

“UN INGEGNERE MANTOVANO”  
*LA GALATEA* WARSAW STAGING (1628)  
IN THE LIGHT OF DOCUMENTS IN THE ITALIAN ARCHIVES

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**ABSTRACT**

Some documents in the State Archives of Mantua provide new information about the identity of the “ingegnere mantovano,” who was the scenographer of the first *dramma in musica* in Poland, i.e., the staging of *La Galatea* in Warsaw in 1628. He was not the engineer Giovan Battista Bertazzolo, as it has been believed until now, but probably the architect Nicolò Sebregondi, assisted by the painter Guglielmo Viani, both employed in Mantua, whose presence in Central Europe is documented after the deaths of the dukes Ferdinando and Vincenzo II Gonzaga.

**KEYWORDS**

Baroque theatre; Mantua; Warsaw; Nicolò Sebregondi; Guglielmo Viani; Alfonso Amorotto Andreasi; Annibale Gonzaga; Sigismund III Vasa; Ladislav IV Vasa; Giovan Battista Bertazzolo; Gabriele Bertazzolo; Antonio Maria Viani

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Il Serenissimo Principe Vladislao fece settimana passata rappresentare in musica la favola pescatoria di Galatea, con intermedi apparenti, macchine e cose simili avendo a questo effetto condotto in Polonia un ingegnere mantovano. V'intervennero Maestà e Ser[enissimi] Principi con molto loro gusto e maggior dei Polacchi per esser a loro cosa peregrina.<sup>1</sup>

[Last week, His Highness Prince Ladislao had the fishing tale of Galatea represented in music, with staged *intermedi*, machines, and similar things for which purpose he had summoned a Mantuan stage architect to Poland. Their Majesties and Most Serene Princes attended [the spectacle, bringing in] much taste superior to the Poles, for whom it is a foreign thing.]

Antonio Santa Croce to Cardinal Francesco Barberini

This passage contains essential information on those who played a key role in the theatrical staging inspired by Prince Ladislao Vasa, which is generally considered fundamental in the development of Polish theatre, in itself strongly influenced by Italian and, in particular, Mantuan stage practices.<sup>2</sup>

The elusive “ingegnere mantovano” was initially identified as a certain Bartolomeo Bolzoni,<sup>3</sup> of whom no trace can be found in the Gonzaga Archives. Other scholars suggest that Bolzoni, like the architect Agostino Locci, was in fact summoned from Rome sometime after 1628,<sup>4</sup> perhaps

<sup>1</sup> Apostolic nuncio Antonio Santa Croce to Cardinal Francesco Barberini, Warsaw, 8 March 1628, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barberiniani Latini (Barb. Lat.) 6584, fol. 58v, *Acta Nuntiaturae Poloniae*, vol. 23: *Antonius Santa Croce (1627–1630)*, ed. Henryk Litwin (Friburgi Helvetiae: Fund. de Brzezie Lanckoroński, 1996), 221.

<sup>2</sup> The passage was made known, transcribed (or quoted) in Stanisław Windakiewicz, *Teatr Władysława IV: 1633–1648* (Kraków: Kluczycki, 1893), 6; Stanisław Windakiewicz, *Teatr polski przed powstaniem sceny narodowej* (Kraków: Nakł. Krakowskiej Spółki Wydawniczej, 1921), 16; Zygmunt Latoszewski, “Z dziejów opery polskiej,” *Muzyka* 7/9 (1927): 109–10; Karolina Targosz-Kretowa, *Teatr dworski Władysława IV (1635–1648)* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1965), 64–65, 255; Wiarosław Sandelewski, review of Karolina Targosz-Kretowa, *Teatr dworski Władysława IV, Rivista Italiana di Musicologia* 4 (1969): 152–53; Paolo Fabbri, “Storia e preistoria dell’opera a Varsavia: il passaggio per Mantova di Ladislao, principe di Polonia,” *Quadrievium* 18 (1977): 146–47 and n20; Paolo Fabbri, “Przejazd przez Mantuę polskiego księcia Władysława,” *Pagine* 3 (1979): 107; Hanna Samsonowicz, “‘Boscareccia campagna’ i ‘delizioso giardino’. Scenografie o tematyce pastoralnej w spektaklach teatru władysławowskiego,” *Barok. Historia–Literatura–Sztuka* 4.1 (7) (1997): 60n6; Anna Szwejkowska and Zygmunt Szwejkowski, *Włosi w kapeli królewskiej polskich Wazów* (Kraków: Musica Iagellonica, 1997), 90n144; Walter Leitsch, “Nowo odnaleziony polski program operowy z 1628 roku,” *Muzyka* 43.2 (1998): 119n8; Hanna Osiecka-Samsonowicz, *Agostino Locci (1601–po 1660). Scenograf i architekt na dworze królewskim w Polsce* (Warsaw: Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2003), 56n117, 211; Alina Żórawska-Witkowska, “Warszawska ‘Galatea’ (1628)–fakty i domysły,” *Muzyka* 48.4 (2003): 95–116; Daniel Martín Sáez, “Ópera y diplomacia entre Italia y Polonia: del paso de Vladislao Vasa por Florencia hasta la inauguración del Teatro de Varsovia,” in *Diplomacy and Aristocracy as Patrons of Music and Theatre in Europe of the Ancien Régime*, ed. Iskrena Yordanova and Francesco Cotticelli (Vienna: Hollitzer Wissenschaftsverlag, 2019), 45–46. Cf. the testimony of Johann von Kospoth, *Zeitung aus Warschau von der Hand Kospoths, 23 Februar–März 1628*, Berlin, Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Geheimes Staatsarchiv, sign. 9-Polen 5 no. 3, vols. 6–7. Leitsch, “Nowo odnaleziony polski program,” 119. I am grateful to Dr Jacek Żukowski for his precious support.

<sup>3</sup> E. C., “[Notizie],” *Archivio Storico Italiano. Fondato da G.P. Vieusseux . . .* 5.12 (1893): 246–47.

<sup>4</sup> Anna Szwejkowska, “Virgilio Puccitelli e l’opera italiana alla corte di Ladislao IV di Polonia,” *Rivista italiana di musicologia. Organo della società italiana di musicologia* 7.2 (1972): 18n5. The identification of Locci is denied in Osiecka-Samsonowicz, *Agostino Locci*, 211.

around 1630, when a third Roman architect, Giovanni Battista Gisleni, arrived in Warsaw.<sup>5</sup> The fleeting reference to the presence and responsibilities of the anonymous “ingegnere mantovano” led Paolo Fabbri to formulate a hypothesis about his identity, claiming, above all, that the architect Antonio Maria Viani (1555/57–1630) should be excluded because of his involvement in the funeral of Duke Ferdinando.<sup>6</sup> This prefect for the Gonzaga buildings<sup>7</sup> was a central figure of the Mantuan Teatro con la Scena,<sup>8</sup> a court theatre reconstructed under the duchy of Vincenzo I Gonzaga alongside the Prato di Castello of the Ducal Palace.<sup>9</sup> During his lengthy service, he proved to be an essential figure in the Gonzaga theatrical productions, as well as ephemeral architecture. His presence in Mantua at the time *La Galatea* was staged in Warsaw is confirmed by the construction of the catafalque in the Basilica of Santa Barbara for the solemn funeral of Duke Vincenzo II Gonzaga. Various unpublished documents also attest to the prefect's commitments in Mantua in February 1628,<sup>10</sup> as well as in May of the following year.<sup>11</sup>

Proceeding with Fabbri's line of reasoning, it is also necessary to exclude a second protagonist: “[on February 1628] Gabriele Bertazzolo . . . had been dead for about a year and a half.”<sup>12</sup> Prefect of the duchy waters (1570–1626), hydraulic and military engineer, cartographer, set and machinery designer, and pyrotechnician,<sup>13</sup> Bertazzolo was reknowned,

<sup>5</sup> Szwejkowska, “Virgilio Puccitelli,” 183n3; Mario Bevilacqua, “Gisleni, Giovanni Battista,” in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 56 (Rome: Treccani, 2001), *ad vocem*.

