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Marcello di Capua, Court Composer to Princess Izabela Lubomirska The latest research into his life and works*

1 Marcello di Capua (b. *c.*1740/47; d. 2 April 1819, Łańcut), also referred to as Marcello Bernardini, is a poorly documented figure in the history of music. This article provides a brief report on the latest research devoted to this Italian composer and librettist who settled in Poland during the last period of his life.

Now all but forgotten, Marcello di Capua enjoyed considerable fame in his day as a true luminary of Classical Italian opera. In the context of this research, it is worth noting that his musical compositions far outnumber his literary works; hence he should be seen primarily as a composer. Indeed, the librettos he wrote were mostly for his own operas.

In Polish cultural history, he is known as a long-serving Kapellmeister[1] to Princess Izabela Lubomirska, née Czartoryska (1736–1816). He remained in the service of this prominent patroness of the arts for a full quarter of a century, and was among those who helped to shape the musical life of Łańcut, at that time a leading European noble residence.

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* This article is based on the author's book *Marcello di Capua, nadworny kompozytor księżnej Izabeli Lubomirskiej: Studium źródłoznawcze* [Marcello di Capua, court composer to Princess Izabela Lubomirska: A source study] (Kraków: Musica Iagellonica, 2019).

[1] The term "Kapellmeister" is a translation of the Italian professional title "maestro di cappella," at that time generally applied to composers.

The relatively rare biographical notes relating to di Capua published in the musicological literature prior to the current research, mainly dictionary or encyclopaedia entries, are characterised by a dearth of facts, usually combined with a large number of hypotheses and unverified assumptions. Yet in light of the latest research, carried out by the present author over recent years and described in detail in an extensive monograph, many biographical issues have been elucidated, and the picture of di Capua's rich creative legacy has become fuller and clearer.

An important methodological aspect of that research was to adopt a strictly source-based approach, not only reading and analysing every available source, but also assessing the entire source material from the widest possible heuristic perspective. Conclusions derived from analysis of musical sources (manuscripts, prints) are confronted here with original, independent and penetrating analysis of non-musical sources (literary texts, archive materials). Direct and indirect sources (which provided strong grounds for conclusions) were meticulously separated from early historical descriptions, which were essentially of a secondary (non-source) character.[2] The starting point for reconstructing the musical activities of Marcello di Capua was a calendar of premieres (1764–1809),[3] which reveals the huge scale of the Italian maestro di cappella's creative achievements and also attests to the wide scope and complexity of the source studies devoted to him.

With the above principles in mind, collecting and ordering the factographic data involved laborious verification of widespread views and findings. In spite of those efforts, some circumstances in the life of di Capua remain the subject of hypotheses. The attempt to evaluate the number, character and condition of the extant works, as well as their significance in the Classical era, was also a serious challenge in view of the extensive geographical area involved. While a significant portion of the music manuscripts are available *in situ*, in the library of the Castle Museum in Łańcut, and a sizeable collection of archive documents from the court at Łańcut are held at the Central Archives of

[2] The problem of identifying source and non-source knowledge is discussed extensively in methodological literature, see, e.g., Jerzy Topolski, *Metodologia historii* [The methodology of history] (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1973), 353–60; Wanda Moszczeńska, *Metodologii historii zarys krytyczny* [A critical outline of the methodology of history] (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1977), 146–7.

[3] See Płoski, *Marcello di Capua*, 77–109.

Historical Records (AGAD) in Warsaw, more numerous sources are scattered across many foreign libraries and archives. However, a thorough examination of the holdings in Łańcut and in Warsaw, supplemented with foreign-held sources, as well as the ordering and systematising of the composer's oeuvre as a whole, provided a solid foundation for summing up and formulating conclusions.

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No systematic research into the life and works of this composer had been conducted previously. The research carried out by Italian musicologists in the 1960s was of a fragmentary nature and focussed mainly on his activities in Rome. The hypotheses put forward at that time now need to be verified and developed. Italian musicologists have thus far continued to ignore almost completely the Polish period in the life of Marcello di Capua, of which they seem to be unaware. Italian (and generally foreign-language) literature does not mention Łańcut at all as the place of his work, and references to his service at the court of Princess Lubomirska are only very general. In turn, parallel research on the Polish side, which in fact was abandoned quite early and is also of a fragmentary character, did not take into account important facts from the composer's Italian period.

We owe our basic knowledge about Marcello di Capua and his works primarily to the research of Raoul Meloncelli, which provided the basis for the biographical entry published in 1992 in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (edited together with Marita Petzoldt McClymonds).[4] Its contents are in fact a recapitulation of Meloncelli's much earlier works, published in 1967 and 1973 in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* and in the encyclopaedia *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. However, the more recent biographical note is expanded to include the findings of Ariella Lanfranchi from the 1980s, which relate also to another composer, Rinaldo di Capua.[5]

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[4] Raoul Meloncelli and Marita P. McClymonds, "Bernardini, Marcello," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, Vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1992); biography with the same text: Meloncelli and McClymonds, "Bernardini, Marcello," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edn, Vol. 3 (London: Macmillan, 2001), and *Grove Music Online*, 2001, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.02857, accessed 22 May 2020.

[5] Raoul Meloncelli, "Bernardini, Marcello, detto Marcello da Capua," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, Vol. 9, 1967, http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bernardini-marcello-detto-marcello-da-capua_(Dizionario-Biografico)/, accessed 22 May 2020; Raoul Meloncelli,

So what was the state of research prior to the current project? Well according to the previous findings by Italian scholars (mainly Raoul Meloncelli), Marcello Bernardini, known as (*detto*) Marcello da Capua,[6] was probably born in Capua between 1730 and 1740, and died after 1799. Around 1764 he is supposed to have arrived in Rome. At that time two theatres there, the Capranica and delle Dame, staged his two intermezzos *Pantomime ed ariette in musica da recitarsi nel Teatro dei Signori Capranica* and *La schiava astuta*. In a number of opera librettos from that period, he was described as "maestro di cappella romano." During the last quarter of 1767, he held the civic office of *caporione* in one of the districts of the papal capital, Campitelli. In 1769 he obtained the post of composer at the Collegio Nazareno in Rome, where for the next 16 years he composed music for Marian feast days. On the basis of Burney's notes about his journey to Italy (1770), together with documents held in the archives of the Collegio Nazareno itself, one may suppose that Marcello was a son (or pupil) of Rinaldo di Capua, his predecessor in that post. In 1771 Marcello di Capua travelled to Naples and began working with the Teatro del Fondo.[7] It is thought that he also travelled to Turin and Munich, where his operas were being staged. Information found on the pages of some of the librettos published during the years 1789–99 shows that at that time he was in the service of "the Princess Lubomirski Czartoryska of Poland, probably Elisabeth Helene Anna Czartoryska, Princess Lubomirski."[8] He is supposed to have settled in Poland

"Bernardini, Marcello," in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik*, Vol. 15 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1973); Ariella Lanfranchi, "Di Capua, Rinaldo," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, Vol. 39, 1991, http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/rinaldo-di-capua_(Dizionario-Biografico)/, accessed 22 May 2020.

[6] Music autographs only use the article "di."

[7] The date given in the currently most reliable biography of Marcello di Capua, probably a printing error, see Meloncelli and McClymonds, "Bernardini" (1992, 2001). In the encyclopaedia *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (1973), Meloncelli gives the year 1791, closer to the actual date, although three years too late.

[8] Range of dates imprecise. Meloncelli and McClymonds, "Bernardini" (1992, 2001); similarly, Meloncelli, "Bernardini" (1967). In the biographical outline from 1973 (*Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*), Meloncelli puts forward a mistaken supposition regarding the princess's family name, supposedly Radziwiłł. None of the biographies referred to above give her adopted name of Isabella (in its Polish version: Izabela).

around the year 1795, after a short visit to Vienna in connection with the premiere of his cantata *Angelica placata*.[9]

Ariella Lanfranchi made an important contribution to the biographical outline. While conducting research in the archives of the Piarist Order in Rome, mainly at the Collegio Nazareno, into documents devoted to Rinaldo di Capua, among others, she came across a number of important historical sources relating to Marcello di Capua. She included her observations on Marcello in her extensive biographical entry for Rinaldo, published in 1991 in the Italian biographical dictionary. Earlier, in 1985, she had presented her initial conclusions from this research in a paper co-authored with Enrico Careri given at an international academic conference in Rome.[10] She was the first to put forward the hypothesis that the two di Capuas were closely related. As she surmised, from a wider source perspective, Marcello di Capua even appears as Rinaldo's "graceless son," mentioned by Burney (but not named directly).[11]

Lexicographical works published prior to those by Meloncelli and Lanfranchi contain little biographical data; and with regard to listing the musical compositions by Marcello di Capua, they are marred by numerous errors and inaccuracies. However, against this background, we should distinguish the ground-breaking results of research by Emilia Zanetti. In 1954, in *Enciclopedia dello spettacolo*,[12] she cited a number of important facts about the composer's life, even though not all her dates were correct. Among other things, she mentioned his use of the title of "maestro di cappella romano," as well as describing an early episode from his work within the structures of the Roman

[9] The above dictionary entries by Raoul Meloncelli also contain an extensive list of stage works, many of which have been identified only on the basis of printed librettos. Out of the total number of nearly 40 operas composed by Marcello di Capua, most of them comic operas, only 13 are supposed to be extant. These estimates are undoubtedly based on the assumption that some of the operatic works are the same in spite of having different titles. In his calculations, the author also took into account incomplete scores and piano scores. Now, after wider source searches, we can assert that the state of preservation of the musical sources is a great deal better.

[10] See Ariella Lanfranchi and Enrico Careri, "Le cantate per la Natività della B.V.: Un secolo di musiche al Collegio Nazareno di Roma (1681–1784)," in *Händel e gli Scarlatti a Roma: Atti del convegno internazionale di studi (Roma, 12–14 giugno 1985)*, ed. Nino Pirrotta and Agostino Ziino (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1987), 322.

[11] Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in France and Italy* […], 2nd edn (London, 1773), 296.

[12] Emilia Zanetti, "Bernardini Marcello," in *Enciclopedia dello spettacolo*, Vol. 2 (Roma: Le Maschere, 1954), 359–60.

local residents' council[13] and his emigration to Poland at the beginning of the 1790s to enter the service of "Princess-Marshaless Lubomirska née Princess Czartoryska."[14] The biographical information is supplemented by a quite extensive list of stage works, not free of erroneous attributions. Zanetti was also probably the first to attempt a general (if very concise) assessment of di Capua's operatic works, mainly in terms of their dramatic structure, and drew attention to the unquestionable success they achieved at the time on Italian and foreign stages.

Even briefer are the biographies which on rare occasions appear in the earlier publications, mainly those from the nineteenth or the first half of the twentieth century. The meagreness of their factography is puzzling, because during the period when Classical opera flourished, di Capua was truly famous and renowned.[15]

Finally, it is worth devoting a few comments to the Polish publications on the subject, very limited and largely outdated. All the research on the Polish side has been based on a number of early publications: a short article by Marian Wallek-Walewski in *Ruch Muzyczny* in 1958,[16] the above-mentioned dictionary entry by Meloncelli from 1967, and the catalogue of the music collection at Łańcut edited by Krzysztof Biegański (published somewhat later, but without reference to Meloncelli's entry).[17] The contribution of Polish musicologists to the subject literature included significant information about Łańcut as the place where Marcello di Capua lived in Poland, as well as the date of his death, established on the

[13] Information given by that author on the basis of Alberto Cametti's unpublished notes held in the archives of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome — confirmed by sources during the current research: *Diario Ordinario* 1767, No. 7842, 21.

[14] Information about being in the service of the "principessa marescialla Lubomirska" (with erroneous date) was first provided in Italian historical descriptions by Sebastiano Ciampi, *Viaggio in Polonia* (Firenze, 1831), 134.

[15] For example, Andrea Della Corte and Guido M. Gatti claim that Marcello di Capua was one of the most famous opera composers of the Italian *settecento*, see Della Corte and Gatti, *Dizionario di musica con XVI tavole di illustrazioni* (Torino: G.B. Paravia & C., [1925]), 45.

[16] Marian Wallek-Walewski, "Nadworny muzyk Izabeli Lubomirskiej: Marcello Bernardini" [Court musician to Izabela Lubomirska, Marcello Bernardini], *Ruch Muzyczny* 1958, No. 8, 28.

[17] Krzysztof Biegański, *Biblioteka muzyczna Zamku w Łańcucie: Katalog* [The music library of Łańcut Castle: A catalogue] (Kraków: Muzeum-Zamek w Łańcucie and Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1968), 14–17 (introduction) and the systematic section.

basis of his death certificate from Łańcut.[18] They also provided an approximate date of birth (different from that in Italian encyclopaedias) — around 1747. In addition, Biegański outlined the range of duties which the composer carried out at the court of Princess Lubomirska and inventoried his Łańcut manuscripts, attempting to date them. Some of the Polish researchers' readings of the Łańcut sources were imprecise. Not being in a position to fully analyse foreign sources, they initiated a whole series of accidental misrepresentations and factual errors, which then became established in the writings on the subject. In this manner, the date of the composer's death came to be altered (in spite of the unambiguous entry in *liber mortuorum*), as did the first name of the composer's supposed father (Enrico instead of Rinaldo).[19] Incorrect conclusions about the nature of di Capua's oeuvre, based on fragmentary research into the sources from Łańcut, at times led to the erroneous belief that this composer also wrote symphonic music.

3 On the basis of indirect Italian sources, we believe that Marcello di Capua was born around 1740. Most Polish scholars who side in favour of the year 1747 count the birth date "arithmetically," relying on an unverified note about the deceased's age in Łańcut parish's *liber mortuorum* (a source as yet unknown in Italy). On the death certificate issued by the church, the age of the deceased is given — or perhaps estimated — to be 72 years, which would indeed point to di Capua having been born in 1746 or 1747. On the other hand, adopting that date does not fit very convincingly into the historical timeline of known events from his early years in Rome. Therefore, at least in this respect, the *liber mortuorum* loses credibility.[20]

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[18] *Liber Mortuorum ex Oppido Łańcut ab anno 1786 ad annum 1831: Tom I* [Vol. 1], ms. (print filled in by hand), p. 82, Archive of the St Stanislaus of Krakow Roman Catholic Parish in Łańcut, no call number.

[19] Erroneous date of death, see inter alia: Andrzej Chodkowski, "Bernardini Marcello," in *Encyklopedia muzyczna PWM* [PWM Encyclopaedia of Music], biographical part, Vol. 1 ab (Kraków: PWM, 1979), 302 (this error was not corrected in the supplement from 1998); *Encyklopedia muzyki* [Encyclopaedia of Music], ed. Andrzej Chodkowski, 2nd edn, s.v. "Bernardini Marcello" (Warszawa: PWN, 2006). Erroneous name of Rinaldo di Capua, see Wallek-Walewski, "Nadworny muzyk"; Biegański, *Biblioteka*, 15.

[20] The instructions printed at the beginning of the book regarding the manner of entering the data inform us that any infringement in this area would be subject to punishment; one might assume that blank sections might be regarded as such infringements. Examination of the whole volume reveals that the "Dies Vitae" column (the age of the deceased) has no empty sections.

