

## Palladio as a tool for opera buffa research: mapping opera troupes and opera buffa outside of Italy (1745-1765)

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# ***Palladio* as a Tool for *opera buffa* Research**

## **Mapping Opera Troupes and *opera buffa***

### **Outside of Italy (1745-1765)**

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KORDULA KNAUS/ANDREA ZEDLER

The establishment and European dissemination of the new genre *opera buffa* characterizes the 18<sup>th</sup>-century operatic landscape. In 1745, Angelo and Pietro Mingotti traveled with a troupe of Italian singers to Graz, Prague, Leipzig, and Hamburg to perform the *opere buffe* *La finta cameriera*, *Orazio*, and *La Fiammetta* – operas that were successfully imported from Naples over Rome to Venice in the early 1740s.<sup>1</sup> In the years to follow, several impresarios tried their luck with *opera buffa* in various European cities. Antonio Denzio performed the opera parody *L'industria galante* in Munich in 1748. This comic opera was followed by *La commedia in commedia*, *Orazio* and *Madama Ciana* (1748-1749) presumably performed by the troupe of Eustachio Bambini who later on traveled to Paris with a similar repertoire.<sup>2</sup> Giovanni Francesco Crosa went to London, Brussels and Amsterdam to perform, among other works, *Orazio*, *La commedia in commedia* and *La finta cameriera* (1748-1750). It was mostly traveling troupes that disseminated the new genre in the late 1740s and 1750s, with varying degrees of success as the bankruptcy and flight from London of impresario Giovanni Francesco Crosa vividly illustrates.<sup>3</sup> By the 1760s, *opera buffa* was performed all over Europe, from St. Petersburg in the Northeast to Cádiz in the South-West, and not only by traveling troupes (which were very prominent in the early years of the genre) but also by court opera ensembles.

To explore these manifold travels of the new genre is one aim of the research project *Opera buffa as a European Phenomenon. Migration, Mapping and Transformation of a*

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1 See MÜLLER VON ASOW, 1917; THEOBALD, 2015.

2 See DI PROFIO, 2005, pp. 91-102; TROLESE, 2005, pp. 103-115.

3 See HOWARD, 2014, pp. 27-43; RASCH, 2006, pp. 118-120; KING/WILLAERT, 1993, pp. 246-275.

*New Genre (1745-1765)*.<sup>4</sup> It started in October 2017 at the University of Bayreuth and investigates the dissemination of *opera buffa* in Europe from 1745 to 1765. To analyze dissemination practices of that scale (with over 500 different *opera buffa* productions) requires the use of applications developed in the field of Digital Humanities. For this project, the open-access tool *Palladio* was chosen to visualize the collected data.<sup>5</sup> *Palladio* is a powerful tool to map geovisual data and to combine it with person data (e.g. names of singers, impresarios, etc.). Until now, the tool has not been used in the field of *opera buffa* research. While working with *Palladio*, it quickly became clear that it is not only helpful in achieving several visualizations of the results, but also facilitates the analysis of the opera network while entering data in the project's database and preparing qualitative analysis of several *opere buffe*. After introducing the general outline of the project and its three parts ("migration", "mapping", and "transformation"), this paper will focus on the "mapping" aspect of the project and give an insight into the work with *Palladio* using the *opera buffa Orazio* as a representative example. Ortrun Landmann described *Orazio* as "a particularly stark example for the pasticcio practice that was virtually raised to the level of a principle".<sup>6</sup> This opera was particularly chosen for the following reasons:

- (1) *Orazio* was performed outside of and within Italy throughout the whole period of investigation<sup>7</sup> and was therefore extensively adapted after the first performance in Naples (1737).
- (2) The geographical dissemination of *Orazio* is representative for the whole repertoire.
- (3) *Orazio* was taken up by opera companies that played a key role in the success of the repertoire outside of Italy – including the troupes of the Mingotti brothers, Santo Lapis, Giovanni Francesco Crosa, Eustachio Bambini and Nicola Setaro.
- (4) The 41 performance series,<sup>8</sup> which could be reconstructed for *Orazio*, are well documented. Already with this representative opera, the basic assumption, that there

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4 The project is funded by DFG – Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (no. 362114878: online: <http://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/362114878>, 06.12.2019) and runs from 2017 to 2020.

