

Music-Making Women- Aristocrats

*in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.
6 Arias for Soprano, Strings and Basso
Continuo by Maria Antonia Walpurgis*


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ABSTRACT

The present article reflects on the shortage of studies concerning music-composing women in the 18th-century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and focuses on one unique figure among those female musicians – Maria Antonia Walpurgis, an aristocrat of Polish descent, who demonstrated versatile talents. Thoroughly educated in her childhood, she was a poet, composer, singer, and director of her own stage works. This paper discusses the aristocratic artist's most important experiences and achievements in the field of music, as well as analysing her earliest surviving work, the cycle of *6 Arias for Soprano, Strings and Basso Continuo* (1747), which Walpurgis may well have performed herself. The arias have been preserved in a manuscript kept at the Sächsische Landesbibliothek in Dresden, shelf mark Mus.3119-F-11. My analysis assesses their style and aesthetic.

Keywords: Maria Antonia Walpurgis, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, women composers, XVIII century, Arias

Women usually don't like any kind of art, are not expert in any art, and have no true genius. They are capable of doing some small jobs quite well, such as only call for an agile mind, taste, grace, sometimes also a little brain and philosophy. They may gain knowledge, erudition, abilities, and everything that can be acquired through work. However, women's writings will never carry that heavenly flame that warms and fires the soul; that genius that consumes and burns out; that fiery speech and lofty passion that captivates the hearts of many...¹

This thoroughly negative opinion concerning women's artistic potential, expressed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in 1758, summed up what men had thought for ages about women who dreamt of artistic careers². Women

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were accused of the inability to control their emotions, of hysterical behaviour, and being incapable of logical and critical thinking. All this was supposed to make genuine artistic creation inaccessible to them. Whenever, therefore, a talented and ambitious figure appeared among them, she was treated as a freak of nature, a paradox, evidence of feminine vanity, or the product of man's free creativity targeted at other men. Not without significance was also the fact that, in accordance with medieval theology, women were viewed as sexuality incarnate, as ontologically inferior to men, as sinners who seduced Adam and led him to embrace evil. A woman's nature needed to be controlled and subordinated to the will of a man, be it her father, husband, or brother³. Such an attitude relegated women's music-making for many centuries to the monasteries and to amateur salon practice.

The negative attitudes to women's creativity concerned many arts, but was particularly acutely restrictive in the field of music, despite the fact that domestic music-making (obligatory keyboard and voice training) was part of the canon of girls' education in the middle and higher social strata. As demonstrated many years ago by Marcia J. Citron in her article⁴ and book⁵ (which explain, among others, why there were no women's compositions in the musical canon), until the 20th century women had no access to institutionalised music education, which limited not only their abilities in this field (hence the focus on small-scale salon forms), but also their access to the music circles: to performers, conductors, and publishers⁶. Having their works performed by public

1 J.-J. Rousseau, *List do d'Alemberta o widowiskach* [A Letter on Spectacles to d'Alembert], trans. W. Bieńkowska, Warsaw, 1966, p. 454.

2 For more on this subject, cf. P. Findlen, W. W. Roworth and C. M. Sama (eds.), *Italy's Eighteenth Century. Gender and Culture in the Age of the Grand Tour*, Stanford, 2009; M. Bogucka, *Gorsza pleć. Kobieta w dziejach Europy od antyku po wiek XXI* [The Inferior Sex. The Woman in European History from the Antiquity till the 21st Century], Warsaw, 2006; C. Hopkins Porter, *Five Lives in Music. Women Performers, Composers, and Impresarios from the Baroque to the Present*, Urbana, 2012; J. Glover, *Mozart's Women. His Family, His Friends, His Music*, New York, 2007; I. Maclean, *Woman Triumphant. Feminism in French Literature 1610–1652*, Oxford, 1977; M. Malinowska, *Sytuacja kobiety w siedemnastowiecznej Francji i Polsce* [The Woman's Situation in 17th-Century France and Poland], Warsaw, 2008; J. Bowers and J. Tick (eds.), *Women Making Music. The Western Art Tradition, 1150–1950*, Urbana–Chicago, 1987; D. Roster, *Les femmes et la création musicale. Les compositrices européennes*

du Moyen Age au milieu du XXe siècle, Paris, 1998; M.E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, 2000; Th. LaMay (ed.), *Musical Voices of Early Modern Women. Many-Headed Melodies*, Aldershot, 2005; K. Pendle (ed.), *Women & Music. A History*, 2nd edn, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 2001.

3 Not without significance in this context was Apostle Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor 14, 34), which demanded: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law" (quoted after the Authorised King James Version of the Bible).

4 M.J. Citron, 'Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon', *The Journal of Musicology*, no. 1, 1990, pp. 102–117.

5 Eadem, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, Cambridge, 1993.

6 One of Europe's most important music conservatories, a secular one, was only established in Paris in 1795. Though others were founded rather soon in various German cities, and in the Polish territories as well (the Central School of Music in

music institutions was also quite beyond their reach, which means that they could not confront the wide audience with their music, take advantage of its critical reception and of possible further performances. Nor could they take up professional musical posts.

The situation that Citron described concerned women living in the 19th and 20th centuries. Still, it also perfectly reflects the situation of ladies who wrote music in the earlier centuries. Their music education was limited to private lessons, frequently given by a musician-father (Francesca Caccini⁷, Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre⁸) or a private teacher, sometimes as excellent as in the case of Barbara Strozzi and Antonia Padoani Bembo (both of whom learned music with Francesco Cavalli), but usually holding rather meagre qualifications⁹. Admittedly, the female alumni of Venetian *ospedali* were an exception, but even they faced an obstacle in the form of a ban on public performances after completing their education, which was part of their contracts¹⁰. Maddalena Laura Lombardini Sirmen, *figlia* of the Ospedale dei Mendicanti was one of the few who did make a career, but even in her case it depended on the support of a musician husband,

despite the fact that she was much more talented than he¹¹. Paradoxically, throughout the 17th and 18th centuries monasteries provided women with the greatest creative freedom, since music-making was in those institutions not only a way of praising God, but also – of filling the time¹².

In the 17th and 18th centuries private education was normally limited to composing small forms such as the madrigal, the aria, the sonata, or the cantata, which could be performed in a private domestic context. The world of great forms – the opera, the oratorio, the symphony – which called for large performing forces, guaranteed wide publicity in case the work proved a success. This world was virtually closed to women, though even in this area there were some notable exceptions (Caccini, de la Guerre, Marianna Martinez, Julie Candeille)¹³. The situation was a little more favourable to women in the publishing market, and many women-composers (Maddalena Casulana, Rafaella Aleotti, Chiara Margarita Cozzolani, Strozzi, Leonarda, and others)¹⁴ managed to have their works printed. One should remember, though, that the majority of music by female composers active in the 17th- and 18th-centuries went unpublished and has since been lost. In the face of such enormous difficulty,

Warsaw opened as early as 1810 thanks to the efforts of Józef Elsner), women were not admitted there at first. In Europe, virtually until the end of the 19th century, even those women who were admitted to a conservatory (as in Leipzig) could not attend classes of composition and orchestration, which were considered as typically male disciplines. For more on this subject, cf. S. Glickman, M. F. Schleifer (eds.), *From Convent to Concert Hall: A Guide to Women Composers*, Westport, 2003, p. 156.