<sup>6</sup> Fabbri, “Storia e preistoria,” 147. Viani's name is found in Antonio Salmati, *Breve ragguaglio del funerale fatto al sereniss. Vincenzo, che fù Duca di Mantova, e di Monferrato dal sereniss. signor duca Carlo I. suo Zio, e successore. Nella ducal chiesa di Santa Barbara di Mantova, il dì 18. di Febraro 1628* (Mantua: Aurelio e Ludouico Osanna fratelli Stampatori Ducali, 1628). See Fabbri, “Storia e preistoria,” 147n21. A copy of the rare volume is kept in Mantua, at the Biblioteca Comunale Teresiana (CP-A.83).

<sup>7</sup> For a brief biographical profile, see Barbara Furlotti, “Viani, Antonio Maria,” in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 99 (Rome: Treccani, 2020), *ad vocem*; Giulio Girondi, *Antonio Maria Viani architetto* (Mantua: Il Rio, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> It is specified (4) in the *Urbis Mantuae Descriptio*, designed and engraved by Gabriele Bertazzolo, and printed in 1628.

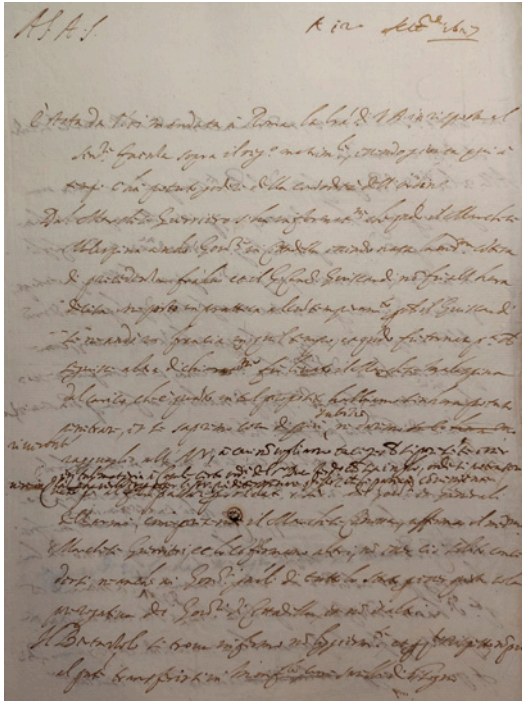
<sup>9</sup> See Paolo Carpeggiani, “Teatri e apparati scenici alla corte dei Gonzaga tra Cinque e Seicento,” *Bollettino del Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio* 17 (1975): 106–8; Paolo Carpeggiani, “Luoghi perduti. Spazi teatrali nel Palazzo Ducale di Mantova,” in *Teatri storici nel territorio mantovano: Forme, significato, funzioni*, ed. Noris Zuccoli (Mantua: G. Arcari Editore, 2005), 37–60.

<sup>10</sup> Viani was involved in the design and construction of the building belonging to the Compagnia di Gesù and in the quarrel regarding its borders. Vincenzo Pulzoni of the Compagnia di Gesù, Mantua, 6 February 1628, Archivio di Stato di Mantova (ASMn), Archivio Gonzaga (AG), fasc. *Diversi*, b. 2779, fol. 279r.

<sup>11</sup> “I will give the Prefect 250 *scudi* to go and buy mountain wood in Verona. . . .” Alessandro Striggi, Mantua, ASMn, AG, b. 2779, fasc. 8, fol. 159r–v.

<sup>12</sup> Fabbri, “Storia e preistoria,” 147.

<sup>13</sup> For a brief biographical profile, see Paolo Carpeggiani, “Gabriele Bertazzolo,” in *Il Seicento nell'arte e nella cultura con riferimenti a Mantova* (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 1985), 112–23; Carlo Togliani, “Gabriele Bertazzolo,” in *Genius loci. Figure e vicende delle terre del Mincio e della risaia*, ed. Marida Brignani and Maurizio Bertolotti (Mantua: Publi Paolini, 2015), 180–97; Carlo Togliani, “I Bertazzolo: ingegneri e territorio fra XVI e XVII secolo,” in *La civiltà delle acque dal Medioevo al Rinascimento*, ed. Arturo Calzona and Daniela Lamberini (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2010), 2:543–86; Carlo Togliani, “Ingegneri e militari gonzagheschi fra Mantovano e Monferrato. Il caso dei Bertazzolo nelle carte dell'Archivio di Stato di Mantova,” in *Castelli, guerre, assedi. Le fortificazioni mantovane, bresciane, cremonesi alla prova del fuoco (XIII–XVIII secolo)*, ed. Mariano Vignoli (Mantua: Publi Paolini, 2008), 202–43; Carlo Togliani, “La chiesa di Governolo da Giovanni da Padova a Gabriele Bertazzolo,” in *Arte e scienza delle acque nel Rinascimento*, ed. Alessandra Fiocca, Daniela Lamberini, and Cesare Maffioli (Venice: Marsilio Editore, 2003), 247–73; Carlo Togliani, “Iconografia mantovana. Dall'affresco vaticano di Ignazio Danti alle incisioni di Gabriele Bertazzolo,” in *Storia dell'architettura e dintorni dal Cinquecento al Novecento*, ed. Paolo Carpeggiani



1. Letter to Duke Vincenzo II Gonzaga, 12 September 1627, Archivio di Stato di Mantova (dalej: ASMn), Archivio Gonzaga (dalej: AG), env. 2308. Photo by the author.

like Viani, for having taken part in the main theatre productions and choreographies of the Gonzaga family for the first three decades of the seventeenth century.<sup>14</sup>

Having made the necessary exclusions, we can turn to Fabbri's identification theory: "Given the qualification of 'engineer', it could perhaps be his nephew Giovan Battista Bertazzolo, Prefect of the Waters since 1610 and certainly coadjutor of his uncle and of the teams involved in the many theatrical enterprises that took place in Mantua at that time."<sup>15</sup> In the absence of a plausible alternative,<sup>16</sup> the name of Gabriele's cousin<sup>17</sup> (not grandson, as has been erroneously stated) was re-proposed also by other scholars after Fabbri.<sup>18</sup> However, in light of certain considerations, legitimate doubts arise.

With regard to Giovan Battista's expertise, he was primarily an engineer, with competencies exclusively in the fields of hydraulics and

cartography.<sup>19</sup> Among the impressive body of documents preserved in the Gonzaga Archives

(Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 2002), 81–132; Carlo Togliani, "Fra terra e acqua nei secoli XVI e XVII. Una famiglia di ingegneri: i Bertazzolo," in *Argille, ghiaie, pietre e calci. Materiali da costruzione nella storia del territorio mantovano*, ed. Luciano Roncai and Gianni Scudo (Mantua: Tre Lune, 2002), 25–42.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Carlo Togliani, "Le feste del 1608 per le nozze del principe Francesco Gonzaga. I luoghi della rappresentazione," in *Itinera Chartarum: 150 anni dell'Archivio di Stato di Mantova. Saggi in onore di Daniela Ferrari*, ed. Roberta Piccinelli, Deanna Shemek, and Luisa O. Tamassia (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2019), 396–405; Carlo Togliani, "Gabriele Bertazzolo e le feste mantovane per l'imperatore Mattia d'Asburgo (1612) nei documenti d'archivio e in una rara cronaca del tempo," in *Un palazzo in forma di parole: scritti in onore di Paolo Carpeggiani*, ed. Carlo Togliani (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2016), 384–401; Carlo Togliani, "Dal Pastor Fido guariniano all'ingresso trionfale di Margherita d'Austria. Spettacoli, artefici e cerimonie a Mantova nel 1598," in *Maestranze, artisti e apparatori per la scena dei Gonzaga (1480–1630)*, ed. Simona Brunetti (Bari: Edizioni di pagina, 2016), 384–404.

<sup>15</sup> Fabbri, "Storia e preistoria," 147.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Repeated also by Fabbri, "Przejazd przez Mantuę," 107.

