Lucio Tufano, »Tears for Nina. Emotion and Compassion, from the Stage to the Audience«

ABSTRACT

A recurrent feature of the reception of Giovanni Paisiello's *Nina o sia La pazza per amore* (first version, in one act, 1789; second version, in two acts, 1790) is the deep empathic involvement of the audience. The masterpiece of the Italian composer appears to have had the power to move male and (mainly) female listeners and to produce strong effects like tears, outbursts, etc. The article offers a preliminary discussion of the French origins of the libretto (a translation of Marsollier des Vivetières' *Nina ou la Folle par amour*, set to music by Nicolas-Marie Dalayrac in 1786), as well as a reconstruction of the genesis of the work as an occasional piece for a specific event within Neapolitan court life, and a brief account of its metamorphosis when the score was adapted by the author for performance in a public theater. The second section discusses contemporary sources that demonstrate the process of emotional participation experienced by eighteenth-century spectators. The final part is an attempt to explain the mysterious fascination exerted by 'the girl driven mad by love' by means of the identification and examination of different elements pertaining to the cultural *milieu*, the theatrical conventions, the specific context, and the dramatic and musical structure of the work.

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TEARS FOR NINA. Emotion and Compassion, from the Stage to the Audience

Giovanni Paisiello's *Nina o sia La pazza per amore* has already been studied from many perspectives.[1] Important books and articles published in recent years feature a variety of methodological approaches, which has allowed us to reconsider the historical and aesthetic significance of the work.[2] In the following, I will focus on the empathic impact of *Nina*, and on its ability to generate emotional involvement among the eighteenth-century audience. As a starting point, however, I think it will be useful to briefly outline the history of this operatic masterpiece.

1. Paisiello's *Nina* was premiered on 25 June 1789 in San Leucio, about 35 kilometers from Naples. The peculiar atmosphere of that memorable *soirée* may be evoked with the help of a chronicle, which appeared in a contemporary newspaper, the *Gazzetta universale* of Florence:

'On Thursday the 25th of this month, the celebration given by the King in the name of the heads and elders of the colony of San Leucio took place in the palace and garden of the Belvedere with the utmost grace and magnificence. Those invited by means of a ticket were the heads of the court, the secretaries of state, the generals, the foreign ambassadors together with the knights of their respective nations presented at the court, the Most Serene Duchess of Saxe-Weimar, Cardinal Spinelli, the commanders of the Spanish fleet together with about fifty officers, and an equal number of ladies and knights: in total no more than 240 people. […] At sunset, they all relocated to a theater, newly erected at some distance from the palace under the direction of the architect and scene painter Domenico Chelli who had painted its splendid decorations. The drama *La Nina o sia La pazza per amore* was performed, partly spoken and partly sung. The music, expressly composed by the famous Paisiello, was of surprising beauty, and the *virtuosa* Coltellini, no less than the other singers, was generally admired. In front of the stage was another theater, separated from the auditorium, which was elegantly decorated, and where the citizens of the colony of both sexes, all dressed the same way, were placed in the manner of an amphitheater, which produced the most attractive effect […].'[3]

We possess other interesting accounts, too. As we have just seen, one of the aristocratic spectators attending the

performance was the Duchess Anna Amalia of Saxe-Weimar. On her grand tour through Italy, the German princess was accompanied by a lady-in-waiting, Louise von Göchhausen, who kept a detailed travel diary. Louise's entry for 25 June adds to the information contained in the *Gazzetta universale*: 'the music was excellent. Coltellini played very well; the tenor Lazzarini, the bass Tasca, and the buffo Trabalza were all good, and the Susanna [Camilla Guida] did not play badly either'. She also describes the theater as a temporary structure made of wood, explaining that the guests reached it by walking through a sort of lit corridor.[4] A good description of the venue was provided in 1826 by the architect Ferdinando Patturelli who still remembered the wooden theater and the covered and lit pathway leading to it.[5]

San Leucio was a place deeply cherished by the King of Naples, Ferdinand IV. This small village, its main building called the Belvedere, is four kilometers from the sumptuous palace of Caserta, one of the numerous residences of the Bourbon royal family (figure 1). In fact, the royal palace of Caserta, with its grand dimensions and solemn rituals, was really a duplication of the Neapolitan court itself. In San Leucio, on the other hand, the king felt free and happy, so he decided to protect the local population by supporting the development of a silk factory. His predilection for San Leucio led him to promulgate a separate Civil Code, which transformed the rural

Figure 1. *The royal palace and garden of Caserta (no. 1) and the Belvedere of San Leucio (no. 4)*, engraving taken from Ferdinando Patturelli, *Caserta and San Leucio* (Naples: Reale Stamperia, 1826).

community into a sort of utopian society that historians regard as one of the greatest achievements of enlightened reformism in the kingdom of Naples.[6] Paisiello's *Nina* was commissioned for the first official visit of Queen Maria Carolina to the so-called »colony«.[7] These particular circumstances should be kept in mind: *Nina* was not an »ordinary« opera score intended for a regular theater season, but rather a *unicum*: a work conceived for a specific occasion within the life of the court, and therefore characterized by very atypical features.

