



# *Meta-stasio.*

Recovery and Standardization of Opera Metadata

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# *Overview*

Introduction to the Metastasio Project

Dealing with the data

Making the technology work



# *The Metastasio Project: Background*

Pietro Metastasio, Prof. Don Neville, and Western University

1993: An early born-digital academic resource

2024: An overhaul is urgently required; Metastasio redux



# *Key Principles of Database Design*

- Good database design prioritizes *consistency* and *data integrity* through the following rules:
  - Eliminate redundancy  
If the same information is entered more than once, database will become inconsistent
  - Enforce data validation  
Use checks to make sure controlled vocabulary is used consistently
  - Logically distinct tables  
Different things should go in different tables, rather than having one table containing many distinct things
- The original Metastasio Databases violated all these principles



# *Databases run on Metadata*

- Figuring out what kinds of things we were dealing with was a challenge.
- Metastasio's librettos typify the Italian "number opera" or *opera numeri*. A libretto could be used as a coherent whole on which to compose a single opera... or bits and pieces could be used separately to construct other operas, independent arias, etc.
  - In order to construct the database, and later the web site, I had to understand the building blocks of the *opera numeri*



# *Building blocks*

- *Work*
  - Opera librettos and shorter works
- Contains: *Scenes*
- Works and scenes may contain *Scenas*
  - A scena is an element of an opera containing a recitative and another musical number such as an aria
- Works, scenes and scenas consist of *numeri* or numbers
  - Examples of *numeri* are arias, duets, trios and quartets, choruses, recitatives, *aria con coro*, etc.
- Each type of item got its own table in the database, and links between the tables represent the relationships



# *Other tables*

- Composers
  - Composers who set any element of a Metastasio work, whether alone or as a building block for something else
  - Links to external name authority file (RISM and/or ViaF)
- Settings
  - A table that includes each setting of a Metastasio work or element
  - Each setting links to the corresponding items in the work and element tables and to the composer
  - The most massive table in the database
- Locations
  - A table of theatres where performances were staged



# *The Databases*

- Editions
- Bibliography
- Full text of works and correspondence
- Works, settings and composers
  - 309 original works
  - 5827 "instances" - settings of works
  - 942 composers
  - 3477 arias, scenas, duets, trios, etc.
  - RISM library sigla, and genres

