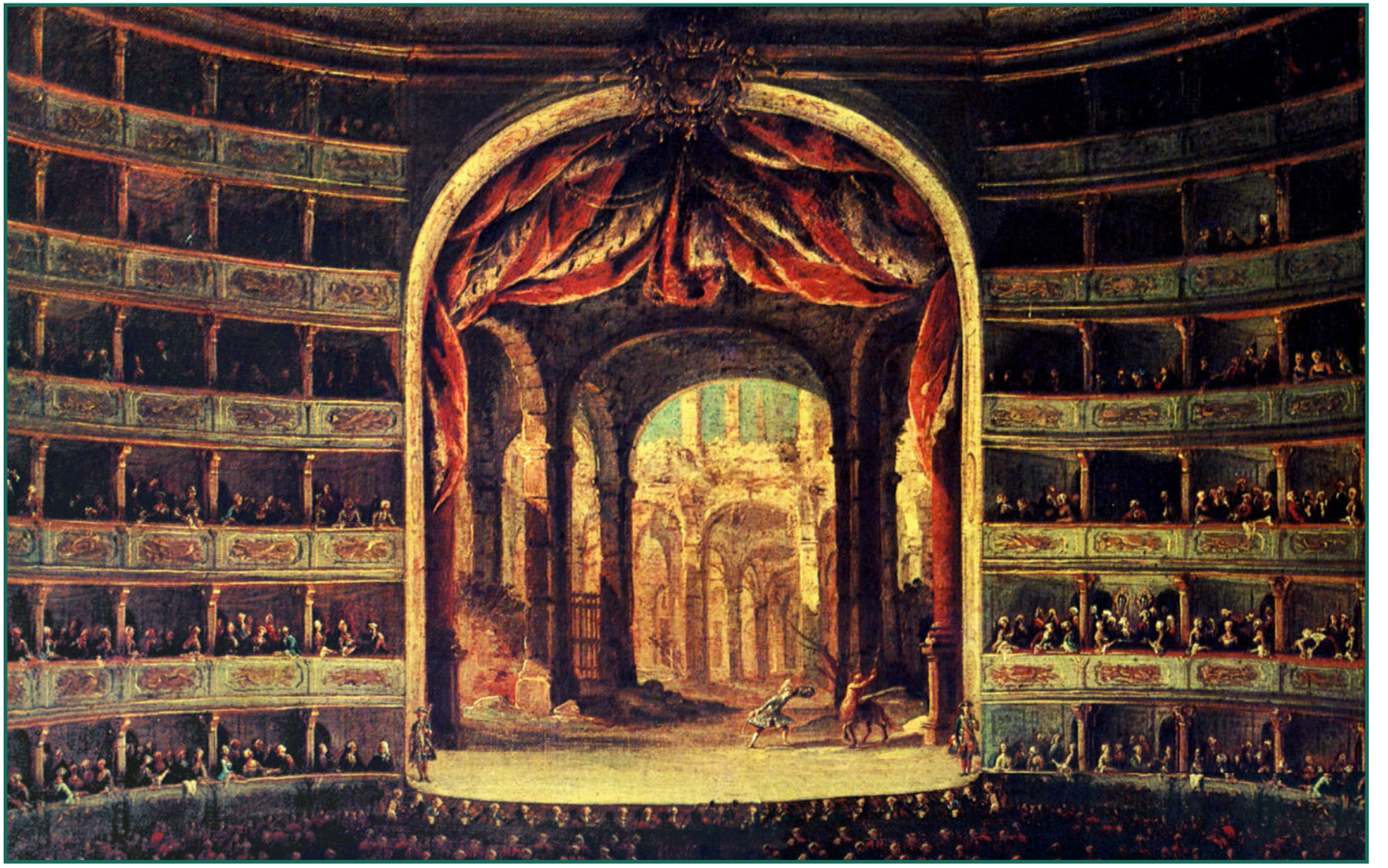
NAXOS

Domenico CIMAROSA

Overtures • 2

L'Italiana a Londra • La Circe • Alessandro nell'Indie
Artaserse • L'Armida immaginaria • Oreste

Toronto Chamber Orchestra • Kevin Mallon



Domenico Cimarosa was the most famous and popular Italian composer of the second half of the eighteenth century. In the course of a brilliantly successful career he composed more than 65 operas as well as a significant body of instrumental music and works for the church. His operas were performed all over Europe both in Italian and in translation. A number of Cimarosa's operas continued to enjoy occasional stagings during the nineteenth century and his most famous work, *Il matrimonio segreto*, is one of only a handful of operas of the period never to have left the repertory. The others are by Mozart.