This is also true of the source of the libretto: the 'comédie en un acte en prose mélée d'ariettes' *Nina ou La folle par amour* by Benoît-Joseph Marsollier des Vivetières.[8] Set to music by Nicolas-Marie Dalayrac in 1786, this piece had achieved a remarkable success in Paris. In 1788 it was translated into Italian for a performance in Monza close to Milan, which took place in the presence of Archduke Ferdinand and his wife, sovereigns of Lombardy under Austrian rule.[9] In this case, too, *Nina* was not scheduled within the regular opera season. From 1786 to 1793 the small theater at the royal residence of Monza featured a series of French *opéra-comiques*, translated into Italian by Giuseppe Carpani and offered to the Milanese court during the autumn holidays.[10] Among the titles chosen for this experimental hybridization of Italian and French theatrical traditions were recent Parisian works, mostly by Dalayrac and André Grétry, as well as a single attempt to create an original Italian *opéra-comique*: *Lo spazzacamino principe* with new music by Angelo Tarchi:

1787: *Riccardo Cor di leone* (Grétry's *Richard Cœur-de-Lion*, 1784)
1788 : *Nina ossia La pazza per amore* (Dalayrac's *Nina ou la Folle par amour*, 1786)
1789*: La dote* (Dalayrac's *La dot*, 1785); *Rinaldo d'Aste* (Dalayrac's *Renaud d'Ast*, 1787)
1790: *Lo spazzacamino principe* (*Le Ramoneur prince*, 1784; new music by Tarchi)
1791: *I due ragazzi savoiardi* (Dalayrac's *Les Deux Petits Savoyards*, 1789); *Raollo signore di Crequì* (Dalayrac's *Raoul, sire de Créqui*, 1789)
1793: *Lodoiska* (pasticcio based on Rodolphe Kreutzer's *Lodoïska* and Luigi Cherubini's *Lodoïska*, both 1791)
1794: *Camilla ossia Il sotterraneo* (Dalayrac's *Camille ou le Souterrain*, 1791)
1795: *La caravana del Cairo* (Grétry's *La caravane du Caire*, 1783)

The French works performed in Monza were not simply translated, but were also adapted by means of cuts, insertions, and changes of various kinds and sizes. This was the case

with *Nina*, too: Carpani's Italian version omits the secondary character of Mathurine; Giorgio, who is descended from the French Georges, has a more pronounced comic vein; and in compliance with Italian tastes, the action opens with a chorus, not with a spoken dialogue as in Marsollier.[11] Nevertheless, the characteristic alternation of prose dialogue and musical numbers is maintained.

The 1788 Monza libretto reached Naples very quickly. It is not possible to ascertain who decided to use it for the tribute to the queen at San Leucio. The migration of the anomalous text from Northern to Southern Italy was probably furthered by the dynastic connections between the two courts, Archduke Ferdinand being the brother of Maria Carolina of Naples. The expert local poet Giambattista Lorenzi made some interesting changes to Carpani's translation, supposedly working in agreement and strict collaboration with Paisiello. It is easy to recognize the reasons and aims behind each of the modifications. Lorenzi and Paisiello inserted the choral piece 'Se il cor, gli affetti suoi' and the aria 'Per l'amata padroncina', to give appropriate musical importance to the character of Susanna, Nina's housekeeper, who only sang in the ensembles in Paris and Monza. Another major difference is the longer and more complex finale: in Marsollier's libretto the action ended, in agreement with French convention, with a short vaudeville in which all the characters, along with the chorus, express their happiness at Nina's recovery. Lorenzi and Paisiello decided to begin the finale already at the point when Lindoro helps Nina remember the day they exchanged tokens and vows of love. In this way, the finale of the San Leucio libretto includes the entire process of Nina recognizing Lindoro and regaining her sanity, and due to this solution the composer got the opportunity to make full use of the climax of the action and its highly emotional potentials. The result is an expanded structure, which is characterized by a remarkable variety of situations, thus allowing for a multisectional treatment.

Although *Nina* had been created for a court event attended by a restricted audience, its fame quickly spread to the city of Naples. The Teatro de' Fiorentini mounted some performances of the opera in its original form in July 1789.[12] One year later, *Nina* appeared on the same stage as the second opera of the season.[13] On this occasion, Lorenzi and Paisiello reworked the San Leucio score to comply with Italian operatic conventions. Above all, they divided the action into two acts, or *parti*. This meant that the opera needed a finale for the conclusion of the first act, which is exactly the function of the new quartet, 'Come!… ohimè!… partir degg'io'. To ensure the necessary variety of voices in the first finale, Lorenzi and Paisiello needed a tenor. So they came up with a truly brilliant solution: transforming the bagpipe-player of the original version into a

speaking and singing character, the Shepherd, and assigning this new role to the singer who performed Lindoro (in the Neapolitan production, the great tenor Giacomo David). To introduce the Shepherd, they wrote a *canzone* in popular style, 'Già il sol si cela dietro alla montagna', thus allowing David to appear on stage in the first act and to sing one more solo number. The presence of this new character also added a touching detail: in the moment when Nina mistakes the Shepherd for her beloved Lindoro, Lorenzi and Paisiello played on the ambiguity between the dramatic character and the physical and vocal identity of the singer (in fact, the Shepherd is not Lindoro, but he resembles him). The last change of the 1790 version is the new aria for Giorgio in the second act, which was added to gratify the famous *basso buffo* Antonio Casaccia, and also to balance the duration of the two acts. After the 1790 metamorphosis, Paisiello had no occasions to make further changes to his score. So *Nina o sia La pazza per amore* began its independent life throughout Europe (either in its original form with spoken dialogues, or – more frequently – with sung recitatives written by other poets and composers) and became one the greatest operatic successes of the late eighteenth century.

