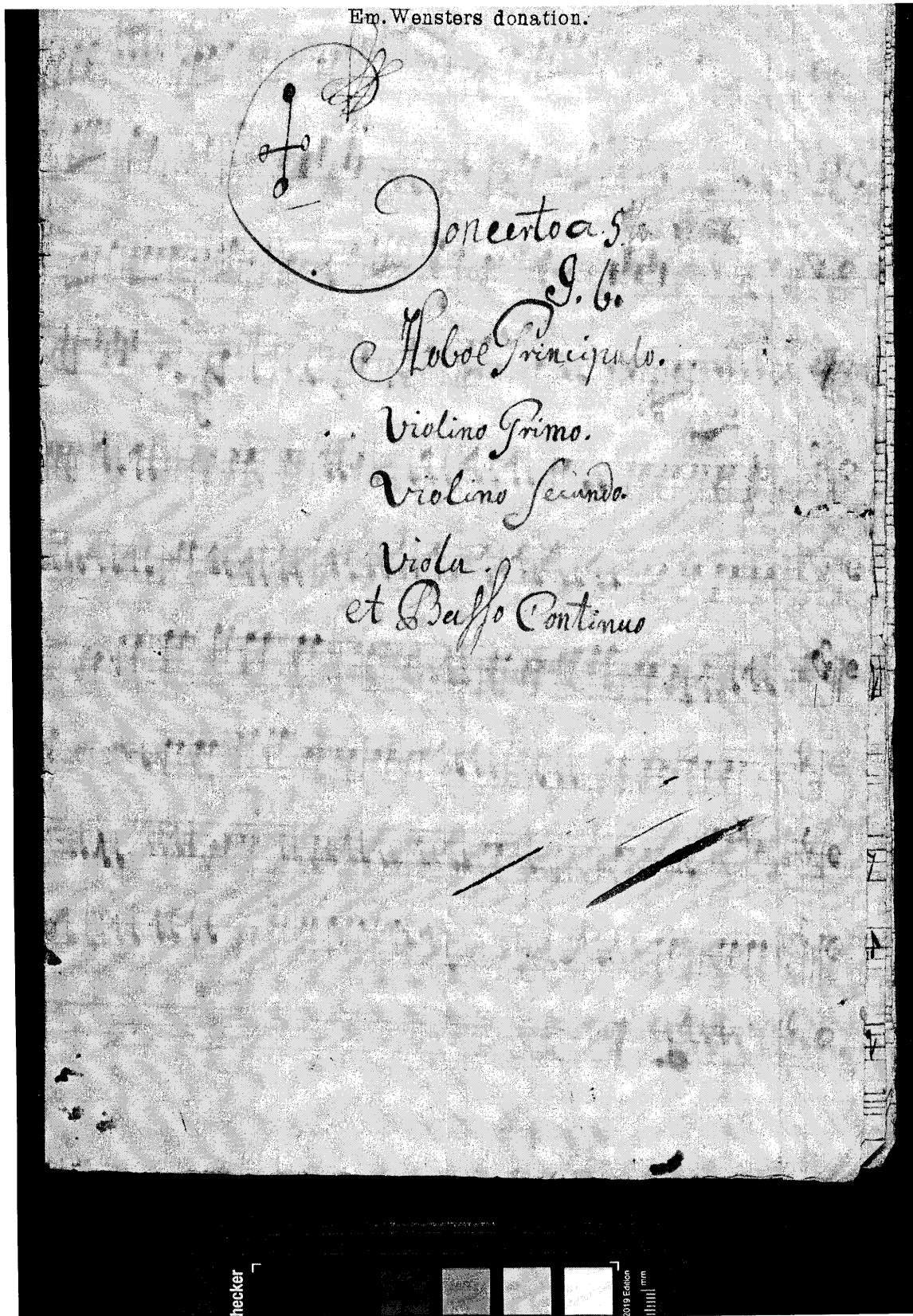


Illustration 1. Title page of the Basso part of S-L, Saml. Wenster L:10.





Illustration 2. Second page of the Violino Secundo part of S-L, Saml. Wenster L:10.