5 *Palladio* is already used as a tool within American theater research: see BEST et al., 2018.

6 "ein besonders krasses Beispiel für die im 18. Jh. nahezu zum Prinzip erhobene Pasticcio-praxis". LANDMANN, 1972, p. 448.

7 Within the project, the performance series on Italian territory will also be included for the qualitative analyses of certain *opere buffe*. For *Orazio* the investigation period is between 1737 and 1765 and includes 41 performance series.

8 The term performance series is here understood as a run of performances of one *opera buffa* at a certain performance place. Therefore, information on performance dates (on a daily basis), the performance place, names of singers, dancers and persons involved in the opera production, such as librettists, composers, impresarios, stage decorators, costume designers and dancing masters are collected based on information found in librettos, music scores, playbills, newspaper announcements, correspondence and literature.

is a strong network of persons involved in the early *opera buffa* business not only inside but also outside of Italy can be well demonstrated.

## The aims of the project

The terms used in the project's subtitle ("migration", "mapping", and "transformation") designate particular conceptual approaches to central research questions that immediately relate to the extensive pasticcio practice in *opera buffa*. On its way through various European cities, *opera buffa* was adapted to fit to local social or political conditions, to fit the abilities of certain singers, to serve as a basis for the compositional experiments of local *maestri di cappella* and for many other reasons. The adaptation practices varied from minor changes to complete reworkings in the typical pasticcio manner. So far, *opera buffa* research has mainly focused on single works, particular composers or certain cities.<sup>9</sup> The project *Opera buffa as a European Phenomenon* instead wants to provide a more systematic approach and explore the preconditions that could, among others, lead to pasticcio practices.

The part of the project addressing "migration" aims to generate knowledge about the dissemination mechanisms and migration processes of people (e.g. composers, impresarios, singers, musicians, dancers, etc.) and objects (e.g. scores, librettos, costumes, stage designs, etc.) that were involved in the production and performance of *opera buffa* in Europe. The project carves out the particularities of *opera buffa* in comparison to *opera seria* and *intermezzi*, and shows the varieties of dissemination practices. This concerns, for example, the singers: in contrast to *opera seria* singers who were often engaged by a particular court and *intermezzi* singers who often traveled as a couple from city to city, *opera buffa* singers had manifold forms of contracts and travel patterns in the 1750s and 1760s. The fact that an *opera buffa* troupe in this time also involved two serious parts that could be casted with *opera seria* singers makes the formation of the *opera buffa* ensemble even more complicated.<sup>10</sup> A differentiated and systematic approach is necessary to study the dichotomy between the permanent positions of court singers and the individually manifold terms and contracts of employment for traveling impresarios and singers.

Another question concerns the mobility of musical manuscripts: many of them were copied in the city of their first performance, mostly in Venice (indicated by paper, wa-

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9 Martina Gremler, for example, studied the dissemination of Sacchini's *L'isola d'amore* in Europe (GREMLER, 2015), Giovanni Polin explored several operas by Baldassare Galuppi (POLIN, 1995 and 2008), numerous publications (BRANDENBURG, 2007; CALELLA, 2009; GREMLER, 2012; SCHRAFFL, 2012 and GREMLER, 2015), partly originating from the project *Die Opera buffa auf der Wiener Bühne 1763-1782*, give detailed information about the establishment of *opera buffa* in Vienna in the 1760s.

10 On the topic of adaptation and modification, concerning serious and comic parts see KNAUS, 2017, pp. 239-261.

termarks and scribes). These manuscripts often reveal traces of adaptation for performances in other, often non-Italian, cities (e.g. inserted arias, comments, transpositions). Other scores were written outside of Italy and represent specific versions performed at these venues (e.g. the scores preserved in Dresden or Vienna). One goal of the project is to find out how the Italian manuscripts found their way to performance venues all over Europe. Impresarios, composers, singers, *maestri di cappella*, agents, diplomats, or other culturally interested persons in the broader sense were potential intermediaries. The project examines and specifies the role that these particular groups of people played in the dissemination of *opera buffa* outside of Italy. This leads to a broader knowledge of operatic networks and how they were established in Europe. These findings are examined in relation to other genres (*opera seria*, *intermezzi*, theater plays).

