

A Lyric Soprano in Handel's London: A Vocal Portrait of Francesca Cuzzoni

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Francesca Cuzzoni (1696-1778) was part of Handel's brilliant cadre of Italian opera singers at the Royal Academy of Music in London between 1723 and 1728. Already one of the most famous singers in Europe, her arrival in London was highly anticipated, and the press followed her performances, personal life, and social activities closely. She was renowned for her superior portrayal of pathos, her rendering of laments and *cantabile* arias, and for the sheer beauty of her voice.

Handel wrote eleven opera roles for Cuzzoni during her tenure at the Royal Academy, most notably Cleopatra in *Giulio Cesare* and the title role in *Rodelinda*. This dissertation offers a vocal profile of the singer through a statistical analysis of the aria types, keys, tessituras, phrase constructions, meters, and tempi of the seventy-three arias. This analysis is combined with close readings of the descriptions of her singing by contemporaneous writers, and a comparison of Cuzzoni's roles with canonical roles from subsequent operatic repertoire for the soprano voice. Lastly, this study serves to organize known information and establish a chronology of the singer's life, travels, significant performances, and other events.