<sup>17</sup> The kinship is clearly stated in Gabriele's last will, where Giovan Battista is identified as his direct heir: "The first progeny [genitura], therefore, and the first established heir of my income must be Signor Giovan Battista Bertazzolo, my cousin, son of Signor Agostino, my uncle. . . ." 20 May 1623, ASMn, Notarial Archives (AN), Not. Policarpo Menini. The last will was drawn up on 14 August 1622; there exists a second version, corrected, dated 4 October 1626, also drawn up by Menini.

<sup>18</sup> Szwejkowska and Szwejkowski, *Włosi w kapeli królewskiej*, 90n145; Osiecka-Samsonowicz, *Agostino Locci*, 51–52, 211; Żórawska-Witkowska, "Warszawska 'Galatea,'" 113.

<sup>19</sup> For a summary of his works, cf. Togliani, "I Bertazzolo: ingegneri e territorio."

of Mantua,<sup>20</sup> no reference is made to any alleged activities of his as a set designer, either in collaboration with his cousin Gabriele or independently. Furthermore, the contents of two unpublished letters of the Gonzaga Chancellery dating back to the second half of 1627 must also be considered. In the first, dated 12 September (Fig. 1), Giovan Battista is briefly mentioned with reference to his precarious state of health, which prevented him from departing for Monferrato:

il Bertazzolo si trova infermo non leggiermente, et per questo rispetto, non può al presente transferirsi in Monferrato, come sarebbe di bisogno, ma come prima sarà in essere, non si mancherà di sollicitarlo secondo che Vostra Altezza ci comanda.<sup>21</sup>

[Bertazzolo is quite ill, and for this reason he cannot move to Monferrato at the present time, as would be necessary, but as soon as he gets better, we will seek his services in accordance with Your Highness's commands.]

It is therefore to be understood that the technician had a forthcoming commitment at the Gonzaga dominions of Monferrato, about two hundred kilometres west of Mantua.

At that time, the duke announced the then imminent departure for Poland of the extraordinary ambassador, Marquis Alfonso Amorotto Andreasi. The diplomat is believed to have been the intermediary behind Giovan Battista being sent to the court of King Sigismund III Vasa.<sup>22</sup> A first missive, sent to “Signor Principe di Polonia 2° Genito,” that is, Jan Kazimierz, contains a presentation of the diplomat and of the duke with a proper greeting of utmost respect.<sup>23</sup> It is significant that a similar letter was not sent to Prince Ladislav, who had already met Vincenzo II during a short stay in Mantua in 1625. The Gonzaga, who had recently risen to power (16 May 1627) after the death of his brother Ferdinando (29 October 1626), wanted to seal the friendship between the Gonzagas and the Polish royal family.

Almost a month later, a second letter, of a similar tenor, was sent to the Great Crown Marshal Mikołaj Wolski.<sup>24</sup> By that time, the Italian functionary had probably already departed from Mantua. The Gonzaga's customary deference, made necessary by the sudden death of Ferdinando, was also reported in missives in Latin, in which the ambassador was presented to

<sup>20</sup> Carlo Togliani, *Gabriele Bertazzolo e gli ingegneri a Mantova tra XVI e XVII secolo*, MA diss. (Politecnico di Milano, 1998–1999).

<sup>21</sup> Anonymous to Vincenzo II Gonzaga, 12 September 1627, ASMn, AG, b. 2308.

<sup>22</sup> Fabbri, “Storia e preistoria,” 147; Fabbri, “Przejazd przez Mantuę,” 107.

<sup>23</sup> “Although Your Highness lacks the knowledge of my person, my affection for Your Highness will never wane. I'm sending to His Majesty the King, Your Highness's father, my special ambassador, Marquis Alfonso Amorotto, and I would consider his mission unaccomplished if he should fail to communicate to you, on my behalf, my desire to serve you to the extent that you should favour me with your commands. Knowing of my succession to these states, Your Highness will know what I mean to you and how to employ me. Therefore, I am appealing to the grace of Your Highness and my Ambassador will add to my case and I affectionately kiss your hands.” Vincenzo II Gonzaga to Jan Kazimierz, Maderno, 23 September 1627, ASMn, AG, b. 2308.

<sup>24</sup> “I am sending my extraordinary ambassador Marquis Alfonso Amorotto to this Court, so that he may revere His Royal Majesty in my name, and represent to him that devotion which by hereditary title I profess toward His Royal Person. I also wanted the same Amorotto to visit Your Excellency on my behalf. . . .” Vincenzo II Gonzaga to Mikołaj Wolski, 19 October 1627, ASMn, AG, b. 2308.

the Marquis and Marquise of Brandenburg,<sup>25</sup> and to the Duke of Saxony.<sup>26</sup> On 22 November Amorotto wrote Councillor Ercole Marliani in Mantua a brief note from Olomouc (Vlmiz) in Moravia,<sup>27</sup> accompanying a report for Vincenzo II, regarding the news of the Danish defeat in the Thirty Years' War. In the first few lines, the functionary wrote:

Aviso a Vostra Altezza il mio arrivo ad Vlmiz Città principale della Moravia, Vescovato del Cardinale Dietristain, di dove parto domani mattina per tempo col Divino aiuto sano, et salvo con tutta la *mia compagnia*. . . . [emphasis mine]<sup>28</sup>

[I announce to your Highness my arrival in Olomouc, main city of Moravia, bishopric of Cardinal Dietristain [Franz Seraph von Dietrichstein], from where I leave tomorrow morning in good time with Divine help, safe and with all my company.]

The generic reference to “*mia compagnia*” does not suggest who or how many people were in Amorotto's entourage; this does not exclude, however, the presence of architects, painters or a skilled workforce to be engaged in the forthcoming staging of *La Galatea*. The word *compagnia* was commonly used to specify groups of actors. This is evident in an undated letter, probably written following Lent of 1627. In the missive, probably addressed to Tomasz Zamoyski, Vincenzo II formally invited the “*compagnia*” of Scapino (actor Francesco Gabrielli) to a preliminary audition for a possible hiring (which indeed took place<sup>29</sup>) at the Mantuan court.<sup>30</sup>

With regards to the possible actors involved in the Polish performance, the name Giovan Battista Andreini was mentioned, owner of a celebrated theatrical company, in the years 1627–1628 in the service of the Habsburgs in Prague (in November 1627 shows and comedies for the coronation of Eleonora Gonzaga as the queen of Bohemia<sup>31</sup> were documented) and Vienna.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, the existing letters signed by Andreini do not provide evidence of his possible involvement in the Polish productions.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Vincenzo II Gonzaga to the Marquis and Marquess of Brandenburg, 19 October 1627, ASMn, AG, b. 2308.

<sup>26</sup> Vincenzo II Gonzaga to Duke of Saxony, 20 October 1627, ASMn, AG, b. 2308.

<sup>27</sup> Alfonso Amorotto Andreasi to Ercole Marliani, Olomouc, 22 November 1627, ASMn, AG, b. 559, fasc. 24, fol. 566r.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 569r.

<sup>29</sup> Claudia Burattelli, *Spettacoli di corte a Mantova tra Cinque e Seicento* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1999), 123, 138n199, 139n200.

<sup>30</sup> Vincenzo II Gonzaga to “s. me. Zamoys,” ASMn, AG, b. 2308. The letter, unpublished, must be related to those of Francesco Gabrielli to Gerolamo Costantini (6 January 1627, ASMn, AG, b. 1272) and of Ercole Marliani to Girolamo Parma (29 March 1627, ASMn, Autografia, b. 10, c. 318r), reported in Burattelli, *Spettacoli di corte*, 25–26, 34n90.

<sup>31</sup> Herbert Seifert, *Die Oper am Wiener Kaiserhof im 17. Jahrhundert* (Tutzing: Verlegt bei Hans Schneider, 1985), 594–95.

<sup>32</sup> Samsonowicz, “Boscareccia campagna,” 60–61; Otto G. Schindler, “‘Sonst ist es lustig alhie’: Italienisches Theater am Habsburgerhof zwischen Weissem Berg und ‘Sacco di Mantova,’” in *Wien im Dreissigjährigen Krieg. Bevölkerung-Gesellschaft-Kultur-Konfession*, ed. Andreas Weigl (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2001), 621–23; Żorawska-Witkowska, “Warszawska ‘Galatea,’” 113.

<sup>33</sup> Giovan Battista Andreini to Charles I Gonzaga and to an anonymous functionary, Prague and Vienna, 28 January and 23 November 1628, ASMn, AG, b. 495, fasc. 4, fols. 444r–v, 446r–v. The former is published in Siro Ferrone,

Amorotto concluded his letter, dated 22 November, with the conventional salutations and the mention of possible travel difficulties.<sup>34</sup> On 30 November he announced his arrival in Kraków and imminent departure for Warsaw, where he would pay reverence to the king of Poland.<sup>35</sup> The missive was accompanied by a short note written to Councillor Marliani.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, a third and more detailed note reveals the identity of Amorotto's travelling companion: Annibale Gonzaga, son of Ferrante Gonzaga di Bozzolo, who had embarked on a military career in the emperor's service. Annibale's presence in Poland, shortly before the staging of *La Galatea*, has already been reported;<sup>37</sup> however, since he declared his re-entry to Mantua from Prague on 22 February 1628,<sup>38</sup> he could not have attended the performance which took place a week later. Annibale's report, sent from Kraków contained political updates on the progress of the war between Sweden and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.<sup>39</sup> He concluded, once again, with a distressing glimpse into the effects of the war on the lands that he had passed through.<sup>40</sup>

After about fifteen days, the group finally arrived in Warsaw. This is revealed in an incomplete document (Fig. 2), offering insight into some interesting details regarding the hospitality reserved for the ambassador by the monarch, Queen Constance of Austria, Prince Ladislas, and a few Polish nobles:

Arrivai Sabato in Varsavia essendo stato incontrant[---] di Monsignor Illustrissimo Nontio con una Carozza, à sei cavalli [---] Gran Secretario del Regno, et dal signor Governatore di Var[---] [Varsavia] [---] [in] nome di Sua Maestà, con nove o dieci Carozze, et da questi fui levato dalla mia condotto sopra una [carrozza] di Sua Maestà et accompagnato alla Casa destinatami, restando ad assistermi il signor Governatore di Varsovia, al incontro v'era una Squadra de Cavalli per guardia, et alla Casa vi stà una Squadra d'Aiducchi;

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*Comici dell'Arte: Corrispondenze* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1993), 143ff, A53; reported also by Schindler, "Sonst ist es lustig alhie'," 635n155; Otto G. Schindler, "Viaggi teatrali tra l'inquisizione e il Sacco," in *I Gonzaga e l'Impero. Itinerari dello spettacolo*, ed. Umberto Artioli and Cristina Grazioli (Florence: Le Lettere, 2005), 107–60, 138–39; Cristina Grazioli, "Le incoronazioni praguesi del 1627, la *tournee* imperiale dei Fedeli (1627–1629) e l'edizione viennese de *La Maddalena* (1629) di Giovan Battista Andreini," in *Il mecenatismo spettacolare dei Gonzaga*, ed. Simona Brunetti (Mantua: Il Rio, 2019), 89–99, 91n7. The fols. 447–48v, written by "Lidia Comica," offer no ulterior clues.

<sup>34</sup> "I hope to be in Kraków in eight days, if the roads are better than those I have seen up until now, which have been most difficult, I will find security where the King of Poland is staying. . . ." Alfonso Amorotto Andreasi to Vincenzo II Gonzaga, Olmouc, 22 November 1627, ASMn, AG, b. 559, fasc. 24, fol. 569v.

<sup>35</sup> "We arrived in Kraków, having found roads very bad, greatly troubled and famished for the entire country is scorched almost everywhere; from here I think I can leave tomorrow for Warsaw, where His Majesty the King of Poland is to be found. . . ." Alfonso Amorotto Andreasi to Vincenzo II Gonzaga, Kraków, 30 November 1627, ASMn, AG, b. 559, fasc. 24, fol. 571r.

<sup>36</sup> Alfonso Amorotto Andreasi to Ercole Marliani, Kraków, n.d., ASMn, AG, b. 559, fasc. 24, fol. 573r.

<sup>37</sup> Targosz-Kretowa, *Teatr dworski*, 65.

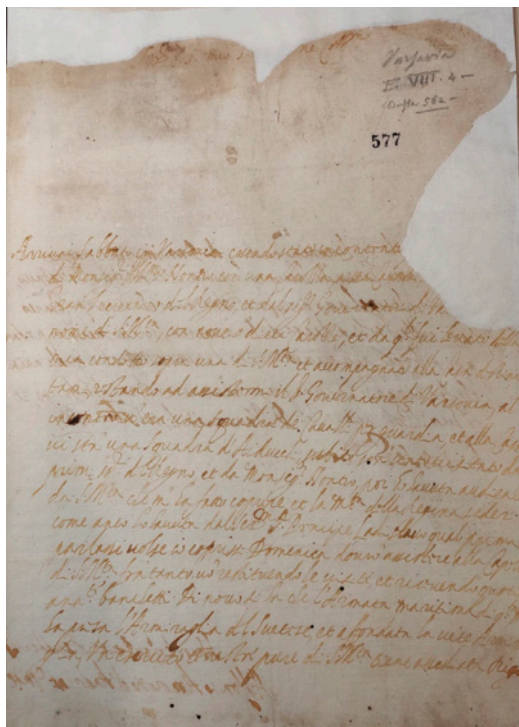
<sup>38</sup> Annibale Gonzaga to resident in Venice Girolamo Parma, Mantua, 22 February 1628, ASMn, AG, b. 2778, fasc. 5, fol. 90r.

<sup>39</sup> Annibale Gonzaga to Anonymous, Kraków, 30 November 1627, ASMn, AG, b. 559, fasc. 24, fol. 575r.

<sup>40</sup> "During the journey from Olmouc to Kraków we found all of Silesia burnt by the war, which is indeed very pitiable; Poland is not scorched, but in itself it is such a country that I would not be able to wish to return. . . ." Annibale Gonzaga to Anonymous, Kraków, 30 November 1627, ASMn, AG, b. 559, fasc. 24, fol. 576r.

subito son stato visitato da primi signori del Regno, et da Monsignor Nontio, poi ho havuta audienza da Sua Maestà, che m'ha fatto coprire et la Maestà della Regina sedere come anco ho havuta dal Serenissimo Signor Principe Ladislao qual prima che parlassi volse io coprissi. Domenica dovrò assistere alla Capella di Sua Maestà, fratanto vò restituendo le visite, et ricevendo quotidianamente banchetti.<sup>41</sup>

[I arrived on Saturday in Warsaw having chanced to meet . . . Most Illustrious Monsignor Nuncio in a carriage, with six horses . . . , [greeted by] Grand Secretary of the Kingdom [Wacław Leszczyński, the Crown chancellor], and by the Governor of War[saw] . . . [in] the name of His Majesty, with nine or ten carriages, and from these I was led from my train in one of His Majesty's carriages and accompanied to the house assigned to me, the Governor of Warsaw remaining to assist me; at the meeting there was a squadron of horseguards, and at the house was stationed a team of hajduks; I was immediately visited by the first lords of the Kingdom, and by Monsignor Nuncio, then I had an audience with His Majesty, who made me put on my hat, and [with] Her Majesty the Queen [who made me] sit [down]; I also had [an audience] with the Most Serene Lord Prince Ladislas, who before I spoke told me to cover my head. On Sunday I will have to assist His Majesty in the Chapel, meanwhile I return the visits, and receive daily banquets.]



2. Letter from Marquis Alfonso Amorotto Andreasi to Duke Vincenzo II Gonzaga, Warsaw, 18 December 1627, ASMn, AG, env. 559, fasc. 24, fol. 577r. Photo by the author.

Amorotto's stay was not intended to last long; he concluded his letter stating that in five or six days he would depart for Brandenburg. This did indeed occur, with immense satisfaction for the hospitality received, on 22 December.<sup>42</sup> In addition to the usual honours the embassy received

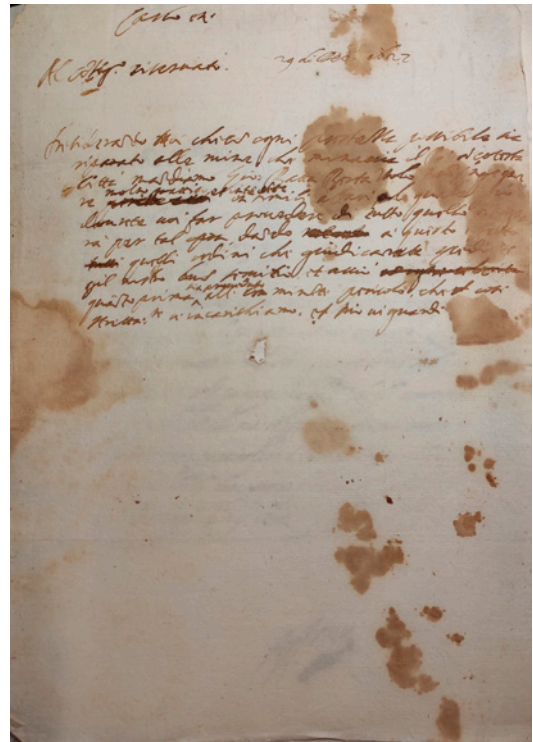
<sup>41</sup> Alfonso Amorotto Andreasi to Vincenzo II Gonzaga, Warsaw, 18 December 1627, ASMn, AG, b. 559, fasc. 24, fol. 577r-v. The letter contains updates of a political and military nature relative to the Danish front during the Thirty Years' War.

<sup>42</sup> His intention is confirmed by the letter to Vincenzo II Gonzaga: "I am leaving tomorrow for the Most Serene Elector of Brandenburg, and I am most consoled of the honours of His Majesty [Sigismund III], and Their Highnesses [Polish Royal Princes], since I believe that Your Highness will be fully satisfied." Alfonso Amorotto Andreasi to Vincenzo II Gonzaga, Warsaw, 21 December 1627, ASMn, AG, b. 559, fasc. 24, fol. 583r.



official recognition of the ducal Mantuan succession from Constance of Austria<sup>43</sup> and her son, Prince Jan Kazimierz.<sup>44</sup> There were also deferential greetings from Mikołaj Wolski<sup>45</sup> and Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł, who recalled his visit to Mantua with Prince Ladislas in 1625.<sup>46</sup> The poor conditions of the roads had rendered the ambassador's already long journey extremely distressing and slow: from the first and last announcements of his departure (respectively 23 September and 20 October) two to three months had passed, indicating that it had taken him several weeks to cover the 1,300 kilometres that separated Mantua from Warsaw. The almost three hundred kilometres from Kraków to Warsaw were covered in a fortnight.

Aside from Annibale Gonzaga, it is not known who was included in the “compagnia.” Certainly not the engineer Giovan Battista Bertazzolo. In fact, a brief note from the Mantuan Chancellery (Fig. 3) confirms that he did not leave with Amorotto, but instead, shortly after the end of December, set out in the opposite direction towards Casale Monferrato, where he would repair the possible subsidence of an embankment along the Po River.<sup>47</sup> It is evident, considering the time it took Amorotto to reach Warsaw, that Bertazzolo, departing in January, is unlikely to have reached the city in time for the staging of *La Galatea*, on 27 February.<sup>48</sup> On 25 December 1627, the



3. Letter from Duke Vincenzo II Gonzaga to the Council of Monferrato, 29 December 1627, ASMn, AG, env. 2308. Photo by the author.

<sup>43</sup> Constance of Austria to Vincenzo II Gonzaga, Warsaw, 20 December 1627, ASMn, AG, b. 557, fasc. 14, fol. 152r.

<sup>44</sup> Jan Kazimierz to Vincenzo II Gonzaga, Warsaw, 20 December 1627, ASMn, AG, b. 557, fasc. 14, fol. 151r.

<sup>45</sup> Mikołaj Wolski to Vincenzo II Gonzaga, Warsaw, 20 December 1627, ASMn, AG, b. 559, fasc. 24, fols. 579–80v.

<sup>46</sup> Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł to Vincenzo II Gonzaga, Warsaw, 20 December 1627, ASMn, AG, b. 559, fasc. 24, fol. 581r–v.

<sup>47</sup> “We wish that an excavation that threatens the Po be repaired with every possible speed in this city, so we send Giovan Battista Bertazzolo our very practical engineer and intendant in similar affairs, to whom, however, you will have to arrange for everything necessary for this work, issuing the orders which you will judge proper for our good service and so that the imminent danger may be avoided, which we entrust you so strictly, and I wish you God's blessings.” Vincenzo II Gonzaga to the Council of Monferrato, 29 December 1627, ASMn, AG, b. 2308.

<sup>48</sup> The date is punctually specified in Żórawska-Witkowska, “Warszawska ‘Galatea,’” 98, on the basis of what is reported in Polish shortened libretto *Summariusz fabuły zacnego i ślicznego młodzieńca tak nazwanego Acy . . .* kept in Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Geheimes Staatsarchiv, sign. 9-Polen 5 no. 3, vols. 10–13 (Leitsch, “Nowo odnaleziony”). Cf. Barbara Przybyszewska-Jarmińska, “Habsburg Queens of Poland and Music at the Polish Royal Court at the End of 16th and in the 17th centuries,” *Arti Musices* 47.1/2 (2016): 14–15.

unimaginable occurred: Vincenzo II passed away<sup>49</sup> and shortly after the war over the succession of Mantua and Monferrato broke out.<sup>50</sup> Thereafter, all correspondences were focused on the uncertain and tragic historical moment and no mention was made of the theatrical staging in Warsaw.

Who then, among the Mantuan people, could have effectively contributed to the success of the *favola piscatoria*? An incidental clue comes from a letter dated 5 July 1628 (Fig. 4):

Il signor Daniel Nys mi fa avisato che si trovi in Venetia certo libretto di Disegni da vendere che è di questa Serenissima Casa, et non essendosi qui trovato negl'Inventarij che si sono fatti dei Serenissimi Duchi Ferdinando, et Vincenzo, bisogna necessariamente dire che sia stato rubbato, tanto più che il Nys mi scrisse che dal figliuolo del Prefetto che sta in Polonia, è stato dato da vendere ad un tal Prete che era frate della Madonna delle Gratie, che l'ha poi dato ad un mercante di Venetia. Questo libretto è stato grandemente desiderato dal medesimo signor Nys nel Contratto delle pitture, et dopoi ancora, onde adesso per servitio di Sua Altezza sarebbe di pensiero di recuperarlo dalle mani di chi lo tiene indebitamente col mezzo della giustizia per farlo restituire all'Altezza Serenissima, ond'io gli rispondo che usi ogni diligenza per ritrovarlo, et se occorrerà valersi del mezo di Vostra Signoria, ricorra a lei, la quale sarà contenta di assistergli in questo. . . .<sup>51</sup>

[Mr. Daniel Nys informed me that there is a certain album of drawings for sale in Venice which belongs to this Illustrious House, and since it is not found here in the Inventories of the Most Serene Dukes Ferdinando and Vincenzo, it must necessarily be said that [it has] been stolen, especially since Nys wrote to me that the Prefect's son, who is now staying in Poland, gave it to be sold to a priest who had been a friar of the Madonna delle Gratie, who then gave it to a merchant from Venice. This album was greatly missed by Mr. Nys himself in the contract for the paintings, and still afterwards, so that now as a way of serving His Highness it would be thoughtful to recover it from the hands of those who hold it unduly by means of justice to have it returned to His Serene Highness. So I reply that you should use every diligence to find it, and if necessary to make use of the means of your Lordship, you should resort to His Highness, who will be happy to assist him in this. . . .]

Viani's young son had unduly taken a precious "libretto di Disegni," prior to the inheritance inventories following the deaths of Ferdinando and Vincenzo II being drawn up, which he had subsequently sold before leaving for Poland. Daniel Nijs, the intermediary who had handled the sale of the Gonzaga collections to Charles I Stuart (1627), laid claim to it. Little or nothing is known about the identity of the young Viani, except that it is thought to be Guglielmo, the

<sup>49</sup> Annibale Gonzaga to the Venetian resident Girolamo Parma, Mantua, 22 February 1628, ASMn, AG, b. 2778, fasc. 5, fol. 90r.

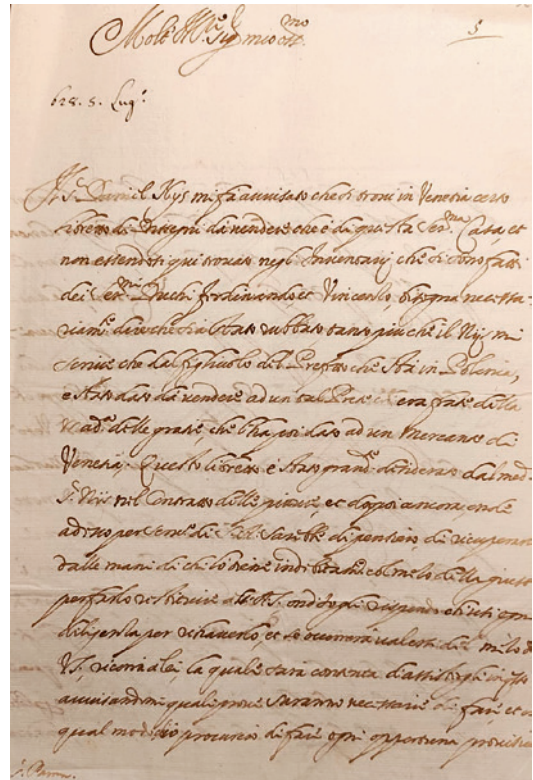
<sup>50</sup> Annibale Gonzaga to the Venetian resident, Mantua, 4 April 1628, ASMn, AG, b. 2778, fasc. 5, fol. 94r.

<sup>51</sup> Alessandro Striggi to [the resident in Venice Girolamo] Parma, Mantua, 5 July 1628, ASMn, AG, b. 2778, fasc. IX, fol. 238r-v.

prefect's only son to have a career in the arts.<sup>52</sup> His presence in Poland is therefore of significance and leads us to assume, although tentatively, that he may have had a role in the staging of *La Galatea*. It seems, however, that any identification of Viani's young son with that of the mysterious “ingegnere mantovano” should be ruled out.

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In order to obtain additional clues, it is necessary to make further investigations into *La Galatea*, whose Polish staging is believed to be more or less faithfully based on the Mantuan one.<sup>53</sup> The lyrics of *Gli Amori di Acis e Galatea* by Gabriello Chiabrera had already been sent to Cardinal Ferdinando Gonzaga by the author in 1608<sup>54</sup> and were published in Mantua, anonymously in 1614, and in 1617 by the Mantuan brothers Osanna.<sup>55</sup> The music of Sante Orlandi had been composed around 1612<sup>56</sup> and the “favola piscatoria” (or “marittima”) performed in the Great Court Scene in 1615<sup>57</sup> and then in 1617, on the occasion of the wedding of



4. Letter from Alessandro Striggi to [the resident in Venice Girolamo] Parma, Mantua, 5 July 1628, ASMn, AG, env. 2778, fasc. IX, c. 238r. Photo by the author.

<sup>52</sup> Furlotti, “Viani, Antonio Maria”; Graziella Sortino, “Antonio Maria Viani,” in *I segni dell’arte: il Cinquecento da Praga a Cremona*, ed. Giulia Bora and Martin Zlatohlávek (Milan: Leonardo Arte, 1997), 352; Giuse Pastore, “Antonio Maria Viani: l’ancona lignea nella basilica di Sant’Andrea e le cappelle laterali della cattedrale,” *Civiltà Mantovana* 5 (1984): 58.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Latoszewski, “Z dziejów opery polskiej,” 109–10; Targosz-Kretowa, *Teatr dworski*, 65; Sandelewski, review of Karolina Targosz-Kretowa, 153; Szweykowska and Szweykowski, *Włosi w kapeli*, 91; Leitsch, “Nowo odnaleziony,” 120–121n15; Osiecka-Samsonowicz, *Agostino Locci*, 211; Żórawska-Witkowska, “Warszawska ‘Galatea’,” 103–9, 113; Przybyszewska-Jarmińska, “Habsburg Queens,” 15–16; Martín Sáez, “Ópera y diplomacia,” 46.

<sup>54</sup> A fable “da cantarai in áu la scena” by the Prince of Mantua, Francesco Gonzaga, dedicated to Galatea's unfortunate love and the pain of Acis's death. Gabriello Chiabrera to Cardinal Ferdinando Gonzaga, Savona, 26 December 1608, ASMn, Autografi, b. 8, fols. 107–8, published by Achille Neri, “Gabriele Chiabrera e la Corte di Mantova,” *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana* 7 (1886): 317–44.

<sup>55</sup> A copy of the latter edition can be found in the Biblioteca del Conservatorio di Musica in Parma. Angelo Solerti, *Gli albori del melodrama* (Milan: Remo Sandron Editore, 1905), 3:5n6 and 6n10. Cf. also Perseo Caracci to Cardinal Barberini, 20 March 1617, ASMn, AG, b. 7457, fol. 7 (cit. in Herla: <http://www.capitalespettacolo.it/>).

<sup>56</sup> Sante Orlandi to Cardinal Ferdinando Gonzaga, Mantua, 17, 23, 30 August and 10 September 1612, ASMn, AG, b. 2725, fasc. 5, fols. 3–6; Vincenzo Agnelli Soardi to Cardinal Ferdinando Gonzaga, Mantua, 31 August 1612, ASMn, AG, b. 2725, fasc. 1, fol. 180; Carlo Maffei to Cardinal Ferdinando Gonzaga, Mantua, ASMn, AG, b. 2725, fasc. 1, fol. 195 (cit. in Herla).

<sup>57</sup> Annibale Chieppio, Mantua, 14 February 1615, ASMn, AG, b. 2733, fasc. 1, fol. 25; Alessandro Striggi to Annibale Iberti, 19 February 1615, ASMn, AG, b. 2733, fasc. 2, fol. 29 (cit. in Herla).

Ferdinando Gonzaga and Caterina de' Medici.<sup>58</sup> At that time, Gabriele Bertazzolo had followed the preparations with Antonio Maria Viani<sup>59</sup> in the “Teatro e Scena ducale,”<sup>60</sup> documented in a well-known letter.<sup>61</sup> The performance was held on 13 March 1617, “with the most beautiful *intermedi* one could devise.”<sup>62</sup> Viani had also been in charge of the ephemeral scenographies built for the Duchess Caterina’s solemn arrival in Mantua. His name, however, appears alongside that of another architect, Nicolò Sebregondi from the Valtellina.<sup>63</sup> It is on the latter that we shall focus our attention.

Nicolò Sebregondi was trained in Rome, where he met Ferdinando, by whom he was summoned to Mantua in 1613.<sup>64</sup> In the archives he is mentioned as “l’Architetto” (the Architect), not to confuse him with the Buildings Prefect, under whose shadow he worked for quite some time. In anticipation of the nuptial celebrations (and before having opted for *La Galatea*), the Duke of Mantua had arranged for Viani and Sebregondi to compete in the realization of two triumphal arches, because the competition between them would have created an “effetto di maggior vaghezza” (effect of greater grace).<sup>65</sup> Towards the end of November 1616, Viani awaited an answer from the duke with regards to “le inventioni mandatele dal Signor Conte Striggi, per cominciare a fare qualche cosa nella Scena” (the inventions sent by Striggi to begin some work on the theatre scene).<sup>66</sup> The two artists seemed unsatisfied with the division of their duties: Sebregondi was displeased “di far un arco solo dei trionfali oltre gli ornamenti ordinatigli de le porte della città e della corte, dicendo, ch’il Prefetto ha da far assai nella Scena” (to make only one triumphal arch in addition to the decoration of the city and court gates, which the

<sup>58</sup> Girolamo Parma, Florence, 17 February 1617, ASMn, AG, b. 1129, fasc. 12, fol. 446; Alessandro Striggi to Annibale Chieppio, Mantua, 18 and 19 February 1617, ASMn, AG, b. 2738, fasc. 4, fols. 743–743bis, 744 (cit. in Herla).

