

Three Melodramas by Pietro Metastasio: Studies in Romance Languages 24

Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782) was one of the most important and influential figures in the history of Italian opera. His librettos were set to music by some of the greatest composers of the 18th century, including Handel, Mozart, and Gluck. Metastasio's operas were performed throughout Europe and had a profound impact on the development of the genre.



Three Melodramas by Pietro Metastasio (Studies in Romance Languages Book 24) by Pietro Metastasio

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This article will provide an in-depth analysis of three of Metastasio's most famous melodramas: *Didone abbandonata* (1724), *Artaserse* (1730), and *Il re pastore* (1751). We will examine the literary and musical elements of these works, their reception and influence, and their significance in the development of Italian opera.

Biographical Sketch of Pietro Metastasio

Pietro Metastasio was born in Rome on January 13, 1698. His father, Felice Trapassi, was a goldsmith and musician. Metastasio's mother, Francesca Galletti, was a singer. Metastasio showed a talent for music and poetry at an early age. He studied at the Jesuit Collegio Romano and later at the University of Rome.

In 1718, Metastasio wrote his first opera libretto, *Gli orti esperidi*. This work was a critical and commercial success, and it launched Metastasio's career as a librettist. Over the next few years, Metastasio wrote a number of successful opera librettos, including *Didone abbandonata* (1724), *Artaserse* (1730), and *Il re pastore* (1751).

In 1730, Metastasio was appointed court poet to the Habsburg emperor, Charles VI. He held this position for the rest of his life. During this time, Metastasio wrote a number of important operas, including *La clemenza di Tito* (1734), *Achille in Sciro* (1736), and *Ezio* (1750).

Metastasio died in Vienna on April 12, 1782. He is considered one of the greatest librettists of all time. His operas were performed throughout Europe and had a profound impact on the development of the genre.

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Didone abbandonata (1724) is one of Metastasio's most famous and successful operas. The libretto is based on the story of Dido and Aeneas from Virgil's *Aeneid*. The opera tells the story of Dido, queen of Carthage, who falls in love with the Trojan hero Aeneas. Aeneas is forced to leave Carthage by the gods, and Dido is heartbroken. She kills herself in a fit of despair.

Artaserse (1730) is another one of Metastasio's most popular operas. The libretto is based on the story of Artaxerxes I of Persia. The opera tells the story of Artaxerxes' struggle for power against his brother, Darius. Artaxerxes is victorious, and Darius is killed.

Il re pastore (1751) is a pastoral opera that tells the story of Aminta, a shepherd who falls in love with Elisa, a princess. The opera is set in Arcadia, a mythical land of shepherds and nymphs. Aminta and Elisa are eventually married, and they live happily ever after.

Literary and Musical Analysis

Metastasio's operas are known for their elegant and poetic language. He used a variety of literary devices, such as metaphor, simile, and personification, to create vivid and memorable images. Metastasio's operas are also known for their sophisticated and complex musical structure. He used a variety of musical forms, such as the aria, the recitative, and the chorus, to create a wide range of emotional effects.

The arias in Metastasio's operas are particularly noteworthy. They are often long and elaborate, and they provide the singers with an opportunity to display their vocal virtuosity. The recitatives in Metastasio's operas are also important. They provide the narrative and dramatic context for the arias. The choruses in Metastasio's operas are often used to create a sense of spectacle and excitement.

Reception and Influence

Metastasio's operas were immensely popular during his lifetime. They were performed throughout Europe and translated into a variety of languages. Metastasio's operas had a profound impact on the development of Italian

opera. They helped to establish the conventions of the genre, and they influenced the work of later composers, such as Mozart and Verdi.

Metastasio's operas continue to be performed today. They are a testament to his genius as a poet and a librettist.

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This article has provided an in-depth analysis of three of Metastasio's most famous melodramas: *Didone abbandonata*, *Artaserse*, and *Il re pastore*. We have examined the literary and musical elements of these works, their reception and



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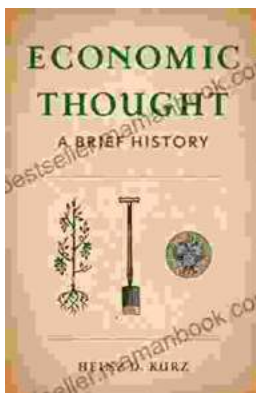
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