

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Ritual, Myth, and Humanism in the Origins of the Venetian Style

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in Musicology

By

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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The so-called *Prima Prattica* style of sixteenth-century polyphonic music was largely codified through the music of Adriano Willaert and the theoretical writings of his protege Gioseffo Zarlino, both musicians attached to the Chapel of San Marco, the central musical organization of the Republic of Venice. As the century progressed, however, the elements of Willaert's style that were emphasized and emulated by subsequent generations of Venetian musicians took the ceremonial music of the Republic in an aesthetic direction that prioritized expression over balance, sonic effects over contrapuntal clarity, and, at times, bombast over contemplation. The stylistic chasm that developed between this specifically Venetian music and what could be heard elsewhere in Europe at the time has yet to be adequately acknowledged or explained, a problem for music history especially due to the profound international influence wielded by later Venetian or Venice-adjacent composers such as

Gabrieli, Monteverdi, Schütz, and Vivaldi.

In this dissertation I explore the ways in which the distinctive cultural, political, religious, and artistic background of the Venetian republic created particular demands which, in conjunction with the unique background and inclinations of Adriano Willaert, led to the creation of this Venetian musical style. In my first chapter, through a brief examination of the foundational preoccupations of the republic and Church of Venice, I establish broad, categorical differences between the cultural demands of it and neighboring states. Next, in chapter two, I more closely investigate the historical circumstances of Venice in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries in order to show how material factors influenced the creation of the Venetian style to occur when and how it did. My third chapter looks specifically at the role of literary humanism in the Venetian cultural florescence of the early sixteenth century and in the work of Willaert, through the composer's own humanistic activities, particularly his Horatian secular motet *Quid non Ebrietas Designat*. Finally, in chapter four I examine Willaert's music for the Church of Venice, specifically his dual-choir, *coro spezzato* psalm settings, as a response to the specifically Venetian aesthetic demands set up in the previous chapters.

The dissertation of Peter Lawson is approved.

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Dedicated to my grandparents, John and Joann Lawson and Dieter and Elizabeth Pohl,  
without whose inspiration and support this project would  
not have been possible.

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## Introduction

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the State chapel of San Marco in the Republic of Venice was an institution with little to no connection to the most recent trends of polyphonic music-making. By the century's end, it had evolved into one of the largest and most elaborate musical institutions in Europe, and the home of the era's most distinctive and individualized local stylistic tradition. This so-called high Venetian style does not fit easily within the taxonomy of the *prima* and *seconda prattiche*, being too novel, too iconoclastically innovative, and too Italian for the former but lacking the stylistic priorities and secular orientation that Giulio Cesare Monteverdi ascribed to the latter.<sup>1</sup> In part for this reason, musicologists have tended to shunt Venetian ceremonial music to the side in music histories and frequently to downplay its singularity within the arena of sixteenth-century polyphony. This neglect would be an issue if the Venetian style was simply an isolated moment in the history of European music-making, but it becomes a major problem due to the profound international influence wielded by the style through the work of composers including the founding figure of the style, Adriano Willaert, as well as Giovanni Gabrieli, Heinrich Schütz, Claudio Monteverdi, and especially Antonio Vivaldi. The degree and process of Venetian influence on the ultimate shape of what is commonly referred to as classical music is still not

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<sup>1</sup> The Monteverdi brothers only mention three musicians associated with San Marco in their list of *prima* and *seconda pratica* exemplars. Adriano Willaert, as a composer, and Gioseffo Zarlino, as a codifier of "most judicious rules," are listed as the ultimate perfecters of the first practice, and Cipriano de Rore, who briefly held the post of *maestro di cappella* between Willaert and Zarlino, is mentioned two times as the founder of the second. How they would have categorized the Gabrielis, or other composers of the more mature Venetian style, is left open to question. W. Oliver Strunk and Leo Treitler, *Source Readings in Music History* (New York: Norton, 1998), 539-540.

adequately understood. However, when one considers Venetian innovations in orchestration, expression, coloration, and the display of power in the sixteenth century in conjunction with the role of the city's ecclesiastical musicians in the development of monody and opera in the seventeenth, there is a strong likelihood that Venice's role in the music-historical metanarrative is far greater than has thus far been acknowledged.

In broad strokes, it is not surprising that, when the Venetian State Church invested in the cultivation of a musical style, it would be dramatically different from what was happening elsewhere in Italy and wider Europe. In addition to the obvious uniqueness of its geography, Venice's culture, politics, economics, and even religion had developed in relative isolation for over one-thousand years, and the particularities that resulted from this seclusion became a source of defiant pride that was expressed in many areas of Venetian cultural production. The notion of a resonance between the musical and cultural distinctiveness of the Republic is, in itself, nothing new, but commentators have stopped short of exploring the connections between them, typically focusing on one or the other and mentioning the other only in passing. The primary purpose of this dissertation is to contribute to the closing of this gap through an examination of the beginnings of San Marco's musical program in the fullest possible cultural, ideological, and material context.

The sophisticated musical operation at San Marco which nurtured the Venetian style was largely the creation of *maestro di cappella* Adriano Willaert and the government officials under whom he worked from his election to the position in December of 1527 until his death in 1562. However, the fact that Venetian officials were motivated to recruit a polyphonic composer and that they chose Willaert, the music that he and his successors wrote and performed for the chapel, and the ways in which that music was incorporated into Republic's

ceremonial traditions were all mediated by the particular circumstances of Venice's history, on both the small and large scales.

First, essentially all of the most elaborate music written for San Marco in the sixteenth century is directly connected to the uniquely Venetian ceremonial tradition of the *andate*, an annual series of processions involving functionaries of both Church and State, in which feasts of the Catholic Church were commemorated alongside and often nearly eclipsed by events in the Republic's own mythologized history. In the case of psalms set for multiple choirs in a style known as *coro spezzato*, which form the central foundational canon of the greater Venetian tradition, this connection is literally written in to the liturgical framework of the events. The *andate*, which were most Venetians' primary means of engagement with their own history, had long been characterized by an outward-looking theatricality, formed through numerous factors in the city's earlier history, which played a profound role in shaping the priorities behind music composed for these rituals. My first chapter is an investigation of the sources of this tradition and of the image of Venice that it was cultivated to perpetuate. It encompasses the origins and development of Venetian political mythologies and the foundation and liturgical materials of the Church of Venice. In particular, I focus on the material factors that contributed to the ultimate character of these characteristically Venetian hybridizations of religion and politics.

Second, the election of Willaert occurred at a moment when Venice was in a state of crisis. The combination of loss of territory, decline of trade, and a series of brutal wars in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries had permanently reduced both the economic viability and the international power and prestige of the republic. The shock of these experiences forced Venetians and Venetian subjects to profoundly reassess their vision of

themselves and of their place in the world. The new musical program in San Marco was one element of the response to this crisis, and its character was fundamentally defined by the modifications to state mythologies and ideologies that were necessitated by it. My second chapter is an investigation of this situation as a catalyst of interest in the cultivation of music and other cultural production. Beginning with a discussion of the musical traditions of pre-Willaertian Venice and the reasons for the delayed establishment of regular polyphony in San Marco, in this chapter I aim to show how one effect of the traumas of this era was to encourage Venetians to increasingly engage with the artistic, literary, and intellectual currents of the Italian Renaissance, which included the growing tradition of Franco-Flemish polyphony.

Third and last, the period following the crises of the early sixteenth century was characterized by an explosion of art making, governmental reorganizations, and urban renovations that were designed in part to provide new grounding for state mythologies that had been compromised in recent decades. A great number of people participated in these processes, but they are particularly associated with the agenda of the innovative doge Andrea Gritti, a patron of Willaert, the painter Titian, the architect Jacopo Sansovino, and many others, whose programs of reform are particularly notable for their incorporation of the newly fashioned tools of Italian humanism and the Renaissance. My final two chapters are specifically concerned with placing the election of Willaert and his music in the larger context of Gritti's program. First, in chapter three, I examine elements of this renovation initiative, particularly the architectural refurbishments of Jacopo Sansovino, in terms of their engagement with the currents of humanism. Then, through a detailed discussion of Willaert's idiosyncratic Horatian motet, *Quid non Ebrietas*, I provide insights into the composer's own

humanistic predilections, which made him ideally suited to participate in this broader Venetian project. In my final chapter I investigate Willaert's music for the chapel of San Marco, specifically his eight *coro spezzato* psalm settings, as they were shaped by the ceremonial aesthetics, liturgical requirements, devotional attitudes, and artistic currents of sixteenth century Venice. Through this discussion I aim to show both that the ecclesiastical music of Willaert, despite his reputation as the paragon of the first practice, provided the template for the more overtly expressive styles of later Venetian composers and how many of the distinctive attributes associated with the mature style are fundamentally rooted in the ceremonial traditions of the Church of Venice.

The potential significance of the Venetian style to the development of European music was recognized very early in the history of musicology. One of the field's earliest landmark works, Carl von Winterfeld's *Johannes Gabrieli und Sein Zeitalter* (1834) (Giovanni Gabrieli and His Era), still stands as one of the most interesting and ambitious attempts to assess sixteenth-century Venetian music within a larger cultural context.<sup>2</sup> Also during the nineteenth century, several remarkable treatments of the subject were produced by Venetian authors. These include, most notably, Francesco Caffi's *Storia della musica sacra nella già cappella ducale di S Marco...* (1854) and Giovanni Fantoni's "La cappella musicale", which was published in the era's most authoritative work on the chapel in general, Camille Boito's *La Basilica di San Marco in Venezia*, both of which have been crucial sources of baseline information throughout the

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<sup>2</sup> Carl von Winterfeld, *Johannes Gabrieli und sein Zeitalter: zur Geschichte der blüthe heiligen Gesanges im sechzehnten, und der ersten Entwicklung der Hauptformen unserer heutigen Tonkunst in diesem und dem folgenden Jahrhunderte, zumal in der venezianischen Tonschule* (Berlin: Schlesinger'sche Buch- und Musikhandlung, 1834)

course of this project.<sup>3</sup>

In the mid-twentieth century, Giacomo Benvenuti's *Andrea e Giovanni Gabrieli e la musica strumentale in San Marco* (1931) and Erich Hertzmann's *Adrian Willaert in der weltlichen Vokalmusik seiner Zeit* initiated a period of substantial interest in Venetian music.<sup>4</sup> Over the following decades, significant contributions to the discussion were made by a large number of prominent musicologists including Giovanni d'Alessi, Armen Carapetyan, Hermann Beck, Egon Kenton, and Hermann Zenck, who initiated the publication of Willaert's *Opera Omnia* in 1937, but died before he could see the project completed.<sup>5</sup> The twentieth century's preeminent specialist in the Venetian style was the prolific British scholar Denis Arnold, whose works on the subject, culminating in his *Giovanni Gabrieli and the Music of the Venetian High Renaissance* (1979), come closest to achieving a culturally grounded conception of a Venetian style.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> F. Caffi, *Storia Della Musica Sacra Nella Già' Cappella Ducale Di San Marco in Venezia Dal 1518 Al 1797* (Venice: Antonelli, 1854); Giovanni Fantoni, "La cappella musicale," in *The Basilica of S. Mark in Venice: Illustrated from the Points of View of Art and History*, ed. C. Boito, trans. W. Scott (Venice: F. Ongania, 1888).

<sup>4</sup> G. Benvenuti., G. Gabrieli, A. Gabrieli, and G. Cesari. *Andrea E Giovanni Gabrieli E La Musica Strumentale in San Marco ... A Cura Di Giacomo Benvenuti* (Milan: Ricordi, 1931); Erich Hertzmann, *Adrian Willaert in der weltlichen Vokalmusik seiner Zeit, ein Beitrag zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der niederländisch-französischen und italienischen Liedformen in der ersten hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1931).

<sup>5</sup> Giovanni D'Alessi, "Precursors of Adriano Willaert in the Practice of "Coro Spezzato," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 5, no. 3 (1952): 187-210; Armen Carapetyan, "The 'Musica Nova' of Adriano Willaert," *Journal of Renaissance and Baroque Music* 1, no. 3 (1946): 200-21; Hermann Beck, *Die venezianische Musikerschule im 16. Jahrhundert* (Wilhelmshaven: Heinrichshofen, 1968); Kenton, Egon F. "The Late Style of Giovanni Gabrieli." *Musical Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (1962): 427-43; Hermann Zenck, "Adrian Willaerts „Salmi Spezzati" (1550)," *Die Musikforschung* 2, no. 2/4 (1949): 97-107; Hermann. Zenck, Walter Gerstenberg, Bernhard Meier, and Helga Meier, eds. *Adrian Willaert: Opera Omnia* (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1950).

<sup>6</sup> Denis Arnold, "Ceremonial Music in Venice at the Time of the Gabrielis." *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 82 no. 1 (1955): 47-59; Denis Arnold, "Music at the Scuola Di San Rocco." *Music e Letters* 40, no. 3 (1959): 229-41; Denis Arnold, "Music at a Venetian Confraternity in the Renaissance." *Acta Musicologica* 37, no. 1/2 (1965): 62-72; Denis Arnold, *Giovanni Gabrieli*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974); Denis Arnold, "Venetian Motets and Their Singers." *The Musical Times* 119, no. 1622 (1978): 319-21; Denis Arnold, *Giovanni Gabrieli and the Music of the Venetian High Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).



