A. SCARLATTI
Oratorio per La Santissima Trinità

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Alessandro Scarlatti 1660-1725
Oratorio for the Holy Trinity
Oratorio in two parts for 5 voices, strings and b.c.
Edited by: Estévan Velardi

Parte Prima
1. Sinfonia: Vivace 0'41
2. Sinfonia: Adagio 1'32
3. Sinfonia: Allegro 1'17
4. Duetto: “Si, sí/No, no!” (Fede, Teologia) 0'39
5. Recitativo: “Io, che tutti i secreti” (Teologia) 0'32
6. Aria: “Una pianta” (Teologia) 1'32
7. Recitativo: “Oh quanto stolta sei” (Fede) 0'27
8. Aria: “Una pianta” (Teologia) 1'32
9. Recitativo: “Tu ch’hai gl’occhi” (Teologia, Fede) 0'24
10. Aria: “Che da un mar” (Infedeltà) 1'25
11. Recitativo: “Sì profondo mistero” (Teologia) 0'33
12. Aria: “Costante prestar fede” (Fede) 6'03
13. Recitativo composto: “Con l’ali al piede” (Tempo) 1'07
14. Aria: “Pretende invano” (Tempo) 1'43
15. Recitativo: “Dunque è ver” (Infedeltà) 1'21
16. Aria: “O te felice” (Fede) 0'24
17. Recitativo: “È ver che luce” (Infedeltà) 0'56
18. Aria: “Della Fede il bel candore” (Fede) 1'37
19. Recitativo: “Ecco, dunque” (Teologia) 0'32
20. Aria: “Ma nobile scudo” (Teologia) 1'11
21. Recitativo: “È ver” (Infedeltà) 0'28
22. Aria: “Or di voi più fortunaro” (Amor divino) 4'31
23. Recitativo: “O te felice” (Fede) 0'24
24. Duetto: “Quanto invidio/Sì che sono” (Fede, Amor divino) 1'31

Parte Seconda
31. Duetto: “Cedi/Oscurar” (Fede, Infedeltà) 1'20
32. Recitativo: “Cara Fede” (Teologia) 1'04
33. Aria: “Pensier così funesti” (Teologia) 4'45
34. Recitativo: “Non paventar” (Amor divino, Infedeltà) 1'37
35. Aria: “Un volere, un potere” (Amor divino) 1'34
36. Recitativo: “Ancor non sei” (Tempo, Infedeltà, Amor divino) 1'38
37. Aria: “Vedrai la tortorella” (Fede) 5'53
38. Recitativo: “Ancor non cedi” (Teologia) 0'39
39. Duetto: “L’augelletto” (Fede/Amor divino) 2'31
40. Recitativo: “Con assalto” (Infedeltà) 0'42
41. Aria: “Povera navicella” (Teologia) 3'37
42. Recitativo: “Di naufragio” (Amor divino) 0'50
43. Aria: “Tanto parla” (Amor divino) 3'12
44. Recitativo: “Povera Infedeltà” (Teologia/Fede/Infedeltà) 0'56
45. Aria: “Tutto le furie” (Infedeltà) 1'21
46. Recitativo: “Stolta sei” (Tempo) 0'29
47. Aria: “Con la Fede” (Tempo) 1'21
48. Recitativo: “È vano il tuo gioir” (Infedeltà) 0'24
49. Aria: “Ora ch’è vinta” (Fede) 2'55
50. Recitativo: “È ver” (Infedeltà) 0'27
51. Quintetto: “Ch’ho ti ceda” (Tratti) 0'54
52. Recitativo accompagnato: “Or che la Fe’ trionfa” (Fede) 0'55

FAITH / FEDE Linda Campanella soprano
DIVINE LOVE / AMOR DIVINO Silvia Bossa soprano
THEOLOGY / TEOLOGIA Gianluca Belfiori Doro alto
INFEDELITY / INFEDELTÀ Mario Cecchetti tenor
TIME / TEMPO Carlo Lepore bass

Alessandro Stradella Consort
On authentic instruments
Fabrizio Cipriani violin I , Elin Gabrielson violin II
Elena De Nard, Anna Maria Bianconi, Gabriele Bellu, Riccardo Minasi violins
Eugenio Lavacchini viola . Marcello Scandelli cello I
Ludovico Minasi cello II . Giuseppe Lo Sardo contrabass
Diego Cantalupi, Evangelina Mascardi Theorbo, Spanish guitar and archlute
Davide Pozzi organ and cembalo
Estévan Velardi conductor
ALESSANDRO SCARLATTI: AN UNJUSTLY NEGLECTED “GREAT MAN”

“[Alessandro Scarlatti] is a great man, and for being so good, seems bad because his compositions are very difficult and suited to performance in rooms, so not successful in theatres, in primis anybody who understands counterpoint will like them; but in a theatre audience of a thousand people, you won’t find twenty that understand it”.¹

