

(a) **Regarding genre classification:**

In this section of the website, it has been expedient to group Metastasio's dramatic works together in quite specific generic categories, a procedure that runs contrary to the loose application of generic terms that is generally to be found in eighteenth century practice. In Metastasio's case, the main sources for such labelling include his correspondence and the title pages of scores and printed librettos, including those of the Hérissant edition for which he provided the genre designations. An examination of these sources reveals that by comparison with the norm of his time, Metastasio's usage is quite consistent, but where discrepancies occur, the fact that often a group of works that share similar characteristics were written around the same time period, allow for genre identification through comparison, the following aspects serving as criteria:

01. The level of intended performers – professional or amateur.
02. The occasion: royal wedding or other “public” celebration, or royal birthday or name day.
03. The performance location – royal or other palace or garden theatre, royal or other aristocratic apartments, royal private apartments.
04. The audience before which the work was performed.
05. The staging (setting and action): extravagant, moderate, or simple.
06. The type of plot: historical, political, mythological, allegorical, pastoral, conversational.
07. The dominant tone – moral, philosophical, laudatory, satirical, comical.
08. The layout: in three acts, in two parts or a single act.
09. The recipient and extent of the encomium if included.
10. The number of performers.
11. The comparative length.
12. The presence or absence of a chorus.
13. The impact of the musical setting including the aria distribution.

Operas (*drammi*) and oratorios (*azione sacre*) aside, this comparison process soon reveals a clear hierarchy that extends downwards from the *festa teatrale* through the *azione teatrale*, *componimento drammatico*, *cantata a due* or *a tre*, to the solo *cantata*. and even on to the humble *complimento*. Occasionally, and at first glance, genre distinctions between a group of works may appear arbitrary, but on closer examination, there is usually sufficient variance in at least one of the characteristics listed above to justify a distinction. Such debatable situations are not common, but will be addressed as they occur within the specific genres described below and in the commentaries on specific works.