The part of the project dedicated to “mapping” generates a map of *opera buffa* performances and the corresponding migration processes in Europe. All data of *opera buffa* performances in Europe between 1745 and 1765 is collected in a database. The terms “mapping” and “space” are here also understood as concepts for a broader cultural analysis. Cultural and musical networks of courts and aristocratic dynasties are investigated with regard to both questions of cultural rivalry and attempts to establish unique cultural spaces.

Finally, the issue of “transformation” in the project’s title aims at identifying the transformation processes of both musical works and the genre of *opera buffa* as a whole when moving from one place to another in Europe. In the project we focus on five aspects that represent distinctive transformation processes throughout the development of the genre and which can result in pasticcio-like practices:

- (1) transformations of works with regard to the performance of traveling opera troupes. We identify and analyze performance versions of traveling troupes and discuss if traveling troupes changed performance versions throughout their travels, and if so, why.
- (2) The project connects questions of genre transformation in the 1760s with the changing structural elements of *opera buffa* present in the cities of their origin. This concerns in particular the difference between the three-act *opera buffa* in Venice and the two-act *intermezzi* in Rome that were disseminated in Europe in the 1760s much more often than in the 1750s.
- (3) The project explores transformations in early *opera buffa* production on institutional levels. One goal is to find out if and when court theaters could afford specific *opera buffa* ensembles and if we can observe the engagement of steady *opera buffa* ensembles in the 1760s that can be associated with the European success of *opera buffa*.
- (4) The project deals with the transformation of the operatic repertoire initiated by the establishment of *opera buffa*. In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, *opera seria* continuously lost ground and was successively replaced by *opera buffa* in playing schedules.

- (5) The transformation processes of the operatic landscape in the 1750s and 1760s also entail aesthetically and socially substantiated changes in taste that seem to be particularly influenced by the establishment of *opera buffa*. *Vice versa*, *opera buffa* also induced these changes in taste. Hereby, the project will not only contribute to a better understanding of 18<sup>th</sup>-century opera and court culture but will also give new insights into the changing aesthetic values at the time of the Enlightenment.

Within the first year of the project, the source material was collected, the database was created and the corpus of performance series was digitally processed. This was an important precondition for the systematic and qualitative investigations in all three of the project's parts.

### **A tool for 'mapping' *opera buffa* performances and visualizing *opera buffa* networks: *Palladio***

The open access tool *Palladio* is a product of the Stanford University Humanities + Design Lab.<sup>11</sup> It allows structured data<sup>12</sup> to be presented in several ways: The collected geodata can be visualized with individual points on maps. For the following visualization (Figure 1) around 420 performance series of *opere buffe* in over 50 cities outside of Italy were reconstructed between 1745 and 1765. The size of the points represents the quantity of performances.<sup>13</sup>

As the map clearly shows, a pronounced reception of the *opera buffa* repertoire in the German-speaking area can be detected within the period under investigation. The only counterweight to the North-East reception is Spain, where the highest number of performance series, with around 60 series given in Barcelona could be identified. Apart from the capital of Catalonia, the hotspots of the early *opera buffa* reception across the Alps, with more than 20 performance series are Prague, Amsterdam, Vienna, Dresden and Munich.

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11 For a detailed description of the tool see online: <http://hdlab.stanford.edu/palladio/about/>, 06.12.2019.

12 Structured data is essential for the work with *Palladio*. For the standardisation of the singer's names the entries in Sartori (see SARTORI, 1994) are used as role models. In addition, all name variants are recorded. Of course, if GND (*Gemeinsame Normdatei*, i.e. the joint authority file of Deutsche Nationalbibliothek) provides an authority file, the respective GND-number is collected in the database not only for the personnel involved in the opera performances, but for performance places and musical material as well. For GND see online: [https://www.dnb.de/DE/Standardisierung/GND/gnd\\_node.html](https://www.dnb.de/DE/Standardisierung/GND/gnd_node.html), 06.12.2019.

13 Please note that the database, which delivers the geodata for the visualization with *Palladio*, is still in development. Therefore, there will still be changes in this visualization at the end of the project.

Figure 1: Opera buffa performances outside of Italy between 1745 and 1765.