7 For more on this subject, cf. S. Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court. Music and the Circulation of Power*, Chicago and London, 2009.

8 For more on this subject, cf. C. Hopkins Porter, *Five Lives in Music. Women Performers, Composers, and Impresarios from the Baroque to the Present*, Urbana, 2012; C. Cessac, *Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre. Une femme compositeur sous le règne de Louis XIV*, Paris, 1988.

9 For more on this subject, cf. C.A. Magner, 'A Short History of Barbara Strozzi', in *Barbara Strozzi. The Complete Works*, Cor Donato Editions online, 2014; E. Rosand, 'The Voice of Barbara Strozzi', in J. Bowers and J. Tick (eds.), *Women Making Music. The Western Art. Tradition, 1150–1950*, Urbana and Chicago, 1987, pp. 168–190; C. Fontijn, *Desperate Measures. The Life and Music of Antoni Bembo*, Oxford, 2006.

10 For more on this subject, cf. D. Arnold, 'Orphans and Ladies: the Venetian Conservatoires (1680–1790)', in *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association 1962–1963*, p. 31; J.L. Baldauf-Berdes, *Women Musicians of Venice. Musical Foundations, 1525–1855*, Oxford, 2004.

11 For more on this subject, cf. E. Arnold and J. Baldauf-Berdes, *Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen. Eighteenth-Century Composer, Violinist, and Businesswoman*, Lanham, 2002.

12 For more on this subject, cf. J.K. Page, *Convent Music and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Vienna*, Cambridge, 2014; R.L. Kendrick, *Celestial Sirens: Nuns and Their Music in Early Modern Milan*, Oxford, 1996; C.A. Monson, *Disembodied Voices: Music and Culture in an Early Modern Italian Convent*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1995; C.A. Monson (ed.), *The Crannied Wall: Women, Religion, and the Arts in Early Modern Europe*, Ann Arbor, 1992; M. Walter-Mazur, *Figurą i fraktem. Kultura muzyczna polskich benedyktynek w XVII i XVIII wieku [With the Figure and the Accompanied Liturgical Songs. The Music Culture of the Polish Benedictine Nuns in the 17th and 18th Centuries]*, Poznań, 2014; Sister Małgorzata Borkowska also wrote extensively on 17th- and 18th-century Polish nuns.

13 The situation of women-singers was not better. They were commonly considered as courtesans, escorts or 'Sirens' who seduced men with their beauty as well as with the sensual charm of their voices. In less poetic terms, they were simply viewed as fallen women who sold their talents on the stage, arousing morbid desires and therefore posing a danger to male morality. Cf. e.g. J. de La Gorce (ed.), 'Description de la vie et moeurs, de l'exercice et l' état des filles de l'opéra', in L. Ladvoat, *Lettres de l'opéra à l'abbé Dubos*, Klincksieck, 1993.

14 J. Bowers, 'The Emergence of Women Composers in Italy, 1566–1700', in *dodać: Bowers and Tick (eds.), Women Making Music*, pp. 116–167, the list of publications on pp. 162–167.

women sought to pursue their musical passions outside the world of music composition, usually in the private sphere, as patronesses of talented artists, amateur music performers, critical listeners, as well as sheet music publishers.

The present article points out the shortage of studies concerning music-composing women in the 18th-century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and focuses on one unique figure among those female musicians – Maria Antonia Walpurgis, an aristocrat of Polish descent, who demonstrated versatile talents. Her grandmother Teresa Kunegunda Sobieska was a daughter of John III, King of Poland and his wife Marie Casimire Louise de La Grange d'Arquien. Thoroughly educated in her childhood, Walpurgis was a poet, composer, singer, and director of her own stage works. Her operas have been the subject of a considerable number of studies as an example of surprisingly high-quality works coming from an aristocrat who could not, and did not wish, to become a professional composer. In this paper, rather than concentrating on the operas, I will analyse her earliest surviving work, the cycle of *6 Arias for Soprano, Strings and Basso Continuo* (1747), a form typical of women's musical output in that period. My analysis assesses their style and aesthetic.

ARISTOCRATIC WOMEN-ARTISTS IN THE 18TH-CENTURY POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH

“After dinner I went to the hall, where my daughters staged comedies [...],” wrote Michał Kazimierz Radziwiłł in his diary, in the entry for 11th December 1746¹⁵. This quotation, though very vague (we do not know what play and by whom the magnate's daughters presented, nor what music potentially accompanied the performance), still seems immensely important to me, as it confirms that many women from aristocratic and noble families pursued artistic activities in a more or less amateurish fashion. Magnates travelled a lot, and spent long months away from their country seats, where they left behind their wives and children. Having dealt with estate management, the servants, and childcare, how else could the ladies of the house fill the long hours on the

manor if not with acting in comedies, singing, playing instruments, reciting poems and plays, reading, and acting as patrons of local as well as foreign artists? The importance of music-making in the process of education is also confirmed by some isolated mentions scattered in the sources, such as the entry in the last will of Franciszka Różycka née Sendzimir (of 1730), stipulating that (as part of their monastic education) her daughters should “learn all kinds of [house] work in the fear of God, as well as to play any instrument they choose, and [to speak] the German language, for all this is useful.”¹⁶

The level of women's education in the 18th-century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was steadily rising, as we know, and they read more and more, so we may also assume that contact with art played an ever greater role in their lives¹⁷. Unfortunately, our knowledge in this area is far from precise. In most cases, women's artistic patronage, the artistic output and preferences of women-aristocrats living in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland – are poorly documented and little known¹⁸. An excellent example can be found

16 M. Bogucka, *Białogłowa w dawnej Polsce. Kobieta w społeczeństwie polskim XVI-XVIII w. na tle porównawczym [Ladies in Old Poland. Women in the Polish Society of the 16th – 18th cs. A Comparative Study]*, Warsaw, 1998, pp. 169–170.

17 *Ibid.*, pp. 170–172.; eadem, *Gorsza pleć*.

18 In recent years, the literature of the subject has been greatly enriched by new publications presenting eminent or simply interesting female figures of the 18th-century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Cf. B. Popiołek, *Królowa bez korony. Studium z życia i działalności Elżbiety z Lubomirskich Sieniawskiej ok. 1669–1729 [An Uncrowned Queen. A Study in the Life and Work of Elżbieta Sieniawska née Lubomirska, c. 1669–1729]*, Cracow, 1996; eadem, *Kobiety świat w czasach Augusta II. Studia nad mentalnością kobiet z kręgów szlacheckich [The Women's World in the Times of King Augustus II. Studies on Noblewomen's Mentality]*, Cracow, 2003; Bogucka, *Białogłowa, A. Słaby, Rządząca oleszycka. Dwór Elżbiety z Lubomirskich Sieniawskiej jako przykład patronatu kobiecego w czasach saskich [The Ruler of Oleszyce. The Court of Elżbieta Sieniawska née Lubomirska as an Example of Women's Patronage in the Times of the Saxon Kings]*, Cracow, 2014; A. Roćko and M. Górka (eds.), *Słynne kobiety w Rzeczypospolitej XVIII wieku [Famous Women in the 18th-Century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth]*, Warsaw, 2017. Nevertheless, we still know rather little about those women's musical tastes and experiences, their patronage of musicians, or amateur music-making. On Polish women's music patronage outside the country, cf. A. Markuszewska, *Festa i muzyka na dworze Marii Kazimiery Sobieskiej w Rzymie [Feasting and Music at the Court of Marie Casimire Louise de La Grange d'Arquien in Rome]*, Warsaw, 2012; eadem, *Kompozytorki i patronki muzyki w XVII i XVIII wieku [Women-Composers and Music Patrons in the 17th and 18th Centuries]*, Warsaw, 2017.