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There is an important conclusion to draw from this: since the known sources of the parent movements that are complete in all their parts (none of them preserved in Swedish sources) are accurately enough executed not to have led to so many errors of this type, the exemplar used by the copyist of the Lund parts was most probably an untidy score or set of parts for the derived ‘concerto’ version of the three movements rather than a source transmitting their unmodified ‘aria’ originals. The question then becomes: was this lost exemplar created in Sweden or in Germany, the most likely other country? No firm decision on this matter is currently possible, but it is worth pointing out (anticipating information given in the next section) that since the parent movements were composed in Dresden (or, in the case of the earlier of the two operas, in Venice just before the departure for Dresden of the composer, Lotti, and the librettist for both operas, Antonio Maria Luchini), the adaptation was almost certainly made in Germany. One should also bear in mind that the circulation of musicians and musical materials between the Protestant states of Germany and the Scandinavian kingdoms was very lively during the early eighteenth century, as the Wenster collection and similar Swedish ones, such as the Engelhart and Kraus collections (likewise in Lund), more than amply testify.<sup>11</sup>

### Lotti’s three arias

no.	aria	opera/scene	date	character	singer
1	Quegl’occhi amabili	<i>Giove in Argo</i> / 1.2	1717, 25 October	Vespetta	Livia Nannini Costantini
2	Vile e debole, il cuor da te non chiede	<i>Ascanio</i> / II.14	1718, Carnival	Silvia	Santa Stella Lotti
3	Agitata da spaventanti	<i>Ascanio</i> / III.11	1718, Carnival	Silvia	Santa Stella Lotti

**Table 1.** Details of the three arias arranged as movements 1–3 of the oboe concerto in S-L, Saml. Wenster L:10.

Table 1 gives basic data for the three da capo arias plucked from two operas for Dresden by Lotti that with the minimal amount of arrangement became, in the same sequence, the three movements of the concerto. Both operas contained three acts and were partnered by comic intermezzi. *Giove in Argo*, classified by Luchini as a ‘melodrama pastorale’, was the lighter of the two works. *Ascanio*, which followed it at the end of the same autumn-carnival season, is described merely as a ‘drama’; it was on a subject taken from classical history. A little unusually, *Giove in Argo* uses the same two

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<sup>11</sup> Indeed, an important part of the collection of Christian Wenster the elder passed on to him from his immediate predecessor as organist at Karlshamn, Gottfried Lindemann, who had come to Sweden from Stettin (today, Szczecin) in 1719. On Lindemann, see especially Davidsson, 1986, p. 144, and Snyder, 1987, p. 326. The copy text for the present concerto could possibly have reached Sweden via him, although that eventuality seems rather unlikely, given Lindemann’s apparent non-involvement with concertos.

characters and singers for minor (but not comic) roles in the opera and principal roles in the intermezzi. Vespetta, in the first aria, is portrayed in a lively (and appropriately ‘vespine’) manner, but appears there as a lady-in-waiting and confidante to her mistress rather than as a participant in knockabout humour together with her male counterpart, Milo. Livia Costantini, née Nannini, was one of the few singers of the time equally at home in serious and comic roles, which was probably a factor behind her recruitment by the company engaged to perform at the Saxon-Polish court.<sup>12</sup> Her vocal compass, defined as e'-a", was taken carefully into account by Lotti in his composition of this opening aria for her.<sup>13</sup>

The second and third arias were both written for Lotti's wife Santa Lotti, née Stella, who was a leading soprano with a compass not dissimilar to Nannini's. She was accustomed to take prima donna roles, such as that of the heroine Silvia in *Ascanio*. This accounts for the fact that these two arias are a little more elaborate vocally than the first one.

The first and third arias are in G minor, notated by Lotti in the old (seventeenth-century) fashion with a single flat in the key signature. They form a frame for the second aria, which is in the contrasting key of E-flat major, notated with two flats in the key signature.<sup>14</sup> As is usual in Swedish sources from quite early on in the eighteenth century, the Lund parts for the concerto version modernize the key signature of the outer movements by adding a flat, although the two flats of the central movement are not increased similarly to three.<sup>15</sup>

Of the many surviving complete and partial full scores of *Giove in Argo*, the most useful for present purposes is a full and complete non-autograph score in the SLUB in Dresden, which was seemingly prepared as an archival copy for the royal library just after the original production in 1717.<sup>16</sup> For *Ascanio*, there exists a similar score in the same location.<sup>17</sup> Each of the arias in Table 1 contains exactly the same number of bars as the concerto movement based on it. This is understandable, because the conversion to

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<sup>12</sup> Livia Costantini earned the nickname ‘La Polacchina’ (‘the Little Polish Woman’) in tribute to her service at the Polish court.