*Palladio* does not only provide different possibilities to visualize maps as the filter options bring other tools to the assistance of a researcher as well. The following visualization with *Palladio* illustrates that the reception of *opera buffa* in the capital of Catalonia did not start until 1750, when Nicola Setaro was invited to perform *opere buffe* with his opera company in Spain.<sup>14</sup> The feature timeline (Figure 2) allows users to pick out a certain period and enables us, for example, to take a closer look at the first stations of *opera buffa* reception across the Alps.

To show a third option of *Palladio* (point-to-point map view [Figure 3]) the performance places of *Orazio* from 1737 to 1765 within and outside of Italy were chosen for a visualization. In addition, contemporary maps<sup>15</sup> can be added to present e.g. border crossings, Alpine passes or administrative districts, which is essential when it comes to the question of traveling opera troupes and their contribution to the dissemination of the operas within Europe. The starting point for the reconstruction of the dissemination in the project is always the material of the first Italian performance, in this case, the libretto of 1737 by Antonio Palomba, which was set to music by Pietro Auletta.

14 See ALIER I AIXALÀ, 1990, pp. 83-134.

15 Of course, the maps have to be available in a usable electronic form and have to be geo-referenced. For example, the New York Public Library's Map Warper application allows the creation of an interactive historical map, which can be used for the visualization with *Palladio*. See online: <http://maps.nypl.org/warper/>, 06.12.2019.

Figure 2: Dissemination of *opere buffe* outside of Italy 1745-1749.



After the premiere *Orazio* was performed mainly in Northern Italy, more precisely in Lombardy and in Veneto, before it was taken up by Angelo Mingotti in 1745 to be performed firstly in Graz and afterwards in Prague and Leipzig in the same year. Already in 1749, *Orazio* reached its northernmost station (Copenhagen) with Pietro Mingotti's opera company at a very early stage of *opera buffa* reception outside of Italy. Until 1765, the opera was given in nearly every important European metropolis where *opera buffa* was performed. *Orazio* is therefore an ideal example of the entire repertoire in terms of geographical dissemination. Of course, the performance of *Orazio* through Europe brought about changes in the tectonics of the original opera: for example, the role of Bettina was removed, the recitatives were shortened and arias or even entire scenes were exchanged due to different performance contexts.

Figure 3: Point to point few with the map *Danubii Fluminis* by Johann Baptist Homann (c. 1720).



With regard to the arias, the singers had an important impact on the adaptations of the operas. It is often the case that newly integrated arias can be directly connected to the change within the cast. Where such adaptations and transformations of *opere buffe* are the subject of research, it is important to record details of troupe constellations. *Palladio* again is a useful tool because it enriches the understanding of the personnel aspect of the *opera buffa* and helps to explore the whole network. In this case, the corpus of the singers who performed *Orazio* between 1737 and 1765, consists of more than 110 individuals (Figure 4).



The graph that visualizes the category “singers” in correspondence with the category “performance places” makes it clear, that about three-quarters of the performance series are linked to each other via one or more singers, making the grey nodes bigger depending on the frequency of performances of each singer.<sup>16</sup> Going into detail, the mentioned troupe of Giovanni Francesco Crosa is an outstanding example of early modern theater companies and the related adventurous lives of their impresarios.<sup>17</sup> His troupe was formed around 1742 in Italy – more precisely in Milan. Performances of *Orazio* by this troupe can be proven outside of Italy for London (1748), Brussels (1749) and Amsterdam (1750). Actually, Crosa’s troupe in London was composed out of two ensembles with top *buffo* singers who already had celebrated successes in Italy. The starting point for the London version of *Orazio* were two performances in Italy: Venice in 1743 and Milan in 1746. The latter was organized by Crosa himself. *Palladio* provides a filter system (“Facet Filter”) with which e.g. the personnel of troupes at certain performance places – in this case Venice, Milan and London, can be filtered (Figure 5):