——2. One of the main features of *Nina*'s international dissemination was its ability to move the audience, and we have various proofs of the effects produced by Paisiello's masterpiece. According to an anecdote told by Paul Scudo in 1852, the famous aria 'Il mio ben quando verrà' caused an extraordinary emotional involvement among the female spectators at its first performance:

'It seems that Coltellini was so affecting in the lovely *romance* 'Il mio ben quando verrà' that the noblest ladies of the court shed hot tears and began to cry out, through the sobs stifling their voices: *Sì, sì, verrà il tuo Lindoro* – Yes, yes, he will return, your beloved!'[14]

This little story, which has been repeated many times, appeared very late and is not based on any verifiable evidence. If not *vrai*, however, it is undoubtedly *vraisemblable*. In other words, while the authenticity of Scudo's narrative cannot be confirmed, it must be admitted that his account, if invented, was consistent with the ideas associated with *Nina* and with its well-established myth.

Earlier and more reliable data is found among the eighteenth-century sources. In 1794, Angela Bruni, a famous actress from the spoken theater, performed *Nina* in Venice, using the text of the libretto but without the musical numbers. In a sonnet celebrating her interpretation, we find a very precise description of the process of identification experienced by the audience:

Nina piagne, e dagli occhi anch'io frattanto verso tenere stille; un tetro orrore l'alma di Nina investe, e io pure intanto sento d'orror raccapricciarsi il core. Ella d'ira s'accende, io di furore; poscia languida cade in dolce incanto, ed io pur m'abbandono al grato errore; ma Nina al pianto torna, io torno al pianto. Ah cara!… ma che fo?… perché m'affanno? Quella Nina non è, sognata è quella… Sì, tutto è ver, ma invan veggio il mio inganno. Vinta da' detti suoi quest'alma giace, e se Lindor non torna a Nina bella, invan sperar poss'io d'aver più pace.[15]	Nina weeps, and at the same time my eyes shed tender tears; a dark disgust overwhelms Nina's soul, and at the same time I feel my heart frightened by disgust too. She is inflamed by anger, I by fury; then she languidly falls into a sweet enchantment, and I, too, abandon myself to that beautiful error; but Nina starts weeping again, and I do the same. Oh dear!… What am I doing?… Why do I worry? This Nina is not real; she is a dream… Yes, it's all true, but I realize my mistake in vain. My soul is overcome by her words, and if Lindoro does not return to the beautiful Nina, I cannot hope to rest anymore.

Another important document is the letter addressed to Paisiello by a group of twenty-one operagoers from Turin in that same year, 1794. The text first appeared in the *Onori funebri renduti alla memoria di Giovanni Paisiello*, a commemorative publication printed in 1816 after the composer's death. The letter describes in detail the reactions to *Nina* on the part of the audience:

'One cannot believe, without having been a witness himself, the effect the opera had on everyone. Some clapped their hands, some stamped their feet, some shouted like madmen, some cried, some remained dumb because they were unable to express and let out the internal commotion and the tumult of the feelings of their souls. No one has ever seen such elation. Parents promised each other never to thwart the righteous desires of their daughters, and lovers were tied closer together. Everyone felt the taste of rural festivities and the desire for the innocent pleasures of simple nature. Recollections of pleasures enjoyed in the country, of the tender scenes or unfortunate love stories of the past, returned to the minds of the listeners, and some were moved by memories of pleasure, some by memories of suffering.'[16]

This passage contains many interesting elements, of which I will draw attention to three. The first one is the »moral effect« produced by *Nina*: the story of a girl driven insane by love shows the terrible consequences of constraints against nature (the decision of Nina's father to thwart her pure love for Lindoro), and thereby produces a change of attitude, if not of mentality, in the audience. The second element is the personal involvement of the individual spectators: the Turin letter does not describe a generic and collective reaction, but suggests that the opera appeals to each member of the audience in a specific way, producing a special reaction that is coherent with her/his age, social and familial conditions, and personal experience. The third element is the nature of the effects produced by the

performance: *Nina* does not simply move the audience, but produces real physical reactions; it not only affects the psychology of the spectators, but their bodies too. Together with the brain and the heart, the body assumes an active role in dealing with the opera: the tumult of feelings becomes a bodily experience; the internal energy is transformed into external manifestations such as gestures, tears, and cries.

3. Irrational feelings like the ones described above do not fall within the normal categories of theatrical experience. Such a high degree of emotional involvement is neither common, nor easy to explain. How should these phenomena be interpreted? Which factors generated such strong responses to Paisiello's opera? Clearly, there is no simple answer to this question. *Nina*'s empathic power relies on a combination of many different elements, the most important of which will be discussed in the following. To do so, I will move from the context to the text, i.e. from the general historical and aesthetic framework to the specific dramaturgical and musical strategies adopted by Paisiello in the shaping of his masterpiece (see figure 2).