We should initially assume that every attempt to establish Marcello di Capua's date of birth more precisely needs to take into account the calendar of the most important events from the early days of his public activities in Rome. Lending credence to the "Polish" date would mean that he achieved his documented artistic successes at an amazingly young age, while some important events in his life would have taken place "before their time," so to speak. The composer would have made his debut in the grandest Roman theatres as barely a teenager; this citizen of Rome would have been elected as leader of the council of the *rione* Campitelli also at a very young age, no more than 20; finally, the still fledgling composer would have been given the prestigious post of *maestro stabile* at the famous religious-educational centre Collegio Nazareno aged about 22 — in stark contradiction to a nearly 70-year tradition of entrusting this role to artists at least a dozen or more years older.[21]

Clearly, the view presented here does not go beyond the realm of supposition and as such is difficult to justify. In view of the diachronic order of the first established biographical facts, it seems more credible to date his birth to an earlier time. The decision to adopt the earlier date, that is, 1740, is also supported by the hypothesis put forward by Lanfranchi, and taken up by other lexicographers, that Marcello's father was Rinaldo di Capua. This hypothesis is based on a number of mutually complementary and corroborative premises. Important among them are two sources from two eighteenth-century authors: Pier Leone Ghezzi (*c.*1740) and Charles Burney (1771).

Based on the notes of the Roman painter and caricaturist Ghezzi, we might conclude that Marcello's parents were most probably Rinaldo di Capua (a Neapolitan composer based in the papal capital) and Agata Lamparelli (his wife, a native Roman). In the period between March 1740 and late 1741, they sojourned together in Portugal. In 1739 Ghezzi produced and then added a caption to an ink drawing representing Rinaldo, then aged around 30; in it Ghezzi wrote: "the said [Rinaldo] departed for Portugal on 18 March 1740 together with his five-month pregnant wife; and he left Rome, in order to engage [in that country] in composing operas, for the sum of one thousand scudos a year."[22] One of Ghezzi's earlier caricatures (and captions) depicts Agata

[21] Cf. Lanfranchi, "Di Capua, Rinaldo." Here, *maestro stabile* denotes a composer working with the named institution on a permanent basis.

[22] Pier Leone Ghezzi, *S. Leonardo* [*sic*] *da Capua, compositore napolitano* […], ink drawing with notes, 1739, with later additions, Vatican Library, call no. Ottob.Lat.3117, f. 110: "il d[ett]o

Lamparelli: "Agata Lamparelli, of Rome, maid to Mistress Faustina Zappi, portrayed by me, cavaliere Ghezzi, on 1 August 1724. [Added in 1738:] Married to Master Leonardo di Capoa [actually Rinaldo di Capua], an excellent composer, a Neapolitan, a very worthy gentleman, in the current year of 1738."[23]

Ghezzi's historical evidence appears particularly strong when examined in conjunction with Burney's account of his Italian journey; the latter was in Rome at the turn of September and October 1770. A study by that author, published a year later, provides extensive information about his long meetings with Rinaldo di Capua. There we find the key passage confirming that Rinaldo indeed had a son. Commiserating with Rinaldo, who by then was in decline, Burney mentions Rinaldo's "graceless son" (Marcello?), who sold (for next to nothing) and squandered the whole collection of his starving father's finest scores.[24]

Ariella Lanfranchi's conception, which assumes that Rinaldo was the father of Marcello, fits extremely well into the biographies of both composers. Both Rinaldo and Marcello collaborated with the Piarist Collegio Nazareno; the former worked for the order during the years 1753–68, the latter from 1769 to 1784. It seems clear that Marcello took over the post of *maestro stabile* at the Collegio Nazareno directly from Rinaldo; and this provides grounds for thinking that it was Rinaldo (whose surname was identical) who was his father.

Leonardo partì per Portugallo alli 18 marzo 1740. e partì con la moglie che era gravida di 5 mesi, e partì di Roma con mille scudi l'anno, è che componesse l'opere. [Note added above previous text:] Qui sotto è sbagliato il nome del compositore dove dice Leonardo deve dire Rinaldo di Capua" ("Erroneous first name of the composer entered below; where it says 'Leonardo,' it should say Rinaldo"); historical-bibliographical commentary in Giancarlo Rostirolla, *Il Mondo Novo musicale di Pier Leone Ghezzi* (Ginevra–Milano: Skira, 2001), 372–3 (item 193).

[23] Pierre Leone Ghezzi, *Agata Lamparelli romana* […], ink drawing with notes, 1724, Vatican Library, call no. Ottob.Lat.3115, f. 103: "Agata Lamparelli romana, cameriera della signora Faustina Zappi, fatta da me cav. Ghezzi a dì primo agosto 1724. La quale si è maritata con il signor Leonardo di Capoa compositore di musica e bravo assai, et è napolitano, è assai civile e bonissimo galantuomo in quest'anno 1738"; historical-bibliographical commentary: Rostirolla, *Il Mondo*, 317 (item 95).

[24] Two accounts from 1770: Burney, *The Present State of Music*, 296: "graceless son"; Burney, *A General History of Music, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period*, Vol. 4 (London, 1789), 558: "[Rinaldo] was living, or rather starving, in 1770 at Rome." Cf. also C.[arlo] Burney, *Viaggio musicale in Italia 1770*, trans. Virginia Attanasio (n.p.: Remo Sandron, 1921), 177; overinterpreting, Attanasio turns the "graceless son" into "un figlio senza gusto e senza intelligenza"!

Alongside the question of the date of Marcello di Capua's birth, another unexplained circumstance is his place of birth. Both historical and modern lexicography assumes that he was born in Capua, a city within the boundaries of what was then the Kingdom of Naples. Such a provenance would be indicated by the anthroponym "di Capua," referring directly to a geographical name and as a consequence regarded by lexicographers as a toponymic nickname. However, among the several possible places of birth currently being examined, the most likely seem to be Rome or Lisbon.

There is no doubt that Rinaldo di Capua, identified by Ariella Lanfranchi as the presumed father of Marcello and described by Burney as "a *Neapolitan* composer of great genius and fire" working in Rome, came from Capua or some other place close to Naples.[25] Ghezzi also consistently emphasises that the composer came from Naples,[26] and yet another piece of evidence as to Rinaldo's origins is provided by de Brosses.[27]

In light of the hypothesis of kinship between the two composers, it seems reasonable to take the view that Marcello di Capua simply took his father's name.[28] Abandoning the idea that Marcello's "nickname" came from the city of his birth allows us to suppose that his actual place of birth was not Capua but Rome, the city from which we have the earliest music sources and other documents relating to him. Not without significance here is also the fact (confirmed by Ghezzi) that the person likely to have been the composer's mother came from Rome. Moreover, on the pages of some early librettos, we find annotations which directly link Marcello di Capua to the community of composers in

[25] Burney, *A General History*, 4:558; my emphasis.

[26] Ghezzi, *S. Leonardo da Capua*: "compositore napolitano"; Ghezzi, *Agata Lamparelli*, about Rinaldo: "et è napolitano."

[27] Charles de Brosses to M.[onsieur] de Neuilly, Rome, 24 November 1739, in *Le président de Brosses en Italie: Lettres familières écrites d'Italie en 1739 et 1740*, ed. M. R. Colomb, 2nd edn (Paris, 1858), 1:386–7: "Naples est la capitale du monde musicien; c'est des séminaires nombreux où l'on élève la jeunesse en cet art que sont sortis la plupart des fameux compositeurs, Scarlatti, Leo, Vinci, le vrai dieu de la musique; les Zinaldo [actually Rinaldo], Latilla et mon charmant Pergolese."

[28] According to Burney's account, Rinaldo was "the natural son of a person of very high rank in that country" (Burney, *The Present State of Music*, 293), which might indicate that he did not have a family name but described himself by means of a nickname based on a place. Possibly Rinaldo's nickname began to function as a surname in Rome. On the other hand, we should not exclude the possibility that Rinaldo's manner of identifying himself (di Capua) fully corresponded to his birth register identity; this in turn would confirm the artist's semi-noble lineage.

Rome. The descriptions "romano" (a Roman) or "maestro di cappella romano" were added to his name in four theatre prints from the years 1769–77, the earliest being the Turin libretto to the dramma giocoso *Il Donchisciotte della Mancia*.[29] It should be emphasised that all this information comes from very early sources and therefore provides a significant argument in favour of Marcello di Capua coming from Rome and not Naples.

