



Francesca Caccini

La Liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina

Translation

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**FRANCESCA CACCINI
(1587 to post-1641)**

**'La Liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola
d'Alcina' (1625):**

Commedia in musica: Prologue and 4 Scenes

Introduction, Dramatis Personae & List of
Scenes, Synopsis, and Translation
(the last with much help from Selene Mills):

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Sources

Edition by Brian Clark 2006, pub. Prima la
Musica! 3 Hamilton St, Arbroath, DD11 5JA
(<http://www.primalamusica.com>), with Notes
therein; and separate text of the Libretto by
Ferdinand Saracinelli;

-with additional information from the article
on *Francesca Caccini* by Suzanne G. Cusick
in 'The New Grove Dictionary of Music and
Musicians' ed. S. Sadie 1980, 2nd edn.2001,
vol.4 pp775-777;

-and from the English translation of '*Orlando
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Introduction and Cantos 6-8.

Another edition has been published in
America, ed.D.Silbert, 1945, Smith College
Music Archives vol.7, Northampton, Mass.
(not consulted).

I am most grateful to Selene Mills for her kind
help in correcting my translation of the Italian.
Any remaining errors are of course my own.

INTRODUCTION

The composer: Francesca Caccini (1587-
post-1641) was the elder daughter of Giulio
Caccini (Romano) and was the first woman
opera composer. She was a singer, a guitar,
harp and keyboard player, and a poet in Italian
and Latin. She had earlier performed in her
father's productions, and was then employed
in her own right as their highest-paid musician
by the Medici in Florence, Tuscany from
1607-1627, returning 1633-1641.. Francesca
was married twice, and had a daughter and a
son by her first and second husbands
respectively. She is described as 'fierce and
restless', 'gracious and generous', and 'a rare
wit', and is known to have opposed the court
poet for his alleged seduction of young singers,
her pupils, to whom she taught singing,
instrumental performance and composition.
Francesca Caccini wrote much vocal chamber

music for women's voices, for herself and her
pupils, and contributed to many court
entertainments, but this is her only surviving
opera.

The opera: '*La liberazione di Ruggiero
dall'isola d'Alcina*' was commissioned by
Florence's Regent Archduchess, Maria
Magdalena of Austria (hence her honorific
mention in the opera's concluding ballet stage
directions). It was published under her
auspices for the state occasion of the visit to
Carnival by a Polish prince, Wladislas
Sigismund. It celebrates his recent victory
over the Turks (symbolised in the opera by the
wicked sorceress Alcina). The first
performance was in Florence in the Villa
Poggia Imperiale on 3 February 1625, and it
was revived in Warsaw in 1628.

The music: Francesca set the libretto as a
'*Balletto in Musica*', part opera, part ballet,
lasting about 2 hours, with music, drama and
dance, concluding with a grand 'Cavalry
Ballet' on horseback (*balletto a cavallo*) such
as was popular in Florence from the mid-
1610's onwards. The opera is in the tradition
of the previous century's '*Intermedii*', with
choruses, solo arias and recitative. The latter
resembles Francesca's father's in style, while
the arias mainly have tuneful melodies in triple
time, in the new operatic style. '*Seconda
prattica*' devices such as unprepared
dissonances and chromaticism are employed,
reliance being placed also on subtle phrasing
and ornamentation, and tonal planning.
Francesca skilfully respects the Italian speech
rhythms and the spirit of the words, as she
explores the relationship to power of the two
main female sorceress characters and the hero
knight Ruggiero. Alcina resorts to emotional
appeals and outright threats, Melissa to reason
and morality. The once-besotted Ruggiero is
recalled by her influence to his senses, to his
chivalric commitment to arms and to his
previous love. Melissa, the 'good' witch, has
music in through-composed '*stile recitativo*'
mainly in the 'natural' hexachord, though
notated in the 'mollis'; whilst Alcina, her evil
opponent, embarks on varying tonal excursions
to far points in both 'durus' and 'mollis'
hexachords. Francesca employs many genres,
such as canzonettas for 3 sopranos,
reminiscent of the 'concerto delle donne';
ornamented strophic arias for the hero's initial
happiness, but serious unornamented recitative
after his liberation; and multi-part madrigals
for the Chorus of Enchanted Plants.

INTRODUCTION contd:

Background to the story: The verse libretto of ‘*Ruggiero*’ by Ferdinand Saracinelli marks a shift away from the mythological subjects of early Florentine opera, to themes from epic poetry. It is based on Cantos 6 to 8 of the epic chivalric romance ‘*Orlando Furioso*’ by Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533), a story also later set to music by Vivaldi and Handel.

The plot: The heroic Saracen champion Ruggiero (Roger) is freed from the enchantments of the wicked sorceress Alcina through the power of Melissa, another enchantress, working on behalf of his beloved, the Christian warrior maiden Bradamante, a member of Charlemagne’s army. Melissa also liberates Alcina’s former lovers (with some of their formerly-beloved damsels), now turned into plants and trees as she tired of them. These include Astolfo, another of Charlemagne’s knights, who is an English prince, cousin to Bradamante and to Orlando (Roland), eponymous hero of the epic.

The legends: This rich medley of plots and characters forms part of the legendary narrative of the adventures of the knights of Charlemagne against the Moors, in Spain and in other, often mythical, parts of the world. In 778 AD Charlemagne was withdrawing across the Pyrenees when his rearguard, led by his nephew Roland (Orlando), was ambushed as a result of treachery and cut to pieces at the Pass of Roncevalles. Stories and legends about these lost heroes grew and circulated widely over the succeeding centuries, especially in France and Italy, some eventually even involving the knights of King Arthur’s Round Table.

Ariosto became obsessed with these legends and worked on his own version for over 25 years, publishing it in 46 sections or ‘*cantos*’ in 1532, the autumn before he died, with much witty parody of the medieval Romances and with a clear sense of the absurd. He was a cultivated poet, playwright and satirist, employed in the service of the Este family at their court in Ferrara in the Po valley, a centre of Renaissance culture and learning. Ruggiero and Bradamante are portrayed by Ariosto as destined, once re-united, to become glorious founders of the Este dynasty, an elegant gesture of tribute to his patrons and employers.

