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FORGOTTEN REALITY, REMEMBERED FICTION:
PRODUCTION VALUES AND COURT OPERA,
1598-1608

by

Peter Eliot Weiss

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Centre for Study of Drama
University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to construct hypothetical productions of early operas by combining elements taken from documentation of performance practice at the time when the operas were created and fragmentary evidence of actual productions. To this end, I discuss the following operas: La Dafne by Jacopo Peri and Jacopo Corsi, with a libretto by Ottavio Rinuccini; La rappresentazione di Anima, et di Corpo by Emilio de' Cavalieri, with a libretto by Agostino Manni; L'Euridice by Jacopo Peri, with a libretto by Ottavio Rinuccini; Il rapimento di Cefalo by Giulio Caccini, with a libretto by Gabriello Chiabrera; L'Euridice by Giulio Caccini, a setting of the same libretto by Rinuccini; L'Orfeo by Claudio Monteverdi with a libretto by Alessandro Striggio; La Dafne by Marco da Gagliano, libretto by Ottavio Rinuccini; and, finally,

Monteverdi's Arianna, which also had a libretto by Rinuccini.

Another way to describe a "hypothetical production" would be "historicized ideal performance text." An "ideal performance text" is an imaginative construct that comes into being along with awareness of a theatrical representation, either present, past or future. It becomes "historicized" when it is created from documentary evidence. My historicized ideal performance texts are not reconstructions of actual performances but readings of the documentary material constantly visualizing the operas in performance.

In my thesis I argue that looking at early court operas in the years from 1598 to 1608 from a theatrical perspective organizes the discussion of issues of performance with regard to these operas and allows a pattern to emerge, from early explorations in the staging of sung narrative, to an example of the form fully realized, a decade later. Production values evolve, though not in a linear fashion, from modest to relatively elaborate as the form itself matures and its integrity becomes more able to withstand the pressures of spectacle. In addition, by 1608 early court opera seems established enough to warrant a history of its early development.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank my committee, Mary Ann Parker, Domenico Pietropaolo and Olga Pugliese for the enormous support and encouragement that they have given me, along with the very necessary advice. In addition I would like to thank the staff of the Graduate Centre for Study in Drama for helping me in every way possible and making my time there as pleasant as it was stimulating and intense. The librarians on the fourth floor of Robarts Library and in the Music Library were also extremely patient and helpful and I owe them, as well, a debt of gratitude.

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Finally, I would like to mention again my two supervisors, Mary Ann Parker and Domenico Pietropaolo who first suggested the topic. It was only their unwavering belief in my ability to assimilate the necessary knowledge and organize the disparate elements that make up the fascinating history of early court opera that enabled me to believe I could do it. I thank them, with deep gratitude and tremendous respect.

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PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to construct hypothetical productions of early operas by combining elements taken from documentation of performance practice at the time when the operas were created and fragmentary evidence of actual productions. To this end, I will discuss the following operas: La Dafne by Jacopo Peri and Jacopo Corsi, with a libretto by Ottavio Rinuccini; La rappresentazione di Anima, et di Corpo by Emilio de' Cavalieri, with a libretto by Agostino Manni; L'Euridice by Jacopo Peri, with a libretto by Ottavio Rinuccini; Il rapimento di Cefalo by Giulio Caccini, with a libretto by Gabriello Chiabrera; L'Euridice by Giulio Caccini, a setting of the same libretto by Rinuccini; L'Orfeo by Claudio Monteverdi with a libretto by Alessandro Striggio; La Dafne by Marco da Gagliano, libretto by Ottavio Rinuccini; and, finally, Monteverdi's Arianna, which also had a libretto by Rinuccini.

Another way to describe a "hypothetical production" would be "historicized ideal performance text." An "ideal performance text" is an imaginative construct that comes into being along with awareness of a theatrical representation, either present, past or future. It is

whatever we imagine the event to be or to have been, based on our knowledge of theatre practice, the amount of information we have been given, and the extent to which we are able to picture such things. Even a unit of information as slight as a title may produce an elaborate spectacle in a creative mind. The relationship between this imaginary performance and an actual one will vary according to the amount of information that the person picturing it is willing or able to apply. Even in cases where a great deal of trustworthy information is available, including, in the case of twentieth-century performances, moment-by-moment photographs or archival videos, ultimately the reconstruction of an experience of a form as ephemeral as theatre will always be a matter of interpretation. Performance is a group experience that takes place not on a stage, but rather, between a stage and an auditorium. The elements of which it is made are not merely words, actions, music, gestures, dance steps, painted scenery and three dimensional furnishings, but also value systems, expectations, personal and political objectives both behind and on the stage as well as in the audience.

The writing on early opera is of two kinds. There are collections of primary documents, such as librettos,

letters, programs, and books describing Royal theatricals; and studies analysing those documents and elucidating theories. In the first case, editors such as Alessandro d'Ancona and Angelo Solerti and, more recently, Paolo Fabbri and Angelo Pompilio, have gathered source materials and made them available in modern typeface. Carol MacClintock, Allardyce Nicoll, Claude Palisca, Denis Stevens and Oliver Strunk, among others, have translated many of these documents into English. Numerous commentaries including those by Nino Pirrotta, Elena Povoleda, Iain Fenlon and Tim Carter have offered interpretations of the primary materials.

While it is true that until now much of the work on the history of opera has been carried out by musicologists, it is not the case, as James M. Saslow complains in relation to the Florentine intermedi of 1589, that each has remained isolated in his or her own discipline.¹ Pirrotta, Povoleda, Fenlon and Carter as well as such social and aesthetic historians as Eric Cochrane and Anthony Blunt and theatre historians such as Joseph Spencer Kennard, have gone to great pains to provide a context for individual art forms amid larger aesthetic movements and to situate these, in turn, in the political and social currents of their periods. The

problem, therefore, does not lie in the lack of effort to elucidate all circumstances relevant to a reasonable ideal performance text, but rather, in the fact that the context is so complex that it all but defies any attempt at organization. Theatre history, particularly the history of performance rather than written text, by its nature takes a comprehensive view of its subject, making it the ideal discipline with which to imaginatively reconstruct and discuss the issues relevant to early opera.

The primary principle in a theatrical reading of a text is, in the words of the historian of Spanish theatre, William Hutchinson Shoemaker, "a careful and constant visualization of the play, from beginning to end, as if it were being performed."² This procedure may be applied to operas as well, whether listening to recorded performances, reading scores, or even when just reading librettos of operas for which the music is lost. Indicators of the staging are to be found both in the sung text and in stage directions which appear in the scores and librettos.³ In the case of the former, characters' actions or stage effects may be described. For example, at the end of Scene Five in La Dafne, Thyrsis indicates Apollo's demeanour as follows:

But see, he himself is approaching, racked with pain. Ah, how the sorrow in his breast is betrayed by his streaming face.⁴

The singer performing Apollo may or may not have actually been weeping but certainly his posture, gestures and manner of movement would have approximated Thyrsis's description. By the same token, in Arianna, when Venus spots Theseus's navy in Scene One,⁵ a number of cardboard ships may have sailed through the artificial ocean visible on stage. Techniques were available to create the effect. However, one must be cautious in suggesting that the actions or scenic wonders alluded to in sung text or explicitly described in stage directions were actually produced in the original productions of early operas unless they are reconfirmed by the reports of witnesses. Librettos and scores delineate possibilities that may be incorporated into historicized ideal performance texts on a provisional basis. These are imaginary constructs which take into account the precedents and practices of the time. They also remain tentative, infinitely subject to revision as new information and new insights emerge.

It is therefore my objective to utilize the research and theories of a broad range of disciplines in order to

synthesize ideal performance texts of early operas, the creation of which will help to highlight and organize issues of theme, narrative and physical production particular to each work. It is not my intention to speculate about how each problem was solved in the operas' initial productions, but rather, to discuss the various solutions available at the time. In addition, in the chronological arrangement of historicized ideal performance texts the pattern of the evolution of early court opera emerges. From 1598 to 1608, the form goes from its embryonic, experimental phase, to a full realization of sung, theatrical narrative. Production values evolve, though not in a linear fashion, from modest to relatively sumptuous as the form itself matures and its integrity becomes more able to withstand the pressures of spectacle. In addition, by 1608 early court opera seems well-enough established to warrant the writing, by Marco da Gagliano, of a short history of its development.

In the Introduction I will discuss contextual concerns pertaining to early opera. I will begin by defining terms which are often used in relation to the subject, but which have varying meanings depending on the particular discipline that they are being used to

describe. I will then discuss a range of theories that were influential in the creation of the new art form. In terms of theatre, I will examine not only relevant aspects of the dramaturgical writings by Francesco Robertello, Giambattista Giraldi, Giovanmaria Cecchi, and Giambattista Guarini, but also general prescriptions for the physical representation of theatre, including settings, costumes, lighting, acting and gesture, by Sebastiano Serlio, Niccolo Sabbattini, Leone de' Sommi and the anonymous author of Il corago, a treatise on the production of opera. In relation to music, I will discuss the rising demand for, and implications of, simplifying polyphonic textures as well as the growing appetite for the kind of expressivity associated with music that has been subordinated to poetic text in madrigal, monody and solo singing. In dance, I will comment upon the boundaries within which theatrical choreography operated, from grandiose pantomimic actions performed in time to music to steps based on the social dancing described in the contemporary manuals of such dance masters as Guglielmo Ebreo, Antonio Cornazaro, Fabritio Caroso and Cesare Negri. I will also consider the use of choreographic figures and interweavings as evidenced by Emilio de Cavalieri, as well as the comments

on dance found in Il corago. Finally I will consider production precedents and the political and social environments of the two courts in which early opera was produced, that of the Medici in Florence and the Gonzaga in Mantua.

In the first chapter, I will elaborate on background material in relation to two specific operatic events in Florence: the Jacopo Peri, Jacopo Corsi and Ottavio Rinuccini collaboration on La Dafne, produced in 1598, and Emilio de' Cavalieri's Rappresentatione di anima, et di corpo, which he argued was the first representation in which the dramatic action was developed entirely in song and music.⁶ The earliest attempts to realize a form of theatrical narrative set entirely to music were characterized by a spirit of intense competition, which, it seems, has contributed in no small measure to the confusion around the question of who created the "first" true opera. I will argue that although it is tempting for historians to arbitrate this dispute in retrospect, there is not enough evidence to make a credible judgment. Rather, each of the works should be examined in terms of its individual contribution to the development of opera. None should be either overlooked or dealt with in a cursory fashion. The importance of works with lost

scores but with librettos and contemporary descriptions extant and works which do not fit neatly into a theory that sees the development of theatrical music as a departure from medieval conventions may be clarified when they are considered from a theatrical point of view. This I will do through the construction of an historicized ideal performance text based both on documentary evidence of the actual production and solutions offered by contemporary or near contemporary treatises for production questions particular to these operas.

In Chapter Two, I will discuss the stature that early court opera had attained in Florence during the festivities celebrating the marriage of Maria de Medici to Henry IV of France and Navarre in October of 1600. I will argue that the productions of Jacopo Peri's Euridice with a libretto by Ottavio Rinuccini and Giulio Caccini's Il rapimento di Cefalo, with a libretto by Gabriello Chiabrero represent the climax of the development of early court opera in Florence. After the small 1602 production of Caccini's Euridice, hurried into print two years before, the creation of court opera in Florence ceased for seventeen years. Although this turn of events may be blamed on the failure of the court operas of 1600,

Peri's setting of Rinuccini's text proved influential, going through two printings during the first decade of the seventeenth century.⁷ Il rapimento di Cefalo was an extraordinarily ambitious project both conceptually and physically. Whether conscious to the aim or not, its creators, inspired by the ideas of ancient sung theatre, seemed to be attempting to forge a coherent narrative musical form of theatre directly out of the tradition of the intermedi.

In Chapter Three the focus shifts to Mantua in 1607, where Claudio Monteverdi's Orfeo with a libretto by Alessandro Striggio was produced during carnival. At a remove from Florence and the direct influence of the Camerata, but already involved in a musical controversy with regard to his madrigals, Monteverdi brought his own particular genius to the developing form. I will examine conflicting evidence with regard to the details of the actual performance of Orfeo and offer some suggestions for solutions to nagging questions.

In Chapter Four I will argue that Claudio Monteverdi's Arianna, with a text by Ottavio Rinuccini, represented the fullest realization of early court opera. Produced in Mantua in 1608 during the celebrations in honour of the wedding of Prince Francesco Gonzaga and

Margherita di Savoia, this culmination of all of the influences that went into the development of early court opera was paradoxically preceded by what may be considered the next step in the evolution of the young form, Marco da Gagliano's setting of Ottavio Rinuccini's La Dafne. Delays in signing the marriage agreement afforded the court the opportunity to commission Gagliano to create the opera for Carnival.⁸ Nevertheless, as a young man he faced a very different prospect in composing opera than had his immediate predecessors. To Gagliano the form was no longer experimental. It was, in fact, so well established that it seemed appropriate to Gagliano to chronicle its history, which he did in the preface to his score of La Dafne.⁹ Monteverdi was part of an older generation and in a sense, the situation he found himself in with regard to writing a second opera can be compared to that of Jacopo Peri in composing Euridice. He had experimented with the form of opera in the previous year's production of Orfeo, much as Peri, Corsi and Rinuccini had in the late 1590s with the first performances of La Dafne. Moreover, just as they had approached the 1600 production of L'Euridice with a confidence founded upon the esteem generated by their

earlier effort, Monteverdi approached Arianna with a sense of assurance founded in the success of Orfeo.

In Chapter Four, after a brief introduction to Marco da Gagliano, I will utilize his abundant production notes to construct an ideal performance text of La Dafne. Although the score for Monteverdi's Arianna is lost, I will utilize Ottavio Rinuccini's libretto as well as Federico Follino's official description,¹⁰ and contemporary accounts to assemble an historicized ideal performance text of the work.

All translations from the Italian are cited except in cases where I have done the translation myself. For direct quotations, I have given the original Italian in the endnote. Where I provide a synopsis of a chapter, scene or act, I indicate the source in the endnote. With regard to the music, in every case where the score is extant, I have referred to an edited modern edition. In some cases, I have also been able to examine a facsimile of the original, but I have done so to investigate notes that the composer added with regard to staging rather than the music itself, which is notated rather differently than music is today. By the same token, when discussing music, I use modern terminology. While this may be justified in describing the way the music sounds

to our ears today, it should not be taken to indicate that these terms, which are part of a modern understanding of music, were current, known or consciously utilized by any of the composers of early court opera.

Endnotes

¹ James M. Saslow, The Medici Wedding of 1589: Florentine Festival as Theatrum Mundi (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) 9.

² William Hutchinson Shoemaker, The Multiple Stage in Spain During the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries, diss., Princeton U, 1933, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1935) 7.

³ Domenico Pietropaolo discusses the reading of plays as theatrical performances rather than drama and the staging implications inherent in dialogue in "The Stage in the Text: A Theatrical Stratification of Italian Renaissance Comedy," Comparative Critical Approaches to Renaissance Comedy, ed. Donald Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella, Carleton Renaissance Plays in Translation Series No. 9 (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions Canada, 1986) 35-51.

⁴ Ottavio Rinuccini, La Dafne, lines 366-370, in Gli albori del melodramma, ed. Angelo Solerti, Vol. II (1904: Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1969) 96. Trans. James Erber, La Dafne di Marco da Gagliano (London: Cathedral Music, 1978) ix.

⁵ Ottavio Rinuccini, L'Arianna | Tragedia | Rappresentata in Musica | Nelle Reali Nozze del Serenissimo | Principe di Mantova | e della Serenissima | Infanta di Savoia from the first edition of Compendio dalle sontuose feste fatte l'anno MDCVIII nella città di Mantova ecc. di Federico Follino, pp. 29-65, in Gli albori, Vol. II, lines 122-130, p. 152.

⁶ Nino Pirrotta, "Studies in the Music of Renaissance Theatre," part 1 of Music and Theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi by Nino Pirrotta and Elena Povoledo, trans. Karen Eales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 241.

⁷ Warren Kirkendale, The Court Musicians in Florence During the Principate of the Medici (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1993) 240.

⁸ Tim Carter, "A Florentine Wedding of 1608," Acta Musicologica 55 (1983): 100.

⁹ Marco da Gagliano "La dedicatoria e la prefazione" to La | Dafne di Marco | Da Gagliano | nell' Accademia degl' Elevati | L'Affannato | Rappresentata | in Mantova (Firenze: Appresso Cristofano Marescotti, 1608), in Gli albori II 66-73. Trans. Carol MacClintock, Readings in

the History of Music in Performance, (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1979) 187-194.

¹⁰ Federico Follino, Compendio dalle sontuose feste fatte l'anno MDCVIII nella città di Mantova per le reali nozzi del Serenissimo Principe D. Francesco Gonzaga, con la Serenissima Infante Margherita di Savoia in Gli albori II 145-187.

INTRODUCTION
CONTEXTUAL CONCERNS PERTAINING TO EARLY OPERA

Introduction

In this chapter I will present a discussion of contextual concerns pertaining to early opera. The diversity of disciplines that unite in this art form creates particular problems with regard to analytical terminology and the organization of historical material. In the first case, terms that are used to describe one discipline may not be applicable to another or may have different implications for different art forms. In the second case, the variety of influences on early opera is so great that it all but defies an organized approach. The form itself comprises elements of theatre, music, dance and staging, all of which were undergoing tremendous changes at the turn of the seventeenth century. The productions of opera took place in specific courts in relation to specific occasions with varying political objectives. In order to find a thread that will tie this material together in an orderly fashion, I have divided this chapter into three parts.

In the first part, I will consider various terms which I wish to use in the discussion of court opera,

creating clear definitions which neither indulge in idiosyncratic coinages nor unquestioningly accept or reject terms in general use. My intention is to clarify my particular meaning for the terms which are generally in use in relation to the early years of opera.

The clue for the organizational principle in the second section of the chapter comes from a remark made by Eric Cochrane in Italy 1530-1630. He ascribes the reason for what he calls a "revolution" in music to "the fortuitous conjunction of four circumstances." They do not actually amount to four different circumstances. Rather, in broad terms, there are only three, and even amongst these there are correlations. However, most relevant in relation to this organization is that first and last he refers to the co-operation, even collaboration, between theoreticians and practitioners.¹ Of course, some of these practitioners were also theoreticians. What is more, it is not my intention to imply that an inter-relationship between these two forms of activity was restricted to this era. However, with the invention of movable type and the establishment of publishing houses first in Venice and then in other Italian centres, an unprecedented opportunity arose for the printing and dissemination of treatises on all

subjects. Influential in their time, these treatises provide evidence not only of reflection on theatre, music and dance, but also of actual practice. Therefore, the second section of the introduction will present a discussion of elements of theoretical writing that are of general applicability to the operas which I examine in detail later in this thesis.

In terms of theatre, I will examine not only relevant aspects of writings on dramatic structure by Francesco Robertello, Giambattista Giraldi, Giovanmaria Cecchi and Giambattista Guarini, but also general prescriptions for the physical representation of theatre, including performance space, settings, machines, costumes, lighting, staging practices, acting and gesture. Writers whose work on these subjects will be considered include Sebastiano Serlio, Nicola Sabbattini, Leone de' Sommi and the anonymous author of Il corago, a treatise on the production of opera. In relation to music, my focus will be on the rising demand for, and implications of, simplifying polyphonic textures as well as the growing appetite for the kind of expressivity associated with music that has been subordinated to poetic text in madrigal, monody and solo singing. In dance, the commentary will be upon the boundaries within

which theatrical choreography operated, from grandiose pantomimic actions performed in time to music to steps based on the social dancing described in the contemporary manuals of such dance masters as Guglielmo Ebreo, Antonio Cornazaro, Fabritio Caroso and Cesare Negri. I will also consider the use of choreographic figures and interweavings as evidenced by Emilio de' Cavalieri, as well as the comments on dance found in Il corago.

In the final section of the introduction, I will consider production precedents and the political and social environments of the two courts in which early opera was produced, those of the Medici in Florence and the Gonzaga in Mantua.

Definitions

In this section the following terms will be discussed: Renaissance, Baroque, opera, narrative, Arcadia and Golden Age. In the first four I will attempt to elucidate definitions specific to this thesis. Arcadia and Golden Age require a more general discussion of the metaphorical world that became the setting for most early operas.

"Renaissance" is a term generally used to denote an era of social and artistic change that began in Italy in

the fourteenth century and gradually spread to the rest of Europe. Different societies and different art forms were affected in varying ways during the Renaissance. Therefore, the question for a commentator on opera must be: what commonalities can be found to be applied usefully to the discussion of a form which is an amalgamation of various arts? It is important to note, however, that the delineation of such commonalities does not imply that the Renaissance was a discreet and homogenous period, but rather, that certain tendencies attained a unique prominence in that age.

These tendencies are:

1. The exploration of ancient sources as models for solutions to current problems;
2. The participation of non-specialists in academic discourse;
3. The artistic use of classical motifs merged with a Christian sensibility; and
4. A feeling of power, ability, and confidence.

The term "Renaissance" literally means "rebirth." It signifies the awareness on the part of artists and intellectuals that their period was fundamentally different from the one immediately preceding it, but that it had a relationship with ancient times. This

understanding was particularly prompted by the work of the humanist and poet Francesco Petrarca, or Petrarch, who urged that beyond its use as a teaching tool for the clergy, Latin literature should be cultivated and a moral philosophy based on classical models be developed.² The Renaissance did not look to Latin texts as a rebellion against the Christianity of the medieval era, but rather as a tool for perfecting the "literate Christian."³ It is important to note that though the Renaissance "revival of antiquity" had precedents in the medieval era, it differed from the past in that its purpose was not merely to investigate ancient sources but to apply the analysis of these sources to contemporary problems.⁴ Hence, as will be argued in this thesis, the pioneers of early court opera typified the spirit of the Renaissance not in trying to literally recreate ancient sung theatre, but rather, in attempting to apply an understanding of Greek and Roman practices to a new form of sung theatre whose power paralleled that found on the fabled ancient stages.

Intellectuals of the Renaissance had an awareness of the difference between their era and the one immediately before. They dismissed the Middle Ages as a period of no advancement⁵ and set about to re-evaluate humanity and its place in nature and history. Significantly, this

investigation was carried on not by professional philosophers, but by ordinary men, writers, intellectuals, nobles and artists.⁶ Hence, by the late sixteenth century in Florence, not one, but two or perhaps three separate and distinct groups of nobles carried on discussions and explorations on the subject of ancient music and how best its principles could be adapted to contemporary uses (as discussed below, pages 68-76 and 141-143). The informal discourse of artists and theoreticians, amateurs and professionals created a fertile creative situation. Eric Cochrane noted that one contributory factor in the musical "revolution" that resulted in opera was that "the experimenters submitted to the guidance of the theoreticians."⁷ That may be so but in some cases they were one and the same person.

The amalgamation of classical motifs and Christian sensibility was not problematic for the Renaissance mind. Indeed, though the humanist movement was committed to the revival of literary, rhetorical and philosophical forms of the ancients, it did not consider this enterprise as being in conflict with Christianity. Rather, the humanists were convinced that classical rhetoric, poetry, history and philosophy would actually strengthen religion. Hence, the idea of gods and God, heavens and

Heaven, could mix easily in early court opera and it was entirely appropriate for pagan gods to pay tribute to mortal rulers and for all to uphold the values of a singular and ultimate Divinity.

Historical events that occur within this period include the invention of printing with movable type, gunpowder, the compass,⁸ the discovery of the new world and the Protestant Reformation.⁹ The rise of science and knowledge in their era led Renaissance "modernists" to consider themselves superior to the previous era. They began to delineate a sense of progress in which their age was the beginning of a continual state of improvement as a result of human discovery and invention.¹⁰ The confidence and optimism of this period may be seen in the solidity and symmetry of the paintings such as Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper, in which architectural elements draw the eye toward the strong centrality of Jesus, haloed by the semi-circular pediment atop a window through which a view of a landscape disappearing in the distance of boundless possibility can be seen. Everything in the picture reinforces a sense of balance and strength. How different, then, is the approach of Caravaggio, a hundred years later. Symmetry and solidity are replaced with dynamic action. Thick walls of

darkness block any vision of endless space. Though it is difficult to determine an exact temporal boundary to the Renaissance, a shift in attitude clearly took place in the artwork of the sixteenth century.

Barely twenty-five years separate Michelangelo's statue of David in Florence and Giulio Romano's painting of Apollo in the Palazzo Te in Mantua and yet, conceptually, they are worlds apart. The bold nakedness and over-sized hands of Michelangelo's biblical figure represent the optimism and confidence of the High Renaissance. He is a portrait of virtù in both of its senses, that of a high moral standard of behaviour and that of power and ability to overcome obstacles and achieve one's purpose.¹¹ This over-sized statue represents man in an idealized, god-like manner.

The startling "Chariot of the Sun," on the ceiling of the Camera del Sole is the portrait of Apollo, seen from below, one foot on, one foot off the chariot that carries a sunburst above it. His toga and cloak fly in the wind behind him, revealing in an almost voyeuristic way, the god's underside. As opposed to the David, which is a man made god-like, here a god is made vulnerable by the intimacy of the viewer's perspective. It is this movement, from the Renaissance confidence in man to the

emphasis on the vulnerability of the gods that characterizes both the age and the new art form of the end of the sixteenth century.

The term "Baroque" was coined in the middle of the eighteenth century, which was, ironically, the end date for the period to which it referred.¹² In 1768, Jean-Jacques Rousseau defined it in his dictionary of music as follows:

A baroque music is that in which the harmony is confused, charged with modulations and dissonances, the melody is harsh and little natural, the intonation difficult, and the movement constrained. It seems that this term comes from baroco of the logicians.¹³

The "baroco" of the logicians was an adjective identifying a far-fetched mode of argumentation by syllogism, but the term "Baroque" may have been derived, instead, from the Portuguese word used to describe an oddly shaped pearl: "barocco."¹⁴

According to Lorenzo Bianconi, it was first used in reference to architecture and should never have been applied to music at all.¹⁵ It would seem to be an even greater stretch to try to apply it to theatre. Eric Cochrane coins an entirely new term for the era. Arguing

that the artistic phase that followed the Renaissance was an exploration of its boundaries rather than a rebellion against them,¹⁶ he calls the period around 1600 the "Neo-Renaissance."¹⁷ By that time, the excitement of the new intellectualism had long since faded. The empirical basis of its art was beginning to be questioned, challenged, and tempered with imagination, whimsy and intuition. Moreover, the new empiricism combined with the Protestant Reformation created spiritual questions that artists took seriously and, in their work, attempted to answer soulfully.

The Counter-Reformation may be considered not merely a Conservative backlash, but rather, a reassertion of spiritual values in a world that had progressed into the empirical at an alarming speed. There is no underestimating the profundity of the threat to people when the foundation of their understanding of reality is shaken. The burning of Giordano Bruno which marked the start of the new century, fifty years after Copernicus, bears witness to the seriousness of this threat.

In The Baroque Poem: A Comparative Survey, Harold B. Segel enumerates basic assumptions about the Baroque that have bearing on the development of opera. It was an age marked by an intensification of conflict in virtually all

spheres of life. The political and economic turmoil of seventeenth-century Europe was intensified by religious, scientific and philosophical events. There was a heightened spirituality and, yet, at the same time, a feeling for and attachment to life that can at best be described as "sensuous." It was an age of antithesis, paradox and incongruity.¹⁸ The spirit-flesh dichotomy is expressed, in Baroque poetry, in the metaphor of the painful separation between lovers. In addition, not only are the lovers separated from one another, but neither can function alone as a complete entity, making the separation representative of a "division of the self."¹⁹ This analysis of the Baroque seems to be a remarkably apt explanation of the Orpheus myth as an expression of the age.

Therefore, although the term Baroque might be subject to some dispute, I will utilize it in this thesis to refer to the spirit of vulnerability and doubt, as well as the paradoxical, passionate metaphors and emphasis on expressivity that characterize early opera.

For the purposes of this thesis, the terms dramma per musica, dramma in musica, fabula per musica, tragedia per musica and the modern term opera will all be considered synonymous and will be defined as a theatrical

work in which the narrative is expressed wholly in music, vocal and instrumental. Bianconi differentiates between early court opera begun in Florence in 1600 and the public opera initiated in Venice in 1637.²⁰ The former term seems to be a precise description for the operas on which I focus.

Narrative indicates a sequence of events in which some development takes place, whether it is a development of plot as in a conventional story or of understanding as in an allegory, miracle or debate play. This definition differentiates opera from any form with a significant amount of spoken text interspersed with songs or music (as in musical theatre or pastoral plays with songs and dances) or wholly musical representations which, though they have narrative elements either over all (as in ballet) or in parts (as in Apollo killing the python in the fourth of the 1589 intermedi in Florence), lack either, in the first case, words, albeit sung, and in the second case, a cause-and-effect, chronological or otherwise narrative relationship between the sections.

"Arcadia" and the "Golden Age" are two separate but related myths. The first has to do with place, the second with time. Harry Levin declares that, since Arcadia is a spatial notion, it lent itself best to graphic

representation, whereas the Golden Age was best suited to narration and generality.²¹ But such gardens as eclogues, pastoral plays and court operas were set in could not have been so idyllic in any age but the Golden one nor are there other locations that the human imagination cared to explore in the world of the time. In any case, theatre is both a narrative and graphic representation and therefore it offered the perfect form to express nostalgia for a better, albeit entirely fictional, world.

René Dubos, an eminent biologist, remarked, "Arcadias and dreams of an imaginary past, and utopias are intellectualized concepts of an idealized society. Different as they appear to be, both imply a static view of the world which is incompatible with reality, for the human condition has always been to move on."²² Indeed, Arcadia could be seen as an imaginary retreat from the cataclysmic events of Renaissance Italy. City-states fought with city states while foreign powers invaded and struggled for dominance. In Florence in the latter half of the fifteenth century great art was created and books printed only to be destroyed by Savonarola's "Bonfire of the Vanities," after which, in only a year, Savonarola himself was tried and immolated.²³ On the sixth of May, 1527, violence on the peninsula reached a bloody pitch in

the Sack of Rome.²⁴ By 1530, Florence had been ravaged by war, siege and plague. "Of the misery and ruin of the countryside," wrote Francesco Guicciardini, "there is little I need say. It is far worse than anything I had imagined. The wealth of the inhabitants has been used up. All the houses around the city...have been destroyed...There is very little grain left to eat this year. There is very little prospect of there being any more next year."²⁵ Cochrane notes, "No one could do anything about the calamities that Fortune inevitably and invariably engendered except escape into the contemplation of a hopelessly lost golden age in which it had once been subject to human will."²⁶

But Arcadia was not simply a wishful political utopia. It was a complex "country of the mind,"²⁷ an imaginary geography, the landmarks of which were evocations of emotional states, an inner world rather than a mirror of the outer one, as Louise George Clubb puts it.²⁸ The idea of Arcadia goes back to the poet Virgil (70-19 BC), born, incidentally, in Mantua. His Latin eclogues were set in the isolated mountainous hinterland on the Peloponnesian Peninsula that had been celebrated in the Homeric hymn to Pan.²⁹ Jacopo Sannazaro's Arcadia, published at the beginning of the

sixteenth century created a vogue for Arcadian eclogues, becoming the model for this form of literature all over Europe.³⁰ It is in Sannazaro's ability to shift from one dimension of fictionality to another as if reality could be determined and/or modified by mere suggestion, which sets the parameters for an entirely subjective, dream-like structure and offers the pastoral form the perfect locale for an exploration of a state rather than the elucidation of a literal action, which is to say a narrative movement from emotional metaphor to emotional metaphor.

So too is the Golden Age more than merely, as Sir Kenneth Clark put it, "the most enchanting dream which ever consoled mankind."³¹ Hesiod defined five ages. The first, which was golden, was an age of peace in which shepherds tended their flocks in a land where everyone shared equally in the fruits of the earth. In the second, silver, people grew inconsiderate and in the third, the age of bronze, they became warlike and destroyed themselves. The fourth was the age of heroes and the fifth, the age of iron, was the era of humanity as we know it.³² But such metaphorical schemata of human development can be applied on an individual as well as a collective level. As Schiller points out, not only do

all peoples have a mythological paradise, "a state of innocence, a golden age," but also, "every single man has his paradise, his golden age, which he recollects with more or less rapture according to his more or less poetic nature."³³ Levin himself offers a different definition of the golden age, as a "nostalgic statement of man's orientation in time, an attempt at transcending the limits of history."³⁴ Thus, it becomes the perfect narratological scheme for a court poet to flatter his sovereign, identifying the modern with the ancient,³⁵ and the human with the divine. In *Arcadia*, in the *Golden Age*, as it is portrayed by court opera, humans and gods walked, danced and sang together.

Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, the term "Renaissance" will be used to refer specifically to the tendencies on the part of artists and intellectuals to recuperate texts from the Classical Greek and Roman era and utilize them as authorities for contemporary artistic development, the informal discourse that accompanied this activity and the mixture of classical motifs with a Christian sensibility within artistic works. The optimism and sense of personal power associated with the Renaissance has been mitigated by the age of early court opera by a resurgence of spiritual values that caused

artists not to reject the emphasis on empirical evidence of the previous era, but rather, to attempt to reconcile the material and the spiritual, especially through the metaphor of union or separation from the beloved. I will use the term "Baroque" to denote this tendency as well as the sense of doubt that results from an awareness of divine vulnerability. The term "court opera" will be used in relation to any theatrical work in which the narrative is wholly expressed in both song and music and narrative is taken to mean a form in which a series of actions creates a coherent development on the part of the participants in those actions, whether that development is one of outward events, or of a dawning of inner awareness and whether it is presented literally, symbolically or allegorically. Finally, Arcadia is the spatial representation of an inner world. Its landmarks are metaphors for states of mind. The Golden Age is its temporal equivalent, though the two concepts are often used in conjunction. The Golden Age as the metaphor for a time of uncomplicated gratification and innocence is pertinent both in social and personal terms, as a yearning for an imagined prelapsarian social construction or a nostalgia for either the infantile connection to the mother or the latent potency of youth, unconnected as yet

to the actions and consequences of maturity. Both Arcadia and the Golden Age were expressed in artistic forms the purpose of which was to extol the virtues of the sovereign and identify him with the gods of antiquity.

The Theoretical Conception of Court Opera

This section will be broken into three major component parts: theatre, music and dance. Each of these will be further divided, the first into dramaturgical structure, form of the theatre, settings, costumes, lighting, acting and gesture. In the second I will discuss principles and practices that had to be established or transformed in order for music to become an integral component in the narrative function of early opera. These included making the words of the text master or mistress of the melody and adapting the rules governing dissonance and consonance so that the composer could make the music as expressive of the affect of the text as possible. Foundation elements of opera, which were developed at this time, included the definition and creation of monody and the use of figured bass and its accommodation to the uses of basso continuo or thorough bass. Finally, though expressive solo singing had long

been appreciated, it was through the writing and experiments of theoreticians that it could be focussed toward the narrative demands of court opera. In the final section I will explore the wide parameters of theatrical choreography in the sixteenth century, from pantomimic actions performed in time to music, to dance steps and choreography as described in contemporary dance manuals to the figures and interweavings characteristic of stage dance.

Printing from movable type was invented in the mid-1400s in Mainz. Presses were set up in Naples in 1465, Rome in 1467 and in Venice and Milan two years later. It took Bernardo Cennini a further decade to establish his press in Florence.³⁶ The invention resulted in an unprecedented opportunity for the creation and dissemination of discourse on a number of topics. Scholars combed through ancient works on art, architecture, philosophy and science. They wrote translations and commentaries and engaged in lively controversies. Their books remain as a record not only of their thoughts but also of the practice that reflected, or rejected, these thoughts.

Theatre

Writers whose works are pertinent to the formation of opera include Francesco Robertello (1516-1568), Giambattista Giraldi, known as "Cinthio" (1504-1573), Giovanmaria Cecchi (1518-1587) and Giambattista Guarini (1538-1612) writing on dramatic structure and genre; Sebastiano Serlio (1475-1554), Nicola Sabbattini (1575-1654), Leone de' Sommi (1527-1592) and the author of the anonymous treatise on the staging of opera, Il corago, dating from around 1630, discussed theatrical space, setting, machines, costumes, lights and the latter two commented also on staging practice, acting, gesture and movement.

Il corago, in fact, details the various functions of a supervisor of court opera, from advice to be given to the poet and composer to the fine points of acting both with and without music, either in a principle role or as a member of the chorus. Anna Migliarisi has convincingly argued, in her doctoral dissertation, Theories of Directing in Late Renaissance and Early Baroque Italy, that Il corago as well as the writings of Leone de' Sommi show clearly that a figure functioning much like the twentieth-century stage director existed in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Italian theatre.³⁷

Dramatic Structure

In 1548 Francesco Robortello's pioneering commentary on Aristotle appeared.³⁸ His remarks on Aristotle, the purpose of theatrical poetry, the difference between tragedy and comedy and the meaning of purgation were influential and the practical applications of the rules he laid down "established the general direction for those that followed."³⁹ He interpreted Aristotle's observation that the action of tragedy was generally bounded by something near a single circuit of the sun to mean from sunrise to sunset, since people did not move around or converse at night. Donatus and Horace were cited as authorities for the rule of five-act structure.⁴⁰ In practice, the breaks between the acts were filled with musical spectacles, the intermedi, which eventually became so elaborate as to overwhelm the plays into which they were inserted, leading Anton Francesco Grazzini's allegorical character Comedy to complain, "I am rent and ruined by those very creations once devised to serve me and be my ornament...the wondrous show, alas, of the intermedi."⁴¹ Eventually, Leone de' Sommi was to write that the intermedi should be related to the plot of the play, making musical spectacle and spoken text into a single thematic unit.⁴²

On the question of genres, Robortello's distinction between tragedy and comedy is precise. In tragedy, catastrophes befalling a king or hero were represented because misfortunes which afflicted the great elicited more compassion from an audience than those suffered by the "obscure and lowly." These ordinary sorts and their "insignificant and trivial actions" were the subject of comedy.⁴³ Tidy genre distinctions were to be challenged, however, both in practice and theory.

A contemporary of Robortello's, Giambattista Giraldi defended his own hybrid creation, the tragedia di lieto fine⁴⁴ (tragedy with a happy ending) claiming that over time artists had improved upon ancient models and that playwrights had to please their own audiences. The actions of tragedy, in any case, had to be "terrible and compassionable," and even in those which ended happily, the audience had to be sustained in a state of suspense, "between horror and compassion," until the very end when a happy resolution of the action would leave them "all consoled."⁴⁵ However, if he agrees with Robortello that "great and royal persons are suitable to tragedy" and "popular persons," such as "honest citizens...servants, parasites, prostitutes, cooks, pimps, soldiers, and all

sorts of common persons" to comedy,⁴⁶ even this distinction became blurred in the creation of new forms.

Giovanmaria Cecchi (1518-1587) was determined that the farsa which he invented could have whatever rules he pleased. Thus, in the prologue to the Romanesca (1585), he claims:

The farsa is a third new thing
 Between tragedy and comedy, enjoying
 The liberty of both of them
 And avoiding their restrictions.
 It welcomes great lords and princes
 Which comedy does not; and welcomes
 As do hospitals and inns
 The vile plebian common folk
 Which Dame Tragedy has never wished to do.⁴⁷

Cecchi's farsa was limited neither in theme nor setting, unlike another new form that also mixed types of people and appended happy endings to moving actions: the pastoral. Published in 1601, The Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry by Giambattista Guarini was a combination of two replies he had composed to objections over his play Il pastor fido, tragicommedia pastorale.⁴⁸ After defining his terms, Guarini argues that low or ordinary characters associated with comedy can and do

appear alongside elevated or noble ones in tragedy, citing the example of the shepherds whose damning testimony in Oedipus Rex provide the final confirmation of the king's true identity. Moreover, noble characters deal with the everyday matters that are the subject of comedy. Laughter and pity are not inharmonious qualities and, finally, more compellingly, the creation of hybrids is not against nature. Guarini cites the examples of the mule borne of the horse and the ass and of bronze which is an amalgamation of copper and tin.⁴⁹

The elements of tragedy and comedy that cohere are, from the former, "its great persons but not its great action, its verisimilar plot but not its true one, its movement of the feelings, but not its disturbance of them, its pleasure but not its sadness, its danger, but not its death." From the latter, it takes a moderate measure of laughter, "modest amusement, feigned difficulty, happy reversal, and above all the comic order."⁵⁰

The goals of comedy, tragedy and tragicomedy are of two kinds: the instrumental, which is intrinsic to the work itself, and the architectonic, which is the effect it is intended to have on its audience. For comedy, the instrumental goal is to imitate the actions of ordinary

citizens whose faults are the source of laughter and the architectonic end is to purge melancholy. In tragedy, the instrumental function is the imitation of horrible and pitiable actions. The architectonic goal is to purge, that is purify rather than eliminate, the feelings of terror and compassion in the viewers. Finally, after a long discussion of the manner, means of discrimination and merit of combining elements of the two forms defined by Aristotle, Guarini defines the instrumental ends of the amalgamation of tragedy and comedy:

[T]o imitate with the resources of the stage an action that is feigned and in which are mingled all the tragic and comic parts that can coexist in verisimilitude and decorum, properly arranged in a single dramatic form, with the [architectonic] end of purging with pleasure the sadness of the hearers.⁵¹

The style of tragicomedy is a mixture that finds a level between the grandeur and severity of tragedy and the earthiness of comedy. It is not a heterogeneous combination of bits from one and bits from the other, but a more coherent blending which produces an homogenous third style, comparable to the way that black paint mixed with white produces a third colour, which is grey.

Guarini's defence of his own tragicomedy leads to a definition of the pastoral form. He begins with a discussion of the Golden Age, which was egalitarian with no distinction among its self-governing shepherds. He credits Agostin de' Beccari with inventing the form by taking eclogues, dialogues between shepherds, and arranging them within a single story, divided into acts, with all the qualities required of a theatrical work. The work is identified as a favola, which simply means "play," in order to differentiate it from tragedy or comedy. Guarini labels his own Il pastor fido "a pastoral tragicomedy," intending the latter term as a description of the quality of the drama and the former as a description of the sorts of people with whom the drama dealt. He emphasizes that the form is "a single conception...an action of shepherds, composed of tragic and comic parts mixed together, and not three actions, one of private persons, the second of persons of rank, the third of shepherds; there is one action that at the same time is kingly and private and pastoral."⁵²

Performance space

The history of the Renaissance performance space begins with a misconception. In 1513, ninety-nine years

after Vitruvius's ten books on architecture were "newly rediscovered,"⁵³ the Jocundus edition of the treatise, published in Florence, the first to accompany the Latin text with illustrations, showed both the Greek and the Roman theatre enclosed within rectangular buildings.⁵⁴ Vitruvius had written his treatise sometime before 27 BC⁵⁵ when theatres would all have been open-air structures. Nonetheless, the Italian Renaissance version assumes the structure to be suitable for inside rooms.

A half century after the first publication of Vitruvius, Sebastiano Serlio's Architettura made its appearance. In his book on perspective, published in 1551, he discusses the theatre dealing first with the entire theatrical space, which, at this time would often be a temporary construction.⁵⁶ Serlio models his design on Vitruvius's Greek and Roman configuration with a horseshoe shaped audience facing a stage intended to house settings and some performers. There is an additional performance space on the apron between the audience and the stage, bounded by the semi-circle of seating.⁵⁷ In the first part of Nicola Sabbattini's Manual for Constructing Theatrical Scenes and Machines (Pratica de Fabricar Scene e Machine ne' Teatri), published in 1638, painstaking instructions with regard

to the building of the stage and seating are given. A further insight is offered by the author of Il corago. One of the benefits of contemporary practice, he writes, over that of the ancients, is the speed with which performing spaces may be set up. They can be built "in the time it takes for the Prince to have dinner."⁵⁸

This performance space, however, is about more than Renaissance recreation of a classical model. As Pirrotta points out, it implies a participatory relationship between the audience and the stage. Although the frame sets the "art" apart, spectators were also drawn into it as they were in the case of the trompe l'oeil frescoes painted by Mantegna in the Wedding Chamber of the Palazzo Vecchio in Mantua. Although the representation on the surface of the wall or behind the proscenium arch may be set in a remote time and place, its significance is not remote at all. Its reality reaches out and involves the spectator.⁵⁹ Thus the distinction between mythological dimensions of the stage and the mythologizing of dynastic pretensions in the auditorium is purposefully blurred.

Setting

Slight though Vitruvius's other remarks on theatre are, they became the foundation for Renaissance thinking

with regard not only to performance space but also to setting. In Book V, Chapters Three to Eight, he discusses, in addition to the location and shape of the theatre, the stage with its three entrance doors (the one to the royal palace being in the middle) and the triangular pillars, periaktoi, used by the Greeks to change stage settings. He defines three kinds of scenes: tragic, comic, and satyric. The first represents royal dwellings, the second the houses of ordinary citizens and the third is a rustic setting with "Trees, caves, hills and other rural objects."⁶⁰

Serlio follows Vitruvius's model closely. His description of a satyric scene was ultimately to become the prototype for pastoral and early opera settings. It consists of trees, rocks, hills, mountains, herbs, flowers, fountains and a number of rustic huts. Both painted and three-dimensional components may be utilized, some of which may be found in nature, but since performances generally occurred in the winter, much of the foliage would have to be simulated with silk. These, however, would "receive more praise than the natural objects themselves," according to Serlio. They should be as costly as possible, since this reflects on the magnificence of the duke or prince sponsoring the

performance. He describes an example from the court in Urbino, designed by Girolamo Genga:

In these I witnessed as much liberality in the prince as taste and skill in the architect. Such beauty was there in the setting as I have never seen in any other similar work. Oh immortal God! what wonder it was to see so many trees and fruits, so many herbs and diverse flowers, all made from the finest silk of the most beautiful colors, the cliffs and rocks covered with diverse sea shells, with snails and other animals, with coral branches of many colors, with sea crabs among the rocks, with so great diversity of beautiful things that to write about all of them would take too long...⁶¹

Machines

Above the elaborate pastoral setting was a sky that could house even greater marvels including gathering storms, moving clouds, opening heavens, and descending gods. Both Nicola Sabbattini and the author of Il corago deal in depth with these issues. Both are concerned with several methods for changing scenes as well as flying gods in and out and creating other magical effects.

First of all, there is the matter of the front curtain. Il corago offers five methods for its removal. It may be pulled apart like a bed curtain, pulled to one side like a picture curtain, let fall to the floor, although this may create a small dust storm on stage, or it may be raised in a single piece. Preferable to all of these is the fifth alternative, which is to raise it with ropes that have been strung through rings placed along its edge in such a way that when it comes into place above the stage it forms an ornamental festoon and it can do so quickly.⁶²

In Chapters Four to Ten of Book Two, Sabbattini describes three different methods for changing scenes as well as how to increase or decrease the stage space when the scenes disappear or are changed, and, finally, how to destroy the whole scene altogether. In the first method of changing scenes, a cloth painted with the new scene is drawn over the frames that are painted with the previous scene. In the second method, completely new frames are slid along soaped grooves until they cover the previous setting. This will work for all but the foremost frames, since the new frames are hidden behind those in front and with the foremost frames this cannot be accomplished. Therefore, the front houses must be covered by the first

method. The third method, which Sabbattini prefers to the other two, is to utilize triangular prisms or periaktoi. Each of the three sides may be painted with a different scene and when operated by "trustworthy men," can create a marvellous transformation of the set when they turn simultaneously.⁶³ A further benefit to periaktoi mentioned in Il corago is the fact that by replacing the unseen panel during the performance, they can be used to create an "infinite number of changes."⁶⁴ In order to decrease or increase the stage space, one simply drills two more holes in the stage floor so that the periaktoi may be moved and their pivots set in new holes either closer to the centre of the stage or farther from it. Then they are revolved and the new setting appears defining a larger or smaller area. A scene that is to be destroyed is fabricated in pieces to begin with. These are hinged together and held in place by bars that can be removed "at one instant," causing the set to seem to fall to pieces. A cord attached to each piece can be drawn in order to put the scene back together as magically and instantly as it fell apart.⁶⁵

The librettos of both Rinuccini's Euridice and Striggio's Orfeo call for the transformation of the stage from a pastoral landscape to the Inferno. Sabbattini

offers two methods for achieving this effect. In the first, an inner stage is revealed, at the front and back of which fires are set. Dancers may move safely in the corridor between the fires, but will seem to be moving and writhing in the flames themselves. In the second method of showing a hell, a large trap door is opened in the middle of the stage. At each corner, there is a man with a torch loaded with "Greek resin." The torches are thrust upward so that they seem to throw flames onto the stage as performers enter and leave the Hell-Mouth.⁶⁶ The author of Il corago introduces Pluto and Proserpina either from midair or from beneath the stage via an undescribed machine the illustration for which is lost.⁶⁷

Elena Povoleda discusses an alternative means of having the Inferno appear.⁶⁸ Designed by Leonardo da Vinci in the final decade of the fifteenth century, Kate Trauman Steinitz describes a reconstruction of it in her article "A Reconstruction of Leonardo da Vinci's Revolving Stage."⁶⁹ Dating to the closing decades of the fifteenth century, the design shows a mountain that split in half to reveal an underworld. The top and sides could easily have formed the backdrop for the pastoral first and second act and the opening of the mountain would have been a marvel to behold.

Sabbattini devotes no less than fourteen chapters of Book Two of The Manual for Constructing Scenes and Machines to the heavens, how to make them cloud over, change colour, have rainbows appear, or gods descend. Most of the devices are simple enough, requiring the heavens to be constructed in sections that may be drawn back and forth. Surprisingly, many of the machines designed to move gods from the heavens to the stage floor are not attached above the stage as in the familiar illustration of Francesco Guitti's "Device for fifty-four persons," which appears in numerous books on the subject, including Pirrotta's Music and Theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi,⁷⁰ but rather, are attached to the back wall,⁷¹ which means that very little overhead space would actually have been required to fly performers in, even less if they were willing to crouch down on their cloud shape carriages as they awaited their entrance.

Both Sabbattini and the author of Il corago describe numerous methods for creating the illusion of a body of water on stage. These will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter Two with regard to the production of Il rapimento di Cefalo.

Costumes

As with settings, the costliness of costumes reflected the magnificence of the court that was producing the event. Thus the author of Il corago states that, although shepherds represent rustic types, they ought to be richly dressed with elaborately ornamented sleeves and trousers.⁷² On their upper torsos they should wear animal skins decorated with gold and silk roses. They should be decked in jewels and capes (il roccietto) of heavy gold material. Their hats should be of various shapes and embellished with feathers, small birds or jewels and everyone must wear rich wigs, "because this beautifies the way the singers look and gives them greater majesty."⁷³ Nymphs should also be richly dressed with heads superbly adorned and to bring much grace to their shoulders, they should have a veil of gold or other light material. Above all, they must wear magnificent boots (borzachini).

The chorus too must be richly apparelled, though not more so than the principal figures. They should wear wigs and be dressed uniformly in various colours that go together well and, because the entertainment is produced to reflect honour upon a particular prince or person, it would also be considered appropriate to have the chorus

dress in the colours of the coats of arms of the house, such as, for example, red and white which are the colours of Austria or yellow and deep blue of the House of Farnese. Those who dance should be dressed in a manner that does not restrict their movement or impede them and their legs should be uncovered. In addition, they should not wear boots like those of the nymphs, but rather simple shoes and socks.⁷⁴

There are three principles for good costuming: fit, finishing touches and the way that the colours go together. Costumes may be more colourful than the clothing worn for daily life. Above all, they should sparkle with false jewels and silk flowers.⁷⁵

In all of this, the author of Il corago reinforces what had been written by Serlio eighty years before when he described "the superb costumes of shepherds made of rich cloth of gold and silk, furred with the finest skins of wild animals" and of the fishermen who were just as richly attired and worked with gold nets and gilded tackle.⁷⁶ Leone de' Sommi also, in his Dialogues on Stage Affairs, probably published around 1565, recommended that costumes be as magnificent as possible. Even servants should be well dressed, as long as their masters are more elegantly attired. As opposed to the author of Il

corago, Leone de' Sommi, uses the colour of costumes to help differentiate characters. For pastoral plays, the arms and legs of the performers are covered with flesh coloured cloth, unless the actors are attractive, in which case their limbs may be bare. All should wear something on their feet, whether socks or "cothurnus," the thick-soled boots believed to have been worn by the performers of ancient Greece. They wear sleeveless shirts under their animal skins, and carry a bowl at their waists or a pouch at their shoulders. They should all carry a polished stick as well. Nymphs are dressed in embroidered slips over which a "sumptuous mantle" is worn. They carry spears or bows and arrows or both. Shepherdesses wear the same embroidered dresses, but no cloak, and carry only a crook.⁷⁷ Therefore, it is clear that no matter how realistic the approach was to costuming, the over-riding concern was the political objective of reflecting the magnificence of the court.

Lighting

The task of lighting the stage presented the designer with numerous problems. Nicola Sabbattini discusses the relative merits of candles or oil and the shape of the lamps in which these may be burned. He and

Leone de' Sommi both consider lighting locations on the stage and in the hall. De' Sommi discusses how to rid the stage of unwanted candle smoke and both he and Serlio describe the way to achieve coloured lighting.