Born in 1749 at Aversa, Cimarosa moved with his family to Naples, shortly after his own birth and shortly before the death of his father, a stonemason. His musical gifts, however, enabled him to study at the Conservatorio di S Maria di Loreto and to embark on a career as a composer of operas in Naples. He subsequently entered the service of Catherine the Great in St Petersburg, then moving to the imperial service in Vienna and, in 1793, to Naples once more, a city from which he was expelled in 1799 when the monarchy was restored after a brief republican interlude. He spent his final years in Venice, where he died in 1801.

Cimarosa's operas are remarkable for their delineation of character, sureness of dramatic touch, melodic invention and assured handling of the orchestra. The overtures are themselves of particular interest. Some conform to the three-movement pattern of earlier Neapolitan composers, while others are cast in a single movement similar to the sonata-form structures of the contemporary symphony. Cimarosa's orchestration is deft and the equal of any symphonist of the period. He retains a fondness for three-part string textures throughout his career, typically with the first violin and viola presenting the melodic material while the second violin is assigned an accompanying figure. For all the similarities, however, the overtures are not symphonies and serve, rather, as scene setters for the drama to follow, without thematic links to the opera itself and to an extent, therefore, interchangeable.

Among the overtures featured on this recording are *L'Italiana a Londra*, Cimarosa's first great international success, and *Giannina e Bernadone,* one of the most enduringly popular of all his operas.

L'Armida immaginaria

Cimarosa's comedy *L'Armida immaginaria* was commissioned by the Teatro dei Fiorentini in Naples in 1777. Shortly before the work's completion, the composer received a second commission for an opera for the Teatro Valle in Rome. Pressed for time, Cimarosa reused a large chunk of material from the overture to *L'Armida immaginaria* in the new work, *Il ritorno di Don Calendrino*, safe in the knowledge that the earlier work could not possibly be known yet in Rome. The relationship between the two overtures is extremely interesting for Cimarosa does not simply borrow material but reworks it in many small but significant details. The superiority of the later overture indeed makes the 'original' look like a sketch. Thus, in spite of the historical circumstances, the impression one gains is that the overture to *L'Armida immaginaria* was written in greater haste than its sequel. The reuse of the thematic material, therefore, was as much an aesthetic decision as a pragmatic one. Giuseppe Palomba's libretto to *L'Armida immaginaria* was inspired by Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*. The work was

well received at its première and was remounted the following season. A further production in Genoa (1787) is also known.

Oreste

Cimarosa's *Oreste,* based on a libretto by Luigi Serio, opened on 13th August 1783 at the Royal Theatre of San Carlo in Naples to celebrate the Queen's name-day and was given nineteen times between the opening night and 15th October. There are no further productions or performances on record, although eighteenth-century manuscripts of *Oreste* in Paris and Lisbon suggest the possibility that productions were mounted in those cities.

While the autograph score divides the opera into two acts, the libretto for the first performance states that the opera is in three acts. What was actually performed at the première is thus open to question. The situation is complicated further by the existence of a second eighteenth-century manuscript copy in the same collection that is in three acts, implying that some performances, perhaps even in Naples, were indeed in three acts. In this later version, the third act is very short, consisting of only a few scenes.

Extensive self-quotation is in evidence once again in this overture: the entire first part is lifted note for note from the first part of the overture Cimarosa had written a year earlier for his oratorio *Giudetta* (Judith), a work composed, as he himself wrote, "for the virtuous young ladies of the music conservatory in Venice known as l'Ospedaletta" where Cimarosa was not only a maestro but also an active choral instructor.

L'Italiana a Londra

Written in 1778 when Cimarosa was not yet thirty, *L'Italiana a Londra* (The Italian Girl in London) proved to be the composer's first big hit. Following its première as a five-person, two act opera at the Teatro Valle in Rome on 28th December 1778, the opera was given numerous productions throughout Europe in the years that followed. By the end of the century performances had been given in German, French, Russian, Polish, Danish, Swedish and English in addition to countless productions in the original Italian.