Count Francesco Maria Zambecari, a perspicacious researcher of musical customs and attentive interpreter of contemporary public’s tastes was the first to single out (back in 1709) one of the main reasons that was to lead to the gradual and inexorable disappearance from repertory of almost all the countless works by Alessandro Scarlatti, i.e. was the extreme formal complexity that distinguished the language of a composer dedicated to a severe strict style, backed up by the most solid counterpoint doctrine, learnt firstly in his home town of Palermo (where he was born on 2nd May 1660), and later improved in Rome, at that point dominated by the imposing figure of Giacomo Carissimi (1605-1674), a composer with whom (according to some experts) the young Alessandro had a short but intense apprenticeship during the first months of his stay in the Eternal City. In that period the Sicilian musician (who had been appointed Maestro di Cappella at the Church of San Giacomo degli Incurabili in 1678) had already been noticed for his astonishing command of the most complicated rhetoric artifices, which he was able to lavish in his works along with a sublime vein of melancholy which had begun to cover the freshness of melodies which were still mindful of the predominant Venetian school and the influence of Alessandro Stradella (1639-1682), the protagonist of the Roman music scene who was about to end his unfortunate extraordinary life as a man and a composer in far-off Genoa at the hands of an unknown assassin.

The first document bearing witness to Alessandro Scarlatti’s work as a composer dates back to 1679, and regards the assignment of an important job - writing of an oratorio - by the prestigious very powerful Archconfraternity of the Holy Cross: “27th January 1679. And was resolute in how to proceed regarding the election of the Maestri di Cappella who have to do the Oratorios for the five Fridays of Lent. [...] on Behalf of the Duke Altemps it was decided to use Mr. Foggia, the Duke of Acquasparta, Don Pietro Cesi, the Duke of Paganica and Scarlattino alias the Sicilian [...]”² decision of the influential organization shows without a shadow of doubt that the nineteen year-old “Scarlantino” (little Scarlatti) had already attracted favourable attention in Rome, where he enjoyed the protection of one of the best known noble families: the secret of such a rapid success is probably to be found in the spread of his early works, in which the musician’s real vocation i.e. a particular bent for vocal writing - was already extremely evident. The cantatas that due to their style can be attributed to this period show an original variety of structures, often bringing to mind archaic stylistic elements (arias varied over a fundamental bass - chaconne) that are freely used alongside more “modern” aspects (such as the da capo arias). The type of voice used was almost always in the soprano register (this was to be the case for almost all the approximately seven hundred cantatas for solo voice composed by Scarlatti during his career), and this probably wasn’t a decision merely intended to gratify the erudite noble clients for whom these real miniature drammi per musica were intended, but rather a spontaneous tendency towards a type of singing that must have seemed to him to be particularly suited to his expressive needs. The great success achieved by these compositions (whose diffusion is confirmed by the large number of manuscript copies still conserved all over the world) confirms that the undeniable complexity of Scarlatti’s writing had to be matched by highly talented performers and extremely educated listeners (as were the members of the newly founded Accademia d’Arcadia, of which the Palermo composer was elected a member in 1706 along with Bernardo Pasquini and Arcangelo Corelli). Later in Rome, the oratorio also found fertile ground for “political” reasons: with the exception of a brief parenthesis, coinciding with the election to the Papal Throne of Pope Alexander VIII, theatrical activity in Rome was subject to serious restrictions between the 17th and 18th centuries. Opera was actually forbidden, even if the nobility and the highest ecclesiastic authorities usually got round papal prohibitions (or ignored them completely) by having operatic productions staged privately in their homes, for which sets were designed by top architects, and at which the most famous singers took part, even coming from abroad. In 1703, His Holiness promulgated an edict that prohibited for five years any events connected with the celebration of Carnival (and especially the performance of operas) to thank Divine Providence for having saved the city from a series of violent earthquakes that had seriously hit the rest of the Latium region. It was therefore necessary to find a “licit” way of enjoying a type of spectacle that was as similar as possible to opera: commissioning the composition of oratorios in the vernacular. In its stylistic evolution, this type of music had taken on the role of substitute for dramma per musica, from which it only differed as far as its sources of inspiration were concerned: sacred history took the place of narration with an Arcadian or mythological background, and comic
Scarlatti had the ability and opportunity to experiment what were to become in just a few years, the keystones of opera throughout an entire continent until the Mozart revolution, i.e. the increasingly frequent use of recitativo stromentato and the widespread use of the aria da capo, destined to take the place of all other types of aria. Some important historians in the 1900s stressed the import role played by the ouverture avanti l’opera invented by Scarlatti in these years in supplying a model for the first stage of development of the symphony (even if this opinion didn’t contribute to breaking the veil of silence to this day covers the numerous works kept in libraries throughout the world, awaiting and hoped for revival). Two reasons - the first of an aesthetic character and the second of an economic nature - led to Scarlatti leaving Naples in 1702, i.e. when he was at the peak of his fame: above all, his gusto was worsening, as the salary he was due in his role as Maestro della Reale Cappella wasn’t paid regularly. Hoping to find a permanent well paid position with Prince Ferdinando III de’Medici, he moved to Florence, but - in spite of the success achieved by the staging of some of his operas (now lost) - he didn’t obtain any job. At that point, he accepted to settle in Rome (1703), where he received the title of assistant Maestro di Cappella at the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore: in that period he was in close contact with Arcangelo Corelli (with whom he collaborated assiduously), and increased his output of sacred music and cantatas, without however giving up his perfection of his ideal model of dramma per musica. This was the point at which Scarlatti moved away definitively from the tastes of that period: his operatic and vocal music in general became increasingly complicated: the symphonies used more and more the counterpoint, the arias longer and their accompaniment was seldom entrusted to basso continuo alone; the virtuosity tended to become more expressive and the artists, rather than demonstrating mere technical ability were required to give really participated spiritually in the written text. Accusations of excessive severity in his style and pomposity began to reach him in Venice when he staged one of his masterpieces there, Mitridate Eupatore (1707).