15 Quoted after: I. Bieńkowska, ‘Przedstawienia teatralno-muzyczne na dworach magnaterii litewskiej w połowie XVIII wieku’ [‘Music Theatre Spectacles at Lithuanian Aristocratic Houses in the Mid-18th-Century’], in *Barok. Historia-Literatura-Sztuka*, vol. XVII/2, no. 32, 2009, p. 147.

in Irena Bieńkowska's monograph on music at Prince Hieronim Florian Radziwiłł's court, where the author informs us that the magnate had three wives, about whose musical interests nothing can be said¹⁹, but at the same time she states that he had inherited his musical talent from his mother, Anna Radziwiłł née Sanguszkó, an eminent patroness of artists, though, as far as I have been able to establish, not of musicians in particular²⁰.

An important place among the well-known creative women-aristocrats is due to Franciszka Radziwiłł née Wiśniowiecka, author of more than a dozen plays²¹, to Barbara Urszula Sanguszkó, translator and writer, who held her own literary salon²², and to Franciszka Radziwiłł's successor in Nieśwież Castle (now Niasvizh in Belarus), Anna Radziwiłł née Mycielska, second wife to Michał Kazimierz Radziwiłł 'Rybenko', about whom he wrote in his diary: "The sacrament of Confirmation was held on the name day of my patron saint, where my wife and children staged the tragedy of Joseph the Patriarch, composed by my brother-in-law, Stanisław Mycielski, son of the castellan of Poznań."²³ Following her husband's death, Anna settled with her children in Mir (now Belarus), and it was there that she was visited by Mariusz Matuszewicz, who added the following entry to his diary: "A lady of great kindness for every guest resided there, who had about twenty ladies-in-waiting at her court, with whom she engaged in modest but joyful pastimes, herself writing various songs for them, since she writes Polish verse rather well, and composing melodies

for them, which she had them sing quite gracefully, having selected various voices for this purpose."²⁴

Another musically gifted aristocrat was Amalia Mniszczek née Bruhl, "famous for her beauty and immense knowledge, who mastered nearly all the European languages like her own, and was a great enthusiast of music and theatre."²⁵ It was she who sang the part of Orontes in the opera *Talestri la regina delle Amazzone* by Maria Antonia Walpurgis, the central figure of this paper. From a later period we have, first and foremost, Aleksandra Ogińska née Czartoryska, "an extremely well-read and well-educated lady, an enthusiast of the theatre, opera and concerts";²⁶ Anna Jabłonowska née Sapięha, a highly regarded patron of arts travelling to Italy, as well as Helena Radziwiłł née Przeździecka, endowed not only with captivating beauty, but (apparently) also with a wonderful voice, and skilled in playing the piano as well as the organ²⁷. "Nothing more beautiful can possibly be imagined, for instance, than the image of Princess Radziwiłł and her four children making music [...] It was exceedingly pleasant to listen to the trios that she performed with her two sons, or with her daughters [...]"²⁸ wrote a Livonian traveller in Poland, Friedrich Schulz.

Among distinguished late 18th-/early 19th-century women-aristocrats who had access to the best-quality education, including travels in Europe, we should mention the legitimate and illegitimate daughters of Izabella Czartoryska née Fleming. They were: Princess Maria Czartoryska of Württemberg, Zofia Zamojska née Czartoryska, and Cecylia Beydale. All of them developed their skills under the supervision of [composers] Wincenty and Franciszek Lessel. Individual songs written by these ladies have been preserved in the collection of *Historical Songs*, to words by Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz (1816). Among the Polish ladies we also find the name of Princess Emilia Potocka; two works by this composer were published by Józef Elsner in *Wybór Piękných Dzieł Muzycznych i Pieśni Polskich* [*A Selection of Beautiful Music*

19 I. Bieńkowska, *Muzyka na dworze księcia Hieronima Floriana Radziwiłła* [*Music at the Court of Prince Hieronim Florian Radziwiłł*], Warsaw, 2013, p. 24.

20 T. Kondratiuk, *Mecenat Anny z Sanguszków Radziwiłłowej (1676–1746)* [*Anna Radziwiłł née Sanguszkó and Her Art Patronage, 1676–1746*], Białá Podlaska, 1986; W. Karkucińska, *Anna z Sanguszków Radziwiłłowa (1676–1746): działalność gospodarcza i mecenat* [*Anna Radziwiłł née Sanguszkó (1676–1746): Economic Activity and Art Patronage*], Warsaw, 2000.

21 B. Judkowiak, 'Franciszka Urszula Radziwiłłowa (1705–1753)', in T. Kostkiewiczowa and Z. Goliński (eds.), *Pisarze polskiego oświecenia* [*Writers of the Polish Enlightenment*], vol. 1, Warsaw, 1992, pp. 66–88; eadem, *Słowo inscenizowane o Franciszce Urszuli Radziwiłłowej – poetce* [*Stage Presentation of Poet Franciszka Urszula Radziwiłłowa*], Poznań, 1992.

22 A. Jakuboszczak, *Sarmacka dama: Barbara Sanguszkowa (1718–1791) i jej salon towarzyski* [*The Sarmatian Lady: Barbara Sanguszkowa (1718–1791) and Her Salon*], Poznań, 2008.

23 E. Rudzki, *Damy polskie XVIII wieku* [*18th-Century Polish Ladies*], Warsaw, 1997, p. 110.

24 M. Matuszewicz, *Diariusz życia mego* [*A Diary of My Life*], vol. 2, Warsaw, 1986, p. 267.

25 E. Swiękowski, *Monografia Dukli* [*A Monograph of the Town of Dukla*], Cracow, 1903 (Dukla, 1997), p. 39.

26 Rudzki, *Damy*, p. 190.

27 Bogucka, *Białogłowa*, p. 189.

28 F. Schulz, *Podróże Infantczyka z Rygi do Warszawy i po Polsce w latach 1791–1793* [*A Livonian's Journeys from Riga to Warsaw and Poland in 1791–1793*], trans. J.I. Kraszewski, intr. and footnotes by W. Zawadzki, Warsaw, 1956, p. 166.

Works and Polish Songs] (1803). One of these, *Andante with Variations*, is a typical musical form practiced by women-composers at the turn of the 18th century. Despite the simplicity of the theme, each successive variation proves the princess's fine performance technique. She was capable of playing parallel octaves or figurations made up of small note values. However, Potocka is traditionally remembered in music history as a patroness. She was the dedicatee of Elsner's *Piano Quartet* Op. 15. One may surmise that the princess could perform the piano part in this composition with relative ease. Another noteworthy woman-composer was Amelia Załuska, daughter of Prince Michał Kleofas Ogiński, who composed famous polonaises. Załuska inherited her parents' musical talent (her mother was the singer Maria Néri), and she composed many pieces for piano.