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE & LIST OF SCENES

Sinfonia: bars 1-40: Score pages 2-3

Prologo: [At Sea]: p.4-11:

- b.41-105: Neptune
- b.106-137: River Vistula
- b.138-189: Chorus of Water Deities
- b.190-235: Neptune, Chorus of Water Deities

Scene I: [At Sea]: p.12-14:

- b.236-255: Sinfonia
- b.256-316: Melissa, on a Dolphin, approaches the island of Alcina.

Scene II: [On Alcina’s Island]: p.14-48:

- b.317-569: Alcina & Ruggiero, with Chorus of 6 Damsels
- b.570-660: [Libretto: *While Alcina departs*]: Damsels, Ruggiero
- b.661-766: A Shepherd & Ruggiero
- b.767-853: A Siren & Ruggiero
- b.854-962: Melissa & Ruggiero
- b.963-1115: Enchanted Plants, Ruggiero & Melissa .
- b.1116-1214: [Alcina returns].The Chorus of Damsels & Alcina.
- b.1215-1314: Oreste (Messenger), Alcina & Damsels
- b.1315-1584: Alcina, Damsels & Ruggiero
- b.1585-1630: Ruggiero & Melissa

Scene III: [On Alcina’s Island]: p.48-53:

‘Here the scene changes, the sea is on fire, and Alcina comes in a monstrous boat woven of whalebones, with a Chorus of Monsters’.

- b.1631-1691: Alcina, Chorus of Monsters
- b.1692-1750: Astolfo, Melissa & Alcina

Scene IV: [On Alcina’s Island]: p.53-59:

‘Here Alcina in the boat, which turns into a sea monster with wings, takes flight and flees, and the whole Scene transforms into rocky cliffs’.

- b.1751-1593: Melissa
- b.1794-1869: A formerly-Enchanted Lady; Melissa
- b.1870-1882: Chorus of newly-liberated Knights
- b.1883-1917: Tutti.

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SYNOPSIS

Sinfonia: bars 1-40: Score pages 2-3

Prologo: bars 41-235; p.4-11: [At Sea]

Neptune, god of the sea, summons other water deities to sing in praise of the visiting Polish royal guest, Prince Wladislas Sigismund. The Spirit of the River Vistula and a Chorus of Other Water Deities call on Phoebus Apollo to help in this praise; then Neptune introduces the story of Ruggiero.

Scene I: b. 236-316; p.12-14: [At Sea]

Melissa, an enchantress, riding on a dolphin, approaches Alcina's island. She has visited Merlin to learn from him, and was informed by him of Bradamante and Ruggiero's destiny to become founders of the Este dynasty. She therefore resolved to help Bradamante in her quest to be re-united with her lover, and sets off to rescue Ruggiero from Alcina's enchantments. To approach Ruggiero in acceptable and authoritative fashion, and reveal to him Alcina's true nature, she resolves to take on the appearance of Atlas, an ancient African sorcerer who had lovingly brought up Ruggiero and who (knowing of a prophecy of Ruggiero's early death as a baptised Christian, treacherously slain) tried to keep him from the dangers of battle by setting his magical flying hippogryph to carry Ruggiero off instead to Alcina's island, where he has since been held a willing captive, though on false pretences, by his hostess.

Scene II: b.317-1630; p.14-48 [On Alcina's Island]

b.316-660: Alcina, an ancient sorceress, sister of Morgana the supposed sister of King Arthur, by magic appears young and beautiful, and has enchanted Ruggiero. When tired of her numerous previous lovers she has turned them (and some of their formerly-beloved damsels) into trees and plants around her palace on the island.

Ruggiero (Roger), a descendant of Hector of Troy, and future ancestor of the House of Este, is a Saracen champion, but in love with, and loved by, Bradamante, a Christian warrior maiden in Charlemagne's army, though he has seen her only once. Now, forgetting her through Alcina's spells, he is enchanted and happily enslaved by Alcina.

Chorus of 6 Damsels, attendant upon Alcina

Alcina goes to attend to her kingdom, leaving Ruggiero to enjoy his surroundings until she returns.

b.661-766: A shepherd tells of his love.

b.767-853: A Siren rises from the waves and also sings to Ruggiero of the delights of love. Ruggiero falls asleep.

b.854-962: Melissa, disguised as Atlas, awakens Ruggiero, bids him feel ashamed of loving 'a filthy sorceress' [*sozza Maga*] and summons him to return to his warrior calling. He resolves to go with her and leave Alcina.

b.963-1115: Chorus of Enchanted Plants entreat Ruggiero not to leave them to the tender mercies of an angry Alcina. Melissa promises to ensure their safety. They cringe as Alcina returns.

b.1116-1214: Chorus of Alcina's Damsels, & Alcina, who has forebodings of her doom.

b.1215-1314: The lady Oreste, a Messenger, describes seeing with Ruggiero a white-haired old man, who is then revealed as the majestic lady [*maestevol donna*] Melissa, and how Ruggiero now recalls his love for Bradamante and is resolved to leave Alcina.

b.1315-1584: Alcina & her Damsels plead in vain with Ruggiero to stay. She goes off with her Damsels, furiously angry.

b. 1585-1630: Ruggiero expresses his joy at his freedom to Melissa, and reminds her to free Astolfo and the other Enchanted Plants before leaving the island.

Scene III: b.1631 – 1750: p.48-53: 'Here the scene changes, the sea is on fire, and Alcina enters in a monstrous boat woven of whalebones, with a Chorus of Monsters'.

b.1631–1691: Alcina threatens Ruggiero with the anger of a woman scorned.