Since the nineteen-seventies, musicologists working on Renaissance Venice have become increasingly specialized, and their works have tended to focus on particular aspects, repertoires, or settings within the Venetian music scene in isolation. Some of these, such as Giulio Cattin's monumental liturgical study, *Musica e liturgia a San Marco*, James H. Moore's investigations of Venetian vespers services in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Anthony F. Carver's work on the background of the *coro spezzato* style, and Gulio Ongaro's on the role of patronage in Venetian sacred music, are rigorously compiled compendia of useful information that have opened up many new possibilities for investigation in this area.<sup>7</sup> Others, beginning with Ellen Rosand's 1977 article, "Music in the Myth of Venice," in which the author began to examine music through the lens of concepts that had been developing in the fields of social, political, and art history, are sweeping interpretive projects that have frequently been particularly strong in their consideration of extramusical cultural factors.<sup>8</sup> Several of these recent musicological endeavors play a central role in this dissertation. Martha Feldman's book *City Culture and the Madrigal at Venice*, which addresses the role of musicians and madrigal performance within the Petrarchan literary scene around Pietro Bembo, provides an enlightening view of the social world of music in Venice during the era of Willaert but does not engage with ecclesiastical music-making, State patronage, or the role of other arts.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Jonathan Glixon's *Honoring God and the City: Music at the Venetian*

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<sup>7</sup> Giulio Cattin, *Musica E Liturgia a San Marco: Descrizione Delle Fonti* (Venice: Fondazione Levi, 1990); James H. Moore, "The 'Vespero Delli Cinque Laudate' and the Role of 'Salmi Spezzati' at St. Mark's." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 34, no. 2 (1981): 249-78; James H. Moore, *Vespers at St. Mark's: Music of Alessandro Grandi, Giovanni Rovetta, and Francesco Cavalli*. Vol. 1-3 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981); Anthony F. Carver, *Cori Spezzati*: vol. 1-2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988 & 2009); Giulio M. Ongaro, *The Chapel of St. Mark's at the Time of Adrian Willaert (1527-1562): A Documentary Study*. (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1986); Giulio Ongaro, "Sixteenth-Century Patronage at St Mark's, Venice." *Early Music History* 8 (1988): pp. 81-115.

<sup>8</sup> Ellen Rosand, "Music in the Myth of Venice." *Renaissance Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (1977): 511-37.

<sup>9</sup> Martha Feldman, *City culture and the madrigal at Venice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

*Confraternities, 1260–1807* provides an excellent picture of the long term evolution of what was happening in Venetian religious music culture outside of the central operation of San Marco.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the most crucial musicological scholar to my work in this dissertation is Iain Fenlon, whose monograph *Ceremonial City* provides an incredibly detailed and thorough gloss of the ways in which historical events directly influenced Venice's developing ceremonial traditions.<sup>11</sup> Fenlon, however, while he provides mountains of crucial insights and data, chooses to stop short of doing any musicological interpretation himself.

Several works on the history of Venice from scholars outside of the field of musicology have also had a profound impact on this project. Most significantly, William Bouwsma's *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty* and Manfredo Tafuri's *Venice and the Renaissance* provided the basic framework for Andrea Gritti's program of urban refurbishment, the extension of which to account for music has been one of the major aims of this dissertation.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Edward Muir's *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* explores many of the same issues as Fenlon's work, but from the point of view of anthropologically informed political and intellectual history.<sup>13</sup> Finally, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice: Architecture, Music, Acoustics*, a recent book by architecture historians Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti, for which the authors traveled to Venice with a Cambridge college choir in order to conduct acoustical tests in San Marco and other important ritual spaces, provided a powerful model for thinking about cross-

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<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Glixon, *Honoring God and the City: Music at the Venetian Confraternities 1260-1806* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Iain Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City: History, Memory and Myth in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty: Renaissance Values in the Age of the Counter Reformation*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance* trans. Jessica Levine (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

media interactions and resonances within the context of the Venetian ceremonial tradition.<sup>14</sup>

For interpretive and analytical models, I have looked to a number of writers from within and without the field of musicology. For the examination of musical texts in isolation, I have attempted to follow the lead of Susan McClary, particularly her analyses of madrigals from Willaert's *Musica Nova* collection in *Modal Subjectivities*, Margaret Bent, who was my primary model for thinking about performance conventions as an interpretive window, and Peter Schubert, who provided key examples for thinking about structure in sixteenth century polyphony.<sup>15</sup> Andrew Dell'Antonio's *Listening as Spiritual Practice in Early Modern Italy*, in addition, offered a very useful model for thinking about the application of music within larger religious contexts and about strategies of communication between composers, performers, and audiences.<sup>16</sup> Above all, this project required methods of interpretation that could account for connections and resonances between pieces of music and trends from outside artistic, literary, and intellectual culture. My primary musicological model for this type of interpretation is Edward E. Lowinsky, particularly the strategies he outlined in his articles "The Concept of Physical and Musical Space in the Renaissance:(a Preliminary Sketch)" (1941) and "'Music in the Culture of the Renaissance'" (1954).<sup>17</sup> I have also been guided in this arena by insights from the field of art history. In particular, Michael Baxandall's method of object-oriented

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<sup>14</sup> Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice: Architecture, Music, Acoustics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Susan McClary, *Modal Subjectivities: Self-Fashioning in the Italian Madrigal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Margaret Bent, "Diatonic Ficta," *Early Music History* 4 (1984): 1-48; Margaret Bent, *Counterpoint, Composition and Musica Ficta* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Peter Schubert, "Authentic Analysis," *Journal of musicology* 12, no. 1 (1994): 3-18; Peter Schubert, "Hidden Forms in Palestrina's First Book of Four-Voice Motets," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 60, no. 3 (2007): 483-556.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Dell'Antonio, *Listening as Spiritual Practice in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> Both are featured in Edward E. Lowinsky and Bonnie J. Blackburn. *Music in the Culture of the Renaissance and Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

interpretation, which looks at works of art like functional objects and analyzes their “intent” in terms of the problems that they are able to solve, and Dave Hickey’s materially grounded investigation of the social role of artistic culture, have both provided systematic strategies for tracing these intersections that are fascinating in terms of their potential musical applications.<sup>18</sup>

I have received a great deal of guidance and support throughout this process, for which I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude. Thank you, first of all, to my parents, Nancy and Bob Lawson and my sister Sarah, who never failed to support me in my ever-changing childhood curiosity and have never stopped. Heartfelt thanks also to my academic father-figure, Mitchell Morris, who knows better than anyone how to give guidance without ever telling you what to do, to all of my committee members, each of whom has played a major role in shaping this project, and to the UCLA department of musicology, for taking a chance on me and giving me the support to figure out what I wanted to do and how to do it.

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<sup>18</sup> See Dave Hickey, "Buying the World." *Daedalus* 131, no. 4 (2002). and Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

### **Vita:**

Peter Lawson graduated from Brown University with a B.A. in Music in 2004. Then, after spending one year studying with musicologists Leslie Gay, Rachel Golden, and Nasser Al Taei at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, he entered the UCLA musicology department in the Fall of 2006. While at UCLA, he has earned an M.A. (2008) and a C. Phil (2011), presented papers at 2009 conference of the Society for American Music and at the 2014 Interdisciplinary Conference on Venice and Ritual at Princeton University, and worked extensively as a teaching apprentice. He has been awarded two UCLA Summer Research Mentorships (2007 and 2008), the UCLA Department of Musicology “Friends of Musicology” award for outstanding graduate student paper in 2009, and a UCLA Center for 17th- and 18th-Century Studies Predoctoral Fellowship in the Spring of 2013.

## Chapter 1

### Historical Ideology and Ritual Particularity in the Myth of Venice

“Dio si è rivelato come storia, non come un compendio di verità astratte.”<sup>19</sup>

Pope Francis

#### The ingredients of the myth of Venice:

The development of something that could be called a Venetian style in polyphonic music did not occur until the election of *Maestro di cappella* Adriano Willaert in the early sixteenth century. By the time this occurred, a tradition of Franco-Flemish polyphony had been developing in Italy for over one-hundred years, but although Willaert was a product of that tradition, the music that he, and even more-so his successors, produced for the chapel of San Marco, takes a stylistic direction so different from anything previous as to demand an explanation. In part, this may simply be a question of personalities, but it is also rooted in the fact that working within the Church of Venice meant contending with a dense web of myths, ideologies, aesthetics, and religious practices. And all of these were mediated by Venice's unique tradition of public engagement with its own history. This chapter sets out the

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<sup>19</sup> “God has revealed himself as history, not as a compendium of abstract truths.” Antonio Spadaro, “A big heart open to God: The exclusive interview with Pope Francis,” *America Magazine*, 30 (September 2013).

connections between the distinctive elements of Venetian culture, especially with regard to attitudes about art and religion, to the city's history, both as it is understood today and as it was told in Willaert's era. To this end I examine the materials of the central Venetian mythologies of power, permanence, unity, republicanism, divine preference, and spectacle through an investigation of the sources of Venetian distinctiveness in the statecraft, economics, liturgy, and ritual practices of the Republic.

People have been living on the periphery of the Venetian lagoon and using it as a source of fish and salt for many thousands of years, but the process that ultimately led to the city of Venice began in 402 A.D., when groups of refugees took to the islands of the Northern Adriatic, including those of the Venetian lagoon, to escape the Visigothic king Alaric I.<sup>20</sup> These people were initially looking for a temporary refuge rather than new home, and indeed, it was probably a number of years after the city's traditional founding date of 25 March 421 before the lagoon had very many permanent residents.<sup>21</sup> This date, which corresponds to the feast of the Annunciation, a key foundational moment of Christianity, and approximately to the Vernal Equinox, the traditional founding date of Rome, was retained throughout the history of the State both as one of the city's most important and theatrical ritual occasions, despite the fact that it invariably occurred during Lent, and as the first day of the year on the Venetian Calendar.<sup>22</sup> A more factually meaningful foundational moment occurred in 466, when representatives from numerous Adriatic island communities, including but not limited to

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<sup>20</sup> John Julius Norwich, *A History of Venice* (London: Penguin Adult, 2003), 4. Alaric is most well-known for sacking Rome in 410 A.D.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.* p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986). 72, 142, 148.

Venice, met in Grado, a city that sits in its own smaller lagoon about 60 miles to the east, to elect tribunes and organize a rudimentary system of self-government.<sup>23</sup>

Not much information about the Venice's very early history survives, but the first historical mention of Venice's existence, a letter written by the Praetorian prefect Cassiodorus, addressed "to the Tribunes of the Maritime Population," makes it clear that, by the year 537, many of the patterns that would characterize Venetian life for over a millennium were already firmly in place, and that the Venetians had already acquired a reputation for nautical prowess. In this document, Cassiodorus touches on many of what would become commonplaces of Venetian veneration in the coming centuries in his characteristically purple prose. The author first praises the Venetians for their expert seamanship, calling them, "you who often cross boundless distances," and, "who in your voyages traverse your own home."<sup>24</sup> He then goes on to express his amazement with the construction of Venetian ships, the keels of which supposedly, "touch the earth with the greatest pleasure, and cannot perish however frequently they may come in contact with it."<sup>25</sup> Cassiodorus also comments on these maritime communities' engineering, economics, and constitution, the three factors that would be most foregrounded in the myth-building of the sixteenth century. First, the author turns to the Venetians' homes, built on land which is "not the product of nature, but cemented by the care of man into a firm foundation."<sup>26</sup> The incredible stone and brick edifices of Venice were still centuries in the future at this time, but the methods of construction on vertically submerged

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<sup>23</sup> J. J. Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 6.

By this point, after yet another Sack of Rome by Vandals in 455, the institutions of the empire were utterly in shambles and could no longer be counted on even for minimal governance.

<sup>24</sup> Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus, *The Letters of Cassiodorus* (Middlesex: Echo Library, 2006), 387.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.* p. 388.



posts that ultimately made them possible were already being developed. It is remarkable for Cassiodorus to have drawn attention to them at this early date.

For the remainder of the letter, Cassiodorus focusses his attention on the two cornerstones of the early Venetian economy: fish and salt. He seems particularly struck by the abundant food supply provided by the lagoon and by its power as a social equalizer.