From descriptions of Polish women's foreign journeys we learn that they took part in local forms of entertainment, such as balls, concerts, theatrical and operatic spectacles²⁹, as well as themselves organising concerts in rented apartments. An excellent illustration of this can be found in the diary of Katarzyna Plater née Sosnowska, who held private concerts in Rome, featuring her 13-year-old daughter Cecylia³⁰. The above-quoted Schulz, who travelled in Poland in 1791–1793, dedicated relatively much space to the musical culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. He wrote in one place: "Musical preoccupations are extremely common in Warsaw, especially in the upper strata of the society and in related circles, but are more frequent among women than men."³¹ And further:

Music, dancing, games and women is what the Warsaw society is chiefly preoccupied with. The upper classes have a particular liking for music, which is part of their education. Many pleasant voices can be found among both men and women, and many of those latter play various instruments well. Still, I cannot recall anything extraordinary, possibly because the Polish character is too flighty, and their life – too fragmented for them to find the time and patience to develop any kind of talent³².

Even if outstanding talents were indeed missing among the Polish music-making aristocracy, listening to and performing music was undoubtedly an important

element of their everyday lives, especially of women's lives. Nevertheless, as I mentioned above, our image of 18th-century music-making women who grew up, were active in, or associated with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is still very incomplete and definitely calls for further studies³³.

MARIA ANTONIA WALPURGIS –
A MUSIC-MAKING ARISTOCRAT
OF POLISH DESCENT

What Melpomene and Erato truly were
with Urania and Thalia in concord,
all this her pen has let us know in her masterful writing.
And, when she's heard playing, singing and composing
Polyhymnia and Euterpe come too,
So in short, this one goddess is equal to the six³⁴.

One of the most outstanding ladies in the times of the Saxon Kings, and an exceptional figure among the music-making women in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Maria Antonia Walpurgis (baptised Maria Antonia Walpurgis Symphorosa Wittelsbach) was thus described by the already quoted Matuszewicz in the context of her efforts to win the Polish crown: "herself the Elector's wife, and descendant of the daughter of the Polish king John III, a wise and good governor, also distinguished by her ambition and resolution, she desired the Polish crown greatly."³⁵ At least for these reasons she is well-known to historians of that period. I will therefore only limit myself to a few basic facts from her life, focusing on her work and experience in the field of music.

Born on 18th July 1724 in Munich as the eldest daughter of Elector Karl Albert of Bavaria (son of Theresa Kunegunda Sobieska) and Archduchess Maria Amalia Habsburg of Austria³⁶, Maria Antonia was very

³³ Such studies may prove difficult, though, since the 18th-century Commonwealth's aristocrats viewed music mainly as entertainment and an element of tradition, therefore – as an ephemeral art, and not as a serious preoccupation worthy of close attention and of being extensively commented upon in writing.

³⁴ Quoted after: E. Joubert, 'Maria Antonia of Saxony and the Emergence of Music Analysis in Opera Criticism', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 2013, p. 68.

³⁵ Matuszewicz, *Diariusz*, p. 411.

³⁶ A. Lynn James, 'Her Highness' Voice: Maria Antonia, Music and Culture at the Dresden Court', unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 2002. The majority of biographical data concerning Maria Antonia comes from this study, unless otherwise indicated.

²⁹ Cf. Małgorzata Ewa Kowalczyk, *Zagraniczne podróże Polek w epoce oświecenia [Polish Women's Foreign Travels in the Age of Enlightenment]*, Łomianki, 2019.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

³¹ Schulz, p. 283.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 166.

thoroughly educated. She knew Latin, French, Italian and German³⁷; she also studied mathematics, literature and music. Italian music and culture became her great passion. It was under the guidance of Italian teachers Pietro Torri and later Giovanni Porta that she learned to play the harpsichord; she focused first and foremost on singing, though. She studied composition and voice with the already mentioned Porta, as well as with Giovanni Ferrandini, author of many popular operas and occasional pieces written for the Bavarian court. At age 16 she was competent enough as a singer to perform one of the main parts in a pastoral play dedicated to her grandmother, the widowed empress in Vienna.

Maria Antonia's idyllic childhood and early teenage years came to an end with the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748)³⁸. Her father did not recognise Maria Theresa's (daughter of Emperor Charles VI, d. 1740) claim to the imperial throne, and in 1742 proclaimed himself Emperor Charles VII, but later events thwarted his plans. Eventually Maria Theresa's troops forced him to flee from Munich, and he died in 1745 soon after his defeat. His successor and Maria Antonia's brother, Maximilian Joseph III, strove to rebuild Bavaria's power, and this involved significantly reducing the state's funds for music and opera. Nevertheless, Maria Antonia did not stay for a long time in Munich under her brother's rule. In 1747 she married Friedrich Christian, heir to the Electorate of Saxony and the Polish king's son. The month-long wedding festivities in Dresden featured fireworks displays, as well as new opera productions (such as *La Spartana generosa ovvero Archidamia*, to a libretto by Giovanni Claudio Pasquini, with music by Johann Adolf Hasse), balls, laudatory speeches praising the newlyweds, special medals with images of the couple being struck, etc. – all this to celebrate the important dynastic alliance between the Wettin and the Wittelsbach houses³⁹.

37 Her Dresden library included books in French, German, Italian, Latin, English, and Spanish, representing many different disciplines; cf. James, *Her Highness' Voice*, p. 76.

38 On the Munich period in M.A. Walpurgis' life, cf. also some passages in B. Kägler, *Frauen am Münchener Hof (1651–1756)*, Kallmünz, 2011.

39 It was a double wedding, since Maria Antonia's brother married the sister of Friedrich Christian at the same time. The event was also celebrated in Warsaw with a solemn votive mass and a ball. Cf. A. Żórawska-Witkowska, *Muzyka na polskim dworze Augusta III [Music at Augustus III's Polish Court]*, part 1, Lublin, 2012, p. 436.

Dresden was, at the time when Maria Antonia came to that city, a major European music hub. Augustus III, king of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania as well as Elector of Saxony, was widely known as a music lover who spent enormous sums on his musical pastimes and on fees for talented artists⁴⁰. Employed by his court were Johann A. Hasse, an opera composer extremely highly regarded throughout Europe, who in 1730–1764 held the post of the royal and electoral Kapellmeister, as well as the latter's wife, Faustina Bordoni, considered as one of the most outstanding singers in the entire operatic history. Other court artists included such famous castrati as Domenico Annibali (known as Domenichino), Giovanni Bindi (Porporino), Niccolò Pozzi (Nicolini), and many other excellent singers, both Italian, German, and Polish, as well as brilliant instrumentalists, dancers, and set designers⁴¹.

It was probably while still in Munich that Maria Antonia wrote her first music compositions. It was scribes from Munich that copied her cycle of six arias entitled *Arie sei mit 4 safran buecher*, dated to 1747, which are the subject of the second part of this paper. In the same year she presented herself at the court of her parents-in-law as the author of libretti for two cantatas with music by Hasse, dedicated to the king and the queen. For Augustus III she wrote a piece invoking *Grande Augusto*, while for Queen Maria Josepha of Austria she penned the text of the birthday cantata *Che ti dirò Regina?* She also sang both pieces herself in the presence of the royal couple. The two cantatas are an interesting example of occasional pieces co-authored by a member of the royal-electoral family and conceived as a musical gift⁴². The works represent the borderland between the ruling family's private and public life.