In Venice, the singer couple Anna and Filippo Laschi and Eugenia Mellini Fanti sung in *Orazio*, in Milan, Caterina and Pietro Pertici and again Mellini Fanti can be detected. Under impresario Crosa, the five singers formed a new troupe, went to London and were joined by the castrato Gaetano Guadagni. Interestingly, the singer Mellini Fanti took part in Venice and Milan and a closer look at the London libretto shows that elements of both librettos were taken over for the performances of 1748.<sup>18</sup> The texts of the arias “Alla selva al prato al rio” or “Mentre l’erbetta”, for example, can be found in all of the three textbooks. It is striking, although not surprising, that in contrast all arias for the role of Leandro differ from their predecessors. The role was taken over by Guadagni and led to the integration of new arias within *Orazio*. Two of them are preserved, because they are part of the print *The Favourite Songs in the Opera call’d Orazio*.<sup>19</sup> This print shows in a particularly drastic way how strongly the musical texture of the original opera has already been shaken within the first eleven years of its performance history. Different to the London libretto, which still mentions Auletta as the only composer of the opera, there is – correctly – no reference to the Neapolitan composer in the *Favourite Songs* to be found. The music print represents a ‘best of’ compilation with six arias beginning with “Giovinotti d’oggi di” (composer unknown) attributed to a performance by Caterina Brogi Pertici, followed by “Pupille amabili” (Niccolò Jommeli) and “Quanto è

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16 It has to be mentioned that on the left side of the graph one can find some performance series that are not connected to the others. For only two of them, the premiere in 1737 and the performances in Lucca in 1752, no personnel overlaps with the other performances can be identified. For another eight performance series the different casts could not be reconstructed (yet).

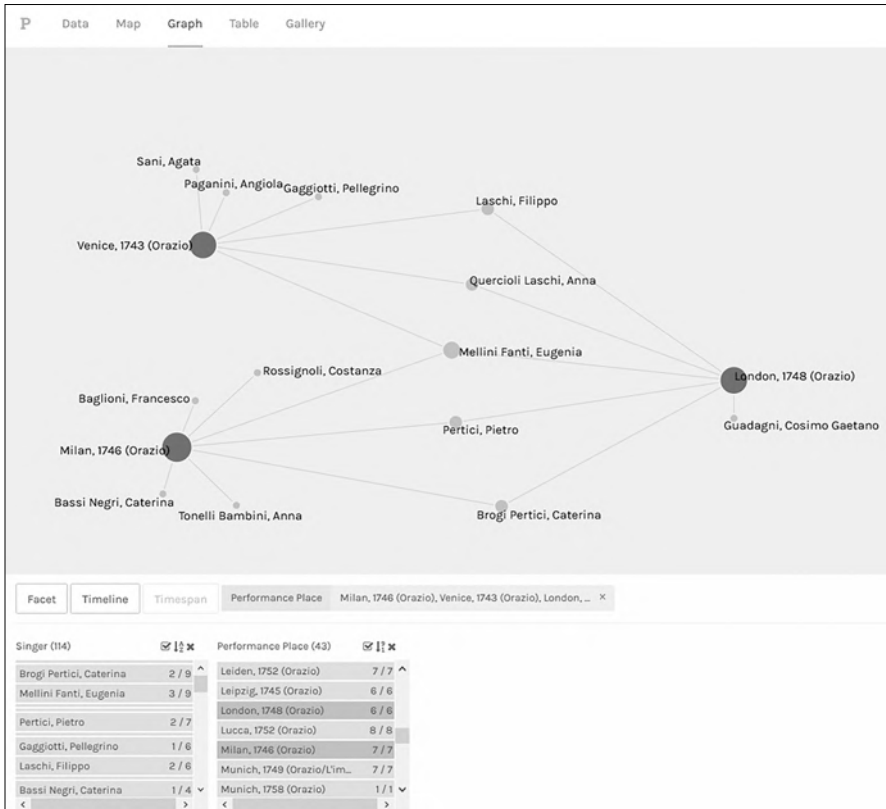
17 See HOWARD, 2014, pp. 27-43; RASCH, 2006, pp. 118-120; KING/WILLAERT, 1993, pp. 246-275.

18 For the preserved librettos of *Orazio* see Appendix I.

19 See *The Favourite Songs in the Opera call’d Orazio*, Printed for J. Walsh, London (c. 1748), GB-Lbl H.1652.vv.[7.]). On the adaptations of *Orazio* see WALKER, 1952, pp. 369-383.

dolce quanto è caro” (Natale Resta) both sung by Guadagni, “Alla selva al prato al rio” (Michele Fini) sung by Eugenia Mellini Fanti, “Procuri la prego” (Alessandro Macchhari) sung by Filippo Laschi and finally “Se non sai, che cosa è amore” (Pietro Paradies) sung by Anna Quercioli Laschi. The *Favourite Songs* are of special importance for the research of this *opera buffa* in two respects: Firstly, it is currently the only musical document that proves the London performances took place. Secondly, Walsh’s compilation is an important testimony for the reception of *Orazio* as a pasticcio.