The overture, similar to many of those by Cimarosa, shares part of its music with another overture, that to *L'infedeltà fedele* (Faithful Infidelity) written the following spring for the opening of the new *buffa* theatre in Naples, Teatro del Fondo. Cimarosa's original overture to *L'Italiana a Londra*, which was composed first, is in three movements: *Allegro con spirito – Andante – Presto*. Later, when he was composing his overture to *L'infedeltà fedele,* a one-movement overture, Cimarosa borrowed 63 bars from the 149 bars of the first movement of *L'Italiana a Londra* to create a longer single movement (194 bars) for the new work.

Artaserse

Cimarosa chose a much-used libretto for the *opera seria* he composed for the Teatro Regio in Turin: *Artaserse* (Artaxerxes) by the prince of librettists, Pietro Metastasio. *Artaserse* had been set previously by Leonardo Vinci (1730), Johann Adolph Hasse (1730), and Baldassare Galuppi (1749). Thomas Arne created his own libretto in 1762 for his *Artaserse*, crafting it after Metastasio's original. The only performance of Cimarosa's *Artaserse* on record after its first performance in Turin is one in Lisbon in 1801 for which additions were made to the score by Marcus Antonio Portugal.

Interestingly, the overture Cimarosa wrote for *Artaserse* which was given its first performance on the opening night of Carnival, 26th December 1784 in Turin, strongly foreshadows his best-known overture, to

Il matrimonio segreto, which he composed some eight years later after 'borrowing' material from the *Artaserse* overture. There are also similarities between the overture to *Artaserse* and two others: *Il marito disperato* (Naples, 1785) and its reworking ten years later as *L'amante disperato*.

Alessandro nell'Indie

Alessandro nell'Indie (Alexander in India) was Cimarosa's first opera to a text by Pietro Metastasio, a tale of confrontation between Alexander the Great and Porus as recorded by both Arrian and Curtius Rufus among other classical writers. Cimarosa's *Alessandro nell'Indie*, a *dramma per musica* in three acts, was first presented at the Teatro Argentina in Rome on 2nd January 1781. A further production of the work (Warsaw, 1792) is known but it does not appear to have enjoyed the success of many of the composer's other operas.

La donna sempre al suo peggior s'appiglia

La donna sempre al suo peggior s'appiglia (Women Should Be Taken at Their Worst), a *commedia per musica* in three acts, received its première at the Teatro Nuovo in Naples as the third opera of the 1785 season. Although there is an eighteenth-century manuscript copy of the full score in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (D.2101-2102) which suggests that a performance took place there, there is no record of any production of *La donna sempre al suo peggior s'appiglia* other than its initial performance at the Teatro Nuovo in Naples, a certain indication that the opera was one of Cimarosa's rare failures.

La donna sempre al suo peggior s'appiglia shares its overture with the later Cimarosa opera, *La felicità inaspettata* (Unexpected Bliss), a work from the composer's Russian period. The autograph score of the latter opera does not contain an overture, instead commencing with a *ballo* or dance. In contrast, the eighteenth-century copy of *La felicità inaspettata* in the library of the Conservatoire Royal de Musique in Brussels is preceded by a Sinfonia, one that is identical with that of *La donna sempre al suo peggior s'appiglia*.

La Circe

La Circe, a *dramma per musica* in three acts with a libretto by Domenico Perelli, was given its première at the Teatro alla Scala, Milan, during Carnival, 1783. Although there are many references to performances other than the La Scala production, the première is the only staging for which documentary evidence survives. A number of authors, without citing their authority, have suggested that there were performances in Rome in 1773 (most unlikely since that was the year of Cimarosa's very first opera in Naples), Genoa (1789), Pavia in 1796 (with the title *Amor di Circe con Ulisse*) and in Lisbon (1805).

Il fanatico per gli antichi Romani

Il fanatico per gli antichi Romani (The Fanatic for Ancient Romans) is a *commedia per musica* in three acts with libretto by Giuseppe Palomba. The first performance took place at the Teatro dei Fiorentini in Naples in the spring of 1777. The opera was also produced in its entirety in Paris during the nineteenth century under the title *Le fanatique des anciens Romains*.