<sup>13</sup> See Durante and Dean, 1992. Singers of the period sometimes publicized their vocal compass rather in the same way that film actresses did their ‘vital statistics’ in the 1950s. This was naturally very helpful to the composers who wrote their singing parts.

<sup>14</sup> The relationship between G minor and its mediant major key of E-flat (in preference to the more usual relative major key, which is B-flat major) is describable as a ‘privileged’ relationship in that it relates to specific pitches and is therefore non-transposable. See the relevant discussion in Talbot, 2006, p. 115.

<sup>15</sup> Predictably, given the carelessness in the copying of the concerto parts, the latter are full of redundant flats as well as missing naturals pertaining to the note E. It could well be that the Lund parts were the first source in the transmission of the first and third movements (in either their ‘aria’ or their ‘concerto’ configuration) to modify the key signature.

<sup>16</sup> D-Dl, Mus.2159-F-3 (digitized with open access). *Giove in Argo* was revived in Dresden with only small modifications in 1719.

<sup>17</sup> D-Dl, Mus.2159-F-5 (digitized with open access).



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make a concerto consisted essentially of: (a) the transfer of the soprano line, now textless, to the oboe at the same pitch; (b) the lightening, in selected places, of single-line accompaniments to the soloist; and (c) the doubling by the oboe of the unison violins in the ritornellos (except in the second movement). Otherwise, there are just a few tiny tweaks, such as the insertion of a passing note or the shortening of a note (with a compensatory rest), that in their very discreet way could be said to constitute genuine recomposition.

### Structural details

Each aria is in the classic ABA form where the reprise of A in its entirety is not written out but simply indicated with ‘Da capo’ after the final bar. The A section’s conventional pair of vocal periods framed by identical introductory and concluding ritornellos – the first modulating away from the tonic and the second reinstating it – is treated in a slightly different way in each aria. In ‘Quegl’occhi amabili’ the two periods are separated, in bars 37–41, by a much-shortened repeat of the ritornello. This would be conventional except for one fact: the miniature ritornello is unexpectedly back in the home key of G minor rather than in the key of B-flat major reached in the first vocal period, as would be normal.

In ‘Vile e debole’, where, unlike in the first and third arias, the A section’s two vocal periods exceptionally feature a full ‘a 4’ accompaniment to the voice, with separate parts for the violins and a direction to all the strings to perform pizzicato throughout, it is, unusually, the framing and intermediate ritornellos that have the less complex texture on account of the non-participation there of the singer.

The third aria, ‘Agitata da spaventi’, shapes the two vocal periods (respectively, bars 16–31 and 32–46) as a near-symmetrical binary structure with double repeats that has no intermediate ritornello but instead, within the first period, features the so-called ‘double *Devise*’, where an initial motto phrase for the soloist is presented twice, with a brief return to ritornello material between the statements. In this instance, shown in Example 1 (bar 20), the very severely cut-down ritornello, consisting merely of a single bar, injects a pleasing and unexpected asymmetry into an otherwise quadratic phrase structure.

All the B sections are constructed in normal fashion as single, tonally open vocal periods without ritornellos, cadencing finally in a related key (relative minor in the first and third arias, dominant in the second one).

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of four systems of music. The first system starts at bar 16 and ends at bar 19. The second system starts at bar 20 and ends at bar 23. The third system starts at bar 24 and ends at bar 27. The fourth system starts at bar 28 and ends at bar 31. The vocal line is written in a soprano clef and the piano accompaniment is written in a bass clef. The lyrics are: 'A - gi - ta - ta da spa - ven - ti', 'Son qual na - ve e - spo - sto ai', 'ven - ti In un mar tut - to pro - cel - la,', and 'tut - to pro - cel - la.' The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and slurs.

Example 1. *Ascanio*, aria ‘Agitata da spaventi’ (Silvia, III.11), bars 16–31.

## Textural details

Both the first and the third aria, which are in quick tempo, place the first and second violins in unison throughout.<sup>18</sup> This practice, very current in the orchestral practice of the time, imparts a lean, athletic cast to the texture and ensures that even in one-to-a-part performance the treble line has the weight proper to orchestral writing. (There are of course also side benefits: speed of composition and notation plus a possible saving of paper.) In the case of the first aria, written for a subordinate character in a pastoral dramatic work, the sparse texture carries an unmistakable and certainly intended connotation of naïveté very similar to that found in many of Vivaldi’s arias in his dramatic works and solo motets of the 1710s and beyond.