“Evil spirits can’t deny that it’s sweet music
If it brings sleep to eyes that never close”. 4

This was the beginning of the incomprehension that accompanied the genius of

personalities were banned from the plot. On the other hand, the formal structure (alternating recitatives, arias and duets, increasingly in da capo form) and the degree of virtuosity - sometimes unrestrained - necessary for both singers and musicians remained similar. Freed from the solemnity conferred by the Latin language, the oratorio in Italian was thus able to spread beyond the basilicas and be performed in the sumptuous palaces of the nobility. The maestri di cappella nevertheless continued to receive a large number of commissions from the powerful oratory confraternities of San Girolamo and the influential protectors of the New Church, including Queen Cristina of Sweden, Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, Prince Francesco Maria Ruspini and Pope Clement XI himself. In the late 1600s, Carissimi and Stradella in Rome had already given wonderful examples of oratorio compositions in Italian, whose real originator however was Alessandro Scarlatti, who wrote approximately forty during his career, many of which to order for his Roman clients. The Palermo composer showed not only that he was able to satisfy his public’s tastes, but also on some occasions dared to adopt bold innovative ideas, fully complying with Baroque spirit and aesthetics. At the beginning of the New Century, although not living permanently in the Eternal City, he was the undisputed ruler of an environment in which competition consisted in musicians of the calibre of the Melani brothers, Bernardo Pasquini and Antonio Caldara, and where even cardinals and princes composed librettos and sometimes cantatas or instrumental music. Perhaps Scarlatti only began to unconsciously create a rift between himself and his audiences when he started his career as an opera composer, the field in which he showed himself to be an ingenious innovator and, unfortunately for him, a forerunner and organizer of the forms which assumed during the 1700s. Yet his first steps in the opera world were taken under excellent auspices: in the winter of 1679, his second work, Gli equivoci nel sembiante, was enormously successful and led an initial interest, followed by the protection of Queen Christina of Sweden (in the libretto of the subsequent Honestà negli amori, he was already able to use the title of the sovereign’s Maestro di Cappella). The rapidly gained fame, the circulation of some of his scores throughout Europe and the consequent stimulus to assert himself as an opera composer resulted in him leaving Rome and moving to Naples, where in the space of eighteen years (1684-1702) he wrote noless than thirty five dramma per musica, an impressive number of cantatas and a great abundance of sacred and spiritual music. In Naples, Scarlatti had the ability and opportunity to experiment what were to become in just a
The idea of celebrating a “Feast of the Holy Trinity” first appeared in French monastic circles shortly after the year 1000. In spite of some slight timid perplexities on behalf of the high Roman clergy, the new devotion spread and very soon took root throughout Europe. The new feast became official for the entire Catholic church in 1334. It’s a festivity of a “theological” nature and therefore for its doctrinal principle seems to be a celebration far from the devotion of common lay folk, precisely because it has as its subject the intimate mystery of God, inaccessible to man’s understanding and inexplicable with the words of common folk. In spite of all this, the Trinitarian cult became one of the most widespread, particularly after the Reformation, when numerous confraternities were founded throughout Catholic Europe, often not only with theological but also and above all humanitarian aims. In early 18th century, Naples, with a long-standing rich tradition and members who included several illustrious personalities from the cultural and political worlds, there was the powerful Archconfraternity of the Holy Trinity of Pilgrims. The church and adjacent hospital were founded in the second half of the 16th century by Fabrizio Pignatelli, who donated them to the confraternity of the Holy Trinity when he died. Confirming the brothers’ organization capacity and social prestige, the complex underwent various extension and rebuilding projects throughout the 18th century. Antonio Medrano, one of the most eminent architects of southern Italian art, worked on it between 1715 and 1754. From 1792 to 1798, the congregation worked on the construction of a new basilica, entrusting the design to Carlo Vanvitelli, who considerably changed the original project by father Luigi (the architect of the Royal Palace of Caserta), which dated back to 1769. The façade’s stucco statues, showing Sr. Filippo Neri and Sr. Gennaro (Januarius), are by Angelo Viva. The interior features a very unusual layout formed by two octagons linked by a rectangle. At the first altar on the left there’s a painting showing St. Gennaro asking for Divine protection for Naples, by Orofino Palumbo with the collaboration of Didier Barra, who painted the view of the town. The sumptuous choir, designed by Medrano, has rich stucco decorations. It’s an environment that has been kept at its utmost splendour and magnificence through the centuries, so it’s therefore not surprising that the official celebrations were enriched by the contribution of numerous prestigious musical events. As has been said, the confraternity was rich and powerful and regardless of expense, recruited the best talent available to celebrate its glories. For these reasons I think it’s possible that, in