<sup>59</sup> “It is not known how to satisfy the Prefect and the Architect in finding money both for the buildings [*le fabbriche*] and for the scene. . . .”, anonymous to Annibale Iberti, 13 November 1616, ASMn, AG, b. 2290; “I have instructed the Prefect, who consults with Count Striggi about the *invenzione* on a daily basis, to keep an eye on the stage and what is going on there and I will constantly put pressure on him to meet Your Highness’s expectations,” Federico Gonzaga, Military Captain and Governor of Mantua, to Ferdinando Gonzaga in Casale, Mantua, 15 November 1616, ASMn, AG, b. 2735, fasc. 13, fol. 419 (cit. in Herla).

<sup>60</sup> Giovanni Mambrino, “Cronaca di Mantova,” ASMn, *Documenti Patrii D’Arco*, no. 80, 1654.

<sup>61</sup> Gabriele Bertazzolo, “da casa,” 18 February 1617, ASMn, AG, b. 2738, fasc. 4, fol. 144 (cit. in Herla).

<sup>62</sup> Gioseffo Casati, 11 March 1617, published by Attilio Portioli, *Il matrimonio di Ferdinando Gonzaga con Caterina de’ Medici (1617)* (Mantua: Tip. Mondovi, 1882), 14–15.

<sup>63</sup> Alessandro Striggi to Ferdinando Gonzaga, Mantua, 19 February 1617, ASMn, AG, b. 2738, fasc. 13, fol. 746r–v.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Stefano L’Occaso, “Sebregondi, Nicolò,” in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 91 (Rome: Treccani, 2018), *ad vocem*; Guido Carrai, “Nicolò Sebregondi,” in *Architektura Albrechta z Valdštejna*, ed. Petr Uličný (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny, 2017), 2:1166–99; Margherita Azzi Visentini, “Nicolò Sebregondi,” in *Il Seicento nell’arte e nella cultura con riferimenti a Mantova* (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 1985), 102–11; Giuse Pastore, “Nicolò Sebregondi architetto della Favorita e di altre fabbriche mantovane,” *Civiltà Mantovana* 4 (1984): 79–104; Ercolano Marani, *Mantova*, vol. 3: *Le Arti* (Mantua: Istituto C. D’Arco per la Storia di Mantova, 1965), 175–78; Giovanni Baglione, *Le vite de’ pittori, scultori et architetti dal Pontificato di Gregorio XIII del 1572, in fino a’ tempi di Papa Urbano VIII nel 1642 . . .* (Rome: nella Stamperia di Andrea Fei, 1642), 365.

<sup>65</sup> Ferdinando Gonzaga to Alessandro Striggi, Casale Monferrato, 21 November 1616, ASMn, AG, b. 2171, fol. 271 (cit. in Herla).

<sup>66</sup> Federico Gonzaga to Ferdinando Gonzaga in Casale, Mantua, 27 November 1616, ASMn, AG, b. 2735, fasc. 12, fol. 424r–v.

Prefect has a lot to do in the scene). Striggi suggested he create a “nuvola”<sup>67</sup> (cloud), instead of the Cremonese Viani. The Prefect, perhaps feeling threatened by Sebregondi’s increasing interference, argued polemically, “d’esser atto a servire etiandio nelle cose sode e non in quelle d’apparenza solamente” (to be able to serve in concrete things and not in those of appearance only).<sup>68</sup> Despite the protests, Viani continued with his intense preparations of the scene and the stage machinery,<sup>69</sup> also having to continuously deal with a lack of funds.<sup>70</sup> On 18 December 1616 the duke summoned Sebregondi to Casale Monferrato with the designs for the triumphal arch, to be erected in Mantua at the church of San Cristoforo, as well as those superimposed on the city gates and the Castello,<sup>71</sup> that is, the ducal palace. The following day, Striggi, with a letter to the Gonzaga, announced Sebregondi’s departure<sup>72</sup> and in February 1617 updated the figures for the execution of the triumphal scenographies; those of the latter constituted the greatest expenditure:

dall’Architetto ho voluto sapere quanta spesa appresso poco anderà nell’erettione dell’Arco disegnato nel quattrivio di San Christoforo, et mi dice che ascenderà alla somma di 1300 scudi in circa, et gli ornamenti per le Porte della Pusterla, et di Castello costaranno da 500 scudi. Dal Prefetto parimente ho voluto intendere l’istesso, et m’ha risposto che l’Arco a lui commesso non importerà meno di 650 scudi, e forse più.<sup>73</sup>

[I wanted to know from the Architect how much money would be spent on the construction of the arch designed in the San Christoforo quarter, and he tells me that it will increase to around 1,300 *scudi*, and the ornaments for the Porte della Pusterla, and the Castello will cost at least five hundred *scudi*. Likewise, I enquired with the Prefect about the same [matter], and he replied that the arch commissioned by him would not cost less than 650 *scudi*, perhaps more.]

The story clearly highlights the determination and ambition of Sebregondi, who, a decade later, following the death of Gabriele Bertazzolo, made a formal plea to take over some of his duties, that is,

<sup>67</sup> That is to say a self-propelled stage machine (cf. Togliani, “Dal Pastor Fido,” 400–404).

<sup>68</sup> Alessandro Striggi to Annibale Iberti, Mantua, 26 November 1616, ASMn, AG, b. 2735, fasc. 1, fol. 105bis (cit. in Herla).

<sup>69</sup> Anonymous to Ferdinando Gonzaga in Casale, 7 December 1616, ASMn, AG, b. 2290.

<sup>70</sup> “For the new *Fabrica* and for the theatre scene we have ordered in our letters to the President of the Municipality that he disburse a thousand *scudi* of the two thousand prepared for the soldiers, with which he will satisfy the present need.” Ferdinando Gonzaga to Alessandro Striggi, Casale, 21 December 1616, ASMn, AG, b. 2171, fasc. 1, fols. 308–9 (cit. in Herla). The one thousand *scudi* followed a loan of another four hundred *scudi* paid between the end of November and the beginning of December. Letter to Duke Ferdinando Gonzaga in Casale, 7 December 1616, ASMn, AG, b. 2290.

<sup>71</sup> Sebregondi had already sent an unspecified drawing to Casale towards the end of November. Nicolò Sebregondi, Mantua, 28 November 1616, ASMn, AG, b. 2735, fasc. 2, fol. 171 (cit. in Herla).

<sup>72</sup> Alessandro Striggi to Ferdinando Gonzaga in Casale, Mantua, 19 December 1616, ASMn, AG, b. 2735, fasc. 1, fol. 148; “Tomorrow the Architect leaves for the coast; had I been warned before I would have obeyed him,” Alessandro Striggi to Annibale Iberti in Casale, Mantua, 19 December 1616, ASMn, AG, b. 2735, fasc. 1, fol. 145 (both cit. in Herla).

<sup>73</sup> Alessandro Striggi to Ferdinando Gonzaga, Mantua, 19 February 1617, ASMn, AG, b. 2738, fasc. 13, fol. 746r–v.

the *apparatus* for the fire and the levelling of water.<sup>74</sup> These were traits peculiar to the scenographer and engineer, with Sebregondi having vaulted his expertise in the latter field since 1624.<sup>75</sup>

With the deaths of Ferdinando and Vincenzo II, all traces of Sebregondi in Mantua are lost. His name disappears from documents to later reappear in Prague on 4 September 1631, in the service of Albrecht von Wallenstein.<sup>76</sup> He worked in the Czech towns of Valdice and Jičín,<sup>77</sup> in Burg Kost, in the castles of Lembeck, Sobčice, and Kamenice,<sup>78</sup> and finally in Strahov.<sup>79</sup> After the death of Wallenstein in 1634, Sebregondi reappeared in Mantua<sup>80</sup> in January 1635;<sup>81</sup> however, a void remains in his biography for the years preceding 1631. The question arises: Where could he have gone immediately after his departure from Mantua? Perhaps to Poland for the staging of *La Galatea*, and from there into the service of Wallenstein, who in 1629 attempted to support the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth forces against Sweden? Or perhaps he moved to the Habsburg court<sup>82</sup> to then go to Warsaw and later return to Prague?