On the broadest level, we may point to the cultural context of the late eighteenth century. As demonstrated by many scholars, *Nina* represents a perfect synthesis of the principal themes debated during the so-called Age of Sentiment. Thanks mainly to its French origins, Paisiello's opera merges and develops some of the central concepts of that complex period. The first and most important of these is *sensibilité*, a faculty which at the time was seen as a superior form of cognition and as a prerogative of the female sex. Not surprisingly, in his dedication to the local ladies, which opens the printed libretto from the Venetian premiere of *Nina* in 1792, the impresario writes: 'I have the honor of offering to you, in *Nina ossia La pazza per amore*, a spectacle in

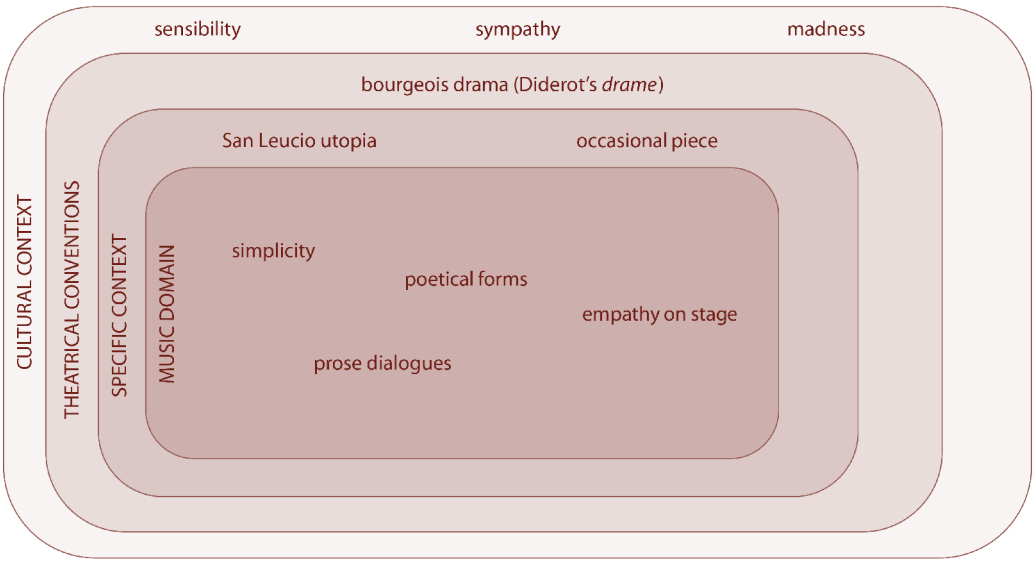

Figure 2. *Nina* from context to text.

a new genre, at least to Venice. Even if it is not entirely comic, it deserves to affect your *delicate sensibility*' (emphasis added).[17]

Another fundamental concept explored in *Nina* is sympathy.[18] I am not referring here to the common and generic meaning of the word, but to its philosophical definition as the English translation of German *Einfühlung*, used by Herder and other thinkers in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Sympathy is the capability of adopting the perspective of the other, of feeling her or his feelings as if they were one's own, of understanding her or his passions through a process of interiorization that is both rational and emotional.

A third crucial element is madness, *folie*.[19] In the Age of Enlightenment, insanity was seen in an entirely new light. Delirium was regarded as a condition of enhanced authenticity, in which the real personality was freed of all constraints. In his *Éloge de Richardson* (1762), Denis Diderot describes the (female) madness caused by love as an expression of truth, a manifestation of genuine feelings, and an emblem of the sublime.[20] Moreover, Stefano Castelvecchi and Carola Bebermeier have demonstrated that the last scenes of *Nina* closely follow the stages described by contemporary psychotherapy as central

Figure 3. Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, *Madame Dugazon in the role of Nina*, 1787 (private collection)..

Figure 4. *Anna Morichelli Bosello in the role of Nina*, engraving from *Applausi al singolare merito della celebre signora Anna Morichelli Bosello* (Venice: Fenzo, [1796]).

to the treatment of mental disease.[21] The nature of Nina's madness may be briefly discussed with the help of a series of portraits, which show famous singers in the title role: Rosalie Dugazon, the first Nina in Dalayrac's *opéra-comique* (figure 3); Anna Morichelli Bosello, who performed the role both in the Italian version of Dalayrac's work in Monza and in Paisiello's work in Paris and Venice (figure 4); Irene Tomeoni in a Viennese production of Paisiello's work (figure 5); and Giuditta Pasta who sang Paisiello's Nina in Milan in the early nineteenth century (figure 6). The four images have some elements in common: the flowers in the hair and hands of the performer, as well as the modern and simple style of the clothes. In these details, which are consistent with the stage direction accompanying Nina's appearance in scene 6 ('Nina, simply clothed, with loose hair and a small bouquet of flowers in her hands'),[22] we may recognize the symbols of Rousseau's concept of nature as a dimension of truthfulness, as well as the influence of Diderot's dramatic theory, which I will discuss below. It is no coincidence that Carpani, in his preface to the Monza libretto, writes that in *Nina* 'all is nature, simplicity, and feeling'.[23] It is also worth of attention that Nina's dress is white on all four pictures, although the color is not specified in the libretto: perhaps an allusion to her virginity? Most important, however, is the type

of expression and the attitude shown by the portraits. We are not beholding a furious, raging woman, but a girl overwhelmed by a kind of melancholic alienation. The impression left by these visual sources is confirmed by some written accounts of the singers' portrayals of the role. When Morichelli Bosello performed Nina in Paris in 1791, the *Mercure de France* published a detailed critique, which included this passage:

'What an interesting madness! It is that of love. There can be no doubt: it is that of an innocent and chaste love; one recognizes it in the midst of the deepest delirium; it is a madness only of the head and of the heart; no affectation or caricature, no unnatural positions, no contortions, no exaggerated derangement.'[24]

The description of Anna Benini in the 1792 Venetian production of *Nina*, which appeared in the *Gazzetta urbana veneta*, is written in the same vein:

'Nina, who has gone mad believing her lover dead, does not enter the stage to speak grotesque nonsense; she only shows the alteration of her brain through her dress and ornaments, in the delirium of her passion, in her delusions, and in her

Figure 5. *Irene Tomeoni in the role of Nina*, engraving [1790].