The benefit of oil lamps is that they are less expensive than candles and, when hung over the auditorium, will not drip wax on the spectators. Unless they are filled with the best oil, however, they smell badly and do not create the splendour of wax candles. Candles, on the other hand, if they are stout and wide are not likely to droop over, as they become soft, and drip wax on the audience below. Moreover, if the container in which they are burning is designed to have a wide bowl beneath the candle, dangers are further avoided. A large number of lamps are required near and over the stage, but Sabbattini does not recommend placing them on the floor of the stage front just behind the parapet. Though they illuminate the costumes well from this location, they create a shadowy effect and make the faces of the performers "seem so pale and wan that they look as if they had just had a bad fever." Moreover, their wicks give off so much smoke that it seems to the spectators that they are looking at the stage through a wall of mist.⁷⁸

Both Sabbattini and de' Sommi agree that more lamps should be placed on, above and near the stage than in the auditorium. Sabbattini states clearly that few or "none at all" should be placed from the middle to the back of the hall.⁷⁹ De' Sommi, on the other hand, places his few lights at the back of the hall, so that their "interposition" between the spectators and the stage would not be dazzling to the eyes. Both theorists explain their reasons the same way. "A man in the shade sees much more distinctly an object illuminated from afar."⁸⁰

According to de' Sommi, the numerous lights on the stage serve a purpose beyond merely illuminating the setting. Citing the custom of lighting bonfires and torches in the street as a sign of joy, he claims the lights are put on stage to suggest a festive mood insisting that gay illumination is not out of place even in a tragedy since "there are tragedies with happy endings."⁸¹ Both he and Serlio suggest putting shiny metal reflectors behind the lights to increase their effect. To de' Sommi, reflected light from a hidden source has the extra benefit of providing illumination without smoke.⁸²

In addition, de' Sommi put coloured glass in front of the lights to prevent eye irritation that he felt resulted from looking directly into a bright light.⁸³ Serlio, on the other hand, spent a good part of his short section on theatre describing how to achieve lights with translucent colour, though he noted "None of these lights have anything to do with the illumination of the scene."⁸⁴ Therefore, they must have been strictly for decorative purposes and, like the rich costuming of rustic shepherds, the jewel-like effects (and gemstones are frequently mentioned in descriptions of coloured lights)⁸⁵ also must have been intended to reflect upon the brilliant wealth and taste of the court.

Staging Practices

One of Leone de' Sommi's fundamental principles was that it was more important to find good actors than a good play, since a mediocre play could be improved through fine performances, while an excellent play could be made execrable through poor ones. Given skilled performers, a play should be cast according to physical suitability for a part, that is, "a lover must be handsome, a soldier stoutly built, a parasite fat, a servant nimble, and so on."⁸⁶ The author of Il corago

considers a casting problem specific to opera. Connoisseurs of music prefer good singers even if they are weak actors, whereas the general audience expresses an opposite opinion. His conclusion is not very decisive. The musical director will try to get the best out of everyone. His only advice is that excellent but weak singers should be set in clouds or machines "where there is little call for movement or the striking of histrionic poses."⁸⁷

In terms of staging, that is, the larger aspects of movement around the stage space, Il corago provides the most comprehensive discussion. In Chapter XV, on the manner of acting in music, it is stated that generally, since music moves more slowly than spoken text, gestures should be executed at a slower pace. The singer should punctuate his singing for the sense of the words, even if the music is written to be continuous. He may have to rehearse this with the musicians in advance. Performers should not walk while singing, unless the music is intended to reflect a particular action such as assault or flight. The singing might be broken up by walking, but in this case, the musicians may either play a suitable ritornello, gracefully arpeggiate on the same note or improvise. Apropos of moving, the singer should

endeavour to occupy other parts of the stage besides the centre.⁸⁸

The singer should not enter the stage singing, unless he or she is in flight or is required to enter while expressing passionate cries. When entering, turning or leaving the stage, the performer must take pains to avoid having his back to the audience any longer than is absolutely necessary and, when engaged in dialogue with another character, the performers must not face each other directly, but rather ensure that their words are being projected toward the audience.⁸⁹

Choruses, numbering not less than twelve and not more than twenty-four (unless the stage is very large) should not always enter and exit the stage from the same locations, but should have some variety. They should come onto the stage through entrances close to the spectators, because then they will be easy to arrange so that on-stage characters can both face the audience and talk to the chorus without the chorus having to move. Care should be taken to make gestures simultaneous. The delight of a chorus is to be found in the figures and interlacings that they perform. These may be done quickly or slowly, according to the affect of that which they are

singing. But, like actors, the chorus should have its face toward the audience as much as possible.⁹⁰

Acting and Gesture

It seems that Hamlet's advice to the Players reflects the prevailing wisdom with respect to acting and gesture as much in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy as in Elizabethan England, "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature."⁹¹ While the author of Il corago makes specific reference to Cicero and Quintilian when dealing with what he refers to as "simple acting,"⁹² Leone de' Sommi states that other than instructing his actors to speak slowly and deliberately without dropping final syllables, he cannot lay down any precise rules. As long as "the performer has a good accent, good voice, and suitable presence, whether natural or achieved by art, it will be his object to vary his gestures according to the variety of moods and to imitate not only the character he represents but also the state in which that character is supposed to be at the moment."⁹³

Both Cicero (106-43 BC) and Quintilian (39-95 AD) wrote about the art of oratory. Though they made

frequent distinctions between oratory and acting, they also drew parallels between the two arts that led to their being used as authorities on acting training.⁹⁴ The former writer stated that in order to be truly persuasive, the orator had to feel the emotion that he was attempting to solicit from his hearers. He had to have physical grace learned from "the exercises of the palaestra, and dancing"⁹⁵ and he should always be moderate in imitation. Exaggeration is farcical and should be avoided. "Nothing can please which is unbecoming," Quintilian stated⁹⁶ in agreement with Cicero who adds, "Let our orator be graceful and delightful...let him have a severe and solid grace."⁹⁷

The necessity for decorum can be traced to Horace (65-8 BC) who had stressed it, in his Ars poetica. He advised young poets that characters should behave in a manner appropriate to their age and station.⁹⁸ Furthermore, he distinguished between actions that should be shown on stage and those which should not be shown but rather, should be reported.⁹⁹

Cicero declared that every emotion of the mind has its own particular look, tone, and gesture.¹⁰⁰ The Renaissance awareness and investigation of this principle is evidenced by Giovanni Bonifaccio's treatise L'arte de

cenni con la quale formandosi favella visibile si tratta della muta eloquenza, che non e' altro che un facondo

silentio, published in Vicenza in 1616. While this is not a theatrical or acting textbook, its existence indicates the degree to which the Renaissance mind was concerned with explicating empirical phenomena.

Bonifaccio was a lawyer and judge who had become convinced that the expression of silent gesture was more eloquent and truthful than words.¹⁰¹ What he offers is an exhaustive, highly detailed inventory of the signification of the position and movement of parts of the body. It seems almost without doubt that this awareness would have been as acute in the theatre as in the court room, particularly after Cicero's statement and Quintilian's directive that every physical action be not only graceful and energetic but also appropriate.¹⁰²

In a general sense, Leone de' Sommi followed the precepts of the Roman orators, recommending that an actor should have a natural disposition for the work of finding "movement and gestures of an appropriate kind to make his part seem real" and that actors should be vivacious and lively. He did not agree with Cicero with regard to the idea that an orator ought to feel the emotion he was imparting. To have one's eyes fill with tears or hair

stand on end could not be "displayed very well on stage," according to de' Sommi, nor could they be "learned if they do not come by nature." Alternately, he believes that an actor should seek to perform a variety of gestures representing the variety of his character's moods. Moreover, an actor should not stay in the same position for too long, even if it is a characteristic pose for the type he is playing.¹⁰³ "Corporeal eloquence," he states, "is of tremendous importance" and, although he agrees with the Roman orators that all parts of the body should move with dignity,¹⁰⁴ he would not go so far as Quintilian in restricting the placement of the hand to the area of the front of the body between the breast and the eye.¹⁰⁵ De' Sommi applies no strict rules, but recommends that when an appropriate gesture cannot be found or has been held long enough, the arms and hands should return to a natural position, hanging loosely by the body.¹⁰⁶

The author of Il corago discusses acting in musical theatre specifically. He calls for broad, slow gestures that, like those in simple acting, must be appropriate to the emotions being sung. In the case of performing gods or goddesses, whether celestial, marine or infernal, it may be necessary to gesticulate a little more

frequently.¹⁰⁷ Choruses must follow the same precepts and should attempt to move together synchronously.¹⁰⁸

With regard to the question of sex and gender, both men and women were cast in female roles in early opera. An attempt at verisimilitude would have been restricted to the use of boys with high voices or castrati. The convention of the intermedi, which early opera drew upon, was to clothe female characters in cardboard (or papier-mâché) breasts and masks, but as James Saslow suggests in his study of the 1589 intermedi, these functioned more as semiotic signifiers than "trompe l'oeil expedients."¹⁰⁹ The characters must be understood as somewhat abstract. Every part of their costuming contained hidden meanings which educated members of the audience took pleasure in decoding.¹¹⁰ Therefore, it did not matter if the mask of a female face did not completely hide the beard of a male performer. The audience accepted his mask, breasts and dress as signs that this was a female and proceeded to interpret them along with their attributes as part of a system representing mythological figures with symbolic implications.

That being said, it cannot be emphasized enough that documents of the time indicate that the performance style was as unaffected as possible. Characters and chorus

members stood and moved naturally. Even when walking in time to music, they were instructed not to appear to be dancing.¹¹¹ Appropriate gestures were performed when called for but they were not sustained in an unnatural fashion. They were not to pose. Judging by Leone de' Sommi's comments, to emphasize the abstract nature of their characters through what we, in the twentieth-century, would term "stylized" movement and gesture would have been considered redundant and in poor taste.

Court Performances at the Turn of the Seventeenth-Century

Thus it is possible to put together a general picture of the performance of court opera at the turn of the seventeenth century. Court opera shared with its five-act predecessor, the pastoral form, rustic setting, hybrid combination of elements from tragedy and comedy, and non-literal, metaphorical relationship between representation and reality. The spectacular musical intermedi that were interspersed between the acts of the pastoral form are totally integrated with the narrative of early opera.

The ideal performance space would look like much like the Jacques Caillot engraving of the Uffizi Theatre in 1616. Whether permanent or temporary it would consist

of a U-shaped auditorium with tiers of seats along the sides and back. There would be playing space in front of a stage framed by a proscenium arch behind which perspective scenery was arranged and apparatus for special effects hidden until its marvels were revealed. The elaborate pastoral setting full of artificial foliage made of silk and twinkling with coloured lights would seem more like a bejewelled replica of an imaginary country symbolic of the magnificence of the court and the ideality of its rule than genuinely representative of a real time or place. The stage area would be more illuminated than the hall and smoke would be vented through holes cut in the roof. On a symbolic level, the stage space served to identify the world in the auditorium with the mythological world of the opera.

Also representing the magnificence of the court, the costumes of the performers playing shepherds, nymphs and gods would all be similarly elaborate and costly. The performers themselves were expected to move with grace and appropriateness of gesture, the chorus synchronously, creating figures and pleasing "interlacings". The ultimate purpose was to modify naturalness with art and design, to externalize inner life to an imaginary place and time that emphasized an ideal reconciliation between

body and spirit, desire and responsibility, imagination and reality and which in turn reflected on the ideality of the current rule.

Music

The emergence of court opera must be seen as a product of the combination of developments in both theatre and music. The former had been evolving toward a metaphorical, non-literal form in the bygone pastoral landscape of which magical mixtures of gods and mortals, nobility and commoners spoke, sang and danced as if to behave in this manner was the most natural thing in the world. All that was required in order to turn this composite into the synthesis that was to come to be known as opera was for the musical element to be completely integrated into the narrative function. But for music to be put to this task, certain fundamental principles had to be established or transformed. These included making the words of the text master or mistress of the melody and adapting the rules governing dissonance and consonance so that the composer could make the music as expressive of the affect of the text as possible. Foundation elements of opera developed at this time included the definition and creation of monody and the

use of figured bass and its accommodation to the uses of basso continuo or thorough bass. Finally, though expressive solo singing had long been appreciated, it was through the writing and experiments of theoreticians that it could be focussed toward the narrative demands of court opera.

The manner in which music evolved slowly, and not necessarily purposefully, toward supporting the narrative function essential to opera is indicated by the number and diversity of demands for a simplification of polyphony. The Council of Trent called for simpler, clearer songs of worship. The loose association of Florentine gentlemen scholars, known as the Camerata, which met in the home of Giovanni de Bardi (1534-1612) perhaps as early as the fifteen-sixties, and most certainly during the 1580s,¹¹² described polyphony as antithetical to the power of ancient sung tragedy. Finally, when his madrigals were attacked, Claudio Monteverdi claimed that making the poetry mistress of the text justified expressive new practices in relation to harmony and dissonance.

In 1577, Pope Gregory XIII presented his "Brief on the Reform of the Chant" to Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Annibale Zoilo, charging them to edit the

"barbarisms, obscurities, contrarities, and superfluties," resulting from the "clumsiness or negligence or even wickedness of the composers, scribes, and printers...that through their agency God's name may be reverently, distinctly, and devoutly praised."¹¹³

In 1581, in a treatise entitled Dialogo della musica antica e della moderna, Vincenzo Galilei complained:

Consider each rule of the modern contrapuntists by itself, or if you wish, consider them all together. They aim at nothing but the delight of the ear, if it can truly be called delight. They have not a book among them for their use and convenience that speaks of how to express the conceptions of the mind and of how to impress them with the greatest possible effectiveness on the minds of the listeners; of this they do not think and have never thought since the invention of this kind of music.¹¹⁴

Claude Palisca referred to Galilei's treatise as "the central manifesto of the Camerata movement."¹¹⁵ Another member of Bardi's circle, the composer and singer Giulio Caccini (1550-1618) put it this way in the 1602 foreword to his collection of arias and madrigals, Le nuove musiche:

...the old way of composition whose music, not suffering the words to be understood by the hearers, ruins the conceit and the verse, now lengthening and now shortening the syllables to match the descant, a laceration of the poetry, but to hold fast to the manner so much praised by Plato and other philosophers, who declare that music is nothing other than the fable and last, and not the contrary, the rhythm and the sound, in order to penetrate the perception of others and to produce those marvellous effects, admired by the writers, which cannot be produced by descant in modern musical compositions, especially in singing a solo above a stringed instrument, not a word of it being understood for the multitude of divisions made upon long and short syllables and in every sort of music, though by the vulgar such singers were cried up for famous.

It being plain, then, as I say, that such music and musicians gave no other delight than what harmony could give the ear, for, unless the words were understood, they could not move the understanding...¹¹⁶

Five years later, in his expansion on his brother's brief statements in the foreword to Il quinto libro de' madrigali, Giulio Cesare Monteverdi, emphasized that madrigals whose harmony obeyed their words, "would indeed be left bodies without soul if they were left without this most important and principal part of music."¹¹⁷

That the words should be merely comprehensible was not the most contentious element of this principle. Rather, it was that the rules of dissonance be freed up in order for the music to be more fully expressive not of the meaning of the individual words in isolation, but of the passions being expressed by words together. Galilei, for example, denigrates the practice of quickly declaiming words meaning "to fly" or "to flee," vocally imitating an ox when singing about an ox, imitating descent with a descending scale or ascent in the opposite manner. Such effects have no less frivolous purpose than to delight, whereas the power of ancient music was found in its ability to induce a passion in the listener.¹¹⁸

Accepted conventions held beauty of sound to be a paramount value and allowed dissonance to occur on strong beats, through a prepared suspension or as passing notes, usually on a weak beat, or as certain forms of auxiliary notes. This had been the practice of such composers as

Adrian Willaert (1490-1562) and Palestrina (c.1525-1594) and had resulted in music with smooth harmony and the kind of rich consonance that was now being denigrated.¹¹⁹

Nevertheless, to say that rules were being relaxed does not imply that freedom resulted. Claudio Monteverdi repeatedly promised to publish a systematization of his rules for composition which were to be known as Seconda Pratica; ovvero, Perfezioni della Moderna Musica. He called it "second practice" since he intended it not to supplant the "first practice" defined by Gioseffo Zarlino (1517-1590), but rather to represent a next step that would co-exist with the "first practice" and to show as well that he did not compose his works "at haphazard," but according to a method, however modern, built upon "the foundation of truth."¹²⁰ In the case of continuo madrigals, the daring and disturbing chords that Monteverdi introduced were placed over a sustained bass note, thus enabling him to create music that remained coherent despite its harmonic tensions.¹²¹

Basso continuo is the means whereby these ideas may be realized. In this style, the central voices of polyphonic singing were replaced by an improvised instrumentation between a vocal line on top and a bass line beneath intended to serve as a foundation. The

instrumental harmony was notated by a shorthand method. Numbers and signs above the bass line indicated to the players of keyboard instruments, harps or lutes which chords to include in their improvised accompaniment. For example, an 11 over a D would have called for the G an octave and a fourth above to be played. A sharp placed over the bass note meant that the composer wanted a major third or tenth to be played when the key contained a minor one. A flat indicated the reverse.¹²² The development of this practice went hand-in-hand with the growing emphasis on a single voice above a supporting accompaniment and obviously such singing allowed the words to be much more clearly understood than they could have been when sung by four voices mingling differing melodies and rhythms.

Monody, the alternative to polyphony, was championed by the members of Bardi's Camerata but its use was far from restricted to the new re-invention of Greek tragedy they were imagining. Solo song reached a far greater public than operas and in the early seventeenth century were published "not by the dozen, but by the gross."¹²³

The expressivity of solo song had long been remarked upon. As early as 1475, Poliziano described the singing of the eleven-year-old Fabio Orsini:

No sooner were we seated at the table than [Fabio] was ordered to sing, together with some other experts, certain of those songs which are put into writing with those little signs of music...and immediately he filled our ears, or rather our hearts, with a voice so sweet that (I do not know about the others) as for myself, I was almost transported out of my senses, and was touched beyond doubt by the unspoken feeling of altogether divine pleasure. He then performed an heroic song which he had himself recently composed in praise of our own Piero dei Medici...His voice was not entirely that of someone reading, nor entirely that of someone singing; both could be heard, and yet neither separated one from the other; it was, in any case, even or modulated, and changed as required by the passage. Now it was varied, now sustained, now exalted and now restrained, now calm and now vehement, now slowing down and now quickening its pace, but always it was precise, always clear and always pleasant; and his gestures were not indifferent or sluggish, but not posturing or affected either. You

might have thought that an adolescent Roscius was acting on the stage.¹²⁴

Poliziano's description presages by a hundred years the monody which Caccini and Peri elucidated in the dedication and foreword to their respective publications of Euridice, something more than spoken but "falling so far below the melody of song as to take an intermediate form."¹²⁵

In his "Discorso sopra la musica," Vincenzo Giustiniani described a performance he witnessed in 1570 of the Ferrara court's concerto delle donne: Tarquina Molza, Lucrezia Bendidio, and Laura Peperara. These were not amateurs singing for their own amusement, but professionals who rehearsed and performed before an audience. According to Giustiniani, their virtuosic style prompted such composers as Giaches de Wert to "advance in the style of composition for several voices." His description of the manner in which they were able to express the emotional dimension of the text emphasizes variety of tones and rhythms:

Furthermore, they moderated or increased their voices, loud or soft, heavy or light, according to the demands of the piece they were singing, now slow, breaking off sometimes with a gentle

sigh, now singing long passages legato or detached, now groups, now leaps, now with long trills, now with short, or again with sweet running passages sung softly, to which one sometimes heard an echo answer unexpectedly. They accompanied the music and the sentiment with appropriate facial expressions, glances and gestures, with no awkward movements of the mouth or hands or body which might not express the feeling of the song. They made the words clear in such a way that one could hear even the last syllable of every word, which was never interrupted or suppressed by passages and other embellishments. They used many other particular devices which will be known to persons more experienced than I...¹²⁶

Though neither expressive solo singing nor theatrical chant, in the sacra rappresentazione, for example, could be considered a new thing at the end of the sixteenth century, the writings and experiments of the Florentine Camerata helped to focus the narrative uses of these sorts of music. The ideas of Bardi's circle were reinforced by demands for the simplification of polyphonic singing and the development of figured bass

and basso continuo. Finally, it is in Giulio Cesare Monteverdi's articulation of the new expressive practices as "the soul" to music's "body" that its place in the attempts of theatrical poetry to reconcile these two elements becomes evident.

Theatrical Dance

Though the consensus among dance historians is that theatrical dance was simply an extension of social dancing, this explanation seems too narrow excluding, as it does, forms of choreographed movement that may occupy a borderline position between the orderliness of dance and the narrative expressivity of pantomime. Allardyce Nicoll notes in his translation of selections from the Second Book of Architecture that Serlio, "like some other Renaissance writers," uses the term "morris dance" (moresca) to mean any kind of theatrical dancing.¹²⁷ Barbara Sparti concurs, in her introduction to Guglielmo Ebreo of Pesaro's De Pratica seu Arte Tripudii (On the Practice or Art of Dancing), written in the mid-fifteenth-century.¹²⁸ She describes "moresche" as any "theatre-dance" pieces performed for an audience and goes so far as to say that the term was sometimes used as a synonym for "intermezzi." The performers, who might be

"squires," courtiers, ballerini or dancing masters, wore costumes, including "headgear," and masks. Scenery was utilized as well as special effects, in particular, fire. The dancers performed allegorical, heroic, exotic or pastoral scenes.¹²⁹

Pirrota quotes a letter written by Giano Pencaro to Isabella d'Este in 1499 describing intermedi performed in the court of Ferrara during carnival:

In the first tramezo [of the first performance of Eunuco] there appeared a group of ten peasants, who, in six exercises, reaped the harvest of their well-cultivated land; inasmuch as, having first entered leaping onto the stage in the fashion of a moresca, they began with their tools to hoe the ground; and, always, every act, movement and measure kept to the tempo and the proportion of the playing, so that several men all seemed to be moved by a single spirit, according to the tempo of the musician. Having thus entered and cultivated the ground, they sowed it with golden seeds, still keeping the measure and tempo I have mentioned above, so that every footstep, every motion of their hands, or turn of their heads

was always in time to the sound. When the grain they had sown had grown, they proceeded to mow it in the same mode and measure, so that one swing of a sickle, one gathering of hay, one tying of a bundle, were all [one] tempo and [one] measure. Thereafter with the above said tempi they threshed it, shovelled it with shovels, and, having stored it in their bags, they prepared as a final entertainment a fine banquet, with singing, acting and dancing; and then, amidst merriment and music, they gave place to the second act. In the second tramezo there came twelve people led by a clown, all dressed in fine clothes of silk, with hose of nine stripes, golden bells and shining ornaments; and these, after a chiaranzana was played, danced a vigorous and most beautiful moresca (una moresca gagliarda et bellissima).¹³⁰

Pirrota points out that the fact that the movements were stylized and performed in time to the music justifies the use of the term moresca to mean a representational dance in which performers took on the roles of exotic, bizarre or comic characters.¹³¹

On the other hand, manuals for social dance written by dance masters offer a rich, if sometimes ambiguous resource. The first of these was written about 1450 by Domenico da Piacenza and entitled De la arte di ballare et danzare. It exists today in manuscript form in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. There is some question, however, with regard to who actually wrote the treatise since it refers to Domenico da Piacenza in the third person and evidences the sort of errors that suggest it was taken down by a scribe working from dictation.¹³²

Dance manuals come from Antonio Cornazano (1429 - c.1500) and Guglielmo Ebreo da Pasaro (1440 - 1481?)¹³³ both disciples of Domenico. Other Renaissance dance masters who committed their instruction to paper include Fabritio Caroso, Cesare Negri, Thoinot Arbeau, John Playford and Baltassar de Beaujoyeulx.

Despite the fact that theatrical dance was supposedly an extension of social dancing, those noted for its creation comprise, on the whole, a different list, including Emilio de Cavalieri, Leone de' Sommi, and Isaachino Hebreo. Beaujoyeulx was noted for his theatrical choreography and Negri includes four pieces designed for use in intermedi in his manual Gratie d'amore. What can be gained from the dance manuals

themselves is some idea of the general stance of the dancer, steps and some basic combinations.

The attitude to dance, as to other arts in this period, reflects a conflict between the need to define a higher purpose for the form and acknowledgment of its sensual dimensions. According to Guglielmo:

The art of dancing is, for generous hearts that love it, and for gentle spirits that have a heaven-sent inclination for it rather than an accidental disposition, a most amicable (amicissima) matter, entirely different from the vicious and artless people who frequently with corrupt spirits and depraved minds, turn it from a liberal art and virtuous science, into a vile and adulterous affair, and who more often in their dishonest concupiscence under the guise of modesty, make dance a procuress, through whom they are able to arrive stealthily at the satisfaction of their desires.¹³⁴

Sir John Davies' poem Orchestra, a Poem of Dancing (1594), argues that dancing came about when the basic elements of the world, earth, air, fire and water, left off their conflict and, persuaded by Love, "nature's mighty king," joined in a dance that continues to be

represented through social dancing.¹³⁵ Julia Sutton extends the analogy to the Neo-platonic conceit that dance reflected the harmonious movements of celestial bodies.¹³⁶

Guglielmo defined six primary requisites for the dancer:

- 1) Misura
- 2) Memoria
- 3) Partire del Terreno
- 4) Aiere
- 5) Maniere
- 6) Movimento corporeo.¹³⁷

Cornazano also defines six requisites, four of which seem to match Guglielmo's. However, rather than "Partire del terreno," Cornazano describes "Compartimento di terreno" and instead of "Movimento corporeo," he lists "Diversità a di cose."¹³⁸

Misura refers to the dancer's ability to keep time, his or her musical sense of rhythm and proportion. Aiere is Guglielmo's term for dexterity and lightness, a swaying and upward movement of the body and a corresponding settling down. "Partire del terreno," Cornazano's "Compartimento di terreno" refers to the dancer's ability to estimate and apportion space required

for his or her movements in terms of the limitations of the room. Memoria is obviously the ability to remember the correct sequence of steps and movements.

Guglielmo's definition of the term "maniera" has to do with the co-ordination of the movement of the body to the movement of the feet. For example, he notes, "When one performs a single or a double step he should turn his body, so long as the movement lasts, toward the same side as the foot which performs the step, and the act should be adorned and shaded with the movement called maniera..."¹³⁹ Cornazano's definition of maniera seems to be more like Guglielmo's rendering of aiere. For Cornazano, it has to do with "balancing and undulating" the body as you move your feet. He combines turning in the direction of the foot taking the step with a gentle raising and lowering of the body. For Cornazano, aere on its own is just the grace of movement that will render the dancer pleasing in the eyes of the bystanders.¹⁴⁰ This, in turn, matches Guglielmo's definition of movimento corporeo.

The steps themselves were small and graceful. Again and again, in his descriptions of them, Fabritio Caroso uses "fingerbreadths" as a measure. In his 1602 manual, Nobiltà di Dame, he lists basic steps, such as half,

single, double, steps to the side, and falling steps, as well as short sequences and complete choreographies for social dances.

A few examples of steps and sequences as defined by Fabritio Caroso will begin to create a picture of the quality of sixteenth-century dance movement. Caroso begins his list in Nobiltà di Dame with the "reverence" which is a slight bow accomplished by bending the knees with the left leg drawn back. A "contenance" is a side step. The left foot moves only four to five fingerbreadths away from the right. After five beats, the right joins it, with a swagger achieved by "strutting" slightly to the left, that is, raising the heels a little and then dropping them again. A "flourish" is a little thrust of the left foot. It is first raised and moved slightly forward of the right and then, with an upward movement of the body, the left foot is replaced behind the right heel and then shifted along the floor to the arch of the right foot.¹⁴¹

A "semigrave stopped step," is performed in three beats. First the dancer struts the hip to the left, stepping forward and to the side with the left foot. Again, not much distance is to be covered. The heel does not pass far from the right toe and the two feet are

separated by a mere four to five fingerbreadths. The dancer pauses "as if taking a breath" and then, with a slight swagger, joins the right to the left. A "semibreve" natural step is a walking step in one beat.¹⁴² A "[semi] breve falling jump" is a move to the side with a small jump. That is, in moving toward the left, the moment the dancer puts his left foot down, he raises the right and brings it to two fingerbreadths from the left while lowering the left hip and raising the right with a slight swagger.¹⁴³ Somewhat related to this is the "limping hop," in which the dancer keeps one foot raised and slightly forward while hopping on the other foot, much like someone who is taking tiny limping steps. A "foot under" is frequently mentioned as part of a sequence. The dancer takes a step or "falling jump" to the left with the left foot. Upon landing, he moves his right foot behind the left placing the toe beneath the left heel, which is raised.¹⁴⁴ "Turns on the ground" were achieved by thrusting the left foot forward about six inches, joining it with the right and turning rapidly to the left, keeping only the ball of the left foot on the ground. "The shakes" could be employed during any step and consisted of raising a foot, normally the left one first, and shaking it rapidly from side to side.¹⁴⁵

Jumping steps went from tiny "minced" jumps to "little bounds" to "capers" [capriole] in which the feet changed places during the jump. To perform a "cross caper" the dancer jumps, crosses the left foot over the right and then the right over the left and finally lands lightly. A "triple caper" repeats the process three times, a "quadruple caper" four times and so on. In a "broken caper in the air" the left foot is raised and dropped, the right is raised and dropped while being drawn back and thrust forward quickly. The sequence is completed with a quadruple or quintuple caper.¹⁴⁶

There are three kinds of jumps. For a "turning jump," the dancer leaps upward and turns two complete rotations before landing. The dancer must land gracefully on his or her toes, separating the knees a little and keeping the legs straight. To perform a "reversed jump" the dancer hops once with the right foot on the ground and the left foot raised backward. The left foot then slides beneath the heel of the right, which is simultaneously raised and moved forward. The dancer then turns his or her entire body to the right with a turning jump, landing, once again, gracefully on the toes. Most dramatic was "jump to the tassel." The dancer began in a standing position. Next to him, a

tassel was held at the height of a man. While the dancer jumped, he crossed his right leg over his left in order to touch the tassel with his right toe.¹⁴⁷

There are numerous sorts of sequences. A "pulled sequence" is performed to two beats of music. The left foot is raised and lowered. The right foot is raised and moved forward. The left is raised and moved forward. The right foot is raised and lowered on the spot.¹⁴⁸ A "scurrying sequence" consists of ten quickly executed tiny steps during which the dancer remains on his or her toes.¹⁴⁹ The "changing" or "exchanging step" begins with feet together. The left foot is thrust ahead of the right so that its heel is in a straight line, half a hand's breadth ahead of the right toe. The foot is kept flat on the ground and legs are straight. The right foot moves up to the left. The left is raised three fingerbreadths from the ground and thrust three fingerbreadths ahead of the right toe and then is brought back to join the right foot. All is performed gracefully with the dancer bending and separating the knees slightly.¹⁵⁰

"Wide held steps" move gracefully to the side and backwards, with the knees slightly bent and "quick little steps" are taken on the toes, with the knees straight,

travelling forward. Both of these are used in the galliard.¹⁵¹ Pirrotta defines the term gagliardo as "vigorous" and he mentions it in association with the term brando which he characterizes as the most frequently used term to describe theatrical dance but rarely mentioned in reference to social dance. The other adjective used to describe the brando was allegro or lively. Pirrotta interprets this to mean that theatrical dancing was characterized by "nimbleness of foot and double stamping" which was not considered appropriate for undisguised courtiers in public, social dance.¹⁵²

In Rule XXXV, Caroso describes "The Five Steps of the Galliard." First of all, he writes, there are only two. In the first step, the dancer hops on the ground with the right foot while lifting the left forward and bringing it down. In the second step, the right foot is thrust forward with a "foot under," the left is lifted and dropped again and the right foot is raised in what is called "a step in the air." The dancer then does a cadence with this foot. That is, he brings his right foot back and left foot forward, landing agilely with the right toe about four fingerbreadths from the left heel, knees straight, toes turned up. The dancer must take

care to keep one hand on the pommel of his sword "to keep it from dancing as well."¹⁵³

Among the other sequences Caroso describes are stamping sequences, which may be used in the dance called the "canary" and "broken sequences." In the first, in one triple beat, the left toe is raised while the heel is slid forward a little. The heel is then immediately moved back to a point parallel to the middle of the right foot and raised. The dancer then stamps in time to the music with the left foot before repeating the movement with the right.¹⁵⁴ In a broken sequence, the dancer breaks up his or her sequence of walking. The dancer moves forward on the left foot, thrusts the right forward as in a foot under, raises the left and right heels and then drops them again. The dancers should take care to keep their knees straight and their bodies upright.¹⁵⁵

The writer of Il corago makes a careful distinction between social and stage dancing because that which delights when seen at close range is different from that which gives pleasure when viewed at a distance.¹⁵⁶ One result of this, for example, is the author's demand for a large number of dancers, since more delight accrues from many in a scene than from just three or four.¹⁵⁷ The tempo should be largo, that is, at a stately pace rather

than too quickly, because this will allow the dancers to move more easily in unison. The author found it most unbecoming for the dancers to perform their caprioles one after the other rather than synchronously.¹⁵⁸

In a letter written in 1591 to Isacchino Hebreo, the dance master at Mantua, playwright Mutio Manfredi expresses his concerns with regard to the choreography for his pastoral work, (favola boscherecci), Le Nozze di Semiramide con Memnone, which was to be performed for Carnival. Though the Chorus's four canzonette must be both sung and danced faultlessly, the writer suggests that the first should have little movement and no gestures, the second a little movement as well, but a few little gestures, as the choreographer sees fit. The third should be performed much like the second but with some variation. The fourth should have more movement than the others and gestures of grief and scorn. In the end there is a moresca, in the style of a galliard, with a light, quick beat and the ultimate dance to Hymen is quick in movement and gesture and "not too slow."¹⁵⁹

The author of Il corago states that when dancing accompanies singing, it should follow the mood of the song, whether upbeat or slow and sad. For lively songs, jumps, capers, turns and similar movements are

appropriate. For melancholy songs, however, only steps, broken sequences and continences should be performed. The author asserts that it is up to the "Corago," the supervisor of the entertainment, to ensure that the dancers follow the same figures and rules as are laid out for the choruses.¹⁶⁰ Since he had already stated that the chorus delighted the audience with its figures and interlacings, it is to be assumed that the dancers did the same thing.

In his article on music and spectacle in the Gonzaga court, Iain Fenlon argues that the Balletto della duchessa in the court of Ferrara was related to the ballet de cour in France and that Beaujoyeux's description of figures in his choreography may also apply to the dances prepared by the Italian duchess. In a performance for the carnival season of 1583, a dozen ladies of the Ferrara court danced, "some dressed in black as gentlemen and some in white as ladies."¹⁶¹ Three years later, Anna Caterina Gonzaga described another carnival performance in the Este court:

Twelve dancers, with astounding plumes ordered by the Duke himself, performed the balletti...The words, composed by Signor Guarini, were extremely pleasing, and the

music, by Fiorino, served them well. The dancing was so well matched to both that it was celestial.¹⁶²

If one accepts Fenlon's argument, then Beaujoyeulx's description of his own choreography completes the picture:

It was composed of fifteen figures arranged in such a way that at the end of each figure all the ladies turned to face the King. When they had appeared before the King's Majesty, they danced the Grand Ballet with forty passages or geometric figures. These were all exact and well-planned in their shapes, sometimes square, sometimes round, in several diverse fashions; then in triangles accompanied by a small square, and other small figures.¹⁶³

Illustrations of Emilio de Cavalieri's choreography for the final ballo, "O che nuovo miracolo," of the six intermedi performed with La pellegrina produced in 1589 in Florence for the marriage of Duke Ferdinando de' Medici and Christine of Lorraine (see below, pages 101-104) were published in Cristofano Malvezzi's Intermedii et concerti (1591). Not only did Cavalieri design the choreography for "O che nuovo miracolo," but he also

wrote the music. The lyrics were by Laura Guidiccioni and were composed after the music was finished.¹⁶⁴

Jennifer Nevile has recently reconstructed the work in two articles in Dance Chronicle.¹⁶⁵ She argues that the theatricality of Cavalieri's choreography is to be found in the number and orientation of the dancers, but that, on the whole he relied on the steps that were used in social dancing and which had been described by Caroso and Negri.¹⁶⁶

Cavalieri's choreography was, in fact, conservative in that he utilized only sixteen of the over fifty steps described by Caroso in Il Ballarino or the over a hundred described by Negri in Gratie d'Amore. These include reverences, continences, changing steps, scurrying, pulled and broken sequences, cross capers, turning jumps, capers, broken capers in the air, half capers in the air, repeats, flourishes and steps (described above, page 83-89).¹⁶⁷

Twenty-seven performers were used, but only seven were principal dancers, three men and four women.¹⁶⁸ The twenty in the background did not begin dance until the fifth of the six segments into which Nevile divides the ballo.¹⁶⁹ The orientation of the dancers was toward the audience, rather than toward each other as in social

dancing.¹⁷⁰ Nevile notes another difference between social and theatrical dance that is evidenced in the choreography of "O che nuovo miracolo." In social dancing men and women dance together. In Cavalieri's theatrical choreography, they dance in same sex groupings facing toward the audience.¹⁷¹

The dance begins with all performers in a semi-circle facing the audience. The seven soloists move forward in stages. Once the seven principal dancers have formed a semi-circle in front of the background corps, they begin a series of dances, in which they form various floor patterns, side-to-side, forward and backward, in a large circle, in smaller circles and so on. There are dances in which two or more performers exchange places and other dances in which the dancers trace an elaborate curling path around the small dance floor. Finally, in part five, the background group joins in. At first, they merely change places with each other as the group in the foreground moves from side to side, forward and backward, or in curlicue patterns. The background group then divides into four. They join hands and dance forward, under the arms of the principals. They then form four semi-circles to the sides and behind the main dancers,

who finish the dance with a number of variations performed in their same sex groupings.¹⁷²

Another example of floor patterns, though of a much grander scale, is illustrated in the 1637 engraving "Figure della festa a cavallo, rappresentata nel teatro del Ser. Gran Duca di Toscana" by Stefano Della Bella. Riders on horses arrange themselves in numerous figures, from circles, to stars, to swirls and interweaving lines.¹⁷³

A more recent example of interlacings was performed in the 1998 production of Monteverdi's Orfeo choreographed by Trisha Brown. Costumed identically, the dancers and singers intermingled. During "Lasciate i monti," the singers formed a line perpendicular to the proscenium and as they sang marched slowly across the stage. The dancers, meanwhile, in an undulating line, wove between the singers in s-shapes that became extended figure eights. Despite the simplicity of the device, the effect was extremely evocative, both of the celebratory feeling in the dance itself and also of the historical possibilities. Given the music and the story, very little movement could express a great deal.¹⁷⁴

In dance, as in any other court performance, sumptuousness reflected the magnificence of the ruler.

This was achieved partially through pure numbers; the more dancers, the more the delight, according to Il corago.¹⁷⁵ Ultimately, however, beyond saying that they were performing movements to music, it is hard to pin down exactly what the dancers were doing. Where appropriate, it may have been pantomimic actions. They certainly danced similar steps to those which belonged in social dancing, though careful choreographers would have been aware of the differences in the kinds of movements that would be appreciated when seen on a stage at a distance as opposed to those that caused delight when viewed at close range. Performing in unison and forming geometric figures or patterns, both while moving and when stationary were aesthetic priorities. Ultimately, the dancers had to reflect the mood of the story, especially when their dancing formed the background for singing. Given the magnificence of the production values, expressivity of the music and passion of the narrative, spectacular feats of technical prowess would not have been necessary. In fact, they may have detracted from the power of simple movements executed in unison by a beautifully costumed multitude.

Court Entertainments

The form and staging of the court opera grew out of the tradition of court entertainments and the purposes of opera must be considered in the context of precedent court events. The courts most involved in the evolution of early musical theatre were those of the Medici in Florence, the Gonzaga in Mantua and the Este in Ferrara. It goes without saying that these courts were in communication with one another, linked by marriage and mutual interests. Moreover, agents from one court would report to another with regard to cultural events, seen as indicators of the court's magnificence. They would act as intermediaries negotiating with performers, sometimes using underhanded means to obtain the most desirable musicians and singers for the service of their own courts.¹⁷⁶

The Medici Court and its Intermedi

The Medici had established themselves as the ruling family in Florence when it was a republic governed by an elected council. Its republican spirit was deeply rooted. Myth has it that Florence was founded around 200 B.C. by the Etruscans, but recent discoveries indicate that it was actually around a hundred and fifty years

later that the city was born, and it was Roman, not Etruscan.¹⁷⁷ After the fall of Rome, Florence languished, but from the seventh century onwards, its population increased from a low of about 1,000 to twenty times that by the middle of the eleventh century. In addition, as feudalism declined, its leading families began slowly to evolve a commune to organize its civic and mercantile interests.¹⁷⁸ By the early fourteenth century, their system had formalized into a kind of republic with an elected government made of nine representatives of the major guilds, selected at random in a public ceremony every two months. The names of all those eligible to serve in this capacity were put into leather bags known as borse. As they were drawn, those who had served recently were discarded, as were those of members of families already drawn. Debtors, as well, were disqualified. Six of the representatives were from the arti maggiori, more important guilds such as that of the judges and lawyers and those of the wool, silk and foreign cloth merchants, which were the town's major industries. Two were from the lesser guilds, or arti minori, which included butchers, shoemakers, builders and other labourers. The ninth served as Gonfaloniere,¹⁷⁹ standard-bearer of the city republic, a position that had

been created in 1293 with the institution of the Ordinances of Justice, which effectively wiped out the power of old, once-feudal families.¹⁸⁰ The result was more of an oligarchy than it seemed. The government tended to be controlled by a single powerful merchant family, which, in 1434 became the Medici.¹⁸¹

Nevertheless, the pride in the republican system was a rallying point for the population of Florence and, as such, had major implications with respect to the cultural contributions of the Medici family, both in the period during which they were content to rule from behind the scenes, as did Cosimo de' Medici from 1434 to his death in 1464, and later, when they were named Dukes and finally Grand Dukes.

Cosimo was succeeded by his son, Piero, and when Piero died in 1469, his son was approached to lead the Medicean party and government of the city. Lorenzo de' Medici reluctantly agreed partially because, in his words, "it fares ill in Florence with anyone who is rich but does not have any share in government."¹⁸² What his "share in government" amounted to was no less, according to Francesco Guicciardini, than his becoming "a benevolent tyrant in a constitutional monarchy."¹⁸³

By 1472, Florence had become one of the great cities of Europe. According to the Medici agent, Benedetto Dei, the population of the city was around 70,000. There were 180 churches, 50 piazze, 270 shops selling woollen goods, 83 shops belonging to members of the silk guild, 66 apothecary shops, 84 shops belonging to wood-workers, 54 to sculptors and stone masons, 70 to butchers, 8 to poultry and game merchants, 44 to goldsmiths, silversmiths and jewellers, 30 to gold leaf and silverware workers and, finally, 33 banks. But Florence was also a city of art. It had been home to Dante and Boccaccio. From the days of Giotto and Cimabue, the greatest artists lived and worked there.¹⁸⁴

With the election of Giovanni de' Medici as Pope Leo X in 1515,¹⁸⁵ the family consolidated its power. However, it was not until after Rome was sacked and foreign powers came to dominate in Italy that the republic was overcome and Florence became a duchy subject to Charles V of Spain who had made an agreement with Pope Leo X that allowed the Medici to return as rulers. The first Medici Duke of Florence was the nineteen-year-old, increasingly authoritarian, Alessandro.¹⁸⁶ An understandable ambivalence with regard to this situation was met with the Medici tradition of patronage, which functioned to

endow public buildings with art, but was also used to glorify the ruling family itself, and through metaphysical inference, legitimate its rule over a once proudly republican society.¹⁸⁷

This tradition, which can also be called a family policy, reached a high point during the reign of Ferdinando I who succeeded his brother Francesco in 1587. More affable and gregarious than his predecessor and also deeply concerned with affairs of state and the well-being of Florentine citizens, Ferdinando was destined to become "the most popular of the later Medici."¹⁸⁸

Utilizing teams of brilliant designers such as Giorgio Vasari, Bernardo Buontalenti and Giulio Parigi, elaborate spectacles were produced to celebrate the dynastic marriages of the ruling family. The festivities of 1589, in honour of the wedding of Fernando I and Christine of Lorraine¹⁸⁹ was one of the most elaborate. Hundreds of performers, artists, and trades people laboured on the various activities. According to Bastiano de' Rossi's Descrizione dell'apparato e degli'intermedi fatti per la commedia rappresentata in Firenze nelle nozze de' Serenissimi Don Ferdinando Medici e Madama Cristina di Loreno, Gran Duchi di Toscana, the city expended "all its resources."¹⁹⁰ While the wedding

theatricals cost slightly in excess of thirty thousand scudi, housing and feeding the guests and conducting the bride from France added another hundred and twenty six thousand scudi to the total bill.¹⁹¹

The main theatrical event consisted of the comedy La Pellegrina by Girolamo Bargagli interspersed with six intermedi, supervised by Emilio de' Cavalieri, created by Giovanni Bardi with a number of writers and composers, and designed by Bernardo Buontalenti.¹⁹² The comedy itself revolved around the plight of Lepida, a young woman who has secretly married her lover, who has been posing as her tutor. Her father now wants her to marry, but she obviously cannot. Moreover, she is pregnant. The man her father wishes for her was betrothed to a woman in Spain who, unbeknownst to him, has arrived, disguised as a pilgrim, to seek him in Pisa.¹⁹³ For the intermedi, the stage transformed magically from Pisa to wondrous locations.

The intermedi all had musical subjects. The first represented "The Harmony of the Spheres," with heavens opening to reveal singing goddesses. One of the madrigals had words by Bardi and music by Cavalieri. The remainder were written by Ottavio Rinuccini with music by

Cristofano Malvezzi¹⁹⁴ who, along with Luca Marenzio, wrote most of the music for the six intermedi.¹⁹⁵

The second intermedio was "The Contest of the Pierides and the Muses." The marvels of this one included a mountain that grew out of a trap door in the floor and the transformation of the daughters of Pierus into magpies after they lost the singing contest to the Muses. In this case Luca Marenzio composed the madrigals to texts once again by Rinuccini.¹⁹⁶

In the third intermedio, Apollo slew a fire-breathing dragon named the Python and then celebrated with a victory dance.¹⁹⁷ Saslow suggests not only that Rinuccini used his libretto for this intermedio as part of La Dafne which was produced in the nine years later, but also that the sets and fire breathing dragon were pulled out of storage for the opera as well.¹⁹⁸

In the fourth intermedio a sorceress, performed by Lucia Caccini, appeared in a flying machine above the stage and accompanying herself on the lute sang a song conjuring up the devil. Hell-Mouth opened and a giant three-faced Lucifer emerged from it, eating children while other souls, tormented by devils, writhed in flames. Giovambattista Strozzi wrote the texts for this intermedio and they were set to music by Cristofano

Malvezzi, except for the sorceress's song which was composed by Giulio Caccini and the dirge of the mournful demons which was provided by Giovanni Bardi.¹⁹⁹

The fifth intermedio was "The Rescue of Arion." The mythical singer, Arion, was played by Jacopo Peri. He appeared on a ship cutting through a stage ocean, singing an aria he had composed. Upon discovering that the sailors were plotting to kill him, the poet jumped overboard and was rescued by a dolphin. Once again, Malvezzi wrote the music and Rinuccini the words to the madrigals in this intermedio except for the madrigal that Peri composed and the final dance, which was by Cavalieri with words by Laura Lucchesini.²⁰⁰

The sixth intermedio was the most splendid of all. It was an assembly of the gods whose appeal to accept "the sweet sound of celestial harmony" referred to both the marital satisfaction of the Royal couple and the harmony inherent in Medici rule.²⁰¹ Seven clouds holding twenty gods appeared in openings in the heavens and five of the clouds descended to earth. Meanwhile, twenty pairs of nymphs and shepherds appeared on the stage.²⁰² Before the final madrigal, "O che nuovo miracolo," the choreography of which is described above (pages 92-95),

the entire group of sixty voices sang a chorus in seven parts praising Ferdinando.²⁰³

The Gonzaga Court and Il pastor fido

Mantua was an old city and its identity as a modest cultural centre dated back to the birth of Virgil in 70 BC. Dominated by Northern invaders during the early medieval era, it declared itself a free city in the twelfth century. By 1480,²⁰⁴ when Angelo Poliziano's La Fabula d'Orfeo was produced in the Mantuan court, the Gonzaga family had been ruling the city for over a hundred and fifty years,²⁰⁵ for the first century of which they were known as capitani.²⁰⁶ Then Gian Francesco Gonzaga, characterized by D.S. Chambers as "the first great princely patron in Mantua,"²⁰⁷ was made marquis by Emperor Sigismund. It was during the rule of Gian Francesco's grandson Federico that the important premiere production of Angelo Poliziano's play took place.

Romain Rolland suggests that Poliziano's Fabula was a prototypical opera, adapting the tradition of sacra rappresentazioni to a secular subject. Sacra rappresentazioni itself, he feels, was an important precedent to opera because it was mostly sung. Therefore, he traces through the 1480 production a line

of evolution of the musical theatre form.²⁰⁸ Pirrotta disagrees, arguing first of all that Poliziano's play had nothing to do with sacra rappresentazioni and, second of all, even if it did, it is problematical to compare the singing of opera with the "singing" in sacra rappresentazioni, which he characterizes as no more than "intoned recitation." On the contrary, Pirrotta speculates that if there was singing in Poliziano's La Fabula d'Orfeo it would have owed a debt to the tradition of court performances in which spoken text was interspersed with song, in this case, particularly carnival and improvised song.²⁰⁹

The next theatrical event of note in the Mantuan court came over a hundred years later, with the production of Guarini's Il pastor fido. The period in between may be roughly divided into four stages in which a dialectic between culture and pleasure specific to the personalities involved may be discerned.

Politically, Iain Fenlon characterizes sixteenth-century Mantua as "a territorially small, politically weak state in a militarily strategic geographical position and with a precarious economic base."²¹⁰ Mantua's military situation required Federico to maintain a most delicate neutrality during the conflict between

the Hapsburg Empire, traditional ally and protector, and the Pope, whom Federico had sworn to protect. Its lack of wealth compared to other city states led Federico's mother Isabella d'Este to exclaim when her brother-in-law Lodovico Sforza displayed his treasures to her, "Would to God that we who spend money so gladly had half as much!"²¹¹ Stability could be maintained only through skilful diplomacy and careful management of funds.

Impecuniosity was endemic to the court. Prior to Isabella d'Este's era, the Gonzaga court had been home to Andrea Mantegna for nineteen years. Although the initial offer made to Mantegna by Ludovico Gonzaga, in 1458, seemed generous, by the time the artist had lived and worked in the court for almost two decades he had reason to complain that he was not being remunerated sufficiently.²¹² It was a protest that would be echoed eerily a century later in the letters of Claudio Monteverdi. (See below, pages 110 and 275.) In between, the Gonzaga gathered as much art around them as their resources, or on occasion credit, allowed.

Characterized by Lodovico Ariosto as "liberale e magnanima," and praised for wisdom, virtue and grace,²¹³ Isabella d'Este was an inveterate shopper, concerned with acquiring the latest fashions in jewellery and clothing,

books, art and musical instruments.²¹⁴ She importuned painters to feed her appetite for allegorical fantasy based on pagan myth, a genre in which Bellini was unwilling to work, unlike Perugino who happily did so.²¹⁵ Isabella's studiola was filled with representations of pagan gods and goddesses in such works as Mantegna's Minerva and Mars and Venus and Perugino's Battle between Chastity and Love. Her musical interests are reflected in the decorations of her first grotta in the Castello di San Giorgio as well as in her second grotta in the Corte Vecchia, both of which abound with musical symbols. Deities, angels and satyrs carry and play musical instruments all through the paintings of the studiola.²¹⁶

Patronage underwent a transformation during the reign of Isabella's son, Federico, who became marquis in 1519 and was named first Duke of Mantua by Charles V in 1530. A martial and hedonistic spirit, his interests lay in increasing the power and territory of Mantua and in women. His artistic acquisitions reflected these preoccupations.²¹⁷ It was he who commissioned Giulio Romano to design the sensuous Palazzo Te.

The next period of patronage can be said to go from Federico's death in 1540 to Vincenzo's accession in 1587. It is comprised of two separate but related parts. The

first was the fourteen-year span during which Mantua was effectively administered by Cardinal Ercole as regent, first to Francesco, then, when Francesco died within a year of being made duke, to Guglielmo, his younger brother. The second begins when Guglielmo was made duke in 1558. The entire era was marked by conservatism and consolidation, both economically and artistically with the spirit of the Counter-Reformation dominating the court. This is not surprising considering Ercole's ecclesiastical ambitions and involvement with the Council of Trent, but the trend continued and was strengthened during Guglielmo's tenure. Guglielmo was determined to be a model Christian prince and to create in Mantua a model Catholic state based on reformist principles.

Culture did not waste away in this environment. Letters and surviving payrolls show evidence of a permanent establishment of musicians at court. Guglielmo himself composed music and carried on correspondences with notable composers, particularly the elder Alessandro Striggio and Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina.