Scarlatti to the grave and that resulted in his operas disappear from the repertory, with one significant exception: the instrumental music by Alessandro Scarlatti occupies a marginal position compared to the enormous amount of vocal music, and that’s normal for a composer who – as has been seen – showed a natural bent for putting himself at the service of the human voice. The surprising thing is that having almost completely forgetting the vocal works (sacred, secular and operatic), the 1800’s and (unfortunately) also the 1900’s dedicated themselves with a certain assiduity only to the diffusion and performance of his instrumental repertory. If his keyboard compositions, quite numerous and generally of a high stylistic level, are still absurdly compared with those of his son Domenico and performed with a “pioneering” spirit, the 12 Sinfonie di Concerto Grosso are now a permanent part of the repertoire of numerous groups specializing in the performance of ancient music. These pieces also had their work cut out to shake off the label of Corellismo rather too simplistically applied to them, but eventually they managed to assert themselves thanks to the perfect mastery of counterpoint (seen in the imaginative use of archaic dance rhythms) and above all thanks to the beauty of the melodies, delicately veined with a feeling of subtle sublime melancholy that is the characteristic original feature of the entire work of one of the greatest geniuses of Italian Baroque.

Scarlatti passed the last years of his life in Naples, esteemed and venerated, but by then fatally at the margins of cultural life. The praise of the major theoreticians and the most successful contemporary musicians (including Georg Friedrich Handel, Johann Adolf Hasse and the very severe Johann Joachim Quantz) encouraged the composer to continue his refined formal research, which culminated in two masterpieces of his maturity, **Il trionfo dell’onore** (1718) and **Griselda** (1721), scores which were once again enchantingly written, but light years from the public’s taste. He died in 1725 in the shadow of Mount Vesuvius, where he had retired a few years before, giving up composition almost completely: a new generation of musicians had already taken his place in the hearts of Neapolitan theatre audiences, but this new generation had been brought up in the taste and spirit of one of the most fervent admirers of the solemn magniloquence of Scarlatti’s style, Francesco Durante (1684–1735). By means of the teaching of this superb teacher, the admiration for the Palermo musician was kept alive and recognizable in the style of Pergolesi, Duni, Traetta, Sacchini, Paisiello, Piccinni, Ciampi and Jommelli, triumphantly spreading throughout the world under the name of opera napoletana.
May 1715, to solemnize the Feast of the Holy Trinity (i.e. the congregation’s most important celebration) the most valued esteemed musician in Naples was sought: Alessandro Scarlatti. The Palermo artist, after his travels to Venice and Tuscany, had decided to return to Naples, leaving his Roman residence in 1708. From that date, he resided permanently in Naples for about ten years, taking this decision following a direct invitation by Cardinal Grimani, the Kingdom’s new Austrian Viceroy. Scarlatti’s ten years in Naples reinvigorated rather than excluding his contacts with Roman nobility, his habitual clients. In 1716, the musician even received a patent of nobility from Pope Clement XI. From then on, he became “Cavaliere” Scarlatti, a title often appearing on his autograph compositions, enabling them to be dated with certainty in more than one case. The manuscript of the Oratorio for the Holy Trinity, whose writing is undoubtedly Scarlatti’s, is dated May 1715, but gives no indication of the location. This circumstance could bear out the theory that the score wasn’t intended to leave Naples. The large amount of indications explicitly included for the musicians could lead one to think that Scarlatti couldn’t or didn’t want to supervise its performance. He was fifty five years old (considered a more than mature age in those days) and his musical activity was still very intense, in spite of the frustrations and misunderstandings of a public that increasingly took its distance from his severe style: Alessandro Scarlatti’s commitments culminated in that same 1715 with the performance of the opera “II Tigrane” at the San Bartolomeo Theatre. The “12 Sinfonie di concerto grosso” were written starting in June of the same year, along with a certain amount of instrumental works. Naples respected the Palermo composer as one of the greatest living talents, but his definite refusal to adapt his art to the more superficial trends of an operatic theatre in which the affected ways of the singers were getting the upper hand increasingly relegated him to the margins of the musical life and success. The decision to also dedicate himself to instrumental music (an environment in which Scarlatti put his enormous formal skills to use in a much more evident manner than was allowed by the conventions of opera theatre) can perhaps be intended as the beginning of a deep spiritual crisis, a search for isolation and tranquility which reached its peak in the Sicilian maestro’s last years. As confirmation of the constantly diminishing request in Naples for sacred compositions by Scarlatti (a context in which to tell the truth the composer worked above all in Rome), we can firstly note that the Oratorio for the Holy Trinity by Alessandro Scarlatti is his second last work of this type. However, in this work he summed up all his previous activity, writing a score that - although still tied to models of which he was the most authoritative originator - seems particularly interesting from both a structural and an aesthetic point of view. The libretto is always closely linked with the music, and in fact seems to have been written at the same moment in which the music was being composed. Without wanting to attribute the poetry’s writing to Scarlatti (its author is unknown), it’s nevertheless necessary to note that in more than one point in the manuscript the Palermo composer wrote the verses and changed progression with admirable stylistic competence. The libretto’s structure seems quite traditional, even if one notes the unusual presence of numerous ensemble pieces (several duets and a quintet). Seven and five syllable lines predominate in the arias and hendecasyllables in the recitatives, but with numerous licences (dictated by the music). The language isn’t complicated, but isn’t always simple: it often makes considerable use of metaphors, utilized in a didactic sense, but apparently intended for an audience that was already well versed in theological doctrine, as were the members of the Confraternity of the Holy Trinity in Naples. From a musical point of view, this is a very interesting score, so I don’t think the word masterpiece is at all out of place. The composing is extremely inspired, and we’ll cover this aspect in the enclosed listening guide. However, at this point some details must be strongly stressed. Above all regarding the arias, which become moments of extreme concision and actively participate in the development of the dramatic scenes; most last just the amount of time necessary for the action to take place, to avoid distracting the audience’s attention from the event being performed, which regarded a difficult topic, as has been seen. In fact the characters involved in this oratorio, in the vocal style of two sopranos, alto, tenor and bass, are allegorical figures discussing the concept of the Holy Trinity: this results in a rather animated clash - often requiring considerable concentration and attention - between Faith and Faithlessness, Theology and Divine Love, arbitrated by Time. Putting all this to music, Scarlatti renewed himself constantly; the technical instruments are those he had always used, but here he experimented something new. At first sight it seems that the writing and structure belong to a composing style similar to the first 17th century oratorios, but careful analysis on the other hand astonishingly shows the enormous difference that distinguishes this later period, full of innovation and unexpected strokes of genius from the previous one. We find a Scarlatti who was by this time mature and - with the strength of all his creative ability - wanted to be innovative. The score is at the service of the “drama,” in a musical
action that flows almost without caesura, and the listening guide will emphasize the richness of Scarlatti’s invention, always backed up by extremely in-depth knowledge of all the best writing methods of the most ancient Italian school. This oratorio was discovered very recently almost by chance. I found the autograph score at an antique market and was astonished to discover that it was the only complete one in existence. There are traces of another manuscript copy, which is however incomplete. Chance and luck have given us the possibility of fully appreciating the entire work. The manuscript’s critical revision was by Estevan Velardi, also actively involved in the revision of the poetic text, edited by me.

LISTENER’S GUIDE
Musical analysis of the manuscript by Mario Marcarini

FIRST PART


The introductory symphony is divided into three parts: the very beginning is solemn, immediately giving way to rapid imitative passages, followed by a moment of meditation (with prevalent use of the strings, also in solo passages). The third and last movement, in a faster tempo, is a contrapuntal intertwining of two themes, leading smoothly into the first duet.

4. “Si, si!l No, no!” Duet Faith/Theology (Strings-b.c.) (Allegro).

The two allegorical figures start the action with a lively discussion, expressed in an agitated, fragmented musical dialogue. The character of the whole scene is that of a typical 17th-century opera prologue, in which two or more figures introduce the subject of the story; which, Theology explains in the next recitative, is

5. “Io, che tutri i secreti” Recitative Theology

the desire to render the mystery of the Holy Trinity intelligible to human understanding, not only to heavenly intelligence: it tries to convince Faith of the worthiness of its proposal with a typical aria of comparison:

6. “Una pianta” Aria Theology (b.c.-Ref.) (Allegro)

The tempo is very fast, with the voice accompanied only by the basso continuo; the ornamentation is evident but refined, with obvious didactic intent. After the da capo, an instrumental refrain repeats the main theme and thus ends the piece: this is a typical device of Scarlatti’s rhetoric, to give the aria an epigraphic character and make it more convincing. Faith however is just as certain of its own convictions, and explains in the next recitative

7. “Oh quanto stolra sei” Recitative Faith

that only through believing can man come to understand the divine mysteries, since “no one is allowed to comprehend a God other than himself”. Faith confirms and elaborates on it—reasoning in a magnificent aria with da capo.

8. “Cieca talpa” Aria Faith (Unis. Vl.-b.c.) (Allegro)

This composition, one of the highest moments of the whole oratory for the sense of majesty and balance of its formal construction, has an introduction consisting of a theme played by unison strings that later alternate imitatively with the vocal line. Here, the many ornaments emphasise the character of the personage, at the same

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1 L. Frati, Un impresario teatrale del Settecento e la sua biblioteca, Rivista Musicale Italiana, XVIII (1911), 69
2 R. Pagano, A.S., ERI 1972,45-46
4 Satire by Bartolomeo Doni Contro lo Scarlatti In A. Della Corte, Satire e grotteschi di musiche e di musicisti d’ogni tempo, Turin, 1946, 243.
time authoritarian and magniloquent. We also note the tone of the poetry, halfway between doctrinaire and ironic, also used in the next recitative.