The Chorus of Monsters call for vengeance on her behalf.

b.1692–1750: Astolfo, son of the king of England, a knight of Charlemagne, & cousin of Orlando (Roland) and Bradamante, freed by Melissa from Alcina's spell which turned him into a myrtle, wonders how they can now escape Alcina, the fiery sea and the monsters. Melissa reassures him that they will all fly away with her help. Her power is far stronger than Alcina's, and she bids the monsters and Alcina depart.

Alcina concedes defeat, since fate is against her.

Scene IV: b.1751 – 1917: p.53-59: 'Here Alcina, in the boat which turns into a Sea Monster with wings, takes flight and flees, and the whole Scene transforms into rocky cliffs'.

SYNOPSIS contd:

Sc.IV contd:

b.1751–1793: Melissa points the lesson of dire consequences if mortals do not control unruly unsuitable passions: all the seeming beauties of the island are now seen to be but show – just rocks, ruins and caves.

‘Here comes the Dance of the 8 Ladies of the Most Serene Archduchess with 8 principal Nobles, and they execute a most distinguished *Ballo*’. [Libretto *Here the Ladies, coming forth from a certain grotto, dance. When the dance is finished, one of the freed Damsels sings*] [Bars 1623-1630 suggest some of the Enchanted Plants were noble damsels who gave liberty to their beloved by themselves remaining enchanted in their place,]

b.1794–1869: A Lady Formerly Enchanted sadly longs for the return of their Enchanted Knights. Melissa summons the Knights to come dance with their Ladies and rejoice.

‘Here the Knights are freed, acknowledge their Ladies, and follow the dance’ [Libretto: *with their Ladies. When the dance is finished, they proceed into the theatre to perform the Ballet on Horseback.*]

b.1870–1882: Chorus of Freed Knights which sings of their joy and happiness immediately the dance of the Ladies and Knights is finished.

‘Here follows the Ballet on Horseback’. [Libretto: *Words performed to the accompaniment of music, sung while the Knights on Horseback dance:*

‘The witch’s cruelty has been ended thanks to Ruggiero’s virtue. Virtue brings enduring joy, so let us now rejoice.’

In the middle of the Ballet on Horseback Melissa enters on a chariot pulled by Centaurs, and sings the following:

‘Empty earthly desires bring no satisfaction; climb instead the steep path to virtue.’]

‘When the Ballet on Horseback is finished, the following Madrigal is sung to end the whole celebration’ [Libretto: *in praise of the most beautiful Tuscan Ladies*]:

b.1883–1917 : Madrigal: Sadness is over, so laugh and rejoice.

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TRANSLATION

This is deliberately rather literal to aid interpretation of individual words, and retains where possible the line structure of the Italian verse, so at times may read somewhat awkwardly in English.

Editorial insertions are in square brackets, translated extracts from the Libretto in italics. Additional punctuation has been inserted, and further setting and stage directions deduced from the text..

Sinfonia: bars 1-40; score p.2-3

Prologue: b.41-235; p.4-11 [At Sea]

b.41: Neptune:

Not because the African and chorus,
conspiring together
Against famous Aeneas, arm themselves
with anger;
Not because Jove comes to my great kingdom
Changed for the sake of gentle Europa into a
bull;

b.54: Ritornello

b.58: But to marvel that, within the Tuscan
shores
Among Flora's fair suns, the bright Son
Of the great Sarmatian King opens his eyes,
Do I, Monarch of the Sea, come out of the
waves..

b.71: Ritornello

b.75: Come with me, and with sonorous
voices,
Spirits of the Waters, honour in peace
Him who defeated in war the Moscovite
And the Thracian, and beat the fierce
Tartars.

b.88: Ritornello

b.92: Sovereign irrigator of [my] noble
kingdom,
Faithful tributary to me, it is fitting for you,
Vistula, to sing the immense praises
Which gladly the Tuscan kingdom celebrates.

b.106: River Vistula:

O [thou], of the watery kingdom
The revered Lord, to utter the praises
Of these glorious kings
These waters have not the trumpets.
Although the heart blazes with deep desire to
do so.

b.116: It is [thus] silent and sighs for it.

Only the lyre of Phoebus
For this unconquered Mars
Whom all admire

Can utter [even] a part of [his] glories

b.126: And fill pages with [his] immortal
fame..

We, to the sound of these waves,
Will beg him in the meantime

Prologue contd.

That he may satisfy your desires
With his fine singing.

b.138: Chorus of Water Deities:

Golden-haired god of fair Parnassus
Set in motion rich [reverberations]
[Of] a most sweet sound from [your] golden
strings,

And let the harmony consonant
Always be
To the valour of [this] most brave king.

b.154: Duo:

For [his] ardour, for the toil of Bellona
[Goddess of war, sister of Mars]
Weave for [his] hair a fair garland.
Make audible, O kindly Deity,
The wonderful sound of his glory.

b.172: Trio:

Do so none the less,
From your fair breast
While is silent
The fierce trumpet in happy peace.

b.180: Tenors and Sopranos:

Make audible, o kindly Deity,
The wonderful sound of his glory.

b.190: Neptune:

After sky and sea today decree
Equal sway to thy great valour,
May it please you to hear how Ruggiero
Abandoned the love of evil Alcina.

b.202: Ritornello

b.206: Through the ardour of his betrothed
for her faithful lover
He spurned the evil sorceress's base deceits.
The brave-hearted courage of the loving
prince

Creates a joyful sight for [her] royal heart.

b.220: Chorus of Water Deities:

Golden-haired god of fair Parnassus
Set in motion rich [reverberations]
[Of] a most sweet sound from [your] golden
strings,

And let the harmony consonant
Always be
To the valour of [this] most brave king.

[Libretto: *The end of the Prologue*]

[Scene I: bar 236-316: Score p.12-14]

**Melissa, on a dolphin, approaches the island
of Alcina.**

b.236: Sinfonia

b.256: Melissa: Thus, wicked Alcina,
With the lying beauty
Of [your] deceitful face
Do you trust to hold buried through your
wicked passion
This flower of all chivalry,

Sc. I contd:

b.267: This unconquered Ruggiero,
Destined to bring back such bright laurels?
Thus will you hold [him], so that in vain
May be the promises made by me,
A noble maiden;

And from [that] glorious and fine race
b.277: Shall there not issue the destined
heroes?