“Poverty,” he writes, “may associate itself with wealth on equal terms,” as “one kind of food refreshes all.”<sup>27</sup> Even the homes of rich and poor, all being the kind of low-slung wooden structures that it was then possible to build on the sandy, boggy soil, astound Cassiodorus for their equality. All this leads the author to gush that the casual abundance and moderate style of the Venetians allows them to be free of envy, “that vice to which all the rest of the world is liable.”<sup>28</sup> Too be sure, the idea of Venice as a society with few distinctions between rich and poor, if it ever truly existed, would not be long-lived. However, the reliability of the lagoon as a food source for all strata of society would remain a cornerstone of Venetian political security and constitutional stability throughout the city’s history, and the idea of all Venetians being invested together, across class lines, in a unique enterprise, while perhaps laced with hopeful naiveté, would remain a commonplace of Venetian rhetoric. Finally, on the subject of salt, Cassiodorus begins to hint at what would become the ultimate cornerstone of Venice’s reputation in the medieval and early-modern worlds, its fabulous wealth and potential as an economic engine. Rather than ploughing fields or herding livestock, he muses, the Venetians make their harvest yet another assertion of their mastery over the sea, so that “every wave is a bondservant.”<sup>29</sup> Salt had apparently already become so central to the Venetian economy that

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<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

Cassiodorus states that their money had might as well be minted out of it, which, he notes, wouldn't be such a bad thing, as some people might not care for gold, but everyone wants salt.<sup>30</sup>

The tone of Cassiodorus's letter indicates a desire to project a certain degree of diplomatic deference in dealing with a new entity on the verge of becoming a major center of power in the Mediterranean world. However, from the document's primary purpose, instructing the Venetians to prepare to deliver a tithe of olive oil from Istria to Ravenna, it is also apparent that the author fundamentally regarded his addressees as subjects. It is worth noting explicitly that, despite the mythological structures built up to assert the contrary, Venice was at no point in its early history an independent state. At the time of its earliest settlement, the lagoon was still under the jurisdiction of the western Roman Empire, which continued to wield power in Italy despite being nominally subservient to the Eastern Emperors. The conquest of Italy under the Eastern Emperor Zeno and his Ostrogothic agent Theoderic the Great brought Venice into more direct Byzantine rule under the jurisdiction of the Exarch (frontier governor) of Ravenna.<sup>31</sup> This era of Byzantine dominance of Venice was to last for over three hundred years, during which time the rise of the kingdom of Lombardy reduced the area of Imperial influence in northern Italy to a tiny sliver of the Adriatic coast from Venice down to Ravenna.<sup>32</sup>

Due to their maritime enterprises, Venetians had much more direct contact with their colonial masters than was typical of a backwoods province, and this connection with the cosmopolitan center of Constantinople was crucial to the development of Venetian culture.

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> James A.S. Evans, *The Age of Justinian: The Circumstances of Imperial Power* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 22-23.

<sup>32</sup> J. J. Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 13.

Young Venetian men who could afford to do so travelled to the capital to be educated, and many of them returned with Byzantine brides. Venetian politicians began to take on byzantine titles and honorifics to boost their authority and to model their dress on that of Byzantine governors or even the Emperor himself. Venetian religion also evolved more and more into a self-conscious reflection of Byzantine practice, with prayers and liturgy following the currents of St. Sophia, and later ducal ceremonies and processions mirroring those of the imperial chapel.<sup>33</sup> Gradually, the doge of Venice would take on a role as a kind of secular figurehead and ceremonial centerpiece of the state church, which was directly modeled on that of the emperor.

All of this is crucial to an understanding of the cultural and political background of the republic of Venice. It is, however, also extremely important to remember that the idea of a Venice and a Venetian people that had lived in complete liberty for over one thousand years was absolutely central to Venetian identity in the sixteenth century, and there seems to have been no end to the amount of massaging and rearranging of facts in which Venetian historians were willing to engage for the purpose of maintaining that mythology. Part of the reason for this necessity can be detected in the words of the late-sixteenth century Venetian writer Paolo Paruta, who wrote in his *Political Discourses*, that Venice was able to attain “such a height of perfection... ..because that city was free-born, and was from the very beginning ordered according to the true civil end, to wit, to peace and concord, and to the union of her citizens.”<sup>34</sup> In this, Paruta was almost certainly being influenced by Machiavelli’s comment in Book I Chapter 49 of the *Discourses*, that “if those cities that have had their beginning free and

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<sup>33</sup> *ibid.* p. 16.

<sup>34</sup> Paulo Paruta and H. Carey. *Politick Discourses ... Wherunto Is Added, a Short Soliloquy ... Rendred into English by the Right Honorable, Henry Earl of Monmouth. [with a Portrait of the Translator.]* (London: Moseley, 1657), 12.

that have been corrected by themselves, like Rome, have great difficulty in finding good laws for maintaining themselves free, it is not marvelous that the cities that have had their beginnings immediately servile have not difficulty, but an impossibility in ever ordering themselves so that they may be able to live civilly and quietly.”<sup>35</sup>

Both of the above quotations are inflected with the currents of sixteenth century humanism, but they are rooted in the much older Aristotelian principle that bodies tend to return to their natural state.<sup>36</sup> Within such a framework, or at least one possible interpretation of it, a free-born city may be temporarily subjugated and vice versa, but the pull of the state of origin will always win out in the end. Clearly then, for the myth-builders of Venice, a free origin was a crucial prerequisite to a mythology of permanence. Already in the very first known history of Venice, written by John the Deacon in the eleventh century, this imperative can be seen to be in effect. John’s *Chronicon Sagornini*, and many other sources that followed, lists Paolo Lucio Anafesto as the first doge of Venice, elected in 697. According to the research of the modern historian John Norwich, this man was actually an eighth century Byzantine Exarch. The actual first historically confirmed doge, Orso Ipato, was elected, along with new dukes in many other areas under Byzantine control, as part of a widespread uprising to resist the first iconoclasm in 726.<sup>37</sup> An origin story for the highest office of the Republic that hinges on a rebellion against an outside authority, especially one that ultimately ended with a return to the status quo, was simply not compatible with the most crucial

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<sup>35</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, N., B.R. Crick, and L.J. Walker, *The Discourses* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003) 100.

<sup>36</sup> This idea remained a part of the scientific mainstream until Newton’s theories began to provide another way of talking about why a stone falls to earth, fire rises to the sky, and objects in space move in approximate circles.

<sup>37</sup> J. J. Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 13. Curiously, Exarch Paul was killed attempting to put down this rebellion.

ideologies of the State, and this helps to explain why Venetian historians were so willing to ignore the evidence for Byzantine origins that was all around them.<sup>38</sup>

The historical moment of independence actually occurred after Venice had existed in some form for over three-hundred years, but not as a coherent city. Until this point, Venice had been an extremely loose network of Island and coastal mainland communities, each ruled by a separately elected Tribune, and collectively referred to in Latin as *Venetiae* (in the plural).<sup>39</sup> Depending on location, population, and other factors, these communities had different priorities, which often clashed with one-another so that, by the sixth century, open skirmishes between settlements were not uncommon.<sup>40</sup> The establishment of the office of doge, which provided a single leader to mediate disputes, may have alleviated the situation somewhat. However, the early seats of ducal power were the ancient mainland city of Heraclea (today: Eraclea) and the town of Malamocco on the Lido peninsula (from 742), both somewhat removed from the burgeoning republican-leaning culture that was developing in the lagoon, and this may have slowed the process of unification.

This spatial diffusion gave the Venice of the first few centuries a very different character than that of the past thousand years or so, and it is thus curious to note that the arrival of Venetian independence and relative Venetian unity occurred at more or less the same time as the arrival of a Venice that would be more or less recognizable in its basic form to people in the sixteenth century, or today. The Realtine island group, the largest landmass in the Lagoon, which today is practically synonymous with Venice, stood largely vacant until

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<sup>38</sup> References to Paolo Lucio Anafesto as the first doge of Venice abound, not only in early-modern sources, but even in books written in the last ten years.

<sup>39</sup> As opposed to the present-day singular latin name, *Venetia*.

<sup>40</sup> J. J. Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 12.

the eighth century. Unlike the other relatively solid, sandy islands of the lagoon, the Rialto<sup>41</sup> consisted of low-slung muddy bogs that were difficult to access due to the treacherous shallows of the lagoon and



Bird's-eye view of Venice by Gabriel Bucelin - 1649-1650  
Württembergische Landesbibliothek, HB V 15 fol 538r

frequently submerged by

the extreme high tides (*Acqua Alta*) of the Adriatic.<sup>42</sup> For these reasons, early Venetians had understandably ignored it until around 775, when, prompted by population increase, disgust with the constant infighting, and very likely concern over the recent Frankish invasion of Italy, settlement began there in earnest.

Movement to the Rialto brought several fundamental changes to Venetian society. Most importantly, it forced people from disparate communities, occupations, and social strata into relatively close quarters, enforcing some level of civility and making it more difficult for rivalries and disagreements to lead to large-scale violence.<sup>43</sup> In addition, the difficulty of

<sup>41</sup> Technically the Rialto is only one of several islands, but the name has frequently been used as a short-hand for the entire group, as I will be using it from here on out. PL

<sup>42</sup> J. J. Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 18.

<sup>43</sup> In many cases these rivalries remained in effect, but took on a ritualized form. This can be seen most famously in the traditional enmity between two factions of Venetian Popolani: the Nicoletti, who lived in the western Rialto near the church of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli and were primarily fisherfolk, and the Castellani, boat-builders who lived in Castello. These groups would fight yearly battles for the possession of a bridge, called the *Ponte dei pugni* or Bridge of fists, which, while still quite violent, was fought with sharpened sticks and fists in lieu of conventional weapons. Such festivals were controversial, but still practiced, in the sixteenth century.

Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 100.

see R.C. Davis, *The War of the Fists: Popular Culture and Public Violence in Late Renaissance Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

making the Rialto livable required an unprecedented level of governmental organization and communal cooperation. From the beginning, the cultivation of the Rialto was a massive undertaking involving cutting and shoring up canals, reclaiming and bolstering land, and pounding pilings into the soft ground for construction, and it was through these endeavors that many of the unique structures and customs of Venetian civic society were formed.

The rise of the Rialto was also central to the origins of Venetian independence. By the year 805 the Franks had conquered nearly all of northern Italy, including the former Exarchate of Ravenna, which they donated to the Church to form the original papal states. When, in 810 A.D., Venice was attacked by Pepin of Italy, son of Charlemagne, it was the inaccessible<sup>44</sup> refuge of the Rialto, to which all but the necessary defenders had fled, that ultimately turned the tables, forcing Pepin to resort to trying to starve the Venetians out with a blockade, which was unsuccessful due to the fertility of the lagoon.<sup>45</sup> Technically, Venice would remain under the protection of Constantinople for some time, but it was no longer viable for the Byzantines to take an active role in governance.<sup>46</sup> It is not completely clear when the Byzantine emperors finally gave up their claims to Venice, but a chrysobull<sup>47</sup> written in 992 by Emperor Basil II, which describes Venetians as outsiders rather than subjects, seems to imply that the republic enjoyed full independence by that time.<sup>48</sup>

In the following centuries, bolstered by their strong relations with the powerful Byzantine empire, Venetians continued to develop their traditions of maritime commerce,

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<sup>44</sup> The Venetians had removed all buoys and navigational aids before Pepin's arrival

<sup>45</sup> According to legend, the Venetians pelted Pepin's troops with bread in order to show him the futility of his efforts.

<sup>46</sup> J. J. Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 23-4.

<sup>47</sup> A decree sealed with the golden calf emblem of the Byzantine emperors.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas F. Madden, *Enrico Dandolo and the Rise of Venice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 4.

already noted by Cassiodorus in the sixth century. Many Venetian families gained incredible fortunes from this tradition, but within the ideological structures of the State, trade gradually came to be regarded as so integral that, for medieval and early-modern Venetians, there was no clear distinction between public service and private enterprise. The seventeenth-century diplomat Thomas de Fougasses outlined this concept in his massive 1608 history of the Republic.<sup>49</sup> As he described, Lacking lands to cultivate, the early Venetians determined to send their young men, “into sundry places of Christendom, and of the Infidels,... ..to learn them navigation, and other matters belonging to the sea.... Some of them remained for a long time among those foreign nations, negotiating for themselves and others, whereby, besides the great wealth which they purchased, they made themselves fit by experience for great matters, so as returning afterwards to Venice they readily executed all matters committed to them.”<sup>50</sup> Young men of the Venetian aristocracy were expected to begin their careers as Fougasses describes, by serving within the family business, often staying for years at distant ports, negotiating deals and generally supporting Venetian interests. Those who excelled at that then moved on to serve the republic more directly from within the Venetian diplomatic corps., which served as a jumping-off point to the power centers of Venetian government. This system helped to prevent factionalism by forcing potential leaders to prove their dedication to the state before entering positions of power, and it allowed trading families to divide their

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<sup>49</sup> Thomas de Fougasses’s 1608 publication, *Histoire Generale De Venise...*, was an early attempt to construct a comprehensive and comparative history of the republic. Written at a time when a tremendous interest in things Venetian was being generated, particularly in the protestant north, by the recent interdict (mass excommunication) of the entire State by pope Paul V, and presumably for that reason, Fougasses devotes particular attention to tracing the history of the Venetian/Papal relationship. This work, particularly in an English translation prepared by William Shute and published in 1612, was extremely influential as a vector of the myth of Venice and set the stage for other popular translations of works by Paulo Paruta, Andrea Palladio, Fra. Paolo Sarpi, and many other Venetian writers during the seventeenth century.

Thomas de Fougasses and W. Shute. *The Generall Historie of the Magnificent State of Venice: From the First Foundation Thereof Vntill This Present* (London: G. Eld, and W. Stansby, 1612).

<sup>50</sup> Thomas de Fougasses and W. Shute. *The Generall Historie of the Magnificent State of Venice*, 117.



energies between public and private matters by giving young people primary responsibility for business issues and letting the old focus their attentions on more universal matters.