A year later, an event took place that proved important to the further development of Maria Antonia's vocal abilities. The post of courtly Kapellmeister and her voice tutor was given to Nicolò Porpora, who boasted such pupils as the castrati Farinelli, Cafarelli, and Porporino, as well as women-singers: Caterina Regina Mingotti and Catarina Gabrieli. The young aristocrat

40 For more information, cf. *ibid.*, as well as: J.B. Stockigt, 'The Court of Saxony-Dresden', in S. Owens, B.M. Reul and J.B. Stockigt (eds.), *Music at German Courts, 1715–1760: Changing Artistic Priorities*, Woodbridge, 2011, pp. 17–50.

41 Żórawska-Witkowska, *Muzyka na polskim dworze*, op. cit

42 The history of presenting gifts is probably as old as mankind itself. One of the first researchers to study this subject was Marcel Mauss in his *Essai sur le don* of 1925.

developed her technique under Porpora's attentive guidance for three years. Despite her great lifelong fascination for the music of Hasse, it seems that the Dresden Kapellmeister never taught her composition, which may be related to the fact that he was frequently absent from the court for a longer time. *Il Sassone*, as he was commonly called, set to music one more libretto by Walpurgis – that of an oratorio entitled *La Conversione di Sant'Agostino* (1750), which belongs to Hasse's best compositions. A musician who may possibly have proved more to the future Electress of Saxony's liking as her teacher and artistic collaborator was Giovanni Alberto Ristori. Unfortunately, most of his output has been lost, but in his heyday he was very highly regarded as an organist, composer of sacred music, occasional pieces such as serenades, as well as cantatas and operas. He also wrote musical settings for Maria Antonia's cantatas. From the years 1747–48, we have three such compositions: *Nice e Tirsi*, *Lavinia a Turno*, and *Didone Abbandonata*. From a letter by the Count of Wackerbarth, who acted as Friedrich Christian's personal adviser, we know that Walpurgis performed these pieces in a very tasteful manner⁴³. She also sent their texts to Pietro Metastasio for appraisal. The latter wrote with unfeigned admiration in a letter (of 25th January 1749) to the Dresden-based librettist, Abbate Pasquini:

Never in eternity would I be able to imagine that a young princess could attain such perfection in poetry writing, and in a foreign language at that. What is admirable in her two cantatas and the canzonetta is not just the proper subtlety of thought, combination of ideas, noble phrases, harmonious verse and exquisite sensitivity of expression, but, what surprises me most, the artistic ease for which a lucky natural talent would not suffice, because it involves a steady pulse that can only be achieved through long and painstaking practice⁴⁴.

And in another letter he added: "Ah, wretched we are, my dear Pasquini! If the rulers can write such exquisite poetry, how shall we be able to console

ourselves in our humble fate, we, the hapless cicadas of the Parnassus?"⁴⁵

Metastasio was not the only one to appreciate Maria Antonia's poetic talent. In 1748, in recognition of her poetic and musical abilities, Walpurgis became one of the noble members of the Roman Pontificia Accademia degli Arcadi, assuming the pastoral name of Ermelinda Talea. She remained very active. Around 1750 she translated Metastasio's *Demetrio* into French and performed it with her courtiers. She also paraphrased the *Miserere* in French and published it under a pen name. She composed another cantata for the queen, *Le Siege de Troie*. She was evidently fascinated with the combination of French-language poetry and music in the Italian style. She engaged in these artistic projects while important events were also taking place in her personal life. In 1749 she miscarried, to her own and her husband's despair. The couple then went on a pilgrimage to Prague. During her second pregnancy she took better care of herself, and refrained from participating in courtly festivities. Her efforts brought the much awaited fruit, when in 1750 she gave birth to her first son, Frederick Augustus. In the following years, she bore six more children, only one of whom did not live to see adulthood.

In 1748, for Augustus III's birthday, Maria Antonia prepared his first opera, for which she also wrote the libretto. It was a *dramma pastorale* entitled *Il Trionfo della Fedeltà*, representing the Arcadian myth of humanity's Golden Age, characterised by simplicity, a life of truth and love; the world of singing shepherds, shepherdesses and nymphs. Walpurgis herself wrote in her address to the readers (*Avviso al lettore*): "The contents of this fable are entirely the author's invention, though the characters were modelled on the real world."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ "Oh poveri noi, caro Pasquini! Se i sovrani scrivono poesia in tale eccellenza, come ci consoleremo dell'umile nostra sorte noi sventurate cicale di Parnaso?", *ibid.*, p. 132.

⁴⁶ "L'argomento di questa favola é tutto d'invenzione dell'AUTRICE, benchè i caratteri fossero allora presi dal vero," "Il Trionfo della Fedeltà", in *Varj componimenti per musica di Ermelinda Talea reale pastorella arcade*, Roma 1772, p. 72. Following this work's premiere, its new version was presented in 1754, and the libretto was printed in the same year, along with its first reviews in the newly founded periodicals such as *Das Neueste aus der anmuthigen Gelehrsamkeit*. Notably, these were the earliest professional opera reviews for a wide audience, and they included music notation for the examples discussed. The reviews stressed Maria Antonia's unique position among the artists of the day, since she combined in her output the talents of a librettist, composer, and performer. On the history and contents of the reviews of Walpurgis' operas, cf. Joubert, *Maria Antonia of Saxony...*, pp. 37–73.

⁴³ This is a reliable opinion, since Wackerbarth was a music lover and connoisseur, as well as an important patron of arts. More on his musical patronage in Sz. Paczkowski, "Christoph August von Wackerbarth (1662–1734) and His 'Cammer-Musique'", in J. Guzy-Pasiak and A. Markuszewska (eds.), *Music Migration in the Early Modern Age: Centres and Peripheries – People, Works, Styles, Paths of Dissemination and Influence*, Warsaw, 2016, pp. 109–126.

⁴⁴ Metastasio to Pasquini quoted after: James, *Her Highness' Voice*, p. 132.

Even more interesting – because of its theme, circumstances of performance, and political message – is Maria Antonia’s next opera, entitled *Talestri, regina delle Amazzoni*. Its libretto draws on one of the most popular themes of 17th- and 18th-century opera, namely, the myth of the Amazons, strong women (*donne forti*) and warriors who, on the far peripheries of the world, created a community consisting exclusively of persons of their own sex, rejecting love, men, and married bliss⁴⁷. Their attributes were: celibacy, virginity, independence, and self-government. For this reason, they were presented as degenerate and repulsive, though physically they could often be beautiful and attractive. The authors’ task was to put those heroines on the right track by involving them in a love scheme, or, in other words, bringing in a strong male who would be capable of stirring dormant passions in them, the longing for love and physical closeness. Once awakened, these emotions could no longer be ignored, but found fulfilment in marriage. Thanks to a thus constructed plot, the woman was converted to the well-known and commonly accepted path of life, on which she no longer constituted a threat to men and to the world in which they ruled. The ending of Walpurgis’ opera confirms these then universally accepted views. Weapons, anger and an angry face do not become a woman, whose proper qualities are “faith, love, constancy and mercy”, as well a beauty and, importantly, seductiveness.