As can easily be observed, alongside arguments for the "Roman" hypothesis, the sources provide us with another lead. On the basis of the previously quoted captions to Ghezzi's drawings, we may suppose that Marcello di Capua was born in Lisbon. These notes lead to the conclusion that it was in Portugal, sometime in July 1740, that Rinaldo di Capua's wife provided him with an heir, and that may have been Marcello. The "Lisbon" hypothesis should be regarded as highly probable.[30] However, this does not change the fact that the young di Capua was brought up in Rome from an early age.

4 We can confirm that Marcello di Capua was active in Rome during the 1760s. Already as a young composer he saw his works performed in public. Moreover, according to information in the archival *Diario Ordinario* (Chracas publishing house), during the last quarter of 1767, he did in fact occupy the public post of *caporione* (elected superior of a self-governing body) of the tenth district, Campitelli.[31] In 1769 he took the post of chief composer and harpsichord instructor at the Collegio Nazareno in Rome, for which he subsequently

[29] *Il Donchisciotte della Mancia, dramma giocoso per musica da rappresentarsi nel Teatro di S.A. Serenissima il Signor Principe di Carignano l'autunno dell'anno MDCCLXIX* (Torino, [1769]).

[30] As part of the research into the composer's date and place of birth reported here, attempts were made to obtain information about the contents of extant *liber natorum* or *liber baptisatorum* manuscripts from *c.*1740 from Lisbon. The search focused on baptism registers of the Nossa Senhora do Loreto church of the Priests of the Sacred Heart, located in what used to be the Italian parish to which Rinaldo di Capua probably belonged while living in the capital of Portugal during the years 1740–41. It has been established that the historical parish documentation survived the earthquake of 1755. However, it was impossible to access the oldest, key volume with entries up to 1749 (covering the period when Marcello's presumed father stayed in Lisbon), because that source was lost sometime during the 1960s.

[31] After 1751 the post of *caporione* could be filled not only by noblemen but also by ordinary citizens, see *Nuova enciclopedia popolare italiana ovvero Dizionario generale di scienze, lettere, arti, storia, geografia* […], 5th edn, Vol. 19 (Torino, 1864), s.v. "Rione." Alberto Cametti, Emilia Zanetti and Raoul Meloncelli all agree that it is highly unlikely that another person with the same surname was involved.

composed seven cantatas for Marian feasts.[32] The Collegio Nazareno was one of the most important religious-educational centres in the State of the Church; it had a tradition stretching back more than a century.

At this time, he also became a highly valued composer of *opera buffa*, receiving numerous commissions from the most esteemed Italian and European theatres. On the basis of surviving prints of librettos, we believe that his fame entailed increasingly frequent travels, including to Florence, Bologna, Naples, Venice and Milan, as well as important musical centres lying beyond the Italian lands: Dresden, Vienna, Prague, Paris, Madrid and Lisbon. During the peak period of di Capua's artistic work (1783–92), his operas would receive up to a dozen or more productions a year.

While still in his early Roman period, in 1776, he began calling himself "maestro di cappella napoletano"[33] (instead of "romano"), presumably in a declarative identification with the renowned Neapolitan school, to which his first music teacher, Rinaldo di Capua, belonged. However, Marcello only started collaborating with theatres in Naples (the Nuovo, later the Fondo, and also San Carlo) 12 years later.[34]

From 1786, the pages of selected librettos to operas by Marcello di Capua include the statement that he remained in service to the Polish Princess Lubomirska: "maestro […] all'attual servizio di Sua Altezza la Signora Principessa Lubomirski Kcartoriski di Polonia." The earliest form of this statement type is found in the libretto to *Il fonte d'acqua gialla o sia Il trionfo della pazzia*,[35] an opera premiered in the autumn of 1786 at Rome's Teatro Valle. It is very likely that the princess became interested in the Italian chapel master's music in the spring of that year, during her 15-week stay in Rome. She would

[32] The literary layer of these works was mainly based on Old Testament motifs, such as Oniah's vision, Gideon's fleece, the star of Jacob, the blossoming of Aaron's rod, Jehovah's covenant with Noah and Ezekiel's prophecy. See also Example 1.

[33] The oldest extant source which gives Marcello's Neapolitan title is a print of the libretto of *La bella forestiera o sia La viaggiatrice fortunata, farsetta in musica a cinque voci da rappresentarsi nel Teatro Capranica nel carnevale dell'anno 1776* […] (Roma, 1776).

[34] The first Neapolitan libretto is *La finta Galatea o sia L'antiquario fanatico, commedia per musica da rappresentarsi nel Teatro Nuovo sopra Toledo per second'opera in quest'anno 1788* (Napoli, 1788).

[35] A rare copy of the libretto, listed under an incorrect call number in the Vatican Library (I-Rvat, call no. Stamp.Ferr.V.8120 int. 7, instead of the correct int. 6): *Il fonte d'acqua gialla o sia Il trionfo della pazzia, farsetta per musica da rappresentarsi nel Teatro Valle degl'ilustriss. sigg. Capranica nell'autunno dell'anno 1786* […] (Roma, [1786]).



Example 1. Marcello di Capua, [*La verga mistica di Aronne*]
Cantata a Tre Voci 1773, autograph, f. 1v
Archivio Generale delle Scuole Pie di S. Pantaleo, Rome

then have had the opportunity of meeting Marcello di Capua personally, for example at the premiere of his latest farsetta, *Gli amanti confusi o sia Il brutto fortunato*, at the Teatro Valle.[36]

Accepting a position with Izabela Lubomirska did not require the composer's immediate arrival at one of her residences, which were mainly Łańcut Castle and the soon-to-be rented Esterházy Palace at Mölker Bastei in Vienna. Probably on the strength of a contract signed in the second half of the 1780s, di Capua obtained the possibility of fully satisfying his current Italian obligations. During this time, he was also able to begin intensively gathering sheet music for the princess's private collection.

[36] Libretto *Gli amanti confusi o sia Il brutto fortunato, farsetta per musica a cinque voci da rappresentarsi nel Teatro Valle degl'Illustriss. Sigg. Capranica, nella primavera dell'anno 1786* […] (Roma, [1786]); this is the only source libretto from the spring of 1786; the precise date of the first performance is 26 April 1786, see *Diario Ordinario* 1786, No. 1184, 24.

It is worth noting that after the death of Rinaldo di Capua (*c.*1780), and when the possibilities of composing for the Collegio Nazareno became exhausted (1784),[37] Marcello's hitherto numerous artistic links to his native Rome diminished relatively quickly. This suggests a considerable reduction in his activity in Roman theatres during the late 1780s and a markedly increased presence on the Neapolitan scene. We cannot exclude the possibility that directly before taking up his position with Izabela Lubomirska he spent some time in Naples. The necessity of beginning his service in Poland emerged somewhat unexpectedly soon after, following the outbreak of the French Revolution. By 1789 it was already clear that Lubomirska's nearly three-year "permanent" sojourn in Paris would not be continued, and thus the prospect of her returning to Central Europe (Warsaw, Vienna, Łańcut) suddenly became more imminent.

Marcello di Capua left for Poland presumably no earlier than at the end of spring or beginning of summer 1792; this period saw the beginning of intense musical and theatrical life at Princess Lubomirska's Łańcut Castle. It is also possible that he started his service at the court some months later. His presence in Łańcut in December 1793 is confirmed by the accounting books kept at the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw.[38]

In February 1793, he most likely stayed with Lubomirska in Vienna during the staging of his opera *La donna bizzarra*.[39] The following year, he brought a gift to the Austrian capital: his occasional cantata *Angelica placata*, dedicated to Empress Maria Theresa of Naples and Sicily. This work, composed probably at the request of the Polish princess, was performed at the two imperial theatres.[40]

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[37] Interestingly, the period of Marcello di Capua's documented compositional work for the Collegio Nazareno (from September 1769 until September 1784) corresponded exactly to the pontificate of Clement XIV. Di Capua's last cantata was heard within the walls of the Piarist college six days prior to that pope's death. However, we have no information that might explain this coincidence.