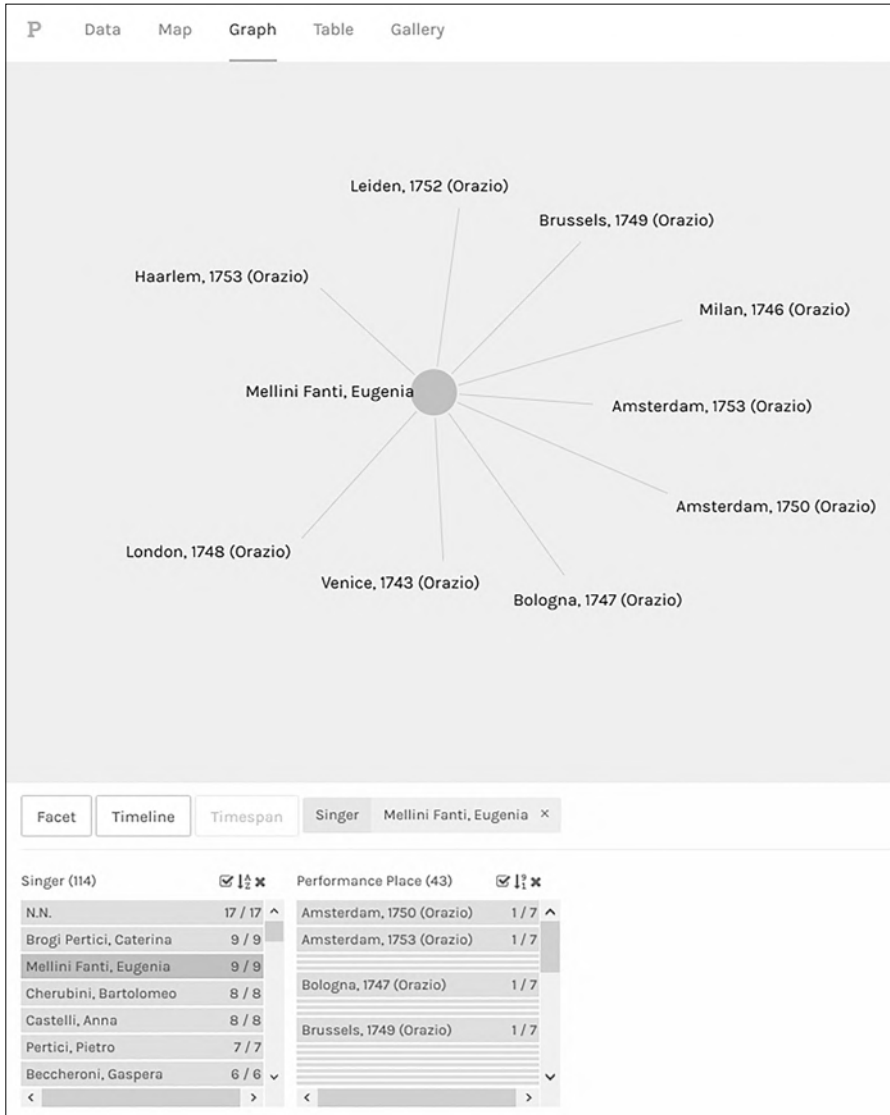
Figure 5: The formation of Crosa’s opera troupe for the London performances of *Orazio*.



After successful London performances (not only of *Orazio*), problems came up around Crosa and the following year Guadagni and the Pertici abandoned him. Crosa, on the other hand, became more and more involved in financial difficulties, was arrested, fled to Holland and started again performing among others *Orazio* in Amsterdam and Brussels with the rest of his troupe. In fall 1750, the impresario was caught by the London lenders and was imprisoned in The Hague. And his troupe? Mellini Fanti (Figure 6), who, along with the singer Caterina Brogi Pertici is most frequently to be found in *Orazio* performances between 1737 and 1765 (both: nine times), remained in Amsterdam for some

years and continued to perform in *buffo* roles with the troupes of Giuseppe Giordani and Santo Lapis.<sup>20</sup> With the latter, she appeared again in *Orazio* in 1753 in Amsterdam.