This training program was necessitated by the evolution of a system of government, which developed in complement with the Venetian economy. Many of the Venetian families who grew extremely wealthy from trade gradually began to style themselves *Nobili* and to construct fanciful genealogies, claiming ancestors among the lagoons original settlers as well as the nobility of ancient Rome.<sup>51</sup> These rising Nouveau riche probably wielded considerable power within their *sestieri* [Venetian administrative units], which were then still isolated and largely independent communities, but it would take some time before this *de facto* aristocracy could compete with the power of the doge. From the outset, the position of doge was, at least in principle, an elected one, and even though several early doges were able to pull nepotistic strings in order to ensure dynastic succession, no family succeeded in maintaining rule for more than two successive generations.<sup>52</sup> The power of these doges was also limited by two attending tribunes who were elected with the specific mandate of preventing abuses.<sup>53</sup> There was also, from at least the early ninth century, a general assembly called the *Arengo* or *Concio*, open to all male citizens, which was the conceptual zenith of power in the republic. Expressions of its power were, however, largely limited to the confirmation of new doges and the formation of uprisings to remove those who failed to pass muster by force, as happened no less than six times between 804 and 1032.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Thomas F. Madden, *Enrico Dandolo and the Rise of Venice*, 2.

<sup>52</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 252.

<sup>53</sup> J. J. Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 34.

<sup>54</sup> S.E. Finer, *The History of Government from the Earliest Times: The Intermediate Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 987.

The aristocratic republican form of the mature Venetian State had its beginnings in a ducal council known as “the good men” or “the faithful,” featuring members of families from both factions, begins to appear in documents dating from the reign of doge Tribuno Menio (979-91).<sup>55</sup> This group was, at least initially, still in a subservient position to the doge, but the role of these 131 representatives as signatories to government documents implies at least a drive to give this new body the appearance of authority. Over the next few centuries, the merchant class gradually managed to leverage its power against both the doge<sup>56</sup> and the general populace,<sup>57</sup> and Venetian politics came to be increasingly dominated by smaller councils made up of its members. These included the *Consiglio dei Savii* (1143), which became the *Consiglio Grande* and ultimately functioned like an *Arengo* of the nobility, the *Pregadi* or Senate (1229), the court of the *Quarantia* (the Forty: 1207); and the *Consiglio dei dieci* (Council of Ten: 1310), a highly secretive security council, and most importantly, the *Signoria* (Authority), which evolved from the Tribunes of the city’s origins and were, through their control over the agendas for the Senate and Great Council, the most influential body in the

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<sup>55</sup> Thomas F. Madden, *Enrico Dandolo and the Rise of Venice*, 3-4.

<sup>56</sup> Dynastic succession was banned in 1032. S.E. Finer, *The History of Government from the Earliest Times: The Intermediate Ages*, 987.

After 1130, the regal ducal emblem of the scepter was replaced with the banner of saint Mark, which was explicitly posited as a symbol of the republic in general rather than of the individual head.

Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 253.

<sup>57</sup> The *Arengo*, which was Venice’s largest and most widely representative governing council, lost its right to directly elect the doge through highly dramatic circumstances in 1172, when doge Vital II Michiel, having been lured into a Byzantine trap, brought his fleet home ravaged by plague. When it became clear that he had not allowed his navy to be decimated for no gain but also brought the disease into the city, an angry mob exploded and stabbed the doge to death while he was attempting to flee, the first ducal assassination the republic had experienced in over two-hundred years. Although the entire city had apparently been outraged at Michiel to the point that his own councilors had abandoned him to his fate, in the shock that followed it was the populace who were scapegoated. When a meeting was called to choose a successor to Michiel, the result was not the election of a new doge, but rather an eleven member electoral college. The *Arengo* was never called upon to choose a doge again, and eventually they even lost the right of selecting a council of electors. The council was eliminated altogether in 1423.

Thomas F. Madden, *Enrico Dandolo and the Rise of Venice*, 90-91.

J. J. Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 108-109.

Venetian government.<sup>58</sup> Doges had a seat on each of these councils, and in this way they continued to hold some real power in the State, but it was only in the context of a group, as a *primus inter pares*, that this power could be wielded. Their ability to act as individual monarchs, at least in matters of governance, had been effectively stripped.

The final major step in the development of the modern Venetian Republic was the *serrata*, or closing of the aristocracy. Despite the fact that Venetian elites had been describing themselves as “*Nobili*” for some time, until the end of the thirteenth century there was no officially sanctioned concept of nobility in the republic.<sup>59</sup> It is not difficult to understand how the idea of establishing a permanent hereditary political class may have appealed to Venetian merchant families. First of all, it strengthened the Venetian claim of descent from the nobility of ancient Rome and linked the Republic to what was at the time generally regarded as a positive aspect of Roman society. Also, across Europe in the thirteenth century concepts of hereditary nobility were becoming more widespread and more ideologically tied to the personal virtues we associate with the word today, and members of this developing international aristocracy were increasingly regarding themselves as a class apart.<sup>60</sup>

The *Serrata* seems to have begun as an effort by doge Pietro Gradenigo (1289-1311) to dramatically expand the size of the *Consiglio Grande* to make room for several new families

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<sup>58</sup> Élisabeth Crouzet-Pavan and L.G. Cochrane, *Venice Triumphant: The Horizons of a Myth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 204.

<sup>59</sup> Gerhard Rösch: "The Serrata of the Great Council and Venetian Society, 1286-1323," in *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297-1797*, ed. John Jeffries Martin and Dennis Romano (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 68.

<sup>60</sup> M. Barber, *The Two Cities: Medieval Europe, 1050-1320* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 42.

who had distinguished themselves in the Second Genoese War (1294-99).<sup>61</sup> These measures led to a near doubling of the size of the Council, which went from 589 members in 1297 to 1,150 in 1311, but they were followed by a series of laws making membership less attainable to newcomers. A final round of reforms in 1321-23 resulted in the basic shape of the constitution that would remain in effect for as long as the republic existed. From that point on, all men over the age of 21 whose grandfathers had sat on the *Consiglio* were granted automatic membership, and only in extreme cases were new families admitted.<sup>62</sup>

The process of the *Serrata* ultimately led to a drastic expansion of the Venetian ruling class and a much broader representation of the populace in government, but it also closed off many of the avenues that had previously been available to bring new families into the political elite.<sup>63</sup> A new, non-voting class of *citadini* (citizens) was instituted and became increasingly important after the *Serrata*, but what few democratic gestures had once existed, such as the mass approval of a newly elected doge, were reduced to the purely symbolic and gradually eliminated.<sup>64</sup> Also, significantly, the new importance of genealogy in determining eligibility led to the need for a record of *sapienti* family histories; this record, kept by the Court of the

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<sup>61</sup> Gerhard Rösch: "The Serrata of the Great Council and Venetian Society, 1286-1323," 70.

Due to the confusion over the dating of the *Serrata*, Gradenigo has frequently been remembered by historians as a highly conservative leader who aimed to bar the populace from participation in government, perhaps in retribution for popular uprisings in 1266 and 1275. In fact, resolutions to rigidify Council membership were rejected by Gradenigo at least twice during his dogeship, and most of the elements of the *Serrata* that prevented new families from entering the political class were enacted after his time.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.* pp. 75.

The actual minimum age for council membership was 18, and a few names of noble men under 21 were drawn by lot.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.* pp. 76.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.* p. 83.

Forty, although it may not have been conceived of in this way from the start, formed the basis for what would become the officially sanctioned nobility of Venice.<sup>65</sup>

For Venetian historians of the sixteenth century, who tended to view excessive popular participation as a root cause of decline in both the Roman and Florentine republics, this tradition of insular governance was seen as one of the Republic's greatest strengths. These humanist writers followed the lead of Niccolò Machiavelli, who wrote in his *Discourses* that the three pure forms of government: democracy, aristocracy, and principality, while not inherently bad, are fundamentally flawed due to their tendency to devolve into anarchy, oligarchy, and tyranny respectively.<sup>66</sup> For this reason, he writes, "prudent legislators, aware of their defects, refrained from adopting as such any one of these forms, and chose instead one that shared in them all, since they thought such a government would be stronger and more stable, for if in one and the same state there was principality, aristocracy, and democracy each would keep watch over the other."<sup>67</sup> This notion of a "mixed constitution," in which no force went unchecked by another, had an inherent appeal to the Venetian aesthetic.

One of Machiavelli's most conflicted admirers, Venetian state historiographer Paolo Paruta (1540-1598), who published his own set of *Discourses*<sup>68</sup> near the turn of the seventeenth century, explained this in terms of the then-current medical doctrine of the humors.

And as if falls out in our bodies, which being compounded of four elements, continue so long in life, as that proportion is maintained, which when it is destroyed, they are likewise wasted and corrupted; (for that part which becomes

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<sup>65</sup> *ibid.* p. 75.

<sup>66</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, N., B.R. Crick, and L.J. Walker, *The Discourses*, 75.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.* p. 109.

<sup>68</sup> Paolo Paruta, *Discorsi Politici Di Paolo Paruta: Nei Quali Si Considerano Diversi Fatti Illustri, E Memorabili Di Principi, E Di Repubbliche Antiche, E Moderne; Divise in Due Libri. Aggiuntovi Nel Fine Un Suo Soliloquio, Nelquale L'auttore Fa Un Breve Essame Di Tutto Il Corso Della Sua Vita* (Venice: Nicolini, 1599).

too prevalent, changeth the rest into its self, and dissolves the form which they made when all together:) So that commonwealth which is composed of diverse parts, may continue in one and the same state, as long as the authority of Government is proportioned with **equal temperament**, as it ought to be, to each part. But as soon as any one part begins to domineer too much, it is apparent that she grows towards corruption: For the prevalent part by consuming the rest, doth by little and little reduce them all into itself, and alters the aspect of the city.<sup>69</sup>

The appeal of this notion, which seemed to offer a recipe for everlasting good government, is clear, but so are its limitations when applied to Venice, a state in which one rigidly defined social class, the maritime nobility, had to stand in for the popular, aristocratic, and monarchical aspect of government. Even Paruta seems to acknowledge this issue when he writes that Venice's "excellent form of government, [] though it be mixed, hath little in it of popular government, and much of the Optimati."<sup>70</sup> While it would not be inaccurate to refer to early-modern Venice as an aristocracy, albeit an unusual one in terms of the number and proportion of enfranchised citizens, the importance of this idea of a balance of powers to Venetian identity and mythology in the sixteenth century was immense.

For this reason, the *Serrata*, which seemed to secure the center against incursion by both doge and populous, was increasingly regarded as the foundational moment of the modern republic, and the officially sanctioned nobility it created was increasingly held as an object of fetishization.<sup>71</sup> This is especially apparent from the decision made in 1526 to transform the official list of noble families, previously a simple record kept by the *Quaranta*, into a lavishly decorated golden-bound book, the *Libro d'oro*, that came to be regarded as a central document

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<sup>69</sup> Paulo Paruta and H. Carey. *Politick Discourses*, 3.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.* p. 54.

<sup>71</sup> Gerhard Rösch: "The Serrata of the Great Council and Venetian Society, 1286-1323," 69.

of the Venetian constitution. A comment from a discussion of the *Serrata* by sixteenth-century genealogist Marco Barbaro helps to explain the point of view behind this sacralization. As he wrote, “when we speak of or write simply about a Venetian citizen [*semplicemente cittadino Veneto*],” he writes, “we mean and intend a citizen who is not eligible to be a member of the Great Council even if his father had been the emperor. And when we speak or write about a noble citizen [*nobile cittadino*], we mean and intend by it a citizen who is, or is eligible to be, in the Great Council, even if his father, before he was raised to the dignity, had been of the most vile lineage.”<sup>72</sup> There are certainly some weaknesses to Barbaro’s statement. In truth, the Venetian republic did have a habit of granting noble status to high-profile foreigners such as the Gonzagas of Mantua, the d’Estes of Ferrara, and the della Scalas of Verona.<sup>73</sup> Nobles of humble parentage were also considerably less likely in post-*Serrata* Venice than Barbaro seems to imply. It was not unheard-of, in the event of extraordinary service to the republic, for new names to be added to the closed nobility, such as those of the 38 new families after the war of Chioggia in 1381, but these were invariably the names of *cittadino* families that had been in Venice for generations and were sufficiently wealthy and established to be commanding ships of war.<sup>74</sup>

Nonetheless, Barbaro’s central message is a powerful one: it doesn’t matter who a person is in the outside world, his or her status in Venice is a question to be decided by Venetians and on Venetian terms. There can be little question that the *Serrata* was, at least to some degree, a power play by the old powerful families who wished to preempt competition

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<sup>72</sup> Quoted in Rösch, pp. 69-70.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.* p. 76.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.* p. 77. It is highly likely that the addition of new noble families in 1381 had as much to do with the population decline of the Black Death thirty years before as it did with honoring service to the republic in war.

from the *nouveau riche*, but facing this issue head on also allowed Venetians to define their own concept of nobility for themselves, based on service to the republic, whether personal or ancestral. Elements of defiant self-determination such as this one loomed large in the sixteenth century, when Venetian civic pride was largely built on the republic's defiant insistence on continuing to do things, whether in government, religion, economics, or architecture, in its own unmistakably Venetian way, despite immense streamlining and homogenizing pressures from without.

### **Spectacle and Self-Assertion in Venetian Ritual Traditions: The Church of Venice**

It was, however, Venice's distinctive religious traditions, and the immense web of historical and ideological content that was gradually built up around them, through which all of the other myths of Venice were filtered. This was particularly so in the sixteenth century, when, due to homogenizing trends in religious practice and political tensions with the papacy, Venetian assertions of independence in both liturgy and ritual spectacle took on an especially defiant character. Although the first settlers of the lagoon certainly brought their Church with them, Venice's rise as an important religious locale began with the Lombard invasion of Italy in 568 A.D., when the Patriarch of Aquileia was forced to flee to Grado.<sup>75</sup> Due to its legendary foundation by St. Mark the evangelist, Aquileia had long been the center of religious life in the region, and after this move the weight of that status was shifted onto the Adriatic lagoons.

