

Paradisi, he most likely moved to Venice and began training under the Neapolitan composer Nicola Porpora around the years 1726–33, while Porpora was working for the Ospedale degli Incurabili.¹³ During these years, Porpora was already a well-known vocal instructor for many other castrati, including the famous Farinelli and Caffarelli, and he excelled in training pure vocal technique and absolute control of the voice, especially in regard to agility, dynamics, and coloring—aspects that embody Paradies’s own compositional style. It is likely that Paradies accompanied Porpora to London from 1733 to 1738, after which the corrupt “Paradies,” rather than the Italianate “Paradisi,” began to appear on his publications; it occurs, for example, on his first known opera (*Alessandro in Persia*, Lucca, 1738). Paradies began composing sacred music for the *figlie del coro* at the Ospedale della Pietà in 1738, and was commissioned by the Mendicanti’s procurators for *Le muse in gara* in 1740. After a few years composing operas in Venice, he moved to London in 1746 and stayed there for many years, making his living teaching, composing, and serving as a music scribe before returning to Venice in his old age.

Paradies’s surviving compositions are primarily vocal and orchestral works. Many, including miscellaneous arias, cantatas, and sinfonias, were created as parts of collective works with other composers or substituted into larger theatrical performances. His vocal music, however, was not exceptionally popular during his time. Charles Burney, referring to the opera *Fetonte*, wrote:

In examining the airs of this opera that were printed, the first seems very common and ill-phrased, nor is there much *estro*, or grace, in any of his songs that I have seen. Indeed he seems to have had no great experience as an opera-composer. And during his residence in England he acquired more reputation by the lessons he published for the harpsichord, and the scholars he made on that instrument, for which he was an admirable master, than by his vocal compositions.¹⁴

Burney’s assessment is confirmed by the fact that Paradies’s keyboard sonatas, titled *Sonate di gravicembalo dedicate a Sua Altezza Reale La Principessa Augusta* (1754), became so popular that they were published in eight different editions—including one in Paris and one in Amsterdam—during the eighteenth century.

Paradies’s skill as a composer, despite Burney’s critique, can be discerned from his reputation as a teacher and the legacy of his composition student, the elder Thomas Linley (1733–95).¹⁵ Linley not only became a successful

composer of English opera but also an extremely successful teacher, passing down skills in vocal performance and composition to his children. Paradies would have taught Linley during his first decade in London. During this time (specifically 1751–57), Paradies also received an exclusive permit to produce Italian operas and compose for the Haymarket Theatre with the poet Francesco Vanneschi. Record of his excellence as a composer and teacher of vocal music also lies in his volume of 185 solfeggi for soprano (ca. 1745) and the autobiography of his pupil Gertrud Elisabeth Schmeling-Mara.¹⁶

Genre and Political Themes

The genre known today as the serenata appeared with a variety of different names in the eighteenth century: “divertimento musicale,” “festa di camera,” “azione teatrale,” “poetica composizione,” among many others. On his musical score of *Le muse in gara*, for instance, Pietro Domenico Paradies labeled it a “cantata,” as a serenata was often considered a special, occasional type of cantata in the eighteenth century. The label the poet chose for this sort of work would often reflect an aspect of the event for which it was performed. In the two different publications of its libretto *Le muse in gara* is branded as both a “divertimento musicale” and as a “componimento in musica.” While both of these terms emphasize the musical aspect of *Le muse in gara*, the expression “divertimento”—found on the published libretto sold to audience members on the evening of the performance—highlights the amusement and entertainment during the actual performance of *Le muse in gara*. On the other hand, “componimento,” which appears within the published report of Frederick Christian’s travels, signals the importance of the poetic text or “composition” that was purchased within the context of the travelogue.¹⁷

Le muse in gara (The muses in contest) features properties typical of eighteenth-century serenatas, including Arcadian devices, alternating recitatives and arias, and extremely virtuosic solo lines. Its narrative presents a *gara* or contest between the muses on how to correctly honor a hero, and it also quite notably displays political import by implicating the relationship between the Venetian Republic and Prince Frederick Christian’s royal Saxon and Austrian families. Indeed, throughout the eighteenth century, the works performed by the *figlie* often included social and political frameworks that were significant within the culture of Venice. One common design was the reinforcement of the long-standing “Myths

Tonkünstler, welches Nachrichten von dem Leben und Werken musikalischer Schriftsteller, berühmter Componisten, Sänger, Meister auf Instrumenten, Dilettanten, Orgel- und Instrumentenmacher, enthält, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1792), s.v. “Paradies (Pietro Domen.).”

13. Confusion surrounds Paradies’s place of origins, as he is often ascribed the title “napoletano,” while scholars have found references to members of a Paradisi family that lived around either Florence or Rome during the years of his youth. See Gajewski, “Pier Domenico Paradies,” 234.

14. Charles Burney, *A General History of Music, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period*, vol. 4 (London, 1789), 455–56.

15. See “Memoir of Thomas Linley,” *The Harmonicon: A Journal of Music*, vol. 3 (London: Samuel Leigh, 1825), 215.

16. Gertrud Elisabeth Schmeling-Mara, “Eine Selbstbiographie der Sängerin Gertrud Elisabeth Mara,” ed. O. von Riese- mann, *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, new series, 10, no. 33 (18 August 1875), col. 515, translated in Gajewski, “Pier Domenico Paradies,” 242–43.

17. The libretto most likely published and sold to audience members for the evening of the performance was *Le Muse in Gara: Divertimento Musicale per sua Altezza Reale, di Polonia Principe Elettore di Sassonia il Serenissimo Federico Cristiano Da rappresentarsi dalle Figlie del pio ospedale de Mendicanti* (Venice, 1740). The published report of Frederick Christian’s travels was *L’Adria Festosa* (1740), cited previously in note 3.