Figure 6: Mellini Fanti's performances of *Orazio*.

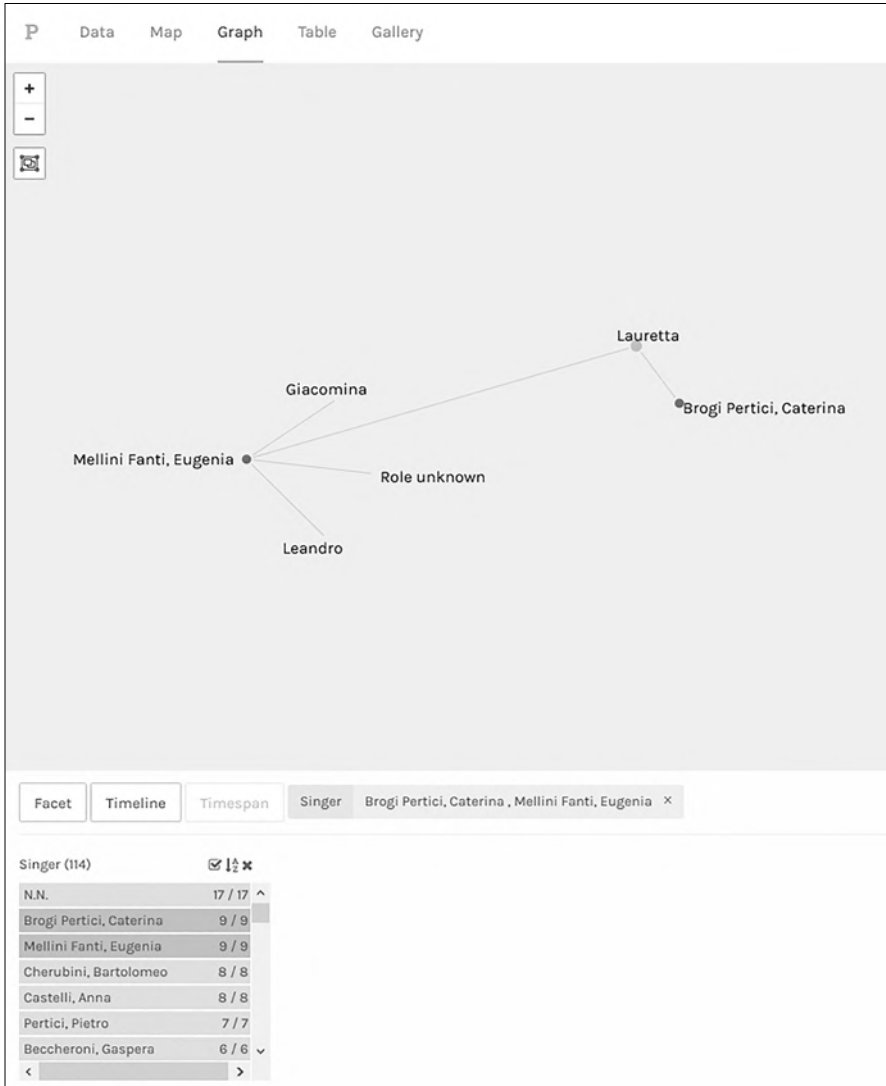


Using the example of Crosa's company, it becomes clear that most of the troupes cannot be characterized by an excessive personnel stability. One can imagine the environment of an impresario as a contact and information platform, which determined the profes-

<sup>20</sup> See RASCH, 2006, pp. 124-133.

sional progress of the individual singers, but also had effects on the way the *opere buffe* were adapted. The stability of troupes within a certain period of time and the individual paths of singers from one to another performance is precisely what is recorded within the project's database.

Figure 7: Roles of Brogi Pertici and Mellini Fanti in Orazio.



*Palladio* not only visualizes connections between performance places and individual singers: with the integrated facet filter, it is possible to analyze, for example, the role stability of *Orazio* as well, as some of the singers were always touring around with the same role, like Caterina Brogi Pertici. Of all performers, she most often took the part

of Laretta (nine times). Eugenia Mellini Fanti, on the other hand, changed roles, performed the parts of Giacomina, Laretta and took also the male role Leandro (Figure 7).