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<sup>75</sup> Garry Wills, *Venice: Lion City: The Religion of Empire* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2002), 29. The bishop of Aquileia had begun styling himself Patriarch during the Schism of The Three Chapters, which had occurred just fifteen years before. Not long after, the Lombards set up their own rival Patriarchate in Aquileia, which maintained an intense rivalry with Grado for centuries. The Patriarchate of Grado ultimately moved to San Pietro di Castello in Venice in 1457. see J. J. Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 11.



Soon, the people of the lagoons began altering their mythologies to embrace this new status. Most significantly, a new version of the story of St. Mark's mission appeared, in which the apostle stopped to rest on an island on his way to Aquileia and experienced a vision of a great city dedicated to his patronage.<sup>76</sup> Curiously, however, it was not Grado, but Venice where this incident supposedly took place. The relationship between Venice and Mark, who was rapidly replacing the Byzantine martyr Theodore of Amasea as the city's patron saint, would come to define the life, institutions, and status of the republic's developing state church. This status owes in large part to a daring heist that is traditionally held to have taken place in 828, when two Venetian merchants, Buono of Malamocco and Rustico of Torcello, supposedly concerned for the safety of St. Mark's remains under Muslim rule in Alexandria,<sup>77</sup> conspired with the Greek priests of the sanctuary to smuggle them out of the city under a layer of raw pork to discourage inspection.<sup>78</sup> It must be mentioned that the earliest extant traces of Venetian Marcian lore come to us from sources dating from a century or more after this event supposedly took place. Thus, it is highly possible that Venetians concocted the story of Mark's sojourn in the lagoon after the fact to bolster the Venetian claim to his remains. Also it goes without saying that no evidence exists that the remains that were brought, if remains

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<sup>76</sup> *ibid.* pp. 29-30.

<sup>77</sup> Alexandria had been under muslim rule for 183 years by this time. However, some Christian sites had apparently been ransacked in riots, and a revolt involving both Copts and malcontent Muslims had broken out the same year, so it is conceivable that there could have been legitimate fears of a blowback against Christians from the Caliphate. H.H. Johnston, *A History of the Colonization of Africa by Alien Races* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 70.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas. J. Craughwell, *Saints Preserved* (New York: Random House, 2011), 199. Some versions of the story have Mark's remains smuggled in kegs of lard, which would probably have actually been a more effective strategy.

were brought at all, were actually those of Saint Mark.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, the version of events related above was sacred fact to Venetians of the sixteenth century.<sup>80</sup>

In early medieval Christianity, the translation of important relics, even if carried out intentionally, was taken as a sign of a profound relationship between the saint and the location of translation, and the supposed presence of apostolic remains in Venice was an honor with which no Church in Europe other than that of Rome and Santiago de Compostela, whose claim relied on machinations even more precarious than Venice's, could compete. This gave the Republic a unique opportunity to develop its Church along lines of its own choosing. An indication that the early Venetians understood this opportunity is that they did not choose to house Mark's remains in a parish church, which would have placed them fundamentally under the control of the Church hierarchy rather than that of the State. Instead, in the construction of the Cappella San Marco, Venetians devised a new kind of hybrid civic and religious institution. Directly adjacent to the ducal palace, San Marco was technically the private chapel of the doge.<sup>81</sup> Functionally, however, the chapel operated more like an urban cathedral, serving as a common center for the disjunct religious life of the city and offering a rallying point to unite the various parishes.<sup>82</sup> Since 774 the city had been home to an actual

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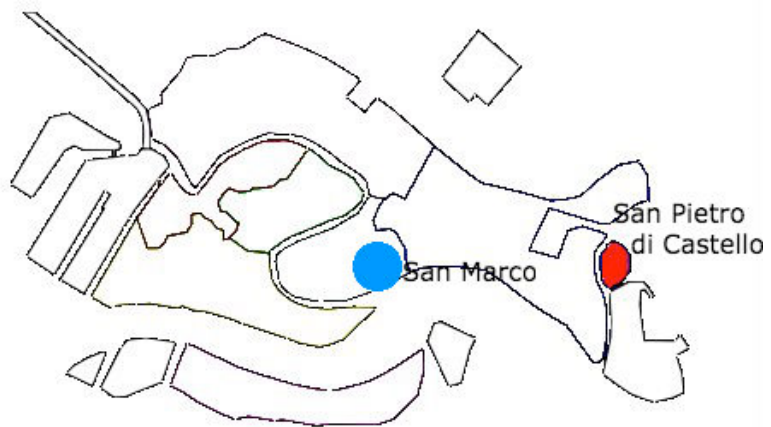
<sup>79</sup> Janet Sethre, *The Souls of Venice* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2003), 28.

<sup>80</sup> Whether or not there is any truth to the story of the translation of Saint Mark, it must be understood in the context of the rivalry between Aquileia and the Maritime lagoons over which was the legitimate heir of the evangelist's Church. Early on, the lagoons had the upper hand because the unorthodox Arianist doctrines of the Lombards had kept them on the outs with the mainstream church. After the invasion of the Franks, who were on particularly good terms with the Church of Rome, this situation had changed significantly, and the Council of Mantua, which was held in 826 A.D., had strengthened the Aquileian claim significantly. Thus, an orchestrated translation of key relics the very next year, whether actually carried out or simply claimed, may be read as a strategic counter-play on Venice's part. *ibid.* p. 29.

<sup>81</sup> Iain Fenlon, *Piazza San Marco* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 22.

<sup>82</sup> Since 1807, San Marco has actually been the Cathedral of Venice, replacing San Pietro di Castello, but this was not the case before.

cathedral, situated on the tiny island of Olivolo (Later renamed San Pietro di Castello). However, rather by intention or happy accident, this basilica was located as far from the centers of city life as was possible within the Rialto



Locations of San Marco and San Pietro di Castello on the Rialto

island group, making it easier for San Marco to fill this niche.<sup>83</sup> This situation allowed the Venetian state an unusual degree of influence over the religious lives of the people in their city.

This influence was a valuable tool, and thus direct and uncompromised State control of San Marco came to be regarded as an essential asset to be guarded with the highest priority of the government. For instance, in 1580, when a busybody cleric attempted to go outside the chain of command to petition Rome to bring the chapel into the Church hierarchy, he was told in an angry letter from the Council of Ten that, “You have managed to offend, in *the dearest thing we have*, which is the absolute authority over the Church of S. Mark.” (Italics mine)<sup>84</sup> There were significant practical reasons why ensuring that the first allegiance of San Marco was to the State was a particular priority in Venice. The nature of Venetian economics made it necessary for the republic to maintain trading relationships with people who were seen by the Roman Church and much of Christian Europe as enemies: the Eastern Orthodox

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<sup>83</sup> Even in today’s densely packed Venice, the eastern section of Castello, with its private lawns, large wooded parks, sporting venues, and ship yards, seems comparatively empty.

<sup>84</sup> Entire letter transcribed in Camillo Boito and W. Scott, *The Basilica of S. Mark in Venice: Illustrated from the Points of View of Art and History* (Venice: F. Ongania, 1888), 96-97.

“heretics” (after the Great Schism of 1054) of the Byzantine empire; and especially the Islamic sultanates of Arabia, North Africa, and eventually Ottoman Turkey. To the pragmatic Venetians, this policy was justified, as one put it, “because we cannot live otherwise and know not how except by trade,” but maintaining relationships outside of the western Christian communion made them vulnerable to scapegoating by the Roman Church.<sup>85</sup> Medieval and Early-Modern Venetians were, nevertheless, highly religious, and the potential for an organized program of chastisement, or worse, the denial of sacraments posed a serious threat to morale. A state affiliated church staffed with clerics who could be instructed not to rail against the livelihood of its congregation and who would continue to maintain the religious well-being of the republic without regard to Rome was, thus, an essential asset, which helped the city to hold together in defiance against papal interdicts (mass excommunications) in 1201, 1282, 1309, 1482-4, 1509, and 1606-7.<sup>86</sup>

The San Marco that currently stands is actually the third version that was begun during the reign of doge Domenico I Contarini (1043-71) and consecrated in 1094, and no images have survived to give a clear idea of what the first two may have looked like.<sup>87</sup> However, evidence suggests that, while considerably more modest in scale, they were probably, like the current structure, built on the model of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople.<sup>88</sup> The Apostoleion, as it was called in Greek, had several features that seem

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<sup>85</sup> Frederick C. Lane, B.G. Kohl, and R.C. Mueller, *Studies in Venetian Social and Economic History* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1987), 105.

<sup>86</sup> William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty: Renaissance Values in the Age of the Counter Reformation*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968). 80.

<sup>87</sup> Sarah Bonnemaison and Christine Macy, *Festival Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 86.

<sup>88</sup> Iain Fenlon, *Piazza San Marco*, 21. Second only to the Hagia Sophia among the churches of Constantinople, the Church of the Holy Apostles was destroyed in 1461. The Fatih Mosque stands in its footprint in modern-day Istanbul.

to parallel San Marco. It was originally constructed by Constantine and rebuilt by Justinian in 550 to house the remains of St. Andrew, who had essentially the same role in the lore of Constantinople as Mark in Venice.<sup>89</sup> Also, despite not being the most hierarchically important church in the city, it bore a special relationship to the eastern emperors that might be compared to that which existed between the doges and San Marco.

What is curious about this choice is why the Venetians chose to build their grand edifice in what was, by this time, an extremely antiquated style when other Byzantine borrowings in the same era tended to follow more up-to-date models like the Hagia Sophia.<sup>90</sup> By selecting an architectural style from over a half-millennium before, it seems that the Venetians were not so much trying to emphasize their connection to the Byzantine empire, an institution from which they were, by this time, interested in asserting their independence, but rather to the empire's golden age and to its two most notable leaders, Constantine and Justinian. In effect, by linking their republic to foundation and rise of Constantinople rather than to its current state they were revealing their ambition, looking forward to their republic's own rise to power on the Mediterranean, and positing themselves as a new, better Constantinople. Venetian politicians, artists, and humanists of the sixteenth century would mirror this approach in their manipulation of ancient Roman signifiers (see chapter three).

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<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Paul Stephenson, *The Byzantine World* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 388.

With this new institution and the new grandiose vision of Venice that it represented came a new spiritual role to replace the diminishing political authority of the doge.<sup>91</sup> The doges' role as sole patrons of San Marco grew increasingly important as their actual power in the State was gradually whittled away. This transition of the ducal role served a practical purpose due to the seeming contradiction that, although the Venetian nobility was incredibly cautious about the idea of the doge behaving like a *terra firma* despot, the idea of the doge as a "Prince" seems to have remained central to Venetian identity.<sup>92</sup> Such an arrangement was possible in Venice because the status of a doge was determined by context. This idea is encapsulated in an oft-repeated aphorism from the sixteenth-century political theorist and religious thinker, cardinal Gasparo Contarini, "In habitu princeps, in Senatu senator, in forō civis." ("In bearing he is a prince, [but] in the senate he is a senator and in the marketplace a citizen.")<sup>93</sup> In other words, while the doge had both the privilege and the responsibility of looking and behaving like a king, he did not have, in the political theology of the republic, the

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<sup>91</sup> The reduction of ducal authority continued beyond the early reforms mentioned above. In the late thirteenth century they were banned from granting fiefs and benefices, the transactions at the heart of feudal relationships in medieval Europe, and this rule was later expanded to disallow all private gifts to anyone but relatives and gestures of personal generosity of any kind towards members of the Great Council. In the fifteenth century, new regulations prevented the doge from receiving guests in official dress, having private audiences with visiting dignitaries, forming relationships with guilds, using his influence to benefit his family, and allowing anyone to address him as "my (or our) lord." By the early sixteenth century it had reached the point where nearly everything that a doge said or did in public was dictated, one might even say choreographed, by the laws of the state.

Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 255-257.

<sup>92</sup> See for instance book eleven of Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia, Città Nobilissima Et Singolare Descritta in Xiiii Libri Da M. Francesco Sansovino* (Venice: Jacomo Sansovino, 1581), concerning the office of doge, titled, "of the Grandeur and dignity of the Prince." Also, Gasparo Contarini's discussion of the office in *La Repubblica E I Magistrati Di Vinegia*. per Domenico Giglio, 1551, which begins on page 48, P. Marcello, *Vita De Prencipi Di Vinegia* (Venice: Plinio Pietrasanta, 1557), Pietro Bembo, *Della Historia Vinitiana* (Venice: con privilegii, 1570), Donato Giannotti, *Libro De La Repubblica De Vinitia* (Rome: 1542). and many others.

<sup>93</sup> Gasparo Contarini and V. Conti. *La Repubblica E I Magistrati Di Vinegia* (Venice: Girolamo Scotto, 1544), 19.

two bodies (the “body natural” and “body politick”) of a true monarch.<sup>94</sup> Rather, the dignity of the office was derived from his ability to act as a stand in, synecdoche, or, in a literal sense, vicar for the true body politic of Venice – most accurately the Grand Council, but for the purposes of mythologizing could be taken to be the entire populous, or even the city itself –, and for its special relationship with St. Mark, under specifically prescribed circumstances. At all other times he was something like an ornately decorated chalice, which may at times serve as a vessel for the consecrated wine of communion but remains beautiful to behold even when empty.