Theatrical life in the court depended on travelling companies and productions originating in the Jewish ghetto. Jewish actors performed during the celebration of Marquis Federico Gonzaga's accession in 1520 and,

beginning five years later, the community was forced to bear the cost of court performances by Jewish actors, a special form of taxation. Jewish productions became lavish spectacles that utilized music, machines and visual effects. Distinguished Jews associated with the court included the fifteenth-century dancing instructor Guglielmo Ebreo, author of Trattato del arte del ballo and from the middle of the 1560's onward, theorist and prototypical stage director, Leone de' Sommi. Both de' Sommi and at least one other Jew, harpist and singer Isacchino Massarano, were involved in the production at Il pastor fido which began rehearsal in the early 1590s but was not ultimately produced until the end of the decade.²¹⁸

Vincenzo's ambitions for Mantua, both politically and culturally, far outstripped the city-state's means. His military campaigns of 1595, 1597 and 1601 were disasters and, added to the lavish scale of his artistic endeavours, soon drained the resources so carefully husbanded over the previous half century.²¹⁹ Claudio Monteverdi complains bitterly in his letters about the Duke's supercilious paymaster withholding his salary and, while the paymaster may well have been peremptory, it also seems that given the state of the Gonzaga's

finances, there may not have been enough money to pay everybody and Monteverdi simply was not a powerful enough creditor to warrant more concern. Nevertheless, it would hardly have been in Monteverdi's best interests to lay the blame more accurately on the Duke's prodigal nature and his letters may be seen as an attempt at tact and diplomacy.²²⁰

After 1587, Vincenzo had a new theatre built and dramatic presentations became an important and regular feature of court life.²²¹ He had already been interested in Il pastor fido since 1584, before it had even been finished. Guarini refused to allow him to produce it at that time, although the Ferrarese attempted, apparently with the author's consent, what turned out to be an unsuccessful staging. There is a general consensus among experts that the work was presented in some form in Turin in 1585. In 1591, Gonzaga once again attempted to produce it, this time under the auspices of his mistress, the Marchesa di Grana, with the help of Leone de' Sommi. There were considerable problems with the production and it was not until 1598 that it was finally performed.

The problems concerned a scene in which the characters play a game of "Blind Man's Buff" (Gioco della cieca). Mirtillo watches the object of his affection,

Amarillis, as she dances blindfolded. With the connivance of Corisca, who is actually in love with Mirtillo herself, he enters the game and is caught by Amarillis, who thinks she is harmlessly embracing a nymph like herself. Letters written by Gonzaga's secretary, Annibale Chieppio as well as by Guarini reveal that the difficulties lay not only in the risqué nature of the scene, but also in the technical requirements for the performers to act, speak, sing and dance. Though Guarini admitted that incorporating the dance was one of the most troublesome aspects of the work, he insisted in the preface to the 1602 edition that there were precedents for the scene in the ballets he had composed for the Ferrarese court.²²²

Conclusion

Thus the stage was set, in Mantua and Florence, for the advent of a new form that would synthesize the elements of theatre, music and dance which had been part of cultural and political agendas of their respective courts. Using the Renaissance reliance on ancient authority theatre and music, theoreticians had slowly been evolving a form that would express the Baroque concern with reconciling material and spirit realities.

Theatrically, realistic and sumptuous settings vied with ingenious machinery to create elaborate effects; sparkling with jewel-like light and peopled with richly costumed characters, the pastoral world on stage was a metaphor for the tension between body and soul. Music had become at once simpler and more expressive, emphasizing the passions of the text, and dance covered a wide range of choreographic possibilities from the literal pantomime of activities to the abstract formation of geometric patterns, with the steps of social dancing in between. All of this varied activity had a focus in the inter-relations between artists and intellectuals, practitioners and theoreticians, imagination and analysis, creativity and conscious elucidation of cultural aims.

Endnotes

¹ Eric Cochrane, Italy: 1530-1630, ed. Julius Kirshner, Longman History of Italy (London and New York: Longman Group, 1988) 224-225. The second influence he considers important was that of the Council of Trent demanding greater intelligibility of words in religious music and the third had to do with the communicability of words in popular songs. Obviously, this is a single principle being found in different sources, to which could (and probably should) be added the voices of theoreticians and practitioners.

² Denys Hay, "Idea of Renaissance," Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas, ed. Philip Wiener, Vol. IV (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973) 121.

³ Hay 122.

⁴ Hay 127.

⁵ Herbert Weisinger, "Renaissance Literature and Historiography," Dictionary of the History of Ideas 147-148.

⁶ Nicola Abbagnano, "Renaissance Humanism," Dictionary of the History of Ideas 129.

⁷ Cochrane, Italy 224.

⁸ Weisinger 149.

⁹ Lewis Lockwood, "Renaissance," The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. Stanley Sadie, Vol. XV (London: Macmillan, 1980) 736-741.

¹⁰ Weisinger, 148-149.

¹¹ Jerrold E. Seigel, "Virtù In and Since the Renaissance," Dictionary of the History of Ideas 477-486.

¹² Claude V. Palisca, "Baroque," The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Vol. II 172-178.

¹³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Dictionnaire de musique (Paris: la Veuve Duchesne, 1768), "Baroque," p. 41, quoted by Claude V. Palisca, Baroque Music, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968) 2.

¹⁴ Palisca, Baroque Music 2.

¹⁵ Lorenzo Bianconi, Music in the Seventeenth Century, trans. David Bryant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) viii.

¹⁶ Cochrane, Italy 3. In the Introduction Kirshner states, "Mannerism, a stylistic term that continues to provoke controversy, refers to the audacious experiments in painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry and prose of the next two generations. These experiments, Cochrane

insists, must be understood as a further evolution, not a rejection, of High Renaissance models."

¹⁷ Cochrane 209.

¹⁸ Harold B. Segel, The Baroque Poem: A Comparative Survey (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1974) 51-61.

¹⁹ Segel 99.

²⁰ Bianconi 162.

²¹ Harry Levin, The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1969) 194-195.

²² René Dubos, Mirage of Health (New York, 1959) p. 220, quoted by Levin 164.

²³ Christopher Hibbert, Florence: The Biography of a City, A Viking Book (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993) 370-371.

²⁴ Cochrane, Italy 7-18.

²⁵ Quoted by Cochrane, Italy 15-16.

²⁶ Cochrane, Italy 17.

²⁷ Ralph Nash, "Introduction," Arcadia and Piscatorial Eclogues by Jacopo Sannazaro, trans. Ralph Nash (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966) 23.

²⁸ Louise George Clubb, Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989) 154.

²⁹ Levin 6.

³⁰ Cochrane, Italy 24.

³¹ Quoted by Levin, 4.

³² Levin 14-15.

³³ Quoted by Levin, xv.

³⁴ Levin xv.

³⁵ Levin 18.

³⁶ Christopher Hibbert, The Rise and Fall of the House of Medici (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1979) 169.

³⁷ Anna Migliarisi, "Theories of Directing in Late Renaissance and Early Baroque Italy," diss., University of Toronto, 1996.

³⁸ Marvin Carlson, Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey, from the Greeks to the Present, expanded edition (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993) 37.

³⁹ Carlson 40.

⁴⁰ Carlson 39-40.

⁴¹ "Misera, da costor che già trovati/ fur per servirme e per mio ornamento/ lacerar tutta e consumarmi sento...la meraviglia, ohimè! degli intermedi." Quoted by Nino Pirrotta, "Studies in the Music of Renaissance Theatre," Music and Theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi by Nino

Pirrota and Elena Povoledo, trans. Karen Eales

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 172.

⁴² Leone de' Sommi 261.

⁴³ Francesco Robortello, "Commentary on Aristotle's Poetics," trans. C.J. McDonough, in Sources of Dramatic Theory, Volume One: Plato to Congreve, ed. Michael J.

Sidnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 87.

⁴⁴ Damiano Pietropaolo, "Introductory notes to Giambattista Giralaldi ('Cinthio')," Sources of Dramatic Theory, Volume One: Plato to Congreve, ed. Michael J.

Sidnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

121.

⁴⁵ Giambattista Giralaldi, "On the Composition of Comedies and Tragedies," trans. Damiano Pietropaolo, in Sidnell, Sources 126.

⁴⁶ Giralaldi 125-126.

⁴⁷ Trans. Carlson, 52-53.

⁴⁸ Allan H. Gilbert, intro. to "The Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry," by Giambattista Guarini, in Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden, ed. Allan H. Gilbert (New

York: American Book Company, 1940) 504.

⁴⁹ Guarini, in Gilbert 505-533.

⁵⁰ Guarini 511.

⁵¹ Guarini 524.

⁵² Guarini 533.

⁵³ George Altman, et al, Theater Pictorial: A History of World Theater as Recorded in Drawings, Paintings, Engravings and Photographs (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1953), between illustrations 89 and 90, no pagination. Joseph Gwilt lists the first three editions of Vitruvius as 1486 in Rome, 1496 in Florence and 1497 in Venice, in the "List of the several Editions and Versions of Vitruvius" by in The Architecture of Marcus Vitruvius Pollo in Ten Books, trans. Joseph Gwilt (London: Priestly and Weale, 1826) xxi-xxii.

⁵⁴ Allardyce Nicoll, The Development of the Theatre: A Study of Theatrical Art from the Beginnings to the Present Day, 3rd ed. (London: George Harrap and Co., 1952) 85.

⁵⁵ Frank Granger, "Introduction" to Vitruvius On Architecture, ed. and trans. Frank Granger (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1931) xiv.

⁵⁶ Allardyce Nicoll, "Introduction" to "From The Second Book of Architecture (Il Primo (Secondo) Libro d'Architettura, Paris, 1545, pp. 63-74)," The Renaissance

Stage, ed. Barnard Hewitt (Coral Gables, Fla: University of Miami Press, 1958) 18-21.

⁵⁷ Sebastiano Serlio, "From The Second Book of Architecture (Il Primo (Secondo) Libro d'Architettura, Paris, 1545, pp. 63-74), trans. Allardyce Nicoll, The Renaissance Stage, ed. Barnard Hewitt (Coral Gables, Fla: University of Miami Press, 1958) 21-24.

⁵⁸ "...di li a quattro ore, avendo detto principe altrove in quel mentre pranzato, vi comparve il palco e le scene come per incanto edificate..." Il corago o vero alcune osservazioni per metter bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche, ed. Paolo Fabbri e Angelo Pompilio (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1983) 32.

⁵⁹ Pirrotta 5.

⁶⁰ Vitruvius, trans. Gwilt 131-147.

⁶¹ Serlio, trans. Nicoll 32-33.

⁶² "Il quinto pare a me che sia di tutti il più bello et ingegnoso, e questo facendosi andare la tela in alto con certe corde infilate in alcuni anelli cuciti per il lungo della tela ragunata in alto viene a fare come festoni et ornamento della scena e perché vuole esser alzata con velocità..." Il corago 117.

⁶³ Nicola Sabbattini, "Manual for Constructing Theatrical Scenes and Machines (Pratica di Fabricar Scene e Machine ne' Teatri, Ravenna, 1638)" trans. John H. McDowell, The Renaissance Stage, ed. Barnard Hewitt (Coral Gables, Fla: University of Miami Press, 1958) 100-106.

⁶⁴ "Il quarto modo è quello de' triangoli, bellissimo perché si potrà fare in scena di qualsivoglia grande altezza, e potranno fare infinite mutazioni col far e un usciolino in esso dove entrando un uomo possa salire per il fusto d'esso triangolo acconcio con certi zoccoli su ad alto per accomodare dalla parte di dretto nuova tela or telaietto per fare un nuova mutazione." Il corago 118

⁶⁵ Sabbattini 106-111.

⁶⁶ Sabbattini 126-127.

⁶⁷ Il corago 121.

⁶⁸ Elena Povoledo, "Origins and Aspects of Italian Scenography," Music and Theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi by Nino Pirrotta and Elena Povoledo, trans. Karen Eales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 289-298.

⁶⁹ Kate Trauman Steinetz, "A Reconstruction of Leonardo da Vinci's Revolving Stage," Art Quarterly, XII (1949): 325-38.

⁷⁰ Pirrotta, opposite page 275.

⁷¹ Sabbattini 146-169.

⁷² "I pastori dovranno, benché rappresentino persone rustiche, essere vestiti riccamente come di calzoni e maniche riccamente adorne..." Il corago 113.

⁷³ "...perché quelle abbelliscono l'aspetto de' recitanti e rendono la persona più maestevole." Il corago 113.

⁷⁴ Il corago 113-114.

⁷⁵ Il corago 115.

⁷⁶ Serlio 33.

⁷⁷ Leoni de' Sommi, Dialogues on Stage Affairs, trans. Allardyce Nicoll, Appendix B in The Development of Theatre 254-255.

⁷⁸ Sabbattini 93-96.

⁷⁹ Sabbattini 95.

⁸⁰ De' Sommi 259.

⁸¹ De' Sommi 258.

⁸² Serlio 34. De' Sommi 259.

⁸³ De' Sommi 259.

⁸⁴ Serlio 34.

⁸⁵ xiv Serlio writes about achieving an "emerald shade... ruby color...topaz" or "the best counterfeit of diamond."

The lights of Ben Jonson's masques as well were described in these lapidary terms. Serlio, 33-34, 34n.

⁸⁶ De' Sommi 251.

⁸⁷ Roger Savage and Matteo Sansone, "Il corago and the staging of early opera: four chapters from an anonymous treatise circa 1630" Early Music 17.4 (1989): 501.

"...dove non si richiede tanto moto né espressione di atteggiamenti istrionici." Il corago, 92.

⁸⁸ Savage and Sansone 500. Il corago 90-91.

⁸⁹ Savage and Sansone 502. Il corago 92.

⁹⁰ Savage and Sansone 503-504. Il corago 98-99.

⁹¹ William Shakespeare, Hamlet in Classic through Modern Drama, ed. Otto Reinert (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970) III, ii, 15-16.

⁹² Il corago 93.

⁹³ De' Sommi, trans. Nicoll 252.

⁹⁴ Toby Cole and Helen Crich Chinoy, eds., Actors on Acting: The Theories, Techniques, and Practices of the World's Great Actors, Told in Their Own Words (New York: Crown Publishers, 1970) 21-30.

⁹⁵ Cicero, De Oratore, trans. J.S. Watson, Cicero on Oratory and Orators (London: George Bell and Sons, 1876) excerpted in Actors on Acting, 22-23.

⁹⁶ Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, trans. Rev. John Selby Watson, Institutes of Oratory (London: George Bell and Sons, 1913) excerpted in Actors on Acting, 27.

⁹⁷ Cicero 24.

⁹⁸ Horace, "The Art of Poetry," trans. Niall Rudd, Sources of Dramatic Theory 62-67.

⁹⁹ Horace 69.

¹⁰⁰ Cicero 24.

¹⁰¹ Giovanni Bonifaccio, L'arte de cenni con la quale formandosi favella visibile si tratta della muta eloquenza, che non e' altro che un facondo silentio, L'opportuno Academico Filarmonico (Vicenza: Francesco Grossi, 1616) 3-7.

¹⁰² Quintilian 27-28.

¹⁰³ De' Sommi, trans. Nicoll 252-253.

¹⁰⁴ De' Sommi, trans. Nicoll 253.

¹⁰⁵ Quintilian 29.

¹⁰⁶ De' Sommi, trans. Nicoll 253.

¹⁰⁷ Savage and Sansone 500-502. Il corago 90-92.

¹⁰⁸ Savage and Sansone 503-504. Il corago 98-99.

¹⁰⁹ James M. Saslow, The Medici Wedding of 1589: Florentine Festival as Theatrum Mundi (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) 55-56.

¹¹⁰ Roy Strong, Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals 1450-1650, (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1984) 22-28.

¹¹¹ Marco da Gagliano, "Preface to Dafne." Source: Marco da Gagliano La Dafne (Mantua, 1608), preface as printed in A. Solerti, L'Origine del melodrama (Turin, 1903), pp. 78-89, trans. Carol MacClintock, Readings in the History of Music in Performance, (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1979) 190.

¹¹² Claude V. Palisca, The Florentine Camerata: Documentary Studies and Translations (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989) 3-7.

¹¹³ Pope Gregory XIII, "Brief on the Reform of the Chant," trans. Oliver Strunk, Source Readings in Music History: From Classical Antiquity through the Romantic Era (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1950) 358.

¹¹⁴ Vincenzo Galilei, "Dialogo della musica antica e della moderna," trans. Oliver Strunk, Source Readings in Music History: From Classical Antiquity through the Romantic Era (New York: W.W. Norton, 1950) 312.

¹¹⁵ Palisca, Camerata 1.

- ¹¹⁶ Giulio Caccini, "Foreword" to Le nuove musiche (1602), trans. John Playford, Source Readings in Music History: The Baroque Era 18.
- ¹¹⁷ G.C. Monteverdi, "Foreword" to Il quinto libro de' madrigali (Venice, 1607) Trans. Oliver Strunk, Source Readings in Music History: The Baroque Era (New York: W.W. Norton, 1965) 47.
- ¹¹⁸ Galilei 316-317.
- ¹¹⁹ Palisca, Baroque Music 8-12.
- ¹²⁰ Claudio and Giulio Cesare Monteverdi, "Foreword" to Il quinto libro de' madrigali, trans. Oliver Strunk, Source Readings in Music History: The Baroque Era (New York, W.W. Norton, 1965) 46-52.
- ¹²¹ Palisca, Baroque Music 11.
- ¹²² Palisca, Baroque Music 21.
- ¹²³ Nigel Fortune, "Italian Secular Monody from 1600 to 1635: An Introductory Survey," Musical Quarterly, 34.2 (1953) 171-172.
- ¹²⁴ Pirrotta 36.
- ¹²⁵ Jacopo Peri, "Foreword to Euridice," trans. Oliver Strunk, Source Readings in Music History: The Baroque Era 14.

¹²⁶ MacClintock, trans. quoted by Fenlon, Music and Patronage 127.

¹²⁷ Nicoll, note to Serlio 25.

¹²⁸ There are five extant manuscripts of this manual, one of which, the Paris codex, is dated 1463. Artur Michel, "The Earliest Dance Manuals," Medievalia et Humanistica (Series 1) 3 (1945) 122.

¹²⁹ Barbara Sparti, "Introduction" to De Pratica seu Arte Tripudii (On the Practice or Art of Dancing) by Guglielmo Ebreo of Pesaro, trans. Barbara Sparti (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) 53-54.

¹³⁰ Pirrotta 50.

¹³¹ Pirrotta 54-55.

¹³² Michel 119.

¹³³ Dates for these dance masters come from both Artur Michel 120-123, and Otto Kinkeldey, A Jewish Dancing Master of the Renaissance: Guglielmo Ebreo (1929; Brooklyn: Dance Horizons, 1966?) 6.

¹³⁴ Kinkeldey 7.

¹³⁵ Quoted by Julia Sutton, "Late Renaissance Dance," Courtly Dance of the Renaissance, (Nobiltà de Dame) by Fabritio Caroso, ed. and trans. Julia Sutton (1986; N.Y.: Dover, 1995) 21.

- ¹³⁶ Sutton 22.
- ¹³⁷ Kinkeldey 9.
- ¹³⁸ Kinkeldey 10.
- ¹³⁹ Kinkeldey 10.
- ¹⁴⁰ Kinkeldey 10-11.
- ¹⁴¹ Caroso, trans. Sutton 114-115.
- ¹⁴² Caroso, trans. Sutton 97-104.
- ¹⁴³ Caroso, trans. Sutton 113-114.
- ¹⁴⁴ Caroso, trans. Sutton 122-123.
- ¹⁴⁵ Caroso, trans. Sutton 125.
- ¹⁴⁶ Caroso, trans. Sutton 120-124.
- ¹⁴⁷ Caroso, trans. Sutton 118-125.
- ¹⁴⁸ Caroso, trans. Sutton 108.
- ¹⁴⁹ Caroso, trans. Sutton 110.
- ¹⁵⁰ Caroso, trans. Sutton 121-122.
- ¹⁵¹ Caroso, trans. Sutton 105.
- ¹⁵² Pirrotta 55.
- ¹⁵³ Caroso, trans. Sutton 116-118.
- ¹⁵⁴ Caroso, trans. Sutton 110-111.
- ¹⁵⁵ Caroso, trans. Sutton 105-106.
- ¹⁵⁶ "Gran distinzione si deve fare tra i balli che si fanno in terra a quelli che si fanno in scena, poiché quelle vaghezze e sottigliezze, le quali rappresentate da

un che balli in una sala arrecano diletto e meraviglia agli spettatori, rappresentate in una scena non sono godute nella medesima maniera essendo rimirate da persone che si ritrovano chi vicine e chi lontane..." Il corago, 101.

¹⁵⁷ "...maggior diletto arreca il vedere molti in una scena che tre o quattro." Il corago, 101.

¹⁵⁸ "Deve il tempo essere largo, acciò più facilmente si unischino quelli che ballano andare a tempo, essendo molta sconvenevolezza il vedere cadere sul palco con una capirola uno doppo l'altro e non tutti unitamente." Il corago 102.

¹⁵⁹ "...le quattro canzonette del Choro vanno cantate senza fallo, ma vanno parimente ballate, E perché a voi toccherà di fare i balli, vi ricordo che il primo vuole haver poco movimento, e niun gesto. Il secondo, poco movimento anch'egli, ma qualche piccolo gesto di desiderio. Il terzo ha da essere come il secondo, purché variato di partite. Il quarto dee havere alquanto maggior movimento degli altri, e gesti di dolore e di disdegno. Nel fine v'è una moresca alquanto gagliarda, [sic] battuta con haste e con dardi, e dico alquanto gagliardo [sic] e non molto, per lo riguardo che havere

si dee alle Ninfe. Il ballo ultimo d'Himeneo v'è allegro di moto e di gesti, e non molto lento." Quoted in Carol MacClintock, Giaches de Wert (1535-1596) Life and Works, Musicological Studies and Documents 17, (American Institute of Musicology, 1966) 176.

¹⁶⁰ "Accade talora accompagnare il ballo con il canto, perciò secondo che il canto sarà mesto o allegro, tale dovrà essere il ballo; l'allegro si farà con salti, capriole, giravolte e simili, ma il mesto e malinconico non altro che con passi, spezzate, continenze o d'altri simili si potrà rappresentare; perciò spetterà all'uffizio del corago il vedere che il maestro di ballo si confaccia con il canto come anco nelle figure e intrecciamenti osservi le medesime regole che si sono date dei passeggi dei cori..." Il corago, 102.

¹⁶¹ Iain Fenlon, "Music and Spectacle at the Gonzaga Court, c.1580-1600," Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association 103 (1976-1977) 97.

¹⁶² Fenlon, "Music and Spectacle" 97.

¹⁶³ Fenlon, "Music and Spectacle" 99.

¹⁶⁴ Jennifer Nevile, "Cavalieri's Theatrical Ballo 'O che nuovo miracolo': A Reconstruction," Dance Chronicle 21.3 (1998): 357.

¹⁶⁵ Jennifer Nevile, "Cavalieri's Theatrical Ballo and the Social Dances of Caroso and Negri," Dance Chronicle 22.1 (1999): 119-133, is the companion to "Cavalieri's Theatrical Ballo 'O che nuovo miracolo': A Reconstruction," Dance Chronicle 21.3 (1998): 353-388.

¹⁶⁶ Nevile, "Cavalieri's Theatrical Ballo and the Social Dances" 123.

¹⁶⁷ Nevile, "Cavalieri's Theatrical Ballo and the Social Dances" 123.

¹⁶⁸ Nevile, "Cavalieri's Theatrical Ballo: A Reconstruction" 361-362.

¹⁶⁹ Nevile, "Cavalieri's Theatrical Ballo: A Reconstruction" 358-359 and "Cavalieri's Theatrical Ballo and the Social Dances" 124.

¹⁷⁰ Nevile, "Cavalieri's Theatrical Ballo and the Social Dances" 129.

¹⁷¹ Nevile, "Cavalieri's Theatrical Ballo and the Social Dances" 125.

¹⁷² Nevile, "Cavalieri's Theatrical Ballo: A Reconstruction" 372-386.

¹⁷³ Julia Sutton, "Dance: IV Late Renaissance and Baroque to 1700," New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. Stanley Sadie, Vol. 4 (London: Macmillan, 1980) 189.

- ¹⁷⁴ Trisha Brown, director and choreographer, Orfeo by Claudio Monteverdi, Festival International d'Art Lyrique d'Aix-en-Provence, 15 July 1998.
- ¹⁷⁵ Il corago 101.
- ¹⁷⁶ Iain Fenlon, Music and Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Mantua, Vol. 1, Cambridge Studies in Music (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) 84.
- ¹⁷⁷ Christopher Hibbert, Florence: The Biography of a City, A Viking Book, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993) 2.
- ¹⁷⁸ Hibbert, Florence 13-14.
- ¹⁷⁹ Hibbert, Florence 41-42.
- ¹⁸⁰ Hibbert, Florence 30.
- ¹⁸¹ Hibbert, Florence 84.
- ¹⁸² Hibbert, Florence 128-129.
- ¹⁸³ Hibbert, Florence 129.
- ¹⁸⁴ Hibbert, Florence 101-102.
- ¹⁸⁵ Hibbert, Florence 168.
- ¹⁸⁶ Hibbert, Florence 175.
- ¹⁸⁷ Roy Strong, Splendour at Court: Renaissance Splendour and Illusion, (London: 1973), quoted by Hibbert, Florence, 190.
- ¹⁸⁸ Hibbert, Florence 189.

- ¹⁸⁹ A.M. Nagler, Theatre Festivals of the Medici: 1539-1637 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964) 1-2.
- ¹⁹⁰ Saslow 49.
- ¹⁹¹ Saslow 177.
- ¹⁹² Nagler, Theatre Festivals 72.
- ¹⁹³ Girolamo Bargagli, La Pellegrina (The Female Pilgrim), trans. Bruno Ferraro, Carleton Renaissance Plays in Translation (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1988)
- ¹⁹⁴ Nagler, Theatre Festivals 74-78.
- ¹⁹⁵ Nevile, "Cavalieri's Theatrical Ballo: A Reconstruction" 257.
- ¹⁹⁶ Nagler, Theatre Festivals 80-82.
- ¹⁹⁷ Nagler, Theatre Festivals 82-84.
- ¹⁹⁸ Saslow 182.
- ¹⁹⁹ Nagler, Theatre Festivals 84-87.
- ²⁰⁰ Nagler, Theatre Festivals 87-88.
- ²⁰¹ Saslow 157-158.
- ²⁰² Nagler, Theatre Festivals 89.
- ²⁰³ Nevile, "Cavalieri's Theatrical Ballo: A Reconstruction" 358.
- ²⁰⁴ This is the date which is discussed at length and ultimately determined to be most likely in Pirrotta, 3-6.

- ²⁰⁵ Fenlon, Music and Patronage 12.
- ²⁰⁶ Fenlon, Music and Patronage 10-13.
- ²⁰⁷ D. S. Chambers, Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance, (London: Macmillan, 1970) 112.
- ²⁰⁸ Romain Rolland, Some Musicians of Former Days (1915; New York: Benjamin Blom, 1971) 28-35.
- ²⁰⁹ Pirrotta 19-21.
- ²¹⁰ Fenlon, Music and Patronage 12.
- ²¹¹ Julia Cartwright, Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua 1474-1539: A Study of the Renaissance, (London: John Murray, 1903) 75.
- ²¹² Letters of Ludovico Gonzaga, 15 April 1458 and of Andrea Mantegna, 13 May 1478, in Chambers, Patrons and Artists 116-120.
- ²¹³ Lodovico Ariosto, Orlando Furioso, Vol. 1, 3rd ed. (Firenze: Felice Le Monner, 1854) Canto 13.59. 243.
- ²¹⁴ Cartwright 74-75.
- ²¹⁵ Selections from Isabella d'Este's and her agents' correspondence with these artists translated in Chambers, Patrons and Artists 124-142.
- ²¹⁶ Egon Verheyen, The Paintings in the Studiola of Isabella d'Este at Mantua, (New York: New York University Press, 1971) Plate 5 and plates 11-45.

²¹⁷ Fenlon, Music and Patronage 47-50.

²¹⁸ Fenlon, Music and Patronage 39-42.

²¹⁹ Fenlon, Music and Patronage 121.

²²⁰ Shlomo Simonson notes, in The History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua, (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher Ltd., 1977), "Vincenzo, who succeeded better than any other Duke in extorting great sums of money from the Jews of Mantua in exchange for an 'absolution' and similar rights, was in dire financial straits all his life..."

182.

²²¹ Fenlon, "Music and Spectacle" 91-92.

²²² Fenlon, "Music and Spectacle" 93-94.

CHAPTER ONE
EARLY EXPERIMENTS IN MUSICAL THEATRE

Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the first performances of La Dafne by Jacopo Corsi, Jacopo Peri and Ottavio Rinuccini and the first performances of Emilio de' Cavalieri's La rappresentazione di anima, et di corpo as well his previous musical theatre presentations with texts by Laura Guidiccioni. The earliest attempts to realize a form of theatrical narrative set entirely to music were characterized by a spirit of intense competition, which, it seems, has contributed in no small measure to the confusion around the question of who created the "first" true opera. No less than three factions claim this distinction: Ottavio Rinuccini, on behalf of Jacopo Peri, Jacopo Corsi and himself for the creation of La Dafne, performed in 1598;¹ Emilio de' Cavalieri on behalf of Laura Guidiccioni and himself for a number of pastorals set to music and performed in 1590 and 1595;² and, finally, Giulio Caccini who not only takes credit for the 1598 production of Rinuccini's La Dafne,³ but also purports to have been composing this sort of music since 1585.⁴ It is tempting for historians

to arbitrate this dispute in retrospect, but with all of the music lost for the Cavalieri works and only fragments of the Corsi-Peri-Rinuccini collaboration extant, there is not enough evidence to make a credible judgment. Rather, each of the works should be examined in terms of its individual contribution to the development of opera. None should be either overlooked or dealt with in a cursory fashion. The importance of works with lost scores but with librettos and contemporary descriptions extant, and works which do not fit neatly into a theory that sees the development of theatrical music as a departure from medieval conventions, may be clarified when they are considered from a theatrical as well as musical point of view.

The 1598 production of La Dafne by Jacopo Peri and Jacopo Corsi with a libretto by Ottavio Rinuccini is an example of an important precedent with a lost score. It is a work that came about as a "trial"⁵ to see if it was possible to revive the manner in which "ancient Greeks and Romans, in representing their tragedies upon the stage, sang them throughout."⁶ Tim Carter claims that La Dafne was created as a counter-attack to Emilio de' Cavalieri's contention that, in his musical pastorals Il Satiro and La disperatione di Fileno with texts by Laura

Guidiccioni, he had been the first to recreate the tragic style used by ancient Greeks and Romans. The idea that a Roman interloper in Florence had quickly succeeded where Florentines had long been struggling was intolerable. Carter goes so far as to conclude that, if it were not for Cavalieri, La Dafne might not have been written.⁷ La Rappresentazione di anima, et di corpo by Emilio de' Cavalieri with a libretto by Padre Agostino Manni,⁸ first produced in 1600, is a very musical sacra rappresentazione. It seems to be Cavalieri's attempt to metamorphose into opera a form which, in Nino Pirrotta's words, had either too much music in it or too little: too much if you consider as music "intoned recitation of dialogue" and too little if you count only those instances in which characters actually sing a hymn, a prayer or a song.⁹

Pirrotta convincingly argues against Angelo Solerti and Romain Rolland's suggestion that opera evolved slowly from sacra rappresentazione through Angelo Poliziano's La Fabula d'Orfeo, becoming secular over time. He also takes umbrage at what he calls the "widespread misunderstanding"¹⁰ that court opera was the result of discussions of a certain small circle of learned gentlemen in Florence. In contrast, he emphasizes the

diversity of influences of which sacra rappresentazione and the Florentine Camerata were but two.

If the Corsi-Peri-Rinuccini La Dafne served as an experiment for theories regarding the manner in which modern music could recreate the style of ancient Greek and Roman sung recitation, then Cavalieri's La Rappresentazione di anima, et di corpo incorporated the spectacle of sacra rappresentazione in a religious opera that forged a link between medieval theatrical practice and the ideas of the Florentines. It was Cavalieri who first used the term recitar cantando in the subtitle to the published score of La Rappresentazione di anima, et di corpo, but Pirrotta insists on a difference between the accomplishment of Cavalieri and those of Peri and Caccini. The former created a new genre distinction. The latter were concerned with a new style of singing.¹¹ G.B. Doni, some forty years after the operas were first performed, dismissed Cavalieri's as "ariette, with a great deal of artifice, many repetitions, echoes, and similar traits,"¹² or "little songs which have nothing to do with the good and true theatrical music."¹³ Barbara Russano Hanning, in examining Rinuccini's poetry and that of Agostino Manni to whom the libretto of La rappresentazione di anima, et di corpo is attributed,

notes that in each case the style of the poetry is determined by the musical intention of the composer.¹⁴ Cavalieri was primarily concerned with the beauty of the music and hence Manni's verse tends to be stylized and regular. For Peri, who wanted to imitate human inflections, Rinuccini developed a much more flexible style.¹⁵

Jacopo Corsi

Jacopo Corsi was the patron who both sponsored and participated in the composition of La Dafne. Of noble lineage, his family's fortunes rose only in the middle to late sixteenth-century. Prior to that the Corsi's economic base and position in society were unstable. The family had been considered part of an anti-Medicean faction during the fifteenth-century and, suspected of treason early in the sixteenth, Corsi's ancestors Jacopo di Simone and his son Francesco were executed. The family's fortunes did not begin to improve until 1556 when Corsi's uncle Simone, another of Jacopo di Simone's sons, was admitted to the Florentine Senate.

Simone's appointment brought his brother Giovanni back to Florence, where, in 1560, he married Alessandra della Gherardesca, daughter of Conte Simone della

Gherardesca. The following year she gave birth to their first son, Jacopo. A sense of upward social and financial mobility characterized Jacopo's young life and he and his brothers received a broad education. Not only were they taught writing and arithmetic, but they were also placed under the care of a private tutor, Ser Francesco Olmi, who provided them with a humanist education. They had a visiting music master and the Florentine madrigalist Luca Bati was one of several musicians hired to teach them singing, keyboard playing and music theory.¹⁶ Corsi went on to study with the musician Baccio Palibotria-Malespina and was taught keyboard by "messer Simone," organist of San Giovanni from 1575-1578, and subsequently by Cristofano Malvezzi,¹⁷ maestro di cappella of the Duomo and San Giovanni Battista and organist of San Lorenzo. Next to Alessandro Striggio, father of the librettist for Monteverdi's Orfeo, Malvezzi was "the most important musician in the city."¹⁸ Corsi eventually built up a large collection of instruments, sang, composed¹⁹ and "developed a passion for dancing."²⁰

In adulthood, he became known as a connoisseur of the arts and as a supporter, often in very tangible ways, of artists. His home was considered:

...almost like a public academy, [always open] to those who studied or enjoyed the liberal arts. Knights, letterati, poets and distinguished musicians would gather there: and especially lodged and cared for were Tasso, Chiabrera, Marino, Monteverdi, Muzio Efrem and many others of the same order. In the palace, cocchiate, feste, and balli were performed and rehearsed."²¹

Palisca infers that his home was a second "camerata," quite separate or "even opposed" to that of Count Giovanni Bardi.²² Nino Pirrotta dismisses both this idea and Angelo Solerti's suggestion of a third "camerata" centring around Emilio de Cavalieri. Pirrotta argues that the term "camerata" should be applied only to the group which met in Bardi's home.²³ Palisca defines Bardi's group as one primarily involved in discussion on learned topics, with some music-making of an amateur nature on the side, while Corsi's was "a kind of semi-professional musical and dramatic workshop" with theatrical experimentation as its primary focus.²⁴ Tim Carter contends that there was a great deal of overlap between the memberships of the various groups. Corsi and Bardi lived in the same quarter of the city, belonged to

the same confraternities and had a relationship with one another that was both financial and social.²⁵

Corsi's relationship with the circle of artists who frequented his palace was financial as well as social. He often lent money to artists without charging them interest and, when they were unable to pay back the capital, turned the loan into a gift. Ottavio Rinuccini, author of the libretto for La Dafne as well as Euridice was greatly in debt to Corsi at the time of Corsi's death in 1602.²⁶

Jacopo Peri

Jacopo di Antonio di Francesco Peri, also known as "lo Zazzerino" because of his mane of blonde hair,²⁷ was born in Florence on the 20th of August 1561. He later claimed Rome as the city of his birth, perhaps considering it politically expedient to do so. When Ferdinando I came from Rome to take power after the death of his unpopular brother Francesco, being a Florentine was considered a disadvantage.

By the age of twelve Peri was employed singing laudi at the Servite monastery of Santissima Annunziata. Sometime before he turned sixteen he too became a pupil of Cristofano Malvezzi.²⁸ In 1579 he was appointed

organist at the Badia and joined the choir at San Giovanni Battista. Four years later, when Girolamo and Giulio Rossi produced Giovanni Fedini's Le due Persilie for the entertainment of the Princesses, Peri provided the music for the first intermedio.²⁹

By the 1580s Peri enjoyed a considerable reputation as a tenor. Sought out in court circles, he had gone to Mantua at the request of Eleonora de' Medici, wife of Prince Vincenzo Gonzaga. Nonetheless, through most of the decade he only managed to eke out a living and therefore solicited a permanent position in the Medici court, finally appearing on its payrolls in September 1588.³⁰ In the following year, he took part in the intermedi performed between the acts of Girolamo Bargagli's comedy La Pellegrina produced as part of the festivities for the marriage of Ferdinando I de' Medici and Christine of Lorraine. Specifically, he performed the part of Venus in the first intermedio³¹ and the role of the poet Arion in the fifth intermedio. Accompanying himself "with marvelous art" on the chitarrone, he sang an aria the music for which he himself had composed.³² Tim Carter sums up his analysis of the music for the aria by characterizing Peri as a "conservative" composer. His setting was noteworthy not for its uses of dissonance and

awkward juxtaposition of chords, but rather for its "restraint." Although the poem was an emotional one, Peri did not indulge in the use of suspensions and dissonances, but rather, allowed the words to carry the impact.³³

Once he had secured a position in the Medici court, he remained in its employ until his death on or before August 12, 1633. Aside from the score to Euridice and a collection of music for one or more voices and continuo entitled, Le varie musiche (1609), little of his music survives. All that is left of the score of La Dafne are a few fragments.³⁴

Ottavio Rinuccini

On January 20, 1562, Ottavio Rinuccini was born into a noble Florentine family prominent in cultural and diplomatic affairs since the thirteenth century. He began writing verses for court entertainments as early as 1579 and was a member of the Accademia Fiorentina as well as the Accademia degli Alterati. There is no evidence that he attended meetings of Giovanni Bardi's Camerata, but both Bardi and Jacopo Corsi were also members of the Alterati. Rinuccini worked on the six intermedi of the 1589 production of La Pellegrina. The third intermedio

depicts the battle between Apollo and the dragon, Python, and this became the basis for the opening scene of La Dafne. Barbara R. Hanning characterizes Rinuccini's contribution to early opera as the development of a verse form suited to Peri's recitative.³⁵

Rinuccini continued his association with Peri and Corsi through the 1600 production of Euridice and collaborated with Claudio Monteverdi for the 1608 production of Arianna in Mantua. At that same time, Marco da Gagliano composed a version of La Dafne for which Rinuccini revised the libretto. He also collaborated with Monteverdi on the Mascherata dell'ingrate. His last libretto, Narciso, languished for want of a willing composer. Outstanding among the sonnets, canzoni, madrigals and pastoral and sacred works which he wrote in his final years are Zefiro torna and Lamento della ninfa set by Monteverdi. Rinuccini died in Florence in 1621.

La Dafne

According to Jacopo Peri, preparations for La Dafne were already underway in 1594 when he was approached by Jacopo Corsi and Ottavio Rinuccini to compose the music. The objective was to see if contemporary music could

imitate "speech in song" in the manner of ancient Greek and Roman tragedy. A few years later, in the Preface to Euridice, Peri described an "intermediate form" that is not quite music, but is more "harmonic" than speech. He had observed that in normal speech, some words are "so intoned that harmony can be based upon them." Between these words with harmonic potential there are words that cannot be described in this manner. Peri decided that, if he caused the bass line to move in time to the passions, holding it firm through the harmonic and non-harmonic tones that occur in the recitative, he would create a situation in which dissonance would be passed through quickly on the way to consonance, which was expressed in words that were "intoned," that is, sustained on a single note. He concluded, however, that, though this cannot be proved to be the manner in which ancient Greeks and Romans sang in the theatre, it is the only way that the music of the late 16th century could be adapted to speech.³⁶

The result of the experiment was so successful, it was repeated three times. During Carnival 1598³⁷ a private performance was given "in a small room,"³⁸ presumably in Jacopo Corsi's home. In attendance were "Don Giovanni de' Medici and some of the leading

gentlemen"³⁹ of Florence. The following year, "taking courage" from the success of the first performance, the work was revised and again presented in Jacopo Corsi's home in the presence, this time, of the Grand Duchess and Cardinals Dal Monte and Montaldo.⁴⁰ The third performance took place a year later, but now on a "most noble stage,"⁴¹ the Hall of Statues in the Pitti Palace,⁴² in front of the Grand Duchess, Queen Maria Medici, the Cardinal legates and numerous princes and lords of both Italy and France.⁴³ It was performed once again in 1604 before the Duke of Parma while he was visiting Florence.⁴⁴

The libretto was published in 1600 by Giorgio Marescotti.⁴⁵ The score is lost but for six fragments which Tim Carter reproduces in Volume Two of Jacopo Peri 1561-1633: His Life and Works. There are no descriptions of the performances themselves. The creation of an historicized ideal performance text, therefore, must rely to a great extent on the internal evidence of the libretto. The music fragments may not, in themselves, give a clear picture, but Carter stresses that Peri was fond of reworking old material and he suggests that Peri reworked music from the chorus "Almo Dio, ch'il carr'ardente" for "Se de' boschi i verdi onori" in Euridice and "Chi da' lacci d'amor vive disciolto" for

"Torna, deh, torna, pargoletto mio" from Rinuccini's Mascherata di ninfe di Senna.⁴⁶ Hence, taken together with his later work, the latter may provide some idea of the sound of this opera.

James Saslow suggests that Rinuccini adapted his libretto from the text for the third intermedio of 1589. He thinks that Bernardo Buontalenti probably designed the stage sets, re-using some of the set pieces, including the fire-breathing dragon, which had been in storage for almost a decade.⁴⁷ Certainly both the intermedio and the opera begin with the same incident and it is possible that for the third performance in the Pitti Palace elements from the intermedio might have been utilized. It is questionable whether Corsi would have gone to such trouble and expense for the earlier performances in his house. They were likely modest, especially given eye-witness Pietro de' Bardi's evidence that the first performance took place "in a small room." Bardi goes on to say that the work was "sung to the accompaniment of a consort of instruments."⁴⁸ What all this adds up to, then, is a gradual increase in both confidence and complexity, climaxing with an elaborate performance on a large stage utilizing, perhaps, some of the settings that had been created for the opulent wedding production of

1589. The marvels of the intermedi are not necessarily called for in the libretto, which could have been staged quite simply.

There may or may not have been a front curtain. Because the Euridice begins without a fanfare or musical introduction, it is likely that the music for La Dafne began in the same manner, that is, with the first words expressed in the prologue. These are delivered by Ovid, the writer of the source material, which, as Simon Harris points out, Rinuccini followed quite faithfully.⁴⁹ Because Ovid is neither a god nor an allegorical figure, it is likely that he simply entered, or, if there was a front curtain, as there might have been by the third production, he could simply be found on stage when it went up. He begins by introducing himself, not failing to mention that, in life, he sang his verses accompanying himself on his lyre.⁵⁰ Thus he "taught the art by which love can be kindled in a frozen heart,"⁵¹ an idea that will be echoed by Alessandro Striggio's *La Musica* ten years later. Ovid turns to the audience and welcomes its royal members. The verses here changed according to the occasion. In the 1600 edition of the libretto, he recognizes "l'alta Regina, / Gloria e splendor de' Lotaringi Regi."⁵² He then refers to the musical

experiment that is taking place. "Following the ancient style," he will "clearly show how dangerous it is to denigrate the power of love."⁵³ The "ancient style" is that of the Greeks and Romans who sang or chanted the texts of their tragedies. Ovid ends with a brief summary of the plot and exits.

The chorus enters in a trepidatious mood. Delphi is being terrorised by the dragon Python. The nymphs and shepherds are being told to walk quietly, without disturbing the foliage, so as to not draw attention to themselves. This is quite a different start from that of the 1589 intermedio which began with a dance in celebration of the bride and groom, including the formation of their initials by the dancers. In the intermedio, the entrance of the beast interrupted a happy mood. In the opera, quiet and fear prevail. The shepherds and nymphs pray to Jove to protect them from the monster and as they express their terror, an echo responds. The echo eventually identifies itself as Apollo. The nymphs and shepherds beg him to slay the dragon.⁵⁴ A stage direction follows, indicating that Apollo shoots the dragon, Python, with his bow and arrows.⁵⁵ This stage direction may have been added for any of the performances. For the third performance, with

more resources and possibly the dragon from the intermedio, there may have followed a dance, as in the 1589 version. In that version, the slaying of Python had five phases. In the first, Apollo surveyed the area, considering its advantages and disadvantages as a battleground. In the second, he "antagonized the dragon." The third and fourth stages were characterized by the rhythm of the battle. The former was in "iambic rhythm" and the latter in "spondaic." Finally, after shooting arrows into the rear of the dragon, causing it to fall forward into a pool of its own black blood, Apollo performed a rapid victory dance.⁵⁶ It is possible that eventually Peri or Corsi added music enabling a dance similar to this one to be performed in one of the productions of La Dafne. What is interesting about the libretto, however, is that it allows the possibility of a completely different, and much simpler approach.

Apollo is at first heard but not seen. If the stage direction is ignored, then what follows his being urged to kill the dragon is his entrance. He simply walks onto the stage and announces that the dragon is dead. Since neither the dragon nor the god need to have been seen up to this point, it is conceivable that in at least one of the early performances of La Dafne, the battle took place

off-stage. Eventually, perhaps for the final performance at the Pitti Palace, the dragon from the 1589 intermedi was taken out of storage and made available. However, as the libretto is written, the scene can be performed effectively either with the dragon or without it. It is not necessary for it to have been on-stage, since for the purposes of this story, it is only a subsidiary part of the plot. Inflated from his successful battle, Apollo will denigrate tiny Cupid. The action of the greater part of the opera has to do with his punishment, the defeat of the larger god by the smaller. The concern of this opera is not the joy of love, but its power to humble.

The chorus celebrates the death of Python and extols the merits of Apollo, their liberator. Venus and Cupid enter. In the 1600 edition of the libretto, there are neither scenic divisions nor stage directions nor indications within the sung text that either Apollo or the chorus move off the stage. On the contrary, four lines after the entrance of Venus and Cupid, Apollo approaches them. He patronizes Cupid and Cupid is offended. Venus warns Apollo that it is risky to mock the diminutive love-god's power. Cupid pulls his mother aside and swears to avenge this insult to his dignity.

Venus encourages him and he announces that he must temporarily abandon her in order to seek a timely revenge. Venus is acquiescent. "Go in good cheer, o son, and I will be happy here," she tells him. "It is far too dangerous to have you near me when you are angry."⁵⁷

Angelo Solerti attributes the following song to Cupid,⁵⁸ but Tim Carter, in his reproduction of the musical fragment, attributes it to either Cupid or Venus:⁵⁹

Chi da' lacci d'amor vive discolto
 De la sua liberta' goda pur lieto,
 Superbo no: d'oscura nube involto
 Stassi per noi del ciel l'alto decreto;
 S'or non senti d'amor poco ne' molto,
 Avrai dimani il cor turbato e 'nqueto,
 E signor proverai crudo e severo
 Amor, che dianzi disprezziasti altero.⁶⁰

Let he who lives free of the bonds of love
 happily enjoy his liberty. Not with pride, for
 heaven's high decree seems wrapped in dark
 clouds to us. If today you do not feel love to
 a greater or lesser extent, tomorrow your heart

will be anxious and disturbed, and Cupid, whom you greatly despised, will prove a cruel, severe master.⁶¹

With Cupid having announced that he was departing, there seems no reason to insist that Cupid sang this verse. Therefore, Tim Carter's approach is quite logical. The verse is a comment on the action. Either character could have sung it and, in fact, it may well have gone back and forth between the characters depending on the production and who was singing each role. In any case, both characters have indicated that they will be leaving the stage, Cupid to exact his revenge and Venus to "stroll through these woods."⁶² Therefore, one departs first. The other sings and then departs. The chorus comments on the action.

The chorus creates a transition into the next part of the plot by narrating the story of Narcissus and his metamorphosis into a flower. Thus, they introduce the concept that the consequences of scorned love will be metaphysical. Narcissus's transformation into a flower foreshadows Daphne's transfiguration into a tree.

At this moment the huntress enters, chasing a fugitive deer. Apollo is instantly struck with love. The terminology of Daphne's hunt becomes a metaphor for

Apollo's desire. He approaches her, but she rejects him. He insists, however, that together they could make a delightful hunt.⁶³ Nonetheless, she flees from him to pursue the deer which flees from her. The chorus has witnessed the scene, making it a rather public humiliation of Apollo, which he may have acknowledged with even a backward glance before following Daphne off of the stage.

Venus and Cupid return immediately, the latter exulting over his victory. They return to heaven. Obviously, at this point, in an elaborate production, as the third one might have been, Venus and Cupid could have ascended in a cloud. Probably, it would have begun to descend from above upon Venus's line, "Ma di tornare al cielo è tempo ormai."⁶⁴ It is conceivable that, if the stage were of a more permanent kind, there would already be overhead rigging and a cloud-shaped chariot. If not, a fairly simple device might have been quickly constructed. In Chapters Forty-three to Forty-five of his "Manual for Constructing Scenes and Machines," Sabbattini describes a number of methods of lowering clouds carrying people. In the first, two beams are affixed to the back wall to create a vertical track. A horizontal beam, supported underneath by another beam set

at an angle, runs up and down along the vertical track. The carriage carrying performers would be fastened to the top of the horizontal beam. The whole apparatus then operates via a pulley system. In the second method, two vertical grooves are created at the back of the stage and the cloud is mounted on a beam that runs between them. Once again it is raised and lowered with pulleys. The third method is most ingenious and would have created quite a spectacle. In Chapter 45, Sabbattini describes a system whereby a cloud may be lowered from the back of the heavens to the front of the stage. There must be adequate space, "at least 20 feet," behind the scenery. A beam about twenty-five feet long is attached, at its centre, to a fulcrum, which is fixed to the floor behind the rear curtain or backdrop. At the top of the twenty-five foot beam, the cloud platform is attached. On the other end, a rope is affixed. It runs through a pulley set twenty feet above the stage, but behind the scenery, and another three feet above the stage and, from there, to a windlass. The descent and ascent of this carriage are then controlled by stagehands operating the windlass. If there is not enough room behind the scenery for this method, another one may be utilized. In this version, the beam is fixed to the back wall with a hinge. Once

again, a pulley system is used, but it is operated from beneath the stage.⁶⁵ If either of these systems had been used, a cloud would have appeared from the back of the heavens and drifted to the front of the stage. Venus and Cupid would have then boarded it and its direction would have been reversed, taking them up and back into the sky. All of this stage action would have occurred during the chorus's commentary, the thrust of which is that there is no human heart which is invulnerable to the piercing of love's dart.⁶⁶ This is the reverse of a deus ex machina. Rather than descending in the final moments of a tragedy to restore balance in a world gone awry, Venus and Cupid re-ascend having done their worst to mortal and immortal alike. Now the humans are left to come to terms with what has happened.

The Messenger enters, singing "Qual nova meraviglia/Veduto han gli occhi miei?"⁶⁷ Prompted by members of the chorus, he recounts the story of Daphne's transformation into a laurel tree, following her pursuit by Apollo. The sorrowful god enters. Though Daphne had scorned his advances when she was human, he expresses only the tenderest affection for her, blessing what she has become, and wishing it invulnerability to the assaults of nature, both fiery and frozen.⁶⁸ This is

ironic, because it was precisely Daphne's invulnerability to nature, that is to human nature of which sexual desire and love are a part, which led her to her present condition.

The fragment of Peri's music for this passage indicates that it was composed strophically. Solerti labels it an "aria." The final five bars of the verse repeat. The three verses all dwell on the same material thematically, namely, on Apollo's good wishes for the happy life of the laurel tree. All this indicates that the passage was treated more musically, and that even in this experiment in sung narrative, a combination of recitative and song was already being used.

There is no indication either in stage-directions or in the sung text as to whether Apollo exits or remains on stage once he has finished his aria. Given that the first two performances took place in Corsi's home, it is likely that the production facilities were minimal. There is no reference anywhere to the use of a machine for either Apollo's entrances or exits. Without a spectacular stage effect for his final exit, it seems logical that he would have remained on stage, giving the final chorus a focal point, rather than making a somewhat pathetic exit on foot.

Jacopo Corsi wrote the fragment of music that is extant for the final chorus. It is in 6/4 time and ends the opera on a somewhat uplifting note. The words celebrate Daphne's enduring chastity and equanimity in the face of natural threat. But the song ends with an earnest prayer for the requital of love.

The opera has a quality of plaintive sweetness to it. Apollo shows himself heroic not just in slaying the beast that threatens the idyllic lives of the nymphs and shepherds of Delphi, but also in the face of sexual disappointment. His sentiments are both tragic and noble-hearted. The final appeal of the chorus for the requital of love is an entirely appropriate note for Carnival time. Without the score, it is impossible to say whether there was dancing or whether large stage effects were to be covered by orchestral playing, but the libretto indicates an engaging entertainment that was more coherent though less spectacular than the intermedi of which the court was both familiar and fond. Obviously, it was successful. Rinuccini reports "that it gave pleasure beyond belief to the few who heard it"⁶⁹ and Pietro de' Bardi supports this statement, claiming that the opera left him "speechless with amazement."⁷⁰ Since the production to which he was referring was modest,

taking place in a small room, surely what was amazing about it was not its spectacle, but the form of sung theatre itself. Bardi goes on to say that there were numerous imitators of this form, not only in Florence, but elsewhere as well, including Rome.⁷¹ This last was no doubt a reference to Emilio de' Cavalieri and his production of La Rappresentatione di anima, et di corpo.

Emilio de' Cavalieri

Emilio de' Cavalieri was born in the 1540s into an old and aristocratic Roman family. His mother was Lucrezia della Valle and his father was the same Tomasso de' Cavalieri who, as a handsome youth, had been the object of Michelangelo's poetic adoration. His family can be traced via his paternal grandfather, son of Gabriele Orsini and Giovanna de Militibus (de' Cavalieri) to the Orsini's of the eleventh century and the de Militibus of the early fifteenth century.⁷²

From 1572 onward, he held a series of "quasi-sinecures" either inherited or acquired for him by his family. In 1577, he replaced his grandfather, Mario de' Cavalieri, as organizer of the Quadragesima at the Oratorio del Santissimo Crocifisso in San Marcello. Eight years later, he was appointed one of two deputies

in charge of the construction of a double organ for Santa Maria in Aracoeli, the church which contained his family's vault. The construction of organs turned out to be of enduring interest for him, both in Rome and in Florence.⁷³

Claude Palisca suggests that Cavalieri was director of music for Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici when the latter was resident in Rome.⁷⁴ Ten days after the Cardinal became Duke of Tuscany, Cavalieri wrote him expressing his desire for a position at the Medici court. By February, he was appointed superintendent of all artists except for Bilivelt, the jeweller, and Giambologna, the sculptor. He was given an apartment in the Palazzo Pitti and a salary of 25 scudi.⁷⁵ Nino Pirrotta suggests that this appointment was made largely to undercut the influence of Giovanni de' Bardi who was associated with the unpopular regime of Ferdinando's older brother Francesco and had encouraged the even more unpopular alliance between Francesco and Bianca Capello, a "beautiful Venetian adventuress."⁷⁶ Ferdinando's importation of a number of "foreigners," mostly from Rome, to work in his court aroused considerable resentment. As Giovanvettorio Soderini complained, "The citizen is cast aside, friends have become servants, and

these, slaves. But foreigners more than anyone are welcome and promoted."⁷⁷ Cavalieri was caught up in the general resentment.

Too much should not be made of the antagonism expressed by and against Cavalieri. Certainly, there must have been tension during the preparations for the 1589 celebration of Ferdinando's marriage to Christine of Lorraine. Bardi, who was used to being in charge, was now answerable to Cavalieri. Nevertheless, due to the latter's efficient and fastidious administration, the celebrations succeeded triumphantly. As late as the autumn of 1600, Cavalieri reports on a meeting he had with Bardi in Rome and there appears to be little animosity between the two men.⁷⁸ Cavalieri did maintain some bitterness toward Giulio Caccini whose machinations during the wedding ceremony of 1600 wrested artistic control from him and, when he fled to Rome after the "disgrace" of Euridice and Il rapimento di Cefalo, Caccini became his successor. Cavalieri also expressed anger at Rinuccini's claim to have "been the inventor" of sung recitation, but even here, Jacopo Peri was conciliatory, acknowledging Cavalieri in the preface to the score of Euridice.⁷⁹ He writes as follows: "Signor Emilio del Cavaliere, before any other of whom I know,

enabled us with marvelous invention to hear our kind of music upon the stage."⁸⁰

The works to which Peri was referring were pastorals which Cavalieri composed to texts written by Laura Guidiccioni: Il Satiro and La disperazione di Fileno, both performed in 1590, and Il giuoco della cieca, based on the scene from Il pastor fido and performed in 1595, 1598 and 1599.⁸¹ Caterina Guidiccioni called Cavalieri's achievement an extraordinary mode of singing ("altro modo di cantare che l'ordinario")⁸² and Alessandro Guidotti, in the preface to the score of the Rappresentazione de Anima, et di Corpo, described, La disperazione di Fileno, "in which Signora Vittoria Archilei, whose excellence in music is known to all, reciting, moved [all] to tears, while in the same place the person of Fileno moved them to laughter."⁸³ He described a dance in Fileno in which "three satyrs come to do battle and sing while fighting and dancing to a moresca melody" and one in Giuoco della cieca in which "four nymphs dance and sing while they play around the blind-folded Amarilli, obeying the rules of the game."⁸⁴ Unfortunately, both the music and the texts for these early musical pastorals have been lost.⁸⁵

Cavalieri had not only been employed to supervise entertainments in the Medici court. He was also given

diplomatic responsibilities which took him to Rome beginning in 1591 to negotiate with members of the Sacred College in the conclave following the death of Pope Gregory XIV. He returned to Rome for an extended stay in 1593 and made two more trips to the city in 1597. He was also in the city for four months from December 1599 to April 1600, but this seems to have been a trip made for wholly personal reasons. In November of that year, after the marriage celebrations for Maria de' Medici and Henry IV, Cavalieri moved to Rome permanently but continued to correspond with the Florentine court.⁸⁶

For the last two years of his life, Cavalieri complained of ill health and he died suddenly in March of 1602.

Rappresentatione de Anima, et di Corpo

The libretto for the Rappresentatione de Anima, et di Corpo is generally attributed to Agostino Manni,⁸⁷ a resident priest of the Vallicella.⁸⁸ A laud that he wrote, Anima e Corpo, published by the fathers of the Oratorio in 1577, forms the basis for the text of part of the first act of the opera. Warren Kirkendale rightly argues that it is correct to classify the work as sacred

opera rather than oratorio. It was clearly staged with costumes, movement, dance and some spectacle.⁸⁹

While its theatrical elements owe a clear debt to the tradition of the elaborate sacra rappresentazione, Kirkendale traces the roots of the form of the opera to "Franciscan contrasti-type lauds of the duecento,"⁹⁰ similar to the medieval form of morality play in which abstract concepts became personified as allegorical characters whose conflicts represented psychic struggle. In this case, the struggle is against temptation and toward spiritual fulfillment. The allegorical figures include Time, Intellect, Body, Soul, Pleasure with two companions, Guardian Angel, World, Worldly Life, and Good Counsel. There is a chorus, as well as separate choruses of angels, blessed souls and damned souls. The central concern for Body is how to reconcile his desires with the needs of Soul. He cries out:

Alas, who can counsel me,
 To which of the two shall I cling?
 The soul comforts me,
 My senses transport me:
 My flesh tries me,
 Eternity affrights me.⁹¹

In the first act, Body chooses to go to heaven with Soul rather than enjoy earth's brief pleasures. In the second act, he and Soul triumph over the temptations of Pleasure, the World and Worldly Life. The third act offers them a glimpse of the fate of the eternally blessed and the eternally damned in Heaven and Hell respectively.

The work was first produced in Rome in February of 1600, during Carnival,⁹² in the Oratorio di Santa Maria in Vallicella. It was performed twice, first for fifteen and then for twenty cardinals.⁹³ Alessandro Guidotti's preface to the published score of the Rappresentazione de Anima, et di Corpo leaves little doubt that the work was intended to be staged. How fully realized that staging was in the initial performance is open to question. Clearly, whatever was done was not costly. In a letter written on November 24, 1600, Cavalieri boasts that the rappresentazione cost "six scudi at the most,"⁹⁴ indicating that the original production was modest. It is likely that all the performers were male, though some of the characters are clearly female. Soul, Worldly Life, and Guardian Angels, for example, were all written for soprano voice.⁹⁵

In the preface to the score, Guidotti indicates that the orchestra is not to be seen, but rather, should be hidden behind the backdrop. He lists a number of instruments appropriate for opera: "a double lyre, a clavicembalo, a chitarrone or theorbo...a sweet-toned organ."⁹⁶ However, he also indicates that a full symphony with "voices doubled and a large quantity of instruments" should play "before the curtain falls."⁹⁷ Cavalieri approved "of changing the instruments according to the affetti of the performer."⁹⁸

Prologue

Despite the dust that it would have raised, according to the anonymous stage treatise Il corago,⁹⁹ the front curtain for the initial performance of the Rappresentatione de Anima, et di Corpo was dropped and not raised. Revealed on stage were two boys dressed as Prudence and Caution. They recited a spoken prologue after which the ancient figure of Time entered and the opera began.

Act One

Prudence and Caution set the tone for the first act. In terms of dramatic tension, it never rises above the plaintive. The intensity of the material increases with

each act. Therefore, the first act is subtle. On the other hand, there is a certain bold theatricality in the appearance of ancient Time. There is something carnival-like in this fantastic figure and this quality could have been accentuated in his costume.

Time sings a recitative on the subject of the ephemeral nature of life and the necessity of good deeds. Guidotti comments that "the instruments that are to accompany the singers must wait in giving the first consonance until he starts."¹⁰⁰ It is not clear when the chorus enters, but once they have they remain on stage for the entire presentation. Guidotti once again directs that they should change places at times. Ritornellos and sinfonias offer appropriate opportunities for this sort of movement. In addition, the chorus should stand when singing in order to facilitate gestures. Once they have finished singing, they should return to their places, some remaining on their feet while others are seated. Thus, Guidotti indicates a concern for visual variety in staging. The music is in four voices but can be doubled, so that it is shared by two choruses of four singers each, "the stage being large enough for eight."¹⁰¹ In a largely homophonic chorus in four parts, the chorus elucidates the moral of the act: the wise understand that

the brevity of life serves to allow us to reach heaven sooner. The verses are separated by brief ritornellos. As mentioned above, the chorus may have changed position during the ritornellos, particularly if they were made up of two groups of four.

Intellect enters and sings a recitative about desire. The gratifications of the world are short-lived. Body and Soul begin the dialogue based on Manni's laud of 1577. Body suggests various earthly solutions for Soul's discontent, but finally agrees to pursue the only lasting satisfaction, which is to repose, together, in God. With the words, "Si che hormai Alma mia, / Con teco in compagnia," he removes from his costume "some vain ornament, such as a golden chain, a feather from his hat, or the like."¹⁰² The chorus sings a song of praise to the Lord. Once again, it is in four parts, largely homophonic and the verses are separated by ritornellos. A sinfonia ends the first act.

Act Two

The second act has more drama in it. Body and Soul must fend off several temptations on their heavenly journey. Even Soul almost succumbs. The Chorus begins by repeating the last line of the previous act, "Benedite il

Signor, perch'egli è buono." ("Praise the Lord for he is good.")¹⁰³ Counsel enters to warn the travellers against the deceptions of World and Life. The Chorus, again in four parts with ritornellos between the verses, reiterates his sentiments. Joy is to be found only in heaven.

The mood shifts suddenly with the appearance of Pleasure with two companions. Their song is lively with sprightly ritornellos in 6/4 time. Most of the lyrics are sung in unison, but each verse breaks into a more madrigal-like texture just prior to the cadence. Pleasure and his companions should have instruments in their hands. Guidotti recommends a chitarrone for one, a small cymbal with bells for another and a "chitarrina alla spagnuola" for the third.¹⁰⁴ They accompany themselves and perform their ritornellos and, given the liveliness of the music, it is likely that they moved in a dance-like fashion while they played it.

Body is tempted by Pleasure but Soul is steadfast and drives the cheerful trio off. By Scene Five, Body and Soul are in heaven. What this means is not exactly clear since a later stage direction states that the "heavens open." It is conceivable that the architectural features of the room could have been exploited at this

point. I would suggest that there was an upper part of the stage, a balcony or clerestory decorated to look like heaven. Body and Soul are seen moving heavenward, perhaps on a staircase with landings or platforms that allow them to stop along the way. At the first such stop, they debate whether or not it is wise to resist pleasure. Soul suggests they ask heaven and sings out her questions, to which heaven, as an echo, responds. The questions are designed so that the final word is the answer that Soul desires. For example, when asked, "Does a wise man love worldly pleasure or does he flee?" the Echo responds, "Flee!"¹⁰⁵

Guardian Angel now appears both to congratulate the travellers on resisting temptation thus far, and also to warn them of further battles. The Chorus comments briefly as World enters to tempt Body and Soul and, indeed, even Soul wonders whether it is possible to serve both God and the World. Guardian Angel assures her it is not. Worldly Life arrives to help lure Body and Soul from Heaven. Soul struggles to resist World's determined arguments. Finally, Guardian Angel steps in and suggests that beneath the attractive exterior, World and Worldly Life are undesirable. "Strip off their raiments," she commands. Guidotti describes the theatrical action:

The World and Worldly Life should in particular be richly clothed. When their garments are removed, the clothes beneath, of one, should show great poverty and ugliness; the other should show a corpse.¹⁰⁶

The pair struggles against exposure but fail and Body and Soul together triumph over the temptations of World and Worldly Life. Guardian Angel decides to reward them and at this point, heaven opens and a chorus of Angels, singing in five-parts, invite Body and Soul to enter.

Spectacle was part of the tradition of sacra rappresentazione and one of the most spectacular opening-heavens dates back to Filippo Brunelleschi's fifteenth century design for the Paradise of San Felice. Suspended above the congregation, between two rafters of the church, Brunelleschi arranged a bowl formed of thin laths affixed to an iron star. On the inside of the lower edge of the bowl, twelve children, aged twelve and dressed as angels, were secured on wooden brackets just large enough to stand on. Above their heads were three garlands of tiny lanterns that appeared to be stars from the ground. The beams were covered in cotton to resemble clouds. Affixed to another ring, inside the bowl, was a "nosegay"

of eight nine-year-old angels surrounding an almond-shaped copper structure filled with small lights. This mandorla, as it was called, held the Angel of the Annunciation who descended in it to the stage floor. God surrounded by angels could also be seen on one side of the bowl. The entire apparatus could be hidden or revealed thanks to two large doors on rollers which made a noise like thunder when the doors were being opened or closed.¹⁰⁷

Nicola Sabbattini suggests that a circle be cut in the heavens as large as the desired Paradise. Then concentric circles of wood are cut. The central-most circle is the narrowest. Each one around it gets progressively wider. The circles are covered with clouds. The one in the centre is the whitest. A myriad of lights are hidden behind the circles and the entire apparatus is hidden by a shutter. When the time comes for Paradise to open, the lamps are lit and the shutter is pulled aside.¹⁰⁸

One wonders how much of this Paradise Cavalieri could have afforded with a budget of only six scudi. Clearly, some sort of balcony with an arrangement of well-lit spherical clouds, which could be hidden by a shutter, is called for in the score.

The final Chorus of Act Two has great variety in it. It begins with a solo, summarizing the action up to this point: after life we rise to heaven. A chorus in four parts responds, "That is the inevitable fate of mortals."¹⁰⁹ A brief ritornello precedes a duet. Again the subject matter is the same and the verse ends on the line, "That is the inevitable fate of mortals." It is followed by another ritornello and, a chorus in five parts. When the on-stage singers get to the line "That is the inevitable fate of mortals," the Echo responds, "Of mortals!" The next verse is sung line-by-line by single voices in the chorus, and the Echo responds repeating the final word of each line. Finally, "That is the inevitable fate of mortals" is once again sung by a chorus in four parts and then repeated by an Echo in four parts. With a sinfonia the second act ends.

Act Three

Act Three is characterized by theatrical spectacle and musical variety. It begins with a dialogue between Intellect and Counsel. The former advises Body and Soul to ascend to Heaven, the latter to flee from Hell. Intellect describes Heaven and Counsel describes Hell. The dialogue is punctuated by the Chorus's admonition to

fear the wrath of Heaven, but seek its treasures. In order to emphasize the point, in the second scene the mouth of Hell opens. Counsel calls out to the Damned to describe their state and they reply, "Il fuoco, il fuoco eterno, / Crudel, crudel Peccato." ("Fire, eternal fire, / Cruel, cruel shame.")¹¹⁰ The verse is sung by a single voice and is followed by a Chorus in four parts, "Al foco, al foco eterno."¹¹¹

Given the modesty of the budget about which Cavalieri boasts, the sort of Hell which Sabbattini describes in Chapter 22 of his Manual for Constructing Theatrical Scenes and Machines sounds reasonable. Once again, the architecture of the room would have to have had the correct configuration, but if there was an inner space behind the back curtain or shutters, then this could easily have been transformed into a Hell-Mouth. Two lines of fire would be lit, one just behind the shutter and the other farther back, allowing a safe corridor in which the performers could move and sing while appearing to be in the midst of flame.¹¹² This would not have been the traditional Medieval entry to Hell, shaped like a dragon or mythical beast, spewing smoke and flame out of a mouth large enough for humans to enter and exit, but it would have been effective.

Sabbattini offers a more elaborate Hell-Mouth in Chapter 23. For this version, a large trap door must be cut in the stage floor. Underneath it, on each side of the opening, there is a man with a torch. These torches are thrust violently upward when the trap door is opened so that it seems as if flames are leaping from Hell.¹¹³ This is not a costly design and, if there were no place behind the stage for Hell to be located, it would have been another solution. The one to be chosen would have depended on the depth or the height of the room.

In the following scene, Heaven opens while Hell closes and Intellect calls out to the Blessed Souls to describe their state. Once again, there is a solo verse followed by a line sung in four parts. Soul, Intellect, Body and Counsel sing two six-line verses in four parts about what an error it is not to heed the Immortal Kingdom. Hell re-opens and its terrible conditions are reiterated. Hell-Mouth closes and from Heaven, which has remained open all this time, the Blessed Souls again describe the celestial sweetness of eternal life. The Chorus repeats the verses that were previously sung by Soul, Intellect, Body and Counsel.

Now Hell and Heaven open simultaneously. In the first, a solo voice laments that grief and punishment

never end. The Chorus of Damned Souls repeats, "Never, never, never."¹¹⁴ Hell closes for the last time as a single Blessed Soul exults in the glory that lasts forever and the four-part chorus repeats, "Always, always, always."¹¹⁵

Soul, Intellect, Body and Counsel sum up the message of the opera which is that we should love God, shun the deceitful world, beg mercy for our sins and do good deeds because death comes quickly. In a duet, Body and Soul repeat their desire to ascend to Heaven. Angels, Blessed Souls, Soul, Intellect, Body and Counsel together sing a five-part, mostly homophonic verse of praise to the Lord. The Angels and Blessed Souls sing a verse in three parts before everyone together, both those in front of the curtain and those behind, sing a six-part verse of adoration to God. Once again, it is mostly homophonic, breaking into a madrigal-like texture on the final repetitions of the words "sempiterno Regno."¹¹⁶ There have been madrigal-like hints now and again during the opera, a word started a beat early in one part of a four-part section, for example, but nothing as sustained as this. It is a moment of great beauty.

Intellect invites those who "stand listening" to join in. Another six-part song of praise is performed.

Soul concludes with the thought, "Ch'eterno Regno avrà chi serve a Dio." ("...that the eternal kingdom is for those who serve God.")¹¹⁷ A final chorus in four parts leads to the finale.

The finale may be done, according to Guidotti, either with or without a dance. If no dance is introduced, then the last line of the four-part chorus, "Rispondono nel Ciel Scettri, e Corone," is repeated in an eight-part contrapuntal setting with voices and instruments doubled.¹¹⁸

To end with a dance, the eight-part verse is omitted, and a six-verse and six-part chorus is sung. There are two different settings for the verses and two different ritornellos alternating between each verse. Guidotti describes the dance:

The dance begins with a Riverenza (a slight bow) and a Continenza (a side step), and then follow other slow steps with interweavings and crossings of all the couples with gravity. In the Ritornelli there are four dancers, who dance exquisitely a leaping dance with caprioles (capers) and without singing. And so continue through all the stanzas, always varying the dance. And the four maestri who

dance may vary it one time with a Gagliard, another time a Canario, and another with a Corrente, which will suit the Ritornelli very well. If the stage is not large enough to accommodate four dancers, have at least two: and the dance should be devised by the best dancing master to be found.¹¹⁹

Cavaliere being the choreographer of the famous dance which ended the 1589 intermedi in Florence, there can be little doubt that the initial production of the Rappresentazione di anima, et di corpo ended with a dance such as Guidotti described.

Conclusion

Both La Dafne and Rappresentazione di anima, et di corpo were modest productions but both have major claims with regard to the development of the form. La Dafne was the testing ground for sung recitative based on theories of ancient Greek and Roman theatre music. The discoveries made and the confidence that grew from the warm reception the work obviously received allowed Peri and Rinuccini to go on to create the Euridice which Corsi produced in 1600 for the nuptial celebrations of Maria de' Medici and Henry IV. Early performances of La Dafne

may have included elements of spectacle (and even actual set pieces) from the tradition of Florentine intermedi.

La Rappresentatione di anima, et di corpo formed a link between medieval spectacle and the new ideas of sung recitation that Cavalieri had been in contact with in Florence. Though the creators of La Dafne contributed to the development of sung recitation, it was Cavalieri who coined the term recitar cantando. His approach emphasized the beauty of the music rather than the musicality of the spoken text that was what Peri instead sought to emphasize. Both works were well received in their time and both show evidence of great theatrical excitement.

Endnotes

- ¹ Ottavio Rinuccini, "Dedication" to Euridice.
Translation by Oliver Strunk, Source Readings in Music History: The Baroque Era (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1965) 7-9. Text in Italian in Angelo Solerti, Le origini del melodramma (Turin, 1903) 143-147.
- ² Alessandro Guidotti, "Dedication to Cardinal Aldobrandino" of Rappresentatione di anima, et di corpo by Emilio de' Cavalieri (Rome, 1600), quoted and translated in Tim Carter, Jacopo Peri, 1561-1633: His Life and Works (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1989) 126-127.
- ³ Giulio Caccini, "Preface" to Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle (1614), quoted and translated by Carter, Peri 31.
- ⁴ Giulio Caccini, "Dedication" to Euridice, trans. Strunk 10-12. Text in Italian in Solerti, Le origini 50-52.
- ⁵ Jacopo Peri, "Foreword" to Euridice [1601], trans. Strunk 13.
- ⁶ Rinuccini, "Dedication," trans. Strunk 7-8.
- ⁷ Carter, Peri 126-134.

⁸ Barbara Russano Hanning, Of Poetry and Music's Power: Humanism and the Creation of Opera (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1980) 67.

⁹ Nino Pirrotta, "Studies in the Music of Renaissance Theatre," Music and Theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi by Nino Pirrotta and Elena Povoledo, trans. Karen Eales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 20.

¹⁰ Nino Pirrotta, "Monteverdi and the Problems of Opera," Music and Culture in Italy from the Middle Ages to the Baroque: A Collection of Essays (Cambridge, Mass., and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1984) 235.

¹¹ Pirrotta, "Studies" 243.

¹² Quoted by Hanning 46.

¹³ Quoted by Carter, Peri 129.

¹⁴ Some of Manni's poems were originally lauda texts. See the discussion on page

¹⁵ Hanning 68-75.

¹⁶ Tim Carter, "Music and Patronage in Late Sixteenth-Century Florence: The Case of Jacopo Corsi (1561-1602)," I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance, Vol. 1 (Florence: Villa I Tatti, Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, 1985) 59-60.

¹⁷ Carter, "Corsi" 70.

¹⁸ Carter, Peri 4-6.

¹⁹ Carter, "Corsi" 70.

²⁰ Carter, "Corsi" 65.

²¹ "la casa di Iacopo Corsi, cavaliere fiorentino, era sempre aperta, quasi una pubblica accademia, a tutti coloro che dell'arti liberali, avessero intelligenza or vaghezza. A quella concorrevano cavalieri, letterati, poeti e musicisti insigni: e specialmente vi furono alloggiati e trattenuti il Tasso, il Chiabrera, il Marino, il Monteverdi, Muzio Efrem e mill'altri di tale schiera. In essa si concertavano e si provavano le cocchiate, le feste, i balli accompagnati da musica," Carlo Dati, quoted in A. Solerti, Gli albori del melodramma, Vol. 1 (1904; Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1969) 48. Trans. partially my own and partially from Tim Carter, "Corsi" 67-68.

²² Claude V. Palisca, "The Alterati of Florence, Pioneers in the Theory of Dramatic Music," New Looks at Italian Opera: Essays in Honor of Donald J. Grout (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1968) 9-10.

²³ Nino Pirrotta, "Temperaments and Tendencies in the Florentine Camerata," Music and Culture 218.

²⁴ Palisca, "Alterati" 9-10.

- ²⁵ Carter, "Corsi" 73-74.
- ²⁶ Carter, "Corsi" 70.
- ²⁷ Angelo Solerti, Gli albori, Vol 1, 50.
- ²⁸ Carter, Peri 4-6.
- ²⁹ Carter, Peri 6-8.
- ³⁰ Carter, Peri 10-11.
- ³¹ Carter, Peri 18n.
- ³² Angelo Solerti, Gli albori, Vol. II 33n.
- ³³ Carter, Peri 120-121.
- ³⁴ Howard Mayer Brown, "Peri, Jacopo," The New Grove Dictionary of Opera, 1992 ed., Vol. III, 956-958.
- ³⁵ Barbara R. Hanning, "Rinuccini, Ottavio," The New Grove Dictionary of Opera, 1992 ed., Vol. III, 1345-1346.
- ³⁶ Peri, "Foreword" to Euridice, Strunk 14-15, Solerti 45-47.
- ³⁷ 1597 in the Florentine dating system, which began the new year at the Feast of the Annunciation on March 25th until 1750. Konrad Eisenbichler, The Boys of the Archangel Raphael: A Youth Confraternity in Florence, 1411-1745 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) 10.

- ³⁸ Pietro de' Bardi, "Letter to G.B. Doni" (1634) Le origini del melodramma (Turin, 1903) 143-147, trans. Strunk, Source Readings Baroque Era 5.
- ³⁹ Marco da' Gagliano, "Preface" to Dafne, in Gli albori II, 80-81. Trans. Carter, Peri 32.
- ⁴⁰ Rinuccini, "Dedication," trans. Strunk, 8.
- ⁴¹ Rinuccini 8.
- ⁴² Claude V. Palisca, "Musical Asides in the Diplomatic Correspondence of Emilio de Cavalieri," Musical Quarterly 49 (1963): 348.
- ⁴³ Rinuccini 8.
- ⁴⁴ Carter, Peri 39.
- ⁴⁵ The libretto that I worked from was the one edited by Angelo Solerti in Gli albori del melodramma, Vol. II (1904: Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1969) 74-99. I cross-checked it with Jacopo Peri, La Dafne d'Ottavio Rinuccini; rappresentata alla Sereniss. Gran duchessa di Toscana, dal Signor Iacopo Corsi (Firenze: Appresso Giorgio Marescotti, 1600).
- ⁴⁶ Carter, Peri 145.
- ⁴⁷ James M. Saslow, The Medici Wedding of 1589: Florentine Festival as Theatrum Mundi (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996) 182.

⁴⁸ Bardi, trans. Strunk 5.

⁴⁹ Simon Harris, "The Significance of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in Early Seventeenth-century Opera," Music Review 48 (1988): 12.

⁵⁰ "Quel mi son io, che su la dotta lira / Cantai le fiamme de' celesti amanti" Ottavio Rinuccini, La Dafne, Prologue, lines 5-6 in Gli albori, Vol. II, 75.

⁵¹ "Indi l'arte insegnai come si deste / In un gelato sen fiamma d'amore" Rinuccini, lines 9-10. Text in Gli albori Vol. II, 75. Trans. James Erber, La Dafne di Marco da Gagliano (London: Cathedral Music, 1978) v.

⁵² Rinuccini, lines 17-18. Text in Gli albori, Vol. II, 75.

⁵³ "Seguendo di giovar l'antico stile, / Con chiaro esempio a dimostrarvi piglio, / Quanto sia, Donne e Cavalier, periglio / La potenza d'Amor recarsi a vile." Rinuccini 13-16. Text in Gli albori, Vol. II, 75.

⁵⁴ Rinuccini, lines 29-55. Text in Gli albori, Vol. II, 76-79

⁵⁵ "Qui Apollo mette mano a l'arco e saetta il Fitone." Rinuccini, after line 55. Gli albori, Vol. II, 79

⁵⁶ A.M. Nagler, Theatre Festivals of the Medici: 1539-1637 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964) 83.

⁵⁷ "Vanne pur lieto, o figlio; / Lieta rimango anch'io. /
Che troppo è gran periglio / Haverti irato a canto..."
Rinuccini, lines 144-147. Text in Gli albori Vol. II,
84-85.

⁵⁸ Solerti 84.

⁵⁹ Carter, Peri 376.

⁶⁰ Rinuccini, lines 150-157. Text in Gli albori Vol. II,
84.

⁶¹ Trans. Erber vii.

⁶² "Per queste selve intanto / Farò dolce soggiorno..."
Rinuccini, 148-149. Gli albori Vol. II, 84. Trans. Erber
vii.

⁶³ "E, quando non ti spiaccia, / Farem d'accordo diletta
caccia." Rinuccini, lines 234-235. Gli albori Vol. II,
89.

⁶⁴ Rinuccini, line 275.

⁶⁵ Nicola Sabbattini, "Manual for Constructing Theatrical
Scenes and Machines (Pratica di Fabricar Scene e Machine
ne' Teatri, Ravenna, 1638)" trans. John H. McDowell, The
Renaissance Stage, ed. Barnard Hewitt (Coral Gables, Fla:
University of Miami Press, 1958) 153-162.

⁶⁶ Rinuccini, lines 276-303. Gli albori Vol. II, 91-92.

⁶⁷ Rinuccini, lines 304-305. In Gli albori Vol. II, 92.

⁶⁸ "Non curi la mia pianta o fiamma o gelo, / Sian del vivo smeraldo eterni i pregi, / Nè l'offenda già mai l'ira del cielo." Rinuccini, lines 389-390. In Gli albori Vol. II, 97.

⁶⁹ Rinuccini, "Dedication," trans. Strunk 8.

⁷⁰ Bardi, "Letter," trans. Strunk 5.

⁷¹ Bardi, "Letter," trans. Strunk 5.

⁷² Warren Kirkendale, "Emilio de' Cavalieri, A Roman Gentleman at the Florentine Court," Quadrivium 12.2 (1971): 9.

⁷³ Kirkendale, "Cavalieri" 10-11.

⁷⁴ Claude V. Palisca, "Cavalieri, Emilio de'," New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 1980 ed., Vol. IV, 20-23.

⁷⁵ Kirkendale, "Cavalieri" 10-11.

⁷⁶ Nino Pirrotta, "Temperaments and Tendencies in the Florentine Camerata," Music and Culture in Italy from the Middle Ages to the Baroque (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1984) 223.

⁷⁷ "Il Cittadino sta remesso, gli Amici son diventati Servitori, e questi tramutati in schiavi; ma Forestieri più di tutti graditi, ed antesignani." Giovanvettorico

Soderini, letter to Silvio Piccolomini, 22 December 1587,
trans. Tim Carter, Peri, 20.

⁷⁸ Claude V. Palisca, "Musical Asides in the Diplomatic
Correspondence of Emilio de' Cavalieri," Musical
Quarterly, 49 (1963) 351.

⁷⁹ Palisca, "Musical Asides" 349-354.

⁸⁰ Peri, trans. Strunk 13.

⁸¹ Kirkendale 14-15.

⁸² Kirkendale 15.

⁸³ Alessandro Guidotti, "Preface," Rappresentazione di
Anima, et di Corpo by Emilio de' Cavalieri, trans. Carol
MacClintock, Readings in the History of Music in
Performance (Bloomington and London: Indiana University
Press, 1979) 183-184.

⁸⁴ Guidotti, trans. MacClintock 183-184.

⁸⁵ Kirkendale 14.

⁸⁶ Palisca, "Musical Asides" 340-344.

⁸⁷ Kirkendale, "Cavalieri" 16.

⁸⁸ Claude V. Palisca, "Cavalieri: Rappresentazione de
Anima, et di Corpo," booklet, Rappresentazione de Anima,
et di Corpo by Emilio de' Cavalieri, CD, Polydor, 1970.

⁸⁹ Kirkendale, "Cavalieri" 17.

⁹⁰ Kirkendale, "Cavalieri" 17.

⁹¹ "Ahi! chi mi dà consiglio? / A qual di due m'appiglio?
/ L'Anima mi conforta, / Il senso mi trasporta / La carne
mia mi tenta / L'eterno mi spaventa" Agostino Manni,
Rappresentatione de Anima, et di Corpo by Emilio de'
Cavalieri, facsimile edition (1600; Farnborough, Hants.,
England: Gregg Press Ltd., 1967) Not paginated, but
delineated in sections, section 14. Trans. not credited,
CD, Polydor, 1970.

⁹² Palisca, "Cavalieri: Rappresentatione de Anima, et di
Corpo."

⁹³ Kirkendale, "Cavalieri" 16.

⁹⁴ Emilio de' Cavalieri, letter to Marcello Accolti, 24
November 1600, trans. Palisca, "Musical Asides" 352.

⁹⁵ H. Wiley Hitchcock, "Rappresentatione di Anima, et di
Corpo," New Grove Dictionary of Opera, Vol. III, 1992 ed.
1239.

⁹⁶ Guidotti, trans. MacClintock 184.

⁹⁷ Guidotti, trans. MacClintock 184-185.

⁹⁸ Guidotti, trans. MacClintock 184.

⁹⁹ Il corago o vero alcune osservazioni per metter bene in
scena le composizioni drammatiche, ed. Paolo Fabbri e
Angelo Pompilio (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1983)
116-117.

- ¹⁰⁰ Guidotti, trans. MacClintock 185.
- ¹⁰¹ Guidotti, trans. MacClintock 185-186.
- ¹⁰² Guidotti, trans. MacClintock 186.
- ¹⁰³ Manni, section 16, trans. Polydor 20.
- ¹⁰⁴ Guidotti, trans. MacClintock 186.
- ¹⁰⁵ "Ama il mondan piacer l'huom saggio, o fugge? fugge"
Manni, section 28, trans. Polydor 25.
- ¹⁰⁶ Guidotti, trans. MacClintock 186.
- ¹⁰⁷ Giorgio Vasari, Vite, trans. A.B. Hinds, A Source Book in Theatrical History by A.M. Nagler (New York: Dover Publications, 1952) 41-43.
- ¹⁰⁸ Sabbattini, trans. McDowell 173.
- ¹⁰⁹ "È sorte avventurosa de' mortali," Manni, section 54.
- ¹¹⁰ Manni, section 69, trans. Polydor 34.
- ¹¹¹ "To the fire, eternal fire." Manni, section 70.
- ¹¹² Sabbattini 126.
- ¹¹³ Sabbattini 126-127.
- ¹¹⁴ "Non mai, non mai, non mai." Manni, section 79.
- ¹¹⁵ "Sempre, sempre, sempre." Manni, section 81.
- ¹¹⁶ Emilio de'Cavalieri, Rappresentazione di anima e di corpo, ed. Eike Funck (Wolfebuttel und Zurich: Moseler Verlag, 1981) 131.
- ¹¹⁷ Manni, section 89.

¹¹⁸ Guidotti, trans. MacClintock 186.

¹¹⁹ Guidotti, trans. MacClintock 186.

CHAPTER TWO
COURT CELEBRATIONS IN FLORENCE IN 1600

Introduction

In October of 1600, the Florentine court celebrated the marriage of Maria de' Medici and Henry IV of France and Navarre. As part of the festivities, Jacopo Corsi sponsored a performance of Jacopo Peri's musical setting of Euridice with a libretto by Ottavio Rinuccini. It was a small production far overshadowed by Giulio Caccini's Il rapimento di Cefalo, with a libretto by Gabriello Chiabrera. Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger wrote the description of the celebrations.

Euridice and Il rapimento di Cefalo represent the apex of Florentine activity in early court opera. Peri's setting of Rinuccini's text was not so much an attempt to recreate an ancient form as to discover a new one based on ideas about the old. Il rapimento di Cefalo was an extraordinarily ambitious project both conceptually and physically. Whether conscious of the aim or not, its creators, inspired by the ideas of ancient sung theatre, seemed to be attempting to forge a coherent narrative musical form of theatre directly out of the tradition of the intermedi. In many ways this was an obvious step to

take. If the "wonder of the intermedi" had come to overshadow the qualities of the spoken comedies into which they were inserted, then it would have seemed logical to do away with the comedy altogether and allow a new intermedio-like form to carry both spectacle and story.

The situation is complicated by the existence of Caccini's setting for Rinuccini's Euridice. Though not produced until 1602, it was hurried into print in 1600, making it contemporary with the works created for the wedding festivities of Maria de' Medici. Theatrically, there seems to be little new understanding to be gained from its score or the meagre records of its modest production. Musically, however, it provides not only a record of the sections of the first production of Euridice for which Caccini insisted his music be used, but also a clue to Caccini's musical approach to Il rapimento di Cefalo, the score of which, except for two pieces that made their way into his Le nuove musiche, is lost.

I will begin this chapter by introducing the new personalities who make their appearance in association with the subject of early court opera at this point: Giulio Caccini and Gabriello Chiabrera. This will be

followed by a discussion of Peri and Caccini's differing approaches to the formulation of recitative. A description of the context of the 1600 court celebrations in Florence will introduce the historicized ideal performance texts of the two operas performed during the festivities. In conclusion I will suggest the paradox of these achievements. On the one hand, these two productions represent an apex in the development of Florentine court opera. On the other, they represent the end of it. By 1608, for the marriage celebration of Cosimo II and Maria Maddalena, the entertainments returned to the comedy and intermedi formula that had achieved so much renown in 1589 and significant advancements in court opera took place outside of Florence.

Giulio Caccini

Giulio Caccini was born in Rome on October 8, 1551. He died sixty-seven years later, on December 10, 1618, in Florence. Known as a solo singer, composer, teacher, music theorist and gardener, he was sporadically in the employ of the Florentine court from 1565¹ until his death.²

Caccini came from a humble but creative family. His father was a carpenter. Orazio, his older brother, became a musician in Rome and his younger brother, Giovanni, a sculptor in Florence.³ By the age of thirteen, Caccini was singing as a boy soprano in the Cappella Giulia.

In 1565, he was recruited to Florence to act as a putto musico, in the wedding festivities of Francesco Medici and his first wife, Joanna of Austria. At this point he began to study with Scipione del Palla whom he credits as his master in the "Foreword" to Le nuove musiche.⁴ By 1575, he was a member of the Company of the Archangel Raphael⁵ and by 1578 to 1579, the dates deduced by Claude Palisca for the composition of the Discorso mandato da Giovanni de' Bardi a Giulio Caccini detto romano sopra la musica antica, his relationship with his patron and mentor, Giovanni de' Bardi, was obviously well established.

Over his lifetime, Caccini developed a reputation for being involved in political machinations in the Medici Court. As early as 1575, he became implicated in the tragic events surrounding the death of Eleonora, the wife of Pietro Medici, natural son of Cosimo I, and the execution of her lover, Bernardo Antinori. Caccini read

a letter from Antinori that had been entrusted to him to deliver to Eleonora. Subsequently, he denounced the couple to the Grand Duke Francesco.⁶ After Francesco's death, Caccini's relationship with Giovanni de' Bardi did not stand him in good stead with Grand Duke Ferdinando as Bardi had encouraged the unpopular marriage between Francesco and Bianca Cappello.⁷ Hence, when Bardi went to Rome to act as a "Lieutenant-General of both companies of the Guard"⁸ for Pope Clemente VIII, Caccini followed as his secretary.⁹ Caccini soon returned to Florence, where, in 1593, he was removed from the ducal payroll as the result of his having been involved in a violent quarrel with the jealous suitor of one of his students.¹⁰ A contemporary account of the situation indicates that Caccini believed himself to be the victim of envious rivals.¹¹

Music historian Warren Kirkendale suggests that the reason he was returned to the employ of the court in 1600 was that both his services as composer and those of his family as performers were indispensable to the elaborate plans for the wedding festivities of Maria and Henry IV of France. Never distant from unpleasantness and seemingly discontent with merely composing the music for Gabriello Chiabrera's libretto, Caccini insisted that his

singers sing his, rather than Peri's, music in the Euridice and wrested artistic control from Emilio de' Cavalieri, whose job he was eventually to assume.¹² What is more, as soon as the wedding was over, he hurried to compose and have published his own setting of Rinuccini's Euridice in order to claim precedence as the "inventor" of the new "noble manner of singing."¹³

It appears that Caccini is remembered more for his precipitate bid for immortality than for his opera scores: with the exception of two songs, the music for Il rapimento di Cefalo is lost and that of the Euridice is often denigrated. Warren Kirkendale dismisses it as "clearly inferior to Peri's admirable setting"¹⁴ and Nino Pirrotta denies that Caccini was ever able to "take the decisive step toward writing dramatic music."¹⁵ Kirkendale maintains that Caccini's greatest contribution lay in the field of chamber monody and in the publication of his collection of solo airs and madrigals, Le nuove musiche, in 1602.¹⁶ Caccini published another collection of solo works, Le nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle in 1614.¹⁷ His musical reputation also results from his activities as a singer and performer.¹⁸

Gabriello Chiabrera

Giulio Caccini and Gabriello Chiabrera would seem, at first glance, to have been highly compatible collaborators. A prolific poet and librettist, Chiabrera wrote in a wide variety of genres but has come to be best known as a writer of lyric and dramatic poetry conceived for musical settings.¹⁹ Nicknamed "Il Savonese," he was born on June 8, 1552 in Savona, where he died on October 11, 1638. He was educated in the humanist tradition in the Jesuit College in Rome, but returned to his birthplace when he was twenty, after having been involved in a duel.²⁰ Beginning in 1597, he worked for the Florentine court,²¹ but he also enjoyed the patronage of Grand Duke Carlo Emmanuel of Savoy, Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga of Mantua, and Pope Urban VIII.²²

A member of the Accademia degli Alterati of Florence,²³ Chiabrera also appears in Carlo Dati's list of the names of eminent visitors to the home of Jacopo Corsi.²⁴ After the 1591 publication of a collection of poems, Canzonette, and the 1599 publication of Scherzi e canzonette morali and Maniere de' versi toscani, "he was celebrated as a new Pindar."²⁵ Caccini, Peri, Monteverdi, Rasi and Landi were among the composers who utilized Chiabrera's lyrics.²⁶ His work is also said to have

influenced that of Ottavio Rinuccini and the intimacy of his relationship to musicians associated with the Medici court is attested to by the epitaphs that he wrote for Rasi, Corsi, Rinuccini and Caccini.²⁷

The Art of Story Spoken in Song

Of the three composers responsible for the early experiments in fully musical narrative, Jacopo Peri's approach would seem to have been the most radical. He began with text and sought, in essence, to emphasize in a musical manner the natural inflections of speech. Emilio de' Cavalieri's position was on the opposite end of the spectrum. For him, the pre-eminent value was the beauty of the music and the poetry of the text was to be designed to facilitate that value. Giulio Caccini's position was somewhere in the middle of these two extremes. Barbara Russano Hanning characterizes his style as more lyrical than Peri's²⁸ and the composer himself described his starting point as a reform of polyphony, the inner voices of which were given over to instruments "for the expression of some passion, these being of no use for any other purpose."²⁹ Thus, the words, carried by the top voice only, were not obscured. Though his concern was the expression of the "conceit" of

the words, his starting point was essentially musical. The requirements of melody were allowed to be relaxed in order to serve the text, but his recitative did not emphasize affect with the poignancy that Peri achieved.

Marco da Gagliano credits Jacopo Peri with no less than "the rediscovery of that artful manner of sung recitation which all of Italy admires."³⁰ The word he uses is "recitar cantando," defined by Nino Pirrotta as "a style of singing normally ruled...by the accent and expression of the text and by the needs of the action rather than by principles of musical organization."³¹ Pirrotta further draws a distinction between Peri's "recitar cantando" and Caccini's recitative, which Pirrotta calls, "cantar recitando." As opposed to Peri's recitative, in which the organization of the text as it is spoken becomes the defining factor for the way in which it will be sung, Caccini's is musical in its inception. It is essentially non-theatrical music adapted to the uses of theatrical narrative.³²

The term "recitar cantando" seems to have been coined by Emilio de' Cavalieri in the title to La rappresentazione di Anima, et di Corpo: "...per recitar cantando."³³ Yet, as Barbara Russano Hanning points out, in many ways Cavalieri and librettist Agostino Manni's

objective was the opposite of that of Peri and Rinuccini. Rinuccini's approach to verse was extremely flexible, helping to reinforce Peri's goal of imitating somewhat musically the sound of the speaking voice. In Manni's libretto, however, both rhyme schemes and line length were regular, because Cavalieri wanted the "poetic" elements strengthened in order to enhance the beauty of the music.³⁴ His goal was not to invent a new recitative but rather to amplify the role of music in the expression of narrative.³⁵ It was Giovanni Battista Doni's opinion, in 1648, that Cavalieri did not create recitative, but rather a more musical style characterized by "ariette, with a great deal of artifice, many repetitions, echoes, and similar traits."³⁶ On the other hand, Doni used examples from Peri's Euridice in discussing two kinds of recitative. He classified Daphne's description of Eurydice's death as the "narrative" form of recitative and the Prologue as the "special recitative" style which was halfway between the "narrative" and the "expressive," which he identified with the famous lament from Monteverdi's Arianna.³⁷

Peri himself stated that he was interested in finding something new, though based on ancient Greek and Roman models, claiming to have "discarded every other

manner of singing hitherto heard." He used the term "diastematica," which he defined as "sustained or suspended" and proposed to "hasten it" so that the sound would take an "intermediate course, lying between the slow and suspended movements of song and the swift and rapid movements of speech."³⁸

The manner in which he set out to achieve his goals has two elements in it: points of consonance between the bass line and the melody, and the movement of rhythm of the harmony in accord with the affect. He had noticed that certain words were "intoned," or held at a certain pitch,³⁹ while others were passed over quickly. He moved the bass line according to the particular rhythms with which individual affects were expressed, creating consonance between the bass line and the intoned words, and holding the bass line "firm" under the words which were expressed quickly until it reached the next intoned word and, hence, new consonance. Dissonance, therefore, would be passed over quickly and consonance held. In this manner Peri sought to create a speech-based sung discourse that would "not distress the ear."⁴⁰

Tim Carter suggests that in the 1600 production of Euridice the disturbing effects of dissonance were further reduced because the accompaniment was heard

barely, if at all, by the audience. The instruments may have been restricted to only those listed by Peri in the "Foreword" to the score: gravicembalo, theorbo, lira grande, and large lute,⁴¹ none of which was "sustaining." They were located, moreover, behind the scenes. Carter proposes that if chords were lightly sounded only at the consonances, then dissonances would have occurred as the sound of the bass instrument was dying away. Therefore, their effect would have been very subtle.⁴²

In reconstructing Euridice, the most important factor with regard to the music is the degree to which Peri succeeded in realizing his version of "recitar cantando." It is important to note that, while almost all musical elements are subordinated to this new intermediate form of sung narrative, there are also instances of song, counterpoint, and dance in the score.

When Giulio Caccini wrote, in his "Foreword" to Le nuove musiche that he "endeavored [sic]...to bring in a kind of music by which men might, as it were, talk in harmony, using in that kind of singing...a certain noble neglect of the song,"⁴³ his objective may have sounded very much like Peri's. However, where Peri referred to words that are intoned due to their meaning or the content of their affect, Caccini described how he "passed

or stayed the consonances or chords upon long syllables, avoiding the short."⁴⁴ The difference is subtle but distinct. Both composers were trying to ensure that the poetry could be clearly discerned, but Peri conceived the resulting composition as an almost musical or music-like representation of the way that emotion modified the inflection of the speaking voice. Emotion was not at the centre of Caccini's style. Sound was. Caccini's approach to the passions of the text, however, was by no means generalized, though he articulated it with regard to singing rather than composing. He condemned:

...such errors as he [the singer] most easily falleth into who hath framed to himself a manner of singing, for example altogether passionate, with a general rule...and who does always use them in every sort of music, not discerning whether the words require it.⁴⁵

Barbara Russano Hanning speculates that Caccini's most important contributions to the field of music were in performance rather than composition.⁴⁶ Indeed, his "Foreword" to Le nuove musiche devotes a great deal of attention to the art of the singer. His concern over ornamentation is also relevant to the construction of an historicized ideal performance text of Il rapimento di

Cefalo. He disapproved of the over-use of vocal effects, restricting them to less passionate music, to long syllables rather than short, and to final cadences.⁴⁷ Therefore, from the evidence to be found both in his writing and in his score for Euridice, it can be seen that, though in some ways the reform of court entertainment through the transformation of intermedi into opera would have been enormous, in the hands of Giulio Caccini as well as the other composers whose music was included in the performance of Il rapimento di Cefalo, the results were reminiscent of the intermedi, but rather simplified and clearer. Perhaps, however, such an approach simply did not create enough sound either to fill the hall in which the opera was performed or balance the enormity of its stage effects. As Cavalieri put it, the music was not "proportionate to the place and to the theatre."⁴⁸

The Production of Court Opera in 1600

Court opera's coming of age in Florence in 1600 meant that for the first time not only would major expenditure be put into its production, but also, the prodigious talent and experience of the court's theatrical design team, led by Bernardo Buontalenti,

would be called upon to provide setting and machinery. Buontalenti had worked for the Medici court since 1567⁴⁹ and his name shows up in the description of the 1569 events prepared for the visit of Duke Karl of Austria.⁵⁰ In 1586, he designed the Medici Theatre in the Uffizi⁵¹ and provided the settings for its inauguration during the festivities for the marriage of Virginia de' Medici and Cesare d'Este, Duke of Ferrara.⁵² In 1589, he was responsible for the designs for the lavish wedding festivities of Ferdinando and Christine of Lorraine.⁵³ Michelangelo Buonarroti's official description of the event matches the expectations derived from the collaboration of such accomplished artists as Buontalenti, Chiabrera and Caccini:

...a meritorious spectacle, next to which all others would be less esteemed where they were the result of less ingenuity and less learning, [it] was judged an extremely noble fable in a magnificent setting, with apparatus that was more superb than any other and it was all sung!⁵⁴

Comparing "the most marvellous machinery ever seen in our times"⁵⁵ to marvels of production in ancient Rome,

Buonarroti claimed the stage machines "operated with an ease that was not to be believed"⁵⁶

Evidence from the correspondence of Emilio de' Cavalieri tells a different story. The settings were not "terminated and finished."⁵⁷ The productions "of moderate size did not succeed, and particularly the big production did not."⁵⁸ In addition, in 1608, when co-directing, with Giovanni de' Bardi, the preparations for the wedding of Cosimo de' Medici and the Archduchess Maria Magdalena of Austria, Michelangelo Buonarroti, who had written so flatteringly of the 1600 festivities, warned in a letter that if rehearsals are not sufficient, "things turn out badly, as we have seen years past."⁵⁹ Giovanni de' Bardi was more specific. He wrote, "It is necessary to rehearse extensively, for we do not want things to turn out as they did at the wedding of the Queen [of France, Maria de' Medici]."⁶⁰ Claude Palisca suggests in his article "The First Performance of Euridice," that uncertainty with regard to the final arrangements for the wedding could have been the reason for the productions falling short of their potential. Even though negotiations between Duke Ferdinando and Henry IV of France and Navarre had begun almost a decade before, it was not until the end of August that it became clear that

the major celebration would be in Florence little more than a month later.⁶¹

Maria de' Medici was Ferdinando's niece, daughter of his older brother Francesco and Joanna of Austria, his ill-fated first wife. Ferdinando's purpose in betrothing Maria to Henry was, as in his own marriage to Christine of Lorraine, to strengthen Florence's alliance to France in order to balance the power of the Hapsburg Philip of Spain in Italy.⁶² Negotiations had begun as early as 1592 when Henry was still Protestant and married to Marguerite of Valois. He made a secret agreement promising to convert to Catholicism, dissolve his marriage to the childless Marguerite, and marry Maria de' Medici all in exchange for Duke Ferdinando's financial aid. It took eight years but, in due course, Henry fulfilled his promises. The reconciliation with the Church of Rome took place in 1595 and in the spring of 1599 Marguerite agreed to the annulment of her marriage. The dowry agreement was signed on the 7th of March 1600 and on April 25th the marriage contract was announced in Florence but Henry delayed and created new complications. Negotiations with regard to where the wedding and its accompanying festivities would take place continued up until the end of August.⁶³

The idea of the marriage was a popular one with the Florentine nobility who went so far, in the person of Jacopo Corsi, as to offer to fund part of the exorbitant dowry that Henry had demanded.⁶⁴ Though Ferdinando did not have need of the nobles' financial help, Corsi's reward for his part in the negotiations was to be permitted to contribute to the entertainments for the wedding celebrations.⁶⁵

Christopher Hibbert considers the 1600 wedding celebrations as "the finest" of all the court festivities over which Ferdinando presided,⁶⁶ but James Saslow indicates that Ferdinando was never as liberal in spending on court entertainments as he had been for his own wedding in 1589. Moreover, the mineral deposits in the Pietrasanta quarry were exhausted by 1587 and the wool industry began to decline at around this time.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the Florentine economy of 1600 was still robust and Ferdinando I, despite a reputation for frugality, tended to spend lavishly on spectacles if he felt they would enhance his public prestige.⁶⁸

Reconstruction of the 1600 Performance of Euridice

Materials for the reconstruction of the performance of Euridice come from the score, which was published in

1601. It contains informative prefaces by both Jacopo Peri and Ottavio Rinuccini. The libretto, also extant, was published in 1600.⁶⁹ Angelo Solerti includes the libretto in Volume Three of Gli albori del melodramma along with Michelangelo Buonarroti's Descrizione della felicissime Nozze Della Cristianissima Maestà di Madama Maria Medici Regina di Francia e di Navarra, which contains a page of description.⁷⁰ In his preface to the score of La Dafne published in 1608, Marco da Gagliano also discusses the production of Peri's Euridice.⁷¹

Although it was Buonarroti's job to extol the festivities, the discrepancy between his and Gagliano's praise and his later comments as well as the disparagement of Cavalieri and those he claimed to have spoken to in Rome may have to do with the nature of the performance itself. It took place on the evening of October 6⁷² in the apartment of Don Antonio de' Medici in the Pitti Palace in the hall currently known as the "Sala bianca."⁷³ Howard Mayer Brown contends that the room held "no more than 200 specially invited guests."⁷⁴ Gagliano describes the audience as "the flower of Italian nobility."⁷⁵ In other words, this was a small group of cognoscenti. The performance came out of the experimental tradition of La Dafne. Obviously, only

those who understood its aims could appreciate it. For Gagliano, it was a formative experience. For the Duke of Mantua whose taste for the avant garde had already shown itself in his early desire to produce Il pastor fido, it was the inception for the plan to produce a court opera for the wedding festivities in Mantua in 1608.⁷⁶ That some of the audience would neither understand nor enjoy the production was only to be expected. The Euridice was very much a new kind of court entertainment. It emerged out of discussions and developments that had taken place in Florence over the previous four decades. Even Buonarroti whose job it was to praise the event writes in moderate terms. It had only two stage settings. They were well realized but hardly overwhelming compared to the staged "wonders" of Il rapimento di Cefalo. In the end, Buonarroti concludes, "The whole was consummately performed, honouring everyone who had a part in it and giving varied pleasures to the mind and senses of the spectators."⁷⁷ In other words, it achieved what it set out to achieve and did so in a creditable manner. Those who came to see traditional spectacle would have been disappointed. Those who came prepared to appreciate musical and theatrical innovation, on the other hand, were well satisfied.

In his preface to the score, Peri identifies several of the performers as "the most excellent musicians of our times." They were Francesco Rasi, who sang the part of Amyntas; Antonio Brandi, Arcetro; Melchior Palantrotti, Pluto; and Jacopo Giusti, "a little boy from Lucca" who represented the part of Daphne, "with so much grace." Claude Palisca identifies the remaining singers as: Peri, himself, in the part of Orpheus; Giovannino, a castrato studying with Emilio de' Cavalieri, as La Tragedia; Giulio Caccini's sister-in-law, one of the four members of his household involved in the production, as Eurydice; Fabio Fabbri (possibly) another castrato and student of Emilio de' Cavalieri, as Venus and Proserpina, Piero Mon and the Frate dell Annunziata, as Radamante and Caronte.⁷⁸ Behind the scenes, Jacopo Corsi played gravicembalo, Don Grazia Montalvo, theorbo; Giovan Battista dal Violino, lira grande; and Giovanni Lapi, a large lute.⁷⁹ Three recorders would also have been required for the sound of Tirsi's triflauto.⁸⁰

The direction was probably by Emilio de' Cavalieri. Witnesses attribute the production to him and he himself stated,

To tell you the truth, I was pleased to hear
that all the things in which I participated are

said to have been done by Signor Don Giovanni, and those for which others were responsible and did not succeed they say I did. I replied to this by giving an account of where I intervened.⁸¹

Clearly, Cavalieri was involved to some degree.

Prologue

Michelangelo Buonarroti indicates that there was a curtain covering the "most noble"⁸² stage but he does not mention whether it rose or fell to reveal the setting behind it:

Inside a great arch were two niches, one at each end. In them Poetry and Painting were represented as statues - a nice touch on the part of the designer. Between these a forest was seen, very beautifully rendered through relief and painting. It was bathed with a light as bright as day by well-placed lamps.⁸³

The opera begins with the first words sung by La Tragedia. There is no musical introduction, no toccata, not even a few notes prior to the start of the aria. This makes sense since the objective was to find "an intermediate form" that was neither music nor speech but

was, nonetheless, based on speech.⁸⁴ In such a form, there would be no need for a musical entrée, since it was not music, just as there would be no spoken text in the opera, since it was not theatre. On the other hand, Peri does not sacrifice all musicality to the central idea of through composed sung dialogue. The prologue is composed strophically and there are tiny ritornellos inserted between the stanzas.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the effect of opening the opera on the sound of a barely accompanied singing voice would have been startling.

Just as Jacopo Peri's beginning to the opera score establishes the boundaries of the new form, so too Rinuccini's words attempt to define the modifications that court opera demands of the genre of tragedy. *La Tragedia* identifies herself but immediately announces her metamorphosis. She is no longer the harbinger of "unhappy spectacles,"⁸⁶ but rather the herald of a happier song and sweet delights appropriate to the occasion of a Royal wedding.⁸⁷ In the fifth stanza of the prologue, she pays tribute to Maria de' Medici, returning to the subject of genre in the seventh and concluding by directing attention both to the new queen and the singing of Orpheus.⁸⁸

Scene One

Because there are no scene demarcations in either the libretto or the score published in 1600, it seems that the original was intended to flow as a single unit broken only once for the set changes to and from the Inferno of Scene Four. Nonetheless, scholars tend to divide the opera into five or six scenes. Tim Carter chooses the first option, ending each scene with a strophic chorus.⁸⁹ Solerti chooses the second, beginning each scene with the entrance of a major character.⁹⁰ It would appear wise to follow Solerti's example in order to get a sense of discrete narrative units in the text.

The first scene is organized around Eurydice. Shepherds and nymphs celebrate her marriage to Orpheus. Though this would appear to be a perfect opportunity for a strophic setting, it is through composed. As a result it is likely that static stage pictures were created rather than dance or dance-like movement. The chorus could have arranged itself around Euridice in attractive tableaux and as individual singers stepped forward for their solos the group might have subtly changed its configuration. The mood is happy but because its musical expression is restricted to recitative the tone is somewhat restrained. The only repetition comes on the

line, "Non vede un simil par d'amanti 'l sole!"⁹¹ First, a nymph sings this quote from Petrarch,⁹² and then it is repeated by a shepherd, by Arcetro, and finally, in five parts, by the chorus as a whole.

Eurydice expresses her delight and invites her nymphs to celebrate in a nearby shaded wood. The part of the chorus that Eurydice takes with her as she exits could have used the second and third scene to change their costumes and make-up in order to appear as Infernal Shades and Deities in the fourth scene.

In the original production Giulio Caccini composed the airs that Euridice sang.⁹³ The shift from Peri's style to Caccini's would not have seemed drastic here. Caccini's compositions for Eurydice were pretty, a bit more melodic than Peri's, but on the whole would have blended in reasonably well with the rest of the scene.

The first scene ends on a chorus that is sung and danced by the nymphs and shepherds who remain on stage to wait for Orpheus. In terms of staging, the dance offered the chorus an opportunity to create formations, such as the letter "M" for Maria de' Medici or "H" for Henry IV. These could be altered during the danced choruses between the solo stanzas. Once again, the composition used in the first production was by Caccini.⁹⁴

Scene Two

Orpheus and Arcetro enter. The second scene begins directly upon the ending of the chorus of the first scene, with neither break nor bridge, nor even a change of key.⁹⁵ The tone is curiously plaintive. Orpheus dwells not so much on his current happiness as on the frustration he experienced when his love was unrequited. Now that he has married Eurydice, he expresses only momentary gratitude for the fulfillment of his desires before falling prey to a morose resentment of the slow passing of time.

This is the first reference to time in the libretto. Over the course of the story, Rinuccini is careful to mention time repeatedly in order to reinforce the idea that the entire action is taking place within twenty-four hours. Right now, it is morning. Rinuccini will identify it as such later in the opera, when Orpheus cries at the portals of Hell, "Alas, at dawn the light of my eyes met dusk."⁹⁶

The entrance of Tirsi, singing, dancing and playing a trifle, relieves the depressed tone of the early part of the scene. He may have been miming the trifle to the sound of recorders behind the scenery, an effect similar to that which Marco da Gagliano claims to have

used eight years later in the Mantuan production of La Dafne, where he utilized four viol players behind the scenes so that the sound of Apollo's lyre would seem extraordinary.⁹⁷ Tirsi dances and sings two stanzas, composed strophically and separated by a lively ritornello. Arcetro, Tirsi and Orpheus share some banter. Orpheus's last line cadences on the word "sole" in A-major.

Suddenly, a g-minor chord breaks the mood. Daphne enters, at first unable to elucidate her tragic message. A dramatic dialogue ensues in which Orpheus and Arcetro attempt to convince Daphne to speak.

Finally, she launches into her description of Eurydice's death. Unexpectedly, the first half of her soliloquy is lyrical. Still unable to fully immerse herself in the horror of what has happened, she begins with an idyllic description of Eurydice and her followers in the wood. The imagery is sweet; the bass line keeps a fairly regular measure. Halfway through the description, however, she plunges into the tragic incident of the snakebite and end of Eurydice's life. Now there are more shorter notes, rests, and greater intervals as the music represents her feelings of discomfort.

This is the first of several "messenger" speeches in the opera. Observing rules of classicism and decorum, Rinuccini keeps the action off stage and has it reported rather than shown. While on the one hand, this results in a rather static work, on the other it allows Rinuccini to keep most of the action in a single location and offers opportunities for lyricism in both the libretto and the score.

Orpheus's reaction to Daphne's news is one of shock. "I can neither weep nor sigh," he moans, on a mere three notes, A, B and C over a repeated A in the bass line.⁹⁸ After his initial shock, the tempo speeds up and the intervals increase in size as he expresses grief. But after a pause a whole and a quarter note in length, he resolves to follow Eurydice into death and the music reflects his mood shift modulating into F-major and a more regular metre. "I come, o dear life, o dear death," he concludes with typical Baroque antithesis. He leaves, followed shortly by Arcetro. The chorus ends with a meditation on death. Once again, in the original production, it was Caccini's setting of the chorus that was performed.⁹⁹

Scene Three

The action continues seamlessly. Rinuccini does not make the obvious choice to have the libretto follow his main character, but rather, keeps it in the single pastoral location. Yet he varies the mood. The third scene begins with another "messenger"-type narrative, this time describing the miraculous arrival of a goddess from Olympus to aid Orpheus. In a sense, this soliloquy is the opposite of Daphne's, which began in an idyllic manner and ended tragically. Arcetro describes Orpheus's grief-stricken journey to the site of his beloved's demise. Finding, at last, the blood-soaked patch of grass where she fell, he throws himself upon the ground to weep. At this moment, in a chariot drawn by twin doves, a goddess descends from the upper atmosphere and reaches out to Orpheus. Orpheus is consoled and the chorus reflects homophonically on Heaven's intercession in human life. A solo shepherd adds the suggestion that they go to the temple to pray. The chorus responds with a repetition of the line, "Let us go and raise our voices and heart in song to heaven."¹⁰⁰ The final chorus is in five parts. At the end of it, the performers leave the stage and the scene changes to the Inferno.¹⁰¹

Scene Four

No music covered the scene change, because, once again, in this opera there was very little music that was not sung. Michelangelo Buonarroti described the setting as follows:

...when a hell was represented, these woods changed into horrible and frightening masses that seemed real. The twigs looked bare and the grasses livid. Further upstage, through the opening of a large rock the city of Dite could be seen burning, tongues of flame vibrating from the windows of its towers, the air all around blazing with a brassy colour.¹⁰²

This account sounds very much like Sabbattini's design for the Inferno in Chapter 22 of his Manual. It is also similar to that which may have been used in Cavalieri's Roman production of La rappresentazione di anima et di corpo. An inner space behind the back curtain or shutters would have opened. As discussed above (pages 49-50) two lines of fire would be lit, creating a safe corridor for the performers who would nonetheless appear to be in the midst of flame.¹⁰³ At the very back, a painting of the "city of Dite" would have shimmered in the brassy light of the flames.

The device that was used to change the scene is open to question. Nagler quotes Rinuccini's libretto, which at the close of Scene Four uses the verb rivolgersi, which he takes to mean, "turning itself about," perhaps indicating the use of periaktoi,¹⁰⁴ the three-sided prisms associated with ancient Greek theatre and described in Chapter Seven in the second book of Nicola Sabbattini's Manual for Constructing Theatrical Scenes and Machines (described above, page 49).

However, the reference to the possible use of periaktoi exists only in the libretto, which in all likelihood was published before the performance so that it could be distributed to the first audience. Tim Carter lists no less than thirty-two textual discrepancies between the libretto and the score and suggests that Peri and Rinuccini agreed upon these changes, but that the latter did not consider them significant enough to include in the libretto.¹⁰⁵ It is also possible that the libretto was completed and sent to the printer while changes were still being made in the rehearsal process. Therefore the libretto does not offer conclusive proof that the settings were painted on periaktoi and it is more likely that the methods used to change from the pastoral scene to that of the Inferno

would have been the relatively simple ones described by Sabbattini in chapters 5 and 6 of the second book of the Manual for Constructing Theatrical Scenes and Machines.

The new scene would have been painted on cloth to be drawn over the frames representing the previous setting or on frames that would slide in grooves in front of the frames depicting the pastoral locale.¹⁰⁶

Rinuccini was concerned that he was breaking the unity of place by changing the scene. Therefore, in his "Dedication" to the libretto, he explained, "I have followed the authority of Sophocles in his Ajax in introducing a change of scene, being unable to represent otherwise the prayers and lamentations of Orpheus."¹⁰⁷

Venus leads Orpheus into this blazing underworld. The otherworldly effect of their silhouettes against the fiery background of the Inferno and the city of Dite is not difficult to imagine. Venus has raised Orpheus's spirits but she must now leave him to "pray, sigh and weep so that the force of his sweet lamentation which moved Heaven might sway Hell."¹⁰⁸ She departs and the mood of the scene descends to one of great despair.

Orpheus sings three unequal stanzas describing his grief and imploring the gods of the underworld for pity. Each section ends on the line, "Weep for my lament,

Shades of Hell."¹⁰⁹ Marco da Gagliano described Jacopo Peri's performance as Orpheus thus:

I will say that no one can fully appreciate the sweetness and the power of his airs who has not heard them sung by Peri himself, because he gave them such a grace and style that he so impressed in others the emotion of the words that one was forced to weep or rejoice as the singer wished.¹¹⁰

The power of Orpheus's plaint, therefore, was clearly reinforced by Peri's performance.

When or how Pluto enters is not indicated. It would have been stunning if his deep bass voice resounded from the inner stage behind a curtain of flames but it is likely that he entered from the side of the stage opposite to that which Venus used for her exit. He and Orpheus engage in a debate over whether the laws of the underworld may be bent to allow Eurydice to return to life. Pluto's intransigence increases the length of the debate, building emotion and suspense. At moments he seems to be swayed by a new affect inspired in his breast by Orpheus's soft and sweetly sung words. Yet he resists the temptation to yield to the demi-god's request. Proserpine intercedes on Orpheus's behalf, but still

Pluto is unmoved. Finally, when Charon too adds his weight to Orpheus's argument, Pluto agrees unconditionally to Eurydice's release.

Here is Rinuccini's greatest modification to the mythical source and, once again, he felt it necessary to explain himself:

To some I may seem to have been too bold in altering the conclusion of the fable of Orpheus, but so it seemed fitting to me at a time of such great rejoicing, having as my justification the example of the Greek poets in other fables. And our own Dante ventured to declare that Ulysses was drowned on his voyage, for all that Homer and the other poets had related the contrary.¹¹¹

Orpheus rejoices but briefly, in a mere three lines, and it is left up to the Chorus of Shades and Infernal Gods to celebrate his triumph. This chorus as presented in the first performance was composed by Caccini and was sung mostly in unison.¹¹²

Scene Five

The setting returns to its original state.¹¹³ If the chorus of Shades and Infernal Gods stayed within the

inner stage area, they would have instantly been hidden as the shutters or curtains in front of it closed. If periaktoi had been used, they would have revolved to their previous position. If the setting had merely been covered, it would have been uncovered at this point.

The mood at the beginning of the scene is one of uncertainty. Although the audience is aware of Orpheus's achievement, the characters within the story have no idea whether he is still alive or has perished in his quest despite the goddess's aid. In the libretto, Rinuccini exploits this uncertainty, following the recommendations of Giraldi who stated that even tragedies that ended happily had to sustain a mood of suspense.¹¹⁴ Rinuccini maintains it as long as possible. Arcetro confides his worries to the Chorus of Nymphs and Shepherds who attempt to reassure him.

Aminta enters with the happy tidings that the lovers have both returned from the Underworld, but the anxiety of the on-stage characters is not relieved. They do not believe him. Arcetro accuses Aminta of behaving like a madman, indulging in fantasy in order to cheer up his friends.¹¹⁵ In another "messenger" speech Aminta reports that, while he and a group of shepherds were consoling the bride's parents, Orpheus and Eurydice suddenly

appeared. Finally convinced, Arcetro responds with the pathetic conceit that the sky is responding to Aminta's words with sunset colours more glorious than those of dawn.¹¹⁶

Once again, this is a reference to the time frame of the opera. If it began at Dawn, as Orpheus implied in his lament in the Underworld, then, now, at Dusk, it ends, well within a twenty-four hour time limit. There is no chorus at the end of Scene Five. The bridge from uncertainty to joy has been achieved by Arcetro's final speech and the stage is set for the return of the happy lovers.

Scene Six

In a joyous mood, Orpheus and Eurydice enter with a Chorus of Nymphs and Shepherds, likely those who had previously performed the roles of Infernal Shades and Deities. The dialogue recapitulating what has happened is kept brief and the opera ends on a long chorus that is both sung and danced.

The instructions for the performance of "Biondo arcier" are quite specific. For the first two five-part stanzas the entire chorus is directed to both sing and dance.¹¹⁷ It is possible that what was meant was that a

corps of dancers were to perform at the same time as the singers, but it seems more likely that the chorus did sing and dance simultaneously. It would have taken skill, since the chorus is written in counterpoint. The third stanza is in three parts and is to be sung without any dancing. It is followed by several repetitions of a ritornello to be danced to by two soloists.¹¹⁸ The ritornello is very spirited and would have called for a choreography full of quick small steps, leaps, capriole and turns. Two more stanzas in five parts are sung and danced. Then a stanza in three parts is sung, this time by tenors.¹¹⁹ The opera concludes with a final two stanzas in five parts, sung and danced by the entire ensemble.

In order to reassure readers in perpetuity of the accuracy of the score, text and stage directions, Peri concludes his work with the sentence, "And thus, just as described was the performance given."¹²⁰

Il rapimento di Cefalo

Although Il rapimento di Cefalo was the major presentation of the 1600 festivities for the marriage of Maria de' Medici and Henry IV of France and Navarre, its score was never published and is assumed lost.

Construction of an historical ideal performance text, therefore, rests on the libretto, which is included in Angelo Solerti's Gli albori del melodramma, Volume III, along with eighteen pages of Michelangelo Buonarroti's description of the event. In The Court Musicians in Florence during the Principate of the Medici, Warren Kirkendale quotes contemporary accounts from the diaries, letters and memoirs of Cesare Tinghi, Francesco Settimani, Francesco D'Abramo, Pierre de L'Estoile, and Cardinal Guido Bentivoglio.¹²¹ Astringent comments by Emilio de' Cavalieri, balancing the effusive praise of the court commentators appear in translation in Claude Palisca's article, "Musical Asides in the Diplomatic Correspondence of Emilio de' Cavalieri."¹²² Later remarks by both Buonarrotti and Giovanni de' Bardi reinforce those of Cavalieri.

Il rapimento di Cefalo was an extraordinarily ambitious project, both physically and conceptually, and in many ways it was ahead of its time. If Emilio de' Cavalieri, in his Rappresentazione di Anima, et di Corpo, was building musically on the model of sacra rappresentazione and if Jacopo Peri and Ottavio Rinuccini were departing musically from previous practice in order to discover a new, intermediate form, then Caccini,

Chiabrera and their collaborators were attempting to build upon the tradition of the intermedi in order to create a musical spectacle with an homogenous narrative. The relationship with intermedi is therefore not a weakness in the production, but rather, its very raison d'être. The kind of spectacle it was attempting to achieve would ultimately reach its peak in the eight-hour long Il pomo d'oro by Antonio Cesti on a libretto by Francesco Sbarra, performed in Vienna in 1668.¹²³ The titillating nature of its story, which was deemed by Giovanni de' Bardi as "objectionable"¹²⁴ for a court entertainment on the occasion of a wedding, would eventually find an appropriate place in the public theatre, as is attested to by such works as Monteverdi's and Busenello's L'Incoronazione di Poppea and La Callisto by Francesco Cavalli with a libretto by Giovanni Faustini.

Said to have cost sixty thousand scudi, Il rapimento di Cefalo involved over a hundred musicians, including Caccini's son and the four women of his household, Melchiorre Palantrotti,¹²⁵ Francesco Rasi and Jacopo Peri,¹²⁶ and a thousand other persons.¹²⁷ According to Cesare Tinghi, it lasted for five hours,¹²⁸ but Cavalieri reported that "it did not even reach three."¹²⁹ Bernardo

Buontalenti, assisted by Alessandro Pieroni,¹³⁰ created the elaborate settings and stage effects.¹³¹

Buonarroti dispenses with the synopsis in a few brief sentences. Aurora, goddess of the dawn, is in love with Cephalus, and she descends to earth to seduce him. He resists her advances until Jove and Cupid intercede on her behalf. Tithonus, Aurora's former lover, is wounded by her infidelity, the sun cannot rise and Night holds sway over the world. Even Berecynthia, "the Great Mother of all life"¹³² emerges from the depths of the earth to lament the loss of light.¹³³

The performance took place on the ninth of October in the theatre of the Uffizi before an audience of three thousand men and eight hundred women. The auditorium was U-shaped and had been specially painted for the occasion. An arcade bursting from a blue space surrounded the audience. Great chandeliers hung over the stage, which was ornamented with statues. The front curtain was a rich red drape decorated with fleurs-de-lis and the palle insignia of the Medici family as well as with gold tassels. It opened by separating in the centre and disappearing rapidly to either side.¹³⁴

Prologue

The area over the stage was painted to look like a cloud-studded sky, ending at the ceiling of the theatre with the Royal (Medici) Coat of Arms, placed between figures representing Magnanimity and Dignity. At either side of the proscenium arch, at stage level, was a statue: one personifying Theory, the other Practice. A frieze of amorettes ran along the top of the arch.¹³⁵

The stage itself was dominated by a mountain. Buonarroti claims that it was twenty braccia in height, which works out to an almost unbelievable seventy-five feet.¹³⁶ At the summit, the winged horse Pegasus planted his hoof on the source of the spring of Hippocrene, which flowed with real water. Apollo sat with the nine muses surrounded by mountain greenery. Poetry stepped forward from their midst to sing the prologue. Her hair was garlanded with laurel and she carried a lyre in one hand and a plectrum in the other. Hanging at her waist were veils of four distinctive colours, in reference to the four noblest arts of poetry, and on one foot, she wore a sock, on the other, a cothurnus, or thick-soled shoe thought to be worn by the performers of ancient Greek tragedy. After promenading around the stage to delight the audience with the view of her costume from every

angle, she stepped to the front of the stage and began to sing.¹³⁷

First she identified herself as Poetry. Then she praised Maria de' Medici, for whose sake she was going to tell the story of ancient gods driven mad by love. The sons of Maria de' Medici and Henry IV would achieve such greatness, she predicted, that they would be out of reach of the arrows of Envy.¹³⁸ Thus she ended a musical encomium that, unlike those of Rinuccini, had little to say about the new form of sung theatre, or the hybrid tragicomic genre or even the power of music. It focussed largely on paying tribute to the bride and celebrating her future.

At the end of the prologue the giant mountain sank away in full view of the audience. Sabbattini explains a technique for producing such an effect in Chapter 24 of his "Manual for Constructing Theatrical Scenes." A mountain is painted on a cloth that is stretched on a frame of wood, the cross bars of which are of unequal length. The vertical beam, onto which the cross bars are affixed, slides up and down a vertical groove by means of ropes and a windlass. A hole is cut in the stage floor that is large enough to accommodate the entire mountain.

So common was this device, according to Sabbattini, that it did not even warrant an illustration.¹³⁹

Act One

As soon as the mountain of the prologue disappeared, the setting of the first act was revealed. It was a dark plain and forest, over which the sun had not yet risen. A number of hunters gathered on rocks to wait for dawn. They were richly attired in multi-coloured costumes, with hunting gear and greyhounds on golden chains. Even more nobly dressed, Cephalus lay asleep. In the sky to the east of him a beautiful rose coloured cloud appeared and began to descend toward the ground. It was threaded with gold and silver to reflect the dawn light and carried a beautiful young woman with golden wings. She wore a white and rose-coloured gown and her cloak was ruffled by a light breeze. As she descended she sang a song and perfume gently wafted out into the air of the auditorium. When she landed, her luminous gilded slippers carried her gently toward the sleeping hunter.¹⁴⁰

Her cloud-chariot was able to transform itself in a number of astounding ways. On the way down, small clouds detached themselves from it and floated about in the air. Once she had left it, it returned to the sky, becoming

smaller and smaller as it ascended.¹⁴¹ Sabbattini outlined two separate methods for these effects, but Buontalenti was obviously able to combine them.

In Chapter 49, Sabbattini describes the method whereby a single cloud can split into three. Three separate bracing arms are required, one in the centre to support the main nimbus and one on each side for the small subsidiary clouds. These secondary braces are hinged so that the smaller clouds may be hidden behind the main one until it is time to separate them. The entire effect is operated with ropes and pulleys.¹⁴² From the sound of Buonarroti's description, Buontalenti's clouds did not just separate, but were able to perform an aerial ballet. Sabbattini describes the second feat, the cloud's growing smaller as it ascended, in Chapter 46. Essentially, the cloud is stretched on a frame much like that of an umbrella. Once again, it is operated by ropes and pulleys. The cloud increases in size as the ribs on which it is stretched are forced apart from a central axis and it decreases as the ribs are drawn together.¹⁴³

As Aurora approached Cephalus, the appearance of the scene changed. Rose-coloured light began to illuminate the rocks and plains of the setting. Nagler suggests that Buontalenti utilized transparent screens illuminated

from behind.¹⁴⁴ Sebastiano Serlio gave explicit instructions for the colouring of light in The Second Book of Architecture, 1545. Various materials were crushed and used to colour water that was then put in a specially shaped glass container to be placed in front of the light.¹⁴⁵ Leone de' Sommi placed coloured glass in front of lights.¹⁴⁶ If the lights were located behind the scenes, then they could have easily been lit manually by hidden stagehands. Lights over the stage in view of the audience might have been lit by using a long pole on the end of which is affixed a small candle, as is described by Sabbattini in Chapter 41 of the first book of the "Manual for Constructing Theatrical Scenes."¹⁴⁷

Initially Cephalus mistook Aurora for Cintia and promised that, if she wanted to hunt in these woods, he would leave immediately. Aurora corrected him and identified herself. She told him he had injured her,¹⁴⁸ but then reassured the upset hunter that the wound had been caused by love. When Cephalus protested that he was not worthy to be loved by a goddess, she grew impatient with his humility. He tried to retreat to the forest to pursue the hunt, but she refused to part from him, promising that he would find it impossible to resist her advances. "Man," she announced, "has no power against

God!"¹⁴⁹ The act ended with the chorus of hunters extolling the hunt before leaving the stage.¹⁵⁰ Stefan Venturi del Nibbio wrote this piece of music.¹⁵¹

Act Two

Overhead, the jealous god Tithonus appeared on a cloud that changed into various shapes, growing larger and smaller and resembling at various points a dolphin, a horse, a forest or a mountain. While he had been sleeping, his consort Aurora deserted him. Now, as he searched for her, despite the disorder of his grey hair and beard, he sang sweetly, in sdrucchioli, (verse in which the accent falls on the third to last syllable of the line) of his lost love.¹⁵² The music for this aria has survived in Caccini's Le nuove musiche. It is composed for a bass voice and is strophic. True to his principles, he restricted the ornamentation in the first four verses, all sung to the same melody, to a single occasion toward the end of each verse. The final stanza, however, is full of passaggi, which would have allowed the performer singing the role of Tithonus a moment of virtuosity before vanishing back into the sky.¹⁵³

The forests and plains of the first act transformed into an ocean with islands and blue mountains seen low on

a distant horizon. Not only did the ocean move in waves, but it was also audible.¹⁵⁴

Nicola Sabbattini describes three methods for representing a sea. In the first, a wooden frame is built of the size required and a cloth is stretched loosely upon it. Cord is then run under the cloth at one and one half foot intervals. The ends of the ropes are held by stagehands on either side of the scene. By raising and loosening the ropes they are able to make the cloth appear like a sea. In the second method, strips of wood are profiled to look like waves. Cloth, painted azure with silver at the top to look like cresting waves, is attached to the cut side and as many pieces of wood as are needed to represent the sea are placed at 1½-foot intervals to allow a corridor between the waves for bodies, boats or sea creatures to pass through. The waves are hinged and are raised and lowered by poles affixed beneath them and operated from under the stage. One set of waves, the second, fourth, sixth and so on, is operated by one stick. The other stick operates the alternating set, the third, fifth, seventh, etc. In this way, the two sets may rise and fall sequentially. Finally, Sabbattini describes his preferred method, which is to create the sea with a series of wavy cylinders

built on wood frames covered with cloth, painted blue and black with a touch of silver. The cylinders are operated by stagehands turning cranks at either end. By combining method two and method three, it is possible to create a sea that rises, swells, becomes stormy and changes colour. That is, waves of cloth on wooden forms are inserted between the cylinders. The cloth is painted black with silver at the top. While the sea is calm, the wave forms are kept out of sight between the cylinders. When the sea becomes tempestuous, the waves forms are raised from beneath the stage, darkening the sea with large, threatening swells.¹⁵⁵

On one side of the stage, the chariot of the sun rose, drawn by four almost untameable horses. It was finely crafted, set with precious stones and decorated with reliefs representing the twelve Zodiac signs as well as the story of Daphne and Apollo, including the episode in which Apollo killed the dragon Python. Phoebus Apollo was represented by a beautiful, golden-haired boy, wearing luminous and gauzy clothing. Radiant sunbeams rotated behind him.¹⁵⁶

On the other side of the stage, the ancient god Oceanus rode in on an enormous silver whale, fourteen braccia in length. The whale had quills it could thrust

out and retract. It could also crunch on fish that leapt into its mouth from the sea, flap its ears, roll its large yellow eyes and spout water.¹⁵⁷

For spouting water, Sabbattini recommends the use of pounded silver or talc placed in a cornucopia behind the animal that is to discharge it. The cornucopia is connected to a tube into which a stagehand, hidden from the audience, would blow.¹⁵⁸ A similar method might have been used for the water that dripped from the whale's maw when it ducked underwater and re-emerged.

Numerous rough and scaly sea "Tritons" and deities of a livid cerulean blue colour swam around the whale and lashed at the waves with forked tails. Clouds blew across the sky and all who saw the scene were impressed by chaotic sea-storm that Buontalenti was able to conjure up.¹⁵⁹

At length Oceanus questioned Apollo as to why he had not brought light to the world. Apollo replied that he could not bring day if it had not been preceded by dawn. The answer to Oceanus's question regarding Aurora's whereabouts came from Cupid who appeared on high surrounded by a ring of dancing amorettes. The love god exulted in his power to keep day from dawning. There being nothing that Oceanus or Apollo could do to alter

the situation, they were resigned to retreat and, after Cupid celebrated his power, he too disappeared with his putti.¹⁶⁰ Pietro Strozzi was the composer of this chorus.¹⁶¹

Act Three

The setting once again became a landscape, but a different one from that of the first act. Cephalus and Aurora returned to sing a duet on the subject of gods loving mortals. Cephalus expressed his fears regarding the magnitude of this alliance, but Aurora warned him that, if he preferred a mortal to her, it would only prolong her sojourn on earth and continue to prevent the sun from rising. "Oh, Goddess," Cephalus exclaimed, "the world is in the hands of God, he must take care of it. I must take care of myself!"¹⁶² Aurora promised to stay by his side and night took over the stage.¹⁶³

Crowned with poppies, Night was dressed in black with a blue, star-spangled mantle and a black, star-spangled veil. She also had black wings and carried two children in her arms. One was totally white, the other totally black. The first represented Sleep and the second, Death. Looking as if she had just come out of the Cimmerian caves, "come è favola," she arrived in a

golden chariot drawn by two owls. The four rimless wheels had luminous spokes making them seem like stars that symbolized the four nocturnal vigils. As she appeared, not only did the scene on stage become darker, but also, to the amazement of the spectators, the lights in the auditorium dimmed as well.¹⁶⁴

Sabbattini explains one way to achieve this effect. Cylinders of soldered tin are suspended above each lamp with cords operated by a pulley system. To dim the lights, the tin cylinders are lowered to hide the flames of the lamps. To re-illuminate the stage, the cylinders are raised.¹⁶⁵ Buonarroti mentions that the lights did not merely dim in the auditorium. They also transformed into tiny stars.¹⁶⁶ If tin cylinders were used, the deception that the large lights shrank into a thousand stars would have been easy enough to achieve by punching tiny holes in the cylinders.

A large crescent moon ascended, passed through clouds and changed colour. Above Night's head, an arch of the signs of the Zodiac appeared. Above each sign, a boy floated.¹⁶⁷ Night sang about the situation that had come about as a result of Aurora's infatuation with a mortal. In turn, five of the boys representing signs of the Zodiac responded. Finally, the entire group of

Zodiac signs sang as a chorus.¹⁶⁸ During this song, composed by Luca Bati,¹⁶⁹ Night disappeared and reappeared amid the clouds. At the end of the scene she simply vanished.¹⁷⁰

Act Four

No sooner did another new landscape appear than it began to break apart. Crevices opened revealing multi-coloured metals and rocks within the earth. Mists rose and springs appeared. A small mountain grew and burst open to reveal Berecyntia, the Great Mother of all life. In her solo she blamed Cupid for the lamentable situation that had arisen as a result of Aurora's sojourn on earth.¹⁷¹ All at once he appeared in the sky disrespectfully inquiring whether she was going on about her old loves, but when she replied that her concern was only for Aurora, he reassured her that events would turn out well and she returned to the earth.¹⁷²

From the clouds overhead, Mercury descended with caduceus in hand and wings on helmet and feet. He had a message for Cupid from Jove. In order to restore the universe, the little love god was to put an end to Aurora's current romantic dalliance. Cupid attempted to flee and there ensued a chase of one cloud machine by

another. Finally, Mercury caught Cupid, whose cloud expanded as he was pulled onto Mercury's machine. Together they re-ascended.¹⁷³

Heaven now opened to reveal itself full of clouds and gods richly dressed in gold. The stage filled with more clouds and more gods until the number grew from twenty-five to, in Buonarroti's estimate, a hundred, all singing and/or playing instruments. This celestial chorus, composed by Luca Bati,¹⁷⁴ served as the finale to the fourth act. Without any further change of scene, the fifth act began.¹⁷⁵

Act Five

Mercury and Cupid arrived at the feet of Jove who sat, surrounded by gods, on a majestic throne perched on a large eagle. With a sonorous voice he commanded Cupid to return to earth and to bring Aurora's affair with Cephalus to a swift conclusion. As the chorus of gods paid tribute to the greatness of their ruler, Cupid dutifully descended to earth where he encountered Aurora, with whom he plotted how to get Cephalus to heaven.¹⁷⁶

One of the most interesting moments in the libretto occurs during this interchange between Cupid and Aurora. It is a self-reflexive reference to the staging of the

opera itself. Cupid reassures Aurora that her love will be remembered, that in future centuries it will be sung about in a large theatre with beautiful scenery.¹⁷⁷

Aurora replies that, although she is worried about the judgment of the vulgar masses, royal ears will be kinder to her reputation, because kings, like the state, are close to Gods and therefore have divine thoughts.¹⁷⁸

When Cephalus appeared, he put up the last of his resistance, but finally, in a begrudging manner, allowed that, as the affair was "imposed" upon him, he would give Aurora his hand and ascend with her to heaven. This they did on a cloud that changed in shape to resemble a beautiful vase without a base. The final chorus was composed by Caccini and published in Le nuove musiche, where he claims it was sung and played by "seventy-five persons in a semi-circle for the entire scene."¹⁷⁹ The refrain is written in six parts, homophonic in the first line and then more madrigal-like in the second. The first stanza was sung by the bass Melchior Palantrotti, the second by Jacopo Peri and the third by Francesco Rasi, both tenors. According to Caccini, Peri performed ornamentation of his own devising and Rasi performed some of his own and some of Caccini's ornamentation. The almost entirely homophonic final stanza was sung by the

chorus in six parts.¹⁸⁰ The chorus celebrates the idea that heaven's will can only be fulfilled when love is able to pursue its true course.¹⁸¹

The opera ended with a magnificent afterpiece. The stage transformed again into a great theatre in the Doric style, intended to look like an extension of the auditorium. Heroes took their places on the various levels of the stage as an enormous chariot carrying Dame Fama rose from beneath the stage. The chariot was larger than any stage machine that had preceded it. Dame Fama, with great wings, flowing hair and a dress ornamented all over with eyes, held a trumpet and an olive branch. One of her feet rested on a globe and the other was raised as if to dance. Beneath her sat sixteen women, representing the eighteen cities ruled by Duke Ferdinand. Two in the foreground had precedence: one representing Florence wore a crown and golden mantle and sat on a lion, the other, as Siena, was on a crowned she-wolf and wore black and white clothing. Dame Fama sang a song of tribute to the Duke and as she was whisked to heaven, the sixteen women stepped off the carriage and began to sing and dance, thus ending the spectacle joyfully celebrating the good fortune of their state.¹⁸²

Conclusion

An historicized ideal performance text of the 1600 performances of Jacopo Peri and Ottavio Rinuccini's L'Euridice and Giulio Caccini and Gabriello Chiabrera's Il rapimento di Cefalo would reflect the modest success of the first and the spectacular artistic ambition of the second. Only a portion of its already small audience may have appreciated Euridice, though clearly it was well performed and, for those who understood its intentions, an exciting experience. The popularity and influence of its score is attested to by the fact that it went through two printings, one in 1600 and the next in 1607.¹⁸³

Evidence found in Emilio de' Cavalieri's correspondence indicates that both Euridice and, perhaps to a greater degree, Il rapimento di Cefalo suffered from administrative nightmares during the course of their preparation. He complains that Don Giovanni de' Medici did not listen to his advice regarding the music or to that of Bernardo Buontalenti with regard to the machines.¹⁸⁴ "[T]he more I was slighted, and also Bernardo, the more the miracles disappeared and they [the entertainments] appeared to foreigners as commonplace and struck people as tedious."¹⁸⁵

Clearly, however, whether the works failed or achieved, at best, qualified success, they marked a halt to the development of court opera in Florence. In 1602, Caccini's setting of L'Euridice was performed on the eighth of November 1602 for a visit by the cardinals Montalto and Monte. It was not a major event.¹⁸⁶ After this, operas were to be performed in Rome and Mantua. In Florence, for the wedding of Ferdinando's son, Cosimo, to Maria Magdalena of Austria, the court returned to the traditional entertainment, a comedy, in this case, Il giudizio di Paride by Michelangelo Buonarroti, interspersed with spectacular intermedi.¹⁸⁷

Meanwhile in Rome, for the 1606 Carnival, the opera Eumelio composed by Agostino Agazzari with a libretto by P. [Fr.] Torquato de Cupis and P [Fr.] Tirletti, was produced in the Seminary. The work represents a fusion of influences from Emilio de' Cavalieri to Jacopo Peri and Ottavio Rinuccini. It is a hybrid sacra rappresentazione and secular melodramma. The plot concerns Eumelio, a musical prodigy and protégé of Apollo, who is entrapped by a roving band of demons disguised as Vices. They promise him wealth and fame for his singing ability and when he agrees to follow them, as any callow youth might, they carry him to Hell and

present him as a trophy to Pluto. Apollo is bereft and, with Mercury's encouragement, descends to the Underworld to plead for the lad's release. In a parallel to Rinuccini's version of the Orpheus myth, Pluto at first resists but finally yields unconditionally to the request. Apollo and Mercury bring Eumelio back to Arcadia and the opera ends in celebration. The music is a mixture of techniques: counterpoint and homophony in the choruses and monody in the solo passages. The work does not seem to be through composed. The major characters have a number of melodies that they repeat with various texts.¹⁸⁸ Though not a major accomplishment, Eumelio is worth mentioning for the manner in which it attempts to reconcile the influences of sacred drama and allegory with those of neo-classical theatre and the early court operas of Florence.

The next major development in the history of early court opera would take place in Mantua, a year later, where the genius of Monteverdi would bring the nascent form to the next stage in its evolution.

Endnotes

- ¹ Warren Kirkendale, The Court Musicians in Florence During the Principate of the Medici (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1993) 119-121.
- ² Barbara Russano Hanning, "Giulio Caccini," New Grove Dictionary of Opera, Vol. I, 1992 ed. 668-669.
- ³ Kirkendale 120.
- ⁴ Giulio Caccini, "Foreword" to Le nuove musiche, trans. John Playford, Source Readings in Music History: The Baroque Era, ed. Oliver Strunk (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1965) 17.
- ⁵ Kirkendale 121. A history of the confraternity of the Archangel Raphael based on the documents of the organization is to be found in Konrad Eisenbichler, The Boys of the Archangel Raphael: A Youth Confraternity in Florence, 1411-1785 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).
- ⁶ Kirkendale 122.
- ⁷ Nino Pirrotta, "Temperaments and Tendencies in the Florentine Camerata," Music and Culture in Italy from the Middle Ages to the Baroque: A Collection of Essays

(Cambridge Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1984) 223.

⁸ Giulio Caccini, "Dedication," L'Evridice | Composta in | Musica | in stile rappresentativo | da GIULIO CACCINI | dtto Romano (Florence, 1600). Excerpted in Angelo Solerti, ed., Gli albori del melodramma, Vol. II (1904; Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1969) 111-112, trans. Strunk, Source Readings: Baroque, 10.

⁹ Kirkendale 128.

¹⁰ Kirkendale 130-131.

¹¹ In a letter from the Este ambassador to Florence dispatched to Ferrara 25 July 1593, Bartolomeo Prospero reports that Caccini told him about what happened and claimed that it was the result of the persecution of his enemies: "Il sig.^f Giulio Cacchini Romano musico m'ha detto questa mattina esser stato licenziato dal Grand.^a con suo dispiacere, se ben la sua provisione di 200 scudi l'anno era pocha; di tal licenza ne sono stato causa le persecutioni de' suoi emuli, et invidiosi." Quoted by Tim Carter in "Giulio Caccini (1551-1618): New Facts, New Music," Studi Musicali 16 (1987): 21n.

- ¹² Claude V. Palisca, "Musical Asides in the Diplomatic Correspondence of Emilio de' Cavalieri," The Musical Quarterly 49.3 (1963): 349-354.
- ¹³ Caccini, "Dedication", Gli albori III, Strunk, Source Readings: Baroque 11.
- ¹⁴ Kirkendale 142.
- ¹⁵ Pirrotta, "Temperaments and Tendencies," 228.
- ¹⁶ Kirkendale 144.
- ¹⁷ Kirkendale 154-155.
- ¹⁸ Hanning, "Caccini," New Grove Dictionary of Opera, Vol. I, 668.
- ¹⁹ Barbara Russano Hanning, "Chiabrera, Gabriello," New Grove Dictionary of Opera, Vol. I, 838-839.
- ²⁰ Hanning, "Chiabrera," New Grove Dictionary of Opera, Vol. I, 838-839
- ²¹ Kirkendale 605-606.
- ²² Hanning, "Chiabrera," New Grove Dictionary of Opera, Vol. I, 839.
- ²³ Hanning, "Chiabrera," New Grove Dictionary of Opera, Vol. I, 839.
- ²⁴ Carlo Dati, quoted in Angelo Solerti, Gli albori I 48.

²⁵ Barbara Russano Hanning, Of Poetry and Music's Power: Humanism and the Creation of Opera (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1980) 13.

²⁶ Hanning, "Chiabrera," New Grove Dictionary of Opera, Vol. I, 839.

²⁷ Kirkendale 607.

²⁸ Hanning, "Caccini," New Grove Dictionary of Opera, Vol. I, 668.

²⁹ Caccini, "Foreword" to Le nuove musiche, 18.

³⁰ "Allora ritrovò il sig. Iacopo Peri quella artificiosa maniera di recitar cantando, che tutta Italia ammira." Marco da Gagliano "La dedicataria e la prefazione" to La Dafne di Marco | Da Gagliano | nell' Accademia degl' Elevati | L'Affannato | Rappresentata | in Mantova (Firenze: Appresso Cristofano Marescotti, 1608), in Gli albori, Vol. II 68.

³¹ Nino Pirrotta, "Early Opera and Aria," New Looks at Italian Opera: Essays in Honor of Donald J. Grout, ed. William W. Austin (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1968) 51.

³² Pirrotta, "Early Opera," 51-53.

³³ Emilio de Cavalieri, Rappresentatione di Anima, et di Corpo, novamente posta in musica dal Sig. Emilio del

Cavalliere, per recitar cantando (Rome: 1600;
Farnborough Hants., England: Gregg Press Ltd., 1967)
title page.

³⁴ Hanning, Of Poetry 67-77.

³⁵ Pirrotta, "Early Opera" 46.

³⁶ Giovanni Battista Doni, "Trattato della musica
scenica," Lyra Barberina Amphichordos ed. Antonio
Francesco Gori (Florence, 1763, 2 vols.) Vol. 2, 22,
trans. and quoted by Hanning, Of Poetry 46.

³⁷ Claude V. Palisca, "Peri and the Theory of Recitative,"
Studies in the History of Italian Music and Music Theory
(Oxford: Oxford University at the Clarendon Press, 1994)
462.

³⁸ Jacopo Peri, "Foreword," Le Musiche | DI IACOPO PERI |
Nobil Fiorentino | Sopra l'Evridice | Del signor OTTAVIO
RINVCCINI/Rappresentate nello Sponsalizio | della
Cristianissima | Maria Medici | Regina di Francia | e di
Navarra (Florence, 1601) Text in Solerti, Gli Albori,
Vol. II, 109. Trans. Strunk, Source Readings: Baroque
14.

³⁹ Palisca, "Peri and the Theory of Recitative" 457.

⁴⁰ Peri, "Foreword," in Gli albori, 109, trans. Strunk,
Source Readings: Baroque, 14.

- ⁴¹ Peri, "Foreword," 15.
- ⁴² Tim Carter, Jacopo Peri 1561-1633: His Life and Works, (New York: Garland Publishers, 1989) 202-203.
- ⁴³ Caccini, Nuove Musiche, 18.
- ⁴⁴ Caccini, Nuove Musiche, 20.
- ⁴⁵ Caccini, Nuove Musiche, 21.
- ⁴⁶ Hanning, "Caccini," New Grove Dictionary of Opera, Vol. I, 668.
- ⁴⁷ Caccini, Nuove Musiche, 20.
- ⁴⁸ Cavalieri, letter of (probably) 7 November 1600, trans. Palisca, "Musical Asides," 350.
- ⁴⁹ Kirkendale 620.
- ⁵⁰ Nagler, Theatre Festivals 43.
- ⁵¹ Nagler, Theatre Festivals 3.
- ⁵² Nagler, Theatre Festivals 58.
- ⁵³ Nagler, Theatre Festivals 72.
- ⁵⁴ "...alcuno spettacolo meritevole, tutti gli altri meno stimandosi, dove meno d'ingegno e di studio pongono gli uomini, fu giudicato in magnifica scena rappresentarsi una nobilissima favola, e di superbo apparato più di alcun'altra, e tutta essa cantata." Michelangelo Buonarroti, "Descrizione | della felicissime | Nozze Della Cristianissima Maestà di Madama Maria | Medici

Regina di Francia | e di Navarra," Gli albori del melodramma, ed. Angelo Solerti, Vol. III (1904; Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1969) 11.

⁵⁵ "...le più meravigliose machine, che mai finora ne' nostri tempi si fosser viste..." Buonarroti, "Descrizione," Gli albori 11.

⁵⁶ "...oprare con agevolezza non più creduta..." Buonarroti "Descrizione," Gli albori 27.

⁵⁷ Cavalieri, in Palisca "Musical Asides" 350.

⁵⁸ Cavalieri, post script to the letter of 24 November 1600, trans. Palisca, "Musical Asides" 351.

⁵⁹ Michelangelo Buonarrotti, letter to Curzio Picchena, undated (August 1608?), quoted by Tim Carter, "A Florentine Wedding of 1608," Acta Musicologica 55 (1983): 92.

⁶⁰ Giovanni de' Bardi to Curzio Picchena, 13 July 1608, quoted by Tim Carter, "A Florentine Wedding" 92.

⁶¹ Claude V. Palisca, "The First Performance of Euridice," Studies in the History of Italian Music and Music Theory (Oxford: Oxford University Press at the Clarendon Press, 1994) 439-441.

⁶² James S. Saslow, The Medici Wedding of 1589: Florentine Festival as Theatrum Mundi (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996) 11.

⁶³ Palisca, "First Performance" 439-441.

⁶⁴ Palisca, "First Performance" 440.

⁶⁵ Tim Carter, "Music and Patronage in Late Sixteenth-Century Florence: The Case of Jacopo Corsi (1561-1602)," I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance, Vol. 1 (Florence: The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, 1985) 66.

⁶⁶ Christopher Hibbert, The Rise and Fall of the House of Medici (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974) 281.

⁶⁷ Saslow 178.

⁶⁸ Saslow 11.

⁶⁹ Ottavio Rinuccini, L'EURIDICE | D'OTTAVIO RINUCCINI | RAPPRESENTATA | NELLO SPONSALITO | Della Christianiss. | REGINA | DI FRANCIA, E DI | NAVARRA (Firenze: Nella Stamperia di Cosimo Giunti, 1600) and Jacopo Peri, LE MUSICHE | DI IACOPO PERI | NOBIL FIORENTINO | Sopra L'Euridice | DEL SIG. OTTAVIO RINUCCINI | Rappresentate Nello Sponsalizio | della Cristianissima | MARIA MEDICI | REGINA DI FRANCIA | E DI NAVARRA, ed. Enrico Magni

Dufflocq, Reale Accademia D'Italia Musica (1600,
 Fiorenza; Roma: Reale Accademia D'Italia, 1934)

⁷⁰ Buonarroti, "Descrizione," Gli albori 113. Trans.
 Palisca, "First Performance" 443.

⁷¹ Translation of the "Preface" to La Dafne by Carol
 MacClintock, Readings in the History of Music in
 Performance (Bloomington and London: Indiana University
 Press, 1979) 187-194.

⁷² A.M. Nagler, Theatre Festivals of the Medici 1539-1637,
 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964) 93.

⁷³ Palisca, "First Performance" 433.

⁷⁴ Howard Mayer Brown, "Music - How Opera Began: An
 Introduction to Jacopo Peri's Euridice (1600)," The Late
 Italian Renaissance: 1525-1630, ed., Eric Cochrane,
 Harper Torchbooks, (New York: Harper and Row, 1970) 419.

⁷⁵ "...il fior della nobiltà d'Italia..." Gagliano, in Gli
 albori, 69. Trans. MacClintock, 189.

⁷⁶ Gagliano, in Gli albori, 69. Trans. MacClintock, 189.

⁷⁷ "...il tutto compiutamente passando con onore di chi a
 condurla in qualunque parte vi intervene; e con piacer
 vario, e di mente e di senso, in chi vi fu spettatore."
 Buonarroti, in Gli albori, 113. Trans. Palisca, "First
 Performance," 443.

- ⁷⁸ Palisca, "First Performance" 444-447.
- ⁷⁹ Peri, "Foreword," Gli Albori, II, 108-110. Trans. Strunk, 15-16.
- ⁸⁰ Carter, Peri 175, 202.
- ⁸¹ Palisca, "Musical Asides" 352.
- ⁸² Ottavio Rinuccini, "Dedication" L'Euridice, prima edizione, Solerti, Gli albori, 107, trans. Strunk, Source Readings: Baroque, 8.
- ⁸³ Buonarroti, trans. Palisca, "First Performance" 443.
- ⁸⁴ Peri, "Foreword," Gli albori, 109, Strunk, Source Readings: Baroque, 14.
- ⁸⁵ Jacopo Peri, Le nuove musiche per l'Euridice, transcribed by Vito Frazzi (Firenze: Edizioni Otos, 1970) 1-5.
- ⁸⁶ "Spettacolo infelice," Ottavio Rinuccini, L'Euridice, line 7, in Gli albori 115.
- ⁸⁷ "Tal per voi torno, e con sereno aspetto / Ne' reali Imenei m'adorno anch'io, / E su corde più liete il canto mio \ Tempio, al nobile cor dolce diletto." Rinuccini, lines 21-24, in Gli albori 115.
- ⁸⁸ Rinuccini, lines 17-28, in Gli albori 115.
- ⁸⁹ Carter, Peri 157-158.
- ⁹⁰ Solerti, Gli albori 116-142.

⁹¹ "Never before has such a pair of lovers been seen by the sun." Rinuccini, line 53, Gli albori 117.

⁹² Line 9 of the sonnet "Due rose fresche e colte in paradiso," Pirrotta, "Early Opera" 83.

⁹³ Peri, "Foreword," Gli albori 110, Strunk, Source Readings: Baroque 15-16.

⁹⁴ Peri, "Foreword," Gli albori 110, Strunk, Source Readings: Baroque 15-16. Unfortunately, Caccini's compositions for the choruses seem to have been more of a setback than those for Eurydice. Here, in "Al canto, al ballo, a l'ombre, al prato adorno," his music lacks the lilting quality that Peri had achieved with the same text. Peri's setting would have given the scene much needed musical variety. Caccini's much blander music does not. There are a number of in-depth comparisons between Caccini's settings and Peri's, but they are not material in the context of the first production. The audience in the "Sala bianca" heard only Caccini's choruses and hence obviously made no comparative judgment. It is possible, however, that the substitutions exacerbated the "tedious" quality of the music about which Cavalieri complained in his letters from Rome.

⁹⁵ The final cadence of the chorus is G major and that is the key on which Orpheus begins. Peri, Euridice, ed. Frazzi, 22-23.

⁹⁶ "Ohime! Che su l'aurora / Giunse a l'ocaso il sol de gli occhi miei." Rinuccini 428-429, Gli albori 130.

⁹⁷ Da Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 193.

⁹⁸ "Non piango e non sospiro, / O mia cara Euridice, / Chè sospirar, chè lagrimar non posso." Rinuccini, lines 226-228, Gli albori 123. Peri, Euridice, ed. Frazzi, 45-46.

⁹⁹ Peri, "Foreword," Gli albori 110, Strunk, Source Readings: Baroque 15-16.

¹⁰⁰ "Alziam le voci e 'l cor cantando al cielo." Rinuccini, line 397, Gli albori 128.

¹⁰¹ "Finito questo a v. il Coro si parte, e la Scena si muta in Inferno." Jacopo Peri, MUSICHE Sopra L'Euridice 28.

¹⁰² Buonarroti, "Descrizione," in Gli albori 113, trans. Palisca, "First Performance" 443.

¹⁰³ Nicola Sabbattini, "Manual for Constructing Theatrical Scenes and Machines (Pratica di Fabricar Scene e Machine ne' Teatri, Ravenna, 1638), trans. John H. McDowell, The Renaissance Stage, ed. Barnard Hewitt (Coral Gables, Fla: University of Miami Press, 1958) 126.

- ¹⁰⁴ Nagler, Theatre Festivals 95.
- ¹⁰⁵ Carter, Peri 163-167.
- ¹⁰⁶ Sabbattini, trans. McDowell 100-103.
- ¹⁰⁷ Rinuccini, in Gli albori, 107, trans., Strunk, Source Readings: Baroque 8.
- ¹⁰⁸ "Prega, sospira e plora: / Forse avverrà che quel soave pianto / Che mosso ha il Cielo, pieghi l'Inferno ancora." Rinuccini, lines 415-417, in Gli albori, 129.
- ¹⁰⁹ "Lagrimate al mio pianto, Ombre d'Inferno." Rinuccini, lines 427, 435 and 447. In Gli albori 130.
- ¹¹⁰ Gagliano, in Gli albori, 68, trans., MacClintock 189.
- ¹¹¹ Rinuccini, "Dedication," Gli albori, 107, trans. Strunk, Source Readings: Baroque 8.
- ¹¹² Peri, "Foreword," Gli albori 110, trans. Strunk, Source Readings: Baroque 15-16. Giulio Caccini, L'EVRIDICE | COMPOSTA IN | MUSICA | In Stile Rappresentatiuo da | GIULIO CACCINI | detto Romano ed. Angelo Coan (Firenze, 1600; Firenze: Edizioni Musicali Otos, 1980) 90-94.
- ¹¹³ "Qui torna la scena come prima." Peri, MUSICHE 41.
- ¹¹⁴ Giambattista Giraldi, "On the Composition of Comedies and Tragedies," Sources of Dramatic Theory, Volume One:

Plato to Congreve, ed., Michael J. Sidnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 126.

¹¹⁵ "Vaneggi, Aminta? O pure / Ne sperì ralleger con tai menzogne?" Rinuccini, lines 625-626, in Gli albori, 136.

¹¹⁶ "Oh! di che bel seren s'ammanta il cielo / Al suon di tue parole, / Fulgide più che in su'l mattin non suole, / E più ride la terra e più s'infiora / Al tramontar del dì, ch'in su l'aurora." Rinuccini, lines 679-683, in Gli albori, 138.

¹¹⁷ "Ballo a 5. Tutto il Coro insieme cantano e Ballano." Peri, Musiche 50.

¹¹⁸ "Questo ritornello va replicato più volte, e ballato da due soli del coro." Peri, Musiche 52.

¹¹⁹ "Sopra l'aria a 3, ma con tre tenori." Peri, Musiche 52

¹²⁰ "E con questo ordine, che s'è descritta, fu Rappresentata." Peri, Musiche 52.

¹²¹ Kirkendale, 137-141.

¹²² Claude V. Palisca, "Musical Asides," especially pages 351-353.

¹²³ Carl B. Schmidt, "Pomo d'oro, Il," The New Grove Dictionary of Opera, Vol. III, 1992 ed. 1051-1054.

¹²⁴ Cavalieri, letter of (probably) 24 November 1600, in Palisca, "Musical Asides," 351-352.

¹²⁵ Buonarroti, in Gli albori, 12.

¹²⁶ Barbara Russano Hanning, "Rapimento di Cefalo, II" New Grove Dictionary of Opera, Vol. III, 1992 ed. 1238-1239.

¹²⁷ Kirkendale, 137. Also, Buonarroti, "più di cento musici," in Gli albori, 12.

¹²⁸ "durò detta comedia dale 24 ore per fino alle ore 5 di notte." Quoted in Kirkendale, 138.

¹²⁹ Cavalieri, letter of (probably) 24 November 1600, in Palisca, "Musical Asides," 352.

¹³⁰ Buonarroti, in Gli albori, 27.

¹³¹ "Vi cantarano più di cento musici, vi operarano più di mille altre persone, attese le machine di più sorte, che si furono, e tutte maravigliose, ordinate, e condotte da Bernardo Buontalenti con somma sua lode. Dissesi, che questa sola festa fosse costata al granduca 60 mila scudi." Settimani, quoted in Kirkendale, 138.

¹³² Nagler, Theatre Festivals 99.

¹³³ "L'Aurora, amante Cefalo, scendono in terra, ad infiammarlo di sè, mentre egli donna mortale ama, si studia: il che non conseguendo giammai per lusinghe o persuasionii, interponendovisi Giove ed Amore, con gli

altri Dei, quello ne mena in cielo: non non già prima che Titone, della perdita di lei in cielo si dolga, l'Oceano e la Notte del Sol che non sorge: chè il Sole del non la si vedere innanzi, e Berecintia del danno che sopra la terra ne cade non si quereli." Buonarroti, in Gli albori 11.

¹³⁴ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 12-13.

¹³⁵ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 13.

¹³⁶ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 13. In Theatre Festivals of the Medici 1539-1637, page 96, Nagler translates braccia as "ell" which was approximately forty-five inches, according to Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Toronto: Thomas Allen and Son, 1976).

¹³⁷ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 13-15. Translation based also on Nagler, Theatre Festivals 96.

¹³⁸ Gabriello Chiabrera, Il rapimento di Cefalo, in Gli albori 31-32.

¹³⁹ Sabbattini, "Manual," trans. McDowell 128.

¹⁴⁰ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 16. Partial translation in Nagler, Theatre Festivals 97.

¹⁴¹ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 16. Partial translation in Nagler, Theatre Festivals 97.

¹⁴² Sabbattini, trans. McDowell 166-168.

- ¹⁴³ Sabbattini, trans. McDowell 162-164.
- ¹⁴⁴ Nagler, Theatre Festivals 97.
- ¹⁴⁵ Sebastiano Serlio, "The Second Book of Architecture (Il Primo (Secondo) Libro d'Architettura, Paris, 1545), trans. Allardyce Nicoll, The Renaissance Stage, ed. Barnard Hewitt (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1958) 33-35.
- ¹⁴⁶ Leone de' Sommi, Dialogues on Stage Affairs, trans. Allardyce Nicoll, Appendix B in The Development of Theatre: A Study of Theatrical Art from the Beginnings to the Present Day, 3rd ed. (London: George Harrap and Co., 1952) 259.
- ¹⁴⁷ Sabbattini, trans. McDowell 97-98.
- ¹⁴⁸ "...tu fosti autor di mia ferita." Chiabrera, line 67, in Gli albori 34.
- ¹⁴⁹ "Uomo non have incontro a Dio potere." Chiabrera, line 123, in Gli albori 36.
- ¹⁵⁰ Chiabrera, lines 125-130, in Gli albori 36.
- ¹⁵¹ Buonarroto, in Gli albori 11.
- ¹⁵² Buonarroto, in Gli albori 17. Partial translation in Nagler, Theatre Festivals 97.
- ¹⁵³ Giulio Caccini, Le nuove musiche ed., H. Wiley Hitchcock, Vol. 9 of Recent Researches in the Music of

the Baroque Era (Madison: A.R. Editions, Inc., 1970) 137-140.

¹⁵⁴ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 17. Partial translation in Nagler, Theatre Festivals 97.

¹⁵⁵ Sabbattini, trans. McDowell 130-135.

¹⁵⁶ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 17-18. Partial translation in Nagler, Theatre Festivals 97-98.

¹⁵⁷ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 17-18. Partial translation in Nagler, Theatre Festivals 97-98.

¹⁵⁸ Sabbattini, trans. McDowell 142-143.

¹⁵⁹ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 17-19. Partial translation in Nagler, Theatre Festivals 97-98.

¹⁶⁰ Chiabrera, lines 131-151, in Gli albori 37-41, Buonarroti, in Gli albori 19. Partial translation of the Buonarroti in Nagler, Theatre Festivals 98.

¹⁶¹ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 11.

¹⁶² "O Diva, il mondo è nella man di Dio;/ Egli se 'l curi: io curerò me stesso." Chiabrera, lines 291-292, in Gli albori 43.

¹⁶³ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 19. Partial translation in Nagler, Theatre Festivals 98. Chiabrera, lines 252-293, in Gli albori 42-43.

- ¹⁶⁴ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 19-20. Partial translation in Nagler, Theatre Festivals 98.
- ¹⁶⁵ Sabbattini, trans. McDowell 111-113.
- ¹⁶⁶ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 20. Trans. Nagler, Theatre Festivals 99.
- ¹⁶⁷ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 20-21. Partial translation in Nagler, Theatre Festivals 99.
- ¹⁶⁸ Chiabrera, lines 294-356, in Gli albori 43-46.
- ¹⁶⁹ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 11.
- ¹⁷⁰ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 21. Partial trans., Nagler, Theatre Festivals 99.
- ¹⁷¹ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 22. Partial translation in Nagler, Theatre Festivals 99. Chiabrera, lines 357-376, in Gli albori 47.
- ¹⁷² Chiabrera, lines 377-407, in Gli albori 47-48.
- ¹⁷³ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 22-23. Partial translation in Nagler, Theatre Festivals 99.
- ¹⁷⁴ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 11.
- ¹⁷⁵ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 23. Partial translation in Nagler, Theatre Festivals 99.
- ¹⁷⁶ Buonarroti, in Gli albori 23-24. Partial translation in Nagler, Theatre Festivals 99-100. Chiabrera, lines 476-581, in Gli albori 52-56.

¹⁷⁷ "Certo mi recherà l'alta memoria / Dell'amor
dell'Aurora: / Si col pensiero io veggio / Ne' secoli
futuri / Di lei cantarsi l'amorosa pena / In gran teatro
e su mirabil scena." Rinuccini, lines 531-536, in Gli
albori II, 54.

¹⁷⁸ "Infra vili mortali / Biasmo mi si darà, perchè del
vulgo / Sono i giudicii frail: / Ma certa son che alle
reali orecchie / La fiamma mia non giungerà con biasmo: /
Che i re, come di stato / Sono a gli Dei vicini, / Così
non meno hanno i pensier divini." Rinuccini, lines 545-
552, in Gli albori II, 54.

¹⁷⁹ Caccini, Le nuove musiche, trans. Hitchcock 103.

¹⁸⁰ Caccini, Le nuove musiche, trans. Hitchcock 103-113.

¹⁸¹ "Poichè così m'imponi, / O Diva, ecco la mano."

Chiabrera, lines 602-603, in Gli albori 56.

¹⁸² Buonarroti, in Gli albori 25-26. Partial translation
in Nagler, Theatre Festivals 100.

¹⁸³ Howard Mayer Brown, "Peri, Jacopo," The New Grove
Dictionary of Opera, Vol. III, 1992 ed. 956-958.

¹⁸⁴ Cavalieri, letter of (probably) 7 November 1600,
trans. Palisca, "Musical Asides" 350.

¹⁸⁵ Cavalieri, letter of (probably) 24 November 1600,
trans. Palisca, "Musical Asides" 352.

¹⁸⁶ Kirkendale 146.

¹⁸⁷ Tim Carter, "A Florentine Wedding of 1608," Acta Musicologica 55 (1983): 89.

¹⁸⁸ Margaret F. Johnson, "Agazzari's Eumelio, a 'Dramma Pastorale'," The Musical Quarterly 57.3 (1971): 491-505.

Margaret Johnson based her article on a microfilm copy of the only known print of Eumelio, published in 1606 by Ricciardo Amadino in Venice. She obtained a microfilm copy from the Biblioteca Musicale Governativa del Conservatorio di Musica S. Cecilia in Rome.

CHAPTER THREE
L'ORFEO IN MANTUA

Introduction

With the 1607 production of L'Orfeo: Favola in musica by Claudio Monteverdi with libretto by Alessandro Striggio the discussion of early opera moves from the Medici court in Florence to that of the Gonzaga in Mantua. Because the work was performed during Carnival and not in honour of a marital celebration, its creators were free to use the original tragic denouement in which Eurydice is lost a second time, but, unfortunately, no official record of the event was commissioned. Therefore, even though the libretto was published in 1607¹ and the score in 1609 and again in 1615,² questions remain with regard to significant aspects of the production: where and how it was staged, and even what ending was used. On the other hand, away from the direct influence of Bardi's camerata or its participants, Monteverdi and Striggio each brought their own particular perspective to the ongoing development of the fledgling form. The composer had already been embroiled in a controversy regarding his use of expressive dissonance and if the librettist had not himself been a participant

in the 1589 intermedi in Florence, as some evidence suggests, certainly his father had and Striggio's libretto would therefore have been influenced by the theatrical marvels created for that event. In this chapter I will discuss L'Orfeo as a production of the Mantuan court, the controversy regarding Monteverdi's madrigals, and Striggio's background before describing performance issues of the opera itself.

L'Orfeo as a production of the Mantuan court.

Theatrically, life at the Mantuan court had been fairly uneventful since the production of Il pastor fido in 1598.³ The city was suffering from an economic decline which some historians blame on Duke Vincenzo's prodigal spending habits, but which also resulted from the collapse of the textile industry.⁴ From a high point in the middle of the sixteenth century when there were 128 looms giving work to three thousand people in the city alone, the number had declined to a mere twenty by the end of the century. This was caused by the establishment of weaving in England and France, in some cases with the help of Italian labour.⁵ The economic crisis was exacerbated by Duke Vincenzo's disastrous military campaigns of 1595, 1597 and 1601.⁶

Monteverdi's letters provide abundant evidence of the unreliability of the court treasury. In October of 1604, he was forced to write directly to the Duke to request payment for five months back-wages.⁷ Four years later, sick in Cremona, he sent a litany of economic complaints to Annibale Chieppio, Councillor to Duke Vincenzo. They included debts from having accompanied Duke Vincenzo on his military campaigns, low wages and empty or reversed promises of increases.⁸ Almost twenty years later, when he was Music Director at St. Mark's in Venice and was asked to return to Mantua, Monteverdi once again recounted the economic hardships he had suffered under Duke Vincenzo, "Nine times out of ten there would be no money for me in the treasury."⁹

The result of all of this is paradoxical. Given the lack of occasion, political purpose and money, the planned production could not have been anything but modest. However, given the paucity of theatrical events of note, it would also have been keenly anticipated. This is evidenced by a letter written by Carlo Magno to his brother Giovanni in Rome the night before the first performance of Orfeo:

Tomorrow evening the Most Serene Lord the
Prince is to sponsor a [play] in a room in the

apartments which the Most Serene Lady of Ferrara had the use of. It should be most unusual, as all the actors are to sing their parts; it is said on all sides that it will be a great success. No doubt I shall be driven to attend out of sheer curiosity, unless I am prevented from getting in by lack of space...

Denis Stevens estimates that the Orfeo took about a year to write.¹⁰ It was the initiative of Duke Vincenzo's older son, Francesco, who would have been twenty years old in 1606. Though traditionally Prince Francesco has been associated with music and theatre, there is only slight evidence of his interest in the arts, perhaps based for the most part on his instigation of the production of Orfeo. Characterized by the Venetian ambassador Pietro Gritti as "handsome, grave, cautious with money and moderate in taking his pleasure,"¹¹ he is referred to by Stevens as a "schemer and organizer," competing with his more poetic and musical younger brother Ferdinando in producing courtly entertainments. In February of 1606, Francesco had a discussion with the court secretary, Alessandro Striggio, who offered to write a libretto based on the Orpheus legend. They settled on Monteverdi as the composer.¹²

Eleven months later, Francesco sent a letter to his brother at the Medici Court in Pisa asking his assistance in obtaining a soprano for the performance of "a play in music" he intended for Carnival.¹³ Twelve days later, he forwarded the part which the castrato was to learn.¹⁴ The degree of readiness of the score, however, is a matter open to some interesting questions, since on the sixteenth of February when the castrato Giovanni Gualberto finally arrived in Mantua, Francesco wrote to Ferdinando indicating that, if the part was too difficult for the singer, "the music could be altered to suit his needs."¹⁵

Monteverdi and the Madrigal

As Denis Arnold claims, "the heart of Monteverdi's music lies in his madrigals. There he tackled and solved what he conceived to be the problems of the composer."¹⁶ Iain Fenlon points out that although Monteverdi and Striggio's approach to the writing of L'Orfeo is indebted to Jacopo Peri and Ottavio Rinuccini's Euridice, Monteverdi's recitative differs from Peri's in that many of its distinguishing features are borrowed from his madrigals.¹⁷

By 1607, Monteverdi had already been embroiled in a controversy regarding his madrigal writing, central to which was the question of whether text was to have precedence over music or vice versa. It was the concern with expressivity in what Monteverdi termed "the second practice," which the composer carried over into his work in opera. On one level the argument was between the old and the new, the reactionary and the modern. On another, it revealed the tension between a Renaissance and a Baroque sensibility, between the desire for order, adherence to delineated rules and accepted practices that had had their worth demonstrated empirically and the desire to build new practices upon the old, to explore the boundaries of rules and to modify previous practice so that it could serve a new purpose. The expressive values with which Monteverdi imbued his madrigals were so theatrical that his attacker, the theorist Giovanni Maria Artusi, a canon in the church of San Salvatore in Bologna, criticised not only the music, but the singers for their bodily movement while performing it.

The controversy began in 1600 when Artusi published a treatise entitled Delle imperfezioni della moderna musica attacking the new innovations in music.¹⁸ He focussed his attack on examples from unpublished

madrigals by Monteverdi. The text takes the form of a dialogue between Signor Luca and Signor Vario. The first has heard a number of madrigals in which he perceived harsh "new modes and new turns of phrase" which he found "little pleasing to the ear" since they violated the Renaissance "rules - in part founded upon experience, the mother of all things, in part observed in nature, and in part proved by demonstration." He hands Signor Vario examples of the compositions he has been talking about. Upon viewing them, Vario exclaims that they are not founded upon "some reason which could satisfy the intellect,"¹⁹ a demand seemingly at cross-purposes with music designed to cause an emotional response. Although Artusi does not go so far as to name the offending composer, Denis Stevens identifies the madrigals in question as passages from Guarini's Il pastor fido, most likely composed for the 1598 performance in Mantua.²⁰ If he is correct, then these works represent not just Monteverdi's exploration of expressivity in song, but the exploration of expressivity in song for theatrical purposes.

Artusi perceives the theatricality in the madrigals, but rather than appreciating it, he finds it offensive

and predicts that such music and the kind of singing that goes along with it is certain to be short-lived:

But if you would know what they say, they are content to know how to string their notes together after their fashion and to teach the singers to sing their compositions, accompanying themselves with many movements of the body, and in the end they let themselves go to such an extent that they seem to be actually dying - this is the perfection of their music.²¹

In the person of Signor Vario, Artusi proceeds to defend the conventional manner of part writing and condemn the innovators who declare "that this novelty and new order of composing is about to produce many effects which ordinary music, full of so many and such sweet harmonies, cannot and never will produce. And they will have it that the sense, hearing such asperities, will be moved and will do marvelous things."²² The new practice combines consonant and dissonant semiminims into a wholly dissonant minim. This is "gross and offensive," since the movement is not "by step." Artusi denies that there is any such thing as "accented singing," which supposedly occurs when a part ascends to a higher note. He cites the example of four notes ascending by step. The accent

in this case would be produced on that last note, the voice having been carried there "gracefully." But Artusi doubts that composers and singers understand each other well enough to truly achieve this effect. If by any chance a "not unpleasing harmony" is produced, it may only be because the singers did not sing what was written or the ear of the hearer was deceived.²³ "[D]issonances are employed in harmonies as nonessentials"; nonetheless, their use is governed by such rules as are laid out by Artusi himself in his *Art of Counterpoint*. Rapid movement through dissonance not governed by such rules is just noise. He finally objects to the use of sevenths, because "they do not give grace to the composition...the higher part has no correspondence to its whole, beginning, or foundation."²⁴

While others joined in the controversy, Monteverdi himself was silent until the publication of his *Il quinto libro de' madrigali* in 1605 and, even then, his reply to Artusi was mild. He claimed to have been too busy to respond but that he was in the process of drafting a reply which was to be entitled "Seconda Pratica; ovvero, perfezioni della moderna musica."²⁵ He maintained that he did not compose his works haphazardly but as much according to reason, the senses and a sense of

methodology which, though different from Zarlino's, was as legitimate and that the modern composer "builds upon the foundation of truth."²⁶ He also seemed eager to take credit for the term "second practice."

Although Monteverdi never did complete the promised treatise, in 1607, his brother Giulio Cesare published a heavily annotated version of his brief comments. Giulio Cesare points out that it had been the intention of the composer to "make the words the mistress of the harmony and not the servant." Artusi's examples paid no attention to the words. In fact, he did not even bother to indicate the words for which the offending music had been written.²⁷ Giulio Cesare also stresses that Monteverdi's principles are drawn from practice and not from abstract theory and that the proof of the validity of his ideas will come not from argument but from the music itself, as it is performed.

Alessandro Striggio

Alessandro Striggio (1573-1630) was the son of the madrigal composer and musician, also named Alessandro Striggio, who took part in the Florentine intermedi of 1589. The younger Striggio studied law in Mantua in preparation for a career in diplomacy.²⁸ Stevens claims

he was already a court secretary in 1605²⁹ but Barbara Hanning places his appointment as secretary to Duke Vincenzo in June 1611.³⁰ However, in his first letter to Striggio in 1609, Monteverdi addresses him as "Most Worthy Councillor of His Most Serene Highness."³¹ Striggio was also a member of the Accademia degli Invaghiti where he was known as "il Ritenuto."³²

The list of Striggio's work is not extensive. Collaborations with Monteverdi, aside from L'Orfeo, include (probably) Tirsi e Clori (1616) and the lost dramatic cantata Apollo. He also wrote the texts for Il trionfo d'onore and Il balletto d'Ifigenia, for which Marco da Gagliano wrote the music.³³

There is some question as to whether the librettist himself took part in the 1589 intermedi in Florence due to a reference in the edition of the music to both Alessandro and Alessandrino in separate intermedi.³⁴ Whether or not the spectacular staging effects of the Florentine intermedi were witnessed by or reported to the younger Striggio, their influence can be felt in his libretto.

L'Orfeo

According to a letter written by Francesco Gonzaga to his brother Ferdinando on the 23rd of February, 1607, L'Orfeo, favola in musica was to be presented on the following night "nella nostra Accademia."³⁵ Fenlon translates this as "in front of the members of the academy," since Carlo Magno's letter sets the performance in an apartment in the palace. The Academy was the Accademia degli Invaghiti, founded in 1562 by Cesare Gonzaga of Guastalla. Its interests were mainly in chivalry, oratory and poetry. Both Francesco and Ferdinando Gonzaga were members, as was Alessandro Striggio. It appears that Monteverdi was not.³⁶

Nevertheless, although the work may have originally been produced on a modest scale, the score reveals a work that is far more elaborate, conceptually, than a chamber work. In fact, it might be apt to consider the first production of L'Orfeo as a kind of elaborate staged reading: rehearsed, costumed and performed in a rudimentary fashion. Like staged readings today, the excitement it generated was one of novelty and exclusivity, its audience consisting of a privileged elite getting to preview something entirely new and different.

Without either a commemorative description of the first performance of Orfeo or even methodical records of the payrolls at the time, it is not possible to reconstruct the actual personnel for that performance. However, utilizing the seven payrolls which are extant for the fifty years between 1577 and 1627, as well as new accounts and letters, Susan Parisi, in her article "Musicians at the Court of Mantua during Monteverdi's Time: Evidence from the Payrolls," offers a reconstruction of the musical establishment at the Gonzaga court between 1606 and 1608, in which she names forty-three musicians and singers, most of whom, presumably, could have been pressed into performance for the 1607 Carnival production of Orfeo. The singers included sopranos Caterina Martinelli, Claudia Cattaneo (Monteverdi's wife, who died in September of 1607), Giovan Battista Sacchi, Don Giulio Cardi and Isacchino della Profeta [Massarano], who also played the lute. Tenors included Francesco Rasi, Francesco Campagnolo, Francesco Dognazzi and Pandolfo Grande. Giovan Battista Marinoni, Annibale Pelizzari and Don Anselmo Rossi are listed simply as singers. Additionally, Lucia Pelizzari, Isabetta Pelizzari, Don Eleuterio [Buosio], Henrico Vilardi and Luca Francini, all singers, may have left by

1606. There were nine strings players, two keyboardists, harpist Lucrezia Urbana, three guitarists, though not all in permanent service, a cornet player, at least one wind player and another who performed both clarino della trombe and trombone.³⁷

The list of characters which appears at the front of the 1609 edition of the score is as follows:

La Musica Prologo

Orfeo

Euridice

Choro di Ninfe, e Pastori

Speranza

Caronte

Choro di Spiriti infernali

Proserpina

Plutone

Apollo

Choro de Pastori che fecero la moresca nel

fine.³⁸

There are certain obvious problems with this list. Sylvia, the messenger, is omitted. Also, Monteverdi's precision with regard to the chorus of shepherds to dance the moresca at the end might indicate that this was the only dancing that was performed in the opera, but then

again, it might not. Monteverdi also called for a large ensemble of instruments at the front of the score, but specified additional instruments where they were required in the body of the music. Therefore, his list should not be taken to be comprehensive, nor to preclude dance from sections of the opera other than the ending.

The sopranos called for in the score include La Musica, Euridice, Speranza, Proserpina and the Echo. Anne Ridler identifies Sylvia as a mezzo-soprano and Apollo as a counter-tenor.³⁹ Speranza, as well, has been sung to good effect by a counter-tenor.⁴⁰ Orpheus is a tenor, Caronte and Plutone are basses.

Iain Fenlon documents an exchange of letters between Francesco and Ferdinando Gonzaga who was living at that time in the Medici court, which had repaired to Pisa as it did each year for Carnival.⁴¹ The former did not feel there were sufficient sopranos of merit in the Gonzaga court and wanted to borrow one from the Medici. The Medici were agreeable and eventually the castrato Giovanni Gualberto, who had been a pupil of Giulio Caccini, arrived in court, having learned the prologue by heart, "the rest proving impossible because it contains too many notes..."⁴² Francesco, in a letter to Ferdinando dated February 9, 1607, mentions that the castrato will

also have to perform the part of Proserpina, since the singer who was supposed to sing the role could no longer do so.⁴³ Since a later letter expresses Francesco's delight with the way in which Gualberto had performed his roles, there seems to be fairly conclusive evidence that the castrato from Florence performed *La Musica*, *Proserpina* and one other role. Fenlon speculates that that would have been *Speranza*.⁴⁴

Since Francesco Rasi, an accomplished tenor, was on the court payroll, it seems reasonable to assume that he took the lead role.⁴⁵ Denis Stevens cites a Florentine report from 1608 which mentions that the part of Eurydice was sung by "a little priest" ("pretino").⁴⁶ He speculates that this may have been the castrato Padre Teodoro Bacchino.⁴⁷ Stevens further speculates that the parts of Caronte and Plutone may have been performed by the bass singers Giovanni Battista Marinoni and Serafino Terzi, who, with Bacchino, had been members of the vocal quintet that accompanied Monteverdi on the Duke's ruinous Hungarian campaign of 1595.⁴⁸ Marinoni does appear on the partial payroll list of 1603-1608.⁴⁹

The list of orchestral instruments at the front of the score is imposing, though Monteverdi calls for additional instruments in the score:

Duoi Gravicembani
 Duoi Contrabassi de Viola
 Dieci Viole da braccio
 Un Arpa doppia
 Duoi Violoni piccoli alla Francese
 Duoi Chitaroni
 Duoi Organi di legno
 Tre bassi da gamba Quattro Tromboni
 Un Regale
 Duoi Cornetti
 Un Flautino alla Vigesima seconda
 Un Clarino con tre trombe sordine.⁵⁰

In his performing edition, Denis Stevens lists the instruments required for the entire opera as follows:

Woodwind: 2 descant recorders
 2 cornetti
 Brass: 5 trumpets
 5 trombones
 Strings: 2 violini Piccoli
 4 violins
 4 violas
 2 cellos
 2 double-basses
 Continuo: 2 harpsichords

3 archlutes
3 bass viols
2 archcitterns
2 positive organs
1 regal
1 harp.⁵¹

Jane Glover organizes the instruments into three groups: strings, brass and continuo.⁵² Each group will have a very specific use. Composers of intermedi had already begun to associate certain families of instruments with certain frequently recurring scenes. For example, celestial scenes set in Olympus called for a large number of instruments: harpsichord, great spinet, lutes, harp, viols, and wind instruments. Percussion and reed instruments were omitted in order to create, "a universal harmony from which...all trace of vulgarity was banished."⁵³ Reeds, on the other hand, were associated with pastoral scenes. Viols and trombones gave a "distinctive sonority" to infernal scenes.⁵⁴ As will be seen, Monteverdi also uses instrumentation to differentiate settings, calling for strings, organs, harpsichords, plucked continuo instruments and also recorders for pastoral scenes and cornets, trombones and regals for the Infernal scenes.⁵⁵ The great number and

variety of "fundament" instruments is characteristic of the sixteenth century.

There are no percussion instruments called for. In her article "Monteverdi as a Primary Source," Anna Maria Vacchelli makes an observation that may be relevant to this choice. She notes that, in the foreword to the Lamento della Ninfa in the Eighth Book of Madrigals, Monteverdi states that "Her weeping must be sung according to the beating of the affect of the soul, and not to the beating of the hand."⁵⁶ That is to say, the rhythm and metre are determined according to the feelings being performed and hence may be fluid and irregular according to the singer's interpretation of the affect. Monteverdi also instructs that the Lettera amorosa and the Partenza amorosa from the Seventh Book of Madrigals be sung "without beating."⁵⁷ This is a further emphasis on the degree to which the affect of the text was master of the music.

Nevertheless, percussion instruments may have been used, particularly in the final moresca. As discussed above (pages 288-290), Monteverdi does not list every instrument called for in the opera at the front of the score. If the choreographer of the production decided that the dancers would use tambourines or a similar

percussion instrument, then Monteverdi might not have indicated this anywhere on the score.

Toccatà

The opera begins with a five-part Toccata musically summoning the attention of the audience. Monteverdi specifies that it is to be repeated three times "before the curtain is raised."⁵⁸ If the score has any credibility as a record of the initial production, then it certainly indicates the presence of a number of production values: a stage, however temporary, with a curtain which was raised and not dropped. We know that the room was small and if we further assume that it did not have capacious space above the stage, then one possibility for what was used is the one recommended in Il corago. This curtain would have been raised quickly with ropes strung through rings placed along its edge in such a way that when it came into place above the stage it formed an ornamental festoon.⁵⁹ Monteverdi also specifies that the trumpets be muted which means that their pitch would be raised a full tone. The Toccata is written in C but intended to sound in D, which is the tonality of the Prologue.⁶⁰

Prologue

After the third repetition of the Toccata, the curtain rises and the bucolic setting is revealed. Like that described in 1545 by Sebastiano Serlio it would be made up of both painted and three dimensional components. The foliage would have had to be simulated with silk or other material.⁶¹ But the pastoral setting is also revealed musically, through a five part ritornello for strings and flautini.

Just as Rinuccini chose to begin his version of the Orpheus myth with theoretical comments sung by a performer representing La Tragedia, Striggio decided to emphasize thematic aspect of the power of music by having the allegorical figure of La Musica sing the prologue. She may have already been on stage or perhaps in a fanciful chariot descending from the heavens. Alternately, she might have been rising from beneath the stage as did the nine daughters of Pierus and the Muses in the second intermezzo of La pellegrina.⁶² Like them, she would certainly have been draped in an elaborate costume, hair garlanded, breasts delineated by a high waisted gown, with a flowing skirt of several layers.⁶³ Based on the evidence of the correspondence between

Francesco and Ferdinando Gonzaga, *La Musica* was performed by the soprano castrato, Giovanni Gualberto.⁶⁴

In the first of five stanzas, *La Musica* greets the audience, in particular the Gonzaga rulers whose lineage and deeds she celebrates. Some commentators interpret this as a way of identifying the Gonzagas with the heroes in the forthcoming story,⁶⁵ but this is illogical for two reasons. First of all, this version of the Orpheus myth stays true to Ovid and Poliziano in having Orpheus fail to remove Eurydice from the Underworld. In fact, it expands upon it, since his great aria "Possente spirto," intended to overwhelm the obstacles of Hell with the great power of music, fails to sway even Charon, the Boatman. Secondly, the Gonzaga themselves were heroes. The long history of their rule over Mantua had, at this point, the stuff of legend in it. In 1328, with the cry "Viva il Popolo!" they overthrew the despotic Bonaccolsi who had consolidated power through treachery.⁶⁶ Thereafter, the Gonzaga acquitted themselves heroically in the defence of their city.⁶⁷ Therefore, the first stanza of *La Musica's* prologue cannot be looked at as anything other than a kind of oral dedication, the equivalent of that which was printed at the beginning of

books in that era. It acknowledges and praises the sponsorship of the artistic endeavour.

There follow six bars of the ritornello in a-minor before the second stanza. According to the advice found in Il corago, La Musica might move to a different spot on the stage during the musical interlude. She would probably not dance and she would undoubtedly remain at the front of the stage, but she would vary her position in order to increase visual interest. Moreover, once she had addressed the Duke and his family, she could move on to address other members of the audience.

In the second stanza, she identifies herself and begins to describe her power. Anne Ridler, in her English translation of the libretto, translates the stanza as follows:

Music am I, who with sweet accents can charm
and comfort the most despairing spirits: now
with noble anger's fire, and now with rage of
desire the coldest heart inflaming.⁶⁸

There are numerous possibilities and implications for the last two lines: "Et or di nobil ira, et or d'amore / Posso infiammar le più gelate menti."⁶⁹ In Striggio-Monteverdi's L'Orfeo: An Excursion into its Neoplatonic Layers, Glen Segell suggests that what was

being expressed there was Music's power to overcome the "resistance of uncultivated minds."⁷⁰ Yet, if you interpret the word "menti" not so strictly to mean heart or mind, but rather something along the lines of "mentality" or "mental state," then it begins to approach the idea of affect and then "gelate menti," becomes "frozen affect," and the objective of Baroque music is precisely to move or change such affect.⁷¹

The third stanza continues in this vein. Anne Ridler's translation parallels the desire that is wakened in the last two lines of stanza two with the specific desire for "the heavenly lyre's immortal music" mentioned in the final two lines of the third stanza.⁷² "Hence," *La Musica* begins the fourth stanza, "I will tell you about Orfeo."⁷³ That is to say, "I tell you the story of Orfeo in order to awaken the desire for heavenly music, or the music of the spheres." This will result in the unfreezing of affect. She describes Orfeo and his misfortunes in heroic terms; however, although these qualities are associated with tragedy, what follows is not a tragedy in its strictest sense.

Just as Rinuccini's *La Tragedia* concerned herself primarily with genre in the prologue to Euridice, *La Musica* makes a passing reference to hybrid form at the

start of the fifth stanza when she states that her songs alternate between joy and sadness.⁷⁴ She then makes reference to the setting, as was frequently done in Italian comedies of the Renaissance. This functions to move the focus away from the singer and onto the world of the play. While the full sixteen bar version of the ritornello, which was performed at the start of the Prologue, is repeated, La Musica will make her exit and the chorus of shepherds and nymphs will enter. If she was flown into the scene, she might re-ascend. If not, she would simply walk off.

Act One

The mood of the first act is one of ceremoniousness. A solemn tone and stately tempo dominate and an emotional distance is established between Orpheus and Eurydice as well as between the couple and the chorus of shepherds and nymphs of the chorus. In the first of the three sections into which the act can be divided, the chorus celebrates the occasion of Orpheus's marriage to Eurydice with an invocation to the god Hymen. The dignified mood established by the hymn is enlivened somewhat by a five part balletto which was sung and quite possibly danced. In the second segment of the act, Orpheus and Eurydice

sing of their happiness. The poignancy of the music Monteverdi composes for this section contrasts with the joy in Striggio's words, emphasizing emotional ambiguities and foreshadowing the disaster that is about to befall the newly wedded couple. The final segment of the act returns symmetrically to the hymn to Hymen and the balletto of the beginning while Orpheus and Eurydice exit to the Temple for their actual marriage. The act ends with Orpheus's return, alone, while Eurydice celebrates elsewhere with her nymphs.

In the same ritornello which covers La Musica's exit, a chorus of nymphs and shepherds makes its entrance. Their costumes might be similar to those "made of rich cloth of gold and silk, furred with the finest skins of wild animals"⁷⁵ which Serlio describes in the Urbino production. It seems likely that Orpheus and Eurydice also entered at this time and became the focal point around whom the shepherds and nymphs arranged themselves to sing, and also to dance.

The first voice to be heard is that of a shepherd, singing in d minor. He praises the happy day and, in the first instance of establishing an emotional distance between the wedding couple, singles out Orpheus to honour with music, mentioning the bride only to recall her past

rejections of the groom. Again isolating Orpheus from his mate, he calls upon his companions to sing their "sweetest music" to honour their demigod. The chorus then calls upon Hymen to bless the marriage. The song is in five parts but sung in unison so that the words are very clear. Monteverdi stipulates in the score that it should be sung to all the instruments, but Jane Glover notes that he did not mean all of the instruments called for at the front of the score, but rather, all of the instruments associated with the pastoral setting, namely strings, organs, harpsichords, plucked continuo instruments and recorders.⁷⁶ Now a nymph invokes the Muses in Parnassus to enrich the songs of the shepherds and nymphs with the sounds of their "melodious lyres." The tempo picks up as the chorus sings the joyful, "Lasciate i monti", a five part balletto the lengthy ritornello of which, written in triple metre, seem to be intended as a dance.

Barbara Sparti, in the introduction to her translation of Guglielmo Ebreo's dance manual mentions "round dances", not normally included in the instructional works of most contemporary dance masters. She recounts an incident that occurred in April 1459. Galeazzo Maria Sforza stopped in Firenzuola on his way to

Florence and took part in a round dance with a group of young women who sang as they danced.⁷⁷ In one section of his balletto entitled The Shepherd, Cesare Negri describes males and females changing partners as they dance.⁷⁸ It is not difficult to imagine a partner changing dance around Orpheus and Eurydice during the ritornellos of "Lasciate i monti". Alternately, the dancers may have formed a more static semi-circle around the bridal couple and performed jumps, capers and turns on the spot.

After "Lasciate i monti", they turn to Orpheus and ask him to sing some appropriate song about love and he complies with "Rosa del ciel..." in d minor. "Rose of the heavens" is a reference to Apollo, a foreshadowing of his appearance at the end of the work. Though he rhetorically asks the god of the sun if he has ever seen a happier lover, the beautiful melody which he sings is more haunting than joyous. Eurydice's rejoinder modulates to a minor. Her words are ambiguous. She cannot describe to Orpheus the joy that his rejoicing causes her, since she is no longer in possession of her heart. It is now with her beloved and Love and, therefore, she instructs him to ask the god of love how happy she is and how much she loves Orpheus.⁷⁹ The

ambiguity of her words is reinforced by the mournful quality of her melody.

The mood is somewhat redeemed, at the start of the third section of the act, by a reprise of "Lasciati i monti..." and a repetition of the supplication to Hymen. Structurally, in order for the plot to develop, Orpheus and Eurydice must leave the stage and become separated. In addition, enough time has to pass for Eurydice to celebrate with her nymphs, be bitten by a snake and die. In the fashion of ancient Greek tragedy, these events must occur offstage and be reported by a messenger. Therefore, a shepherd reminds the group that they must go to the temple to offer sacrifices to the gods. This is followed by a ritornello during which Orpheus, Eurydice and some of the members of the chorus would exit. They go off to the temple to pray and a small ensemble remains on stage. John Whenham suggests that this ensemble, consisting of a soprano, three tenors and a bass, is sufficient to sing all of the choruses of the second act, enabling the remainder of the chorus time to change costumes in order to appear as infernal sprits in Act Three.⁸⁰ If there was a separate dance ensemble, then a group of dancers would also stay on stage at this time so that the whole stage picture did not suddenly become too

spare. Two shepherds sing that none should despair, no matter how grave their situation appears.⁸¹ This is followed by a ritornello which could have been danced to. The movements here would have been slower and more stately, a bassa danza, that is, a dance consisting of steps only, changing the formation on stage to add visual variety. A trio of a nymph and two shepherds continues the moral commentary begun by the duet in madrigal-like polyphony. The metaphor moves to nature and the sky, with the sun coming out after a foreboding storm.⁸² Again this is followed by a ritornello. Finally a duet completes the moral with a reference to the return of spring after winter⁸³ and the first act ends with a five-part exultation on Orpheus's return although he is without his bride:

Ecco Orfeo, cui pur dianzi
 Furon cibo i sospir, bevanda il pianto.
 Oggi felice è tanto
 Che nulla è più che bramar gli avanzi.⁸⁴

Act Two

A short Sinfonia functions to create a musical division between Act One and Act Two. John Whenham suggests that the curtain would remain open and the set

would be unchanged and this seems entirely likely.⁸⁵ The exultant mood of Orpheus's return sets the tone for the first section of the act which, like the previous one, can be divided into three. The purpose of the first, with its unalloyed happiness, is to create the greatest possible sense of *peripeteia*, reversal of fortune which in this case is a fall from jubilation to grief, when, in the second segment of the act, Orpheus learns that his bride is dead. In the final section, after Orpheus's exit, the messenger and chorus express their own grief over the tragic turn of events.

At the start of the act, Orpheus steps onto the stage announcing happily that he has returned to his beloved woods, elated by the sunniness of his love.⁸⁶ In the ritornello which follows, Monteverdi is specific about the instrumentation, capitalizing on the laughing sound of two small violins, "duoi violini piccioli alla francese," along with the harpsichord and two "Chitaroni" (sic).⁸⁷ If a small contingent of dancers has been left on stage, they would use the short ritornello to change their formation in order to vary the stage picture. A shepherd continues Orpheus's celebration of the woods. The ritornello after his first stanza is a repeat of the one which followed Orpheus's solo but, for the ritornello

which follows the shepherd's second stanza, Monteverdi replaces the two tiny violins with two ordinary violins and a viola.⁸⁸ Again, with all of these musical interludes, it is justified to assume that there would be some dance-like movement on the stage, simply to ensure that the stage picture does not become static. A duet follows. Monteverdi specifies the accompaniment: a harpsichord and single chitarrone.⁸⁹ The lyrics once again take up the subject of the woods. The first ritornello repeats the previous one but, after a stanza describing the plight of Pan, the god of shepherds, who has been rejected by all his lovers, Monteverdi inserts a ritornello to be played by two chitarroni, a harpsichord and two flutes⁹⁰ in humorous replication of Pan's pipes. The careful orchestration of this section of the act foreshadows, in a musical sense, the varying accompaniments intended to emphasize Orpheus's musical power in the aria "Possente spirto" with which he will attempt to persuade Charon to allow him to cross into the Underworld.

When asked by a five-part chorus to sing in honour of the countryside, Orpheus responds with the lively "Vi ricorda ò bosch'ombrosi," asking the woods to recall their role as witness to his previous suffering for love.

If in the first act, his expression of joy had a melancholy tone, in the second, his recollection of sorrow is mitigated by the joyfulness with which he expresses it. Once again, very short ritornellos separate the stanzas, allowing for a change of position on the stage and perhaps for one or two solo dancers to do just a few steps, leaps or capers, to punctuate the movement. The ritornellos are to be performed by five violins, a bass, two harpsichords and three chitarroni,⁹¹ certainly a small showcase of Orpheus's musical power. His aria cadences on G major. It is followed by a solo sung by a shepherd. This is a transition from the first to the second section of the act. The words emphasize Orpheus's current state of bliss after his suffering for love and the arioso cadences on C major.

All the more shocking, therefore, is the C sharp which follows C in the base-line. Emotional well-being have been firmly established musically and verbally in the first part of the act. As the second begins, the dissonance of the C sharp is as confusing to the on-stage characters as the deeply anguished first stanza of the messenger, Sylvia. "What misfortune!" she sings, "Cruel, pitiless fate! Injurious stars in a jealous heaven!"⁹² Her words are accompanied only by the organ and a single

chitarrone.⁹³ The disoriented reaction of the shepherds is expressed by one who asks, "What is this sad sound which shatters our happiness?"⁹⁴ The bewilderment of this query may indicate not only that Sylvia's sound is unexpected, but also that she may have been heard before she was seen. Indeed, after her next stanza, in which she announces that she has terrible news to bring Orpheus, a shepherd finally introduces her. Therefore, one manner in which this section might have been staged would have been to have Sylvia sing her first stanza off-stage and then enter during the first shepherd's reaction. If she entered upstage of the group around Orpheus, then she would not have been revealed until they turned to see what the sound was. The group would then part to enable her to move down toward Orpheus. Once again, at this point, Monteverdi is careful to specify the accompaniment: a harpsichord, chitarrone and violin.⁹⁵

Sylvia is reticent to articulate what is causing her grief. Her music is full of rests to indicate hesitation or moments when overpowering grief prevents her from speaking. For example, when she finally informs Orpheus that Eurydice is dead, there is a rest between the words "La tua diletta sposa" and "è morta."⁹⁶ Orpheus is almost struck dumb. After a pause represented by a half note

rest he replies simply, "Ohimé." Another pause follows, which is indicated in the Malipiero edition as a whole note rest.⁹⁷ The messenger then, in a halting fashion, tells the entire story of Eurydice's demise. The recitative which Monteverdi employs has enormous expressive power. A shepherd responds with a reiteration of "Ahi caso acerbo..." Other shepherds react, turning finally to the bereaved lover.

There is another pause. It is as if Orpheus cannot quite assimilate what he has just heard. Accompanied only by an organ and a chitarrone,⁹⁸ he attempts to come to terms with what has happened. Finally, he decides upon a course of action. God-like in his reaction to mortality, he conceives of a heroic quest and departs to rescue his beloved from hell itself. In one of the rare moments in which the music seems to be designed to allow movement while singing, Orpheus takes his leave of the earth, the sky and the sun pausing between each farewell to move closer and closer to the exit. Finally, he is gone and a five-part chorus reiterates "Ahi, caso acerbo..." The emotional atmosphere of the second section of the act has been one of shock, bewilderment and grief.

In the third segment, the mortals who remain attempt to come to terms with the news of Eurydice's death and Orpheus's departure on a quest that might end in his death as well. Sylvia is all but destroyed by having been the bearer of so tragic a message. She determines to hide herself away and live the life of a hermit. A slow sinfonia covers her departure from the stage. Two shepherds, once again accompanied only by organ and chitarrone⁹⁹ attempt to draw a moral from this experience. The chorus sings the five-part refrain, "Ahi, caso acerbo." The duet of shepherds finally determines that the group must pay tribute to the dead body of Eurydice, thus motivating their departure from the stage. The five-part "Ahi, caso acerbo" is repeated a last time and the stage empties to the sound of the ritornello which was played at the beginning of Prologue and of Act One and is therefore associated with the Pastoral setting. It forms a musical parenthesis, indicating that this part of the story is finished.

Act Three

Jane Glover points out a stage direction that exists in the score which Malipiero omits from his edition. It indicates that at the start of the third act, trombones,

cornets and reed organ enter¹⁰⁰ to perform an eight-part Underworld sinfonia. The sinfonia is repeated in order to allow time for the scene to change, presumably in front of the audience, as was the custom.

The change might have been effected through the use of periaktoi, (see above, page 45). A more elaborate mode of changing the scene is suggested by a design by Leonardo da Vinci, a reconstruction of which was described by Kate Trauman Steinitz in a 1949 article in Arts Quarterly. The reconstruction was built by engineer Roberto Guatelli based upon three documents: drawings and notes by Leonardo located in the Codex Arundel in the British Museum, Bernardo Bellincioni's preface to his play Il Paradiso for which Leonardo designed the setting, and the report of an anonymous spectator at the performance. Dating back to the closing decades of the fifteenth century, the design shows a mountain which split in half to reveal an underworld.¹⁰¹ The top and sides could easily have formed the backdrop for the pastoral first and second act and the opening of the mountain would have been a marvel to behold. The most likely methods for change, however, would have been the relatively simple ones for covering the settings described by Nicola Sabbattini in chapters 5 and 6 of the

second book of the Manual for Constructing Theatrical Scenes and Machines. The new scene would have been painted on cloth to be drawn over the frames representing the previous setting or on frames that would slide in grooves in front of the frames depicting the pastoral locale.¹⁰²

The stage floor must now transform into the waters of the river Acheron, over which Charon will guide his boat toward Orpheus. Later, in the same boat, Orpheus will depart. In his stage manual, Sabbattini describes three methods for creating a sea, any of which could have been adapted to the requirements of the Acheron. (See discussion of methods to create the sea, above pages 240-241.) The final method of making waves with undulating cylinders operated by cranks is used when showing a ship coming onto the stage, turning and exiting in the same place as it entered.¹⁰³

Whatever the method for creating the sea, how the transition to it from a solid floor was effected is more difficult to ascertain. Bastiano de' Rossi's description of the transformation into the sea for the fifth intermedio in 1589 says simply that "the stage floor became ocean waves."¹⁰⁴ It seems that the changes for the intermedi were effected with such a great movement of

clouds and coverings over the scenery that a distraction was created. In the confusion, the exact nature of the changes would not be discernable and they would seem magical or dreamlike. Certainly the opening of the mountain, as in da Vinci's vision of a set, would have been not only impressive but also efficient. The river machinery would already be in place. If, on the other hand, periaktoi turned or the scenery was merely covered, then the machinery for the waves would have to have been pushed on from the side. It might not seem a very elegant solution, but perhaps a change of lighting helped create a distraction so that the setting would have seemed to come into place more magically as the audience's eyes adjusted to a sudden darkness.

Leone de' Sommi, in his Dialoghi of the late sixteenth century, describes shading or extinguishing a part of the lights on stage for tragic effect.¹⁰⁵ Sabbattini designed metal cylinders that could be placed over lighting devices to dim them. These could be rigged so that a number of cylinders dropped over a number of lamps simultaneously. They would also be as easy and quick to remove in order to re-illuminate the stage.¹⁰⁶

A possible picture of the scene change comes into focus. The pastoral setting empties of characters during

the final ritornello of Act Two. The musicians playing instruments associated with the setting leave, to be replaced by those whose sounds will summon the image of the underworld. As they begin to play the stage becomes ominously dark. The trees transform into the black rocks of a barren and malevolent landscape. Waves surge on from the side of the stage. It is an Inferno such as Dante described and such as was elaborately represented in the fourth intermezzo for La Pellegrina in Florence, in 1589.¹⁰⁷

The mood is one of uncertainty and suspense. In the first of the act's three sections, Orpheus enters accompanied by Hope. In using an allegorical figure rather than a god, as Rinuccini had, Striggio is following a medieval tradition rather than that of Renaissance classicism, incidentally drawing attention to the heterogeneous nature of the theatrical form and the diversity of its influences. What is more, he emphasizes the metaphoric nature of the pastoral environment. Hope is the personification of an emotional state. She exists only in Orpheus's psychological world. In fact, as the Chorus to Act Four draws a final conclusion on his time in the Underworld, they will weigh both his external and internal emotional demands, finding him equal to the

first but vanquished by the second.¹⁰⁸ Hence, as he moves toward the Underworld, the libretto shifts from objective reality, and Orpheus enters not only the Underworld of Ovid and classical sources, but also his own personal unconscious and the Inferno of Dante.

In an overt reference to the latter, Hope confronts the inscription over the gate, "Lasciate ogni speranza o voi ch'entrate" ("Abandon every hope ye who enter here.")¹⁰⁹ She sings the phrase twice and departs. "If you, sweet Hope, flee from me, / from what may I draw the strength I need?" Orpheus asks.¹¹⁰ This is a moment of enormous heroic crisis. Can Orpheus proceed hopelessly? From what sort of inner resource will he summon the strength and will to continue? Yet Monteverdi does not allow this particular moment to develop. Charon's entrance occurs simultaneously with Hope's departure. Thus ends the first and begins the second section of the act. Despite the frequency with which Monteverdi uses rests in order to express dramatic tension elsewhere in the score, here he has Charon confront Orpheus directly upon the latter completing his last utterance to Hope. There is no time for reflection. Orpheus must simply act.

In chapters 31 and 32 of his "Manual," Sabbattini describes methods whereby a vessel may be seen to move over the sea and how to make it turn around and withdraw from the scene. In the first case, a profile of a ship is created which can slide along a groove cut in the stage floor. It is operated from beneath the stage. The second case is a more complicated operation. The cylindrical waves are cut into two parts with a gap in the middle for the ship to pass through. A board cut and painted to look like a wave is affixed along the gap where the vessel will travel. It must be done in such a way that the action of the cylinders is not impeded. The vessel is built in the round and will move on rollers over a piece of wood cut in a wave form so that the ship seems to be rising and falling in ocean swells. The rollers are fixed in such a way that the ship can pivot around and return to the place from which it entered.¹¹¹ Ships capable of carrying performers were not new. One had been used in the fifth intermedio of 1589 to carry Jacopo Peri as the poet Arion and a crew of sailors intent on his murder.¹¹²

Thus, Charon's bark rolls in over the dark waves. In deep, accusatory tones, accompanied by a regal,¹¹³ the boatman rejects Orpheus's request before the demigod has

even had a chance to speak. A *sinfonia* allows Orpheus to gather his wits. It may also cover the entrance of a chorus of Infernal Spirits, on the other side of the Acheron, souls in torment coming to witness Orpheus's humiliation.

Orpheus summons all the musical powers at his command in the aria, "Possente spirto." The power of Orpheus's music is emphasized by the use of different instruments to accompany each stanza and perform the *ritornelli* between stanzas: two violins for the first; two cornets for the second, as Orpheus' pleading becomes more insistent; double harp for the third to soften and placate; and finally two violins and a "Basso da braccio," to play very softly. A pipe organ and *chitarrone* perform the bass line. For the first four stanzas, Monteverdi provides the singer performing Orpheus with a choice of an ornamented line or a simple one, should he choose to improvise the ornamentation himself. But with the fifth stanza, beginning "Sol tu nobile Dio," the ornamented line is eliminated, indicating that Monteverdi wished a simplified vocal approach at this point. He also specifies the accompaniment to be three violins and a double bass, playing very softly, "pian piano."¹¹⁴

"Possente spirto" marks the centre of the opera,

giving it a sense of symmetry. Iain Fenlon warns that to overstate this quality would be "to view the work anti-historically,"¹¹⁵ and he quotes Nino Pirrotta's footnote advising that the symmetry of the first act should be viewed in the general context of text and action rather than a pure element of musical form,¹¹⁶ but equally, it would seem that to understate the musicality of the structure of L'Orfeo is to obscure the unique manner in which this particular work was trying to merge musical and dramatic elements at a time when there were controversies with regard to both musical and dramatic structure.

"Possente spirto" poses a problem in that Orpheus, after summoning all the musical power at his command, fails to convince Charon to allow him onto his boat. Charon states, almost graciously, that while he is flattered, pity does not exist in hell. Commentators consider this a weakness in the text, but, actually, it is a justifiable choice on the part of the creators. Orpheus is only partially a god and just as a particular perspective exposes the human-seeming vulnerability of Giulio Romano's Apollo in the Palazzo Te, Orpheus's failure demarcates his mortal side. Furthermore, his inability to sway Charon prefigures his failure to adhere

to his promise not to look back when leading Eurydice out of the Underworld. That outcome would seem less credible had Orpheus's entry into the Underworld been more conventionally heroic. As it is, his power fails when used consciously.

However, after a sad supplication to all of the Infernal Spirits to return his bride, a *sinfonia* performed by organ, violin and double bass plays very softly¹¹⁷ and Charon is lulled to sleep. Orpheus seizes the opportunity to enter the boat and cross the river into Tartarus. Accompanied only by the organ,¹¹⁸ he sings that boldness will triumph where entreaty failed.¹¹⁹ "Here he enters the bark," Monteverdi states, "and exits singing, accompanied by the organ."¹²⁰ As the bark moves off the stage, Orpheus repeats his heart-rending plea for the return of his bride, "Rendetemi il mio ben Tartari Numi."¹²¹

In the brief third segment of the act, a *sinfonia* covers Orpheus's exit, and also, if they were not already on stage, the entrance of the Chorus of Spirits. Accompanied by a regal, organ, five trumpets, two bass viols and a double bass, the Spirits draw, in five-part madrigal-like fashion, the moral for the act, with the following words: "Man has the power to tame nature."¹²²

Act Four

A short sinfonia indicates that the change between Acts Three and Four is as swift as that between Acts One and Two. Once again, it is most likely that the scene would be played against the same backdrop. The Infernal Spirits need not leave the stage as they will be required shortly. Only the river waves must be cleared. If they are pulled off to the same side as Orpheus's exit, then they might give the impression of waters receding. However they are moved, it would have been as quickly as possible. Rossi refers to "lightning-swift" changes in the Florentine intermedi.¹²³ Presumably that would be the objective here as well.

There are a number of means whereby Proserpine and Pluto might have made their entrance. In the fourth intermezzo for La Pellegrina, Lucifer appeared rising out of the stage floor, in the midst of an Inferno, "his torso rising out of a circular lake to a height of eight ells."¹²⁴ In Il corago there is a suggestion that Proserpine and Pluto may be introduced from mid-air, that is, flown in.¹²⁵ Because all of the Inferno is their realm, this is not necessarily illogical.

If they do not rise through the floor or fly in through the air, Proserpine and Pluto might arrive on an

elaborate float. Like the float for Demogorgone designed by Giorgio Vasari for the finale of the 1565 procession Geneologia degli dei, it might be in the shape of a dark, double cave drawn by dragons and surrounded by such allegorical figures of woe as Discord, Envy, Fear, Obstinacy, Ignorance, Poverty, Lamentation, Licentiousness, and Falsehood.¹²⁶ The Infernal Spirits would form an attractive formation around them as the float came to a stop.

If the mood of the first act was one of celebration tempered with ceremony, that in Act Four is one of the seriousness of hell leavened by love and joy. Once again, there are three distinct sections. The first focuses on Proserpine and Pluto, the second on Orpheus and Eurydice and the last on the loss of Eurydice.

Proserpine and Pluto are obviously aware of Orpheus's entreaty since the act begins with Proserpine pleading his case. It is likely that Orpheus was not on the stage at this point. He is spoken about in the third person and no reference is made to his exit to seek Eurydice, though he is announced when he returns later with his bride. Pluto is easily convinced by Proserpine to allow Orpheus to lead Eurydice out of the Underworld. However, he imposes the condition that Orpheus is not to

look back at her while they make their way through the abysses of Hell.¹²⁷ He sends spirits to proclaim his commandment throughout his kingdom. Whilst they do so, Proserpine and Pluto sing delicately of love and the delights of marriage. A five-part chorus sums up the message of the first part of Act Four: "Today pity and love triumph, triumph, triumph in the Underworld!"¹²⁸

A spirit announces the entrance of Orpheus and for the first time in the act, Monteverdi specifies the instrumentation. Two violins play a ritornello as Orpheus comes onto the stage, followed by Eurydice. He sings a stanza of happy self-celebration. In the ritornello which follows, Orpheus and Eurydice mime moving through dark pathways on their journey out of the Underworld. Meanwhile, Proserpine and Pluto exit. If they were flown in, they would rise above the stage and disappear. If they were wheeled in on a float, it could move backwards, in a direction opposite to the way Orpheus and Eurydice are going in order to emphasize the distance that the latter are travelling away from the heart of the Underworld. Orpheus sings another stanza of self-congratulation and, during the following ritornello, he and Eurydice move again. Finally, halfway through his third stanza, he turns his attention to the consequence

of his triumph, the reunion with his beloved, but no sooner does his attention turn to Eurydice than he is assailed by doubts.

A noise is heard offstage and Monteverdi changes the instrumentation to harpsichord, viola and chitarrone.¹²⁹ Orpheus turns and sees Eurydice's eyes. He sings to her, accompanied only by the organ but, as the harpsichord, viola and chitarrone return,¹³⁰ he loses sight of his beloved. A spirit steps in front of him, reminding him that he has broken his pact and preventing him from interfering as Eurydice is removed to the Underworld. With the same notes as the messenger used to sing "Ahi, caso acerbo," Eurydice laments, "Ahi, vista troppo dolce..." "Is it because you love me too much," she asks her husband, "that you have lost me?" She and her husband are separated by a chorus of spirits. Orpheus attempts to go to her, but is pulled away by unseen forces.

The third part of the act is brief. During an Underworld sinfonia, Orpheus leaves the stage, returning to "the hateful light of day."¹³¹ The chorus of spirits once again draws a moral, this time focussing on Orpheus's inability to conquer his own inner impulses, the doubt and the impulsiveness which caused him to break

the pact with Pluto. After the chorus of spirits, there is a sinfonia without repeats, which lasts long enough to cover the exits of characters.

Act Five

At this point, Monteverdi indicates, in the score, that the cornetts, trombones and organ with reed pipes fall silent, while a series of instruments enter to play the d minor ritornello that was heard in the prologue and at the end of the second act.¹³² The repeats in the ritornello allow time for the change of scene.¹³³ Orpheus will identify the location as the same one where his "heart was pierced by grief at the bitter news,"¹³⁴ indicating that Act Five takes place in the same location as Acts One and Two. The flats and shutters for that scene would be uncovered or the periaktoi could turn backwards. If an opening mountain such as Leonardo da Vinci conceived had been used, it would be closed now and Orpheus could appear over the top of it, lamenting the now irrevocable loss of Eurydice. Once more, the candles or oil lamps illuminating the stage would be relit or, if they had been covered for the underworld scenes, they are now uncovered and the brightness of the scene becomes cold and empty. Orpheus's despair is expressed in the

slow tempo of his lonely six-stanza soliloquy. The accompaniment which Monteverdi calls for is made up of two duos of organ and chitarrone playing on either side of the stage.¹³⁵ The companionship of nymphs and shepherds in the first two acts is ironically mirrored when he is joined by the disembodied Echo.

The echo song was an extremely popular in this period but it proves an inadequate comfort for the bereaved demi-god. His mood spiralling downward, he forswears the love of all women, since none could ever be as beautiful, wise or honourable as she whom he has lost. Whenham notes that at this point, the verse changes to sdrucchioli, in which the stress falls not on the second to last but on the third to last syllable of each line.¹³⁶ The key moves from g minor to G major and the result is a more truculent feeling in the aria.

At this point, in the libretto distributed at the first performance, a group of Bacchantes enters. Having overheard Orpheus' vitriolic damnation of "vile womankind," their "hearts are brimful of...divine fury."¹³⁷ Orpheus flees from their wrath, but they call upon their god, Bacchus, to avenge the wrong he has done them. In the score, a short sinfonia is heard followed by the descent of Apollo, presumably in a cloud-shaped

vehicle. He and his son reconcile and together ascend to heaven where Orpheus will be reunited with Eurydice in the stars.

According to F.W. Sternfeld, in his article "The Orpheus Myth and the Libretto of 'Orfeo'," most scholars believe that Monteverdi altered the fifth act sometime before publishing the score in 1609.¹³⁸ They believe that the version in which the Bacchantes declare their intention to rip the demigod limb from limb is the first and "true" version but that Monteverdi changed it because he preferred a happy ending (lieto fine). To substantiate this argument, they refer to a letter the composer wrote in 1627 in which he characterizes an unhappy ending as a weakness.¹³⁹

Sternfeld puts forward another theory suggesting that the version in which Apollo descends from above and carries Orpheus up again to heaven is actually the original version but that, when the creators of the opera were confronted by the restrictions of its first, tiny performance space, they realized that they would not be able to install the appropriate flying equipment and quickly substituted an ending that would not require it.¹⁴⁰ There are a number of arguments against this theory. First of all, even though it is not known

exactly which room in the Palazzo Ducale was used for the staging of L'Orfeo, there are numerous halls which, though small compared to theatres, were probably spacious enough to accommodate the staging requirements of the opera. Admittedly, though the ceilings are high, they are probably not high enough for overhead flying equipment. Nevertheless, in Chapter Forty-three of his "Manual for Constructing Scenes and Machines," Sabbattini describes an alternate solution. In this method, two beams are affixed to the back wall to create a vertical track (as described above, pages 156-158). If this method was used, the cloud would have been attached to a horizontal beam running down along the vertical track and would have needed little overhead space.¹⁴¹ Therefore, it seems likely that there would have been enough room in many of the existing halls to achieve the flying effect in this manner.

Iain Fenlon suggests that the poetry in the version with Apollo is not as accomplished as that in the version with the Bacchantes and was probably written by somebody other than Alessandro Striggio. Possible tamperers with the text include Monteverdi himself or even Ferdinando Gonzaga.¹⁴² Paolo Fabbri argues further that the first ending is subtler and therefore more appropriate for a

performance to be given before an "accademia" of scholars. He feels that the imagery in the ascent to heaven is basically a Counter-Reformation addition intended to Christianize the text in retrospect, again not something that would be necessary for a small performance in front of an elite and sophisticated audience.¹⁴³

It is equally possible that the ending with the Bacchantes was the original ending which Striggio wrote, borrowed from the Poliziano version performed in Mantua in 1480. The libretto with the original ending was then sent to the printer well in advance of the performance date to ensure that it was ready for distribution at that time. Meanwhile, he and Monteverdi may have adopted the ending that appears in the score. As Prince Francesco's letter of February 16, 1607 indicates, changes were being made to the opera right up to the last minute.¹⁴⁴

It seems unlikely that any writer would stand idly by and not comment upon a drastic change being made to his text. There is evidence that Striggio knew about the different ending. Monteverdi wrote to him from Cremona in August 1609 asking him, in his stead, to present the printed score to Francesco Gonzaga, its dedicatee.¹⁴⁵ It would have been brazen of Monteverdi to make such a

request having tampered with the text without consulting Striggio, and, moreover, there is no evidence that the librettist responded with any objections to the alteration of his work.

There are three elements to Monteverdi's happy ending. The first is Apollo's uplifting moral:

Troppo, troppo gioisti
 Di tua lieta ventura;
 Hor troppo piagni
 Tua sorte acerba e dura.
 Ancor non sai
 Come nulla quagiù diletta e dura?¹⁴⁶

The second is the hope contained in the promise that, in the stars, Orpheus will be reunited for eternity with Eurydice and the third, and final, element is the happy chorus sung by the shepherds, which equates the literal hell of Orpheus' visit to the underworld with the metaphorical hell of normal human suffering in order to bring the story to a distinctively Christian end:

Così grazia in ciel impetra
 Chi qua giù provò l'inferno
 E chi semina fra doglie
 D'ogni grazia il frutto coglie.¹⁴⁷

Monteverdi ends the score with a moresca. According to Pirrotta, any theatrical dance could be termed a moresca.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, it would be highly speculative to relate this dance to forms of Morris dancing performed elsewhere in the world. Nevertheless, given the lively nature of the music, one could easily imagine a choreography made up of swift movements, falling jumps, capers, leaps, and turns to celebrate the happy resolution of the tragic story of Orpheus.

Conclusion

L'Orfeo is both a tragic love story and an elucidation of the power of music. It is also about human limitations. Orpheus conquers the Underworld but fails himself. The complexity of his story is reflected by the complexity, diversity and variety, which characterize the libretto, score and production values of Monteverdi's first opera. Nino Pirrotta asserts that "the spectacular apotheosis ending Orfeo clearly represented a compromise with the genre of the intermedio" and credits it with ensuring the survival of the new genre threatened as it was by "on one side, the richer articulation of plot and dialogue of the spoken theatre and, on the other, a number of other genres in

which music associated with less dramatic but more spectacular action."¹⁴⁹

The first performance of L'Orfeo so impressed Duke Vincenzo that he ordered a second to be put on the following week.¹⁵⁰ A year later, not one but two operas were performed at the Mantuan Court, one during Carnival and the other, Monteverdi's second, during the celebrations in honour of the marriage of Prince Francesco and Margherita di Savoia.

Endnotes

¹ Surviving copies are held in four libraries: Biblioteca comunale dell'Archiginnasio in Bologna, Biblioteca universitaria in Genoa, and two copies in the Herzog-August-Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel. Iain Fenlon, "The Mantuan Orfeo," Claudio Monteverdi Orfeo, ed. John Whenham, Cambridge Opera Handbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 186n. In his article "'Orfeo', Act V: Alessandro Striggio's Original Ending," in Claudio Monteverdi Orfeo, John Whenham provides the text of the ending which differs from that in the score in Italian and in an English translation.

² Fenlon, "The Mantuan Orfeo" 2-3. Four copies of the 1609 score survive in libraries in Florence, Modena, Genoa and Rome and four copies of the 1615 score survive in Brussels, London, Oxford, and Wroclaw. Claudio Monteverde (sic), L'Orfeo: Favola in Musica (Venice, 1615; Farnborough: Gregg International Publishers, 1972) is a facsimile of the 1615 edition with brief introductory material by Denis Stevens.

- ³ Denis Stevens, "Introductory material," The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi, trans. Denis Stevens, Rev. Ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 42.
- ⁴ Iain Fenlon, Music and Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Mantua, Vol. 1, Cambridge Studies in Music (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) 121-122.
- ⁵ Selwyn Brinton, The Gonzaga - Lords of Mantua (London: Methuen and Co., 1927) 186-187.
- ⁶ Fenlon, Music and Patronage 121.
- ⁷ Monteverdi, Letters, trans. Stevens 34-35.
- ⁸ Monteverdi, Letters, trans. Stevens 50-51.
- ⁹ Monteverdi, Letters, trans. Stevens 362.
- ¹⁰ Stevens, "Introductory material" 42.
- ¹¹ Fenlon, "Mantuan Orfeo" 11.
- ¹² Stevens, "Introductory material" 42.
- ¹³ Francesco Gonzaga, letter to Ferdinando Gonzaga, 5 January 1607, trans. Steven Botterill, "Appendix I" Claudio Monteverdi Orfeo 167.
- ¹⁴ Francesco Gonzaga, letter to Ferdinando Gonzaga, 17 January 1607, Claudio Monteverdi Orfeo 168.
- ¹⁵ Francesco Gonzaga, letter to Ferdinando Gonzaga, 16 February 1607, Claudio Monteverdi Orfeo 169-170.

- ¹⁶ Denis Arnold, Monteverdi, *The Master Musicians*, rev. Tim Carter (London: Dent, 1990) 46.
- ¹⁷ Iain Fenlon, "The Mantuan Stage Works," The New Monteverdi Companion, ed. Denis Arnold and Nigel Fortune (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1985) 266-269.
- ¹⁸ Giovanni Maria Artusi, "Delle imperfezioni della moderna musica," trans. Oliver Strunk, Source Readings in Music History: The Baroque Era (New York: W.W. Norton, 1965) 33.
- ¹⁹ Artusi, trans. Strunk 33-34.
- ²⁰ Stevens, Monteverdi 41.
- ²¹ Artusi, trans. Strunk 42.
- ²² Artusi, trans. Strunk 36.
- ²³ Artusi, trans. Strunk 37-39.
- ²⁴ Artusi, trans. Strunk 41-44.
- ²⁵ Claudio Monteverdi, "Foreword with the 'Dedication' of His Brother G.C. Monteverdi," to Il quinto libro de' madrigali, trans. Strunk, Source Readings: Baroque Era 48-49.
- ²⁶ Translated in Paolo Fabbri, Monteverdi, trans. Tim Carter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 48.
- ²⁷ G.C. Monteverdi, trans. Strunk 46

- ²⁸ Barbara R. Hanning, "Striggio, Alessandro," New Grove Dictionary of Opera, ed. Stanley Sadie, Vol. IV (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1992) 583.
- ²⁹ Stevens, Letters 42.
- ³⁰ Hanning 583.
- ³¹ Monteverdi, Letters 57.
- ³² Hanning 584.
- ³³ Hanning 583-584.
- ³⁴ Nino Pirrotta, "Studies in the Music of Renaissance Theatre," Music and Theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi by Nino Pirrotta and Elena Povoledo, trans. Karen Eales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 213n.
- ³⁵ Francesco Gonzaga, letter to Ferdinando Gonzaga, 23 February 1607, Claudio Monteverdi Orfeo 170.
- ³⁶ Fenlon, "Mantuan Orfeo," 12.
- ³⁷ Susan Parisi, "Musicians at the Court of Mantua during Monteverdi's Time: Evidence from the Payrolls," Musicologia Humana: Studies in Honor of Warren and Ursula Kirkendale, ed. Siegfried Gmeinwieser, David Hiley and Jörg Riedlbauer (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1994) 192-200.
- ³⁸ Reproduced in Claudio Monteverdi, L'Orfeo: Favola in Musica, ed. G. Francesco Malipiero (Vienna: Universal Edition, no date), facing page 1.

³⁹ Anne Ridler, "Introduction" to her translation of Orfeo: Favola in Musica, A Legend in Music, music by Claudio Monteverdi, libretto by Alessandro Striggio in The Operas of Monteverdi, National Opera Guides, ed. Nicholas John (London: John Calder, 1992) 34.

⁴⁰ Matthew White sang the part for the Toronto Consort concert performance, Friday, March 27, 1998, Trinity St. Paul's United Church, Toronto.

⁴¹ Fenlon, "Mantuan Orfeo" 12.

⁴² "...ma il restante non già perché ricerca troppo voci." Ferdinando Gonzaga, letter to Francesco Gonzaga, 5 February 1607, trans. Iain Fenlon, Claudio Monteverdi Orfeo 169.

⁴³ Francesco Gonzaga, letter to Ferdinando Gonzaga, 9 February 1607, trans. Fenlon, Claudio Monteverdi Orfeo 169.

⁴⁴ Fenlon, "The Mantuan Orfeo" 16.

⁴⁵ Fenlon, "The Mantuan Orfeo," 16 and Parisi 199.

⁴⁶ The term "pretino" was sometimes used in a derogatory manner, but it would seem that in this case the intention was merely to identify the priest in question as young and therefore capable of playing the role of a woman.

⁴⁷ Denis Stevens, ed., "Preface," L'Orfeo favola in musica (London: Novello, 1967) i-ii.

⁴⁸ Stevens, L'Orfeo ii.

⁴⁹ Parisi 193.

⁵⁰ Claudio Monteverde (sic), L'ORFEO | FAVOLA | IN MUSICA. Venice, 1615; Hantsworth, England: Gregg International Publishers, 1972, n.p.

⁵¹ Stevens, L'Orfeo iii.

⁵² Jane Glover, "Solving the Musical Problems," Claudio Monteverdi Orfeo, 140.

⁵³ David Kimbell, Italian Opera (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 28-29.

⁵⁴ Kimbell 29.

⁵⁵ Glover 142-143. As she points out, the indication of this is in two stage directions left out of the Malipiero edition. In this chapter, these directions are discussed as they come up in the score.

⁵⁶ "Il pianto di essa...va cantato a tempo delaffetto del'animo, et non quello dela mano." trans. Vacchelli, Proceedings of the International Congress on Performing Practice in Monteverdi's Music: The Historic-Philological Background, Goldsmith's College, University of London,

13-14 December 1993, ed. Raffaello Monterosso (Cremona: Fondazione Claudio Monteverdi, 1995) 30.

⁵⁷ Vacchelli 30.

⁵⁸ "Toccata che si suona avanti il levar de la tela tre volte con tutti li stromenti, e si fa un Tuono più alto volendo sonar le trombe con le sordine." Monteverdi, L'Orfeo, ed. Malipiero 1.

⁵⁹ "Il quinto pare a me che sia di tutti il più bello et ingegnoso, e questo facendosi andare la tela in alto con certe corde infilate in alcuni anelli cuciti per il lungo della tela ragunata in alto viene a fare come festoni et ornamento della scena e perché vuole esser alzata con velocità..." Il corago 117.

⁶⁰ John Whenham, "Five Acts: One Action," Claudio Monteverdi Orfeo 48-49.

⁶¹ Sebastiano Serlio, "The Second Book of Architecture," trans. Allardyce Nicoll, in The Renaissance Stage, ed. Barnard Hewitt (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1958) 32-33.

⁶² Nagler, Theatre Festivals 81.

⁶³ Nagler, Theatre Festivals fig. 49.

⁶⁴ Steven Botterill's translations of pertinent sections of the letters between Francesco and Ferdinando Gonzaga

are found in Appendix 1, Claudio Monteverdi Orfeo 167-172.

⁶⁵ Whenham, "Five Acts" 49.

⁶⁶ Brinton 44.

⁶⁷ Brinton 46-94.

⁶⁸ Anne Ridler, trans., "Orfeo: Favola in Musica, A Legend in Music," The Operas of Monteverdi, English National Opera Guides (London: John Calder, 1992) 35.

⁶⁹ Alessandro Striggio, "La Favola d'Orfeo Rappresentata in Musica il Carnevale dell'Anno MDCVII in Mantova," in Gli albori del melodramma, ed. Angelo Solerti, Vol. III (1904; Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1969) lines 7-8, p. 246.

⁷⁰ Glen Segell, Striggio-Monteverdi's L'Orfeo: An Excursion into its Neoplatonic Layers (London: Glen Segell, 1997) 11.

⁷¹ Claude V. Palisca, Baroque Music, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1968) 3-4.

⁷² "E in questa guisa a l'armonia Sonora / De la lira del Ciel più l'alme invoglio." Ridler, trans. 35. Facsimile of 1615 edition of score, 3.

⁷³ "Quinci à dirvi d'Orfeo." Translation my own. Striggio, line 13, Gli albori III, 246.

⁷⁴ "...i canti alterno or lieti, or mesti," Striggi, line 17, in Gli albori III, 246.

⁷⁵ Sebastiano Serlio, "The Second Book of Architecture," trans. Allardyce Nicoll, in The Renaissance Stage, ed. Barnard Hewitt (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1958) 32-33.

⁷⁶ Glover 142.

⁷⁷ Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro, De pratica seu arte tripudii: On the Practice or Art of Dancing, trans. Barbara Sparti (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) 59.

⁷⁸ "Il cavaliero, che guida'l ballo, piglierà la sua dama per lo braccio destro. poi faranno due .S. uno attorno alla destra tornando sempre ogn'uno al suo luogo. si lasciano, & fanno l'altro .S. intorno alla sinistra, la dama piglia'l braccio destro all'altro cavaliero. poi fanno lidue .S. come si è già fatto. il cavaliero piglia l'altra dama, & fa'l medesimo." Cesare Negri, Le Gratie d'Amore (1602; N.Y.: Broude Brother Ltd, 1969) 227.

⁷⁹ "Io non dirò qual sia / Nel tuo gioire, Orfeo, la gioia mia, / Chè non hò meco il core / Ma teco stassi in compagnia d'Amore; / Chiedilo dunque à lui s'intender brami / Quanto lieta gioisca e quanto t'ami." Striggio, lines 93-98, in Gli albori III, 249-250.

⁸⁰ Whenham 53-54.

⁸¹ "Alcun non sia che disperato in preda / Si doni al
duol, benché talhor n'assaglia / Possente si che nostra
vita inforsa." Striggio, lines 124-126, in Gli albori
III, 251.

⁸² "Che poichè nembo rio gravido il seno / D'atra tempesta
inorridito ha il Mondo / Dispiega il ciel più chiaro i
rai lucenti." Striggio, lines 127-129, in Gli albori,
III, 251.

⁸³ "E dopo l'aspro gel del verno ignudo / Veste di fior la
Primavera i campi." Striggio lines 130-131, in Gli
albori, III, 251.

⁸⁴ "See him come, see him come, brave Orfeo! / Who for
bread tasted sighs, whose drink was weeping. / Now can he
want for nothing: he thirsts no more whose wine is love
unceasing." Striggio, facsimile 25. Trans. Ridler, 39.

⁸⁵ Whenham 46.

⁸⁶ "Ecco pur ch' à voi ritorno / Care selve e piagge amate,
/ Da quel Sol fatte beate / Per cui sol mie notti han
giorno." Striggio lines 151-154, in Gli albori, III, 252.

⁸⁷ Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 41.

⁸⁸ Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 43.

⁸⁹ Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 44.

⁹⁰ Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 45.

⁹¹ Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 48.

⁹² "Ahi caso acerbo! ahi fato empio e crudele, / Ahi Stelle ingiuriose, ahi cielo avaro." Striggio, L'Orfeo, lines 199-200, in Gli albori, III, 254.

⁹³ Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 56.

⁹⁴ "Qual suon dolente il lieto di perturba?" Striggio, L'Orfeo line 201, in Gli albori, III, 254.

⁹⁵ Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 57.

⁹⁶ Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 59.

⁹⁷ Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 59.

⁹⁸ Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 61.

⁹⁹ Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 68.

¹⁰⁰ "Qui entrano li Tromb[oni] Corn[etti] & Regali..."

noted by Glover 142.

¹⁰¹ Kate Trauman Steinetz, "A Reconstruction of Leonardo da Vinci's Revolving Stage," Arts Quarterly, XII (1949) 325-38.

¹⁰² Nicola Sabbattini, "Manual for Constructing Theatrical Scenes and Machines Pratica di fabricar scene e machine ne' teatri (Ravenna, 1638)," trans. John H. McDowell, The Renaissance Stage: Documents of Serlio, Sabbattini and

Furtenbach, ed. Barnard Hewitt (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1958) 100-103.

¹⁰³ Sabbattini, trans. McDowell 130-137.

¹⁰⁴ "...e'l palco divenno Mare ondeggiante..." [Bastiano de' Rossi] Descrizione dell' Apparato, e degl' Intermedi. Fatti per la Commedia rappresentata in Firenze. Nelle nozze de' Serenissimi Don Ferdinando Medici, e Madama Cristina di Loreno, Gran Duchi di Toscana (Firenze: Anton Padovani, 1589) 55.

¹⁰⁵ Salvatore J. Castiglione, trans. A Source Book in Theatrical History, ed. A.M. Nagler (New York: Dover, 1952) 108.

¹⁰⁶ Sabbattini, trans. McDowell 111-112.

¹⁰⁷ A.M. Nagler, Theatre Festivals of the Medici: 1539-1637 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964) 85-86.

¹⁰⁸ "Orfeo vinse l'inferno e vinto poi / Fu dagli affetti suoi. / Degno d'eterna glori / Fia sol colui ch'avrà di sè vittoria." Striggio lines 258-261, in Gli albori, III, 268.

¹⁰⁹ Striggio line, 337, Gli albori III, 259. The reference is to line 9 of Canto III of Dante's Inferno: "Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate." "Abandon every

hope, who enter here." Dante Alighieri, The Divine Comedy: Inferno, Verse Translation, trans. Allen Mandelbaum, (New York: Bantam Books, 1982) 20.

¹¹⁰ "Qual bene or più m'avanza / Se fuggi tù, dolcissima Speranza?" Striggio lines 348-349, in Gli albori, III, 260.

¹¹¹ Sabbattini, trans. McDowell 135-140.

¹¹² Nagler, Theatre Festivals 87-88.

¹¹³ Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 81.

¹¹⁴ Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 84-100.

¹¹⁵ Pirrotta 272.

¹¹⁶ Pirrotta 268, n. 97.

¹¹⁷ Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 103.

¹¹⁸ Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 103.

¹¹⁹ "Vaglia l'ardir, se foran vani i preghi." Striggio, L'Orfeo line 406, in Gli albori, III, 262.

¹²⁰ "Qui entra nella barca e passa cantando al suono del Organo di legno." Monteverdi, ed. Malipiero 104, facsimile 68.

¹²¹ Striggio line 410, in Gli albori, III, 262.

¹²² "Nulla impresa per uom si tenta in vano / Nè contra lui più sa natura armarse, / Et de l'instabil piano / Arò gli ondosi campi, e 'l seme sparse / Di sue fatiche,

ond'aurea messe accolse." Striggio lines 411-415, in Gli albori, III, 262.

¹²³ "...come baleno", quoted by Nagler, Theatre Festivals 79.

¹²⁴ Nagler, Theatre Festivals 86.

¹²⁵ Il corago 121.

¹²⁶ Nagler, Theatre Festivals, 29 and fig. 9.

¹²⁷ "Ma, pria che tragga il piè da questi abissi / Non mai volga ver' lei gli avidi lumi." Striggio, lines 465-466, in Gli albori, III, 264.

¹²⁸ "Pietate oggi et Amore / Trionfan ne l'Inferno." Striggio, lines 495-496, in Gli albori, III, 266.

Monteverdi has the word "trionfan" repeat three times in the score. Malipiero 120-121, facsimile 77.

¹²⁹ "Qui si fa strepito dietro la tela." Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 125, in facsimile 89.

¹³⁰ Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 125.

¹³¹ "l'odiosa luce" Striggio, line 547, in Gli albori, III, 268.

¹³² "Tacciono li Cornetti, Tromboni et Regali, et entrano a sonare il presente Ritornello, le viole de Braccio, Organi, Clavicembani, contrabasso, et Arpe, et Chitaroni,

et Ceteroni, et si muta la Sena." Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 137, in facsimile 88.

¹³³ Whenham 46.

¹³⁴ "Questi i campi di Tracia, e questo è il loco / Dove passommi il core / Per l'amara novella il mio dolore." Striggio, lines 562-564, in Gli albori, III, 269.

¹³⁵ "Duoi Organi di legno, e duoi Chitaroni concertono questo Canto sonando l'uno nel angolo sinistro de la Sena, l'altro nel destro." Monteverdi, L'Orfeo 138.

¹³⁶ Whenham 74.

¹³⁷ John Whenham, trans., "'Orfeo', Act V: Alessandro Striggio's Original Ending," Claudio Monteverdi Orfeo 36-41.

¹³⁸ F.W. Sternfeld, "The Orpheus Myth and the Libretto of 'Orfeo'," Claudio Monteverdi Orfeo 31.

¹³⁹ Letter of 7 May 1627, English translation in The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi, trans. Denis Stevens, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 318-320.

¹⁴⁰ Sternfeld 31.

¹⁴¹ Sabbattini, trans. McDowell 153-154.

¹⁴² Fenlon, "The Mantuan 'Orfeo'" 16.

¹⁴³ Fabbri 67.

¹⁴⁴ Francesco Gonzaga, letter to Ferdinando Gonzaga, 16 February 1607, trans. Botterill 169-170.

¹⁴⁵ Letter of 24 August 1609, Monteverdi Letters 55-58.

¹⁴⁶ "Rashly, rashly rejoicing / in your transient good-fortune / too rashly weeping you now the Fates importune. Do you not know yet / that to mortals on earth all joy's uncertain?" Striggio, in Malipiero ed. 147, facsimile 94. Trans. Ridler 56.

¹⁴⁷ "Thus he goes without delaying / great Apollo's call obeying. / In the skies he'll live contented / who was here by Hell tormented. / Though today he sowed in sorrow, / he shall reap in joy tomorrow." Striggio, in Malipiero ed. 152, facsimile 99. Trans. Ridler 56.

¹⁴⁸ Pirrotta 54-55.

¹⁴⁹ Pirrotta 270-271.

¹⁵⁰ Fenlon, "Mantuan 'Orfeo'" 17.

CHAPTER FOUR
COURT CELEBRATIONS IN MANTUA IN 1608

Introduction

The fullest realization of early court opera occurred in Mantua in 1608 during the celebrations in honour of the wedding of Prince Francesco Gonzaga and Margherita di Savoia. Delays in signing the marriage agreement afforded the court the opportunity to commission Marco da Gagliano to create a new setting for Ottavio Rinuccini's La Dafne to be performed during Carnival.¹ The wedding festivities themselves featured another opera, Claudio Monteverdi's second, Arianna, again with a text by Rinuccini. In a sense, Monteverdi had experimented with the form of opera in the Orfeo of the previous year, much as Peri, Corsi and Rinuccini had done in the late 1590s with the first performances of La Dafne. Moreover, just as they had approached the 1600 production of L'Euridice with a confidence founded upon the esteem garnered by their earlier effort, Monteverdi approached the Arianna with a sense of assurance founded in the success of Orfeo.

At age twenty-five, Marco da Gagliano represented the "next generation" of composers. For him, court opera

was already so well established that he felt justified in providing a history of it in the preface to his score for La Dafne. He was not a pioneer trying to forge a new genre out of ideas, discussions and previous traditions but, rather, the inheritor of already formulated conventions, which he was attempting to perpetuate.

In this chapter, I will introduce Marco da Gagliano and discuss the production of La Dafne performed during Carnival. I will then assemble an historicized ideal performance text of Monteverdi's Arianna for which, sadly, the score has been lost.

Marco da Gagliano

Born in Florence on May 1, 1582², Marco da Gagliano would have been sixteen years of age when Peri's setting of La Dafne was first performed and only eighteen when he saw L'Euridice two years later. He was a pupil of Luca Bati, the maestro di cappella at both San Lorenzo and the Florence Cathedral, and became his assistant at San Lorenzo in 1602. In 1607, under the protection of Prince Ferdinando Gonzaga, Gagliano founded the musical Accademia degli Elevati,³ where he was known as "L'Affannato," the breathless one.⁴ In 1608 he became maestro di cappella of San Lorenzo. A year later he was

given the title maestro di cappella of the Medici Court but, although he was involved in court musical productions as composer, singer, player of theorbo and keyboard instruments and director,⁵ he was never a member of the court's "secular musical establishment."⁶ In 1609 he became maestro di cappella of the Compagnia dell'Arcangelo Raffaello,⁷ to which he had belonged since the age of five and a half.⁸ He received holy orders, joined the canons of San Lorenzo in 1610 and was elevated to "protonotary apostolic" in 1615. With the exception of his six-month sojourn in Mantua in 1608, he remained in Florence all of his life and died there on the 25th of February 1643.

Gagliano composed four operas besides La Dafne, all with librettos by Andrea Salvadori. Lo spozalizio di Medoro et Angelica was produced in 1619 to celebrate the coronation of the Archduchess Maria Maddalena's brother Ferdinand II as emperor. This was the first opera to be performed in Florence since Caccini's Euridice in 1602. Jacopo Peri wrote some of the music, but Gagliano was probably responsible for the greater part of the composition, as he did not mention Peri in letters accompanying the score, which he sent to the Duchess of Mantua, and Salvadori mentioned only Gagliano as composer

in the dedication to the commemorative libretto.⁹ He composed two sacred operas, La Regina Sant'Orsola, produced in 1624; and La Istoria di Iudit, performed in 1626; and another secular opera, La Flora, o vero Il natal de' fiori, produced in 1628. Hanning notes the dance choruses in the work, which fill the role of intermedi, and the comic character of Pan, who introduces buffo elements into the opera.¹⁰

La Dafne

Gagliano's La Dafne was produced for Carnival and was not an official part of a large event. Hence, as in the case of Monteverdi's Orfeo performed a year earlier, the court did not commission a description of it. However, in his preface to the score published in 1608, Gagliano makes some general comments on the disposition of the instruments in relation to the singers and discusses in detail the staging of a number of moments in the piece. He also gives the names of several of the performers. In addition, in preparing the text of the libretto included in Volume Two of Gli albori del melodramma, first published in 1904, Solerti used the 1608 manuscript, published in 1608, from the Magliabechi collection, "Mus. Ant. 36." It incorporated not only

changes to the text but also notations with regard to staging and the names of performers.¹¹ That manuscript was reported lost in 1926 by Andrea Della Corte.¹² However, due to Solerti's careful scholarship its notations were preserved.

Gagliano does not specify where the performance was held, whether it was in a small room, as Orfeo had been, or whether the large theatre that was going to be used for the wedding festivities was pressed into service for Carnival as well. The only clue that can be gathered comes from a chance remark which he makes in regard to the size of the chorus. The number of members should be "in conformity with the capacity of the stage."¹³ He then goes on to say that half the chorus would be six or seven, "for the chorus should be made up of no fewer than sixteen or eighteen people."¹⁴ Notwithstanding the inaccuracy of his arithmetic, he appears to be leaning toward a chorus that had fewer than sixteen or eighteen members, indicating, thereby, that the stage was on the small side. Given the occasion, the precedent of Orfeo and the possibility that the larger theatre was already occupied with preparations for the grander celebration to follow in May, it is likely that La Dafne was performed in a modest space.

From Gagliano's preface we learn that the tenor Francesco Rasi sang the role of Apollo, the Florentine counter-tenor, Antonio Brandi, known also as il Brandino, sang the role of Thyrsis and Caterina Martinelli sang the stanza "Chi da' lacci d'amor vive disciolto."¹⁵ As discussed in Chapter One, either Cupid or Venus may have sung this stanza. In the Magliabechi manuscript, however, the names Tonino and "la s.a Margherita dal cortile," are marked beside the lines for Cupid and Venus, respectively.¹⁶ There is no easy reconciliation for the discrepancy. The markings in the Magliabechi manuscript may have referred to a production other than the one in which Martinelli performed either Cupid or Venus. It may have been that Antonio Brandi reprised his role as Thyrsis for this production. It is clear from Gagliano's preface, however, that Martinelli performed one of the two roles. It is more likely that she sang Venus than Cupid, since appropriate casting for the latter part would have been a boy, or putto, and one, perhaps by the name of Tonino, was borrowed from the Florentine court in early January.¹⁷ The role of Daphne is not mentioned although there were a number of sopranos on the payroll at that time, including Giovan Battista Sacchi and Don Giulio Cardi.¹⁸ Also borrowed from the

Florentine court were Livia Schieggia, "the wife of Pompeo,"¹⁹ Santi Orlandi, and Domenico Belli. The Magliabechi manuscript lists the following members of the chorus: "Dom., Cecc., Piero, Adamo, Nicc., Ora."²⁰ Dom. may have referred to Domenico Belli from Florence. Cecc. is probably the same as Cecchino, referred to later in the text.²¹ Tonino and Cecchino played nymphs.²²

In his preface, Gagliano does not specify which instruments are to play, but he does advise that those that play for the soloists be placed where "they can see the faces of the performers, in order that hearing each other better they may perform together."²³ This would indicate that they were placed in front of the stage and not behind it. As to their number, again he is not specific, but recommends finding a balance that supports the singing without obscuring it. "Let the manner of playing be without ornament, taking care to repeat the notes that are sung, playing those that will support them, all the time maintaining a lovely harmony."²⁴ There are, in addition, diverse instruments that accompany the choruses and play the ritornellos.²⁵

Whether it was the influence of Monteverdi or the passage of time, Gagliano's approach to court opera is much more confidently musical than that of his Florentine

predecessors. Notwithstanding the history of the form that he offers, his score does not betray a doctrinaire adherence to a style somewhere between speech and song. Hence, his score contains a variety of musical forms, and he suggests that a sinfonia be played before the curtain falls, in order to get the attention of the audience.²⁶

Prologue

Gagliano describes the Prologue in detail. Within the first fifteen or twenty bars of the sinfonia, once the audience has become attentive, the curtain falls and is whisked away by invisible stagehands in the wings. Ovid, in dress "suitable for a poet," with a laurel crown on his head, a lyre at his side and a bow in his hand, enters. He moves to the spot where he feels it is appropriate to begin singing and, "without further ado," he begins. He must walk in time with the music, taking care, however, that he does not appear to be dancing, and his demeanour must be grave, as befits a great poet. "Above all, his singing and gestures should be full of majesty, more or less in accord with the loftiness of the music."²⁷

The prologue itself is beautiful and melodic. Composed strophically, it is clearly a song. Each stanza

begins in a medium tempo but ends a little bit faster, creating a feeling of excitement and forward movement. Gagliano insists that every one of Ovid's movements and gestures must be timed with the music. The singer may take two or three steps during the ritornellos that separate some of the verses. Some of the stanzas are run together, however, in order to give the impression of sprezzatura.²⁸

The words are largely the same as those sung in previous productions, but two new verses replace the one in which the Medici rulers in the audience were acknowledged. These pay tribute to Vincenzo and Leonora, "noble heroes, adored by every fair soul."²⁹

Scene One

After Ovid leaves the stage, having finished singing the prologue, the chorus of Nymphs and Shepherds enters, each showing, through facial expression and gesture, that they are afraid of meeting the Python. The chorus for the first production numbered between twelve and fourteen. When half of their number, six or seven according to Gagliano (see page 350), had entered, the first shepherd turned to his nearest companion and began singing. Singing and walking at the same time, he moves

into a position that Gagliano describes as "the right spot."³⁰ In contrast to his remarks on Ovid, who is to choose his own position, Gagliano is not specific with regard to who determines the correctness of the spot for members of the chorus. It is not clear whether a "corago"-like director was present, although in some cases, as with Ovid above, and the movements of Python and Apollo discussed below,³¹ Gagliano implies that certain predetermined staging choices are up to the performers to arrange.

Once the first shepherd reaches his spot, the rest of the chorus forms a semi-circle around him. This is their basic formation for the entire opera. Major characters, or those who "speak to one another," should stand four or five paces in front of the chorus in order to be clearly differentiated from it, but the shepherd who recounts Apollo's victory to Daphne takes only two or three steps in front of his compatriots during that scene. Gagliano also instructs the chorus to perform gestures appropriate to the text that they are singing.³²

Gagliano's recitative is more musical than Peri's. Barbara Russano Hanning notes that he moderated Peri's formulation of narrative recitative by reducing the prominence of the verse endings. The basic units of

recitative are quarter and eighth notes, but the rhyming words are usually expressed in quarter notes as opposed to Peri's half notes. Gagliano notates the broad cadences in half notes, creating a rhythmic hierarchy between internal line endings and closing cadences that does not exist in Peri's recitative, since Peri used whole notes.³³ The result is much more song-like. That is, it is clear that the performers are singing, not declaiming or finding a middle ground between speech and music.

The prayer, "Se lassù tra gli aurei chiostri," with its five-part refrain, is even more clearly a song. Despite its lively tempo and tuneful quality, Gagliano stipulates that the chorus is to kneel on one knee and turn their eyes to heaven, as if directing their prayers to Jove.³⁴

The echo song, "Ebra di sangue," follows. Once again, Gagliano instructs the chorus to react happily or sadly to the Echo's responses, whichever the case may be. The echo song is full of musical variety, with ornamentation restricted to a few specifically chosen words, such as "poggi" and "oggi," in the line and response, "Farà ritorno più per questi poggi? Oggi."³⁵ Also ornamented are "console" and "sole," in "Chi sei tu,

che n'affidi e ne console? Sole."³⁶ The final two lines, written in three parts, have a madrigal-like texture.³⁷

Gagliano is very specific with regard to the staging of the next section:

After Echo's last answer the Python appears from one of the stage entrances, and at the same time, or a little later, Apollo appears from another direction with his bow - a large one - in his hand.³⁸

The chorus "almost shouts" the words "Ohimè che veggio" as they run to hide from the monster, but not from the view of the audience.³⁹ However, the music that they are to shout is sweet, composed in five parts and leads to the contrapuntal texture of "O Divo, o Divo, o Nume eterno."⁴⁰ While they sing these words, the chorus must once again give the impression of praying.⁴¹

Gagliano recommends that the monster be large with, if possible, movable wings and the ability to breathe fire. He says that he has seen this effect, but he does not stipulate that the Python in the first productions of La Dafne had these qualities. "Above all," he emphasizes, "it must writhe; the wearer of the costume must go on all fours, with his hands on the ground."⁴²

Meanwhile, "with a light and proud step," always in time to the music, Apollo approaches the monster. He shakes his bow and brandishes his arrows, not only synchronizing his gestures to the singing of the chorus, but also adhering to movements that have been predetermined with the performer playing Python, "so that the fight shall be in time with the music."⁴³

Apollo shoots his first arrow on the words, "O Benedetto stral," his second on "O glorioso Arciero," and his last "while 'Vola, vola pungente' is being sung."⁴⁴ At this moment, the serpent, showing that he is mortally wounded, lumbers toward one of the exits. Apollo follows him. The chorus takes a few tentative steps onto the stage, keeping their eyes on the exit through which Python and Apollo left while they sing "Spezza l'orrido Tergo," as if watching the hated monster die.⁴⁵

After the song, they re-form their crescent-shaped position and Apollo returns to the stage. The performer now playing Apollo was a different person than the one who had served to kill the serpent. Gagliano generally discouraged the idea of dancing; nevertheless, he noted that that attack on Python required "agility, leaps, and wielding of the bow...traits that appear in a good fencer and dancer."⁴⁶ For a good singer, the requirements of the

struggle with Python might be so taxing that he would find it difficult to sing afterwards. Therefore, in his preface, Gagliano recommends the use of two performers dressed alike, one to perform the fight with Python and the other to sing of it. "This exchange works so well," he writes, "that no one even perceived the deceit during the many times it was played."⁴⁷

While strutting up and down the stage, the singing Apollo, who was portrayed in 1608 by Francesco Rasi, performed the through composed "Pur giacque estinto in fine,"⁴⁸ which had been written not by Gagliano but, as he says in his preface, by "a principal Academician, a great protector of music and a great expert in it."⁴⁹ Both the wording of the reference and the fact that he does not actually name the Academician indicate that he may have been trying to find a tactful way to identify Cardinal Ferdinando Gonzaga, patron of Gagliano's Accademia degli Elevati.

When Apollo finishes his song, he leaves the stage and the Chorus sings a paeon to him, during which they move "successively to the left, to the right, and to the rear, avoiding the appearance of dancing."⁵⁰ Gagliano recommends this "maneuver," as he calls it, for all of the choruses. He is obviously concerned with avoiding a

static stage picture, but seems equally disapproving of dance. Hence, he is attempting to find a balance, a kind of movement that will both be in accord with the tempo of the music and also allow gestures appropriate to the poetry, but will still remain within certain bounds of natural behaviour. The effect of a dance in praise of Apollo would be too stylized, too artificial. Therefore, the chorus moves gracefully as it sings the four stanzas of "Almo Dio, che'l carro ardente." The first stanza is largely homophonic, in five parts and is sung by the entire group. Each of the following verses is a duet in which there is a contrapuntal texture on the last line of each stanza.

Scene Two

The chorus forms a semi-circular backdrop to the scene between Cupid, Venus and Apollo. The soloists are distinct from the chorus, four or five paces toward the front of the stage. The dialogue that ensues is bright and lively, full of musical variety and changes of tempo. It has a melodic quality and high spirit that emphasizes the humorous, teasing quality and lessens the threat of Cupid. It is as if Gagliano's score is not yet ready to take the tragedy of Apollo and Daphne seriously. The

peripeteia of his defeat and her transformation will be all the more effective for the high spirits that precede it.

In this version of the libretto, as in the one performed a decade earlier in Florence, Apollo affronts Cupid by teasingly asking him what "beast or serpent" he has his bow drawn against, referring boastfully to his own triumph over Python. Cupid, ever ready to prove his puissance, swears to revenge the insult. This leads to a verse paying tribute to the power of Love, which was sung, in 1608, by Venus (see discussion above, page 351).⁵¹

According to Gagliano, this tribute, "Chi da' lacci d'amor vive," was sung by Caterina Martinelli. The air for the ottava stanza was composed by the same Academician responsible for Apollo's "Pur giacque estinto al fine"⁵² and it contains the sorts of adornments, gruppi, trilli, passaggi and esclamazioni that Gagliano condemns when over-used without regard to their appropriateness to a given text. Here, obviously, he views the ornamentation as completely suitable. What is more, Martinelli's performance of the octet filled "the whole theater with delight and wonder."⁵³ The air is introduced by a brief five-bar ritornello, which is

repeated between the first and second stanza, the final line of which is repeated twice, with ornamentation the second time.⁵⁴

The scene ends with chorus "Nudo Arcier" in a very lively five-part homophonic setting.⁵⁵

Scene Three

For the 1608 Mantuan production of La Dafne, Ottavio Rinuccini revised and amplified his ten-year-old text. One of the places where his revisions are most apparent is at the start of Scene Three. In the later version he introduces Daphne with more care than he did a decade earlier, creating a sort of a prologue to her meeting with Apollo. She enters chasing a deer and meets a shepherd, played in 1608 by Domenico (possibly Belli from Florence). The shepherd disengages himself from the chorus, takes a few steps toward her and narrates the story of Apollo's victory over Python, using appropriate gestures to imitate Apollo's movements.⁵⁶ She responds with modest gratitude:

O what a heroic thing to do! Happy, happy day!
Go back to making music and dancing, shepherd,
sing once more! Feeling much more secure, I

will return to the mountains and the valleys to hunt wild wandering game.⁵⁷

The introduction of the description of the Python incident, about which Apollo's brags toward the end of the scene, creates structural symmetry within the scene and thematic integrity with the scenes that have preceded it.⁵⁸ In between the two boasts, the scene retains the provocative banter through which Apollo attempts to seduce Daphne, but only manages to frighten her.⁵⁹ Rinuccini further strengthens the structure of the opera, however, with the addition of the following line for Daphne, just before she flees, "An inviolable law decrees that I refuse the company of a god." The scene ends with Thyrsis following Apollo and Daphne out in order to "see if he catches her."⁶⁰

Scene Four

Scene Four also begins with a reference to Python. A shepherd from the chorus observes that Python lies dead, a trophy of Apollo, but that he in turn, his heart pierced by love, has become a trophy of Cupid.⁶¹ Venus and Cupid enter and Cupid sings a lively self-congratulatory air, "Madre, di gemme e d'oro." With its quick tempo, this song seems designed to be moved to,

although not danced, with gestures appropriate to the imagery of a laurel crown being placed on Cupid's head or of the God of Light weeping after having been vanquished by Cupid's bow.⁶²

Although Venus tells Cupid that it is time for them to return to Heaven, it seems doubtful that any flying equipment was used in the first production. The reason for this has to do with Gagliano's instructions on Apollo's first appearance. He comes onto the stage, the composer says precisely, from a different entrance than that used by Python.⁶³ Therefore, if Apollo was not flown in on his first entrance and Gagliano never mentions any instance of flying equipment, then it seems unlikely that Venus and Cupid ascended to heaven in a cloud-shaped chariot. In all probability, they merely walked through one of the entries to the stage as the chorus began the six-part homophonic "Non si nasconde in selva."⁶⁴

Scene Five

Thyrsis, the messenger, arrives bringing the news that Daphne, fleeing Apollo's advances, prayed to heaven for escape and was transformed by the gods into a laurel tree. The chorus changes its customary position. The leaders step forward and move to where they can see the

messenger's face, in order to facilitate the all-important facial reactions to what they are hearing. Gagliano is most emphatic about the need for expressiveness on the part of the messenger. In the first production it was sung by Antonio Brandi, who learned the role at short notice having only arrived in Mantua after the new year. Duke Ferdinando I had been reticent to lend singers to the Mantuan court because a wedding was being planned in Florence as well. He did not finally agree to let Brandi and others go until Ferdinando Gonzaga added his own plea to those of the Duke on 20 December 1607.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Brandi acquitted himself admirably. Gagliano describes his performance as follows:

[H]e sang the part in such a way that I do not think anyone could have desired more. His voice is a most exquisite contralto; his pronunciation and grace in singing wonderful, for not only does he make the words intelligible, but with his gestures and his movements he insinuates into your mind something very much more.⁶⁶

Hanning uses the example of Tirsi's "Quando la bella Ninfa..." to show Gagliano's "tightly constructed

harmonic movement.⁶⁷ The upper voice has a surprisingly quick tempo. Eighth notes predominate and there are few half notes. That is, there is no lugubrious dwelling on the melancholy events. The bass progresses by fifths away from and back to the area of C, utilizing the stopping points provided by the poet, but Gagliano makes sure that each pause occurs on the chord most nearly related to that of the previous cadence, creating a "rounded harmonic plan."⁶⁸ The effect is once again more song-like and musical than declamatory and dramatic.

The scene ends with the hauntingly beautiful chorus "Piangete, o Ninfe, e con voi pianga Amore" mourning the loss of Daphne. Gagliano specifies that the singers of the chorus are to refer to each other as if talking amongst themselves. The duo who sing "Sparse più non vedrem di quel fin oro," should look at each other when they come to the exclamation "Piangete, Ninfe e con voi pianga Amore."⁶⁹ In addition, all of the members of the chorus should look at one another during the five-part madrigal "Dove, dove è il bel viso," and move to the music on the repeats of "Piangete, Ninfe e con voi pianga Amore."⁷⁰

Scene Six

Scene Six begins with Apollo's lament, which Gagliano emphatically declares should be sung "with the greatest possible emotion."⁷¹ The performer should also take care to sing a crescendo when the words call for it.⁷² It should also be noted that the section beginning "Un guardo, un guardo appena" and ending "Non chiami molte volte il tuo bel nome," was also composed by the principal Academician Gagliano referred to earlier.

When Apollo reaches the lines "'Ma sempre al mio crin d'oro / Faran ghirlanda le tue fronde e' rami,"⁷³ his gestures should follow the action he describes. He is to create a garland of laurel for his own blonde hair. Gagliano explains that the technique for bending a branch in order to create a crown was difficult to discover. Finally, a gentleman by the name of Cosimo del Bianco, "a man most skilful at this trade, marvelously inventive in matters of costume, apparatus, and such like things,"⁷⁴ solved the problem. Two branches of the same length, about half as long as a man's arm, are tied together at one end. They are held so that they look like a single branch, but when it comes time to use them as a crown, the two are spread apart, keeping the tied end together.⁷⁵

This was not the only example of stage magic that Gagliano required for the final scene. In addition, when Apollo sang the lively terzetti, "Non curi la mia pianta o fiamme, o gelo," he lifted his lyre to his chest and when he drew his bow across it, four viol players (either of viola a braccio or gamba) played in the wings, unseen by the audience. This was done to create the effect of an "extraordinary melody" coming from Apollo's lyre. "This trick cannot be detected except in the imagination of some hearer," Gagliano goes on to say, "and gives great pleasure."⁷⁶

A lengthy chorus of eight stanzas ends this opera. The first homophonic stanza is written for five voices and sung by the entire chorus. The second stanza is written for a trio of two nymphs and a shepherd. The pattern of chorus and trio alternating persists until the second to last verse, after which the trio does not sing again and the large chorus ends the opera. Ritornellos are inserted between some of the verses, but some verses are joined together in order to create a feeling of sprezzatura at the end of the opera equal to that which it had at its start.

Arianna: Tragedia in musica

Chronologically Arianna follows Gagliano's La Dafne. Although in many ways the latter work exemplifies the next stage in the development of early opera, the creation of a new generation taking an already well-established form forward, Monteverdi and Rinuccini's creation represents a culmination of the influences that went into the first formation of opera, the idea of recreating ancient sung tragedy, with its characteristic unities, as well as the desire to add narrative to the spectacle of intermedi. However, if Arianna was a culmination of influences, it was also a departure from previous conventions.

Ottavio Rinuccini may have subtitled Arianna "tragedia in musica" because he intended it to finally achieve the objective which he and the Florentine creators of early court opera discussed in forewords to their published works: the creation of a new form of sung tragedy based on ancient models. Certainly, the text evidences the care for unity of time, place and action that Rinuccini expressed, even when breaking those principles, in his previous librettos. Interference from the royal family, however, ensured that an austere academic approach would not prevail.

On 27 February 1608, they met to discuss the plot. A letter dated the same day states, "Madama [the duke's mother] is agreed with Sig. Ottavio [Rinuccini] to enrich it with some 'actions,' it being rather dry."⁷⁷ Pirrotta suggests that the added "actions" included the dialogue between Venus and Cupid in the first scene, the appearance of Ariadne and Bacchus rejoicing in the final scene, and Jove's descent from the heavens to bless their marriage.⁷⁸ Like the appearance of Apollo at the end of the Orfeo of the previous year, Jove's descent ties the staging of the opera to the spectacular tradition of the intermedi, the normal entertainment for a ducal marriage festivity and one that would clearly showcase the duke's magnificenza. In this case, however, there is the added dimension of Duke Vincenzo's desire not only to demonstrate his magnificenza, but also his acumen, taste and position at the forefront of the development of art.⁷⁹ Hence, L'Arianna was a compromise between tradition and the wish to be progressive on the part of Rinuccini, Monteverdi and Duke Vincenzo.

Theatre, however, has always been, by definition, a collective endeavour. The artistic will of any individual involved must be combined with those of others involved in the corporate process of creating and

subsidizing a production. The creator's work is subject to the interpretive influence of performers, designers, organizers and sponsors, whether they are termed choragus, corago, director, patron or producer.

Rinuccini's achievement was not so much that he conceived a credible recreation of ancient musical and theatrical narrative, but that with Arianna, he and Monteverdi demonstrated that the combination of elements making up the new form could be performed effectively and affectively before an audience of five thousand spectators (see below, page 376). Thus, the triumph of Arianna is that, while it did not supplant intermedi, it firmly established a place for opera in court entertainments.

Arianna represents a departure from previous operas in a number of important ways. First of all, the setting is no longer pastoral. It is Naxos, a barren island in the middle of the sea, a real location in that it does not represent the dream of a prelapsarian paradise. What is more, the opera is conceived to have a single setting and to be performed without a break or change. It was short, by court entertainment standards, a mere two and a half hours. Unlike Apollo and Orpheus, its protagonists have no association with music to justify the singing of

their lines. Neither the power of music nor the creation of art from baser instincts has a thematic place in Arianna.

The tale is woeful. According to myth, Minos, king of Crete, demanded the sacrifice of seven Athenian youths and seven Athenian maids every nine years. They were to be sent to be devoured in the labyrinth, home of the half-bull, half-human Minotaur. Ariadne was daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë, and, in fact, half sister to the Minotaur who was the result of a liaison between her mother and a magical white bull sent ostensibly by Poseidon for a sacrifice some years before. Ariadne possessed a magical spool of thread that allowed her to make her way safely in and out of the labyrinth and this she lent to the dazzling Theseus in return for his promise to marry her.⁸⁰ He took the spool and killed the Minotaur, thereby freeing Athenian youths and maids from the barbarous tribute Minos had demanded. Theseus honoured his promise to Ariadne only inasmuch as spiriting her away from Crete, but when his ships dropped anchor at Naxos, he took her ashore and deserted her. In myth, as in the early court opera, Bacchus the god of wine rescued and married her.⁸¹

Rinuccini's libretto is interesting in that it is strangely devoid of conflict. Both Euridice and Orfeo climax in the confrontation between Orpheus and Pluto. Conflict between Apollo and Cupid is what gives rise to the plot in La Dafne. Even La rappresentazione di Anima, et di Corpo chronicles the reconciliation of the divergence between the needs of the Soul and the desires of the Body. No such dynamic occurs in Arianna. Theseus transports Ariadne to Naxos and abandons her. Since the audience is informed that he will do so in the first scene, there is no suspense in Ariadne's decline of fortunes or in their reversal. Yet, even if Rinuccini's approach lacks a dramatic confrontation, the result is nevertheless theatrical. The story moves inevitably toward its heartbreaking climax and then redeems itself, consolingly, in true Giraldian fashion. The libretto has an intelligence and its human characters have a reality that is quite gripping, even without the music that would have, doubtless, reinforced its emotional impact. Moreover, if Rinuccini's text offers Monteverdi anything, it is the opportunity for an enormous amount of musical variety, which, based on the evidence of the extant "Lament of Ariadne," he must have exploited.

During the preparations for Monteverdi's Arianna, tragedy struck. Caterina Martinelli, who had created a sensation in La Dafne and was to sing the title role in Monteverdi's work, contracted smallpox and died on Friday, 7 March 1608. For Monteverdi, who had been the teacher with whom she had boarded when she first arrived in Mantua in 1603, the death must have been an enormous blow, especially coming only six months after his wife, Claudia Cattaneo, passed away.⁸²

Unfortunately, the score was never published and is considered lost except for Ariadne's lament, written for Caterina Martinelli but sung, in the first performance, by Virginia Andreini Ramponi (La Florinda).⁸³ Andreini was joined in the cast by such luminaries as Settimia Caccini, Francesco Rasi, Antonio Brandi and Lemmo Orlandi.⁸⁴ An historicized ideal performance text is helped by several documents: Federico Follino's official description, the libretto by Rinuccini and contemporary accounts.

As discussed in the Preface (pages 4-5) a reading of the libretto enriched with contemporary descriptions of the production allows the visualization of an opera of impressive scale. Its set, with a rocky shore and moving ocean that disappeared in the distance, would have

exemplified sixteenth and seventeenth court settings, that is, it would have been real-looking and yet, with the addition of elaborate man-made elements designed to emphasize, in Serlio's words, "as much liberality in the prince as taste and skill in the architect."⁸⁵ Gods, heroes, soldiers, and fisher-folk would all have been richly garbed. Of some of the spectacular stage effects we can be certain, because they are described in contemporary accounts. The sung text alludes to other effects which may or may not have actually been staged, but for which the technology did exist at the time. Though only one example of the music remains, it is nonetheless the emotional climax and most famous moment of the opera, a work that enjoyed enormous popularity as a chamber monody in the seventeenth century and served as a model for other "lamenti di camera."⁸⁶ Moreover, Monteverdi's score for L'Orfeo gives us an idea of the musical range and expressivity he would likely have revealed in the composition of Arianna. Finally, visualization allows us to understand that, although modest in comparison with intermedi, Arianna was nonetheless a sumptuous spectacle that successfully filled a focal place in a major celebration of the Mantuan court.

The performance of Arianna took place as planned on the evening of May 28th in the Court Theatre of Mantua, recently completed by the court architect Antonio Maria Viani.⁸⁷ According to Pirrotta it was a temporary structure "designed ad hoc, on one side of the Prato di Castello"⁸⁸ and it was said to have held between four and six thousand spectators, depending on which commentator was doing the counting.⁸⁹ However many the theatre held, it was not large enough to accommodate all who wanted entry and Follino reports that the crowd pressing to get in became unruly. Neither Captain Camillo Strozzi, Lieutenant of the Duke's Archers nor Signor Carlo Rozzi, General of the Army, could quiet the crowd. It took the Duke himself to restore order.⁹⁰

Prologue

Pirrotta quotes Follino's description of the opening of L'idropica and applies it to Arianna,

Once the candelabra were lit inside the theatre, the usual signal of the sounding of the trumpets (emphasis Pirrotta's) was given from the area inside the stage, and when it sounded a third time, the great curtain covering the stage disappeared...with such

speed that even as it was being raised there were few who perceived how it disappeared.⁹¹

The description of the fanfare sounds a great deal like the one that summoned the audience to attention prior to L'Orfeo. Jane Glover, in fact, suggests that, because the toccata from Orfeo is almost identical to the opening of Monteverdi's 1610 Vespers, it may have been a well-known piece generally used to open any official ceremony.⁹² Hence, it seems there is a possibility that, though most of the music is lost, the toccata that would have been used is the one that is extant.

Visually, the opera was immediately appealing. Even before the curtain had disappeared, Apollo was descending from the heavens on a beautiful cloud, full of light and splendour. It inched lower to the sound of the sweet music of various instruments playing together behind the scenes and landed in the rocky landscape of the opera's only setting, an island in the midst of a sea of continually rolling waves that disappeared into the distance along the horizon. These waves would have been a perfect opportunity to put into practice the method of creating an ocean described by Nicola Sabbattini in Chapters 27 to 29 of the "Manual for Constructing Theatrical Scenes and Machines,"⁹³ (discussed above, pages

240-241) particularly the third type, which he favoured, that is, undulating wooden cylinders painted to look like waves and crank-operated by stagehands out of sight behind the scenery.⁹⁴

Once he had debarked from his cloud, Apollo moved majestically into the view of the spectators and began to sing.⁹⁵ He identified himself but did not discuss the form of opera or tragedy, except to make reference to the serpent, Python, of La Dafne, and even then to assure his audience that he was not setting his celestial footprint on earth for such martial deeds, but rather, armed with a lyre, he had come to delight the heart of the royal bride, to whom he then paid tribute.⁹⁶ Only at the very end of his song did he once again make a passing reference to the form of opera when he mentioned that it was his hope this story of love betrayed would elicit admiration for the way it invested new singing with ancient nobility.⁹⁷

Scene One

There is no evidence that Venus and Cupid descended from a cloud as had Apollo. Follino simply states that, when Apollo finished his song and left the stage, the beautiful Venus and her son, Cupid, appeared.⁹⁸ While

making an entrance by simply walking onto the stage does not seem very grand for a pair of gods, it seems likely that had they been lowered from the heavens in a machine, Follino would have mentioned it. Therefore, one can only assume that Venus and Cupid entered simply, on foot.

In their dialogue, Venus predicts that Theseus will abandon Ariadne and exhorts her son to do something to relieve the distress of "a soul so gentle, a heart so faithful."⁹⁹ He agrees to inflame the heart of Bacchus with love for Ariadne and as Theseus sets foot on the island, Venus "hides herself in the ocean"¹⁰⁰ and Cupid renders himself invisible to sojourn amongst the mortals and carry out his mother's wishes.¹⁰¹

The question arises as to whether or not Theseus's boat was seen by the audience. Cupid tells his mother to look at it charging through the waves. Sabbattini describes such an effect in detail in Chapters 31 and 32 of his "Manual" and it is discussed above in relation to Charon's bark in Orfeo (see page 314). It would have been possible and quite easy to have a ship move through the rolling waves in the distance so that it disappeared behind a rock to land out of sight a few moments before Theseus stepped into view.

Pirrota dismisses this scene as "conventional and superfluous,"¹⁰² added at the insistence of the Gonzaga family, but so peremptory a condemnation neglects the important function that the scene performs in converting the genre of "tragedy" into something appropriate for a royal wedding celebration. Both the Prologue to Euridice and the modifications made to its story show that Rinuccini was concerned with the problem of adapting, in Cavalieri's words, "tragic texts and objectionable subjects"¹⁰³ so that they would become appropriate matter for celebration. As Pirrota points out, Arianna's claim to the designation of "tragedy" comes from the fact that its characters are of royal birth.¹⁰⁴ It is, actually, a hybrid form in that, although heart-breaking events occur, the story ends happily. The purpose of the first scene, therefore, whether part of the original conception for the opera or added on later to appease the royal family, is to transform theatrical tragedy into court opera.

Despite the fact that the highpoint of Arianna is an aria in which the eponymous main character sings "Leave me to die," this is not a story of heartbreak and death, but rather, a heroic story about a noble young woman who overcomes a situation of fatal neglect and finds

happiness through marriage to a god. The parallel with the Infanta and Prince Francesco must be drawn with the final alliance between Ariadne and Bacchus and not her initial ill-fated union with Theseus. Just as in Euridice Rinuccini was careful to reassure his audience at the outset that Tragedy's comportment was entirely changed for the new form of sung theatrical narrative and that her intention was to tell a tale of love and not of blood and horror, so too, in Arianna he uses the first scene to ensure that the audience understands that no matter how desperate Ariadne's situation seems nor how hopeless her plaint, events would resolve happily. Paradoxically, evidence shows that the emotional distance allowed to the audience by this approach did not make them take her lament less seriously. Rather, they obviously felt free to weep with her sorrow knowing that soon both she (and they) would be solaced by a lieto fine.

Scene Two

Rinuccini offers Monteverdi an immediate opportunity for musical variety at the start of the second scene. Theseus enters with a chorus of soldiers. He knows they are far from home and loved ones, but feels justified in

delaying their return in order to rest on this island. With martial vigour, the soldiers reassure their leader that, though home and loved ones are sweet, they value, most highly, honour, risk and danger.¹⁰⁵

The dynamic quality of the opening is contrasted by the trepidation of Ariadne's entrance. She is fearful, homesick, forlorn. Theseus reassures her with promises regarding her life to come as queen to Athens. His sincerity in this will come into question all too soon.

Ariadne and Theseus go off to bed as night falls. The chorus of fisherman sings a prayer to the dusk.¹⁰⁶ At this point, the lights may have dimmed on stage. Follino does not mention such an effect, but that may have been because the darkening of light on the stage was no longer considered extraordinary. Eight years before, when Buonarroti described the effect in Il rapimento di Cefalo, it was not just that the lights on stage went dark, but also that those in the audience were both dimmed and transformed into thousands of little stars (see above, page 243).

Scene Three

A sense of apprehension dominates the mood of the third scene. If the lights were dimmed, then shadowy

figures enter the stage engaged in an intense interchange sung, perhaps, in low tones. Ariadne is sleeping. Theseus has returned to the stage struggling with his conscience over the prospect of abandoning her. His counsellor argues that honour should be more highly valued than love. Moreover, Ariadne is the daughter of an enemy. The Athenians would never accept her as a queen. Theseus and his counsellor are not diametrically opposed, but their varying points of view offer Monteverdi an opportunity for contrast in the settings. Theseus may sigh irresolutely remembering Ariadne's soft kisses and regretting his own cruelty. The counsellor's more forceful argument, on the other hand, would call for a lively tempo and a determined tone.

A messenger appears to inform Theseus that the ships are ready and he departs. The chorus ends the scene with an expression of anxiety. The night holds secrets that bode ill. The members of the chorus pray for day as the first light of dawn appears. If the lights were darkened at the end of Scene Two, then, coloured glass, as was used in Il rapimento di Cefalo, may have been placed in front of lights to create a sense of sunrise at this spot.¹⁰⁷

Scene Four

For Ariadne the dawn brings catastrophe. Rinuccini exploits the discrepant awareness between what the audience knows and what Ariadne knows about her abandonment in order to build tension as the audience wonders how she will find out what they already know and how she will react once she does. She enters looking for Theseus. Although both her confidante, Dorilla, and the chorus attempt to reassure her, she grows ever more agitated. Once again Rinuccini offers Monteverdi an opportunity for musical diversity. Dorilla sings, soothingly:

Certo ch'a riveder l'armate navi
 Ei sarà gito al porto,
 O per mirar s'in mar son quiete l'onde,
 E se dolci o soavi
 Spirano al cammin vostro aure seconde.¹⁰⁸

But the calm mood is shattered by the pulsing rhythm of Ariadne's frantic exclamation:

Ma perch' a l'aer cieco
 Muto da me s'invola?
 Perchè mi lascia sola?
 Perchè non fa ritorno?¹⁰⁹

Thus the scene moves back and forth between the tones of reassurance and the cries of growing desperation until Ariadne and Dorilla exit toward the shore to look for Theseus's fleet. The chorus debates Ariadne's situation concluding that Cupid (Love) cannot triumph over hearts ambitious for honour.¹¹⁰

Scene Five

Suspense builds relentlessly as the story moves toward its emotional climax. Rinuccini moderates the intensity of the stage action by having Ariadne's desertion confirmed by a messenger and not by Ariadne herself. Though the messenger sighs and has difficulty expressing what he has seen, his description is nonetheless more objective and less extreme than the emotions he has witnessed in Theseus's betrayed wife. The scene, in fact, is an introduction to the focal point of the opera, the lament that was to become so famous. It serves to build the audience's expectations toward the moment of Ariadne's return.

Scene Six

The moment of Ariadne's anticipated emotional outburst has arrived, but rather than beginning with loud histrionics, Ariadne's entrance is steeped with sadness.

Entirely distraught, she sings the words, "Let me die! Let me die!"¹¹¹ In the music that is extant, she begins on a quiet A and moves up a step to B-flat while the bass slowly descends from A to G. Ariadne then descends by a leap of a fourth to F while the bass holds steady. On the word "morire," Ariadne descends further to E, but the bass line moves to A and then leaps an octave. Thus begins the lament that was so affective and so piteously rendered, as Follino's account indicates, that not a single person could be found who was unmoved by it, nor was there a single woman in the auditorium who did not shed a tear.¹¹²

Marino described Virginia Andreini Ramponi's performance of the lament in a poem that Pirrotta terms "the most famous...of the time," Adone:

E in tale guisa Florinda udisti, o Manto
 là ne' teatri de' tuoi regi tetti
 d'Arianna spiegar gli aspri martiri,
 e trar da mille cor mille sospiri

(VII, ottava 88)

And in such guise you heard Florinda, O Mantua,
 there in the theaters of your royal abode
 disclose Ariadne's bitter torments,

and draw from a thousand hearts a thousand sighs.¹¹³

The lament is in five sections, between which are interspersed comments of the chorus. Ariadne begins with the desire to die and goes on to question how Theseus could do such a thing to her. She begs him to turn around and come back for her. In the lines, "O Teseo, O Teseo mio / se tu sapessi, o Dio, se tu sapessi, ohimè, come s'affanna la povera Arianna," the long low half notes of the first "Teseo," of the "mio" and "Dio," are contrasted with quarter notes on "se tu sa(pessi)" and by agitated sixteenth notes of "come s'af(fanna)." Her disturbed state is further revealed through changes in tempo, from lento to a surprising allegro, followed by an equally surprising calmo.¹¹⁴ The music shifts to reflect the range of the emotions of abandonment that Rinuccini explores in the text: despair, false hope, rage and resolution. Ariadne moves restlessly from one idea to the next. She bewails her plight, longs for her parents, condemns Theseus, but no sooner does she wish him harm than she repudiates her words. Finally, she sadly concludes, "So it goes for those who love and believe too much."¹¹⁵

Ariadne's misfortune, though intense, is short-lived. Dorilla spots a boat and suggests that Theseus has returned. Once again, it is possible that the audience shared in sighting sails in the distance. Although Ariadne is not so easily mollified, she leaves with Dorilla to see who is coming to dock on the island.¹¹⁶

Scene Seven

Like Scene Five, Scene Seven is not theatrically interesting in itself. It functions to provide a release from the tension of the previous events and to prepare for the spectacle to come. A messenger arrives, Thyrsis, to tell how Bacchus has landed on the island and courted Ariadne. She has accepted him. Heaven has seen fit to put an end to her torments.

At the end of Thyrsis's final verse, he declaims, "Look, here are the bride and groom, here are the royal lovers"¹¹⁷ obviously drawing a parallel between the god and the faithful maiden and Prince Francesco and the Infanta of Savoy.

Scene Eight

At this point, on the left side of the stage, Bacchus enters with Ariadne and Cupid, surrounded by

Bacchus's soldiers in beautiful armour, with superb helmets on their heads. At the same time, the instruments behind the scenes begin to play. One group of the soldiers performs a delightful and intricate dance, while the rest of the soldiers sang the chorus.¹¹⁸

At the end of the chorus, Cupid calls upon gods and mortals to bear witness to the glory of love and Ariadne admits that the reward of the love of a god far surpassed her expectations for happiness. Venus rises out of the ocean as Jove descends from the Heavens to bless the happy couple. Sabbattini suggests, in regard to bringing Dawn from beneath the stage, that the same machine as was used to bring a god from above be used, except in reverse. The machine described has a cloud placed on a frame extending from a vertical plank that is raised and lowered along a groove built onto the back wall. He also suggests a lever be used, which in this case, seeing as Jove was already being lowered from above, might have been more practicable.¹¹⁹ Whether or not the staging was inspired by Botticelli's now famous painting of Venus rising from the sea, certainly this would have been a spectacular finale. It may have been modest by the standards of Florentine intermedi, but very much part of

the intermedi tradition in its combination of classical allusion and stage machinery.

Finally, Bacchus promises Ariadne a garland of bright stars for her hair and the two and a half hours of Arianna come to a happy close.

Conclusion

In Mantua, in 1608, the various influences that contributed to the formation of early court opera came to a successful culmination in Monteverdi and Rinuccini's Arianna. A few months before, in the same court, Marco da Gagliano, representing a new generation of composers, set the text that had served, ten years previously, as one of the first "experiments" in sung theatrical narrative. In his preface to the published score of the 1608 production of La Dafne, Marco da Gagliano describes many details of the staging of the opera. In this chapter, I have inserted his notes into a description of the production, discussing each as it came up. I also noted changes that Rinuccini had made to the libretto to strengthen it structurally. The music that Gagliano composed was confident, lively and full of variety and the production was well received.

All of the elements of early court opera were fully realized in the sumptuous production of Monteverdi's and Rinuccini's Arianna. Though it had only a single setting, its marvels included a rolling ocean and gods descending from the heavens as well as emerging from the waves. Although most of the music is lost, the most famous moment of the opera is still extant in a monodic chamber setting that was extremely popular and widely imitated in the seventeenth-century. A reading of the libretto and contemporary descriptions of the production allow a visualization that reveals some of the elements which made it a gripping emotional experience for the almost four thousand spectators who viewed its premiere.

So established did the form of court opera seem to Gagliano that, in his preface to the score of La Dafne, he felt justified in chronicling its history. Early opera was neither the reconstruction of an ancient form nor the continuation of medieval and Renaissance traditions, but a new form created for and adapting to the needs of a new audience, first in court, and then, later in the century, in the public theatre.

Endnotes

- ¹ Tim Carter, "A Florentine Wedding of 1608," Acta Musicologica 55 (1983): 100.
- ² Barbara Russano Hanning, "Gagliano, Marco da," The New Grove Dictionary of Opera, Vol. II, 1992 ed. 324-325.
- ³ Hanning, "Gagliano." 324-325.
- ⁴ Claude V. Palisca, "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy," Studies in the History of Italian Music and Music Theory (Oxford: Oxford University Press at the Clarendon Press, 1994) 68.
- ⁵ Hanning, "Gagliano." 324-325.
- ⁶ Warren Kirkendale, The Court Musicians in Florence During the Principate of the Medici (Firenze: Leo S. Oschki Editore, 1993) 45.
- ⁷ Edmond Strainchamps, "Marco da Gagliano and the Compagnia dell'Arcangelo Raffaello in Florence: An Unknown Episode in the Composer's Life," Essays Presented to Myron P. Gilmore, Vol. II: History of Art. History of Music., ed. Sergio Bertelli and Gloria Ramakus (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1978) 485.
- ⁸ Strainchamps, "Gagliano and the Compagnia dell'Arcangelo Raffaello" 475.

⁹ Kirkendale 226.

¹⁰ Hanning, "Gagliano."

¹¹ Angelo Solerti, Gli albori del melodramma, (1904; Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1969.) 77n.

¹² Andrea Della Corte, "Nota bibliografica," Drammi per musica: Dafne - Euridice - Arianna by Ottavio Rinuccini, Collezione di classici italiani con note (Torino: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1926) xxxvi.

¹³ Marco da Gagliano "La dedicatoria e la prefazione" to La | Dafne di Marco | Da Gagliano | nell' Accademia degl' Elevati | L'Affannato | Rappresentata | in Mantova (Firenze: Appresso Cristofano Marescotti, 1608), in Gli albori del melodramma, Vol. II, ed., Angelo Solerti (1904; Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1969) 70. Trans. Carol MacClintock, Readings in the History of Music in Performance, (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1979) 190.

¹⁴ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 190, in Gli albori II 70.

¹⁵ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 188-192, in Gli albori II 67-72.

¹⁶ Solerti, Gli albori II 81n.

¹⁷ Carter, "A Florentine Wedding" 99-100.

¹⁸ Susan Parisi, "Musicians at the Court of Mantua during Monteverdi's Time: Evidence from the Payrolls," Musicologia Humana: Studies in Honor of Warren and Ursula Kirkendale, ed., Siegfried Gmeinwieser, David Hiley, Jörg Riedlbauer (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1994) 195.

¹⁹ Carter, "A Florentine Wedding" 100. Carter speculates that the "Pompeo" referred to was either Pompeo Caccini or the lutenist Pompeo di Girolamo da Modena.

²⁰ Solerti, Gli albori II 77.

²¹ Solerti, Gli albori II 84.

²² Solerti, Gli albori II 77.

²³ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 190, in Gli Albori II 69.

²⁴ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 190, in Gli Albori II 69.

²⁵ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 190, in Gli Albori II 69-70.

²⁶ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 190, in Gli Albori II 69-70.

²⁷ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 190, in Gli Albori II 70.

²⁸ Gagliano, "Preface," in Gli Albori II 70. Carol MacClintock translates sprezzatura as "a certain liveliness." (190) Charles Singleton's translation of the word as "nonchalant" in Baldassare Castiglione's The Book of the Courtier is quoted by Nino Pirrotta, in "Studies in the Music of Renaissance Theatre," Music and Theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi by Nino Pirrotta and Elena Povoledo, trans. Karen Eales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 246n. Pirrotta himself expands the definition with regard to sixteenth century music as "the apparently inborn spontaneity and relaxed self-confidence that must characterize the performance of the perfect courtier, no matter how difficult the task." 245-246.

²⁹ Rinuccini, La Dafne, in Gli albori del melodramma, Vol. II (1904; Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1969) 76, trans. James Erber, La Dafne di Marco da Gagliano (London: Cathedral Music, 1978) v.

³⁰ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 190, in Gli Albori II 70.

³¹ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 190-192, in Gli Albori II 70-71.

³² Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 191-192, in Gli Albori II 70-71.

³³ Barbara Russano Hanning, Of Poetry and Music's Power: Humanism and the Creation of Opera (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1980) 100.

³⁴ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 191, in Gli Albori 70.

³⁵ Marco da Gagliano, La Dafne, transcribed and edited by James Erber (London: Cathedral Music, 1978), scene I, bars 89-93.

³⁶ Gagliano, Dafne, transcribed by Erber, scene I, bars 97-102.

³⁷ Gagliano, Dafne, transcribed by Erber, scene I, bars 109-117.

³⁸ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 191, in Gli Albori II 70.

³⁹ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 191, in Gli Albori II 70.

⁴⁰ Gagliano, Dafne, transcribed by Erber, scene II, bars 4-10.

⁴¹ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 191, in Gli Albori II 70.

⁴² Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 192, in Gli Albori II 71.

⁴³ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 192, in Gli Albori II 71.

⁴⁴ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 191, in Gli Albori II 70-71.

⁴⁵ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 191, in Gli Albori II 70-71.

⁴⁶ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 191, in Gli Albori II 71.

⁴⁷ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 192, in Gli Albori II 71.

⁴⁸ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 191, in Gli Albori II 70-71.

⁴⁹ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 193, in Gli Albori II 73.

⁵⁰ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 191, in Gli Albori II 71.

⁵¹ Rinuccini, La Dafne, lines 91-156, in Gli albori II, 81-84, trans. Erber, vi-vii.

⁵² Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 193, in Gli Albori II 73.

- ⁵³ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 188, in Gli Albori II 67.
- ⁵⁴ Gagliano, Dafne, transcribed by Erber, scene III, bars 70-130.
- ⁵⁵ Gagliano, Dafne, transcribed by Erber, Scene iii, bars 131-149.
- ⁵⁶ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 192, in Gli Albori II 71.
- ⁵⁷ "O di celeste eroe degni vanti! / Felicissimo giorno!
Al suono, a' balli, / Tornate omai, pastor, tornate a'
canti. Vie più sicura anch'io per monti e valli /
Saettando n'andrò le fere erranti." Rinuccini, La Dafne,
in Gli albori II 86n.
- ⁵⁸ Rinuccini, Dafne, in Gli albori II 89n.
- ⁵⁹ Rinuccini, La Dafne, lines 204-231, in Gli albori, 87-88, trans. Erber vii-viii.
- ⁶⁰ Rinuccini, La Dafne, in Gli albori, 89n., trans. Erber vii.
- ⁶¹ "Qui Fiton giacque estinto, / Trofeo d'Apollo; e qui
trafitto il cuore / Pianse il gran vincitor, trofeo
d'Amore." Rinuccini, Dafne in Gli albori II 89n.

⁶² Gagliano, Dafne, transcribed by Erber, scene IV, bars 151-161.

⁶³ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 190, in Gli Albori II 70.

⁶⁴ Gagliano, Dafne, transcribed by Erber, scene IV, bars 180-211.

⁶⁵ Carter, "A Florentine Wedding" 99-100.

⁶⁶ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 192, in Gli Albori II 72.

⁶⁷ Hanning, Of Poetry 106.

⁶⁸ Hanning, Of Poetry 106.

⁶⁹ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 192, in Gli Albori II 72. It is Erber's suggestion that the exclamation that Gagliano refers to in his introduction is "Piangete, Ninfe," the last line of the stanza. This makes sense in terms of Gagliano's next instruction.

⁷⁰ "quando cantano insieme il duo Sparsè più non vedrem di quell fin ora, il riguardarsi in volto l'un l'altro su quelle esclamazioni ha gran forza; così ancora quando cantano tutti Dov'è, dov'è il bel viso; non poca grazia areca il muoversi secondo il moto de' cori, quando uniti

insieme replicano Piangete, Ninfe e con voi pianga Amore." Gagliano, "Preface," in Gli albori II 72.

⁷¹ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 192, in Gli Albori II 72.

⁷² Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 192, in Gli Albori 72.

⁷³ Rinuccini, lines 383-384, in Gli albori II 97.

⁷⁴ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 193, in Gli Albori 72.

⁷⁵ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 193, in Gli Albori 72.

⁷⁶ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 193, in Gli Albori 72

⁷⁷ Nino Pirrotta, "Monteverdi and the Problems of Opera," Music and Culture in Italy from the Middle Ages to the Baroque: A Collection of Essays (Cambridge, Mass., and London, Eng.: Harvard University Press, 1984) 246.

⁷⁸ Pirrotta, "Monteverdi and the Problems," 246.

⁷⁹ Edmond Strainchamps suggests that Arianna was intended to be the vehicle for this purpose in "The Life and Death of Caterina Martinelli: New Light on Monteverdi's 'Arianna,'" Early Music History 5: Studies in Medieval

and Early Modern Music (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 156.

⁸⁰ Robert Graves, The Greek Myths: 1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960) 292-339.

⁸¹ Graves 304.

⁸² Strainchamps, "Life and Death of Caterina Martinelli" 159-168.

⁸³ Strainchamps, "Life and Death of Caterina Martinelli" 170.

⁸⁴ Pirrotta, "Monteverdi and the Problems" 247.

⁸⁵ Sebastiano Serlio, "From The Second Book of Architecture (Il Primo (Secondo) Libro d'Architettura, Paris, 1545, pp. 63-74), trans. Allardyce Nicoll, The Renaissance Stage, ed. Barnard Hewitt (Coral Gables, Fla: University of Miami Press, 1958) 32.

⁸⁶ Lorenzo Bianconi, Music in the Seventeenth Century, trans. David Bryant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 210-211.

⁸⁷ A.M. Nagler, Theatre Festivals of the Medici 1539-1637 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964) 177.

⁸⁸ Nino Pirrotta, "Theater, Sets, and Music in Monteverdi's Operas," Music and Culture in Italy from the Middle Ages to the Baroque 255.

⁸⁹ Nagler, Theatre Festivals 178.

⁹⁰ "...i quali concorrevano alla porta in tanta quantità che non bastò la destrezza del capitano Camillo Strozzi, luogotenente della guardia di gli Arcieri del Duca, nè l'autorità del Sig. Carlo Rossi, Generale dell'armi, per acquetar tanto tumulto ch'ancor fu necessario che vi andasse più volte, per farli star indietro, il Duca istesso." Federico Follino, Compendio dalle sontuose feste fatte l'anno MDCVIII nella città di Mantova per le reali nozze del Serenissimo Principe D. Francesco Gonzaga, con la Serenissima Infante Margherita di Savoia in Solerti, Gli albori II, 145.

⁹¹ Follino, Compendio, in Solerti, Gli albori III, 208. Trans. Pirrotta, "Theater, Sets" 256.

⁹² Jane Glover, "Solving the Musical Problems," Claudio Monteverdi: Orfeo, John Whenham, ed., Cambridge Opera Handbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 141.

⁹³ Nicola Sabbattini, "Manual for Constructing Theatrical Scenes and Machines (Pratica di Fabricar Scene e Machine ne' Teatri, Ravenna, 1638) trans, John H. McDowell, The Renaissance Stage, ed., Barnard Hewitt (Coral Gables, Fla: University of Miami Press, 1958) 130-133.

⁹⁴ Sabbattini, trans. McDowell, 132-133.

⁹⁵ Follino, Compendio, in Gli albori II 145-147. Partial translation in Nagler, Theatre Festivals 178-179.

⁹⁶ Ottavio Rinuccini, L'ARIANNA | TRAGEDIA | RAPPRESENTATA IN MUSICA | NELLE REALI NOZZE DEL SERENISSIMO | PRINCIPE DI MANTOVA | E DELLA SERENISSIMA | INFANTA DI SAVOIA (1608), lines 1-20, in Gli albori del melodramma, Vol. II, Angelo Solerti, ed. (1904; Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1969) 147-148.

⁹⁷ "Forse avverà che de la scena argiva / L'antico onor ne' novi canti ammiri." Rinuccini, Arianna, lines 23-24, in Gli albori II 148.

⁹⁸ "Poichè Apollo ebbe dato fine al suo bel canto, parti di scena, e nell' istesso tempo si vide comparir Venere bellissima col figlio Amore, i quali diedero principio alla favola in questa maniera." Gli albori II, 148.

⁹⁹ "Anima sì gentil, si fido core," Rinuccini, line 78, Gli albori II, 151.

¹⁰⁰ "Io nel mar tratterrommi, o qui d'intorno." Rinuccini, line 151, in Gli albori II, 153.

¹⁰¹ Rinuccini, lines 25-153, in Gli albori II, 149-154.

¹⁰² Pirrotta, "Monteverdi and the Problems" 246.

¹⁰³ Emilio de' Cavalieri, letter of (probably) 24 November 1600, in "Musical Asides in the Diplomatic Correspondence of Emilio de' Cavalieri," by Claude V. Palisca, The Musical Quarterly 49.3 (1963): 352.

¹⁰⁴ Pirrotta, "Monteverdi and the Problems" 247.

¹⁰⁵ "Dolce i teneri figli, / Dolce sposa gentil raccorsi in seno; / Ma dolce ancor non meno, / Per bellissimo onor, rischi e perigli." Rinuccini, Arianna, lines 173-176, in Gli albori II 154.

¹⁰⁶ Rinuccini, Arianna, lines 198-321, in Gli albori II, 155-159.

¹⁰⁷ Rinuccini, Arianna, lines 322-497, in Gli albori II 159-165.

¹⁰⁸ "He probably went to the port to see the ships or to check whether the waves on the sea are calm and if soft

and sweet breezes will favour your voyage." Rinuccini, Arianna, lines 515-520, in Gli albori II, 166.

¹⁰⁹ "But why is he fleeing from me silently in the dark air? Why is he abandoning me? Why is he not returning?" Rinuccini, Arianna, lines 521-524, in Gli albori II, 166.

¹¹⁰ "...non trionfa Amore / Ov'arde i cori ambizioso onore." Rinuccini, Arianna, lines 617-618, in Gli albori II, 170.

¹¹¹ Rinuccini, Arianna lines 782-783, in Gli albori II, 175.

¹¹² "...lamento che fece Arianna...il quale fu rappresentato con tanto affetto e con sì pietoso modi, che non si trovò ascoltante alcuno che non s'intenerisse, nè fu pur una Dama che non versasse qualche lagrimetta al suo pianto." Follino, Compendio, in Gli albori II, 145.

¹¹³ Pirrotta, "Monteverdi and the Problems" 247.

¹¹⁴ Claudio Monteverdi, Lamento d'Ariana in genere rappresentativo a voce sola e si canta senza battuta, Libro VII, transcribed by Raffaele Mingardo (Milano: Edizioni Curci, 1970) 3-9.

¹¹⁵ "Così va chi tropp'ama e troppo crede." Rinuccini, Arianna, line 862, in Gli albori II, 178.

¹¹⁶ Rinuccini, Arianna, lines 782-938, in Gli albori II, 175-180.

¹¹⁷ "Ecco gli sposi, ecco i reali amanti." Rinuccini, line 1067, in Gli albori II, 185.

¹¹⁸ Follino, Compendio, in Gli albori II, 185.

¹¹⁹ Sabbattini, trans. McDowell, 153-174.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I construct hypothetical productions of early court operas by combining elements taken from the fragmentary evidence of actual performances with documentation of performance practice at the time when the operas were created. The purpose is not to speculate on what might have occurred, but rather to create a series of ideal performance texts, or imaginary constructs, informed by a discussion of historical evidence. Opera, and early court opera is no exception, is a combination of disciplines: music, poetry, theatre, painting, costume design, and engineering. The context is so complex that it all but defies organization. I argue that theatre history, particularly the history of performance rather than written text, by its nature takes a comprehensive view of its subject, making it the ideal discipline with which to reconstruct imaginatively early opera.

This thesis focuses on the years from 1598 to 1608, during which court opera developed from an early experimental phase to full realization and acceptance as a form of entertainment for ceremonial occasions. The musicological research into this period made use of

documentation of all sorts, but its emphasis has been mostly on the analysis of extant scores. However, the scores for three out of the seven court operas produced in this period are lost. Looking at the performances from a theatrical perspective addresses this dilemma by focussing attention on other historical material. I argue that visualizing the performances of each opera from the material at hand, whether or not the score is extant, reveals a pattern in the development of early court opera that is not clear from an examination of its musical elements alone. Each opera was seminal in its own way, representing a different solution to the problem of reconciling musical and theatrical traditions.

In the Introduction I discuss the contextual concerns pertaining to early opera history. I begin by defining certain terms that are associated with early opera but have different connotations when used in relation to the individual disciplines combined in opera. A discussion of various theories that were influential in the creation of the new art form follows. In terms of theatre, I examine relevant aspects of dramaturgical writings of the time as well as general prescriptions for the physical representation of theatre, including settings, costumes, lighting, acting and gesture. In

relation to music, I discuss the rising demand for, and implications of, simplifying polyphonic textures as well as the growing appetite for the kind of expressivity associated with music that has been subordinated to poetic text. In connection with dance, I comment upon the boundaries within which theatrical choreography operated, from grandiose pantomimic actions performed in time to music to steps based on the social dancing described in the manuals written by fifteenth- and sixteenth-century dance masters. I also consider the choreography of Emilio de Cavalieri, as well as the comments on dance found in Il corago. Finally I examine production precedents and the political and social environments of the two courts in which early opera was produced, those of the Medici in Florence and the Gonzaga in Mantua.

The new form synthesized elements of theatre, music and dance that had been part of the cultural and political agendas of their respective courts. Using the Renaissance reliance on ancient authority, theatre and music theoreticians had slowly been evolving toward a form that would express the Baroque concern with reconciling material and spiritual realities. Early court opera began with modest "experimental" productions,

but the form had inherited the staging traditions of Renaissance theatre and the intermedi which were interspersed between its acts: realistic and sumptuous settings, ingenious machinery for elaborate effects, sparkling jewel-like light and richly costumed characters. Eventually, early court opera matured to the point where it could retain its integrity as a form and include the elaborate staging qualities characteristic of the court theatre and intended to showcase the magnificenza of the royal patron. The subjects of court opera were pastoral stories in which the tension between body and soul could be expressed metaphorically within a cosmic order that ultimately paid tribute to the ruling family present at the performance. This struggle was seen most obviously in a religious context in Cavalieri's Rappresentatione di Anima, et di Corpo and with some psychological complexity in Monteverdi's and Striggio's Orfeo, but it also forms an important underpinning to all the operas discussed in that they all make use of the metaphor of the painful separation of lovers which is representative of the division of the self.

Chapter One focuses on two early operas: La Dafne, a collaboration between composer Jacopo Peri, composer/patron Jacopo Corsi and librettist Ottavio

Rinuccini, produced in Florence in 1598; and Emilio de' Cavalieri and Agostino Manni's Rappresentatione di anima, et di corpo, produced in Rome in 1600. The first represents an early experimental phase in the development of opera and the second an amalgamation of the tradition of sacra rappresentazione and the new ideas about ancient sung theatre being debated in Florence in the sixteenth century. Notwithstanding the degree to which Count Giovanni de' Bardi's informal group of noble scholars, known as the "Camerata," did or did not influence the development of opera, it is clear from evidence in the forewords and introductions to librettos and scores, that the idea of reconstructing the sung theatre of the ancients was current in Florence in the middle to late sixteenth-century. The achievement of the pioneers of opera was not the reconstruction of an ancient form, however, but the creation of an entirely new one.

La Dafne was the testing ground for sung recitative based on theories of ancient Greek and Roman theatre music. It was Peri's objective to create an intermediary form between speech and song using the intoned notes of spoken words as a guide. Not entirely divorced from the tradition of Florentine intermedi, early performances of La Dafne may have included elements of spectacle. It has

even been suggested that actual set pieces from the 1589 festivities in honour of the marriage of Duke Ferdinando and Christine of Lorraine were taken out of storage and pressed into service for its production. Indeed, since the opera had three performances and its creators were continually working to improve it, it is certainly conceivable that its ultimate staging in the Pitti Palace made use of whatever resources the Medici court was willing to provide. The discoveries made, and the confidence that grew from the warm reception that the work obviously received, allowed Peri and Rinuccini to go on to devise the Euridice which Corsi produced in 1600 for the nuptial celebrations of Maria de' Medici and Henry IV.

La Rappresentazione di Anima, et di Corpo, on the other hand, was the result of an entirely different approach to the problems of theatre and music. Although it may have been influenced by ideas to which Emilio de' Cavalieri was exposed when in Florence, it was clearly an extension of Renaissance religious theatre. It seems that Cavalieri was intent on enlarging upon the tradition of "intoned recitation" associated with sacra rappresentazione and, although he coined the term recitar cantando, his approach was unlike that of Peri.

Cavalieri emphasized the beauty of the music rather than the musicality of spoken text.

Jacopo Peri and Ottavio Rinuccini's Euridice and Giulio Caccini and Gabriello Chiabrera's Il rapimento di Cefalo were examined in Chapter Two. These were performed during celebrations in honour of the marriage of Maria de' Medici and Henry IV of France and Navarre. Euridice and Il rapimento di Cefalo represent both the apex and decline of opera activity in Florence. Although Peri's setting of the Euridice evidenced a confidence in the new form engendered by the successful reception received by La Dafne, it was, nevertheless, a modest production best appreciated by a small coterie who understood its intentions. Il rapimento di Cefalo, on the other hand, was an extraordinarily ambitious project both conceptually and physically. Whether conscious of the aim or not, its creators, inspired by the ideas of ancient sung theatre, seemed to be attempting to forge a coherent narrative musical form of theatre directly out of the tradition of the intermedi. The audience reaction to the two operas could be described, at best, as mixed. Though the credibility of the contemporary commentaries is obviously affected by the motivations or animosities of the writers involved, it is clear that the first

decade proved the printed score for Peri's Euridice to be influential and popular, whereas, except for two songs, the music for Il rapimento di Cefalo was never to be published at all.

On the other hand, Caccini hurried his own setting for Rinuccini's Euridice into print. In Chapter Two, I also briefly discuss this work. Though not produced until 1602, it was published in 1600, and therefore may be considered contemporary with the works created for the wedding festivities of Maria de' Medici. Theatrically, there seems to be little new understanding to be gained from its score or the meagre records of its modest production. Musically, however, it provides not only a record of the sections of the first production of Euridice for which Caccini insisted his music be used but also a clue to Caccini's musical approach to Il rapimento di Cefalo, the score of which is lost, except for two pieces that made their way into his Le nuove musiche. After the small production of Caccini's Euridice, opera activity in Florence ceased for seventeen years.

Meanwhile in Rome, the opera Eumelio composed by Agostino Agazzari with a libretto by Torquato de Cupis and Tirletti, was produced in the Seminary for the 1606 Carnival. A minor, though interesting work, it

represented a fusion of influences from Emilio de' Cavalieri to Jacopo Peri and Ottavio Rinuccini, making it a hybrid of sacra rappresentazione and secular melodramma.¹ The next major development in the history of early court opera took place a year later in Mantua, where the genius of Monteverdi brought the nascent form to the next stage in its evolution.

The focus of Chapter Three is Claudio Monteverdi's Orfeo with a libretto by Alessandro Striggio, which was produced during Carnival 1607. I consider L'Orfeo as not only a tragic love story and an elucidation of the power of music, but also as a portrayal of human psychology. As a god, Orpheus is able to conquer the Underworld but as a human, he fails himself. The complexity of his story is reflected by the complexity, diversity and variety that characterized the libretto, score and production values of the work. However, because it was produced for Carnival and not for a royal occasion, no official documentation exists and attempts to imaginatively reconstruct the first performance must face a number of difficult problems, not the least of which has to do with the fact that two endings exist for the opera, one in the libretto that was distributed at the performance and the other in the score. The questions of

which ending was actually performed, which ending is superior and why the ending was eventually changed have engendered a great deal of speculation but seem, ultimately, unanswerable. Nevertheless, the debate has produced some tantalizing theories, such as Nino Pirrotta's assertion that "the spectacular apotheosis ending Orfeo clearly represented a compromise with the genre of the intermedio," and ensured the survival of the new genre threatened as it was by "on one side, the richer articulation of plot and dialogue of the spoken theatre and, on the other, a number of other genres in which music associated with less dramatic but more spectacular action."²

In any case, by 1608, opera seemed well established and its survival assured. In Chapter Four, I argue that what began as a discussion amongst educated nobles in Florence and a tentative experiment sponsored by a wealthy patron culminated in the Mantuan court productions of Marco da Gagliano's re-setting of Rinuccini's La Dafne and Monteverdi and Rinuccini's Arianna. In a sense, Gagliano had grown up with opera. He would have been only sixteen years old when Peri's La Dafne was first produced. It is not surprising, therefore, that the form seemed to him to be enough of an

institution to warrant the history of its beginnings which he provided in the preface to his score of La Dafne. In addition, his preface detailed the staging of his opera, in several cases with great specificity, enormously facilitating the construction of an historicized ideal performance text. Musically, his approach incorporated the ideas of recitative that had been developed by Peri as well as the musical variety associated with Monteverdi, whom he characterized as "the most celebrated musician [who] composed the songs in so exquisite a way that one can truthfully say the excellence of ancient music was revived."³

Monteverdi's Arianna, although "it visibly moved the whole theater to tears,"⁴ was never published. The only fragment remaining from its score is the hauntingly beautiful Lamento d'Arianna. Clues with regard to the work's first performance come from Rinuccini's libretto, Federico Follino's official description and contemporary accounts. The opera was produced as part of the official celebrations for the marriage of Prince Francesco Gonzaga and Margherita di Savoia and therefore its production values would have been lavish. Nevertheless, its single setting, however elaborate, was in no danger of overshadowing the marvels of the intermedi performed between

the acts of Giovanbattista Guarini's L'Idropica, produced as part of the same festivities.

In fact, all of these productions except Il rapimento di Cefalo were modest in comparison with other court spectacles produced for official occasions. Their modesty, however, was an important aspect of their development. The expectations of a small group of cognoscenti meeting in a room in the home of a wealthy merchant to witness a somewhat informal presentation of an experiment in music and theatre are far different from those of five thousand guests of the Duke sitting in a grand theatre during the elaborate celebrations of a royal wedding.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Il rapimento di Cefalo failed to satisfy the expectations of its audience. It took eight more years and the combined experience and genius of Ottavio Rinuccini and Claudio Monteverdi to create in the Arianna an opera that would succeed in a well-equipped theatre before a large audience. Even then, its use of stage effects was judicious. Nevertheless, when combined with an intelligent narrative of great human interest, a variety of musical forms, dance, gesture, costume and setting, it showed the degree to which early court opera could move

an audience of thousands, thus solidifying the reputation of the new form not as a dry exploration of the past to be understood by an elite few, but as an entertainment which would appeal to a broad range of the public.

The construction of a series of historicized ideal performance texts of the early court operas produced between 1598 and 1608 has enabled me to organize issues and ideas pertaining to this crucial decade in the development of opera. A theatrical reading of librettos, scores, and contemporary accounts puts an emphasis on the visualization of each opera as a performance and balances the work of musicologists by reinforcing the notion of opera as a synthesis of disciplines. Moreover, associating issues with specific operas and discussing them chronologically clarifies the pattern of evolution from modest explorations of an idea that excited the minds of Renaissance artists and scholars to its full-fledged and successful realization.

Endnotes

¹ Margaret F. Johnson, "Agazzari's Eumelio, a 'Dramma Pastorale'," The Musical Quarterly 57.3 (1971): 491-505.

² Nino Pirrotta, Music and Theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi, trans. Karen Eales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 270-271.

³ Marco da Gagliano, "Preface to Dafne," trans. Carol MacClintock, Readings in the History of Music in Performance, (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1979) 189. Marco da Gagliano, "La dedicatoria e la prefazione che riferisco sono premesse alla rara stampa: La | Dafne di Marco | Da Gagliano | nell'Accademia del'Elevari | L'Affannato | Rappresentata | in Mantova (Firenze: Appresso Cristofano Marescotti, 1608) in Angelo Solerti, ed., Gli albori del melodrama, Vol. II (1904; Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1969) 69.

⁴ Gagliano, "Preface," trans. MacClintock 189-190. Gli albori Vol. II, 69.

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