The opera *Talestri, regina delle Amazzoni* was composed and performed in August 1763⁴⁸ to mark the return of Augustus III to Dresden following the end of the Seven Years’ War, which had forced him to stay in Warsaw⁴⁹. The extremely lavish spectacle featured members of the royal family and courtiers as performers. Maria Antonia sang the part of Talestri; Antiope and Priestess Tomiri were impersonated by the Electress’s sisters-in-law, the princesses Maria Kunigunde and Maria Elisabeth; Countess Maria Amalia Mniszech, daughter of Heinrich von Brühl, Augustus III’s prime minister, sang Oronte, and Baron von Rechenberg was Learco. Maria Antonia’s children appeared in ensemble scenes. The very fact of an opera being performed by the royalty and by high court officials

was something unusual and extraordinary⁵⁰. From a letter written by Maria Antonia to Empress Maria Theresa in September 1763, we learn that this was requested by the king himself, and that the request proved by no means easy to comply with for the Electress at that time:

I am greatly obliged to Count von Sternberg, who painted very beautiful sets for my opera. Should I have the honour of singing in front of Your Majesty, the joy of pleasing you would be the best form of success to me. But I must confess that the opera has given me a lot of pain. I took the liberty of offering to sing in it as proof of our happiness with the king’s lucky return, but unfortunately this gave rise to the wish for the work to be performed by us in front of others. And so now [Hasse’s] *Leucippo* is the subject of our debate; the same *Leucippo* that has already been sung by everyone! I am doing my best to get out of this task, but since they tell me that this is the king’s desire, what else can I do? It is a source of real concern to me, after so many years of dealing with more serious and useful issues, it makes me genuinely sad to see myself reduced to the profession of singer! It does not become either my age or status. And what will the audience think, which has already begun to develop a favourable opinion about my person? They will say that I only care for some frivolous talents [of mine], and I will most likely lose whatever little merit I have gained [with them] so far. Ah, my dear friend, forgive me for opening my heart to you by sharing with you a subject so delicate that I dare not express my sadness to any person of a status different than yours⁵¹.

As a consequence of the Seven Years’ War, Augustus III had moved to Warsaw. Until 1761 (when they were forced to leave Dresden for Munich) Maria Antonia and her husband Friedrich Christian took care of state affairs in Dresden. This gave Walpurgis the confidence that she could exert authority by herself. From her letter to the Empress it is evident that Augustus III’s daughter-in-law saw herself as a person with some experience in the field of politics, which she wished to demonstrate through her new stage work. She found it painful to be reduced to the role of a subject and a person of secondary importance, degraded to the role of singer, which represents the literal fact of being treated as a mere ornament at the royal court (however talented), but also has a notable symbolic significance, which could serve as a point of departure for a consideration of the role of music in the lives of 18th-century aristocrats, including this particularly intriguing

⁴⁷ D.E. Freeman, ‘La guerriera amante: Representations of Amazons and Warrior Queens in Venetian Baroque Opera’, in *Musical Quarterly*, no. 30, 1996, pp. 431–460.

⁴⁸ The libretto of *Talestri* was first printed in 1760 in Munich.

⁴⁹ *Talestri/Regina delle Amazzoni/Dramma/composto, messo in musica, e con estrema/magnificenza recitato colle/cognate e alcune dame/da/ERMELINDA TALEA/al ritorno in Sassonia del Re/AUGUSTO III./dopo l’ultima Guerra l’anno MDCCLXIII.*

⁵⁰ Ch. Fischer, ‘Self-Stylisation in a Ceremonial Context: Maria Antonia Walpurgis as ‘*Talestri, regina delle amazzoni*’”, in M. Bucciarelli, N. Dubovy and R. Strohm (eds.), *Italian Opera in Central Europe. Vol 1: Institutions and Ceremonies*, Berlin, 2006, p. 204. The article also provides interesting information concerning the performance, the venue, the audience, and the reception of the work.

⁵¹ James, *Her Highness’ Voice*, p. 147.

example of a person who had been engaged in creating and performing music for many years.

As we know, by 1763 Maria Antonia had composed two operas and several cantatas, authored the text of an oratorio as well as several minor poetic works. She was a very creative and versatile person, who made a name for herself as a poet, composer, and singer. She also played the harpsichord. Her two surviving operatic scores represent surprisingly high musical standards for an unprofessional musician who saw herself as a *dilettante*⁵² and did not reap financial profits from her musical activity. For this reason, she did not have to dedicate much care to attracting and satisfying a wide theatrical audience. Even if some of her contemporaries' favourable remarks concerning her artistic achievements were mere flattery, such pieces as the arias *Sempre m'avrai sul ciglio*, *Pallid'ombra che d'intorno*, and the opening sinfonia of *Talestri* could well be the work of a professional composer. The surviving music proves that the Electress perfectly mastered the composition techniques and style that were dominant in Europe at that time. All the same, she saw the profession of a musician (a singer) publicly presenting her skills as improper for a woman of her age and status; not serious enough, possibly even dishonourable, and most certainly lowering her status and the courtiers' respect, since it created an image of her as a vain and frivolous person. Such opinions could well send her into political oblivion. This is most likely what other aristocrats thought as well, and it was probably for this reason that so few of them left any traces of their artistic activity behind, since they considered it as a trifle not worthy of serious attention, or even preferred to hide it from their environment. This was particularly true of women, who gained prestige as patronesses of art, but lost it if they presented their artistic skills in public. Possibly for this very reason, Walpurgis' manuscripts remained unpublished for a long time, and her paraphrase of the psalm *Miserere* was printed under a nom de plume. This situation would probably remain unchanged, had it not been for Maria Antonia's contacts with the Gottscheds⁵³.

⁵² Ch. Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces*, vol.1, London, 1775, pp. 136–137.

⁵³ Johann and Luisa Gottscheds are considered today as representatives of the German Enlightenment. They were particularly interested in supporting and cultivating writings and poetry in the German language, and in helping the German artists achieve appreciation by printing their works. Maria Antonia and Friedrich Christian were frequent guests at lectures which Johann Gottsched delivered at Leipzig University. He also translated into German three of her libretti: *Il Trionfo della Fedeltà*,

Augustus III died in the year of the *Talestri* premiere, and Maria Antonia became the Electress. She did not, however, enjoy her newly gained political power for a long time, since her husband Friedrich Christian passed away just several months later. From that moment on, as the Electress-Widow she shared her time between Dresden and her native Munich. In 1772 she made her long-dreamt-of grand tour of Italy, and received a particularly splendid reception in Padua, where she was honoured with a performance of *Il Trionfo della Fedeltà*⁵⁴. Notably, one of the performers was Gaetano Guadagni, then a leading castrato soloist, the first person to sing the part of Orfeo in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Guadagni performed several times in front of the Electress-Widow in Padua, with great success, and later accompanied her on her way back to Munich, where he continued to enjoy her special favours⁵⁵.