In contrast, ‘Vile e debole’ is in 12/8 metre and ‘Largo’ tempo, possessing the classic character of a siciliana. Typical for this dance type is the soothing parallel motion in thirds and sixths of two treble parts (see Example 3). Accordingly, in this aria Lotti assigns a separate line to the second violin throughout. However, rather than being fully independent, the vocal line maintains a heterophonic relationship with the first (occasionally, second) violin line, dipping in and out of simple doubling. This works well particularly because of the pizzicato timbre of the strings, which gives the vocal line

<sup>18</sup> ‘Quegl’occhi amabili’ has no tempo direction in the sources, but its 2/4 metre and vigorous character would justify an ‘Allegro’ marking; ‘Agitata da spaventi’ is marked ‘Presto’.

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unchallenged prominence. (The same inequality will recur in the concerto after the conversion from vocal to oboe timbre.)<sup>19</sup>

### Illustration of the text

VI 1+2  
Vla  
VESPETTA  
Basso

6  
6  
13  
13

*p*  
*p*

Que - gl'oc - chi a - ma - bi-

**Example 2.** *Giove in Argo*, aria 'Quegl'occhi amabili' (Vespetta, I.2), bars 1-19.

As one would expect, each of the arias expresses the character singing and the dramatic situation. Lotti achieves this simply but subtly. Scene 2 of Act I of *Giove in Argo* opens in woodland with a dialogue in recitative between princess Iside (daughter of Inaco, king of the Argives, who has been killed, and his kingdom usurped, by Licaone, the tyrant of Arcadia) and her loyal confidante Vespetta. Iside is tearful over her father's death but hopeful of a successful marriage. Smarter than her mistress, Vespetta (recognizable as a precursor of Mozart's Despina) urges her to set tears aside in order to accomplish her

<sup>19</sup> Mention should be made in passing of a solo motet borrowing the music of 'Vile e debole' that is preserved in the collection of the cathedral of St Vitus in Prague (CZ-Pak, MS 852). The choice of this aria as the basis of a contrafactum suggests some degree of popularity.

purpose. Vespetta's positivity and alertness are conveyed by Lotti through a *détaché* manner of string writing, with plentiful staccato wedges and abrupt transitions between crotchet, quaver and semiquaver motion (and similarly between stepwise melodic progression and vigorous leaps). Example 2, showing the aria's opening ritornello, sets the scene perfectly.

In the emotion-filled Scene 14 of Act II of *Ascanio*, the heroine, Silvia, confesses to the eponymous hero that it was she, rather than a different person accused of the act, who had earlier intended to assassinate him. At the last moment, she had found herself incapable of carrying out her purpose (arising from a blood feud) on account of an involuntary love for him. She throws herself on his mercy but avows her willingness to suffer the death penalty for her previous intention. In his text for her exit aria Luchini captures well the lachrymose but also courageous, defiant but nevertheless resigned, state of Silvia's mind:

Vile e debole, il cuor da te non chiede	Lowly and weak, my heart demands
Un raggio di pietà nella mia morte.	no scintilla of pity from you at my death.
Se alla costanza in me dar vuoi mercede	If you wish to reward my constancy, hasten
Affretta il colpo in questo sen già forte.	the thrust into my breast, earlier so valiant.

Lotti's choice of E-flat major for this aria is well calculated. Although the affective properties of this key are far from uniform in the descriptions given by theorists and commentators of the period, that given by Johann Mattheson in 1713 in *Das neu-eröffnete Orchestre* seems particularly apposite.<sup>20</sup> In his words, '[It] has much of the pathetic in it. It is only concerned with serious and plaintive things; it is also bitterly hostile to all lasciviousness'. The mellowness traditionally associated with this key in music for (or including) stringed instruments is also supported by an acoustic consideration: the fact that the open strings coinciding with notes of the primary triads fall on these triads' third rather than their fifth or root.<sup>21</sup> 'Plaintive' is an accurate choice of word that makes a particularly happy connection with Meredith Little Ellis's statement in the *New Grove* that 'from the 18th century to the 20th the siciliana was associated with pastoral scenes and melancholy emotions'.<sup>22</sup> The relative textural and harmonic density of this movement, with its deft little chromatic touches, enhance the bittersweet affect.