[38] On 8 December 1793 Lubomirska's Warsaw treasury paid 54 zloty for a *czoja* (a thick coat with sleeves?) "for an Italian Marcelli, to Łańcut" ("za czoję dla Włocha Marcelli — do Łańcuta"); see "Expensa Pieniężna zaczynaiąca się w Warszawie à die 31. Xbris 1786" [Warsaw book of expenditure from 31 December 1786], ms. 1786–95, p. 232, AGAD, call no. AGWil Anteriora 185.

[39] Libretto *La donna bizzarra, dramma bernesco per musica in due atti da rappresentarsi nell'Imperial Teatro di Corte l'anno 1793* (Vienna, [1793]).

[40] Libretto *Angelica placata, cantata per musica da rappresentarsi negli imperiali teatri di Vienna, e dedicata alla regnante augustissima imperatrice Maria Teresa* (Vienna, 1794).

Settling in Łańcut as court composer, Marcello di Capua enjoyed significant prestige. We know that in the late phase of his service, he drew a substantial lifetime annual salary of 3,024 Polish zloty, a sum comparable to the pay of the most prominent architects, artisan artists, doctors and clerks in Lubomirska's employment.[41] Despite a lofty title and high salary, his tasks at the court had a rather modest scope and were primarily limited to composing (or musically setting) occasional works, probably also looking after the musical library and instrument collection, and training amateur musicians from the aristocracy — including the princess's young ward, Prince Henryk Lubomirski, who played the harp. Independently of these official responsibilities, di Capua continued, until the turn of the century or even longer, to respond to numerous commissions from Italian theatres. We can thus surmise that he travelled at least several times to Southern Europe in connection with the frequent premieres of his operas, including to Venice and Rome.[42]

After 1800, he significantly limited his creative activity. According to the *liber mortuorum* of Łańcut parish, he died on 2 April 1819 in Łańcut. The cause of death was described by the general Latin term "convulsiones."[43] It is possible that he had been ill for a long time; this is indicated by his documented stay at the resort of Karlsbad in the summer of 1808 (probably financed by Lubomirska).[44] He was buried at the cemetery located on the boundary of the Łańcut estate.[45] Still in the nineteenth century, all the graves were moved to a new burial site, but there is no surviving tombstone of the composer.

It should also be added that there are no likenesses of Marcello di Capua among the meagre body of Polish and foreign biographical sources.

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[41] "Książka Pensyów zaczynaiąca się od dnia 1go lipca 1817go a kończąca się dnia [*sic*] 1822, Łańcut" [Book of salaries beginning from 1 July 1817 and ending on 1822, Łańcut], ms., actually from October 1817 to 1822, p. 63, AGAD, call no. APŁ 116.

[42] As was customary in the eighteenth century, it is highly likely that the composer sat at the harpsichord for the first three performances of the newly presented work, cf., e.g. John Spitzer, Neal Zaslaw and Michael Kennedy, "Conductor," in *Grove Music Online*, 2002, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O901114, accessed 22 May 2020.

[43] *Liber mortuorum*, 82.

[44] See *Liste der angekommenen Kur- und Badegäste in der königl. Stadt Kaiser-Karlsbad im Jahre 1808* (Karlsbad, [1808]), 60 (item 671).

[45] That cemetery is no longer in existence. The earliest reference to it in the archived records of Łańcut town council comes from 1806, see Maria Nitkiewicz, "Historia i zabytki łańcuckiego cmentarza" [History and monuments of the cemetery at Łańcut], http://lancut.artlookgallery.com, accessed 22 May 2020.

5 The surname "Bernardini," popularised by lexicographers, should be deemed unjustified. It is not supported by available sources and stands in contradiction with a very viable hypothesis about Marcello di Capua's close family ties with Rinaldo di Capua. A survey of musical historiography indicates the name's genesis as unclear and reaching back to the 1780s. Such an early dating not only fails to validate, but also hampers or even impedes, an unequivocal determination of its provenance. Based on analysis of direct and indirect sources and historical descriptions of a secondary nature, we can surmise that it is a distorted form of the composer's second name, Bernardino. Subsequent lexicographical publications, naturally conservative and developed more on the principle of the accumulation of knowledge, rather than time-consuming source criticism, have led to the dubious surname becoming established in contemporary musicological literature.

Analysis of more than 300 music manuscripts (autographs and copies) and about 150 libretto prints (material objects or their bibliographical descriptions expanded by detailed content given in the preliminaries, as well as scans and microfilms) has shown that there is only one case where the source information about the composer includes, alongside the name Marcello and the surname di Capua,[46] the additional name "Bernardino" (*sic*).[47] This concerns the libretto to the dramma giocoso *Il barone a forza o sia Il trionfo di Bacco*, printed for the Teatro Scroffa in Ferrara for the autumn opera season in 1789. In this case, the wording identifying the composer takes on a peculiar form, not encountered in other sources: "La musica è del celebre Sig. Maestro Marcello *Bernardino*

[46] Together with frequent variants of the article "di/da/de" and less frequent deformations of "Capua."

[47] It may be more difficult to arrive at conclusions on the basis of such searches because of errors made by libraries. On the basis of fallacious quotations from sources given in bibliographical descriptions I-Vgc (Italian catalogues OPAC Servizio Bibliotecario Nazionale, http://opac.sbn.it, and Polo SBN Venezia, http://polovea.sebina.it, accessed 22 May 2020), we turned our attention to two other librettos which were said to include the surname Bernardini: *Il vecchio ringiovanito, intermezzi per musica da rappresentarsi nel Teatro di Tordinona nel carnevale dell'anno 1781* (Roma, [1781?]) and *Li tre Orfei, intermezzi per musica a cinque voci da rappresentarsi nel Teatro della Pallacorda di Firenze nel carnevale dell'anno 1784* (Roma, 1783). The presence of an error was established beyond question by a search in I-Vgc, Rolandi collection, call numbers of the erroneously described sources respectively Rol. 0161.01, Rol. 0161.02.

de Capua napoletano."[48] The only identified copy of this print is located in the music library of the University of California.[49] It has also not been possible to confirm the correctness of the form of the anthroponym "Bernardino" on the basis of any other, alternative source text. (The only additional trace of a personal name in this form is to be found in one of the early historical descriptions produced by Giovanni Battista Cacciò, discussed below.)

However, even earlier, in 1786, in the Milan yearbook *Indice de' spettacoli teatrali*, which traditionally summed up European operatic repertoire of the previous season, there appeared the puzzling surname "Bernardini." "Maestro Marcello Bernardini di Capua" was mentioned twice: first in the main part of the theatre repertoire on the occasion of the premiere of the dramma giocoso *I tre Orfei* in Savona,[50] and then in the index of names at the end. Elsewhere in this publication, we find two other mentions of that musician, but there he is inconsistently referred to as "Marcello di Capua," with the "Bernardini" component omitted.[51]

Beginning with the said year 1786, consecutive editions of *Indice de' teatrali spettacoli* were produced by Lorenzo Formenti, a clerk at the Teatro alla Scala.[52] He took over all the editorial work from Giovanni Battista Cacciò, who in the 1783/84 season had recorded in the yearbook a Roman staging of *Li tre Orfei* with music by one "Sig. Maestro Capua." It turns out that in the index of persons given at the end of the publication, Cacciò confused the actual author of *The Three Orpheuses* (Marcello di Capua) with Rinaldo di Capua. Moreover, the latter's first name was mistaken for his surname, which is recorded as "Rinaldi." Cacciò marked the missing first name of this "Rinaldi" with the letter "N" — as

