

## Marriage for Comic Effect

*“Everything that has been written by men about women must be suspect, for they are both judge and party.”*

Poulain de la Barre in *L'Egalité des deux sexes*, 1673.

*The plots and characteristic situations of the intermezzi make any production a continuous variation on the same theme. The intrigues are built mainly around stereotypes regarding women: their cunning nature, their obvious inconstancy, their congenital duplicity.*

*What amuses us—or leaves us perplexed and irritates us in these scenes—was different for an audience in the eighteenth century, when these works were a great success. Humor based on sexism (misogyny, homophobia, transphobia), with hints of xenophobia, ageism, etc., is always in the background, if not center stage. What amused people then may be exasperating today, but not always, not necessarily.*

*The real difficulty is to distinguish which comic effects remain enduring, tenacious, inextinguishable, and which ones are faded, or have completely expired. The humor may be hidden in a detail or need explanation because of an unfamiliar historical context. Amusement may also depend on whether one enjoys the mockery and identifies with the satirist or sympathizes with the mocked. It is these layers of meaning that the dramaturgy must untie to prepare the new building which is the performance.*

*For Pimpinone, it seemed necessary to conduct a global reflection. This critical approach is what I am attempting here, based on a reading of the libretto. This attempt to “understand” the texts by constantly keeping in mind what the original intentions were, is also to determine whether those intentions are still dynamic today: generating comedy and carrying meaning.*



Hamburg

“Hambourg Ville Impériale d’Allemagne très fameux port de mer ...”  
(Hamburg, Imperial town of Germany, very famous sea harbor...)  
French etching by Charles Inselin (b. ca. 1673), Paris 1694,  
from Nicolas de Fer (1646–1720), *Atlas Royal*, Paris 1705.  
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Comic elements were present in the Italian operas of the seventeenth century but were gradually banished from the main plot. However, comedy did not disappear entirely from the stage—comic

interludes were inserted between the acts of an *opera seria*, a musical drama with a serious subject. The audience, and the singers who specialized in the comical genre, continued to demand comedy, and the compromise was the birth of the comic intermezzo, which was performed during the intermissions of the opera seria. Offering a welcome break after the circumvolutions of the solemn drama, their simple humorous plots did not require the same kind of attention from the audience. With intermezzos, the long theatrical spectacle could be continued without intermission, involving other performers. The modest heroes of the comic intermezzo sprang from the masked performers of the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, a type of comedy that was performed with a strict, and at the same time very imaginative, code of acting. The artistry of the burlesque expressions, both dramatic and musical, made up for the psychological constancy of these familiar stock characters, modeled on the pert maid Colombina, the old Pantalone, the pedantic Dottore, the resourceful servant Arlecchino, etc. The spectacle was vivid and light and most of the plots were based on contemporary life.

Like many other intermezzos, *Pimpinone* is rooted in the Italian tradition of comedy. *Pimpinone*, a “Lustiges Zwischenspiel” (comic intermezzo) by the German composer Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767), was first performed at the Hamburg Opera in September 1725. *Pimpinone* offered light relief between the acts of Telemann’s adaptation of Handel’s opera seria *Tamerlano*. The bilingual libretto of *Pimpinone*, with recitatives in German by Johann Philipp Praetorius (1696–1766), the new librettist in residence at the Oper am Gänsemarkt, and most of the arias and duets in Italian, reflects a common practice in Hamburg. It was not confined to comic opera. The Italian libretto for *Tamerlano* was adapted in the same way by Praetorius: he gave Handel’s opera German recitatives, likely composed by Telemann himself, while retaining the original Italian arias written by Handel. The plot of *Pimpinone* comes from the “intermezzo comico musicale” composed by Tomaso Albinoni for Venice on a libretto by Pietro Pariati from 1708. Telemann’s version has retained most of the original text, while adding some recitatives, arias, and duos. *Pimpinone* was an immediate success in 1725 thanks to the humorous story of the young maid Vespetta who blows hot and cold to marry her boss and get her freedom, coupled with the witty music Telemann wrote to paint it.