Since the structure of most *opere buffe* in the eighteenth century consisted principally of a string of arias and recitatives (the ensembles being limited to an opening introduction to Act I and a finale for most of the other acts), *Il fanatico per gli antichi Romani* is remarkable for its wealth of ensembles: a duet, two trios, two quartets, a quintet, and two sextets. Surprisingly, it

was not the ensembles but the solo items which were extracted for eighteenth-century performances in Genoa and Naples as well as in London.

Giannina e Bernadone

Cimarosa's *dramma giocoso* in two acts, *Giannina e Bernadone*, was given its première at the Teatro San Samuele in Venice in November 1781 and remains one of his most celebrated comic operas. Extremely popular in the eighteenth century in Italy and elsewhere, notable productions of the work were given in Venice (1781), Prague (1783), and in both Trieste and Rovereto in 1784. In 1785 it was produced in Dresden (as *Hannchen und Bernadon*), Bavaria and Warsaw; in 1786 at Drottningholm in Sweden, the Teatro San Angelo in Venice (as *Il villano geloso*) and in Zara; and in 1787 at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket, London. In the next decade it was staged in Madrid, Potsdam, Esterháza, Bilbao, Marseille, Lisbon and Lugano. Productions were mounted throughout in the nineteenth century and at least two revivals were mounted in the twentieth century including the pioneering broadcast of the opera by Italian State Radio (RAI) on 26th July 1953.

Allan Badley & Nick Rossi

Toronto Chamber Orchestra

The Toronto Chamber Orchestra plays on modern instruments and draws its players from the best orchestras in Toronto, with principal players from the Toronto Symphony, the Canadian Opera Orchestra, the Canadian Ballet Orchestra, Tafelmusik and Aradia Ensemble. Many of the players also play baroque instruments and all are well versed in stylistic issues from the 18th century to the modern day. As such, the orchestra's approach is to extend to all periods of music the transparency and purity of tone one achieves with period instruments. The orchestra has made twelve recordings for the Naxos label.

Violin 1
Paul Zevenhuisen
(concert-master and solo violin)
James Aylesworth
Floortje Gerritsen
Anne Armstrong

Violin 2
Cristina Zacharias
Rachel Moody
Patricia Ahern
Marika Holmqvist

Viola
Eric Paetkau
Ivan Ivanovich

Cello
Katie Rietman
Mary Katherine Finch

Double Bass
J.Tracy Mortimore

Flute 1
Leslie Newman

Flute 2
Emma Zoe Green

Oboe 1
Sarah Jeffrey

Oboe 2
Brian James

Clarinet 1
Micah Heilbrunn

Clarinet 2
Colin Savage

Bassoon 1
Nadina Mackie Jackson

Bassoon 2
Margaret Fay

Horn 1
Gabe Radford

Horn 2
Wendy Limbertie

Trumpet 1
Norman Engel

Trumpet 2
Andras Molnar

Timpani
Edward Reifel

Kevin Mallon

The Irish musician Kevin Mallon, now resident in Canada, is quickly developing a worldwide reputation. With an impressive background that includes conducting studies with John Eliot Gardiner, composition with Peter Maxwell Davies, training at Chetham's School of Music and the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, and at Dartington College of Arts, he learnt his craft as a violinist with such orchestras as the Hallé and the BBC Philharmonic, and later as concertmaster with Le Concert Spirituel and Les Arts Florissants n Paris. With these groups he has recorded extensively and toured the world. He has performed concerts all over Europe, including Vienna, London, Berlin and Paris, with appearances in Russia, the Baltic States, China, Japan, New Zealand, the United States and Canada. Before moving to Canada to take up positions with the University of Toronto and the Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, Kevin Mallon was active in both his native Ireland and throughout Europe. He was conductor of the Irish Baroque Orchestra as well as the Musical Director of the Harty Ensemble in Belfast. He also conducted numerous orchestras and opera companies in Ireland, including the Ulster Orchestra, Castleward Opera and the National Chamber Choir. Kevin Mallon formed and became the Music Director of the Aradia Ensemble in 1996. This vocal and instrumental group has achieved extraordinary successes. All their recordings for Naxos have received international praise. The ensemble was featured in 2000 at the New Zealand International Chamber Music Festival, and in 2003 at the Musica nel Chiostro festival in Tuscany. Although Kevin Mallon specializes in music of the Baroque period, he is in demand to conduct a wider repertoire. As part of his recording contract with Naxos, he is Music Director of the Toronto Camerata, a group made up of some of Toronto's best orchestral musicians, with whom he has already made twelve recordings. In recent years he has also developed an association with the contemporary opera company Opera Anonymous, with which he has conducted Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* and the early nineteenth-century opera *Lucas et Cécile* by the Canadian Joseph Quesnel. He has also conducted Toronto's Opera in Concert in a varied repertoire. Kevin Mallon has made over forty recordings for Naxos in Baroque and Classical repertoire. Engagements as a guest conductor have taken him to Finland, Sweden, Poland and the United States. He has recently taken up the position of Artistic Director of Opera 2005 in Cork, Ireland, launched to celebrate Cork's tenure as European Capital of Culture. This opera company has already achieved remarkable success and has twice been nominated for Best Opera Production in the prestigious Irish Times Theatre Awards.