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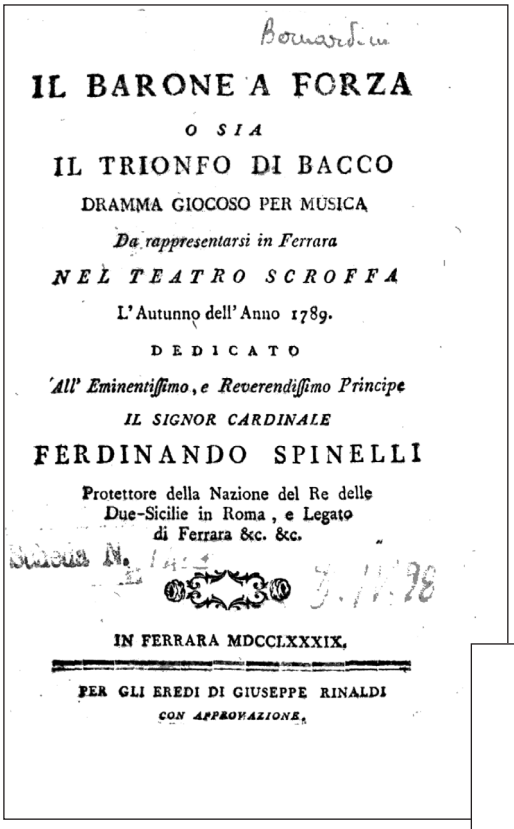
[48] *Il barone a forza o sia Il trionfo di Bacco, dramma giocoso per musica da rappresentarsi in Ferrara nel Teatro Scroffa l'autunno dell'anno 1789* […] (Ferrara, 1789); my emphasis; see also Fig. 1. There is no full description of this libretto in Sartori's catalogue; among other things, it omits information about the composer; see Claudio Sartori, *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800: Catalogo analitico con 16 indici*, Vol. 1 (Cuneo: Bertola & Locatelli, 1990), 401 (item 3775).

[49] The Jean Gray Hargrove Music Library, US-BEm, call no. ML48.I7 No. 628.

[50] The libretto of this spectacle is not known.

[51] See Lorenzo Formenti, ed., *Indice de' spettacoli teatrali di tutto l'anno, dalla primavera 1785 a tutto il carnevale 1786* […] (Milano, [1786]), 161, 208 ("Marcello Bernardini di Capua") and 28, 154 ("Marcello di Capua").

[52] He is mentioned in Pietro Lichtenthal, *Dizionario e bibliografia della musica* (Milano, 1826), 2:222.



Bonardi m

IL BARONE A FORZA

O SIA

IL TRIONFO DI BACCO

DRAMMA GIOCOSO PER MUSICA

Da rappresentarsi in Ferrara

NEL TEATRO SCROFFA

L'Autunno dell'Anno 1789.

DEDICATO

All' Eminentiſſimo, e Reverendiſſimo Principe

IL SIGNOR CARDINALE

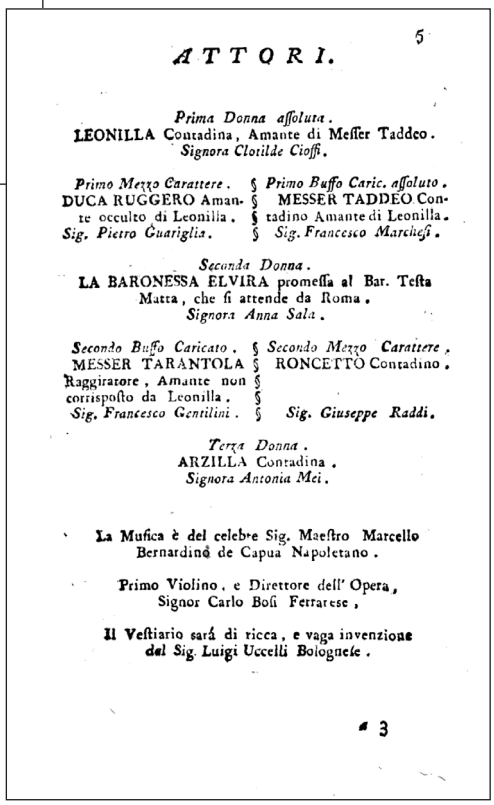
FERDINANDO SPINELLI

Protettore della Nazione del Re delle Due-Sicilie in Roma, e Legato di Ferrara &c. &c.

IN FERRARA MDCCLXXXIX.

PER GLI EREDI DI GIUSEPPE RINALDI

CON APPROVAZIONE.



5

ATTORI.

Prima Donna aſſoluta.
LEONILLA Contadina, Amante di Meſſer Taddeo.
Signora Clotilde Cioſſi.

Primo Mezzo Carattere. § *Primo Buffo Caric. aſſoluto.*
DUCA RUGGERO Amante occulto di Leonilla. § MESSER TADDEO Contadino Amante di Leonilla.
Sig. Pietro Guariglia. § *Sig. Francesco Marcheſi.*

Seconda Donna.
LA BARONESSA ELVIRA promeſſa al Bar. Teſta Matta, che ſi attende da Roma.
Signora Anna Sala.

Secondo Buffo Caricato. § *Secondo Mezzo Carattere.*
MESSER TARANTOLA Raggiratore, Amante non corrisposto da Leonilla. § RONCETTO Contadino.
Sig. Francesco Gentilini. § *Sig. Giuseppe Raddi.*

Terza Donna.
ARZILLA Contadina.
Signora Antonia Mei.

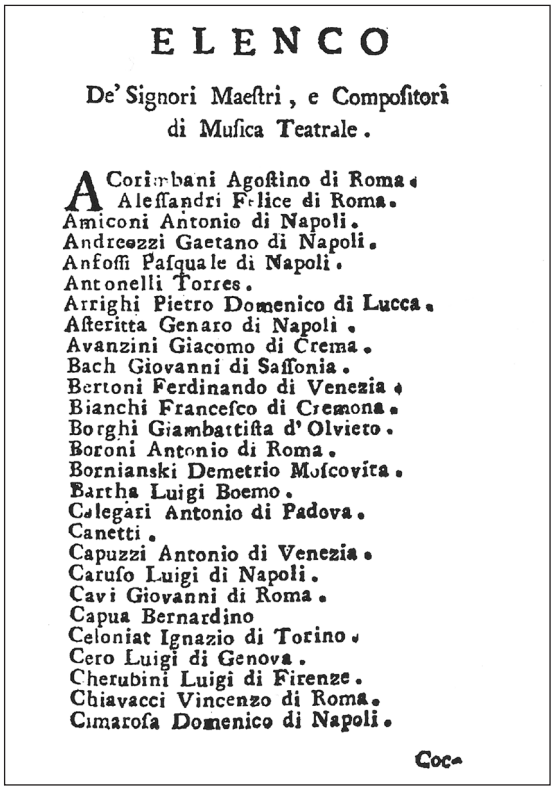
La Muſica è del celebre Sig. Maeſtro Marcello Bernardino de Capua Napoletano.

Primo Violino, e Direttore dell' Opera, Signor Carlo Boſi Ferrarese,

Il Veſtiario sarà di ricca, e vaga invenzione del Sig. Luigi Uccelli Bolognese.

3

Figure 1. The libretto of *Il barone a forza* (Ferrara, 1789), pp. 1, 5 courtesy of Jean Gray Hargrove Music Library



ELENCO

De' Signori Maeſtri, e Compoſitori di Muſica Teatrale.

A Corirbani Agoſtino di Roma.
Aleſſandri Felice di Roma.
Amiconi Antonio di Napoli.
Andreozzi Gaetano di Napoli.
Anfoſſi Paſquale di Napoli.
Antonelli Torres.
Arrighi Pietro Domenico di Lucca.
Aſteritta Genaro di Napoli.
Avanzini Giacomo di Crema.
Bach Giovanni di Saſſonia.
Bertoni Ferdinando di Venezia.
Bianchi Franceſco di Cremona.
Borghi Giambattiſta d' Olvieto.
Boroni Antonio di Roma.
Bornianski Demetrio Moſcovita.
Bartha Luigi Boemo.
Calegari Antonio di Padova.
Canetti.
Capuzzi Antonio di Venezia.
Caruſo Luigi di Napoli.
Cavi Giovanni di Roma.
Capua Bernardino
Celoniat Ignazio di Torino.
Cero Luigi di Genova.
Cherubini Luigi di Firenze.
Chiavacci Vincenzo di Roma.
Cimaroſa Domenico di Napoli.