In the third aria, 'Agitata da spaventi', Silvia (in Scene 11 of Act III) is fearful not for her own life but for that of her supposed father Mezenzio (she is in reality Ascanio's own sister!). Its text employs the well-worn simile of a sailor buffeted by a storm who is anxious to reach the safety of a port. Lotti expresses the singer's breathless nervousness effectively by constantly pausing and restarting the rhythmic motion (see Example 1) and occasionally introducing syncopation. In the B section, where the singer for the first time raises the prospect of arriving safely in port ('spero aver il porto'), a slight calming of the

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in the author's English translation in Steblin, 2002, p. 245.

<sup>21</sup> On this point, see Stübe, 1997, p. 116.

<sup>22</sup> Ellis, 2001, p. 350.

mood, signalled by a more regular rhythmic motion, is perceptible, but this quickly passes, since the situation remains perilous.

By contemporary standards, Lotti's musical illustration of the text in his operatic arias is restrained and suggestive rather than overt. The 'painting' of individual words and phrases is generally eschewed – a fact that allows him, for instance, to carry on much of the motivic work of his A sections into the B sections without excessive regard for any changes in the imagery or mood of the text. As we shall see shortly, this rather abstract (rather than pictorial) musical character becomes an important asset when the leap is made from vocal to instrumental music.

## Da capo form in concerto movements

To set into context the use of da capo form in concertos, it will be useful to start by noting some familiar examples. Among those by J.S. Bach, we have the first movement of the violin concerto in E major BWV 1042 (plus its derivative for harpsichord in F major BWV 1054), both outer movements of the harpsichord concerto in E major BWV 1053 (believed to be transcribed from a lost oboe concerto) and the last movements of the Fifth (BWV 1050) and Sixth (BWV 1051) Brandenburg Concertos. All these movements were of course conceived *ab initio* for a purely instrumental ensemble, are far more complex in their internal structure than the Lotti pasticcio and are (except in BWV 1053) rationed to one per concerto. In every case, the movement so structured is in quick tempo and appears as an outer movement in the predominant Vivaldian three-movement structure favoured by Bach. They are not an ingrained habit but rather an experiment comparable with the *rondeau* finale in BWV 1042 or the binary-form finale in the Third Brandenburg Concerto (BWV 1048), similarly introduced in order to vary the otherwise monolithic use of ritornello form. In parenthesis, it may be added that the Brandenburg Concertos as a whole are an essay in variety of form and instrumentation (notwithstanding a perceptible continuity of motivic elements within the six concertos) – a kind of sample card setting out to impress their dedicatee in Brandenburg – so the two appearances of da capo form in them hardly surprises.<sup>23</sup>

A comparable zest for variety and experiment informs Telemann's more numerous instances of pure ABA form in concertos. Examples include the fourth movement of the early violin concerto TWV 51:B2, the first movement of the concerto for two violins TWV 52:C2 and the fourth movement of the oboe d'amore concerto TWV 51:A2. The *Concert* for three instruments in the third volume ('Production') of his celebrated *Musique de Table* of 1733 (TWV 53:A2) employs da capo aria form in both its second

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<sup>23</sup> On this aspect of the Brandenburg Concertos, see Talbot, 1999. The article contains, on pp. 268–271, an excursus dealing specifically with Bach's use of da capo aria form in concertos and other instrumental genres.

and fourth movements.<sup>24</sup> Like Bach, Telemann appears to reserve the form for quick movements.

In Italian da capo arias and their imitations in vocal music the length of the B section is constrained by the fact that the setting of the second semistrophe of the text normally occupies only one period (rather than two, as the A text does). Instrumental music, however, does not have this limitation. Thus, Bach's B sections in instrumental movements employing the form extend to a considerable length, while Telemann's are not far behind. One common feature in Bach's and Telemann's usage is that neither introductory nor interior moderate or slow movements appear to use the form.

Without exploring the concerto production of minor composers, it already looks probable that the employment of da capo aria form in fast concerto movements was predominantly a German fashion. The nearest coeval Italian composers seem to have got to it is in the fast movements of ripieno concertos (not his solo concertos) by Giuseppe Matteo Alberti (1685-1751), which are actually not in strict ternary form, since they always contain short codas.

To my knowledge, no composer of an original concerto (or compiler of a pasticcio concerto) other than Lotti attempted to use this form for each and every movement. But the instances in Bach and Telemann of concertos with two ABA movements out of their three or four at least establish that our pasticcio concerto would not have been considered an absolute absurdity in Germany and by extension Scandinavia.