No, no; if I am Melissa,
I will fully satisfy,
O faithful Bradamante, your desires.

b.288: I will simulate the appearance
Of African Atlas.
His wicked lover's

Face and art I will make known to Ruggiero;
I will bring about what he wants himself,
To follow the honoured works of Mars.

Prayers and sighs in the meantime
b.308: The deceitful and murderous sorceress
[Will] pour out, and rivers of tears,
So that a spirit fired with rays of
glory

[Her] treacherous beauty will entice, in vain.

[Scene II: bar 317-1630: Score p.14-48]:

[On Alcina's Island, near her palace by the seashore, beneath adjacent mountain cliffs with cool caves and grottoes, in a grassy meadow, with scented flowers including lilies and violets. The air is filled with birdsong. The scene is on the banks of a stream with trickling waterfalls, by a lake with swans, surrounded by woods of cypress, myrtles and other ivy-clad trees, which are Alcina's former lovers and some of their formerly-beloved damsels, transformed into trees. On one is hung Ruggiero's abandoned sword, shield and armour.]

Alcina and Ruggiero, with a Chorus of 6 Damsels. [Ruggiero is bedecked with jewelled torc and armlets, the gifts of Alcina.]

b.317 Chorus of Damsels:

Here it can be said
That of joy
Love places [his] seat.
The God of day, [i.e. the sun,]

b.316 Revolving [all] around
Does not behold a similar couple [i.e. to
Ruggiero and Alcina].

b.337 Ritornello.

b.342 A Damsel:

Powerful Alcina
Queen of us [all]
Triumphs and delights in love.

Sc. II contd:

b.350 Another Damsel

Amongst these plants
Thy charming lover
You hold with a thousand knots

b.362 Ritornello

b.367 Two Damsels:

Noble Ruggiero
Warrior of Love
Well can you be called happy.

b.375 Three Damsels:

A slave of Love,
He passes the hours
Beside your [i.e. Alcina's] fine Sun.

b.383 All the Chorus:

He passes the hours
Beside your fine Sun.

b.393: Ruggiero:

Just as much as, by my sweet & blessed fate
I adore thee, my soul, so much I owe you,
Although I live wounded to death by you.

But you, my heart, do not perceive
b.403: What sufferings & what torments
The wanton Archer shoots from your eyes;
Every glance is a wound.

My life is wretched

If these delights, and [your] beloved and
beautiful eyes, divine stars,

b.413: Cause of my languishing,
Do not know how to heal just as to wound.

b.418: Alcina:

Ah, do not make fun

Most noble lover,

Of one who for you consumes herself in a
living fire.

This appearance [of mine] does not play
A part, except merely to allure you to sigh
[for me].

b.429: [Let] my mirror speak, there where
imprinted,

[Though] deprived of all beauty,
I have a custom of looking at myself.

b.437: Ruggiero:

Be silent, for only in the
sky,

In the sun and in the stars

Can be contemplated your beautiful
appearance.

But if you take delight

In looking here below at what you are,

b.448 Leave the lying glass, lay open my
breast;

My passions will speak it;

Your face will speak therein,

Which I carry in my bosom, a welcome
Paradise.

b.457: Alcina:

Conquer, Signor, your natural chivalry.

Inasmuch as I am pleasing to you, I am

Sc.II contd:

beautiful still.
Provided that the torch of Love
Burning still reigns in your heart,
b.468: Provided that faith, that peace
So live eternally in your heart,
I will be whichever pleases you more,
Either star or sun, or a loving goddess.
b.478: Ruggiero:
My beloved, by your beauty
I will be inflamed while I live.
Deprived of life, I will burn as a bare spirit,
b.485: My darling, by your beauty.
As a model of loyalty and of constant fervour
Behold [my] right hand, and in [my] right
right hand, my heart
b.493: Alcina:
Then with equal fire may eternally
Burn our desire,
For one cannot be sad
Who halts the quiver-bearing God by loving.
b.503: One Damsel of the Chorus [v. 1]:

[Omitted text from Libretto, which fits the music of b.503-528 if repeated: see Score Endnote 'List of Amendments]:

*[When Love wishes to draw his bow
No woman can prevail.
A heart of stone in the hardest bosom
b.513: Who wishes to defend herself from Him,
Feels the arrow,
For which she pours out most bitter tears.]
[Another Damsel: v.2]:
b.503: They were wise to yield at once
Their hearts
To the looks which pierce.
b.513: Enjoy now among the myrtle and ivy
Your loves,
While the air and the brook entice you.
b.529: Alcina:
Remain, o my lord,
On these pleasant shores,
While I go (if you do not take it amiss)
To [attend to] the cares of [my] kingdom.
b.538: You will have a thousand delights:
Here with charming little birds
The countryside is filled,
Here of nymphs and shepherd
Are heard the happy loves,
And of swans and sirens
The sweet songs, which perforce put Argus to
sleep.
b.555: Ruggiero:
Go then, go, happy queen of Love,
Through the scented flowers
Of this pleasant meadow.
Your return will be desired by me
Just as the cold shore soils [long for]*