Coc-

Figure 2. G.B. Cacciò, ed., *Indice de' spettacoli teatrali* [1784/85] (Milano, [1785]) Museo Internazionale e Biblioteca della Musica di Bologna

unknown. As supplementary information about the composer's place of origin, he indicated Capua.[53]

Of particular interest in this context is the next, key issue of the *Indice* yearbook, since it marks an intermediate stage on the route to the total transformation of the surname of Izabela Lubomirska's future Kapellmeister. In the theatre repertoire for the 1784/85 season, Cacciò seems to have become aware of his mistake from the previous year and introduces into the authors' index the item "Capua *Bernardino*,"[54] which refers to the composer of a num-

[53] "Rinaldi N., di Capua," see Gio.[vanni] Batista Cacciò, ed., *Indice de' spettacoli teatrali della primavera, estate, ed autunno 1783, e del corrente carnevale 1784* […] (Milano, [1784]), 115.

[54] Surname followed by first name, without the name of the city (in the systematic part, only Sig. Maestro Capua), see Gio.[vanni] Batista Cacciò, ed., *Indice de' spettacoli teatrali della primavera, estate, ed autunno 1784, e corrente carnevale 1785* […] (Milano, [1785]); my emphasis; copies in I-Vgc and I-Bc; see also Fig. 2.

ber of operas listed in the systematic part: *Il conte di bell'umore*, *Li tre Orfei* (two stagings), and *Le donne bisbetiche*.[55] Yet Cacciò makes another error, failing to remove the "Rinaldi N., di Capua" entry from the index of surnames.[56] It is worth adding that the relevant source librettos (preserved for all the above spectacles) do not mention the intriguing name of Bernardino. However, this new item in the index corresponds to the above-mentioned libretto from Ferrara, which dates from four years later; this confirms the conclusions from the source research and suggests that "Bernardino" was indeed the composer's second name.

In light of the methodological premises presented at the beginning of this article, the periodical published by Cacciò and Formenti does not qualify as a source. It is, rather, an extensive synthesising report which, in spite of its significant information potential and excellent grounding in its period, requires a highly critical approach. Another issue is its circulation. We may doubt whether the early editions of *Indice de' teatrali spettacoli* had any direct influence on the parallel research into Marcello di Capua conducted by the German lexicographer Ernst Ludwig Gerber.

In 1790, three years after the premiere at the Teatro Valle in Rome of Marcello di Capua's famous dramma giocoso titled *La donna di spirito*, Gerber's so-called old lexicon carried the short entry "Bernardini." The enigmatic surname was given without a first name or date of birth, but in relation to the premiere of that opera (in 1787; Gerber erroneously gives 1788).[57]

Against the background of Gerber's biographical note, it is interesting to examine the information recorded by Burney (1789). In his list of eighteenth-century Roman opera composers, the personal appellations "Marcello di Capua" and "Bernardini" (without the first name!) appear separately and concern two different composers working in parallel from 1788.[58] The hypothetical route of borrowings would thus look as follows: the information gathered by

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[55] Characteristic titles of operas by Marcello di Capua.

[56] By that time, works by Rinaldo, then deceased, were no longer being staged.

[57] See Ernst Ludwig Gerber, *Historisch-Biographisches Lexicon der Tonkünstler* […], Vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1790), 146. It was only in the next edition of the lexicon that Gerber added the name "Marcello" and supplemented the surname Bernardini with the supposed nickname "di Capua"; Gerber, *Neues historisch-biographisches Lexikon der Tonkünstler* […], Vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1812), 358.

[58] Burney, *A General History*, 4:573–4.

Formenti was picked up by Burney, who in turn became the source of information for Gerber.

It goes without saying that responsibly putting forward a thesis questioning the authenticity of the name Bernardini required simultaneous investigation of Polish non-musical sources held in the AGAD in Warsaw and the archive of the Roman Catholic parish in Łańcut. That search provided evidence that the name Bernardini was not used within the princess's circle. For example, her last will from 1806 provides an appropriate bequest (1,000 ducats in gold) for "Marcelli di Capoua, Italian."[59] The name Bernardini is also not found in Łańcut's *liber mortuorum*.

6 Marcello di Capua was a composer with close links to the theatre, displaying a great flair for writing large-scale vocal works. His principal domain was the *dramma giocoso* genre and various forms of *opera buffa*. Staying within the area of works combining music and theatre, he also composed, on the margins of his oeuvre, secular cantatas (*componimenti drammatici*), in which he assimilated dramatic elements constitutive of opera, such as stage action, acting, and elements of scenography. Within his operatic output, and to a lesser degree also in his cantatas, his involvement was not limited just to composing, but in a dozen or so cases he also wrote the libretto. This undoubtedly demonstrates that he had both literary talent and a thorough humanistic education, which he probably acquired at the Collegio Nazareno as part of his comprehensive schooling.

The entirety of his legacy includes 47 operatic titles (including two *opere serie*), one oratorio,[60] 10 Italian cantatas, three or four pantomimes (including one with vocal parts), and co-authorship of several *pasticci* and numerous insertions in operas by other composers. As we can see, Marcello di Capua's compositional output is almost exclusively vocal (the only departure being mu-

[59] In the original Polish text: "Marcellemu di Capoua Włochowi," see "W Imié Oyca i Syna i Ducha Swiętego […] ostatnia wola moia" [In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit… my last will and testament], Vienna, 10 May 1806 (with late additions), ms., AGAD, call no. APŁ 136/1, p. 651.

[60] *La visione di Ezechiello*, source I-Mc, call no. M.S. Ms. 179.1; this attribution requires verification.

sic for pantomime scenes). About one third of those works have been lost, while a quarter of them have survived in incomplete form.

Foremost among di Capua's most popular *intermezzi*, *commedie per musica*, musical farces and *drammi giocosi* were *Li tre Orfei*, *Il conte di bell'umore*, *La donna di spirito* (or *La donna bizzarra*), *Furberia e puntiglio*, *Gli amanti confusi o sia Il brutto fortunato*, *Il barone a forza o sia Il trionfo di Bacco*, *L'ultima che si perde è la speranza*, and *La finta Galatea o sia L'antiquario fanatico* (or *Le donne bisbetiche o sia L'antiquario fanatico*).[61]

In the course of a newly initiated overview of Łańcut library holdings, an important discovery was that of two orchestral pantomimes, which di Capua composed during his Polish period.[62] Krzysztof Biegański's catalogue of Łańcut music manuscripts and prints lists them as anonymous works.[63]

As already said, Marcello di Capua's composition technique and style have never been subject to extensive analysis. The hallmark of his music is a strong propensity for alternate versions and widescale borrowing from his own works. In such a situation, any attempt at a global documentation and systematisation of his output would encounter a fundamental difficulty, caused by the eminently "repeatable," or compilatory, character of the bulk of his output. Based on analysis of mutual textual relations between available librettos, similar relations among the music manuscripts and relations across both these groups of sources, we can authoritatively conclude that nearly every production of a given opera during di Capua's lifetime was associated with

[61] Ordered according to the number of stagings documented by the sources (librettos), all the yearbooks of theatrical repertoires by Cacciò, Formenti and Caminer, and works by other authors; Antonio Caminer, ed., *Indice de' teatrali spettacoli di tutto l'anno dal carnovale 1803 a tutto il carnovale 1804* (Venezia, 1804); Caminer, ed., *Indice de' teatrali spettacoli di tutto l'anno dal carnovale 1808 a tutto il carnovale 1809 ed alcun anche precedente* (Venezia, 1809).

[62] PL-ŁA, call nos. RM 127 and RM 133. They will be the subject of a critical edition being prepared by the present author as part of a project financed by the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.