For many years in succession, Maria Antonia maintained an intense correspondence with Frederick the Great of Prussia, which provides evidence, among others, of their musical interests⁵⁶. Until the end of her life she remained one of her main art patrons in Dresden directly after the Seven Years' War, extending her patronage over such musicians as Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen, Maria Teresa Agnesi, Giovanni Battista Ferrandini, and Johann Schürer. Many beautiful and important works were dedicated to her⁵⁷. She left behind a splendid library, which demonstrates her erudition, culture and taste, as well as considerable knowledge of literature, history and philosophy⁵⁸. Nevertheless, as the Electress-Widow she wrote not a single note of music more. She died in Dresden, on 23rd April 1780.

⁵⁴ *La Conversione di Sant'Agostino, and Talestri regina delle Amazzone*. It was most likely under the Gottscheds' influence that the electoral couple extended their patronage over the local artists, thus joining the ranks of 'enlightened' rulers of that age.

⁵⁵ M.N. Massaro, 'Il Ballo pantomimo al Teatro Nuovo di Padova (1751–1830)', *Acta Musicologica*, 1985, p. 245.

⁵⁶ P. Howard, *The Modern Castrato. Gaetano Guadagni and the Coming of a New Operatic Age*, Oxford, 2014, pp. 155–157.

⁵⁷ A. Yorke-Long, 'Maria Antonia of Saxony', in *Music at Court. Four Eighteenth Century Studies*, London, 1954, pp. 89–93.

⁵⁸ Such as the theoretical treatise by Antonio Eximeno y Pujades, *Dell' origine e delle regole della musica, colla storia del suo progresso, decadenza, e rinnovazione*, Rome, 1774.

⁵⁹ The contents of her library collection are listed by A.L. James, *Her Highness' Voice*, op. cit, pp. 40 ff. Maria Antonia had brought with her from Munich the *Catalogo de[i] Libri Mumerati Musicali D: S: A: R: M:A:D: de B*, and she extended her music collection in Dresden. It included, among others, works by Ferrandini, Jommelli, Manna, Hasse, and many others.

SEI ARIE, OR SIX ARIAS FOR SOPRANO,
STRINGS AND BASSO CONTINUO (1747)

The six arias in question are as follows (sequence as in the Dresden manuscript Mus.3119-F-11):

1. *Perfido mi tradisti*
2. *Non parlarmi più d'amore*
3. *Barbaro dispietato d'ogni mio ben*
4. *Prendi l'ultimo addio*
5. *Quanto è felice un cor costante*
6. *Perdei l'amato bene*

The texts for the arias, also written by Walpurgis herself, depict the musical 'affection' of love in its various forms: anger at the beloved one's infidelity; betrayal; sadness; despair, and fidelity. These simple texts directly express the emotional state of the lyrical 'I', and could therefore be easily set to music.

Musically speaking, the arias represent the galant style. All of them were composed in major keys, surprisingly undifferentiated: two arias in F major, two in G major, and two in A major, which may either reflect Maria Antonia's preference for these keys or suggest that she saw the arias more as exercises in composition than as a consciously arranged cycle of works. All the arias are in *da capo* form, and follow the pattern: opening ritornello A (a1 + a2), central ritornello B (b1), *da capo*. Two of the arias (the 1st and 6th) have different tempi in sections A and B, which corresponds to the contrasted affections they represent. Four arias include tempo indications: allegro (the 1st), allegro moderato (the 2nd), largo cantabile (the 3rd), and andante non presto (the 5th). Aria 4 has no tempo marked, and in the sixth the tempo is only indicated for section B.

The opening ritornellos notably vary in length (from 5 to 21 mm.); they demonstrate interesting and varied rhythmic patterns (of special interest are the 1st and 2nd violin parts in the last aria). In the ritornellos Maria Antonia demonstrates the knowledge of typical galant-style concepts, such as triplet and scale progressions, syncopation, ornamentation, and song-like melodies (Musical Example 1).

The arias are song-like and melodious, albeit sometimes conventional, especially in places where Walpurgis introduces too many motivic progressions, or repeats and explores the same motif several times. The vocal part comprises frequent leaps, scale progressions, as well as coloraturas emphasising important words, but the use of

these elements depends on the affection represented by the given aria (Musical Example 2).

The ambitus of the vocal part ranges from d' to a", though the voice rarely descends to d', usually oscillating between f' and a". Apparently Walpurgis followed the fashion of the age in exhibiting a preference for the *messa di voce* ornament, which frequently occurs in the openings of her arias. The notated fermata that followed provided opportunities for vocal improvisation. We can safely surmise (on the basis of our knowledge of other pieces which she performed) that the composer sang the arias herself.

By way of illustrating specific solutions applied by Walpurgis, I will now analyse two selected arias from this cycle: No. 3 *Barbaro dispietato* and No. 4 *Prendi l'ultimo addio*, which represent two different affections, and therefore call for a different type of musical setting.

Aria No. 3 has the following text:

Barbaro dispietato	Ruthless barbarian
D'ogni mio ben mi privi	You deprive me of all that is good.
Perfido ancor vivi	Perfidious, yet still alive,
Non ti punisce il ciel.	The heavens don't punish you.
Ma se del Cielo irrato	But though the thunderbolts
Il fulmini son lenti	Are slow to come down from the
Trema pur e ramenti	irate skies
Ch'io vivo e son fedel.	Still tremble and remember
	That I am alive and faithful [to you].

The aria exploits the affection of amorous agitation, fury, and the desire to punish the unfaithful lover. The aria, in F major, bears no tempo indication, but both the words and their musical setting suggest a fast tempo. In the first four measures the 1st and 2nd violins play in unison, and so do the viola and the b.c. Since all the instruments perform the same melodic material, in the opening the whole orchestra plays in unison, which from the very first bars reflects the agitated mood. This is a solution favoured both by Neapolitan composers and by Giovanni A. Ristori, the Dresden court composer, who frequently set Walpurgis' texts to music. In the following measures, the 1st and 2nd violins perform the main melody of the aria in unison, whereas the low strings provide the rhythmic drive, in the form of rapid quaver passages that enhance the impression of the lyrical subject's anger. The vocal part seemingly enters three measures too early, before the 1st and 2nd violins have completed their phrases, which distinctly brings out the word *barbaro* (*barbarian*), possibly performed *messa di voce*. The vocal

Maria Antonina Walpurgis, *Perfido mi tradisti*, opening ritornello

Allegro

[Violino I]

[Violino II]

[Viola]

[Soprano]

[B.c.]

2 3 4

5 6 7 8

Musical Example 1. Opening ritornellos.

The image displays a musical score for six staves, organized into two systems of three staves each. The top system covers measures 9 through 13, and the bottom system covers measures 14 through 17. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The top two staves of each system are in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and triplets. Measure 11 features a fermata over a whole note. Measures 16 and 17 contain triplet markings over groups of notes. The bottom two staves of each system are empty, indicating parts for instruments not shown in this excerpt.

Musical Example 1. (Continued)

Maria Antonina Walpurgis, *Non parlami più d'amore*, opening ritornello

Andante non presto

Musical Example 1. (Continued)

The image displays a musical score for six arias by Maria Antonia Walpurgis. The score is presented in two systems, each containing five staves. The first system covers measures 6 through 10, and the second system covers measures 11 through 14. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and the time signature is 3/4. The top staff is the Soprano line, the middle two staves are the Violin and Viola parts, the bottom two staves are the Violoncello and Contrabasso parts, and the fifth staff is the Basso Continuo line. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The Basso Continuo line is particularly active, providing a steady accompaniment for the vocal and string parts.