9. “Tu ch’hai gl’occhi” Recitative Theology/Faith
The argument is unexpectedly terminated by the re-proposal of the initial duet, of which we hear a fragment, and another character is introduced.

10. “Si, si! No, no!” Faith/Theology Duet (Strings-b.c.)(Allegro)
Infidelity enters into the allegorical conversation, and in a boldly and obviously provocative recitative

11. “Baldanzose donzelle” Recitative Infidelity
begins to insinuate fundamental doubt which will be the hub around which the entire story will rotate, that is, the possibility of a single nature simultaneously in the three Holy Persons. Not only does Infidelity use provocative language, it also hints gleefully that the discussion of the other two is absolutely futile. In this aria

12. “Che da un mar” Aria Infidelity (b.c.-Ref.) (Allegro stretto)
Scarlatti ingeniously exposes the character of the personage by giving the instrumental accompaniment initially only to the basso continuo in an ostinato form, underlining the foolish and futile convictions of Infidelity, who scornfully and harshly expounds the text, thus without many ornaments. In the final section, when the reasoning becomes totally untenable, the composer introduces an instrumental tutti in the form of a refrain superimposed on the figuration of the basso continuo with the intention (perfectly and admirably accomplished) of creating a sort of imaginative and rhetorical “organised chaos”. In the following recitative

13. “Si profondo mistério” Recitative Theology
Theology is not the least disturbed by this talk, and trusts that with the help of Time (which it invokes) it will be able to attain its goal. Faith echoes this conviction, placidly taking pride in its own merits in a reflective and moderately doctrinal aria.

14. “Costante prestar fede” Aria Faith (2 solo vl.- b.c.) (Andante)
This piece is quiet and reflective. The principal theme is announced by a solo violin (with a second solo violin echoing) and then is given to the voice, which develops it into long phrases enriched by elegant vocalises. The pitch is quite high, and it’s clear melody reminds the listener of the certainties of a celestial intelligence, capable of laying out concepts able to move and convince with elegant sweetness, in full accord with the oratorial rhetoric of the time. The piece, with its dreamy atmosphere, leads into the accompanied recitative the introduces the entry on the scene of Time.

15. “Con l’ali al piede” Mixed recitative Time (Strings)
Solemn and majestic, Time announces its arrival telling of its own virtues. The recitative, accompanied at the beginning and then with only basso continuo, gives way to a brilliant aria with da capo. Time explains that its mere presence is not enough for man to understand the highest mysteries of the Holy Trinity. In this exquisitely crafted aria we plainly see the division between Concerto grosso and concertino, which alternate in the introduction with the suggestive effect of invocation and response.

16. “Pretende invano” Aria Time (Strings) (Allegro)
The treatment of the voice, with rapid vocalises searching out both the lowest and the highest notes of the bass extension, is emblematic of Scarlatti’s style: the composer allegorically describes Time’s capacity of containing within itself a space-time extension incalculable for the human mind, represented both in the broad extension of the voice and in the difficult figurations that would challenge the intonation of the best of performers.

17. “Dunque è ver” Recitative Infidelity/Faith
The story continues with another provocation by Infidelity, answered this time by Faith in a vehement aria.

18. “Della Fede il bel candore” Aria Faith (b.c.-Ref.) (Allegro)
The theme of this aria is a vibrant protest, and so the rhetorical artifice used by Scarlatti concentrates on the rhythm, extremely incisive in the placing of strong accents. The voice is supported by the basso continuo, which begins with a brief introduction. A final tutti in the form of a refrain re-proposes with epigrammatic assurance the short phrases of the soprano.

19. “O tu che vanti” Recitative Time/Infidelity
The theological discussion continues with another strong, dramatic recitative, this time between Time and Infidelity. The former argues that Infidelity can be vanquished with the passage of years, just as it is unable to understand mysteries on too high a plane. It ridicules its rival in the next aria with a sharp syllogism (Come poi tu dir potrai/che un mistero sì profondo/perché è ignoto nol si sa!)

20. “Che sia Tempo” Aria Time (Unison Vl.- b.c.) (Allegro)
Here the tempo is once again energetic and again the rhythm is more important than the melody. Time expounds its reasons solemnly and magniloquently. Vocalises are prevalent at the end of every line of the poetry, after all the phrase has been clearly
pronounced. This is another expedient to underline the “logical” character of Time, in contrast to impetuous and chaotic Infidelity. This latter returns to instil its doubts, 21. “E’ ver” Recitative Infidelity posing another question with an aria that, rather than interrupting the action with a reflective parenthesis, moves the plot along.

22. “L’eterno Padre” Aria Infidelity (Strings) (Grave/Allegro/Grave)
A prelude of mysterious character introduces the broad sweeping melody with which Infidelity expounds its doctrine. This parter is admirably contrasted by the following section, more agitated and faster, symbolically representing doubt and anguish for a question for which it seems the interlocutors have no answer.