[63] Biegański, *Biblioteka*, 323 (items 2512, 2513). The *Catalogue de Musique Vocale et Instrumentale appartenante à Mde la P*[*ri*]*n*[*ce*]*sse Therese Lubomirska née P*[*ri*]*n*[*ce*]*sse Czartoryska* from the beginning of the nineteenth century (call no. 12352/I), held in the Ossolineum in Wrocław, mentions two pantomimes "à grand orchestre" by the Kapellmeister from Łańcut: *Pantomima Lettre A* and *Pantomima del Fanaielli* [actually dei fanciulli] *Lettre B*. The Łańcut manuscript of the latter is partly an autograph, while the copy of the first contains annotations in the composer's hand. For more on this subject, see Płoski, *Marcello di Capua*, 152–4, 195.

the composer's substantial modification of the score. Moreover, the librettos and scores of operas that appear original to the naked eye (composed as "new" works) contain, as a rule, numerous self-quotations, borrowings and references to earlier compositions. This aspect of di Capua's composition technique is explained partly by eighteenth-century practice, but in this particular case it is exceptionally prominent.

The most intensely creative period of Marcello di Capua's activity falls roughly in the years 1768–1800, which correspond to the early and mature Classical era. By the turn of the century, there is a considerable waning of his innovativeness and creativity. His thinking becomes more retrospective, with more self-borrowings, fewer original inventions, and concentration solely on changes to the staffage in a few outdated operatic works. In this sense, di Capua, whose lifespan mirrors almost exactly the conventional frame of the Classical era, shows himself to have been, towards the end of his Italian career, a hostage to conventions proper to composers of the past generation. Already in the 1790s, he presents an epigonic style with weakly developed individual traits.

Based on a general overview of his most representative operatic output, a fair evaluation suggests that the musical language which he developed is a true reflection of normative Classical aesthetics and a very natural, but shallower and creatively limited, formulation of the Italian vocal tradition. Di Capua's composition technique is characterised by a balance between the elements of form and content, as well as the goal of simplicity and clarity to the basic musical elements — from an approachable, well-delineated melody and periodic structure, through uncomplicated functional harmony, to transparent homophonic textures. He employs many stereotypical stylistic and formal solutions to musical problems. All in all, despite his popularity in his day, he can undoubtedly be regarded as a composer of lesser rank. In his creative work, he assimilated and conserved the binding stylistic norms of the late Neapolitan school, but did not thoroughly grasp its most potent aesthetic qualities, such as bel canto and the dramatic qualities of musical means. In the area of *opera buffa*, and marginally also *opera seria*, he thus belonged among the numerous minor contributors to the development of the Classical style.

Given the composer's lengthy stay in Łańcut, an interesting strand to the research consisted of Polish motifs, which are extremely sparse in his works. Thus we may conclude, not overestimating the significance of a few isolated

findings in this area,[64] that at the court in Łańcut he was not expected to compose Polish-sounding music. Di Capua's artistic mission in Poland involved, rather, promulgating Italian culture, and that was undoubtedly the expectation of his employers. Even though he spent well over 20 years in Łańcut, he remained isolated from Polish folkloristic influences and any tendencies which formed the germs of local national style. We do not know whether he followed at all the growing presence of the Polish element in the operas of Kamieński, Stefani, Elsner and Kurpiński.

7 The results of our research significantly broaden the previously scant knowledge about the life and artistic work of Marcello di Capua. It is worth noting that they connect and organise the previous areas of knowledge — separately described, as it were, and to some extent inconsistent — gathered on the Italian and Polish sides. They afford us a more comprehensive evaluation of his role and significance in the Classical era and at the same time enrich our picture of the musical culture of Poland and of Polish-Italian musical connections around the turn of the nineteenth century.[65]

Details of the research into the composer's legacy found in the music collection of Izabela Lubomirska are contained in an extensive catalogue of manuscripts and prints.[66] Another important part of this research project was the creation of the fullest possible list of the *whole* of di Capua's oeuvre. This details the state of musical sources and librettos held in libraries and archives around the world and at the same time assigns a considerable proportion of dispersed arias, ensembles and other separately transmitted sections of works to particular operas and cantatas. This also allows for an assessment of the state of

[64] In the newly attributed music to one of the Łańcut pantomimes, one may discern mazurka rhythms and polonaise cadential formulas. See Example 2.

[65] More information about di Capua's life and works is to be found in the present author's book, which links the musician's life with his rich artistic activity, understood in broad terms not just as compositional and literary work, but also substantial involvement in the organising and staging of productions. A discussion of the most significant operatic performances is set against the wide context of his artistic travels, the geographic area over which his most popular works were staged and testimony of the reception of his output by the composer's contemporaries. Our subject is divided into three sections, corresponding to the stages in di Capua's life and output: the period at the Collegio Nazareno, his flourishing collaboration with numerous theatrical centres, and the quarter of a century of service at the Łańcut court.

[66] Płoski, *Marcello di Capua*, 209–65.



Example 2. Marcello di Capua (attrib.), *Pantomima* PL-ŁA RM 127, No. 24 [*Alla polacca*] (critical edition of the composer's music to Łańcut pantomimes, ed. Mirosław Płoski, in preparation)



Example 2. Continued

preservation of his output for the stage in terms of the integrity of individual musical-dramatic works.[67]

The same research project has also brought the publication of a critical edition by the present author of the composer's final stage work — the azione teatrale a quattro voci *La forza del merito*,[68] written in Łańcut for the marriage of Prince Henryk Lubomirski and Princess Teresa Czartoryska, daughter of the Esquire Carver of Lithuania, in May 1807.[69] Together with the above-mentioned monograph, the edition of the score creates a solid basis for further study of the music of this Italian maestro di cappella. An autograph of the work, hitherto completely forgotten, was found in the Castle Museum Library in Łańcut.[70]

Translated by Zofia Weaver
Proofread by John Comber

[67] Ibidem, 285–386.

[68] Marcello di Capua, *La forza del merito: Azione teatrale comica semiseria per musica a quattro voci e nel fine licenza: recitativo ed aria di Venere* […], ed. Mirosław Płoski (Kraków: Horizon Edition, 2017); see also Example 3.

[69] On the date of the marriage, see Henryk Lubomirski's family document "Autograf mowy Biskupa Przemyskiego Gołaszewskiego na ślubie moim z Teresą X.ką Czartoryską Stolnikówną w Łańcucie 1807 Roku 24 Maja" [Autograph of the sermon given by Revd Gołaszewski, Bishop of Przemyśl, at my marriage to Princess Teresa Czartoryska, daughter of the Esquire Carver, in Łańcut on 24 May 1807], Wrocław, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, call no. 983/I.

[70] PL-ŁA, call nos. RM 258 (score) and RM 85 (parts).



Example 3. Marcello di Capua, *La forza del merito* […], No. 21 (*Andante comodo*): Duet of Galatea and Pigmalione (Kraków: Horizon Edition, 2017)



Example 3. Continued

Abstract

This article explores the biography and musical output of Marcello di Capua (*c*.1740/47–1819), an Italian composer and librettist who spent the last years of his life in Poland. The discussion focuses on the available sources, and is based on analysis and source criticism of music manuscripts and prints, as well as literary texts and archive materials.

Now all but forgotten, Marcello di Capua was quite famous during his lifetime, and was an important figure in the world of Italian *opera buffa*. In 1786 he entered the service of the Polish princess Izabela Lubomirska, née Czartoryska, and subsequently spent more than 20 years helping to shape musical life at the court in Łańcut.

The article discusses several unclear threads in his biography, such as the date and place of his birth, the origins of his family, the actual family name (according to sources di Capua, not Bernardini), and the dating of his arrival in Łańcut. The issues cover three thematic spheres, corresponding to the stages in di Capua's life and output: the period at the Collegio Nazareno in Rome, his flourishing collaboration with many Italian and European theatres, and his long period of service at the court in Łańcut.

The results of this research significantly expand our knowledge of the life and artistic work of this Italian Kapellmeister, which to date has been very scant. They allow us to assess his role and significance in the Classical era, as well as enriching our understanding of musical culture in Poland and Polish-Italian musical links at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Keywords: Marcello di Capua, Marcello Bernardini, Classical opera, Izabela Lubomirska (née Czartoryska), Łańcut