The hot rays of the sun.
b.570: Two Damsels [Libretto: *while Alcina departs*]:
Flying breezes,
Singing birds,
Trickling fountains,
Graces and Loves
b.582: From [all] around [this place]
You make the sun brighter, the day happier.
b.599: Ritornello
b.604: Three Damsels:
Frosty caves,
Brilliant sun,
Grassy meadows,
Lilies and violets
From [all] around [this place]
You make the sun brighter, the day happier.
b.637: Ruggiero:
O how sweet it is to love passionate
beauty.
Love has its own talent;
Another's however causes only war.
[Love] will not ever give torment
If in the beloved compassion is firmly joined.
b.648: I, who in rare beauty
Found beautiful compassion,
Enjoy the rose of Love without thorns.
O how sweet it is to love passionate
beauty.
b.661: Ritornello, played with 3 'flauti'
b. 672: A Shepherd, who tells of his love:
For the most charming and
beautiful earthly star,
Which today obscures the golden rays of
Phoebus,
b.682: My heart burned.
Love smiled,
Eager to see again my suffering.
b.703: Ritornello, with 'flauti' as above.
b.714: There follows the same Shepherd:
But to have scorned me
[She was] soon repentant;
With her compassion my heart is healed,
b.724: Whence I know faith
To whoever does not believe it,
That Love alone is the God of all delight.
b.745: Ritornello, with 'flauti' as above.
b.756: Ruggiero:
O happy Shepherd,
[He] who at your song does not feel
The flame of Love renew in [his]bosom
Indeed has a heart of ice and of stone.
b.767: A Siren, who rises from the waves:
[You] who, in the flower of youth,
Wish to enjoy kindly sweetness,
Follow Love,
Which dispels
All harm, all pain.
b.776: Follow Love, follow Love,
[You] who in the flower of youth

Sc.II contd:

Wish to enjoy kindly sweetness.

b.786: Ruggiero:

Ah, in the beautiful waves, with what,
O most sweet Siren,
Heavenly harmony do you curb the senses?

O mountains, o shores, o woods,

b.796: O soaring birds and wild beasts,
Listen to [these] sweet tones.

Be silent, fountains, and you [too] be silent, o
winds.

b.803: The Siren: [Ruggiero slowly falls
asleep]

Whoever desires with charming laughter
To make cheerful and happy his face,
Make a plaything
Of this fire

Which sweetly inflames a heart.

b.813: Follow Love, follow Love,
Whoever desires with charming laughter,
To make cheerful and happy his face.

b.823 Ritornello

b.828: The Siren:

Whoever in the course of his life
Always wants pleasant peace,
Should enjoy himself and keep silent
Nor should it displease him
To pass [every] day and hour in loving.

b.838: Follow Love, follow Love,

Whoever in the course of his life
Always wants pleasant peace.

b.849: Ritornello

b.854: **Melissa, the Enchantress, in the form
of Atlas, who wakens Ruggiero, put to sleep
by the Siren's song:**

Behold the hour, behold the moment [has
come]

To draw from servitude the noble warrior.
Behold the fatal day which has now arrived.
Arise, arise, Ruggiero !

b.864: Ruggiero:

What importunate voice disturbs my rest?

b.867: Melissa:

Atlas [it is who] comes to you
To learn what madness
Drives you to disgrace yourself on these
sand[y shores].

Of my long efforts

Do I gather these fruits?

b.876: In military passion

All the earth blazes up,
All Libya and all Europe goes to war,
Every braver mind
Scorns the risks of death,

b.886: And do you, badly advised,
Like to be loved by a filthy sorceress?

Shameless Ruggiero,
Where is your unconquered sword,
Where the bright steel,

Which made you so famous?

b.897: Contemplate, with what scribbles,
With what profane songs
You have stained these weapons.

*Ruggiero, the victorious,
Dedicates his heart to Alcina,
His weapons to Love.*

b.907: Take off, mad that you are,
From your warrior's arms,
And from your manly neck, the jewels and
necklaces,

Leave the wicked sorceress
And move to confront the enemy ranks,
If your fine spirit is still desirous of glory.

b.921: Ruggiero:

Woe is me, for only too well
I recognise my failings,
But I do not wish to look at them without
dying.

[O] most fierce grief, most bitter torment,
Which from here [all] round in [my] heart
Increase my shame and my repentance,

b.932: Wage war upon me always,
Shake me, you, so much that I die.

[Takes off Alcina's gifts of jewellery &
throws them to the ground]

Be off with you, scattered on the ground,
[You] empty displays of Love; encircle my
arm

Anew, [my] bright shield,

b.941: And [my] strongest armour, adorn
my breast.

Pardon, [o] pardon my unworthy fault,

O my guardian and father,

b.950: No more do I burn with love; I burn
with anger,

And I long to assail warrior squadrons.

b.957: Melissa:

Let us go quickly to arms,
Where if one runs towards glory
Great honour can abolish [this] brief delay.

b.963: **One of the Enchanted Plants:**

Ruggiero, on the harsh injuries

Of these mournful plants,

Ah, do feel pity in your heart.

b. 970: We will remain most sad

And weakened in all hope

If your power departs.

b.978: **Chorus of the Enchanted Plants,
together with 5 'violas', an 'arciviolata', 4
trombones, chamber organ and a plucked
instrument:**

O what merit, what great

Praise you will have, if our weeping is
assuaged.

b.988: **Ritornello, played by 4 'violas' 4
trombones, chamber organ and a plucked
instrument:**

b.995: Ruggiero:

O pitiful life!

Sc.II contd:

If suffering is virtue,
You well deserve infinite praise.

b.1003: Another of the Enchanted Plants:

What wretched havoc
Will the horrid wild beast wreak
On this unhappy day.
Her implacable anger
All will fall terrifyingly
On us wretched ones here.

b.1018: Another of the Enchanted Plants:

Make [us] remove from here,
And let the feet be released
Of [us] who will praise thee.
The bark he can remove
And untie the harsh knots
With which she has bound others.

**b.1032: Chorus of the Enchanted Plants,
together with the same instruments as specified
above:**

O what merit, what great
Praise you will have if our weeping is
assuaged.

**b.1042: Ritornello, played by the same
instruments as specified above.**

b.1049: Melissa:

Be comforted, o plants,
Who greatly languish or fear.
Revive today your heart's dead hope.
For your safety, against wicked Alcina
Today our valour will fight.