The story of the old rich man, who is ensnared and seduced by a young penniless woman, is one of the most well-worn tropes for the comedy stage, but it seems that, although the plot describes a class struggle, these intermezzi also reflect the battle of the sexes, the “Querelle des femmes.” This broad controversy about the nature of women and their capabilities was raging in the 1700s in Europe. The question was whether or not the female sex should be permitted to act in the same manner as the male one. Authors of the scholarly and popular sphere criticized or praised women’s essential nature, arguing for or against their capacity to equal men. The debate was especially heated on marriage, generally regarded as an extension of the social system, where husbands, like rulers, had powers of authority over the members of the household, and more specifically over their wives. Two inclinations were present, one of contempt for the feminine sex, the other, under the influence of Platonism, tending to the eulogy. Satires of this period moralize on the ridiculous situation of husbands being corrected by their wives. But the actual targets of the satires were the women. Religious prejudice—many viewed women as the daughters of Eve, the original temptress responsible for humanity being expelled from the Garden of Eden—had long-lasting consequences and can be clearly seen and heard in the popular intermezzi.

In *Pimpinone*, the satire on the relations between social classes is established by the complete German title of the work, as printed on the oldest libretto: *Die Ungleiche Heyrath zwischen Vespetta und Pimpinone, oder dass Herrsch-Süchtige Cammer-Mädgen*. The libretto of “The Unequal Marriage Between Vespetta and Pimpinone, or the Domineering Chambermaid” follows the two main rules of comedy as a genre: the characters should be people of humble birth and the plot should improve the morals of the audience by showing them various ludicrous mistakes that one should avoid. Like in Molière’s comedies (which inspired many Italian intermezzi), the story line is simple yet easy to develop as the three intermezzi show what happens when a “Domineering Chambermaid” enters into the “Unequal Marriage Between Vespetta and Pimpinone.”

As with Venetian operagoers, the audience of the Oper am Gänsemarkt in Hamburg could relate to the realistic beginning of the plot. The impoverished Vespetta is searching for a position as a maid (a sight familiar in the fast-growing population of Hamburg at this period) and her path crosses that of the rich “Bürger” Pimpinone, in search of a maid. The libretto does not fail to feature a few caustic criticisms of the frivolous aristocracy, as relevant in Hamburg as they were in Venice, as both cities were governed by their citizens, but the focus is on the relation between the master and the servant girl. The declared ambition of Vespetta is to marry: for security, not for love. She plans to work hard as a maid to obtain a dowry from her boss for good service. Here, one may remember that giving a dowry to an employee was a custom of the time, giving a young maid a particular position in the family, close to a daughter. These transactions often legitimize coercive control of the “daughter” by her “father” by giving him authority over her. The abuses and discriminatory practices against women in marriage with financial payments such as dowry are present in *Pimpinone*. The wedding contract would specify how much of the dowry would go to the widow, how much to her children (before and after her death), and how much was controlled by the husband and his heirs. In *Pimpinone*, the dowry shifts purpose: first Vespetta works to obtain a dowry, but, after being married to her “benefactor”, she claims it back, as personal capital, when Pimpinone, then the “husband,” threatens her with separation. The amount of 10,000 thalers is staggering for the time, and its release could lead to Pimpinone’s financial ruin.

Vespetta’s plans do evolve: after she has captured the heart of Pimpinone with her perfect servile behavior, she runs hot and cold with the now-smitten man. The bourgeois, in fear of losing her, proposes marriage to Vespetta, and when she refuses to accept him without a dowry, offers her a munificent one. The maid has won the top prize she was after: when she becomes the mistress of the house, she changes her social class. Here, the comedy takes an unexpected turn as her behavior, far from being a docile housewife, becomes cantankerous and she aspires to the habits of the aristocracy, with its expensive pastimes. In this way, *Pimpinone* seems first to offer a simple warning to the audience of Hamburg: don’t marry below your station in life nor contract an “Ungleiche Heyrath”: an unequal marriage. Indeed, at the end of the plot, Pimpinone’s world is upside down as Vespetta claims total freedom: she wants to follow her own will in everything. That this desire for emancipation directs her to pleasures and frivolities such as masked balls, card games, and jewelry is a masculine convention of the time. The librettists of *Pimpinone* seem to show a woman who has all the characteristics of a daughter of Eve: a seductive temptress, and ultimately dangerous to men.