Figure 6. Giuseppe Molteni, *Giuditta Pasta in the role of Nina*, 1829 (Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera).

sudden shifts from sadness to joy, all within the limits of theatrical decency.'[25]

In other words, eighteenth-century theatrical decorum and ideas about (amorous) madness prevented too strong manifestations of mental disorder while emphasizing the signs of melancholy.

On the level of theatrical convention, we may observe that *Nina* is a typical example of bourgeois drama, the kind of piece that was simply labelled *drame* within spoken theater. According to Diderot, who was the most important theorist of this genre, bourgeois drama is characterized by its domestic setting and its focus on familial relationships and true feelings in a contemporary context.[26] The fact that Nina is the daughter of a nobleman does not conflict with the genre: the bourgeois connotations do not depend on the social class of the characters, but on their passions and values. According to this definition, Paisiello's creation may be regarded as one of the first works to transpose the spirit and atmosphere of the French *drame* onto the musical stage. This was also the reason why contemporary commentators and music historians encounter so many

difficulties when trying to situate *Nina* within the traditional operatic taxonomy. The label *opera semiseria*, although somewhat anachronistic, has seemed to modern scholars the most acceptable solution to this problem.

With the next step, we arrive at the specific context in which *Nina* was conceived. Some authors have pointed to interesting connections between the *plot* and the utopian colony of San Leucio.[27] According to this interpretation, *Nina* displays the problems caused by rigid social constraints, thereby offering a contrast to the freedom of choice in marriage, which was prescribed by the Civil Code promulgated by Ferdinand IV. In my opinion, these links are not that significant, and while they may explain the success of *Nina* at its premiere, they cannot explain its long-lasting triumph in so many different theatrical centers across Europe.

However, San Leucio as a context is important for another reason. As I have repeatedly stressed, *Nina* is not a »normal« opera created for a »normal« performance in a »normal« theater. Its status as an occasional work for a specific event within Neapolitan court life determines and justifies the exceptional features that distinguish it from common operatic writing. This observation leads us to the deepest level of the analysis, that of the musical domain. Several unusual elements of *Nina*'s musical structure and style are fundamental to its emotional impact. The first aspect to be highlighted is the opera's unity of action, according to the classical Aristotelian definition. In his preface to the 1788 Monza libretto, the translator writes:

'A highborn and innocent girl who loses the use of reason when losing her legitimate lover, and who regains it when regaining her lover, constitutes the entire subject of this comedy, the plot of which – if it exists – is extremely simple but is characterized by an unparalleled delicacy.'[28]

This extreme simplicity and linearity is exceptional when compared to the standards of Italian opera, which usually feature a larger number of characters, one or more secondary plots, a secondary couple of lovers, misunderstandings, disguises, etc. In contrast, the whole action of *Nina* centers on the title role, all the other characters constantly thinking of her, looking after her, talking about her. Thereby, the attention of the audience, too, always and exclusively centers on the sad destiny of the protagonist, without any distractions or digressions.

Another very original feature of *Nina* is its use of prose instead of the standard recitatives. This element, which was also derived from the French tradition, was mostly discussed from the point of view of the performers, many contemporary commentators emphasizing the difficulties experienced by singers who were not at ease with spoken dialogue. However, one might wonder whether the words would enhance the audience's attention and interest in Nina's moving story when

delivered »naturally« rather than sung. Probably, operagoers accustomed to Italian conventions experienced a kind of perceptive shock, the frequent switches from sung to spoken delivery creating not only initial surprise, but also a deeper and more analytical understanding of what happened on stage. In contrast to the heightened declamation of the recitative, the prose dialogues would help generate a more »realistic« depiction of the events and give more power to the pathetic portrayal of the heroine's desolate condition.

Another consequence of using the French source is the morphological variety of the libretto. Giuseppe Carpani, the Monza translator, sought to create a compromise between Dalayrac's music and Italian poetic traditions: the words had to fit the pre-existing melodic line, while also respecting the rules that concern the number of syllables in each verse, the construction of the stanzas, and the rhyme schemes. This resulted in a libretto of great formal originality, which gave rise to non-standard musical solutions, Paisiello reacting to the unexpected structures of the texts by adopting some highly atypical morphological choices. A good example is offered by the beautiful setting of the most famous number of the work, 'Il mio ben quando verrà', the poetical articulation of which (three strophes, each composed by 3 *ottonari*, 1 *quinario* and 2 more *ottonari* each of which is split into 2 *quaternari* in order to display a certain regularity in the rhyme structure) is very far from the Italian conventions due to the process of adaptation from the French.[29]