## The oboe concerto in Lund: movement 1

The two main actions in the conversion of Lotti's arias into concerto movements – simple transfer of the soprano line to the oboe and lightening of the texture in the solo sections – have already been mentioned. The resulting oboe part is idiomatically very suitable, exemplifying the common eighteenth-century view that of all instruments, the oboe came closest in sound to the human voice. However, it is arguably less well fitted to the new genre: a skilled oboist accustomed to playing concertos by Vivaldi, Albinoni or Telemann will miss the challenge to his/her technique posed by the passage-work in running semiquavers and (occasionally) broken chords that characterizes them. In the whole of the concerto never more than six of the most rapid notes employed in the movement (semiquavers in the first and second, quavers in the third) appear consecutively, and each time their motion is purely stepwise. Contrary to convention, the most taxing writing for the oboe occurs when it doubles unison violins in ritornellos. In the aria on which the first movement is based the vocal periods employ a unison accompaniment (see the end of Example 2) where the violins and viola play an octave above the continuo. In the corresponding solo portions of the concerto, however, the continuo simply drops out, leaving a *bassetto* as sole accompaniment. There is an interesting parallel in Saml. Engelhart 468, the Valentini oboe concerto mentioned

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<sup>24</sup> I am grateful for the suggestion of these examples to Steven Zohn, who remarks that several of Telemann's sonatas *auf Concertenart* (to adopt Johann Adolph Scheibe's accurate description) similarly use ABA form for individual movements.



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earlier, where the solo instrument has the same type of accompaniment in the solo episodes of all movements except the third. Evidently, an ultra-light support without continuo harmonization was considered right for the oboe (just as it is, though less exclusively, in oboe concertos by the masters just named). Equally noteworthy is the fact that in this movement (as in the final one) the oboe plays along with the violins in the ritornellos. This is the norm in Vivaldi's oboe concertos, but not in those of Albinoni or Telemann. Sprightly and lyrical by turns, the transcribed movement makes an excellent opening to the pasticcio concerto.

### The oboe concerto in Lund: movement 2

The musical score for the second movement of the Concerto in S-L, Saml. Wenster L:10, bars 1-6. The score is in 4/8 time, B-flat major, and Largo. It features five staves: Oboe (top), Violin 1 pizzicato, Violin 2 pizzicato, Viola pizzicato, and Bassoon/Continuo pizzicato. The Oboe part is mostly rests, while the strings play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. A measure number '4' is marked at the beginning of the second system.

**Example 3.** Second movement of the Concerto in S-L, Saml. Wenster L:10, bars 1-6.

The second movement leaves the ritornellos to the strings and continuo, playing in four real parts (see Example 3). That said, there is an unexpected anomaly to explain. The Violino Secundo in Lund has a musical text identical with that of the Violino Primo. This is possibly due to a simple copying error at some stage in the concerto's transmission. Or perhaps it reflects a practical imperative, even an aesthetic desire, to place the two violin parts in unison for the full duration of the work. Could the pizzicato mode of performance have influenced the decision? It is hard to decide between the alternative explanations. Leaving out the second violin part (included in the example) unquestionably causes real damage to the movement by eliminating the delicious chains of parallel sixths and thirds so idiomatic for a siciliana and unnecessarily bringing about

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numerous ‘bare fifth’ chords, starting with the very first one.<sup>25</sup> In the vocal sections of ‘Vile e debole’ Lotti’s viola part simplifies the texture by making the viola double the continuo variously at pitch and in the upper octave, a feature retained in the concerto movement. All in all, this centrally placed siciliana, which has countless counterparts in the concerto repertoire of the time, makes a very pleasant contrast in all respects (tempo, metre, scoring, texture, mode, affect) with the outer movements.