The orchestral parts and scores of thefollowing works are available from:

www.artaria.com

Sources
The sources upon which the editions used in this recording have been made are:

L'Armida immaginaria
Edited by Allan Badley – Artaria Editions AE269
Naples, Conservatorio di musica 'S. Pietro a Majella'

Oreste
Edited by Allan Badley – Artaria Editions AE264
Naples, Conservatorio di musica 'S. Pietro a Majella'

L'Italiana a Londra
Edited by Allan Badley – Artaria Editions AE268
Naples, Conservatorio di musica 'S. Pietro a Majella'

Artaserse
Edited by Allan Badley – Artaria Editions AE262
Naples, Conservatorio di musica 'S. Pietro a Majella'

Alessandro nell'Indie
Edited by Allan Badley – Artaria Editions AE263
Naples, Conservatorio di musica 'S. Pietro a Majella'

La donna sempre al suo peggior s'appliglia
Edited by Allan Badley – Artaria Editions AE261
Naples, Conservatorio di musica 'S. Pietro a Majella'

La Circe
Edited by Allan Badley – Artaria Editions AE295
Naples, Conservatorio di musica 'S. Pietro a Majella'

Il fanatico per gli antichi Romani
Edited by Allan Badley – Artaria Editions AE266
Naples, Conservatorio di musica 'S. Pietro a Majella'

Giannina e Bernadone
Edited by Allan Badley – Artaria Editions AE298
Naples, Conservatorio di musica 'S. Pietro a Majella'

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CIMAROSA: Overtures • 2

8.570279

Domenico Cimarosa was the most famous and popular Italian opera composer of the second half of the eighteenth century. In the course of a brilliantly successful career he composed more than 65 operas as well as a significant body of instrumental music and works for the church. His operas were performed all over Europe, both in Italian and in translation. A number of Cimarosa's operas continued to enjoy occasional stagings during the nineteenth century, and his most famous work, *Il matrimonio segreto*, is one of only a handful of operas of the period never to have left the repertory. Cimarosa's overtures are remarkable for their melodic invention, assured handling of the orchestra and sheer vitality. Volume One is available on Naxos 8.570508.

Domenico

CIMAROSA

(1749–1801)

Overtures • 2

1	**L'Armida immaginaria**	5:06
2	**Oreste**	6:40
	L'Italiana a Londra	7:38
3	Allegro con spirito	4:06
4	Andante	1:55
5	Presto	1:37
6	**Artaserse**	9:06
	Alessandro nell'Indie	9:42
7	Allegro con brio	4:51
8	Andante	3:12
9	Allegro moltissimo	1:39
10	**La donna sempre al suo peggior s'appiglia**	5:08
	La Circe	9:34
11	Allegro molto con spirito	3:55
12	Andante grazioso espressivo	3:00
13	Allegro molto	2:39
	Il fanatico per gli antichi Romani	7:35
14	Allegro	4:22
15	Andantino grazioso	2:02
16	Allegro assai	1:12
17	**Giannina e Bernardone**	6:55

Toronto Chamber Orchestra • Kevin Mallon

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Booklet notes: Allan Badley and Nick Rossi • Publisher: Artaria Editions
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