**b.1062: Chorus of the Enchanted Plants,
together with the same above-named
instruments:**

Go [hence] happily
While we here,
Solitary and silent,
Will pass the day
Praying continuously
That the hour may arrive
Of [our] liberty.

b.1080: Ritornello

b.1084: There follows the same Chorus:

On [this] lowly ground
We will move [our] feet,
Placing the restraint
On the one who gave it
Singing happily
And treating with contempt
[The one] who betrayed [us].

b.1102: One of the Enchanted Plants:

Alas, what atrocious sight
Shows itself to my eyes.
Behold the cruel and fierce
Pitiless hag; behold her
Who made us unhappy.
Be silent with me now, faithful friends.

[Libretto: *Alcina returns, with the Chorus of
her Damsels.*]

b.1116: The Chorus of Damsels:

O fine thoughts, fly
To the beauty which enchants Heaven.
There, look, the grass is decked more prettily
with flowers;

There await her.

**b.1145: Lively desires, run,
Say that gladly we come, singing.**

There, look, drifting in sweet harmony
The winds sport.

b.1174: Alcina:

Here I left my Life [i.e. Ruggiero],
But where he hides now,
Which of you, branch or leaf,
Which of you, pretty fountains, will tell me?

**b.1183: Alas, why do I see on the ground
Lying abandoned**

All my gifts, so dear to my fine Sun? [i.e.
Ruggiero]

Alas, that in these spoils
I perceive another's trickery.
I foresee my grieving and my death.

b.1196: A Damsel:

Do not mourn, o queen.
Perhaps with such fine art
Here amongst [these] dense branches
Your Ruggiero wishes to test if you love him.

**b.1205: But what's this, woe is me, do I see
(Sign of a bad omen)**

Coming towards you your faithful Oreste.
With [her] fair cheeks pale and sad?

b.1215: Lady Messenger [Libretto: Oreste]:

I do not know which is greater,
[My] fear or my sorrow
That for you, my queen,
Overshadows my breast and transfixes my
heart.

You hear of a strange event.

b.1226: Just now, there where

By the cypress fountain
Hang the famous weapons of your fine Sun,
(i.e. Ruggiero)

Amongst those shady plants

I saw Ruggiero, and with him

b.1235: A man of white-haired appearance

Who admonished the young man;

Then he counselled [him]

To noble warlike exploits.

b.1244: But listen, (O marvel!)

I saw in an instant

That severe appearance

Transform into a majestic lady

Who said 'I am Melissa,

**b.1254: Even though to your eyes there
appeared Atlas.**

Hither Bradamante desired

That I should come flying to you,

To recall to you alone

Her love, her loyalty.

b.1263: And that you ought not, submerged in

Sc.II contd:

cheap pleasure,
To scorn her, who gives you her own heart'.
b.1269: Alcina:
What did Ruggiero say then?
Alas, that by a thousand proofs
I [should] know how fickle is human thought!
b.1276: Lady Messenger:
All happy and smiling,
As appropriate to his mother,
To her he quickly bowed, pays his respects,
Then with such lively affection
b.1285: He asked for news of his Bradamante
That it was clear [that] in that breast
For that charming beauty
Was enclosed in that instant a sea of fire;
b.1294: But of you, who even now
Were his very own heart and his life,
That unfaithful one then said nothing else
But that he wanted to make a break with you:
b.1303: I, being hidden by branches,
[And] not seen by them, heard it all.
When I saw him absorbed
In wishing to escape
I came here in a moment,
So that you might prevent his departure.
b.1315: Alcina:
Alas, Melissa, Melissa,
I recognise that all my misfortune comes only
from you.
Malicious one, am I not yet safe
From you within my own home?
b.1324: Ever insolent and harsh,
Do you disturb my kingdom and my peace?
But an audacious spirit does not always
triumph.
I will go to find this cruel one [i.e.Ruggiero],
b.1335: And with sweet notes
And with moist cheeks
I will soften [his] proud heart.
From [my] grieving eyes I will send forth
Most sweet flames and lively arrows
b.1346: Which will cut off the wings of
his new desire.
b.1350: A damsel (Libretto: of Alcina's):
Behold, beautiful queen, Ruggiero [comes]
to us.
Now we will see how much power
Divine beauty [has], with sweet tears.
b.1358: Alcina [Libretto: on seeing Ruggiero]:
Stop, stop, cruel [one].
Where are you going, pitiless, from here,
Where you ungrateful[ly] leave me a prey to
weeping?
At least rein in such great
Rush to depart
b.1368: For immense grief is killing my
soul.
Look at my tears, hear my shrill cries,

Listen to my most justified complaints.
b.1377: Stop, stop cruel [one], and these eyes,
Which just now [you were] proclaiming [to be]
both stars and suns,
Behold how they are turned by you into rivers;
Reflected in this face,
b.1386: Where joy and laughter had their seat.
You will see your failure and my loyalty
And that, through pain and sorrows,
All the sadness in the world is there gathered.
b.1397: Ruggiero:
Alcina, control your weeping,
And if sorrow rules you,
Weep for your own betrayals and my mistakes.
b.1406: Alcina:
Alas, if you do not take pity on my languishing
Let your own failing move you.
Only realise, what an inextinguishable
dishonour would be
Treachery, for a noble knight.
b.1417: Ruggiero, my darling,
I fear greatly for thee, greatly for myself,
If you deny me help in such great anxieties.
b.1427: Alas, how, without [any] fault on my
part, from you
Do I see every shadow of pity has vanished?
Life of my life,
If [your] own honour
b.1437: And the last words of my speech
Cannot bring it about that your severity is
stopped,
Ah, at least, remember
What sweet embraces
b.1446: In peaceful love you enjoyed with me
And may such a sweet memory hold back your
steps.
b.1454: Another Damsel [Libretto: The
Messenger Oreste]:
O ferocity of a tiger, o heart of stone,
To a supplicating lady, a loving lady,
The most faithful and constant
b.1463: Who ever indeed spilled out sighs or
prayers,
Do. you still deny pity and deny peace?
b.1471: Alcina:
Tell me, o you Heavens, since he is silent,
Which is the greater, his stubborn will or my
grief,
Which gains nothing from the heart of this
cruel man?
b.1482: Another Damsel:
O ferocity of a tiger, o heart of stone.
b.1487: Alcina:
Thus do you season, ungrateful [one],
With most bitter poison,
All [our] sweetness, all [our] past joy?
For this your faithful [lady],
Who gave you her heart and kingdom
b.1496: Do you make no sign of love, and
deny [her] peace?