### The oboe concerto in Lund: movement 3

The image displays a musical score for the third movement of Lotti's oboe concerto in G minor. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system is labeled 'Presto' and includes parts for 'VI 1-2 + Ob', 'Vla', and 'B.c.'. The second system continues the music for the same instruments. The third system starts at measure 11 and shows the oboe part with a repeat sign. The score is written in 3/4 time and features a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

**Example 4.** Third movement of Lotti’s oboe concerto in S-L, Saml. Wenster L:10, bars 1–15.

The finale has a very winning naïve and folk-like character. Its opening, repeated with different scoring in the first vocal period shown in Example 1, paraphrases that of the well-known *Barabano* melody distantly echoed in Smetana’s *Vltava*. There are hints, too, of the Italian gavotta, which, unlike its French progenitor, usually begins on the first rather than the second beat of a cut-time bar. Interestingly, the concerto does not retain the repeats indicated for the first two vocal periods in the aria, perhaps because they were considered out of place in a concerto movement (whereas they are quite common in late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century arias with dance-like features). Otherwise, the accompaniment to the oboe in solo episodes – plain continuo – remains

<sup>25</sup> The separate second violin part for this movement is reinstated in the author’s recent critical edition of the concerto as *Antonio Lotti: Concerto in G minor for oboe, two violins, viola and basso continuo*. Launton: Edition HH (2023).

exactly the same as in the latter's vocal sections. Even though this movement never employs more than three real parts, there is real contrapuntal savoir-faire in the writing, which is all the more impressive for being lightly worn. The modulations, too, are very deftly handled. A fine example of free three-part counterpoint is offered by this movement's opening ritornello, shown as Example 4. The presence of a middle strand is the cue for Lotti to syncopate it delightfully against the outer parts (see bars 6, 8 and 9) in a manner recalling Vivaldi's treatment of inner parts. The unanticipated 'chromatic fourth' (the so-called *passus duriusculus*) in the bass at bars 8–9 is another pleasingly sophisticated touch.

## The question of Lotti's involvement

Extraordinary as it may seem, there is compelling evidence to validate the belief that Lotti himself was the author of this pasticcio concerto, whose movements exhibit perfect compatibility with one another.<sup>26</sup> They even possess thematic links, as the extracts presented as music examples clearly demonstrate. The common elements here are the simple tetrachord and pentachord, either rising or falling, which pervade the thematic material. As noted earlier, however, many pasticcio compilers were extraordinarily adept at unifying, by astute selection, a group of movements taken from here and there, so Lotti's opportunity to do similarly for his own music in no way closed the door to others. But against this one can certainly argue that he obviously had privileged access to his own works and presumably a better recall of their content than anyone else.

What becomes the absolute clincher for his authorship is his sole currently authenticated concerto: one in A major from his brief Dresden period scored for oboe d'amore, strings and continuo that is listed as item 228 in Gustav Adolf Seibel's thematic catalogue of Johann David Heinichen's works.<sup>27</sup> The sources cited by Seibel were two sets of parts in what is today the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Darmstadt (D-DS).

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<sup>26</sup> One should perhaps also leave open the possibility that Lotti merely selected the movements and gave guidelines to someone else on how to execute the transcription.

<sup>27</sup> Seibel, 1913, p. 85. Unknown to Seibel were anonymous sets of parts for the same concerto in the Fürstlich zu Bentheim-Tecklenburgische Musikbibliothek (D-RH, Ms 390, on deposit at the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, Münster) and the University Library in Lund (S-L, Saml. Engelhart, 107). Since the Engelhart dynasty of musicians paralleled the Wenster one geographically, chronologically and in the playing and collection of music for or with oboe, there could well be a connection somewhere along the lines of transmission of the G minor and A major oboe d'amore concertos. Both of the sources just named are attributed by RISM, following Seibel and intermediate catalogues, to Heinichen, while, to confuse matters, a different Swedish source (S-L, Saml. Kraus, 83) names Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel on the manuscript. But the concerto is persuasively listed under Lotti's name in the third part of the Breitkopf catalogues (1763) and in the posthumous sale catalogue of the Amsterdam music seller Nicolaas Selhof (see Brook, 1966, p. 110, and King, 1973, p. 226). Otherwise, Lotti is known to have written only a single concerto: a lost one for two *oboi d'amore*, strings and continuo listed under his name in the posthumous sale catalogue (1732) of the Danish music collector Stephan Kenckel (see Koudal and Talbot, 2010, p. 74). When one also considers Lotti's undoubtedly authentic trio sonata in A major for flute, oboe d'amore and bass, it does indeed appear that he acted as a willing pioneer in the composition of music for this newly invented kind of oboe during his brief period of residence in Dresden.

These manuscripts were shelfmarked respectively Mus. ms. 6036 and 6037.<sup>28</sup> One of them, in the hand of the then Kapellmeister at Darmstadt, Christoph Graupner, evidently bore Lotti's name but was attributed by a later hand to Heinichen. In his entry Seibel explained the discrepancy by writing implausibly that this was a copy made by Lotti of a concerto by his German colleague at Dresden.