This helps to explain why it was only within the sacred space of San Marco on the most sacred ritual occasions, or in ducal processions (*Anđate*), which were, in a very real sense, the chapel in mobile form, when the true regal splendor of the doge was revealed along with the Byzantine treasures, signifiers of imperial authority which the Venetians kept hidden at all other times, that formed the magnificent *Pala d’Oro* altarpiece.<sup>95</sup> Contarini does not mention this context specifically, but it would not have been far out of line if he had continued, “in sacellō Imperator” (“In the chapel he is an emperor”). Unlike other aristocratic

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<sup>94</sup> The concept of the Body Politic can be traced to Aristotle and dates back in English at least to John Fortescue’s *Governance of England* in 1475 (*OED*), but the specific theorization of the King’s (in this case Queen’s) two bodies is laid out in the *Reports* of Edmund Plowden from the court of Queen Elizabeth I. As he described them, the body natural is a monarch’s normal human body, “subject to all infirmities that come by nature or accident, to the imbecility of infancy or old age, and to the like defects that happen to the natural bodies of other people,” whereas the body politic “Is a body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of policy and government, and constituted for the direction of the people, and the management of the public weal, and this body is utterly void of Infancy, and old age, and other natural defects and imbecilities...” (Sounds a bit like Milton Friedman talking about market forces).

For an immense analysis of these concepts as they functioned in the context of Medieval monarchy, see Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). quotations taken from p. 7.

<sup>95</sup> Much more on both the *Anđata* procession tradition and the significance of the *pala d’oro* below. For outside reading on the *Anđata* see Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. and Iain Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City*. and on the *pala d’oro* see Paul Stephenson, *The Byzantine World* (New York: Routledge, 2010), and C. Boito and W. Scott, *The Basilica of S. Mark in Venice: Illustrated from the Points of View of Art and History* (Venice: F. Ongania, 1888).

private chapels, where the patron typically provided funding but was otherwise essentially a glorified member of the congregation, at San Marco the doge gradually evolved into something approaching secular priest whose participation in ritual activities was the defining feature of an important feast on the Venetian calendar.<sup>96</sup> As ducal authority waned in other areas of governance, the role and the centrality of the doge within the ceremonial and administrative functions of the chapel seems, if anything, to have increased.<sup>97</sup>

Just as San Marco was built on the model of the Byzantine emperors' personal church, so to was the pastoral aspect of the dogeship largely derived from imperial models. Byzantine emperors were, however, dynastic autocrats who were specifically posited as chosen by God and who, as we have seen, at least occasionally asserted the right to dictate doctrine to their state Church.<sup>98</sup> Thus, they provided a model, which, while certainly appealing to many ambitious doges, was anathema to the republican ideology of Venice's increasingly powerful ruling class. In most cases, as long as it was confined to the areas of ceremonial pomp and self-presentation, this imperial emulation was tolerated, or even encouraged, but in cases where it seemed to edge into the political realm, not even the preeminence of the doge in his own chapel could supersede the priorities of state. On two important feasts, Trinity Sunday and All Souls' Day, doges were banned from attending services at San Marco because the association of these days with prayer for ones own family

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<sup>96</sup> Although unordained and unbound by priestly vows, the pastoral functions of the doge included giving benedictions, responding to the Introit, assisting the mass, and, most importantly, serving as the centerpiece in liturgical processions.

<sup>97</sup> The absolute preeminence of the doge in state religion came to be taken so seriously that, as late as 1654, an archdeacon and a master of ceremonies, two key figures in the San Marco organization, were banished from the state for applying incense to the Patriarch of Venice not before, but at the same time as the doge. C. Boito and W. Scott, *The Basilica of S. Mark in Venice: Illustrated*, 187.

<sup>98</sup> Charles Freeman, *The Horses of St. Mark's: A Story of Triumph in Byzantium, Paris, and Venice* (New York: Overlook, 2010), (Second page of chapter 8).



raised too many issues of dynasty and nepotism. Similarly, although several early doges were buried in San Marco as Byzantine emperors were in the Apostoleion, this and all other displays of personal insignia were banned there in 1354. Venetians also stopped short of granting their doges the full, quasi-priestly quality of the Byzantine emperors, making it clear that, while they were honored participants in rituals, they were not, like all priests, miracle workers.<sup>99</sup> This check extended into both the ceremonial realm, in which there is no evidence of doges taking communion in both kinds, and the administrative, where they shared their trusteeship of the chapel with a group of officers known as Procurators, the only other officers in the republic who received their appointments for life.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 257.

<sup>100</sup> The Procuratoria was unique in that, although appointment to it was one of the highest honors a Venetian could attain – new doges were almost invariably chosen from among the Procurators –, it was a real administrative job that seems to have involved a great deal of unglamorous bureaucratic work for no direct compensation. The preeminence of the doge over the procurators of San Marco was unquestioned in ceremonial matters, but in administrative activities such as appointments, disciplinary actions, and other day-to-day business of the chapel, they were nearly on the same level, and documentary evidence indicates that the procurators frequently acted unilaterally in matters concerning the maintenance and staffing of the chapel.

The nine Procurators were divided into three groups of three; the *Procuratori de supra* (Referred to by Marino Sanudo in 1493 and many others since as the Procurators of San Marco), who were responsible for administering San Marco and the other state properties in the immediate vicinity, are most significant to this discussion and were, as the title implies, the post prestigious positions. The *Procuratori de Citra* and the *Procuratori de Ultra* were responsible for administrating wills, bequests, and testaments on the near and far side of the Grand Canal respectively.

ibid. p. 261.

R.J. Goy, *Building Renaissance Venice: Patrons, Architects and Builders, C. 1450-1500* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 33.

See also F. Cornaro, *Ecclesiae Venetae Antiquis Monumentis: Nunc Etiam Primum Editis Illustratae Ac in Decades Distributae. Ecclesiae Torcellanae Antiquis Monumentis; Pars Prima* (Venice: Pasqualus, 1749), 327.

### **Origins of the Rite of San Marco:**

The early development of the Church of Venice and the Venetian cult of St. Mark occurred during the era in which Rome and Constantinople were theoretically united in a single communion but divided by a *de facto* schism of tongues. Thus, as a tributary of the Byzantine empire in which services were conducted in Latin, Venice was, from the beginning, somewhat awkwardly placed in the middle of these two sacred behemoths. As a result, the religious traditions that developed in the lagoon tended to borrow elements freely from both as suited the republic's purposes while seeming to avoid anything that would tie them too closely to either. Even after 1054, when the deep-seeded divisions between the two centers became an official schism and the one strong relationship between Venice and Byzantium was beginning to cool, the state Church of the republic continued in this pastiche approach, tending to draw on the eastern church primarily as a source of visual aesthetics while bowing to newly enlarged authority of Rome as much as was necessary in areas of doctrine and liturgy.

There was, however, relatively little drive within the Church to forcibly streamline Western liturgical traditions until the thirteenth century, before which time many regions and cities, including Rome, had more or less unique local liturgical traditions. Standing just outside the margins of the Holy Roman Empire, in which the so-called "Gregorian" rite, which would form the template for the forcibly homogenized liturgy of the Catholic Reformation, was vigorously promoted, Venetians had relative freedom to cultivate and maintain the distinctiveness of their own unique religious traditions for centuries. However, while geographic and political separation made it possible to prioritize and preserve the most meaningful or popular local traditions, it did not fully insulate the state Church from the

pressures of religious trends. Thus, the Venetian liturgical rite, which was known as the *Patriarchino* or, affectionately, the *Marcolino*, differed from neighboring traditions by the sixteenth century primarily in small but often significant ways, and even as those distinctions became fewer, maintaining and emphasizing them gradually became a major point of Venetian pride.

Not much can be said about the early forms of Venetian liturgy due to paucity of sources, but many of the more prominent distinctions that once existed were likely eliminated around 1290, when Bishop Simeone Moro instituted a Franciscan-influenced reform and standardization of the rite following the lead of similar reforms that had been instituted in Rome under Pope Nicholas III.<sup>101</sup> The cumulative process resulted in a liturgical practice that was, particularly in terms of texts and tunes, strikingly similar to Gregorian norms in its broad strokes, making the distinctions that remain difficult to trace.<sup>102</sup> While this comes across as a lamentable instance of homogenization, it was very likely Moro's actions that made possible the survival of any specifically Venetian religious practices. As Giulio Cattin has pointed out, pressures to conform to the new Franciscan standards were intense around the turn of the fourteenth century, and most of Venice's neighboring cities, including Padua, Treviso, Vicenza, and Verona, had unique liturgical traditions at one time but yielded to pressure to abandon them in favor of Gregorian practice in this era.<sup>103</sup> Whether or not it was his intention, by revising Venetian liturgy to account for current religious trends Bishop Moro

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<sup>101</sup> Giulio Cattin, *Musica E Liturgia a San Marco: Descrizione Delle Fonti* (Venice: Fondazione Levi, 1990) 11, 32; N. Havely, *Dante and the Franciscans: Poverty and the Papacy in the 'Commedia'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 51.

Pope Nicholas's family, the Orsini, were a major early ally of the Franciscan orders.

<sup>102</sup> Giulio Cattin, *Musica E Liturgia a San Marco*, 11.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.* 36.

took a great deal of pressure off the Church of Venice, ultimately helping to ensure the survival of the *Patriarchino* long after the vast majority of other local liturgical traditions in the Catholic Church had been eliminated.<sup>104</sup>

Even for later eras, it is not possible to form a complete picture of the Venetian rite from available sources. Although Venice became a major center for the printing of, among many other things, liturgical books beginning in the late fifteenth century, the state liturgy was confined to San Marco by papal order in 1456, just before the arrival of the printing industry, meaning that there was, with the exception of a Psalter printed in 1609 (for reasons to be discussed), never demand to justify printed editions of Marcian liturgical literature.<sup>105</sup> Much of the information that can be gleaned from those hand-written books that are known to have survived, which include, among others, graduals, collectaria, partial missals, and antiphonaries from several eras, has been recently compiled and made available, primarily in James H. Moore's work on seventeenth-century collections for Venetian vespers services and in Giulio Cattin's monumental 1990 work, *Musica E Liturgia a San Marco: Descrizione Delle Fonti*. However, a complete missal, ordinal, processional, and hymnal, all books that would be necessary in order to form a complete picture of the liturgical life of the Church, are all either lost or undiscovered.

Due in part to the obscuring influence of the Franco-Roman rite, the origins of the *Patriarchino* have been an object of curiosity and speculation at least since Francesco Sansovino, son of architect and sculptor Jacopo Sansovino, wrestled with the question in his 1581 guidebook, *Venetia, Città Nobilissima Et Singolare...*, and determined that they must lie in

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<sup>104</sup> *ibid.* 36.

<sup>105</sup> see T.A. Vismans and L. Brinkhoff. *Critical Bibliography of Liturgical Literature* (Lelystad-Haven: Bestelcentrale der V. S. K. B. Publ., 1961)

Constantinople.<sup>106</sup> Another theory that had currency in the eighteenth century traced the rite of Venice, like Saint Mark himself, to Alexandria, but these and other speculations were pushed aside by the monumental *Ecclesiae Venetae, Antiquis Monumentis...* of Flaminio Corner (1749), whose theory of lineage from Aquileia has only recently come under serious question.<sup>107</sup> There are some significant commonalities between the liturgy of the early Aquileian Church and that of Venice, but increased availability of sources has shown these to be somewhat less than it seemed to Corner and his successors.<sup>108</sup> Currently, the problem of the *Marcolino's* origins has no clear solution, but it seems to me that there is no compelling reason to believe that a single, overarching point of origin must exist at all. It is equally possible that the Venetians might have brought the same kind of plurality to their approach to religious practice that they brought to government and trade, borrowing from various traditions at various times as suited their purposes.

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Although there are limits to what can be known about the origins and development of the Venetian rite before it was subjected to the influence of the Gregorian mainstream, it is worth taking a moment to examine the *Patriarchino* calendar as it existed in the sixteenth century, in terms of the occasions celebrated and the texts with which they were associated. Along with the Missal, which has not been found in its complete form for the Marcian rite, the central document of liturgical practice around which other, more specific books are constructed, is the psalter. The use of psalms in the Catholic Church, which plays a central

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<sup>106</sup> Giulio Cattin, *Musica E Liturgia a San Marco*, 11.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.* Find this point of View in Diclich, Boito... It is probably from Giovanni Diclich's assertion of Aquileian origin in his 1823 volume *Rito Veneto Antico, Detto Patriarchino* from which the use of the word "Patriarchino" to describe the Venetian rite originates.

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.* p. 39.

role in the liturgy of the Office and in the Mass, is somewhat confusing to begin with because it has been revamped several times in the history of the Church.<sup>109</sup> Added to this is the fact that St. Jerome, the Roman scholar credited with preparing the Vulgate Bible, edited three versions of the Psalter (two revisions and one original translation) during his career, each of which has played a significant and officially sanctioned role.<sup>110</sup>

Sadly, no early version of a Venetian Psalter has been discovered, although there are occasional psalms and psalm-segments in Graduals and Missals.<sup>111</sup> The earliest complete version is a printed edition that was compiled in 1609 by Giovanni Stringa, canon and master of ceremonies of San Marco, because, as he stated in his preface, existing manuscript copies were disorganized, confusing, and incorrect.<sup>112</sup> The late date of this source is certainly a matter of concern despite Stringa's statement in his preface that he is motivated by a desire to return to the "most ancient usage" (*usui tamen perantiquo*) of San Marco. This assertion provides no insurance against errors or misunderstandings, but it might at least indicate that this was not self-consciously intended to modernize the practice of Venetian psalmody.