Sc.II contd:

What [is] such severity and such anger for?

[O] Love, you see, [o] Love,

How greatly are despised

b.1506: Chivalrous acts and [your] immortal
quiver.

O ferocity of a tiger, o heart of stone.

b.1515: Ruggiero:

Oh, be silent now, you too-much friend of
love,

Annoying to my eyes more than death.

Oh [you] cruel enemy of loyalty and of pity,

On these bare sands

b.1525: As a fitting punishment

In [well-]deserved tears

Remain grieving for me for ever.

b.1532: Alcina:

Alas, that I [should] ask [him] in vain.

Ah, why do I not prevent him

From leaving here by force?

Ah, why into hard tree-bark

Do I not now change his cruel appearance?

b.1544: [O] Furies, who, down in the city of
Pluto

[Are] always at the disposal of every wish of
mine,

Come to me to my usual abode.

Through you may the terrible waves

b.1553: Burn in living fire

And from the deep black abyss

May frightful orcas and whales come forth,

Such that from these sands

All paths for departure may close.

[To Ruggiero]:

b.1562: Come on, flee now, flee if you can!

May the power of my spell bring about

What [my] prayers and tears attempted in vain.

b.1571: Another Damsel [Libretto: of Alcina's]

[To Ruggiero] Ah, cruel one, ah, discourteous!

Such burning [passion], such insults

You will repay with death.

[To Alcina] It [your heart] will open its gates

To anger, to fury;

Your heart will know how to hate, as much as
it knew how to love.

[They go off]

b.1585: Ruggiero: [To Melissa]:

Now that troublesome face

Is removed from my sight

May my face speak to you,

For I do not know how to recount

The infinite joy

Of a heart free and released;

b.1594: May my face speak to you,

From whom [my]heart learned

The desire for glory and for a chaste love.

But, kind mother,

Before giving liberty

b.1604: To the [other]wretched people

bewitched here,

Remove with me the plants on this bank,

Where lies grieving

One related by blood to my beautiful goddess

[i.e. Bradamante]

Within a leafy myrtle,

A noble famous warrior.

b. 1617: Melissa:

Not only the illustrious Astolfo,

But all who were wicked Alcina's [former]
lovers

Today will be happy,

[And] happy also will be the noble damsels

Who to give liberty to a dear beloved

b.1628: Remained enchanted amongst these
plants.

**[She frees Astolfo and the other Plants from
Alcina's transforming spell].**

[Scene III: bar 1631 – 1750: Score p.28-53]:

**Here the scene changes; the sea [is] on fire,
and Alcina enters in a monstrous boat
woven of whalebones, with a Chorus of
Monsters.**

b.1631: Alcina:

What rash heart

At the sight of these

Black storms rippling with fire

Will not feel death's

Cold fear?

b.1641: What spirit so strong

Will be able to look at Alcina's

Enraged appearance?

O badly-advised lover,

Since you have scorned my heart and my
kingdom,

You will experience how great [is] the power

Of a betrayed beauty's anger and wrath.

b.1655: Chorus of Monsters:

He will experience cruelty

Greater than which has been none,

Nor ever will be.

b.1663: One of the Monsters:

Proud monsters,

On the wicked goddess [i.e.Melissa]

Make assault.

Demonstrate

[That] to punish

Your anger knows how,

Someone who does not have faith.

b.1670: Chorus of Monsters:

He will experience cruelty

Greater than which has been none

Nor ever will be.

b.1678: One of the Monsters:

Proud monsters,

For you awaits

Vengeance.

Kill !

Sc.III contd:

To him who is harmful,
Serious retribution
Alcina gives.

b.1684: Chorus of Monsters:

He will experience cruelty
Greater than which has been none
Nor ever will be.

b.1692 Astolfo [previously freed by Melissa]:

And how, alas, from [this] hateful kingdom
Shall we get away, through the living burning
flames?

With the witch do not cruel monsters and
portents

Stand guard over these enchanted sands?

b.1704: Melissa:

Calm your hearts.

High flight in the sky

And my motherly zeal

Will draw you free from these horrors.

b.1713: [To Alcina]:

O treacherous one, do you still have faith in
your deceitful spells?

In your lascivious control

Do you still boast of holding the handsome
Ruggiero?

Your lofty seat [of power] will fall.

b.1724: Heaven does not long suffer [such] a
wicked one.

My strength too greatly exceeds yours.

Your lofty seat will fall; infernal monsters,

b.1734: Get you hence to [your] black
cloisters.

Flee, flee now, [o] wicked siren,

Flee, and take hence with you

Hatred, anger and fury,

The inseparable companions of [your] heart.

b.1746: Alcina:

I'll flee, I'll flee;

Since fate

Implacable

Cannot be withstood,

I'll flee, I'll flee.

**Here Alcina, in the boat, which turns into a
sea monster with wings, takes flight and
flees, and the whole scene transforms into
rocky cliffs.**

[Scene IV: bar 1751 – 1917: Score p.54-59]:

b.1751: Melissa:

O wretched mortals

See what great anxieties,

What great, great evils

In the passing of the years

The human life runs through

Of those who in their own breasts

b.1760: Do not know how to rein in the
too-bold affections;

Sc.IV contd:

See, o brave champion,

How the pomps and comforts

Of the proud palaces,

How the prettiest fountains,

b.1771: The crystalline lakes,

The verdant meadows,

The scented gardens,

The palms, the sceptres, the kingdoms and the
crowns

Will in the end be nought else

But caves, rocks and ruins.

b.1782: Whence you, who pass

In the horrible caves

Troubled days in shady night,

Make return to us

Happy hearts and serene days.