#### Marriage satire

“Où la cornette commande le chapeau obéit”

(Where the wimple commands, the hat obeys)

French etching by Nicolas Guerard (ca. 1648–1719).

Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Even with the addition of mute characters, the traditionally reduced number of singers in the intermezzi cast was still a limitation for an elaborate development of the plot. Disguises and transvestism aided in overcoming this constraint. In *Pimpinone*, after her wedding, Vespetta appears dressed “as a lady,” and her behavior highlights her social ambition. As evidenced by a masked ball in *Pimpinone*, costumes are recurring as well as fundamental elements of *commedia dell’arte* and intermezzi. Disguises are comedic resources, providing an almost endless supply of metamorphoses that offered the actors many possibilities to show their talents and reinforced the versatility that seems to be the innate characteristic of their stock characters. The *commedia dell’arte* is a theatrical form focused on the actor, giving the performer the ability to act *all’improvviso*: to create an original character from his own inspiration, therefore merging the role and the performer. One iconic character seems to embody this trend: Arlecchino. In the intrigues of the Italian comedies, wherein the end is always one or more marriages, Arlecchino is both actor and character either trying to foster or to prevent it, under multiple identities, often based on a social difference, a gender change, an age gap, etc. Period images reveal that Arlecchino always wore his mask, and that part of his usual multicolored, triangled costume was always visible under his disguise, whatever it was. Over the course of the eighteenth century, other

performers who specialized in stock characters were also given the opportunity offered by multiple guises to show off their skills. Behind the mask, under the disguise, the performer must stand out. Like in *commedia dell'arte*, the intermezzi were directly linked with the actor-singers who were performing it.

The role of the performers, in defining the new stylistic and dramaturgical characteristics of the intermezzo genre, is not less important than the ones of the composer and his librettist. The career and repertoire of these singers inform us as to the talents needed to excel in the intermezzo repertoire. On the original libretto of the 1725 Hamburg performance of *Pimpinone*, the names of the singers are recorded: Vespetta was sung by “Madame Kayserin” and Pimpinone by “Msr. Riemschneider, jun.” What we know of their careers supports the impression of specialized talents and of musical superiority. Margaretha Susanna Kayser (ca. 1690–ca. 1748) was one of the best opera singers in Germany during her long active career as a soprano and earned the stage name of “Die Kayserin,” the Empress. In 1708, her operatic soloist début in Hamburg as the seductive Mirtenia in Christoph Graupner’s *Antiochus und Stratonica* caused a stir. In 1717, she created the title role in *Die Grossmütige Tomyris* by Reinhard Keiser and, from the music he wrote for her for this serious role, one can assert that she must have had astonishing vocal abilities and expressive versatility. She was also a good comic actress and her huge success in the role of Vespetta in *Pimpinone* encouraged Telemann and Praetorius to give her top billing the following year for its sequel, *Die Amours der Vespetta oder der Galan in der Kiste*. “Prima Donna assoluta” of the Hamburg musical scene, she became the director of the Oper am Gänsemarkt from 1729 until 1737, likely having been the very first woman in history to fill such a position. In 1736, a Hamburg newspaper wrote: “Despite her age, Madame Kayserin remains the most distinguished [singer]. Her person is theatrical, her voice is still good, except that she is, as they say, a little too Italian-minded, you know her, sir, and so you fully understand all her merits. I cannot deny that I have a lot of respect for her.”