However, a comparison with overlapping content in a fourteenth-century Antiphonary (VAM) and the Orazionale Marciano (VOM) that was compiled in 1567, less than fifty years

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<sup>109</sup> Psalmody traditions in the Church have evolved from the daily recitation of the entire book in early ascetic monasteries to the weekly cycle prescribed by the rule of St. Benedict to the modern-day office of Paul VI, which takes four weeks to work through an abbreviated version of the Psalter.

<sup>110</sup> These are the Roman Psalter, Jerome's first revision of an older Latin translation, which was traditionally used in and around Rome and in pre-Norman England; the Gallican Psalter, his second revision, which became the preeminent version for liturgical use across Northern Europe, including North Italy, and was featured in many versions of the Vulgate; and the Hebrew Psalter, his original translation, which can be found in some bibles, but is not known to have ever played a significant role in liturgy. J.H. Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2003), 44.

<sup>111</sup> Giulio Cattin, *Musica E Liturgia a San Marco*, V.1, p. 55.

<sup>112</sup> PsD = *Psalterium Davidicum / per hebdomadam dispositum / ad usum Ecclesiae ducalis / Sancti Marci Venetiarum / cum omnibus que pro Psalmis, Hymnis et Antiphonis / in Divinis Officiis necessaria sunt. / Nec non cum Officio Defunctorum*, (Venice: apud Franciscum Rampazettum, 1609).

before the Psalter, casts some doubt on this claim. Several texts for Matins, Lauds, and Vespers that are common to the two older Venetian sources have been altered in the Psalter, indicating that Stringa was very likely influenced by some outside practice in his revision.<sup>113</sup>

Stringa was operating in the wake of the Council of Trent, at a time when the Counterreformation's momentum of liturgical reform was at its most intense. A new Breviary – a revision of Pius V's *Breviarium Romanum...* sponsored by pope Clemens VIII – had been released just four years before, and the liturgy it outlined was a rigid requirement for all churches except for those that could, like San Marco, prove that their local traditions had been in continuous use for over two-hundred years.<sup>114</sup> Despite this exemption, tensions between Venice and the Roman Church were intense as well at the beginning of the seventeenth century, to such an extent that the city had begun the year in which the Psalter was published in a state of mass excommunication.<sup>115</sup> As a cleric with loyalties potentially divided between the two entities, it is very likely that Stringa was in a very difficult and ambivalent position while he was at work on his Psalter. It is also likely that he, like many Italians of his generation, was legitimately enthusiastic about the wave of reform that was sweeping through the Church and strove to find a balance between that enthusiasm and his

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<sup>113</sup> Giulio Cattin, *Musica E Liturgia a San Marco*, v.1, p. 58.

<sup>114</sup> James H. Moore, *Vespers at St. Mark's: Music of Alessandro Grandi, Giovanni Rovetta, and Francesco Cavalli*. vol. 1 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981) 112-113.

<sup>115</sup> For information on the interdict of 1606-7 see William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty*.

reverence for the traditions of his city.<sup>116</sup> It is ultimately unclear whether Stringa was motivated by religious fervor, laziness, or editorial necessity, but his edition appears to have brought the language of psalmody in San Marco at least somewhat closer to the mainstream.

Nonetheless, it has long been clear that the psalms in Stringa's text, and other earlier examples, do not quite match those in the Gallican Psalter, which would be the expected version for any church in the region. Antonio Pasini, whose essay, "The Ancient Rite and Ceremonial of the Basilica," printed in Camillo Boito's monumental *The Basilica of S. Mark in Venice, Illustrated from the Points of View of Art and History...*, stands as the foremost canonical nineteenth-century description of the *Marcolino* rite, claimed that this was due to a Venetian tradition of using the *Italo* Psalter, a version which predates Jerome's versions and may have served as source material for his revisions.<sup>117</sup> Other nineteenth-century scholars, including the Protestant theologian Philip Schaff, in the preface to his edition of the writings of Jerome, determined that the psalms sung in Venice followed the Roman Psalter, a theory that has remained popular since.<sup>118</sup> Either scenario, considering Venice's location, would raise considerable questions. A limited textual comparison indicates that while Stringa's Psalter generally corresponds closely to the Gallican, it contains frequent discrepancies that tie it to both the Roman and the *Italo*, which are similar to one-another, and others that seem to

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<sup>116</sup> There has been a tendency to understand the Counterreformation as a reactionary backlash against the protestant reformation that was primarily expressed through increasing inflexibility and authoritarianism on the part of the Church. While these things were certainly part of the story, there was also a powerful drive to improve ordinary people's religious experience that predated and transcended Catholic/Protestant rivalries. Many of the reforms of Trent, such as the requirement of seminary education for priests, the universalizing of the parish system, and even the codification of liturgy, were fundamentally rooted in this impulse. See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). and M.A. Mullett, *The Catholic Reformation* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>117</sup> Antonio Pasini, "The Ancient Rite and Ceremonial of the Basilica," in C. Boito and W. Scott, *The Basilica of S. Mark in Venice: Illustrated*, 178.

<sup>118</sup> Philip Schaff, *A Select library of Nicene and post-Nicene fathers of the Christian church. Second series* (New York: The Christian literature company, 1893). v.6, preface to the psalms.



indicate the influence of one or more other sources.<sup>119</sup> Take for example psalm 147, *Lauda Jerusalem*, the final psalm of Saturday vespers, which is also one of the most important psalms in Venetian festal liturgy. Of the nine verses in the psalm, four contain some discrepancy between the Gallican and Venetian versions. Here is a comparison of all four versions, including only those verses that feature some distinction between the Gallican and the Venetian; For the sake of clarity, I have italicized and translated those words that are of particular interest and included the English translation from the 1899 American edition of the Douay-Rheims bible in its entirety:

### PS. 147: *Lauda Jerusalem*

1

Douay-Rheims: Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem: praise thy God, O Sion.

2

Venetian version: Quoniam confortavit seras portarum tuarum: benedixit filios tuos in te

Gallican version: Quoniam confortavit seras portarum tuarum: benedixit *filiiis tuis* in te

Roman version: Quoniam confortavit seras portarum tuarum: benedixit filios tuos in te

*Italo* version: Quoniam confortavit *serras* portarum tuarum: benedixit filios tuos in te

Douay-Rheims: Because he hath strengthened the bolts of thy gates, he hath blessed thy children within thee.

*filios tuos* & *filiiis tuis* = "your children"

*seras* = "bars," *serras* = "saw"

3

D-R: Who hath placed peace in thy borders: and filleth thee with the fat of corn.

4

D-R: Who sendeth forth his speech to the earth: his word runneth swiftly.

5

V: qui dat nivem sicut lanam nebulam sicut cinerem aspargit

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<sup>119</sup> see highlighted comparison of Venetian, Roman, and Gallican in Cattin, *Musica e Liturgia*, 56-7. I have begun to expand on his comparison and extended it to the *Italo* using the version printed in P. Sabatier, and V. de La Rue. *Bibliorum Sacrorum Latinae Versiones Antiquae: Seu, Vetus Italica, Et Caeterae Quaecunque in Codicibus Mss. e<sup>3</sup> Antiquorum Libris Reperiri Potuerunt : Quae Cum Vulgata Latina, e<sup>3</sup> Cum Textu Graeco Comparantur ... Operâ e<sup>3</sup> Studio ... Petri Sabatier* (Florence: Reginaldum Florentain, 1743).

G: qui dat nivem sicut lanam nebulam sicut cinerem *spargit*  
R: qui dat nivem sicut lanam nebulam *velut* cinerem *spargit*  
I: qui dat nivem sicut lanam nebulam sicut cinerem *spargit*  
D-R: Who giveth snow like wool: scattereth mists like ashes.  
*aspargit* and *spargit* = “scatter;” *sicut* and *velut* = “as”

6

V: Mittit crystallum suam sicut frustum panis: ante faciem frigoris ejus quis subsistet?  
G: Mittit crystallum suam sicut *buccellas*: ante faciem frigoris ejus quis *sustinebit*?  
R: Mittit cristallum *suum* sicut *frusta panis*: ante faciem frigoris ejus quis *subsistit*?  
I: Mittit cristallum *suum* sicut *frusta panis*: ante faciem frigoris ejus quis subsistet?  
D-R: He sendeth his crystal like morsels: who shall stand before the face of his cold?  
*frustum panis* = “piece of bread,” *buccellas* = “Morsels,” *frusta panis* = “pieces of bread”  
*subsistet*, *sustinebit*, and *subsistit* don’t necessarily all mean the same thing, but in all cases the phrase amounts to “who can handle his cold”

7

D-R: He shall send out his word, and shall melt them: his wind shall blow, and the waters shall run.

8

V: Pronunciat verbum suum Jacob: justias, et iudicia sua Israel.  
G: *Qui annuntiat* verbum suum Jacob: justias, et iudicia sua Israel.  
R: *Pronuncians* verbum suum Iacob: iustias, et iudicia sua Israel.  
I: *Pronuncians* verbum suum Jacob: justias, et iudicia sua Israel.  
D-R: Who declareth his word to Jacob: his justices and his judgments to Israel.  
*Pronunciat* = “(He) declares,” *Qui annuntiat* = “He declares,” *Pronuncians* = “Declaring”

9

D-R: He hath not done in like manner to every nation: and his judgments he hath not made manifest to them. Alleluia.

Based on the example above it is possible to make several observations. It is striking, first of all, how similar all four Latin examples are to one-another. For the vast majority of the psalm, the wording of each is identical, and where distinctions do exist they tend to shift the meaning in highly subtle ways, if at all. This likely indicates that these four versions are tied together by a process of revision, as the so-called Hebrew Psalter, the one original translation that was prepared by St. Jerome, exhibits considerably more, and often more substantive, variation. Looking at those differences that do exist, it is notable that, while there is one

example, the use of the accusative *filios tuos* instead of the dative *filiis tuis* in verse 2, of a distinction in the Venetian psalter lining up with both the *Italo* and Roman versions, and one, the word *subsistet* in verse 6, in which the Venetian Psalter seems to follow only the *Italo*, there are no points at which a distinction in the Venetian version lines up only with the Roman Psalter. In the majority of cases, the peculiarities of Stringa's Psalter stand apart from all three other versions to which it has been historically connected. This could potentially be the result of editorial failures on the part of Stringa or an earlier editor, or it could be an indication that the Venetian Psalter derives from other source materials that have yet to be identified. Certainly, these observations seem to imply that a significant part of this story has yet to be told, but I would not anticipate the discovery of an outside source that corresponds exactly to the Psalter that was used in San Marco. It seems altogether more likely that the Marcian Psalter developed gradually as a bricolage of materials from various religious traditions that fluctuated over time along with Venetian contacts and influences. Such a process, which would help to explain Stringa's problems with the manuscript Psalters that he inherited as well as his own editorial practices, resonates with the ideologies of independence and plurality that were central to Venetian constitutional thought.

In terms of the liturgical psalm tone melodies used, the relationship between the *Patriarchino* rite and the Gregorian bears a striking similarity to that of the texts. Unlike the case of the psalter, no authoritative source exists for Gregorian psalm tones, which gradually changed over time and may also have been sung with slight variations depending on location. In comparison with the psalm tones for the office that are given in two sources from opposite extremes of the Gregorian tradition, the *Commemoratio brevis* of the late ninth century and a Vatican edition of the late nineteenth, the Marcian tones given in Willaert's 1550 psalm

collection sometimes gravitate more to the earlier source and sometimes to the latter but always bear a strong similarity to both in their rough contours. Beginning and ending notes, as well as reciting tones, correspond in each case to at least one of the Gregorian possibilities, and what differences are to be found tend to be in the more active segments leading into and out of these moments. As one might expect, given the more public nature of the office in San Marco, compared to the isolated practices of traditional monasticism, the Venetian melodies are frequently more ornate than their counterparts, particularly in the approach to cadences. In some cases, such as that of modes two (hypodorian) and four (hypophrygian), these segments follow contours more similar to the elaborated versions that are provided for canticles in the Gregorian sources. There are exceptions to this, however, such as the psalm tone for Mode five (Lydian), which is actually slightly simpler than either given Gregorian option. In at least one case, that of mode eight, no notable distinctions feature in the *Patriarchino* version.

In terms of the texts and melodies used, thus, Venetian psalmody differed enough from mainstream Gregorian practice to be clearly distinct, but it did not differ in substantive enough ways to significantly alter the meaning of texts or to imply origins in a completely separate process of translation. This essential similarity is even greater in terms of the Psalter's structure, which presents the psalms for the office in a normal week, excluding weekday minor hours (i.e. the ones that are named after numbers: Prime, Terce, Sext,...), from Sunday Matins to Saturday Vespers in precisely the same order as counterparts printed for the standard Gregorian rite. Similarly, a comparison of antiphon and responsory melodies of overlapping texts from a Marcian gradual that was discovered mislabeled on the shelves of a Berlin library in 1987 and its equivalents from the Churches of Aquileia, Rome, and several

other Italian cities reveals, as in the case of the Psalter, frequent small variations, but strikingly few major ones.<sup>120</sup> In terms day-to-day, ferial activity, the liturgy of late-medieval and Renaissance Venice, like that of Aquileia, Rome, and essentially any other Italian city with the exception of Milan, was, as Cattin puts it, “a more or less elaborate variant on the Franco-Roman practice that is the foundational liturgy of the traditions of Western Europe.”<sup>121</sup> This is not to say, however, that the Venetian rite was only superficially distinct from those of its neighbors or of the European mainstream, but rather that the significant differences are more often to be found in the liturgy for particular occasions rather than in the general everyday practice, and especially in the details of ritual choreography and elaboration that transcend the strictly liturgical realm of codified texts and melodies.