Remarkably, this concerto parallels Saml. Wenster L:10 exactly in its employment of pure da capo aria form for all three movements. Its second movement, in E major, is a siciliana that in character and material can be regarded as a twin to its counterpart in the Lund concerto. Whether the A major concerto is likewise a pasticcio of adaptations of arias by Lotti cannot yet be verified (its incipits at present have no concordances with other works listed in RISM), but one would not be surprised if this background were also shared. At all events, the way is clear to declare the G minor concerto a second securely identified one for oboe by Lotti rather than a hotchpotch cheekily arranged from his music by someone else. And he thereby surely earns a small place in music history as the inventor of a previously unrecognised concerto species *auf Arienart*.

## Final thoughts

Given that, as Benjamin Byram-Wigfield has shown, Lotti was no stranger to self-borrowing within the domain of sacred vocal music, he is unlikely to have had any objection to the practice's wider application.<sup>29</sup> But this does not explain why he should have wished to write concertos consisting entirely of movements taken from, or structurally resembling, operatic arias. To have done this only once could suggest a *jeu d'esprit*, but to have done it at least twice betrays a more consistent intention. One possibility is that Lotti identified himself so closely with the vocal domain, both sacred and secular, that when asked to supply a concerto by an oboist (the Dresden court employed several oboists of distinction, including the celebrated Johann Christian Richter [1689–1744], whom he could have met in 1716–1717 at the time of the sojourn of *Kurprinz* Friedrich August in Venice), he decided, with the recipient's blessing, to express his 'vocal persona' in the most overt way and at the same time ease his task by employing forms and materials very familiar to him.<sup>30</sup> After all, he was not employed by the court, as his colleague Heinichen was, to write music of all types. It would not have been beyond his ability to follow the prevalent Vivaldian norms, as Heinichen was already doing, but perhaps he just preferred to be different. Whoever the original recipient of the G minor concerto was, this person is likely to have been identical with the person for whom the A major concerto was destined, in view of the two works'

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<sup>28</sup> In 1944 Mus. ms. 6036 and 6037 were destroyed in a bombing raid, but a reproduction of a much later score, Mus. ms. 347, survives. Several modern editions of this quite frequently performed and recorded work are in circulation.

<sup>29</sup> Byram-Wigfield, 2016, pp. 269–272.

<sup>30</sup> On Richter's receipt or (in some instances) copying of sonatas and concertos for oboe and flute by Vivaldi, Diogenio Bigaglia and Telemann, see Talbot, 2020, p. 61, and Zohn, 2008, pp. 135–137.

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closeness in structure and the normality, in Germany, of players doubling on ordinary oboe and other varieties of the same instrument.

If the unvarying use of ABA form in solo concertos for oboe (and perhaps further instruments?) is, as suggested here, a Lotti ‘signature’, it would be worthwhile to comb the anonymous concertos of this type in Swedish and indeed other libraries just in case more specimens turn up. Given the present-day popularity of his A major concerto (which admittedly benefits from its choice of oboe d’amore rather than ordinary oboe), there is every reason to believe that they will have no difficulty entering the early music repertoire. I have a feeling that the wait will not be too long for the G-minor concerto.

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## Abstract

Manuscript parts for an anonymous oboe concerto in G minor shelfmarked L:10 are found in the Wenster collection at the University Library in Lund. The concerto has the peculiarity that each of its three movements is cast in da capo aria form. It turns out that the movements have been taken from arias in two operas by Antonio Lotti, *Giove in Argo* (1717) and *Ascanio* (1718), written for performance in Dresden. The manner of conversion from aria to concerto movement is very simple, entailing the reassignment of the vocal line to oboe, lightening of the string accompaniment in some solo passages and otherwise only minimal recomposition. Great care has been taken to match the movements to one another to create an instrumental pasticcio. The evidence that Lotti himself undertook the conversion is very strong, since his only other known solo concerto (for oboe d'amore, in A major) likewise uses da capo aria form for each movement, something previously not encountered in the genre. The identity of the performer for whom these concertos were written is considered, a likely candidate being the Dresden oboist Johann Christian Richter, whom Lotti had probably first encountered in Venice in 1716–1717.

**Keywords:** Antonio Lotti, Johann Christian Richter, Samling Wenster, Baroque concerto, Baroque opera, instrumental pasticcio, oboe music, da capo aria

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