As for the unity of action, we have previously noted that all the characters in *Nina* revolve around the protagonist like planets around the sun. From a dramaturgical point of view, this means that the characters, as well as the villagers who accompany the action throughout, often become the witnesses of Nina's suffering. They are not only present on stage when she speaks or sings, but also observe what she does and react to her actions and words. Their empathic involvement in Nina's destiny runs very deep, Giorgio's aria in scene 4 offering a perfect description of the emotional participation on the part of the local population:

Se vedeste, mio signore, quando par che meglio stia, come tutta in allegria la contrada se ne va. Ognun salta, ognun s'accende, chi dà baci, chi li rende… Oh che festa! Oh che piacere! Più bel giorno non si dà. Ma se torna l'adorata padroncina in viso mesta, torna mesta e sconsolata tutta la comunità.[30]	If only you saw, my lord, how the whole village is pervaded by happiness when she seems to feel better! Everyone jumps, everyone rejoices, someone gives kisses, someone else returns them. What festivity! What pleasure! One cannot imagine a more beautiful day. But if the beloved little mistress appears sad again, the whole community becomes sad and desolate again.

In other words, the primary spectators of Nina's gestures and attitudes are Giorgio, the Count, Susanna, Lindoro, and the villagers who surround her, which means that the empathic involvement begins on stage. The audience is moved not only by Nina's suffering, but also by the reactions to her suffering shown by the other characters who function as a catalyst for the emotions of the spectators. This mechanism generates a phenomenon, which has been studied in depth by psychologists and sociologists: the so-called »emotional contagion«. In my opinion, one of *Nina*'s strongest weapons consists in this direct connection between stage and auditorium. A wonderful example is offered in scene 8, which includes the astonishing 'Lontana da te' with chorus.[31] Not caged in a rigid structure, Paisiello's music serves as an effective stimulant here, reproducing Nina's gestures and the changing pace of her heart through sound. Her passing from hope to sadness, from illusion to despair, is translated into a series of very different musical sections. Moreover, Nina is constantly surrounded by the women from the village who pay great attention to their mistress, who observe her delirium, and who finally shed tears of compassion. Their emotions are formidable amplifiers of our own emotions as spectators.

In the pivotal moments of the action, the characters in *Nina*, as well as the audience, are struck by a combination of powerful stimulants. The experience of beholding the gestures, facial expressions, and tears of the protagonist is enhanced by the music, which emphasizes her rapidly changing mental conditions. This empathic complicity between stage and auditorium may help explain the mysterious fascination exerted by the *pazza per amore*.

ENDNOTES

1 Paisiello's score was the main subject of my PhD dissertation in Music Philology, *'Nina o sia La pazza per amore' di Giovanni Paisiello: Testo e contesto, genesi e metamorfosi*, defended in 2001 at the University of Pavia (Italy); see also Lucio Tufano, '*Nina o sia La pazza per amore*: Note e osservazioni tra filologia e drammaturgia', in *Giovanni Paisiello e la cultura europea del suo tempo*, ed. by Francesco Paolo Russo (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2007), pp. 151–178; 'Da *Nina* a *Belisa*: Contagi veneziani (1788–1794)', *Musicalia: Annuario internazionale di studi musicologici*, 3 (2006), pp. 119–146; 'Felicità (e infelicità) sulle scene musicali tardosettecentesche: *La clemenza di Tito* di Mozart e *Nina o sia La pazza per amore* di Paisiello', in *Felicità pubblica e felicità privata nel Settecento*, ed. by Anna Maria Rao (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2012), pp. 435–449.

2 I refer mainly to Stefano Castelvecchi, *Sentimental Opera: Questions of Genre in the Age of Bourgeois Drama* (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 2013), as well as to Carola Bebermeier, *Celeste Coltellini (1760–1828): Lebensbilder einer Sängerin und Malerin* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2015). Other important contributions are Sabine Meine, 'Blick ins Grüne: Empfindsame Perspektiven in Giovanni Paisiellos *Nina o la pazza per amore* (1789)', in *History/Herstory: Alternative Musikgeschichten*, ed. by Annette Kreutziger-Herr and Katrin Losleben (Cologne: Böhlau, 2009), pp. 279–303, and Melina Esse, 'Performing Sentiment; or, How to Do Things with Tears', *Women & Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture*, 14 (2010), pp. 1–21.

3 'Nel giovedì 25 del corr[ente] fu eseguita la festa che in nome dei capi e seniori della nuova colonia di San Leuce dette il re nel r[eal] palazzo e giardini di Belvedere, e riuscì della massima vaghezza e magnificenza. Vi erano stati invitati con biglietto i capi di corte, segretari di stato, generalità, ministri esteri con i cavalieri delle loro respettive nazioni presentati a corte, la s[erenissi]ma duchessa di Saxe-Weymar, il card[inale] Spinelli, i comandanti della Squadra Spagnola con circa 50 degli ufiziali di essa, e altrettante dame e cavalieri, in tutti non più di 240 persone. […] All'imbrunire della sera si trasferirono al teatro nuovamente eretto in qualche distanza dal palazzo sotto la direzione dell'architetto e pittor teatrale sig[nor] Domenico Chelli, che ne aveva dipinte le superbe decorazioni; vi fu rappresentato il dramma *La Nina o sia La pazza per amore*, parte recitato e parte cantato. Riuscì d'una bellezza sorprendente la musica composta espressamente dal celebre Paisiello, e la virtuosa Coltellini, non meno che gli altri cantanti, riscossero l'universale ammirazione. In faccia alla scena era un altro teatro separato dalla platea, vagamente decorato, in cui stavano disposti in anfiteatro gl'individui della colonia dei due sessi in abito uniforme, lo che faceva la più leggiadra comparsa […]'. *Gazzetta universale*, 16/54 (7 July 1789), p. 432.