Madame Kayserin’s partner in *Pimpinone* was “Msr. Riemschneider, jun.” Johann Gottfried Riemschneider was a German baritone whose brother, also a singer at the Oper am Gänsemarkt, was in fact singing Andronicus in Handel’s *Tamerlano* on the same night as his sibling was performing as Pimpinone. Indeed, although Riemschneider Junior also sang in Johann Mattheson’s oratorios, he specialized in comic roles for the operatic stage. In 1728, he sang the leading role of Scaramouche in Telemann’s *Die verkehrte Welt*, while Mme Kayserin sang the comical role of Hippocratine, a female surgeon (Docteur). This “Opera Comique” is inspired by *Le monde renversé* by Lesage, a comedy created on stage of the Fair in Paris in 1718 and illustrates the overlapping of the Italian, French, and German comic repertoires. In 1729, Riemschneider was employed in London by Handel for his New Academy, his second opera troupe. Being the lowest paid member of the company, Riemschneider’s voice was described as “more of a natural contralto than a bass. He sings sweetly in his throat and nose, pronounces Italian alla Cimbrica [in a Teutonic manner, Cimbrica being the south of Denmark and north of Hamburg], acts like a sucking-pig, and looks like a valet de chambre.” Although inappropriate for the noble stiffness of opera seria, it may well be that it is these very characteristics which made his interpretation of *Pimpinone* a success, so important were the physical appearances and body language of the actors in the depictions of their characters.

The acting of an intermezzi's performers needed to be physical as the audience was expecting new variations on well-known themes. The librettos, because of the musical nature of the final product, did not offer as many opportunities as the scenarios found in *commedia dell'arte*. Nevertheless, many situations in *Pimpinone* suggest physical expressions alongside, or instead of, sung words. The importance of dance in these intermezzi is the first indicator: in the 1725 cast, a dancer "Ms. Buckhofer" is mentioned dancing an "Entrée der Verstellung" in *Pimpinone*, although the specific moment of this cameo is not identified. In the libretto, Vesperta explains that she acquired grace and pose thanks to the dancing master of her previous employer; her attractive composure is greatly appreciated by Pimpinone while her seductive answers lure the naïve bachelor. This theatrical affiliation with the acting style of *commedia dell'arte* was also often emphasized by the presence in the libretti of mute roles: highly skilled pantomimes and cameo caricatures of frivolous nobles, pedantic adjudicators, or drunk soldiers... These mute characters also emphasize the physicality of insults and imprecations, sure-to-succeed comic expedients that have always been practiced by *commedia dell'arte* actors.

The predilection of pamphleteers and caricaturists to characterize their human targets in animal forms is an ancient custom. Starting with Aesop's *Fables*, animals found their way in all kinds of apologues, legends, fairy tales, and myths. Jean de la Fontaine, the seventeenth-century French writer whose fables were translated all over Europe, gives the keys to their success, as these fables "are not only moral, but they also impart other knowledge; the properties of the animals and their various characteristics stated therein: therefore, ours too, since we are the epitome of what is good and bad in irrational creatures." Operas, for reasons of courtly origin and decorum, generally restrict the use of animals to that of an accessory inspired by their mythological context (Actaeon as a stag and other Ovidian *Metamorphoses*) or literary inspiration (the Hippogriff in *Orlando furioso*). Italian comedy, however, develops animal themes where the functions of the animal relate more to the search for pure comic effect by giving the opportunity to the actors to demonstrate their physical skills, and *commedia dell'arte* with its masks exploited the theme thoroughly. Characters such as the old Zanni has a mask with a bird beak, Pulcinella's name resembles the Italian "pulcino," a chicken, and Arlecchino, the most emblematic figure of the genre, has been often compared to a monkey but also to a cat, both reminiscent of the demoniac origin of the character. Zoomorphic masks also served as agents of transgression when a salacious intention underlies a comedy often made up of double-entendres, puns, and misappropriation of proverbs.