Musical Example 1. (Continued)

Maria Antonina Walpurgis, *Barbaro dispietato d'ogni mio ben*, opening ritornello

Musical Example 1. (Continued)

The image displays a musical score for six measures, numbered 5 through 11. The score is arranged in two systems. Each system contains five staves: a soprano line (treble clef), a violin line (treble clef), a viola line (treble clef), a basso continuo line (bass clef), and a cello/bass line (bass clef). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is 3/4. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing rests. The basso continuo line is particularly active, providing a rhythmic and harmonic foundation. The overall texture is characteristic of 18th-century Baroque chamber music.

Musical Example 1. (Continued)

The image displays a musical score for six staves, organized into two systems. The first system covers measures 12 to 15, and the second system covers measures 16 to 18. The notation includes treble clefs for the first two staves, a bass clef for the third staff, and a basso continuo clef (C-clef on the third line) for the fourth staff. The fifth staff is a vocal line with lyrics, and the sixth staff is a bass line. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics 'Bar - ba - ro' are written under the vocal line in measure 18.

Musical Example 1. (Continued)

Maria Antonina Walpurgis, *Prendi l'ultimo addio*, opening ritornello

Largo cantabile

[Violino I]

[Violino II]

[Viola]

[Soprano]

[B.c.]

3 *tr*

4 *tr*

Musical Example 1. (Continued)

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 5 and 6, and the second system covers measures 7 and 8. The score is arranged for Soprano, Violin, Viola, Cello/Bass, and Basso Continuo. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. Measure 7 includes trills (tr) in the Soprano and Violin parts.

Musical Example 1. (Continued)

Maria Antonina Walpurgis, *Quanto è felice un cor costante*, opening ritornello

Allegro moderato

[Violino I]

[Violino II]

[Viola]

[Soprano]

[B.c.]

1 2 3 4

5 6 7 8

Musical Example 1. (Continued)

The image displays a musical score for measures 9 through 16. It is arranged in two systems. The first system covers measures 9-12, and the second system covers measures 13-16. Each system contains five staves: a Soprano line (treble clef), a Violin line (treble clef), a Viola line (treble clef), a Cello/Bass line (bass clef), and a Basso Continuo line (bass clef). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The time signature is not explicitly shown but appears to be 3/4 based on the notation. The Soprano part features melodic lines with trills and triplets. The Violin and Viola parts provide harmonic support with triplets and sustained notes. The Cello/Bass and Basso Continuo parts play a steady, rhythmic accompaniment. Measure numbers 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 are clearly marked above the Soprano staff.

Musical Example 1. (Continued)

Musical score for measures 17-21. The score includes two vocal staves (treble clef) with triplets and trills, a basso continuo staff (bass clef), and two empty bass clef staves. The key signature is two sharps (D major) and the time signature is common time.

Maria Antonina Walpurgis, *Perdei l'amato bene*, opening ritornello

Musical score for the opening ritornello of *Perdei l'amato bene*. The score includes five staves: Violino I, Violino II, Viola, Soprano, and B.c. The key signature is one flat (B minor) and the time signature is common time. The score includes triplets and a second ending marked with a '2'.

Musical Example 1. (Continued)

The musical score is presented in two systems. Each system consists of five staves. The top two staves are for the Soprano, the middle three are for the strings (Grand Staff), and the bottom one is for the Basso Continuo. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). Measure numbers 3, 4, 5, and 6 are indicated at the beginning of their respective staves. Trills (tr) are marked above several notes in measures 3, 4, 5, and 6. The notation includes various rhythmic values, slurs, and rests.

Musical Example 1. (Continued)

55

56 57

Bel - la tua fe - del - tà

58

59 60

Non parlarmi più d'amore

76

77 78

li - ber - tà

80

81 82 83 84

Barbaro dispietato d'ogni mio ben

28

29 30 31

ciel _____ non

Quando è felice un cor costante

66

67 68 69

può _____ fi - dar _____

70

71 72 73

_____ si

Musical Example 2. Coloraturas

- *Perfido*, mm. 55–59
- *Non parlarmi*, mm. 76–84
- *Barbaro*, mm. 28–31
- *Quanto e felice*, mm. 66–73

part next features scale progressions already known from the opening ritornello, as well as leaps on the words *barbaro*, *privi*, and *perfido*. On *ciel* there comes a three-measure coloratura based on figurations, later applied both in the ritornello between a1 and a2, and in the next repetition of the same word. Notably, in section A the singer is accompanied by all the instruments in a very lively fashion. After the central ritornello, conventionally modulated to D minor, there comes the much shorter section B, characterised by a rhetorical treatment of the text (scale progressions on *fulmini*, *son*, and *vivo*; rests following such words as *trema* and *ramenti*).

Aria No. 4 has the following text:

Prendi l'ultimo addio	Accept this last farewell
Bell'idolo adorato	Beautiful deity, whom I adore
Più non chiamarmi ingrato	Do not call me ungrateful any more
Ch'io moro à te fedel.	Since I'm dying faithful to you.
Rammentati ben mio	Remember my love
Che la ria morte istessa	That evil death
Tien l'alma meno oppressa	Oppresses the soul less
Che un dubbio si crudel.	Than doubt so cruel.

The aria *Prendi l'ultimo addio* is a song of farewell, in which the lyrical subject expresses sorrow caused by the object of love not believing in his or her fidelity and affection. Such an attitude can only lead to the parting of the lovers. The tempo is *largo cantabile*, the time signature – 4/4, the key – that of G major (and E-major in section B). The eight-measure opening ritornello introduces a melancholy but eminently song-like music material. This section, notable for its simplicity, is based on repeated motifs in the 1st violin. The text is set nearly syllabically. In section A the melodic line is made up more of steps than leaps, while the latter are more frequent in the very brief section B. Of note is the rhythmic fragmentation and diversity of the vocal part. Surprisingly, there are no coloraturas in this aria. All this contributes to a proper rendering of the selected affection. Charming as this piece may be, it undoubtedly lacks the depth and drama known from similar settings by Hasse, Vivaldi, and Porpora. All the same, the arias in question demonstrate that by age 23 Maria Antonia Walpurgis had already mastered the *da capo* form, harmony, principles of writing for solo voice and orchestra, and the key elements of the galant style. She was also capable of employing conventional turns and ideas to reflect verbal meanings. These earliest compositions of hers are full of grace and elegance – qualities that she would further develop in her later works.

Maria Antonia was one of the numerous 18th-century aristocrats who spent their free time performing and

composing music. Her competence in this field, however, was far greater than the skills typically exhibited by well-educated girls, as confirmed especially by her late compositions, such as the opera *Talestri*. However, also in Walpurgis' case her social status and attitude to the musical preoccupations restricted the possibility of going beyond a conventional approach to her own art. On the other hand, her position in the social hierarchy allowed her to see and hear her own music performed both by amateurs and professionals⁵⁹. This privilege undoubtedly had a positive impact on her musical output. Her music lacks neither charm nor expertise, nor does it lack the flame that Jean-Jacques Rousseau unfairly denied to the works of women-composers.

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⁵⁹ The exceptional case of Francesca Caccini cannot make us blind to the fact that women-musicians coming from the lower social strata had no such opportunities.

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