23. “Ti risponde dal cielo” Recitative Divine Love
A new character intervenes at this point: Divine Love bursts onto the scene with simple but incisive strength, melting away all fears in its next aria

24. “Quell’amore” Aria Divine Love (Solo vl.-b.c.) (Moderato)
Here too the three-part formula of da capo is masterfully used to the advantage of the aria’s expressive necessities: the more convincing the reasoning or concept put forth by the character, the more Scarlatti insists on a placid tempo. Here the movement is gentle rather than solemn and is highlighted by interventions of the concertante violin with a theme that winds in a sublimine dialogue with the soprano voice, abandoned in long melodic phrases that resolve with measured and extremely elegant ornaments in the medium-high register.

25. “Ecco dunque” Recitative Theology
Following this elegiac moment Theology once again speaks up, singing the praises of Faith in the next aria.

26. “Ma, ma nobile scudo” Aria Theology (b.c.-Ref.) (Allegro)
Only the basso continuo accompanies the brief virtuosistic exposition of the contralto voice, and the piece ends rapidly with a short, incisive instrumental refrain. Then Divine Love once again speaks up,

27. “E’ ver che luce” Recitative Divine Love
also praising Faith but reminding us that the divine mysteries become more comprehensible the closer we get to God. Its da capo aria

28. “Or di voi più fortunato” Aria Divine Love (Strings) (Moderato)
is solemn, introduced by a sombre, majestic prelude. The vocal line is extremely sober and even the ornaments are characterised by a feeling of grandiose simplicity.

The soprano voice is set mainly in the central register, with rare incursions into the medium-high zone. The piece, with its classical proportions, evidently aims at symbolising the privileged condition of those supreme intellects that reside near the Father.

29. “O te felice” Recitative Faith
With an almost infantile sense of wonder, Faith introduces the duet that concludes the first part of the oratory.

30. “Quanto invidio/Si che sono” Duet Faith/Divine Love (Unison vl.-b.c.) (Allegro)
This is a quick incisive piece, suggested more by the necessity to create a division in the work than for any expressive requirement. Contrary to all the pieces in the oratory up to this point, the text does not move the action forward; it dwells on a theme quite out of the range of this work.

SECOND PART

31. “Cedi/Oscurar” Duet Faith/Infidelity (Strings) (Allegro stretto)
Continuing the refined structural play on symmetrical repeats, the second part of the oratory begins with a duet between Faith and Infidelity: this latter figure continues its bold defiant attacks against the other allegorical figures, and its character is well defined in this piece, conceived as a challenge to the others. The tempo is an allegro stretto whose dotted time is reminiscent of a military march; woven into the rhythm, the voices create rich garlands of vocalises and unravel complex imitative figures. But the next recitative returns to a peaceful climate with its calm melodious figures and tranquil movement.

32. “Cara Fede” Recitative Theology
Theology expresses its feelings about Faith, whom it sees staggering under the blows of Infidelity.

33. “Pensier così funesto” Aria Theology (Solo vl.-b.c.) (Adagio)
An appealing melody of the obbligato violin introduces another meditative aria, in which the text is gravely stressed with the intention of moving the listener, leaving him almost with a feeling of suspension.

34. “Non paventar” Recitative Divine Love/Infidelity
Divine Love intervenes, declaring itself ready to confront Infidelity with arguments so strong that it will no longer have any reason to continue its boasting. Infidelity accepts the challenge, and starts setting out its doubts in the form of theological
queries, first and foremost that of the obedience shown by Jesus Christ to his Father in accepting his crucifixion. Divine Love answers immediately, using both the recitative and the aria to keep the action moving.

35. “Un volere, un potere” Aria Divine Love (b.c.-Ref.) (Allegro)
Accompanied only by the basso continuo (followed by a tutti using the formula, we have already seen of the refrain ending after the da capo of the aria) Divine Love’s aria would seem to be constructed using an ostinato movement, a form that was already considered archaic at the time this piece was written. The atmosphere here is one of pleading, which justifies the expedient of the infinite repetition of the bass line. The final refrain strongly confirms the concepts expressed during the aria.

36. “Ancor non cedi” Recitative Time/Infidelity/Divine Love
Far from being convinced by Divine Love’s arguments, Infidelity continues with its attacks despite Tempo’s opposition. This time the doubt refers directly to the very nature of the Holy Trinity. Once again, Divine Love answers, with a classic aria of comparison.

37. “Vedrai la tortorella” Aria Faith (2 solo VI.-b.c.) (Pastorale)
The elegiac, pastoral character of this magnificent piece is displayed in the intervention of the two obbligato violins, co-protagonists of the voice, giving a feeling of abandon. The vocal line is crystal clear and the ornaments are added exclusively for expressive reasons. The high zone is explored more intensely than in the other pieces of this oratory, requiring a rather wide vocal extension.

38. “Ancor non sei” Recitative Theology
Theology also begs Infidelity to give up, introducing with its recitative a duet between Faith and Divine Love.