4 'Die Musick war vortrefflich. Die Coltellini spielte sehr gut, der Tenor Lazzarini, der Bass Tasca und der Buffo Trabalza war alle gut, auch die Susanne spielte nicht übel. Das Theater war in wenig Tagen von Latten und grünen Reisern erbaut, der Plafon artig gemalt und wie alles versammelt war, ging hinten im Parterr ein Vorhang auf hinter welchen alle die Landleute von der Collonie saßen'. *'Es sind vortreffliche Italienische Sachen daselbst.' Louise von Göchhausens Tagebuch ihrer Reise mit Herzogin Anna Amalia nach Italien vom 15. August 1788 bis 18. Juni 1790*, ed. by Juliane Brandsch (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2008), pp. 88–89.

5 'poco lungi verso oriente dal Casino [di Belvedere], in fondo di uno stradone, propriamente nel giardino di una casetta addetta al direttore delle vigne, fu costruito di legno un teatro diretto dal fu d[on] Domenico Chelli, ove la prima volta venne messa in iscena la celebre *Nina*, composizione del nostro famoso Paisiello […]. Dal Casino fino al teatro fu tutto

illuminato a giorno il detto viale, ricoverto di centine di verdura figurante un grottone, e 'l prospetto del Casino fu ancor esso illuminato, ma a cera'. Ferdinando Patturelli, *Caserta e San Leucio* (Naples: Reale Stamperia, 1826), pp. 78–79.

6 See *Origine della popolazione di S. Leucio e suoi progressi fino al giorno d'oggi, colle leggi corrispondenti al buon governo di essa di Ferdinando IV re delle Sicilie* (Naples: Stamperia Reale, 1789).

7 The frontispiece of the libretto clearly underlines the occasion: *Nina o sia La pazza per amore. Commedia di un atto in prosa ed in verso per musica tradotta dal francese da rappresentarsi a Belvedere nella està del corrente anno 1789 in occasione di essersi portata la maestà della regina ad onorare la nuova popolazione di Santo Leucio* (Naples: Vincenzo Flauto, 1789); Paisiello's autograph score (I-Nc, 15.1.1-2) also mentions the royal commission ('La Pazza Per'Amore / Opera Buffa / tradotta / dal Francese / Messa in Musica espressamente per La / Real Maestà sua / Ferdinando IV / Re delle Sicilie / L'anno 1789', vol. 1, c. 1*r*). For a modern edition of the 1789 libretto see *Libretti d'opera italiani dal Seicento al Novecento*, ed. by Giovanna Gronda and Paolo Fabbri (Milan: Mondadori, 1997), pp. 843–884.

8 *Nina ou la Folle par amour. Comédie en un acte en prose mêlée d'ariettes par M. M. D. V., musique de M. Dalayrac, représentée pour la premiere fois par les Comédiens Italiens ordinaires du Roi le 15 mai 1786* (Paris: Brunet, 1786).

9 *Nina ossia La pazza per amore. Commedia d'un atto in prosa ed in verso e per musica tradotta dal francese da rappresentarsi nel teatro di Monza l'autunno dell'anno 1788, dedicata alle LL. AA. RR. il serenissimo arciduca Ferdinando* […] *e la serenissima arciduchessa Maria Ricciarda Beatrice d'Este principessa di Modena* (Milan: Gio. Batista Bianchi, n.d.).

10 On the French *opéra-comiques* in Monza, see the collection of essays *L'opera francese in Italia: Giuseppe Carpani e le stagioni 1787–1795 del teatro arciducale di Monza*, ed. by Emilio Sala, published as volumes 3 and 4 of *Musicalia: Annuario internazionale di studi musicologici* (2006 and 2007).

11 The translated and altered version of Dalayrac's score performed in Monza has recently been published: *Nina, ossia La pazza per amore. Commedia d'un atto in prosa ed in verso, e per musica (Monza 1788)*, ed. by Davide Daolmi (Milan: LED, 2006).

12 See *'Es sind vortreffliche Italienische Sachen daselbst'*, pp. 90, 92.

13 *Nina o sia La pazza per amore. Commedia in prosa ed in verso per musica tradotta dal francese da rappresentarsi nel teatro de' Fiorentini per seconda opera di quest'anno 1790* (Naples: Vincenzo Flauto, 1790).

14 'Il paraît que la Coltellini était si pathétique dans la romance adorable 'Il mio ben quando verrà', que les plus grandes dames de la cour, pleurant à chaudes larmes, se mirent à crier, à travers les sanglots qui étouffaient leur voix: *Sì, sì, verrà, il tuo Lindoro* – Oui, oui, il reviendra, ton bien-aimé!'. Paul Scudo, 'Celeste Coltellini et Paisiello', *Revue des deux Mondes*, 22 (1852), pp. 982–986 (pp. 984–985).