**Here comes the Dance of 8 Ladies of the
Most Serene Archduchess with 8 principal
Knights, and they execute a most**

**distinguished Ballo. [Libretto:Here the
ladies, coming forth from a certain grotto,
dance. When the dance is finished, one of the
[newly-] freed damsels sings].**

b.1794: A Lady formerly Enchanted:

Pour out, [o] eyes, pour out

Most bitter tears,

Unless Heaven grant us

[Our] longed-for imprisoned lovers,

b.1804: Thus to gain another reward

For [our] most sweet song.

We, in most sad weeping

Which through [our] eyes distils

Love and loyalty,

b.1813: Will perhaps one day find again
devotion.

Therefore pour out, [o] eyes,

Pour out bitter tears,

b.1822: Unless Heaven grants us

[Our] longed-for imprisoned lovers.

b.1827: Melissa:

No more, no more lamenting.

Let [your] sad weeping and complaints cease.

The wicked cruel one flees,

And with her goes the sea of bitter torment.

b.1838: No more, no more.lamenting.

Calm now,

Charming damsels, your tearful looks.

b.1846: There follows the same formerly-
Enchanted Lady:

Our breasts are not able

To comprehend joys and delights

Before love gives back

To our hearts, our heart.

b.1854: Melissa:

Up, therefore, noble warriors,

Come forth to console [your] beautiful
lovers.

Sc.IV contd:

Dance happily with them,
Then when it is time,
To the sound of noble harmony
b.1865: Upon your skilful horses
Renew the dancing.

Here the Knights are freed, acknowledge their Ladies, and follow the dance [Libretto: ...with their ladies. When the dance is finished, they proceed into the theatre to perform the Ballet on Horseback.]

b.1870: Chorus of freed Knights, which sings immediately the dance of the Ladies and Knights is finished:
To delights, to rejoicing!
Whoever was sad,
Let him speak no more
Of his languishing.
To delights and rejoicing!

Here follows the Ballet on Horseback.
[Libretto: Words performed to the accompaniment of music, sung while the Knights on Horseback dance:]

[See **Appendix** {below} for Italian text of *Ballo a Cavallo*]

*He who shuts up Love in [his] heart
Often in tears will pass the days,
Nor will he know what delight is,
If he does not have a discreet heart.
The cruel witch in [her] base pretence
Wicked[ly] wounded our hearts.
It was [by] the virtue of the royal lover
[i.e. Ruggiero, prompted by Melissa]
If now we happily enjoy the day.
May Virtue, fine, kindly and heavenly,
Which always desires to keep faith,
Arm your heart with honourable desires
Nor ever part from you.
[Than] enjoying true joy
Heaven does not have a finer gift;
One who follows you [i.e. virtue], and
appreciates you
Will never see himself perish.
Now let us enjoy [ourselves] in songs and
dances.
[She] who bound us has already fled;
Up, swift and fine horses,
She cannot follow us.
As [her] spells are ended,
As the wicked witch has fled,
Let us redouble our songs.
Let him be glad, who most languished.*

***In the middle of the Ballet on Horseback
Melissa enters on a chariot pulled by
Centaur, and sings the following poem:***

*If man, who was born in Heaven, has
sufferings on earth,
It comes from empty desires and ignoble
relaxations.
Fly therefore, o famous knights,
[From] the wicked cause which erodes your
glory.
Short-lived is the pride of earthly importance.
If a warlike trumpet does not excite a heart,
Then his [own] reputation arrests the neglect,
Nor does the earth know how to enjoy one
serene day.
There where gleams the fine path more steeply
To seats of virtue quickly climb
And with [your] noble worth open up the way.
There, look, by dying, He gives life to another
who deserves [it].*

**When the Ballet on Horseback is finished,
the following Madrigal is sung to end the
whole celebration [Libretto: in praise of the
most beautiful Tuscan ladies]:**

b.1883: O Tuscan ladies, most beautiful under
the sun,
Who at the sad weeping
Of the noble ladies
b.1893: Moistened the serene stars,
Laugh now with their singing
And if you wish to redouble [their] joy,
Learn loyalty from their noble devotion.

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Anne Graf,
with much assistance from Selene Mills.
2010 / rev. 2013

Appendix:

Libretto of Accompaniment to the Ballo a Cavallo:

*Parole fatte all'obbligo della Musica
Cantata mentre ballano i
Cavalieri à Cavallo.*

Chi racchiude Amor nel petto,
Spesso in pianti i dì trarrà,
Nè saprà, che sia diletto,
Se pudico il Cor non hà.
Cruda Maga in vil sembante
Nostri Cori empia ferì.
Fù virtù di regio Amante
S'or godiamo allegri il dì.
Virtù bella, alma, e celeste
Chi serbar vuol sempre fè,
Armi'l sen di voglie oneste
Ne si parta omai da tè.
Per goder vera allegrezza
Più bel dono il Ciel non hà.
Chi ti segue, e chi t'apprezza
Mai perir non si vedrà.
Or godiamo in canti, e in balli.
Già fuggi, che ne legò;
Sù, veloci e bei cavalli,
Noi seguire elle non può.
Se finiti son gl'incanti,
Se la Maga empia fuggì
Raddoppiamo i nostri canti.
Lieto sia, chi più languì.

*A mezzo il Balletto à Cavallo viene Melissa
sopra un Carro, tirato da' Centauri,
e canta i seguenti quadernarii.*

Se l'huom, che nacque al Cielo, ha pene in terra,
Nasce da van desiri, e vil riposi.
Fuggite dunque, ò Cavalier famosi,
L'empia cagion, che vostre glorie atterra.
Caduco è'l vanto di valor terreno.
Se bellicosa tromba un Cor non desta,
Così sua fama il neghitto arresta,
Nè sà godere il terra un dì sereno.
Là dove splende il bel cammin più erto
A' seggi di virtù pronti salite,
E con l'alto valor la strada aprite.
Là vè morendo, altrui dà vita al merto.

[Finito il Ballo a Cavallo, si canta il...Madrigale...]

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