Likewise, the "animals" in the intermezzi of Telemann are less of a fauna than of a "bestiary." Since the medieval period, bestiaries were presented in the form of typological collections where the description of animals and their allegorical interpretation serve as a support for the statement of moral precepts. Decked out in their metaphorical masks, animals display the faults or the qualities that humans attribute to them: power or violence for the lion, vanity for the peacock, flattery for the cat, shrewdness for the fox, clumsiness for the bear, etc. The literary works of ancient Greece and Rome bear witness to the existence of this tradition, when it comes to specifically mocking women. The woman, dispossessed of her human status and reduced to the level of an animal, becomes the object of a commonplace, summarized in this fragment of Menander: "Of all the animals of land and sea / The worst is women, and will ever be."



The librettos of intermezzi, starting with the names of some of the characters, offer many references to this classical trend. The most famous can be found in Pergolesi's *La serva padrona* where Serpina, the maid's name, suggests "little female snake." In *Pimpinone*'s libretto, created many years before Pergolesi, the name of the servant "Vespetta" is another striking example; coming from the Latin "Vespa," it translates from the Italian as "little female Wasp." The theme goes further in the libretto: at the beginning of the plot Vespetta advertises herself as a diligent, efficient, industrious maid... basically, all the qualities of the disciplined worker bee who provides honey and wax for its keeper, an analogy that was made by the ancient Greek authors. Pimpinone, after deciding that he will marry Vespetta, affectionately patter-sings, "Pim, Pim, Pim, Pim, Pimpinina!" (a musical treatment which emphasizes the childish personality of the groom and has a remarkable resemblance to "Pa, pa, pa, Papagena" of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*). Pimpinone's feelings for his "Pimpinina," however, take a hostile turn in the third intermezzo, during which he describes his new bride as a savage bumblebee. Indeed, it is only after she marries him that her identity is understood by Pimpinone: she is a nefarious queen wasp. The librettist of *Pimpinone* goes as far as making his last intermezzo an upside-down honeymoon; the period of thirty days in ancient Egypt, when newlyweds would drink a beverage made with honey, is now filled with bitterness: the wasp stings. When Telemann and Praetorius presented a sequel in 1727, *Die Amours der Vespetta oder der Galan in der Kiste*, they put Vespetta at the center of a plot playing with notions of serial adultery and even a "Suitor in the Trunk."



*Patientia Socratis* (The Patience of Socrates)  
Dutch Etching by Gerard de Jode (1516–1591).

Emblem 33 from *Mikrokosmos = Parvus mundus*. Book of Emblems, engraved by Gerard de Jode, with accompanying verses from Laurentius Haechtanus [Laurens van Haecht Goidtsenhoven]. Amsterdam: 1613.

Pimpinone's comparison of Vespetta to "Xanthippe," the unyielding wife of Socrates, is doubtless an in-joke referring to Telemann's comic opera *Der geduldige Socrates* (The patient Socrates) which tells of

the Greek philosopher's conjugal misfortunes. The work had its first performance in Hamburg in the spring of 1721, four years before *Pimpinone*, even before the appointment of Telemann as Hamburg's new "kantor." The success of the piece led the way for Telemann to become the new musical director of the Oper am Gänsemarkt in 1722. Popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and embodied in visual and operatic as well as written forms, Socrates is represented as the archetypal hen-pecked intellectual, roughly treated by one, or as it is the case in Telemann's *Der geduldige Socrates*, by two termagant wives. The libretto of this comedy in music, "Ein musikalisches Lustspiel," is by Johann Ulrich von König, and like *Pimpinone*, it was based on an Italian original: the piece is replicated from *La Patienza di Socrate con due Moglie* by Nicolò Minato, which was performed in Prague with music by Antonio Draghi in 1680. Besides the success of *Der geduldige Socrates*, its use as a reference in *Pimpinone* suggests that "Socrates's Xanthippe" may have been notorious in the Baroque period, and readily understood by a theater-going audience as the typical unruly woman. The fifth-century BC Athenian philosopher Socrates was already associated in Greco-Roman literature with rationalizing his wife Xanthippe's rude behavior. From the late seventeenth century onwards there has been a tradition of comedies about Socrates in which his marital problems as well as his philosophy have played a fundamental part.