In this duet the Arcadian, pastoral climate of Faith’s preceding aria continues. The principal theme is first expounded by the two concertante instruments (one is the viola, which only rarely is given the honour of a solo passage) which imitate bird songs with interesting echo effects, a procedure taken up by the two voices, then admirably united with the instruments. Here we are in the presence of one of the rare moments of suspension of the oratory, almost a moment of “evacuation” taken as pure divertissement with the opportunity to hear a virtuoso performance (note the unison staccato figures of the two sopranos, typical of operatic compositions).

40. “Con assalto” Recitative Infidelity

Infidelity becomes ever more insolent in its attacks on the other allegorical characters; Theology seems to waver, comparing its condition with that of a ship in a storm.

41. “Povera navicella” Aria Theology (2 solo Vc., 2 solo lutes) (Adagio)
With a true stroke of genius Scarlatti does not give us the type of aria we all expect at this point, that is, a musical tempest; instead he has organised a complex structure in imitative style, a 2-voice fugue accompanied by two obbligato violoncellos (which imitate the breaking of waves) and supported by two solo lutes. The atmosphere he creates is one of incredible suspension, signifying that the doubts Theology suffers are of a moral nature, and thus cannot be expressed with the usual rhetorical expedients characteristic of operatic composing.

42. “Di naufragio” Recitative Divine Love
Reinforcing the comparison Divine Love comes to Theology’s aid. Paradoxically, the comparison is carried on during the recitative, but in the aria the action is carried forward instead. This procedure is in net contrast with the rules of composition of the time, demonstrating once again the experimental prowess of Scarlatti, who in this oratory put together both archaic stylistic features and bold formal and structural innovations.

43. “Tanto parla” Aria Divine Love (Unison vl.-b.c.) (Andante)
Accompanied only by the basso continuo (followed by a tutti using the formula, we have already seen of the refrain ending after the da capo of the aria) Divine Love’s aria would seem to be constructed using an ostinato movement, a form that was already considered archaic at the time this piece was written. The atmosphere here is one of pleading, which justifies the expedient of the infinite repetition of the bass line. The final refrain strongly confirms the concepts expressed during the aria.

44. “Ancor non sei” Recitative Time/Infidelity/Divine Love
Far from being convinced by Divine Love’s arguments, Infidelity continues with its attacks despite Tempo’s opposition. This time the doubt refers directly to the very nature of the Holy Trinity. Once again, Divine Love answers, with a classic aria of comparison.

45. “Tutte le furie” Aria Infidelity (Strings) (Presto)
The tempo marked in the score is presto and the aria is extremely concise in its strong expressive energy. The aria begins with aggressive dotted rhythms, and the tenor voice makes its entrance with quick staccato phrases, ending with garlands of vocalises that are there only for virtuoso effect, used in this context as pure decoration to accentuate the emptiness and the overbearing bur futile boldness of the character.

46. “Ancor non cedi” Recitative Time
Time intervenes with severe tones which at the same time are almost mocking in a recitative in which it exposes Infidelity’s useless and foolhardy affront; in the
Estévan Velardi, orchestral director, holds degrees in choral music and choral conducting. He was a pupil of M. Couraud and G. Bertola in choral conducting, F. Ferrara (as observer), F. Gallini, A. Détév and D. Nénov. He took his degree in orchestral conducting with Ivan Bàkalov in Sofia (Bulgaria). He studied composition with P. Renosto, G. Maselli, L. Chailly and G. Colardo. He also studied cello with Sante Amadori and G. Rossi. He attended courses at the Accademia Chigiana, and studied and collaborated with R. Clemencic. In 1987 he founded the vocal and instrumental group “Camerata Ligure”, which in 1992 became the Alessandro Stradella Consort, dedicated to publishing and performing the complete works of this great Italian composer of the seventeenth century. Velardi has conducted and participated in the revival of many works in their first performances in modern times throughout Italy and other countries. He collaborates with Sergio Vartolo at the XXX Festival oh Chaise-Dieux / France) and with René Clemencic at the Musikverein in Vienna, Teatro Real in Madrid, Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, Alter Oper in Frankfurt, Nordwest Deutscher Rundfunk in Hamburg, and others. He has worked with such renowned stage directors as Pierluigi Pizzi. After eleven long years of research he recovered the manuscript (thought to be lost) of Stradella’s opera La Doriclea. In 2004 he performed and recorded the world premiere of this work. As a specialist in baroque music, he has rediscovered and performed numerous operas, oratorios and vocal and instrumental works by three great Italian composers of the late 17th century; Alessandro Stradella, Alessandro Melani and Alessandro Scarlatti. He is tireless in exploring the treasures Italian music of the 17th and 18th centuries. He has published and recorded for Bongiovanni, Nuova Era Records, Dynamic, Chandos and Brilliant Classics. He has a degree in Social Studies in the Performing Arts from the University of Venice (Ca’ Foscari) under the supervision of Sandro Cappelletto, with the thesis “From project to product: Vivaldi’s Il Giustino.”

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1 Tempos in italics have been added by the author and are not present in the manuscript.

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