What is certain is that there were very strong ties between Mantua and the Empire at that time due to the marriage of Eleonora Gonzaga to Emperor Ferdinand II. Moreover the Empress played a vital role in the widespread diffusion of the theatre in central Europe, so much so that it is possible that the anonymous artist who arrived at the Vasa court did not come directly from Italy, but instead from Vienna or from Prague, also by virtue of the marital ties of Sigismund III, whose wives were both Habsburgs.<sup>83</sup>

An additional clue, if not actual proof, can be found in a letter written by the Bishop of Mantua, Vincenzo Agnelli Soardi, in 1631, at the time residing in Vienna, to the Gonzaga functionary Girolamo Parma. After some bitter considerations about looting in Mantua and the Gonzaga dominions, the cleric reassured his addressee of another unspecified circumstance: “Al signor Guglielmo Viani, figliolo del già signor Prefetto farò sapere la mente di Sua Altezza, et lo stesso farò con il signor Nicolò Sebregondi, et di quanto mi risponderanno ne havrà Sua Altezza relatione” (I will convey His Highness’s wish to Mr. Giuglielmo Viani, son of the Prefect,

<sup>74</sup> Supplication of an anonymous secretary on behalf of Nicolò Sebregondi, 1626, ASMn, AG, b. 2307.

<sup>75</sup> Azzi Visentini, “Nicolò Sebregondi,” 108. Regarding the activities of Sebregondi as hydraulic engineer cf. Pastore, “Nicolò Sebregondi,” 88–89.

<sup>76</sup> L’Occaso, “Sebregondi”; Daniela Ferrari, “L’Eremo dei Camaldolesi e la palazzina secentesca nel Bosco della Fontana,” in *La Palazzina e l’Eremo del Bosco della Fontana presso Mantova*, ed. Ugo Bazzotti and Daniela Ferrari (Mantua: G. Arcari Editore, 2001), 76–79.

<sup>77</sup> L’Occaso, “Sebregondi”; Guido Carrai, “I fiorentini al Castello: il progetto di Bernardo Buontalenti e Giovanni Gargioli per la nuova galleria di Rodolfo II,” *Umění* 51 (2003): 384n50.

<sup>78</sup> L’Occaso, “Sebregondi”; Petr Fidler, “Loggia mit Aussicht. Prolegomena zu einer Typologie,” *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 40 (1987): 84–89.

<sup>79</sup> L’Occaso, “Sebregondi”; Uličný, *Architektura Albrechta z Valdštejna, ad indicem* and 225–29.

<sup>80</sup> Ferrari, “La Palazzina,” 79. Perhaps he also served Count Rudolf von Tieffenbach. L’Occaso, “Sebregondi.”

<sup>81</sup> L’Occaso, “Sebregondi”; Pastor, “Nicolò Sebregondi,” 95n44.

<sup>82</sup> On 21 and 25 November 1627, during Eleonora Gonzaga’s coronation celebrations, in addition to the theatrical performances, “beautiful fireworks were made” in Prague. Pietro Vico to Giovanni Cornaro in Venice, Prague, 27 November 1627; Seifert, *Die opera*, 594–97; Schindler, “‘Sonst ist es lustig alhie,’” 595–97. Comedies were also performed in the early months of 1628.

<sup>83</sup> Osiecka-Samsonowicz, *Agostino Locci*, 211; Żórawska-Witkowska, “Warszawska ‘Galatea’”; Przybyszewska-Jarmińska, “Habsburg Queens,” 14, 19.

and also to Mr. Nicolò Sebregondi; as soon as they respond, His Majesty will receive a report).<sup>84</sup>

The fact that Viani's less well-known son and Sebregondi were both in Vienna at that time leads us to assume the existence of an artistic partnership between the two; a partnership perhaps already in place in 1628, when Guglielmo's presence was documented in Poland.<sup>85</sup> What is certain is that following the deaths of Bertazzolo and Viani, and his return to Mantua, Sebregondi became the undisputed protagonist of the Gonzaga-Nevers architecture and theatre.<sup>86</sup> At a later point, Sebregondi was to be responsible for the celebrations held on 10 May 1646 in honour of the marriage of Ladislav IV to his second wife Marie Louise,<sup>87</sup> daughter of Charles I Gonzaga-Nevers. The spectacle included operatic scenes with recitatives, duets, and arias against the backdrop of a sumptuous scenography and a fireworks display. On the town square, in front of the ducal court, a “very delightful garden” was built on a “pleasant hill,” divided into various sections, containing labyrinths, delightful fountains, balustrades of fake marble, and a large number of vases with flowers. In the corners of the garden there were four domes and a much larger dome at the centre, the latter enclosed from the middle downwards by a beautiful wall with various flowers.<sup>88</sup>

It was on this very occasion that surprising scene changes were exhibited, the fruits of the experience of a consummate theatrical scenographer: the apparition of Manto (daughter of the fortune teller Tiresias and mother to Ocnus, mythical founder of Mantua) under the central dome, upon the withdrawal of a painted backdrop; Idomeneus's flight from a tower to a dome; the opening of a part of the garden in order to let out “un maestoso carro trionfale, tirato da sei corsieri, guidati da sei giovani”<sup>89</sup> (a triumphal carriage drawn by six steeds driven by six youths). It was a triumph as well as yet further testimony of the solid political and cultural (now also dynastic) ties formed between Mantua and Poland during the course of the seventeenth century, before the death of Sebregondi in the summer of 1652.

<sup>84</sup> Vincenzo Agnelli Soardi to Girolamo Parma, Vienna, 8 March 1631, ASMn, AG, b. 496, fasc. 3, fol. 263v; published in Bora and Zlatohlávek, *I segni dell'arte*, 529.

<sup>85</sup> Bevilacqua, “Gisleni, Giovanni Battista.”

<sup>86</sup> Visentini distinguishes three scenographic installations linked to the name of Sebregondi: “In November 1640, as part of the Marian celebrations held throughout Italy under the high patronage of the Society of Jesus. . . . On 9 October 1644, to celebrate the assumption to the papal throne of Innocent X. . . . [and] on the occasion of the wedding of Charles II with Isabella Clara of Austria, on 7 November 1649.” Azzi Visentini, “Nicolò Sebregondi,” 109–10. Engravings documenting the 1640 preparations are to be found in Scipione Agnello Maffei, *Descrizione della solennità dell'incoronazione della Beatissima Vergine, fatta d'ordine della Serenissima Signora Duchessa di Mantova, et di Monferrato* (Mantua: at the Aurelio Osanna stamp. duc., 1640); on the 1649 preparations, see: Livio Asiani, *Descrizione de' fuochi artificiali fatti in Mantova nell'allegrezze delle felissime nozze del serenissimo duca Carlo 2. con la serenissima arciduchessa Isabella Clara d'Austria* (Mantua: gli Osanna, 1649).

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Francesca De Caprio Motta, *Maria Ludovica Gonzaga Nevers: una principessa franco-mantovana sul trono di Polonia* (Manziana: Vecchiarelli, 2002); Francesca De Caprio Motta, *Maria Luisa Gonzaga Nevers. Cerimonia e propaganda nel viaggio verso il trono di Polonia (1645–1646)* (Viterbo: Sette Città, 2018).

<sup>88</sup> Irena Mamczarz, “Polonia e Polacchi nel teatro italiano,” in *Barocco fra Italia e Polonia*, ed. Jan Śląski (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1977), 399–400.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 400–401.

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