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As the case of *Orazio* shows, *Palladio* is an adequate tool to explore the geographical dissemination of *opera buffa* performances and the corresponding personnel network. Information on both is currently recorded on paper (e.g. librettos, newspapers or even SARTORI, 1994) and can now be visualized in their network-likeness. This opens up new perspectives for qualitative studies that would otherwise not be possible because the particular connections and networks would not have been known of, such as, for example, personnel patterns or trends in the field of distribution channels that have contributed to the success of *opera buffa*. Particularly with regard to questions of the social history of *opera buffa*, *Palladio* helps us to look at the topic from different angles. Therefore, such data analysis and visualization make it possible to discover, for example, who were the important protagonists of the *opera buffa* business; who performed with whom, how often in which role, and when; and which were the cultural centers that have fertilized the success of *opera buffa* outside of Italy.

Geo-visualization has lately become a prominent research tool for several projects within the field of musicology.<sup>21</sup> The work with *Palladio* shows that geo-visualization in the humanities can be much more than solely creating dots on a map. However, it is also important to be constantly aware of the particular ways in which specific digital tools shape our knowledge production. One of the huge challenges of the next years and decades will be to keep up a fruitful and constant dialogue between developers and researchers – and between the things we want to know and the tools provided for gaining this knowledge.

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21 See for example the *The Musical Geography Project*, online accessible at <https://musical-geography.org/about>, 06.12.2019, which brings together numerous musicological projects dealing with “mapping” or the “mapping” aspect of the *Verzeichnis deutscher Musikfrühdrucke* project (online: [http://www.vdm.sbg.ac.at/db/music\\_prints.php?content=mapping&menu=2](http://www.vdm.sbg.ac.at/db/music_prints.php?content=mapping&menu=2), 06.12.2019).

## Appendix

Datable performances of *Orazio* and preserved librettos

Year	Performance Place	Libretto
1737	Naples	I-Mb, Racc.dramm.2765
1740	Florence	I-Vgc, ROL.0527.06
1742	Florence	I-Bc, Lo.06861
1743	Venice	I-Bc, Lo.02634
1744	Genoa	I-Gc, B.S.Misc.A.24.1
1745	Florence	US-Wc, ML50.2.O67 A9 1945 (Case)
1745	Graz	A-Gl, C 135448 I
1745	Leipzig	RUS-Mrg, Palomba / it. - 4°
1745	Hamburg	D-B, 12 in. Mus. T 8
1745	Prague	undetectable
1746	Milan	I-Rn, 40 9 C 9.1
1747	Bologna	I-Rn, 40. 9.F.17.7
1748	Venice	I-Mb, Racc.dramm.2877
1748	Verona	I-Mb, Racc.dramm.3597
1748	Turin	undetectable
1748	Brescia	I-PLZc, C. VIII.1
1748	Cremona	undetectable
1748/49	London	GB-Lbl, 11714.b.39.(4.)
1748	Reggio Emilia	I-Bc, Lo.00356
1748	Vienna	D-MHrm, T 369
1749	Copenhagen	DK-Kk, 56,-381
1749	Munich	D-Mbs, Bavar.4015-33,24#Beibd.3
1749	Parma	I-Bc, Lo.06863
1749	Pesaro	undetectable
1750	Amsterdam	undetectable
1750	Barcelona	I-Bc, Lo.00358
1750	Brunswick	D-W, 1183
1750	Brussels	D-B, Mus. T 44-7
1752	Paris	US-CA, 011311072
1752	Leyden	undetectable
1752	Lucca	I-Lg, Busta n. 19462
1753	Amsterdam	undetectable
1753	Haarlem	undetectable
1754	Barcelona	E-BBc, C400/239
1754	Ravenna	I-Bc, Lo.06864
1756	Trieste	I-Mb, Racc.dramm.2767

Year	Performance Place	Libretto
1758	Munich	D-Mbs, Bavar.4015-32,1/2
1761	Barcelona	E-Bu, 07 XVIII-3346
1762	Cadiz	E-Mn, T/22353
1764	Bonn	D-Bim, Ff 28 Aule 1
1764	Prague	CZ-Bu, ST1-0160.626

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