The tale of Socrates's marital situation became an allegory for the virtue of patience and this parable likely came from Seneca's *De Constantia Sapientis* (On Firmness of the Wise Man): "Let us look at the examples of those men whose endurance we admire, as, for instance, that of Socrates, who took in good part the published and acted jibes of the comedians upon himself, and laughed no less than he did when he was drenched with dirty water by his wife Xanthippe." The image of Xanthippe dousing Socrates with the "dirty water" of a chamber pot became a symbol of the moral tale of the shrewish wife, inflicting indignities upon her virtuous husband, and the model of a virtuous husband's dispassionate, calm endurance. One interpretation of the parable is found in Plutarch's *Moralia*: "Xanthippe, though she was a woman of a very angry and troublesome spirit, could never move Socrates to a passion. By being used to bear patiently this heavy sufferance at home, he was ever unconcerned, and not in the least moved by the most scurrilous and abusive tongues he met withal abroad. For it is much better to overcome boisterous passions and to bring the mind into a calm and even frame of spirit, by contentedly undergoing the scoffs, outrages, and affronts of enemies, than to be stirred up to choler or revenge by the worst they can say or do."

Earlier images depicted Socrates's wife Xanthippe pouring the contents of a chamber pot on his head are numerous, and, in fact, this anecdote was the only image of Socrates current in the Baroque period. The scene is often found in early printed emblem books (volumes collecting allegorical illustrations, each with an explanatory text) to illuminate the virtue of patience. As this type of moralizing publications was widely available, the emblem picture contributed to the status of the story in popular culture. Moreover, the anecdote is attractive, besides being instructive, because it is comical, as Seneca had initially suggested, putting it in relation with the Greek comedies satirizing Socrates. In the image by Gerard de Jode, however, there are differences between Seneca's anecdote and the engraving: for instance, the vessel on the picture is more a water jar than a chamber pot. The indignity is softened by this choice, although there is real abuse in the background of the etching where we see the two wives kicking and hitting Socrates. Nevertheless, the violence in both scenes is physical and that



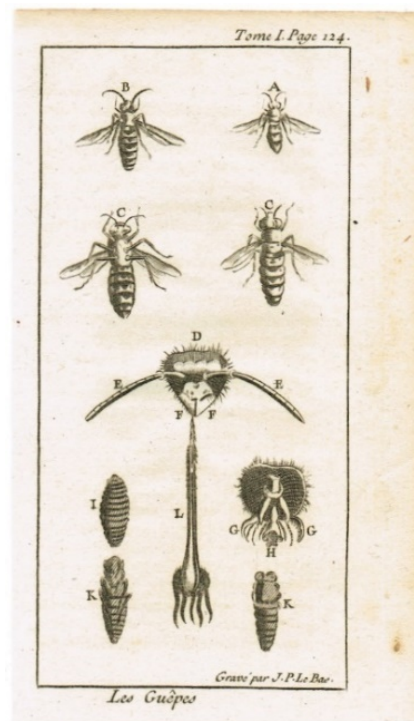
feature led to a fertile ground for the stage and more specifically for the type of physical acting the *commedia dell'arte* required. On stage, like in satirical prints, scenes where a man was bitten by a woman had great popularity. *Commedia dell'arte* made great use of scatological jokes, such as the “dirty water.” The pouring of the chamber pot on the head of a husband became a “lazzi,” a type of acting gag which actors would fit in various plays; the “lazzi” of the chamber pot had already been immortalized in 1578 on the remarkable frescoes of Trausnitz castle in Bavaria which depicted, floor after floor, the indignities suffered by the amorous Pantalone, the indisputable *commedia dell'arte* forefather of Telemann’s Pimpinone.