15 'Applausi poetici all'incomparabile attrice signora Angela Bruni', in *Nina o sia La pazza per amore. Commedia in prosa ed in verso tradotta dal francese rappresentata nel nobilissimo teatro Grimani a San Giovanni Grisostomo il carnevale dell'anno* MDCCXCIV *e dedicata all'incomparabile attrice che ne sostiene la parte* (Venice: Martini, n.d.), p. 55.

16 'Non si potrebbe credere, senza esserne stato testimonio, l'effetto ch'essa produceva su tutti. Chi batteva le mani, chi i piedi, chi gridava da forsennato, chi piangeva, chi restava mutolo non potendo esalare e mandar fuori l'interno movimento ed il tumulto degli affetti dell'anima. Mai non si vide più gran tripudio. I genitori promettevansi a vicenda di non mai più opporsi alle virtuose brame delle loro figliuole, e gli amanti diventavano più cari gli uni agli altri. Si risvegliava in ognuno il gusto delle feste campestri ed il desiderio de' piaceri semplici dell'innocente natura. Ricordanze di quei diletti gustati alla campagna, o tenere scene, o sventurati casi di amore della passata vita si apprestavano alla mente degli ascoltanti: e chi era commosso per memoria di piacere, e chi per memoria di dolore'. Letter dated Turin, 24 February 1794, in *Onori funebri renduti alla memoria di Giovanni Paisiello* (Naples: Angelo Trani, 1816), pp. 143–145 (pp. 143–144).

17 'Ho l'onore d'offrirvi nella *Nina ossia La pazza per amore* uno spettacolo di nuovo genere, almeno per Venezia. Se non è esso totalmente comico, merita però d'interessare la vostra delicata sensibilità'. *Nina o sia La pazza per amore. Commedia in prosa ed in verso per musica tradotta dal francese da rappresentarsi nel nobilissimo teatro Giustiniani in San Moisè il carnovale dell'anno 1792, dedicata alle nobilissime venete dame* (Venice: Modesto Fenzo, 1792), p. 3.

18 See Andrea Pinotti, *Empatia: Storia di un'idea da Platone al postumano* (Bari: Laterza, 2011).

19 See Manuel Couvreur, 'La folie à l'opéra-comique: Des grelots de Momus aux larmes de Nina', in *Grétry et l'Europe de l'opéra-comique*, ed. by Philippe Vendrix (Liège: Mardaga, 1992), pp. 201–219.

20 See Denis Diderot, *Éloge de Richardson*, in *Oeuvres esthétiques*, ed. by Paul Vernière (Paris: Garnier, 1968), pp. 23–48.

21 See Stefano Castelvecchi, 'From *Nina* to *Nina*: Psychodrama, Absorption and Sentiment in the 1780s', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 8/2 (1996), pp. 91–112; *Sentimental Opera*, pp. 125–160; Bebermeier, *Celeste Coltellini*, pp. 199–223.

22 'Nina semplicemente vestita, con capelli sciolti e con un mazzetto di fiori in mano'. I quote from the 1789 San Leucio libretto (see note 7 above), p. 24.

23 'qui tutto è natura, semplicità e sentimento'. I quote from the 1788 Monza libretto (see note 9 above), p. [8].

24 'Quelle folie intéressante! C'est celle de l'amour; il n'y a point à s'y méprendre: c'est celle d'un amour innocent et chaste; on le sent même au milieu du plus profond délire; c'est une folie qui n'est que dans la tête et dans le cœur; point d'affectation ni de caricature, ni de position étudiée, ni de contorsions, ni d'égarement forcé'. *Mercure de France*, 39 (24 September 1791), pp. 148–152 (p. 150).

25 'La Nina, impazzita per creder morto il suo amante, non viene in iscena a spropositar goffamente e non dimostra l'alterazione del suo cervello che dalla foggia del vestito e degli ornamenti, da' deliri della sua passione, da' travedimenti e dagl'improvvisi passaggi dalla tristezza alla gioia, tutto ne' limiti della teatrale decenza'. *Gazzetta urbana veneta*, 6 (21 January 1792), pp. 44–45.

26 See Castelvecchi, *Sentimental Opera*, pp. 63–86.

27 See e.g. Francesco Degrada, '*Nina*, la follia, l'utopia e il rimpianto dell'eden perduto', in *Nina, o sia La pazza per amore* (Milan: Edizioni del teatro alla Scala, 1989), pp. 47–89.

28 'Una bennata ed ingenua fanciulla, cui rapito venendo d'improvviso il legittimo amante perde l'uso della ragione e lo riacquista riacquistando l'amante, forma tutto il soggetto della presente commedia, di nodo, se pur ve n'ha uno, semplicissimo, ma di una finezza poi senza pari'. I quote from the 1788 Monza libretto (see note 9 above), p. 8.

29 See Marino Nahon, 'Carpani e l'importazione della forma strofica', *Musicalia: Annuario internazionale di studi musicologici*, 3 (2006), pp. 39–87 (pp. 72–87); the text of 'Il mio ben quando verrà' can be read at p. 25 of the 1789 San Leucio libretto (see not 7 above).

30 I quote from the 1789 San Leucio libretto (see note 7 above), p. 21.

31 In the autograph score (see note 7 above), 'Lontana da te' occupies cc. 95*r*–106*r* of vol. 1; see also the critical edition contained in Tufano, *'Nina o sia La pazza per amore' di Giovanni Paisiello*, vol. 2, pp. 214–224.