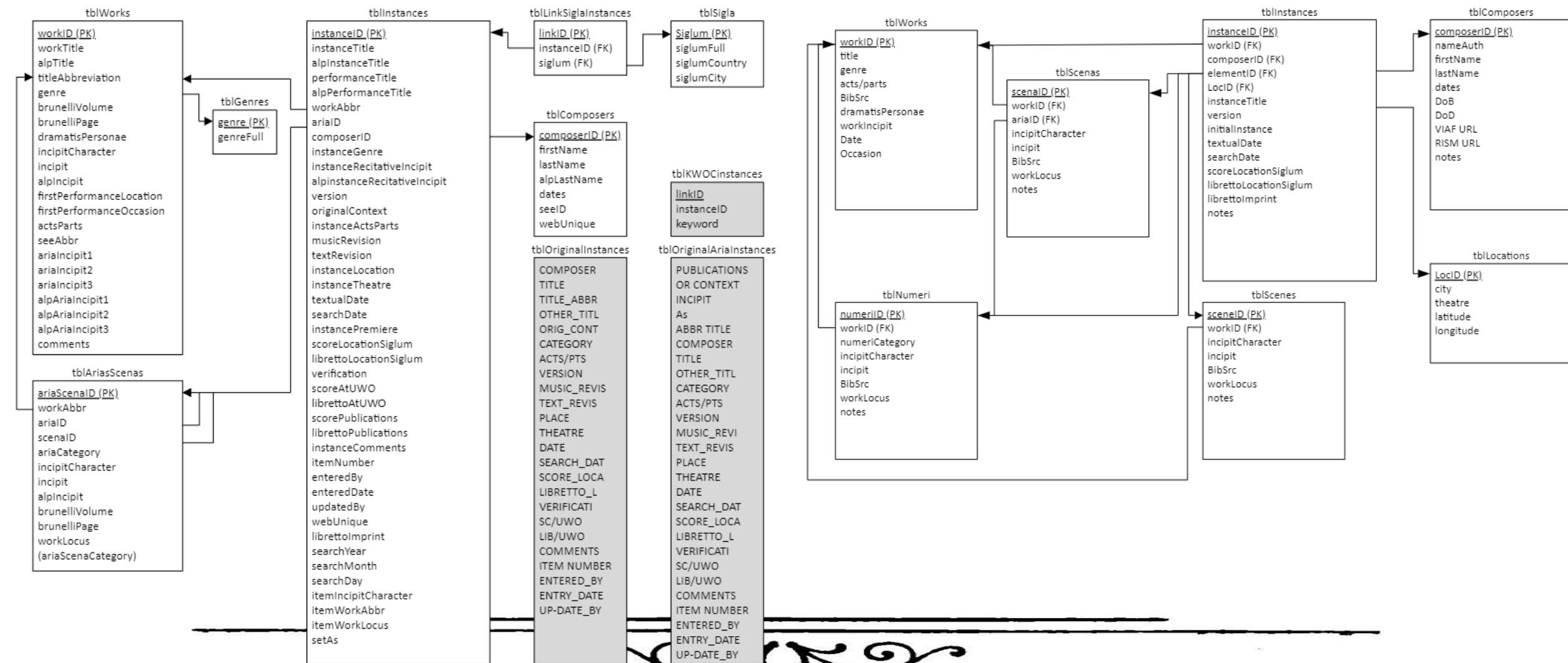




# Data models

## Original

## New



# Composer Names

Girolamo	Abos	(Notger) Ignaz [Ignatz] (Franz) von	Beecke
Girolamo	Abosso		
Agostino	Accoramboni	Dmitrij [Dmitri] Stepanovich [Stepanovitch, Stepanovic]	Bortniansky
Agostino	Accorimbeni	Dmitrij [Dmitri] Stepanovich [Stepanovitch, Stepanovic]	Bortnjanskij
Agostino	Accorimboni	Dmitrij [Dmitri] Stepanovich [Stepanovitch, Stepanovic]	Bortnyansky
Anton Cajetan	Adelgasser		
Anton Cajetan	Adlgasser		
Andrea	Adolfati		
Maria Teresa	Agnesi		
Maria Teresa	Agnesi-Pinottini		
Johann Friedrich	Agricola		
Pietro	Airoldi		
Domenico	Alberti		
Domenico	Albertis		
Tomaso [Tommaso] Giovanni	Albinoni		



# Theatres

Verona	Accademia Filarmonica
Verona	Accademia Filarmonico

Vienna	Kärtnertor
Vienna	Kärtnertortheater
Vienna	Kärtnertortheater

Vienna	Tonkünstlersocietät
Vienna	Tonkünstler-Societät

Turin	Regio
Turin	Teatro Regio

Munich	Hof
Munich	Hofoper
Munich	Hofoper
Munich	Hoftheater
Munich	Hoftheater

London	Covent Gardens
London	Drury Lane
London	Haymarket
London	King's
London	King's -Haymarket
London	King's Theatre
London	King's Theatre, Haymarket
London	Little Haymarket
London	S.M.B.
London	Theatre Royal
London	Theatre Royal, Haymarket



# *Omeka*

- Western Libraries does not support many database-enabled web development systems available to researchers
  - Chose Omeka because the other option was ArcGIS
- Omeka S (S for Semantic) is a linked data platform that runs on metadata – on ontologies
- Problem: No standard ontologies come anywhere close to matching the data structure we'd worked out



# Ontology

## The Metastasio Ontology for Operas and Librettos

This is an ontology developed to precisely describe librettos, operas, and the relationships between them. Initially developed to describe a database of Metastasio's works and their musical settings, it may be particularly suited to the Number Opera or Opera Numeri.

### Classes:

metastasio:Composer, Composer of a musical setting

metastasio:Librettist, Author of a libretto or opera element

metastasio:Work, Original text – librettos and poetic works

metastasio:MusicalSetting, Musical setting

metastasio:Numeri, Numeri, An aria or other element of a work smaller than a scena

metastasio:Scena, Scena, Element of a work usually containing a recitative and another musical number

metastasio:Scene, Full scene or subset of a work

metastasio:Location, Location of a performance

### Properties:

#### Multiple class properties

metastasio:bibSource, Bibliographic source, Citation for element





## EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY STUDIES

### A Metastasio Database

Instances

Works

Arias/Scenas

Composers

Genres

Sigla





## EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY STUDIES

### A Metastasio Database

#### Works

Title Begins With:

Get Works

Type the beginning of a title. You can type accented characters without their accents.

Incipit Begins With:

Get Works

Type the beginning of an incipit. You can type accented characters without their accents.

Works of Genre:

Get Works

# The Metastasio Database

[About](#) [Works by Metastasio](#) [Composers](#) [Musical Settings](#) [Theatres](#) [Resources](#)



## About the Metastasio Database



Pietro Metastasio (b.1698) was an Italian poet and librettist whose name, during the eighteenth century, was synonymous with all that was worthy in Italian serious opera, lyric poetry, and moral aspiration. His career began in Rome and Naples and continued in Vienna where, from 1730 until his death in 1782, he held the prime position of Imperial Court Poet. Metastasio's works range from 27 librettos for the Italian serious opera through a host of similar pieces for the Viennese court and chapel, to smaller sonnets and lyrical verses, while also embracing treatises on the Greek drama, the Aristotle Poetics and the Horace Ars Poetica. Metastasian texts caught the attention of some 400 composers between 1720 and c.1835 and

were represented across a geographical area that stretched from Lisbon to St. Petersburg and on through Central Europe; Copenhagen to Naples and even into the New World.

Quite apart from the number of works written and the number of composers involved, many texts were set several times. Further, all but the first settings by the composers for whom the texts were originally written were usually



# The Metastasio Database

[About](#) [Works by Metastasio](#) [Composers](#) [Musical Settings](#) [Theatres](#) [Resources](#)



## Metastasio's Works

### Genre

### Title Alphabet Browse

### Incipit Alphabet Browse

of 10



1–25 of 237

Copy permalink

Title



Ascending



Sort



Title	Genre	Incipit	Date
<a href="#">A Nice</a>	canzonetta	È forza, mio core	
<a href="#">Achille in Sciro</a>	dramma per musica	Ah! di tue lodi al suono	1736-02-13
<a href="#">Adriano in Siria</a>	dramma per musica	Vivi a noi, vivi all'impero	1732-11-09
<a href="#">Adriano in Siria - SHORTENED VERSION</a>	dramma per musica		1757-09-23

# *Questions?*

Original website/databases: <https://publish.uwo.ca/~metastas/>

New beta-version: <https://verne.lib.uwo.ca/s/metastasio/page/intro>

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