Xanthippe is also given a voice as a character speaking in one of the *Colloquis* of the Dutch philosopher Erasmus, where the philosopher conveys some of his ideas about wedlock. Titled “Coniugium,” the dialogue about marriage published in 1523 starts like the remarkable last and virtuosic aria of Pimpinone, “Sò quel che si dice,” where the irritated husband illustrates an imaginary discussion between his wife Vespetta and another woman, her godmother, switching to different vocal ranges to depict the conversation between two gossips. Here as well, Telemann’s writing is highly inspired by *commedia dell'arte* traditions of specific vocal colors for the purpose of characterization, a path already taken by Albinoni in his version of the same text. Following the dominant social convention in Europe, wives were expected to behave in a submissive way towards their husbands. The message of the plot to the masculine audience of Hamburg was clear: facing a moody wife, be like Socrates, it says, and meet bad temper with patience. And indeed, in the last duet of *Pimpinone*, the bullied husband’s final words are “Ich bliebe Stumm.” This ending, with Pimpinone resolving to stay silent, may be inspired by the line from the Gospel of St. Luke, which can also be read under the emblem of Gerard de Jode: “In patientia vestra possidebitis animas vestras”: In your patience, possess ye your souls.

While the libretto of Johann Philipp Praetorius, even with its Hamburg additions, reflects even more than its Italian model this masculine convention, Telemann’s choice of the ancient Socrates to stage a contemporary *Pimpinone* may also endorse a case of “art imitating life.” Given what we know of Telemann’s troubled marriage to his younger second wife, there may have been a private agenda—revenge, or self-exculpation—in the choice of staging a more popular and contemporary sequel to Socrates. (Masculine) history has recorded that Maria Catharina Textor was fond of fine clothes which, linked with her gambling addiction, were the talk of Hamburg. Extravagant costumes, card games, and money in various forms, are all very present in the libretto of *Pimpinone*. The couple had eight sons and one daughter, and Socrates here again may enlighten a reason for the Socratic composure of Telemann: “She bore [my] children” had said the philosopher, justifying his patience with Xanthippe. Maria Catharina Textor eventually left Telemann, after her affair with a military man was exposed in a satirical play.

Perhaps the Xanthippe parable had broader appeal because it was open to the opposite interpretation. Indeed, some Hamburger spouses may have also enjoyed the story of a wife teaching her pompous husband a life lesson. Although the general belief that a wife depended on her husband’s will was widespread, some voices were pleading for a new position for women, specifically within marriage. The libretto of *Pimpinone* is full of events which can be viewed in this perspective: Pimpinone’s criteria

for hiring a maid are identical in his mind to the criteria for marrying a wife, but Vespeta states clearly that the two conditions should be totally distinct: “When I said this, I was still your maid; but now I’m your wife. So, stifle yourself!” Vespeta reclaims the right to follow her own will and do as she pleases. The libretto alludes therefore to a possible emancipation of married women by giving Vespeta a victory at the end of the piece, like Xanthippe standing up to Socrates. Indeed, a Telemann composition, published in *Der getreue Music-Meister* (“The Faithful Music Master”) in 1728, would seem to support this idea. The Trio Sonata in C minor has movements with names of famous ladies from the ancient world, such as Dido, the deceived queen of Carthage; Corinna, the loved subject of Ovid’s elegies; Lucretia, who killed herself after being raped; Clelia (Cloelia), the courageous Roman woman...all women whose virtues outface the flaws of men. It is remarkable that Xanthippe, Socrates’s wife, is associated with these classical heroines by Telemann. The *Xanthippe* movement, marked “Presto,” is a witty and inventive portrait, and a beautiful tribute to a woman claiming her own will in front of man.



*Les Guêpes* (The Wasps)  
 Engraving by Jacques-Philippe Le Bas (1707–1783)  
 from *Le Spectacle de la Nature*, Paris, 1732, by Antoine Pluche (1688–1761).  
 Collection of Gilbert Blin.