

<b>Institution:</b> University of Birmingham		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA33: Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> The Steffani Revival: Accessibility, performance and appreciation		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2000–2014		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Colin Timms	Peyton and Barber Professor of Music Professor of Music	1973–2012 2013–2014 (now retired and Emeritus Professor of Music)
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> September 2013–December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>The hitherto little-known Italian composer Agostino Steffani (1654–1728) has enjoyed a significant revival due to the work of Colin Timms. Timms has raised awareness of the quality, musical and dramatic characteristics, and historical status of Steffani’s music, and enhanced its accessibility to world-leading performers. Through his work, a largely forgotten composer has been remembered such that <b>his music has become part of the standard repertory of Western classical music</b>. Specifically, Timms’s work on Steffani has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• revived interest in the Steffani repertoire amongst performers;</li> <li>• influenced the creative practice of performers internationally;</li> <li>• extended public awareness and appreciation of Steffani.</li> </ul>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>Timms’s <b>award-winning monograph <i>Polymath of the Baroque: Agostino Steffani and His Music</i></b> (RO1) has become the essential resource on the composer and his works, and in particular his operas, vocal chamber duets and sacred works.</p> <p>Through his work on Steffani’s operas Timms has demonstrated that the composer possesses the rare ability to capture an emotion or delineate a character in music that immediately speaks to the listener and promotes the drama. Steffani’s arias are now seen as surprisingly diverse in invention, style and structure; his recitatives exceptionally lyrical and expressively ornate; and his works more continuous and compelling than most Italian opera of the period.</p> <p>Timms has also revealed Steffani’s operas to be an original and attractive blend of the Venetian style of around 1680 and of the French style — Lully and, especially, Marc-Antoine Charpentier. French influence is clear in Steffani’s orchestration, overtures, dances, rhythms and ornaments. The ‘mixed’ style of his Hanover operas exerted a powerful influence on such composers as Keiser, Handel and even J. S. Bach, and formed the basis of the language of north German music in the late baroque period (RO2).</p> <p>In Steffani’s sacred works, most of which are early, Timms has uncovered a prodigious talent in both late Renaissance and Baroque styles and subsequently argued that Steffani’s famous <i>Stabat Mater</i>, completed in 1727–1728 and recorded by Bartoli and Fasolis (see below), was probably begun nearly fifty years earlier. Timms positions Steffani’s chamber duets in the field of secular Italian vocal music in general and distinguishes three kinds of work, based respectively on the madrigal, the aria and the cantata. He has shown that the duets vary widely in texture,</p>		

with a predilection for imitative counterpoint (which, exceptionally for the period, is used even in Steffani's opera duets), and, by comparing the earlier and later versions of duets that the composer revised, he demonstrates how Steffani's control of counterpoint and structure matured during his career. He also shows how Steffani's works acted as a model and a source of borrowings for Handel and how they — and Steffani personally — formed a bridge between continental Europe and England.

### 3. References to the research

**RO1.** Colin Timms, *Polymath of the Baroque: Agostino Steffani and His Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). ISBN 0195154738.

**RO2.** Colin Timms, 'What did Handel learn from Steffani's Operas?' [2002], reprinted in *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Opera*, ed. Beth L. Glixon (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), ISBN 9780754629016, and also in *Handel*, ed. David Vickers (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), ISBN 9780754628859.

### 4. Details of the impact

The hitherto little-known Italian composer Agostino Steffani (1654–1728) has enjoyed a significant revival due to the work of Colin Timms. Timms has raised awareness of the quality, musical and dramatic characteristics, and historical status of Steffani's music, and enhanced its accessibility to world-leading performers and audiences internationally. Impact has been achieved by:

#### 1. Enhancing the classical repertoire through reviving interest in Steffani's works

Between 2013 and 2020, there have been 16 **new recordings of Steffani**; Timms has directly contributed to 11 of these. This revival can be traced to Timms's biography of the composer: only 15 recordings of Steffani were issued in the 35 years before *Polymath of the Baroque* (RO1) was published. Since then there have been 27, a four-fold increase in the rate of output. Evidence that this revival can be traced to Timms' work comes, for example, from the Boston Early Music Festival (BEMF) recording of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* (Erato, 2015). The fact that this opera was recorded is described by *Gramophone* as "evidence of the artistic good that can come from a healthy scholarly curiosity [... T]his is a landmark event in Steffani's much deserved rehabilitation" (S9). That this recording happened was a result of the close collaboration between Timms, BEMF and its Artistic Co-Directors Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs (S6).

#### 2. The creative practice of baroque music performers has changed to include music by Steffani

Prominent figures in the music industry have attested that their **creative practice** has been transformed by Timms. The world-renowned mezzo-soprano Cecilia Bartoli acknowledges that her engagement with Steffani was shaped by his monograph: "Thanks to this excellent book", she writes, "I first became truly aware of the greatness and diversity of the long forgotten Venetian composer". She confirms, "the exhaustive work catalogue compiled by Timms was crucial for finding the remaining [i.e. surviving] scores of Steffani's operas and his knowledge proved essential" (S1). Likewise, Bartoli's project manager, emphasises that Timms's research was crucial to her project: "Timms's work [...] confirmed the value of Steffani's music and the attractiveness of his story" (S2).

The Artistic Co-Director of the BEMF describes the impact of Timms's work on his thinking and practice as causing him to "examine closely the ways in which Steffani's music and example influenced the music of G. F. Handel", and to better understand "the meaning of arcane symbols in the poetry [of Steffani's duets]". He notes that Timms's work has "fundamentally affect[ed] both my choice of repertory and my stylistic approach to it" (S6).

Chicago-based harpsichordist Jory Vinikour, emphasises the significance of Timms's contribution to the recording of Steffani's chamber duets: "this project would have been severely compromised without Colin's research and input [... W]ith his assistance I was able to discover duets which utilised different configurations [...] than those pieces that had already been recorded [...] and] was able to choose others that had simply never been recorded" (S5).

Two recordings on the Musica Omnia label of Steffani chamber duets, directed by Vinikour, consist of programmes chosen directly in consultation with Timms, as noted by Vinikour himself (S5). Timms also provided the scores, editions and translations of the texts, and the liner essay (S4) for the first of these recordings, entitled *O barbaro Amore* (2018), which was chosen as the *Voix des arts* 'Recording of the month' soon after its release. The second recording — again conceived by Timms and benefiting from his editions, texts, translations and notes (S4) — was released in June 2020 as a two-CD set entitled *À son très-humble service: Duets for Sophie Charlotte of Hanover*.

In sum, as attested by the Artistic Director of the Forum Agostino Steffani in Hanover, "everything musical and musicological that has been done for Steffani during this period, wherever that may be, has been largely based on the work of Prof. Colin Timms" (S7).

### 3. Public awareness of, and appreciation for, Steffani has grown, installing him as an established figure in the classical canon

That the public now regards Steffani as a part of the classical canon is evidenced by the public appetite to listen to his music in live performances and recordings. Specifically:

**3a. Public demand for Steffani has increased** as shown through the numbers of recordings, recording sales and access to streaming files. For example, *The Steffani Project* (November 2013), a boxed set of CDs which combined recordings by Cecilia Bartoli and conductor Diego Fasolis — *Danze e Ouvertures* (September 2013) and *Stabat Mater* (October 2013), plus an earlier recording *Mission* (2012) — has enjoyed a combined sale of [TEXT REMOVED FOR PUBLICATION] units worldwide, at a time when sales of CDs generally have dwindled as a result of streaming and downloads (S11).

**Streaming figures demonstrate the public appeal** of Steffani's music. Eight of the 'Top 10' Steffani tracks on Spotify, the world's leading streaming platform, are indebted to Timms's research — four tracks from *Stabat Mater* are in Spotify's 'Top 10' tracks for Steffani, and these four tracks have 266,954 combined streams on the platform (S10). The BEMF recording of Steffani chamber duets (*Duets of Love and Passion*: CPO, 2017) was also inspired and facilitated by Timms, who supplied editions, texts, translations and notes (S6). Both CDs have enjoyed successful releases, *Niobe*, *Regina di Tebe* in particular having three tracks in Spotify's 'Top 10', with combined streams of 73,702 (S10). In addition, there have been 48,660 online viewings of Decca's 2013 high-production video of Steffani's *Stabat Mater* (featuring Bartoli) (S8).

**3b. Live performances of Steffani's work drew audiences and critical approval.** [TEXT REMOVED FOR PUBLICATION] people [TEXT REMOVED FOR PUBLICATION] attended the five performances of Timms's edition for the Staatsoper Berlin production of Steffani's *Amor vien dal Destino* (2016), directed by René Jacobs, one of the foremost living conductors of baroque vocal music, with whom Timms collaborated closely (S3, S11). Similarly, the performance in 2019 of Timms's edition of *Orlando generoso* at the Boston Early Music Festival (BEMF), the leading event of its kind in North America, [TEXT REMOVED FOR PUBLICATION] (S11). Described by the *Wall Street Journal* as a "stunning production of Agostino Steffani's forgotten gem" (S9), *Orlando* was the centrepiece of the Festival. Timms supplied the edition, acted as music consultant, wrote an extended programme essay, gave a half-hour talk before each of the four performances and chaired a public question-and-answer session. His work also informed the BEMF ensemble's international concert performances of *Niobe*, *Regina di Tebe* from 2013 to 2015 at three major venues — the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam; the Théâtre des Champs

Elysées, Paris; and the Sendesaal, Bremen, [TEXT REMOVED FOR PUBLICATION] (S11). Likewise, Timms's research underpinned BEMF's North American tour of *Duets of Love and Passion* (retitled *Gelosia*) in 2017, which took Steffani duets to six chamber-music venues in Vancouver and Victoria (British Columbia), Seattle, New York, Boston and Kansas.

Overall, the revival of artistic, commercial and public interest in Steffani means that **mid-baroque Italian vocal music is now performed, heard and appreciated more widely than hitherto**. This is evidenced in the way leading international musicians, including Bartoli and Jacobs, have championed Steffani's works inspired by Timms, and have sought out collaborations that have further expanded the profile of his works. For example, in support of Bartoli's recordings, Timms edited six sacred works, all unpublished (and hence unavailable to most performing musicians) and hitherto unrecorded. In turn, Bartoli's personal advocacy of Steffani also led to the writing by Donna Leon of a best-selling novel, *The Jewels of Paradise*, inspired by Timms's account of Steffani's life. Although the initial hardback publication was just prior to the impact period, the book subsequently appeared in paperback (October 2013) and in five foreign-language translations.

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- S1. Testimonial from Cecilia Bartoli, mezzo-soprano (May 2019).
- S2. Testimonial from Cecilia Bartoli's project manager (June 2019).
- S3. *Amor vien dal Destino* programme, 2016.
- S4. *O barbaro Amore* (2018) and *À son très-humble service* (2020) booklets.
- S5. Testimonial from harpsichordist/director Vinikour (February 2020).
- S6. Testimonial from the Artistic Co-Director of the Boston Early Music Festival (2018).
- S7. Testimonial from the Artistic Director of the Forum Agostino Steffani (September 2018).
- S8. Video performance of *Stabat Mater* (September 2013).
- S9. Four reviews: *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung* review (28.04.2016) of *Amor vien dal Destino*; *Wall Street Journal* review (12.06.2019) of *Orlando*; *Financial Times* review (27.04.2016) of *Amor vien dal Destino*; *Gramophone* review (03.2015) of *Niobe, regina di Tebe*.
- S10. Screenshot of Spotify's Top 10 for Steffani (taken 25.08.2020).
- S11. Emails from DECCA and venues confirming sales and attendance figures (2019–2020).