LECHEROUS MEN, A MUTE SOPRANO, AND PORPORA
IN GASPARE TRAVERSI’S MUSIC LESSON

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Figure 1. Nicola Porpora, “Sorge la bella aurora.” Opening measures from: (a) a facsimile of the manuscript now at the Conservatorio di Musica “Giuseppe Verdi,” Milan [I-Mc] (b) a facsimile of the manuscript now at the Conservatorio di Musica San Pietro a Majella, Naples [I-Nc]; and (c) the first page of the cantata as it appears in Gaspare Traversi’s Music Lesson.
Figure 2. “Sorge la bella aurora,” text with translation by Barbara Russano Hanning

1. Aria
Sorge la bella aurora,
i vaghi prati indora
e rende lieti I fior.
E l’usignuol in tanto
esprime col bel canto
la pena del suo cor

Beautiful dawn breaks,
making the meadows golden,
gladdening the flowers.
Meanwhile, the nightingale
expresses the sufferings of its heart
in beautiful song.

2. Recitative
Cosi quest’alma mia
al susurrar di vaghi Zefiretti
e del Sebeto in su l’amina sponda
cerca ma cerca in vano
il perduto suo bene,
e soffre crude pene
nel vedersi lontan dal suo bel sole
solo si riconsola
quando Febo si tuffa a Teti in seno
perche vede il suo nume
precorre lo splendor d’argenteo lume.

So too my soul—
to the whisper of beautiful breezes
and the sound of the Sebeto in its pleasant banks—
searches, but searches in vain
for its lost love,
and suffers cruel tortures
seeing itself far from its beautiful sun.
Its only consolation is
when Phoebus plunges himself into Thetis’s breast
because it sees its god
anticipate the splendor of silvery light.

3. Aria
Fuggi, Febo, perchè teme
ch’oscurato il suo splendore
sia da quella vaga stella
che m’accese in petto il cor.
Dal dolor si afflitto geme
desperato questo core
che la morte di sua sorte
puo placar il Fier rigor.

Phoebus flees because he fears
that his splendor may be obscured
by that beautiful star
that enflames the heart in my breast.
From such painful affliction
does this desperate heart groan
that [only] death can relieve
the fierce hardship of its fate.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY