

LADISLAS OF POLAND'S VISIT TO MANTUA (1625) MUSIC IN OPEN AND ENCLOSED SPACES

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ABSTRACT

The visit to Mantua of Ladislav Sigismund Vasa, son of Sigismund III, King of Poland and Sweden, was announced, expected, and prepared well in advance. Ladislav stayed in Mantua at the end of February 1625. Duke Ferdinando I Gonzaga mobilized the best musical and artistic resources at court for the prestigious guest, offering a comprehensive programme of events. Despite the lack of sources, it is clear that the festivities planned for Ladislav's three-day stay replicated, on the one hand, well-tested Mantuan traditions for similar occasions, while also emphasizing or adapting some elements deemed appropriate for the concurrent jubilee year. Ladislav's short sojourn in Mantua came at a troubled time in the life of the Gonzaga court, caught in the middle of reorganizing its artistic collections and, contrary to appearances, economically weakened and close to political decline and the irreversible depletion of its artistic and musical resources. The present contribution combines known documentation with new details and contextual evidence, in an attempt to arrive at a better understanding of both the role of the artists involved and the function and meaning of the venues visited by Ladislav and the objects presented to him.

KEYWORDS

Ladislav Sigismund Vasa; Ferdinando I Gonzaga; Mantua; music; theatre; *dramma in musica*; fireworks; Alessandro Striggio Junior; Ercole Marliani; Francesco Dognazzi; Ferrante Agnelli Soardi

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Ladislás Sigismund Vasa's visit to Mantua was announced well in advance; expectations were high, and preparations were soon underway. The European tour of the prince (1624–1625) encompassed several Italian courts,¹ which took pains to receive him with the proper regard for a person likely to govern a strategic kingdom in the geopolitical equilibrium of the time. His short sojourn in Mantua took place at the end of February 1625. Duke Ferdinando Gonzaga mobilized the most talented musicians and artists of the court for the prince's visit, organizing an elaborate programme of events. Despite gaps in the historical sources, one gains the impression that the festivities organized for the occasion, while replicating well-established practices, accentuated or adapted certain elements felt to be in keeping with the contemporary jubilee year. Ladislás's stay in Mantua came about at a troubled moment in the life of the Gonzaga court, which was involved in the complete reorganization of its artistic collections, and contrary to appearances, economically weakened² and approaching a fundamental change in the ducal succession, which, among other things, accelerated the irreversible depletion of its artistic and musical riches.

Both sacred and secular locations, external and internal, offered the Polish prince a kind of well-arranged, extended stage setting. In order to understand the roles of the artists involved, as well as the functions and significance of the venues and objects presented to the guest, it is worth re-examining them in the light of the political and cultural choices of the ruling duke, who was keen to preserve but also revive the legacy of his predecessors.

REPORTS AND INITIAL PROJECTS

Historical accounts and contemporary scholarship concerning the Polish prince's stay in Mantua usually concentrate on his short but intensive sojourn in the city and on the few days beforehand, without giving much attention to other relevant sources. The known correspondence between Mantua and Florence at the beginning of February 1625 documents the formal invitation presented personally by the Gonzaga agent, Count Ferrante Agnelli Soardi, to the distinguished guest soon after his arrival in the city of the Medici grand dukes.³

Decontextualized, the letters from February 1625 seem to suggest that, up until then, the trip to Mantua had been broached by the prince but not really planned. Instead, it is interesting

¹ I am very grateful to David Butchart for the English translation and for his comments. For a recap and new documents on Ladislás's European travel see Jacek Żukowski, "Listy Władysława Wazy i inne nieznanne źródła do jego europejskiej peregrynacji z archiwów szwedzkich i niemieckich," *Kronika Zamkowa. Roczniki* 2/68 (2015): 59–121.

² Cf. Caterina de' Medici Gonzaga to Cristina of Lorena, Porto Mantovano, 2 August 1625, Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), Mediceo, fol. 107, 771f.

³ Ferrante Agnelli Soardi to Ferdinando Gonzaga, Florence, 3 February 1625, Mantua, Archivio di Stato di Mantova (ASMn), Archivio Gonzaga (AG), env. 2711, quoted in Paolo Fabbri, "Il passaggio per Mantova di Ladislao, principe di Polonia: storia e preistoria dell'opera a Varsavia," *Civiltà mantovana* 9 (1985): 49; it is an updated version of article published in *Quadrivium*, 18 (1977): 135–47, translated as: Paolo Fabbri, "Przejazd przez Mantuę polskiego księcia Władysława [1625]," *Pagine. Polsko-włoskie materiały muzyczne. Argomenti musicali polacco-italiani* 3–4 (1979 [1980]): 93–109.

carta. Con questo fine bacio a V. S. Ill.ma con riverente affetto le mani, et le auguro felicità. Di Fiorenza, 3 di luglio 1624. Di V. S. Ill.ma Pront[issimo] obbliga[tissi]mo Hercole Marliani.⁴

[My Most Illustrious and Most Honoured Lord. Here [in Florence] one gathers that the Most Serene Archduke Charles [of Austria]⁵ and the Prince of Poland are coming to Italy between August and September [1624] and intend to pass through Mantua, and that his Most Serene Lordship [Ferdinando Gonzaga] has thoughts of entertaining them, and put on theatrical entertainments and fireworks. For this eventuality he is sending, after the normal post, this messenger to inform your Lordship [Alessandro Striggio Jr.] that, despite the fact that his Serene Highness expressly ordered the dispatch of his Lordship Don Francesco [Dognazzi] and other singers here, they should not now be sent because they will be busy studying and composing music for the trifles which I myself will set down on paper.

With this I kiss your Most Illustrious Lordship's hands and wish you good fortune.

Florence, 3 July 1624

Your Most Illustrious Lordship's most ready and obliged

Hercole Marliani]

The letter announced the passage, through the Gonzaga court, of two guests of the highest order: Archduke Charles of Austria and the prince of Poland. As will be argued below, the location of the correspondents, Marliani and Striggio, previously wrongly interpreted, is relevant to the analysis of the message sent, which is short but rich in interesting details. To understand the letter's meaning it is important to remember that at that time Duke Ferdinando Gonzaga and his consort Caterina were in Tuscany, where they had arrived separately between May and June 1624, and where they stayed until the end of August, either at the Villa Petraia or the Medici court. In Florence, the couple was well looked after by Grand Duchess Christina of Lorraine de' Medici, Caterina's mother, in an apartment on the lower floors of Palazzo Pitti⁶—where Count Soardi would be received the following February.⁷ Ferdinando's entourage

⁴ Ercole Marliani to Alessandro Striggio Jr. in Mantua, Florence, 3 July 1624, ASMn, AG, env. 1132; letter quoted by Susan H. Parisi, who reverses the position of the writers, in *Ducal Patronage of Music in Mantua, 1587–1627: An Archival Study*, PhD diss. (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1989), 357–58.

⁵ Charles of Austria's stay in Florence between September and October 1624 was celebrated with Andrea Salvadori and Jacopo Peri's *Canzone delle lodi d'Austria* (28 September 1624), performed by Francesca Caccini and the Mantuan tenor Francesco Campagnolo, and the staging of *La regina Sant'Orsola* by Salvadori and Marco da Gagliano (6 October 1624), which would be replicated for Ladislás. It was printed under the title of the *Argomento della Regina Sant'Orsola* (Florence: Pietro Cecconcelli, 1624), registered in Claudio Sartori, *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800. Catalogo analitico con 16 indici* (Cuneo: Bertola e Locatelli, 1991), no. 2504. For other sources see Warren Kirkendale, *The Court Musicians in Florence During the Principate of the Medici* (Florence: Olschki, 1993), 230, 298, 605.

⁶ "Fra tanto io me ne sto qui alla Petraia come in un eremo" (In the meantime, I am staying here at Petraia as in a hermitage). Ferdinando Gonzaga to Caterina de' Medici, Florence, 2 May 1624, ASF, Mediceo, fol. 6109. Caterina joined him in mid-June. Curzio Picchena to Averardo de' Medici di Castellina, Florence, 12 June 1624, ASF, Mediceo, fol. 4954.

⁷ ". . . mi condussero a palazzo Piti [sic], . . . alle stanze da basso, dove questa estate era alloggiato il Serenissimo Signor duca [Ferdinando Gonzaga]" (they took me to Palazzo Piti [sic], . . . to the lower rooms, where this summer the Most Serene Lord Duke was staying). Ferrante Agnelli Soardi to Ferdinando Gonzaga, Florence, 3 February

included Ercole Marliani, who maintained contact with Striggio Jr. in Mantua. This helps explain the arrangements regarding the events and the choice of musicians to be involved in the visit of Archduke Charles and the prince of Poland. Marliani's letter documents the fact that at the beginning of July 1624 Duke Ferdinando already knew of Prince Ladislas's visit to Italy. At the same time Ferdinando had apparently received reassurances from the Grand Duchess concerning the prince's journey to Mantua; however, the date and duration of the visit had still not been decided.

The timing of Ladislas's arrival in Italy itself was not yet known, but said to be imminent, which explains why the planning of entertainments got under way immediately: they were to be worthy of the prince and entice him to remain in Mantua longer, thereby transforming a mere passage through the city into a visit worth remembering. Contrary to what has been previously assumed, the programme for his reception, although finalized subsequently, was not decided upon at the last moment, but conceived much earlier, as far as its main components, i.e., "feste sceniche et fuochi artificiali" (theatrical productions and fireworks) were concerned.⁸

The letter's urgent tone, its dispatch via a special "staffetta" (messenger), was necessary to cancel a previous order of Duke Ferdinando, who had asked for "D[on] Francesco et altri cantori" (Don Francesco and other singers) to be sent to Florence. In July 1624, therefore, the basic programme of the Mantuan festivities to be offered to Ladislas had been established and the principal group of artists to be involved had been decided upon; until now this had only been partially identified.⁹

THE ARTISTIC PERSONNEL

With the advantage of his presence in Florence at the time, perhaps, Ercole Marliani was commissioned to curate or write a new dramatic text to be presented with music, which he defined, with obvious false modesty, as "chiacchiere," or a literary trifle.¹⁰ Such facetious self-deprecation, typical of his renowned lively wit, should be read in conjunction with his relationship with the older Striggio Jr., the recipient of the letter, who, like Marliani, was a man of letters and a writer of verse to be set to music, as well as a government official.

Striggio Jr. (1572–1630), son of the instrumental virtuoso and composer Alessandro Striggio (1536/37–1592), was, indeed, a central figure at the Mantuan court. He served five different dukes (Vincenzo I, Francesco IV, Ferdinando, Vincenzo II, and Charles I Gonzaga), and was awarded the title of count in 1611 and, later, marquis in 1628 (of Corticelle in Monferrato) in recognition of his services. A member of the Accademia degli Invaghiti (with the name *Il Ritenuto*—the Reserved or the Self-Possessed One), he cultivated his literary bent alongside his courtly duties, something that was quite common in the Renaissance, but less so in the seventeenth century, when an increasing specialization, typical of the arts of spectacle, can

1625, ASMn, AG, env. 2711.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "We do not know who the author of the text of this 'comedy' was, nor that of the music." Fabbri, "Il passaggio," 45.

¹⁰ Cf. Claudia Burattelli, *Spettacoli di corte a Mantova tra Cinque e Seicento* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1999), 120–24.

be observed.¹¹ He coordinated many festivities and ballets, including the revised production of Gabriello Chiabrera's *Galatea*, set to music by Santi Orlandi for the wedding of Ferdinando Gonzaga and Caterina de' Medici (1617).¹² Striggio Jr. had an advantage as a poet for works set to music owing to his training as a player of the viol and the lirone, which his father taught him, but which he only occasionally indulged in in public.¹³ At the time of Ladislav's visit to Mantua, he could justifiably view himself as being at the peak of his career; at the same time, it is likely that he would not have turned down the opportunity to see a text which he himself had composed represented on stage. Beyond such conjecture, it is nonetheless documented that in July 1624 it was not Striggio but rather Marliani who took on the task of providing a text to be used in conjunction with Ladislav's visit to Mantua.¹⁴

Although it seems likely, it is impossible to determine whether the proposal to produce a "festa scenica" (theatrical entertainment) with music came from Marliani or whether it was the result of a ducal commission. However, judging by the letter it was clearly a satisfied impulse on Marliani's part, confirmed by his intention of sending to Mantua as soon as possible "chiacchiere che metterò su carta" (the trifles which I will set down on paper). Like Striggio Jr., Marliani was the son of an artist, not a musician, and a highly-regarded man of letters, a court bureaucrat and member of the *Invaghiti* (*L'Incitato*—the Excited One) Bernardino Marliani (1542–1605).¹⁵ After his literary debut and study in Rome, Ercole drew close to the world of theatre, gaining prominence through his discernment and originality, and also taking advantage of a period in the artistic life of the court when it was less competitive.¹⁶ Among his works for musical setting were *Il rapimento di Proserpina* (Casale Monferrato, 1611), set to music by Giulio Cesare Monteverdi;¹⁷ the "balli et canti di gran gusto et inventione" (dances and songs of great skill and invention) for the birthday of Duchess Caterina (1619);¹⁸ *La favola d'Andromeda*, set to

¹¹ John Whenham, "Striggi Alessandro juniore," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 94 (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana, 2019); Paola Besutti, "Claudio Monteverdi cittadino mantovano. 'Tirsi e Clori', le feste del 1615 e il 'novo ordine generale,'" *Philomusica on-line* 17 (2018): 19–53.

¹² Burattelli, *Spettacoli di corte*, 116.

¹³ At the age of twelve (1585) he intervened alongside his father at the end of a chivalrous spectacle. Oreste Biringucci, *Apparato e barriera del Tempio di Amor Feretrio, fatta dal serenissimo signor principe di Mantova l'anno MDLXXXV* (Mantua: Francesco Osanna, 1585), 29; see Burattelli, *Spettacoli di corte*, 116.

¹⁴ Ercole Marliani to Alessandro Striggio Jr., Florence, 3 July 1624, ASMn, AG, env. 1132.

¹⁵ See Raffaele Tamalio, "Marliani, Bernardino," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 70 (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 2008).

¹⁶ "Intendesì che il duca di Mantova [Ferdinando Gonzaga] sendo del tutto diverso alla natura del padre [Vincenzo I Gonzaga] habbia licentiatto tutti i buffoni istrioni musici et altre genti simili et levatili tutti i donativi fattili dal morto duca, de possessioni et d'altre entrate" (It was understood that the Duke of Mantua [Ferdinando Gonzaga], whose nature differed completely from that of his father [Vincenzo I Gonzaga], dismissed all the buffoons, musicians, and other similar people and took away all the gifts made to them by the late duke, that is possessions, and other revenue). Unknown correspondents, Rome, 24 March 1612, ASF, Mediceo, fol. 4028, 340f.

¹⁷ *Breve descrizione delle feste fatte dal Serenissimo Sig. Principe di Mantova nel giorno natale della serenissima Infanta Margherita* (Casale: Pantaleone Goffi, 1611).

¹⁸ Paola Besutti, "Variar' le prime 7 stanze della luna': ritrovati versi di ballo per Jacopo Peri," *Studi musicali* 34/2 (2005): 319–74.

music by Claudio Monteverdi;¹⁹ the *intermedi* for a 'large' comedy (Carnival 1620);²⁰ and the comedy *Le tre costanti*, with *intermedi* by Monteverdi, for the wedding of Eleonora Gonzaga and Emperor Ferdinand II (18 January 1622).²¹

In anticipation of the production of *Sant'Orsola*, composed earlier (1620) but not yet performed owing to a succession of bereavements and adverse circumstances, Ercole Marliani had revealed his intention, in the spring of 1622, of writing a work with a sacred theme to be set to music by Monteverdi.²² This reference to *Sant'Orsola* is interesting because it links Marliani creatively with Andrea Salvadori (1591–1634), the principal court poet in Florence. In fact, this veiled antagonism bore fruit in relation to the respective visits of Archduke Charles and of Ladislav, when Salvadori's *Sant'Orsola* was staged in Florence, first on 6 October 1624 for Charles, then on 28 January 1625 for Ladislav,²³ followed by the "tragicommedia del diluvio" (tragicomedy of the Flood) by Marliani in Mantua on 28 (?) February 1625.²⁴ Both these productions were linked not only in terms of their aims but also in reality, since Ferdinando Gonzaga allowed the Mantuan tenor Francesco Campagnolo (1584–1630), who was part of his entourage in Florence, to stay on at the Medici court for the production of *Sant'Orsola*.²⁵ From Campagnolo's own testimony we learn that Duke Ferdinando returned to Mantua in the final days of August 1624.²⁶

The other artist named in Marliani's letter of July 1624 is the Mantuan composer and singer (tenor) Don Francesco Dognazzi (c. 1585–after 1643). He succeeded Santi Orlandi as head of the duke's music (1619), and from at least 1600 had been linked to the palatine basilica of Santa Barbara, situated within the Gonzaga court, first as a singer, later as a canon and a "massaro" (steward).²⁷ He also served in the local Servite church (1607) and was perhaps in Rome as part of the entourage of the then Cardinal Ferdinando Gonzaga. Discharged by Duke Francesco IV, together with the Monteverdi brothers in 1612, he was taken into the personal service of the future Duke Ferdinando, who granted him an annual pension (1616). While he

¹⁹ Paolo Fabbri, *Monteverdi* (Turin: Ed. di Torino, 1985), 212–14. Cf. Albi Rosenthal, "Monteverdi's *Andromeda*: A Lost Libretto Found," *Music and Letters* 46/1 (1985): 1–8; Tim Carter, "Monteverdi, Early Opera and a Question of Genre: The Case of *Andromeda* (1620)," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 137 (2012): 1–34.

²⁰ Ercole Marliani to Annibale Chieppio, Mantua, 12 December 1619, ASF, Mediceo, fol. 2950.

²¹ Ercole Marliani, *Le tre costanti* . . . (Mantua: Aurelio e Lodovico Osanna, 1622); Gabriele Bertazzolo, *Breve relatione dello sposalitio fatto della serenissima principessa Eleonora Gonzaga con la Sacra cesarea Maestà di Ferdinando II Imperatore* (Mantua: Aurelio e Lodovico Osanna, 1622). On fireworks, see Ercole Marliani to Andrea Cioli, Mantua, 23 September 1622, ASF, Mediceo, fol. 2950.

²² ". . . poiché non si può havere l'opera di *Sant'Orsola* del Salvadori, io mi risolvo di comporne una et farla fare in musica al Monteverde, et se non sarà la medesima historia sarà qualche altra simile, et poi quando si rappresenterà inviterò Vostra Signoria" (Since you cannot have the opera *Sant'Orsola* by Salvadori, I resolve to compose one and have it done in music by Monteverde, and if it is not the same history it will be some other similar one, and then when it is performed I will invite Your Lordship). Ercole Marliani to Andrea Cioli, Mantua, 5 May 1622, ASF, Mediceo, fol. 2950.

²³ Angelo Solerti, *Musica, ballo e drammatica alla Corte Medicea dal 1600 al 1637* (Florence: Bemporad, 1905), 156, 173–77.

²⁴ Fabbri, "Il passaggio," 48; Parisi, *Ducal Patronage*, 319.

²⁵ Parisi, *Ducal Patronage*, 422–28.

²⁶ Francesco Campagnolo to Ercole Marliani, Florence, 27 August 1624, ASMn, AG, env. 1132.

²⁷ Parisi, *Ducal Patronage*, 434–37.

was often sent outside Mantua (to Venice, Ferrara, Bergamo, and Vienna), he remained in the service of the Gonzaga court for around forty years.²⁸ Some music prints bearing his name have survived;²⁹ he also appears in anthologies.³⁰ Dognazzi was highly regarded by Monteverdi and by the duke, who in July 1624 arranged his temporary transfer to Florence as part of his court there—a transfer which, according to Marliani's letter, did not take place in order not to distract him from the otherwise vaguely defined musical preparations being organized in connection with Ladislav's visit to Mantua.

As well as "feste sceniche" (theatrical entertainments), Marliani's letter of July 1624 mentioned a second element associated with the art of spectacle at the Gonzaga court, namely, fireworks. Mantua could boast a long tradition in this field. From the middle of the sixteenth century the city's main square of San Pietro had been increasingly exploited but, above all, it was the waters surrounding the city that were used as natural backdrops for firework displays, pyrotechnics, and mock naval battles, conveniently offered to guests at the adjacent hanging garden facing the Piazza San Pietro or, in the case of aquatic spectacles, from the loggias of the Cavallerizza facing the present-day Lago Inferiore.³¹ With the passage of time, the organizers of such entertainments were the successive Directors of the Ducal Building: Giovan Battista Bertani (1516–1576), Oreste Biringucci (1558–1585), and Antonio Maria Viani (1555/60–1629). At the time of Ladislav's visit the person responsible for much of the stage apparatus, but above all for the spectacular pyrotechnics, was the already well-established Gabriele Bertazzolo (1570–1626).³² In the period preceding Ladislav's visit, Bertazzolo had organized the fireworks for the wedding and coronation of Eleonora Gonzaga (19 January and 18 September 1622),³³ and for the election of Pope Urban VIII (14 September 1623).³⁴ The fireworks for Ladislav, however, were not honoured with a printed description.

²⁸ Francesco Dognazzi, *Musiche varie di camera a cinque* (Venice: Bartolomeo Magni, 1643), preface by the Mantuan chancellor Francesco Bulgarini.

²⁹ Francesco Dognazzi, *Il primo libro di varii concerti a una et a due voci . . .* (Venice: Bartolomeo Magni, 1614); facsimile: Gary Tomlinson, ed., *Francesco Dognazzi. Il primo libro de varii concerti* (Venezia, Bartolomeo Magni, 1614) (New York: Garland, 1986), 5:185–220.

³⁰ François Lesure, ed., *Répertoire International des Sources Musicales. Recueils imprimés*, B/1 (Munich: Henle, 1960), 1613/3 and 1618/4. A collection of Dognazzi's arias for one, two, and three voices, quoted in Parisi, *Ducal Patronage*, 581, is not to be found.

³¹ Paola Besutti, "Giostre, fuochi e naumachie a Mantova fra Cinque e Seicento," in *Musica in torneo nell'Italia del Seicento*, ed. Paolo Fabbri (Lucca: LIM, 1999), 3–32.

³² On Bertazzolo see the article by Carlo Togliani in this volume.

³³ Gabriele Bertazzolo, *Breve descrizione de' fuochi trionfali fatti in Mantova il dì 19 Genaro 1622. Nelle imperiali, et Auguste nozze della Ser.ma Sig.ra La Sig. Principessa Eleonora Gonzaga . . .* (Mantua: Aurelio e Lodovico Osanna, 1622); Gabriele Bertazzolo, *Breve relatione delle allegrezze fatte in Mantova il dì 18 settembre 1622 per la coronatione dell'Imperatrice Leonora Gonzaga . . .* (Mantua: fratelli Osanna, 1622).

³⁴ Gabriele Bertazzolo, *Descrizione dell'apparato di fuochi trionfali fatti in Mantova il dì 14 Settembre 1623 per l'assunzione al pontificato di Urbano VIII* (Mantua: Aurelio e Lodovico Osanna, 1623).

THE FORMAL INVITATION

In July 1624, therefore, it was assumed that Ladislav's arrival in Italy was so imminent that the decision was taken to cancel the temporary transfer to Florence of Don Dognazzi and "altri cantori" (other singers), previously ordered, "di proprio pugno" (expressly), by the Duke of Mantua.³⁵ The events of the following months cannot be reconstructed in detail. As mentioned above, we know that the Mantuan tenor Campagnolo remained in Florence, where he took part in the two performances of *Sant'Orsola* (September 1624 and February 1625), but there is no specific information about how the preparations proceeded in Mantua. Nevertheless, it seems likely that Marliani and Dognazzi continued to work on a musical drama.

Even in Florence, where the news of Ladislav's journey was first circulated, there is no certainty about the timing of his itinerary. Following the sojourn of Archduke Charles in September and October,³⁶ the Medici grand duke, anticipating the arrival of the prince of Poland, had moved to his country villas, where he was still in residence at the beginning of November—the customary time of hunting.³⁷ However, the prince did not arrive in Florence until the end of January.

As mentioned above, at that point the Duke of Mantua sent his emissary, Count Agnelli Soardi, to the Medici court (2 February 1625), to deliver the Gonzagas' formal invitation to Ladislav. That very evening Soardi met up with court functionaries and the papal nunciature to discuss in detail the scope of his embassy.³⁸ The following day, he was able to visit the Medici villa at Poggio a Caiano to participate in the "comedia cantata" (sung comedy) and the "balletto a piedi et a cavallo" (traditional and equestrian ballet), performed in honour of the Polish prince.³⁹ The previous week (28 January), *La rappresentatione di santa Orsola* had been presented for the prince;⁴⁰ in the days following, more magnificent festivities were held, among them a game of "balla del calzo" (football) in costume (6 February) and a joust (10 February).⁴¹

In the late afternoon of 3 February, the Mantuan envoy was received by the grand duchess and grand duke, who, among other things, confirmed that Ladislav was looking forward to receiving the invitation from Mantua, having promised empress Eleonora Gonzaga of Habsburg to include the city of the Gonzaga in his itinerary.⁴² In the course of several preliminary discussions, Soardi learned that Ladislav would remain in Florence for the whole of Carnival (until Shrove Tuesday, 11 February 1625) and the beginning of Lent; he was also informed

³⁵ Ercole Marliani to Alessandro Striggio Jr., Florence, 3 July 1624 ASMn, AG, env. 1132.

³⁶ See footnote 3.

³⁷ Curzio Picchena to court of Mantua, Florence, 5 November 1624, ASMn, AG, env. 1132; quoted in Fabbri, "Il passaggio," 41.

³⁸ See footnote 3.

³⁹ *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina* (Florence: Cecconcelli, 1625); Sartori, *I libretti*, nos. 14223 and 14224.

⁴⁰ Ferrante Agnelli Soardi to Ferdinando Gonzaga, Florence, 4 February 1625, ASMn, AG, env. 1133; quoted in Fabbri, "Il passaggio," 42–43. Two versions of the libretto were published: Sartori, *I libretti*, fols. 19704–5.

⁴¹ *La precedenza delle dame* (Florence: Cecconcelli, 1625), by Andrea Salvadori and Jacopo Peri, machines by Giulio Parigi; Sartori, *I libretti*, fol. 19008; for more details see Kirkendale, *The Court Musicians*, 230.

⁴² Ferrante Agnelli Soardi to Ferdinando Gonzaga, Florence, 4 February 1625, ASM, AG, env. 1133; quoted in Fabbri, "Il passaggio," 42–43.

that Ladislav had expressed the wish to visit not only the ports of Pisa and Livorno but also the cities of Lucca and Pistoia before travelling to Mantua. The grand duchess informed the Gonzaga envoy confidentially about the prince's predilections: "brama esser ben trattato, gusta la musica, si diletta di pitture, gode di vedere belli cavalli et è cacciatore universale" (he likes to be well looked after, takes pleasure in music, delights in painting, and enjoys seeing fine horses; he is a passionate hunter). Considering that the visit to Mantua coincided with Lent, she then advised offering the prince, as a "trattenimento gustevole et non ordinario" (enjoyable entertainment, something out of the ordinary), a fireworks display, a boar-hunt, and a "comedia spirituale o favola cantata da suoi musici eccellenti" (spiritual comedy or fable sung by his excellent musicians), culminating in a visit to the celebrated Gonzaga stables and perhaps even the gift of a couple of the famed Gonzaga-bred horses. The latter gesture was traditionally reserved by the duke for guests of the highest order.⁴³

As can be seen, these suggestions, in relation to the main elements of the festivities, matched those already foreseen by the Gonzaga dukes and Ercole Marliani in July 1624, namely, fireworks and a sung dramatic text, either secular or sacred. Likewise, the hunt and the visit to the equine stud farm corresponded to the programme of reception accorded by the Gonzaga to the most important occasions.⁴⁴

On 4 February Soardi finally extended "l'invito al Serenissimo di Polonia perché venghi ad Honorar con la sua presenza la città di Mantova et a pigliar il possesso d'una casa che Vostra Altezza [Ferdinando Gonzaga] la fa tutta sua" (the invitation to his Serene Highness of Poland to honour with his presence the city of Mantua and to take possession of a house which Your Highness makes exclusively available to him).⁴⁵ The proposal was willingly accepted and the idea of an independent residence was received with particular favour, as the prince had communicated his desire to "venire incognitamente" (come privately). In his discussion with Soardi, Ladislav had shown a personal interest in the details of the journey, concerning the access by road and water transport. In reply, the Mantuan envoy boasted that if the prince wished to travel from Mantua to Venice he could do so comfortably by boarding a ship directly "dalla porta del palazzo" (at the entrance gate of the [Gonzaga] ducal palace). One day later, Ladislav formally accepted the invitation (5 February 1625), adding, at the same time, that he did not wish to delay too much his return to his native land.⁴⁶

LADISLAV IN MANTUA: HOLY PLACES, RELIQUARIES, "A GRAND THEATRE," AND FIREWORKS

At the end of February 1625 Prince Ladislav finally arrived in Mantua. Before, however, in Concordia sulla Secchia he was greeted by the ducal equerry Count Aleramo San Giorgio with a retinue, who provided him with carriages in which he entered Mantua. At the San

⁴³ See Giancarlo Malacarne, *Il mito dei cavalli gonzagheschi: alle origini del purosangue* (Verona: Promoprint, 1995).

⁴⁴ Federico Gonzaga to Alessandro Striggio Jr., Vienna, 1 February 1625, ASMn, AG, env. 494, fasc. II, fols. 113–15.

⁴⁵ Ferrante Agnelli Soardi to Ferdinando Gonzaga, Florence, 4 February 1625, ASM, AG, env. 1133.

⁴⁶ Ladislav Vasa to Ferdinando Gonzaga, Florence, 5 February 1625, ASM, AG, env. 557.

Benedetto monastery Ladislas was received by Vincenzo Gonzaga and his cortège. In Mantua, Ferdinando Gonzaga's natural son Giacinto went out to meet the prince. The visit took place between 27 February and 2 March.⁴⁷ All sources agree on the length of the visit—three whole days, including three evenings, with a departure on the following day.⁴⁸



2. Mantua, Palazzina della Paleologa, now demolished. Photo author's archive.

The request for discretion was immediately undermined by the official reception, for which the Duke of Mantua gathered together all the militias of the state. The evening resounded with the shots of muskets, artillery, and mortars outside the city gates, on the shores of the lakes, and from the area of the Piazza San Pietro, where the prince probably made his entrance.⁴⁹ It is not possible to establish with certainty where the house reserved exclusively for Ladislas, commandeered by the duke, was situated. It may be possible to identify it with the attractive Palazzina della Paleologa (Fig. 2), designed and decorated by Giulio Romano, separate from but adjacent to the castle of Saint George (demolished in 1899). As noted by the Polish chronicler Stefan Pac, the prince's room was upholstered in a "new manner," with gold clothes woven in imitation of Netherlandish tapestries with figures. Originally, these were the furnishings of the bedroom of the future Empress Eleonora.⁵⁰ On the first day of his stay, Ladislas inspected the ducal palace, gardens, and *guardaroba*. Based on Hagenaw's report ("A prandio palatium hortumque lustrandi causa pervadit"), Adam Przyboś suggests that Ladislas visited the Palazzo Té on 28 February. The sumptuous residence on the outskirts of the city was commissioned from Giulio Romano and built between 1524 and 1534 as a retreat for the Gonzaga dukes containing part of the ducal stables and a room given over to the Gonzaga horses (Fig. 3).⁵¹

Ladislas's sojourn in Mantua included visits to several significant devotional sites: the reliquary of the most precious blood of Christ, conserved in the basilica *concattedrale* of Sant'Andrea; the palatine basilica of Santa Barbara, where he could view a life-size crucifix commissioned from Pietro Tacca (1577–1640);⁵² the basilica of San Giovanni Bono; and, finally, the sanctuary

⁴⁷ Adam Przyboś, ed., *Podróż królewicza Władysława Wazy do krajów Europy Zachodniej w latach 1624–1625 w świetle ówczesnych relacji* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1977), 366–72.

⁴⁸ "Trattenendosi questo nobile pellegrino tre giornate in Mantova" (Entertaining this noble pilgrim for three days in Mantua), Federico Amadei, *Cronaca universale della città di Mantova*, ed. Giuseppe Amadei and Ercole Marani (Mantua: CITEM, 1954–1957), 3:386; "Venne per passaggio a Mantova il figliuolo del re di Polonia e vi stette 3 giorni" (The son of the King of Poland came to Mantua and stayed there for three days), Giovanni Mambrino, *Dell'istoria di Mantova*, ASMn, Documenti patrii raccolti da Carlo D'Arco, ms 80, 972–73.

⁴⁹ Amadei, *Cronaca universale*, 386; Mambrino, *Dell'istoria*, 972.

⁵⁰ Przyboś, ed., *Podróż królewicza*, 367–68.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 369.

⁵² See Roberta Piccinelli, *Le collezioni Gonzaga. Il carteggio tra Firenze e Mantova* (Milan: Silvana, 2000), 37, 314, 316, 321–22 and Ugo Bazzotti, ed., *Tesori d'arte nella terra dei Gonzaga* (Milan: Electa, 1974), 65.



3. Giulio Romano, Hall of Horses (Mantua, Palazzo Te). Photo author's archive.

of the Madonna delle Grazie, on the shores of Lago Superiore, about ten kilometres from the city and reachable by boat (Fig. 4).

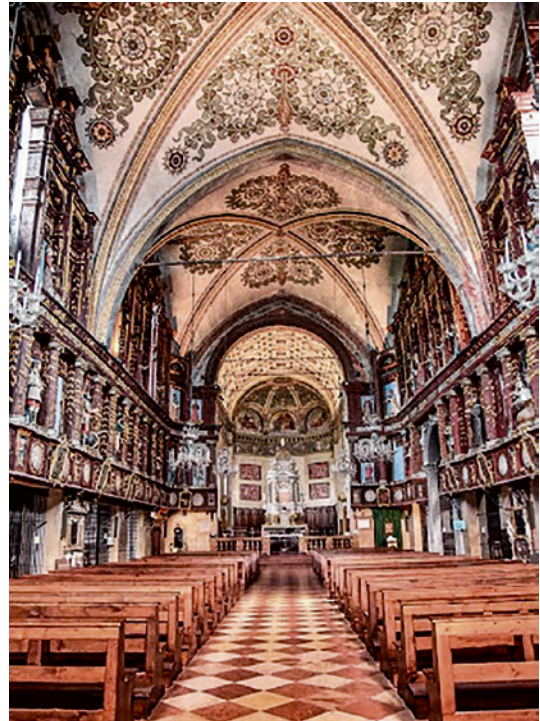
Our knowledge of the basilica *concattedrale* of Sant'Andrea's musical life is fragmentary.⁵³ After the rebuilding of the basilica, a new organ was installed and an organist appointed in the sixteenth century. The reliquary of the most precious blood of Christ was, and still is, preserved in the evocative crypt, inside the so-called sacred vessels of Benvenuto Cellini. These were lost in the nineteenth century and have now been reconstructed (Fig. 5). While many festive ceremonies took place there, it is not certain if Sant'Andrea had a permanent music chapel; on special occasions music was provided by the musicians of the court and the cathedral of San Pietro. At the time of Ladislav's visit, Giulio Cesare Antonelli may have been the organist, and may have welcomed the prince by playing on his instrument.⁵⁴

The palatine basilica of Santa Barbara (Fig. 6), autonomous although part of the ducal palace, was the jewel among the Gonzaga holy places. During the final years of its construction, the prestigious organ, built by Graziadio Antegnati of Brescia (1525–c. 1590), was installed (1565) in the singers' gallery on the right-hand wall. The organ shutters were painted by Fermo Ghisoni

⁵³ Claudio Gallico, *Sopra li fondamenti della verità. Musica italiana fra XV e XVII secolo* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2001), 195–203.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 341–45.

(1505–1575).⁵⁵ A little later, the bell was installed in the bell-tower, cast by Venetian masters, with the personal participation of Duke Guglielmo Gonzaga, who wanted a “sweet” tone and a well-defined intonation (c sol fa ut, corresponding to present-day C2).⁵⁶ In the church's large nave, with its six side-chapels, well-defined areas were reserved for music, including a gallery for the clerks arranged for liturgical chant in the apse behind the altar; a large gallery for professional musicians was situated above the entrance, and an organ with its own balcony in front of another gallery of the same dimensions. The well-organized access allowed the dukes, musicians, and guests to enter the church without using an external route, thus preserving its exclusivity. Duke Guglielmo, who was also a composer, was keen for the basilica, as a collegiate church, to be granted its own rite with an appropriately reformed repertoire of chant,⁵⁷



4. Curtatone (Mantua), Sanctuary of Santa Maria delle Grazie, interior. Photo author's archive.

a special polyphonic repertoire,⁵⁸ and a prestigious musical chapel. The chapel was directed successively by Giaches de Wert (up to 1587), Giovanni Giacomo Gastoldi (to 1609), Antonio Taroni (for three months in 1609),⁵⁹ and Stefano Nascimbeni (to 1612).⁶⁰ Claudio Monteverdi had no official duties there, but it is reasonable to suppose that many of the works brought

⁵⁵ Flavio Dassenno et al., eds., *L'Antegnati di Santa Barbara (1565)* (Mantua: Publi Paolini, 1999).

⁵⁶ Paola Besutti, “La galleria musicale dei Gonzaga: intermediari, luoghi, musiche e strumenti in corte a Mantova,” in *Gonzaga. La celeste galeria: le raccolte*, ed. Raffaella Morselli (Milan: Skira, 2002), 424.

⁵⁷ Paola Besutti, “Un modello alternativo di controriforma: il caso mantovano,” in *La cappella musicale nell'Italia della Controriforma*, ed. Oscar Mischiati and Paolo Russo (Florence: Olschki, 1993), 111–21.

⁵⁸ The polyphonic collection is kept in the Biblioteca of the Milan Conservatorio. Guglielmo Barblan, *Musiche della cappella di S. Barbara in Mantova* (Florence: Olschki, 1972).

⁵⁹ During his Grand Tour, the Polish prince, on behalf his father, probably negotiated with Antonio Taroni on the intermediation in the involvement of Italian musicians in Poland. In June 1627, Taroni “conduceva musici in Pollonia,” as Claudio Monteverdi himself wrote in his letter to Alessandro Striggio. Just before his death in December 1628, Taroni “voleva condurre a” Sigismund III “certi musici.” Claudio Monteverdi, *Lettere, dediche e prefazioni*, ed. Domenico de Paoli (Rome: De Santis, 1973), 265, after: Barbara Przybyszewska-Jarmińska, “Sources on the History of Music at the Courts of the Polish Vasas Preserved in the Skokloster Castle (Sweden),” in *Studies on the Reception of Italian Music in Central-Eastern Europe in the 16th and 17th century*, ed. Marina Toffetti (Kraków: Musica Iagellonica, 2018), 124–25.

⁶⁰ Pierre M. Tagmann, “La cappella dei maestri cantori della basilica palatina di Santa Barbara a Mantova (1565–1630),” *Civiltà mantovana* 24 (1970), 376–400.



5. Mantua, The Basilica of Sant'Andrea, reliquary of the blood of Christ (Sacred vessels). Photo author's archive.



6. Mantua, Basilica Palatina of Santa Barbara, interior. Photo author's archive.

together in his famous *Sanctissimae Virgini Missa* . . . (1610) were composed for the basilica.⁶¹ Ladislas prayed in front of the rare collection of relics, and it is likely that he was offered a sample of the basilica's musical repertoire. At the time of his visit, the organist was Ottavio Bargnani (c. 1570–after 1627),⁶² and the chapelmaster was Amante Franzoni (1605–1630).⁶³

It is likely that just before Ladislas's departure the visit to the sanctuary of Santa Maria delle Grazie was recommended to the noble "pilgrim" both for its fame as a place of devotion and for its unique position on high ground above the waters of the upper lake of the Mincio.⁶⁴

What is certain is that on the second evening of the visit "fu recitata una bellissima gran comedia nella sena grande ducale"⁶⁵ (a most beautiful and grand comedy was given in the ducal grand theatre), designed by Bertani and built (1549–1561) behind the Corte Nuova on one side of the Prato di Castello (now Piazza Castello); in addition there was a "teatro piccolo" (small theatre) at court. Among the earliest permanent theatres in Italy, the "grand theatre" was distinguished by steep flights of steps in a semicircle, a slightly sloping stage with a painted scene in relief depicting a city, and a large auditorium for the battle scenes (*abbattimenti*).⁶⁶ Destroyed by fire in 1588, it was immediately rebuilt in the same location from a design by Ippolito Andreasi (1548–1608), with additions by Antonio Maria Viani in 1598. At the time of Ladislas's visit, the theatre was on the ground floor; it contained many windows, large steps and, very probably, gangways. Twelve portraits in gouache of Gonzaga family members were displayed on its walls. The stage itself was very deep and featured a grand canvas curtain painted with the figures of Manto and Virgil at the sides. It was well illuminated in contrast to the auditorium. The ceiling was painted with sky and clouds.⁶⁷ The theatre had one of the earliest *a levata* (raised) curtains in stage history, which was certainly used in the production of *L'Idropica* and *Il Ballo delle Ingrate* (1608).⁶⁸ Equally certain, the comedy with *intermedi Le tre costanti* was staged there.⁶⁹ The musical instruments could be positioned in a variety of ways. We know, for example, that when *Il pastor fido* was staged (1598 and 1600), and also *L'Idropica*, they were concealed "dentro la scena" (behind the stage) during scene changes. During the *intermedi*, however, the instrumentalists could appear in various places (on the stage, beneath

⁶¹ Paola Besutti, "Ave maris stella: la tradizione mantovana nuovamente posta in musica da Monteverdi," in *Claudio Monteverdi. Studi e prospettive*, ed. Paola Besutti, Teresa M. Gialdroni, and Rodolfo Baroncini (Florence: Olschki, 1998), 57–78.

⁶² Parisi, *Ducal Patronage*, 404–5.

⁶³ He is especially remembered for his *Apparato musicale* . . . (Venice: Ricciardo Amadino, 1613).

⁶⁴ Mambrino, *Dell'istoria*, 972.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Raffaello Toscano, *L'edificazione di Mantova* (Padua: Lorenzo Pasquati, 1586), 22.

⁶⁷ Sources quoted in Elena Tamburini, "A partire dall' 'Arianna' monteverdiana pensando ai comici. Luoghi teatrali alla corte di Mantova," in Besutti, Gialdroni, and Baroncini, *Claudio Monteverdi. Studi e prospettive*, 415–29.

⁶⁸ Federico Follino, *Compendio delle sontuose feste fatte l'anno MDCVIII nella città di Mantova per le reali nozze del serenissimo principe D. Francesco Gonzaga* . . . (Mantua: Aurelio e Lodovico Osanna, 1608), 74, 124, anastatic ed.: Claudio Gallico and Viviana Rebonato (Florence: Olschki, 2004); Paola Besutti, "Il matrimonio dell'infanta Margherita: le feste a Mantova," in *Torino, Parigi, Madrid: politica e cultura nell'età di Carlo Emanuele I*, ed. Mariarosa Masoero, Sergio Mamino, and Claudio Rosso (Florence: Olschki, 1999), 491–506.

⁶⁹ Bertazzolo, *Breve relatione dello sposalitio*, 20.

or elevated above the stage). For *Il Ballo delle Ingrate*, the musicians were visible, placed at the left on a platform jutting forwards at the side between the stage and the public, opposite another similar structure reserved for “the gentlemen of Ambassadors.”⁷⁰ There are no witness accounts regarding the disposition of the instruments for the production offered to Ladislas.

Stefan Pac left the following description of the entertainment on 28 February 1625:

At one hour after sundown: a tragicomedy about the Flood came to an end, very beautiful,⁷¹ produced lavishly with scenes and skill, such that it was in no way inferior to the Florentine comedy [*Sant'Orsola*], and in some ways surpassed it. One could view so many changes of scenery that depicted different kinds of things: many palaces, cities, gardens, the sea, vessels, thunder, lightning, flashes, storms, Noah's ark, animals, and at the end, the heavens themselves—so artfully presented that one thought it was all for real. As well as this, the varied songs of the most excellent singers of Italy kept the audience enraptured.⁷²

The writer describes in some detail the famous effects of the Gonzaga stage techniques but, as is usually the case, he does not reveal who the authors of the spectacle were. Although the text of this drama on the theme of the Flood has not survived, the letter quoted above, from July 1624, identifies Marliani and Dognazzi as the authors, respectively, of the text and the music.⁷³ The supervision of the stage production was probably assigned to the prefect of the ducal fabric, Antonio Maria Viani.⁷⁴

As has been said, well before the summer of 1624 Ercole Marliani already had in mind writing a sacred text based on the model of Salvadori's *Sant'Orsola*, a text which was, therefore, planned before the advice offered by the grand duchess of Tuscany.⁷⁵ Given the similarity of their subject matter, it would seem more likely that the Florentine “comedy” compared to that of Mantua by the Polish chronicler was *Sant'Orsola* rather than *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola di Alcina*, as suggested previously.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Follino. *Compendio*, 124.

⁷¹ In the Polish original: “foremna bardzo,” i.e., very artful, intricate, and sophisticated, made with a lot of work and expertise. Przyboś, *Podróż królewicza*, 369.

⁷² “Ad un'ora della notte: andava terminando una tragicommedia sul diluvio molto bella, preparata con gran dispendio di scena e maestria, cosicché non solo non cedeva per nulla alla comedia fiorentina [*Sant'Orsola*], ma in alcune cose la sopravanzava. Si poté assistere a così tanti mutamenti di scene che rappresentavano diverse cose: parecchi palazzi, città, giardini, mare, vascelli, tuoni, lampi, tempesta, l'arca di Noè, animali e da ultimo il cielo stesso con tanta arte che si pensò perfino di essere di fronte a cose vere. Con tutto questo, i canti diversi dei più eccellenti cantanti d'Italia tenevano lo spettatore rapito.” Mambrino, *Dell'istoria*, 972. Jan Hagenaw wrote: “Vespere tragicomedia de Diluvio exhibetur. Magna artis naturam in tonitribus, fulguribus, pluvia aliisque tempestatibus imitantis commendatione spectantiumque omnium quasi vera illa non figurata sentirentur, stupere et trepidatione.” Pac's and Hagenaw's accounts are quoted in Fabbri, “Il passaggio,” 45.

⁷³ Ercole Marliani to Alessandro Striggio Jr., Florence, 3 July 1624, ASM, AG, env. 1132.

⁷⁴ See Giulio Girondi, *Antonio Maria Viani architetto* (Mantua: Il Rio, 2020).

⁷⁵ This hypothesis differs from Fabbri, “Il passaggio,” 46: “evidently in Mantua the advice of the devout and bigoted Archduchess of Tuscany had been accepted, who at the time had recommended the staging of a ‘spiritual comedy.’”

⁷⁶ This hypothesis differs from Fabbri, “Il passaggio,” 48.

The lack of sources makes it impossible to establish if the Mantuan “comedy” was completely sung or, as seems more likely, recited and interspersed with music and staged *intermedi*. The tempest at sea, described in detail by Pac, sounds very similar, in fact, to the second *intermedio*, concerning the love between Neptune and Amphitrite, in *Le tre costanti*, quoted above.⁷⁷ Nor is there precise information regarding the “most excellent singers in Italy”⁷⁸ who took part in the production. However, some suggestions can be made, based on those who were in court service at the time: Dognazzi, music-master of the duke and a tenor; Francesco Campagnolo, tenor, assuming he had returned from Florence; Margherita Basile, soprano; Giovanni Battista Sacchi, castrato; Michelangelo Cappellini, contralto; and don Bassano Casola, voice range unknown. To them can be added a group of excellent instrumentalists: Luigi Farina, violin; the brothers Giovan Battista and Orazio Rubini, viola, from Casalmaggiore; Giovanni Battista Barbiroli, bowed instruments; Fabrizio Trolandi, viola—all supervised, perhaps, by Salamone Rossi, strings, and Ottavio Bargnani, organ, with Domenico Richi, harpsichord, for the basso continuo.⁷⁹ Not included were Settimia Caccini or Adriana Basile, who had left Mantua in 1620 and 1624, respectively.

The third and final evening was given over to a pyrotechnic spectacle over the waters of the Lago Inferiore, in front of the loggias of the courtyard of the Cavallerizza but also the Palazzina Paleologa, a building that may have been allotted for use by the Polish prince. A so-called “fallò” (bonfire)⁸⁰ consisted of a floating three-row galley on the waters, from which there was released a large quantity of rockets and other fireworks.⁸¹ As hinted above, these were organized by Gabriele Bertazzolo. It was normal for such spectacles to be accompanied by music.

The following day Ladislas left Mantua for Venice. In the ensuing months he wrote a letter of gratitude in his own hand, thanking his hosts for his reception during the visit.⁸²

CONCLUSION

Ferdinando would not have foregone the chance to show the prince the vast collections of paintings, antiquities, and precious objects which, after his return from Rome, he had decided to reorder and inventorize. The duke presented the guest from Poland with “the three most beautiful horses he had in his stable” and with “paintings of famous old masters.”⁸³ This latter aspect was intended to make people think of the display of the Gonzagas’ artistic riches almost as a form of museum, which, unfortunately, after the death of the duke facilitated the

⁷⁷ Bertazzolo, *Breve relatione dello sposalitio*.

⁷⁸ “Più eccellenti cantanti d’Italia.” Fabbri, “Il passaggio,” 45.

⁷⁹ Parisi, *Ducal Patronage*, 287.

⁸⁰ Mambrino, *Dell’historia*, 973.

⁸¹ Stefan Pac (1 March 1625) mentioned: “a galley made of fireworks . . . such a delusion of eyes as if it floated on the sea, having led it out when it was lit, the great number of flares and other fireworks in the air made a beautiful spectacle.” Fabbri, “Il passaggio,” 49; Przyboś, ed., *Podróż królewicza*, 371.

⁸² Ladislas Vasa to Ferdinando Gonzaga, Warsaw, 10 June 1625, ASMn, AG, env. 557.

⁸³ Przyboś, *Podróż królewicza*, 371.

sale of part of the collections in an attempt to prevent an economic crises that was not longer avoidable.⁸⁴

Nor is it possible to learn if Ladislav's expectations, raised by the tales of Empress Eleonora Gonzaga-Habsburg, were completely satisfied. A few years later, however, in 1628, he did encourage music and sumptuous theatrical productions, something that seems to reflect the strong impression Florence and, perhaps still more, Mantua made on him. A Mantuan architect, Bartolomeo Bolzoni, active at Ladislav's court up to 1647, seems to have played some role in constructing theatre machinery.⁸⁵ Ladislav also employed the Mantuan contralto (or soprano) Antonio Arigone from Compagnia della Morte.⁸⁶ During his stay in Mantua the young Vasa met the talented Margherita Basile, whom he would later employ at the Warsaw opera house in the years 1637–1638. He may also have conducted preliminary negotiations with Antonio Maria Viani and his son Guglielmo. The latter, together with Nicolò Sebregondi, was to come to Warsaw in less than three years to prepare a staging of the opera about *Acis and Galatea*.⁸⁷

From another point of view, Prince Ladislav's visit gave Duke Ferdinando an opportunity to consolidate his own position in international politics, riven as it was between France and the Empire as a result of the Monferrato dispute, as well as allowing him to demonstrate—if only for a short time—the apparently continuing good financial state of the duchy through the display of opulence.

⁸⁴ Cf. *Gonzaga. La celeste*; Besutti, "La galleria," 407–75.

⁸⁵ Fabbri, "Il passaggio," 49.

⁸⁶ Blancamaria Brumana, *'Il pianto de' cigni in morte della fenice de' musici.'* *Poesie per Baldassarre Ferri e nuove ipotesi sulla carriera del cantante* (Perugia: Deputazione di Storia Patria per l'Umbria, 2010), 78–79.

⁸⁷ See Carlo Togliani's article in this volume.

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