The best existing liturgical source through which to gain insight into the event-oriented nature of the Marcian rite is the *Orationale*, which was compiled by Giovanni Vitale in 1567, despite being labeled 1602 in the archive of the Museo Correr.<sup>122</sup> This book, which is essentially a highly detailed breviary intended specifically for use at San Marco, features more or less detailed prescriptions for the Mass and Office on every day of the year. That it was heavily used and taken seriously as a guide to local religious practice is indicated by the fact that it was cited as an authority by Sansovino and in two separate *cerimoniali* (relatively compact liturgical handbooks for use by clerics as a spot reference) dating from the mid-sixteenth and the mid-seventeenth centuries.

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<sup>120</sup> Giulio Cattin, *Musica E Liturgia a San Marco*, V.3, p. 193.

<sup>121</sup>“i tre repertori (romano-francescano, di Aquileia, e di San Marco) sono varianti -- ora più, ora meno vistose, ma spesso equivalenti -- di quella liturgia romano-franca che è a fondamento della tradizione liturgica dell'Occidente europeo.” Giulio Cattin, *Musica E Liturgia a San Marco*, V.1, p. 69.

<sup>122</sup> VOM = Venezia, Biblioteca del Museo Correr, Cicogna 1602

Generally speaking, in terms of the *Temporale*, the calendar of feasts relating to the life of Christ and foundation of the Church, the *Orationale* follows the outline of mainstream practice, though with frequent internal distinctions. However, the *Santorale*, the schedule of events relating to the commemoration of specific saints, is extraordinary in its distinctness. The *Orationale* features proper items (i.e. texts associated specifically with a particular day) for a total of 105 feasts that have none in a Gregorian Breviary that was printed in Venice in 1562, of which 44 are not mentioned on the Gregorian calendar at all.<sup>123</sup> A number of these are feasts celebrating saints associated with the Friuli region that were probably borrowed from the calendar of Aquileia. 25 of the feasts in question also receive special liturgy in the Aquileian Breviary, but all but four of those are present in the Gregorian, leaving forty Venetian celebrations with no apparent corollary in outside regional practice.

Liturgical particularities are found, for the most part, in the liturgy for the office rather than the mass, and especially in the office of Vespers, which was the most elaborate and extroverted of the canonical hours in the Venetian tradition.<sup>124</sup> Vespers services in San Marco, which were announced on special days by the bells of the Campanile, the enormous bell tower of the Piazza, received special emphasis and were likely the most well-attended services in the chapel. Most Venetians would have been more likely to attend Sunday Mass at their own parish church, and on feast days, which were not necessarily work holidays, they were much more likely to be free in the early evening than in the morning.<sup>125</sup> Vespers also have a special significance for feasts and holidays because they are, in most cases, the services

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<sup>123</sup> See table in James H. Moore, *Vespers at St. Mark's*, 155-157.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.* 120.

<sup>125</sup> Sixteenth century sources indicate that Vespers occurred *dopo pranzo*, i.e. after lunch, which almost certainly provides time for an after-lunch siesta; later accounts mention particularly elaborate services lasting until three hours after sundown. *ibid.* p. 171.

that bookend the entire celebration.<sup>126</sup> The basic outline of a Vespers service, which is identical in Marcian and Gregorian practice for nearly every day of the year, consists of five psalms (109-147) and the Magnificat, usually preceded by a hymn and separated by a responsory. Each of the psalms and the Magnificat are preceded and followed by Antiphons, short sections of text that may be taken directly from psalms, from other scripture, or may be purpose-written.<sup>127</sup>

Over the course of a normal week (as mentioned above) the psalms are sung in numeric order, but feast days typically employ special collections of psalms, out of their regular order. A large number of feasts in the *Orationale* feature sequences that differ from Gregorian practice, but those sequences are typically found elsewhere in the *Breviarium Romanum*. One exception to this was the so-called *Cinque Laudate* Vespers, a set of psalms (Laudate Pueri, Laudate Dominum Omnes Gentes, Lauda Anima Mea, Laudate Dominum quoniam bonus, and Lauda Jerusalem) tied together by their common use of forms of the verb *laudāre*, a sequence that was also used in Aquileia among other places, though not always on the same days.<sup>128</sup> The *Cinque Laudate* sequence was used for several key feasts, particularly

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<sup>126</sup> Unlike the office liturgy for a normal day, which begins with Lauds, the liturgy for most feast days begins and ends with a vespers service, implying that a feast begins at or before sundown the night before rather than at midnight or sunrise. For the most important feasts, the two services are each given their own set of texts, and for minor feasts the same vespers service is repeated twice. The only exceptions to this are feasts such as Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter which immediately follow another important feast. Although we today tend to think of holidays as beginning and ending at midnight, this conception is still written into our language in cases such as Christmas Eve and New Years Eve.

<sup>127</sup> Many other elements may be added to this basic skeleton, depending on the importance of the day and the elaboration of the service. In the sixteenth century and after, antiphons could also be replaced with polyphonic motets employing either the same or thematically related texts. The only exception to this general order in the Marcian liturgy is the Vespers service for Easter Sunday, which included two Magnificats, both repeated, and clumped the psalms together in groups of two and three, with no Antiphons between them. Moore, James *ibid.* p. 141.

<sup>128</sup> James H. Moore, "The 'Vespero Delli Cinque Laudate' and the Role of 'Salmi Spezzati' at St. Mark's." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 34, no. 2 (1981): 251-2.

those of the Temporale, including the Epiphany, Ascension, Pentecost, Corpus Christi (and its octave), Purification, Assumption, Conception and Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, All Saints', and, in earlier sources, Holy Saturday, and they seem to have been an important marker of pomp, elaboration, and prestige in the Venetian Church.

Another important occasion for which Venetians used a non-Gregorian set of psalms was the Dedication of the Church of San Marco (October 8), although this also appears to be an Aquileian borrowing, as it matches the sequence used to celebrate the dedication of that city's own basilica. There are only two psalm sequences in the *Orationale* that are apparently unique to Marcian liturgy, that for the Feast of the Holy Trinity and that used for both Saint Clement (23 November) and Saints. Hermagoras and Fortunatus (12 July). Hermagoras and Fortunatus are both connected to Venice by their role as disciples of St. Mark, and by relics in Venetian churches, and while first century Pope Clement I has no clear connection to the city, the story of his brutal death at sea – tied to an anchor and thrown over the side – and the anchor-shaped “Mariner’s Cross” that is his emblem give him a strong thematic resonance with the interests of the republic.<sup>129</sup> Curiously, though, despite their liturgical uniqueness and elaboration, these feasts do not seem to have been particularly elaborate celebrations on the Venetian calendar, as their sequence contains one psalm, *Eripe me Domine ab homine malo*, that does not exist in a known polyphonic setting by any composer associated with San Marco.<sup>130</sup> Trinity Sunday, on the other hand, does have many of the markers of a prioritized Marcian feasts, but it too seems to have been given the short shrift musically; testimony from the

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<sup>129</sup> There is another St. Clement (revered by the Roman Church until the sixteenth century and to this day in the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches) who is nominally connected to Mark through his home city of Alexandria, where he is also celebrated on 23 November.

<sup>130</sup> James H. Moore, *Vespers at St. Mark's*, 136.



composer and *Maestro di Cappella* of San Marco Giovanni Croce given in 1600 confirms that the Chapel lacked polyphonic settings of three psalms from its sequence at that time, a situation that could be related to the above-mentioned absence of the doge from the day's rituals.<sup>151</sup>

A much greater potential for diversity and specificity is offered by the antiphons, versicles, responsories, and other materials, which are far less constricted in terms of source material, and which are the primary features that serve to distinguish services from one-another. Antiphons provide context for the more generic psalms that they precede both musically, by determining the mode in which the psalm will be sung, and thematically, by providing narrative material related to the specific celebration. Versicles and Responsories, which tend to be less specific and more vaguely laudatory, then provide the celebrant and congregation the opportunity to provide commentary on the narrative in the manner of a Greek chorus, and to request assistance. For important feasts of the Marcian *Temporale*, these sequences are almost invariably unique, and in the majority of all cases there are differences between the Marcian tradition and the Gregorian. In some cases, such as the closely linked holidays of Christmas, Circumcision, and Epiphany, this difference is simply a question of reshuffling,<sup>152</sup> but for the movable feasts (i.e. those that are tied to the Hebrew lunar calendar) of Holy Saturday, Easter, the Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, and Corpus

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<sup>151</sup> *ibid.* p. 132-3. Markers of priority include the fact that the presence of the doge was required, the *pala d'oro* altarpiece (see below) was exposed, and, in the sixteenth century and after, singers were required to attend both Vespers services in addition to Mass. In Contrast, the feasts of SS. Hermagoras and Fortunatus and St. Clement did not require the doge's presence or merit the *pala d'oro* and only require singers for mass and one vespers service.

<sup>152</sup> Marcian first vespers of Christmas (i.e. Christmas Eve) used the same vespers as Rome, but with the antiphons in a different order. For Circumcision, San Marco repeated the sequence from the second vespers of Christmas, and then used the Gregorian sequence for Circumcision on the Epiphany. see *ibid.* pp. 140-141.

Christi, the differences are more profound and leave little, if any, overlap with Gregorian practice.<sup>133</sup>

For the majority of feasts in the *Sanctorale*, the *Orationale* does not provide a full outline of the sequence of antiphons and psalms, something that would, considering the sheer number of saints on the calendar, lead to a liturgy that was unwieldy in its intricacy, especially for the purposes of memorization. Instead, the book's compilers typically listed the name of a saint or group of saints along with an unique oration and one or two categories (such as martyr, bishop, virgin, apostle,...) into which the saint in question falls.<sup>134</sup> These categories correspond to prefabricated liturgical sequences known as Commons of Saints, which serve to make festal liturgy for minor saints more manageable while still maintaining connections between the service and the particularities of the occasion. Even for occasions with their own specific liturgy, these categories are important because they serve as a guide for secondary considerations such as the color of vestments worn, which was more specific in San Marco than elsewhere, interior decor, and the themes of motets and homilies. Five of the common liturgies listed in the *Orationale*, the commons for multiple martyrs (second vespers), multiple Virgins (second vespers), one confessor bishop ( first and second vespers), and one martyr

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<sup>133</sup> The unique arrangement of Easter has already been discussed. Similarly, in the Roman/Gregorian tradition, Holy Saturday vespers featured only one Antiphon and one psalm; in Venice, the service was complete. On Pentecost, this arrangement is reversed. On the remaining three days, there was no overlap between the Marcian and Gregorian sets of Antiphons. The degree of correspondence between this list and the list of holidays that featured the *Cinque Laudate* psalms is certainly worth noting.

<sup>134</sup> In many cases these things are augmented with a bible verse and a magnificat antiphon. Nearly twice as many feasts on the sanctorale feature unique magnificat antiphons than do psalm antiphons, which is reasonable considering that there is only one of them, compared to five, in a given service. In some cases there are also small revisions, such as the replacement of one antiphon with another, the addition of a hymn, or cues relating to the presentation of relics.

(second vespers)<sup>135</sup>, feature sets of vespers psalm antiphons that apparently unique to Venice.<sup>136</sup> This would account for about 68% of the *Sanctorale* feasts that are included without their own specific liturgy, but the *Orationale* also provides the option of using the standard Roman service (simply repeating the antiphons from Lauds) for the Common of one Martyr, the most frequently encountered category.<sup>137</sup> This presumably implies that the unique service would be reserved for those martyrs that were seen as more significant, but there is nothing to indicate how often either option would have been used. With the information available, it seems reasonable to conclude that anywhere from 40% to 60% of the common feasts on the Marcian calendar would have featured uniquely Venetian liturgical content at vespers.

In total, out of the two-hundred fifty-six feasts listed in the Venetian *Sanctorale* calendar, fifty-one include a full liturgical outline. An additional seven feature instructions to use the liturgy for another feast with slight alterations, and twenty have minimal specific features such as a bible verse or magnificat antiphon but are otherwise generic. The sheer number of festal occasions in a year makes it clear that the majority of them cannot have been treated as special occasions, and the existence of a specifically tailored liturgical program, particularly one that does not match up with practice elsewhere, provides an important clue about the level of importance granted to a particular feast. Out of the fifty-one elaborated feasts in the *Orationale*, only nineteen feature vespers services that are identical to that listed in

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<sup>135</sup> Two options are provided for the second vespers in the commons of one confessor bishop and of one martyr. One is a unique set of antiphons, and the other is to sing the same antiphons from Lauds, which is identical to Gregorian practice.

<sup>136</sup> James H. Moore, *Vespers at St. Mark's*, 145.

<sup>137</sup> See "In Vigilia Unius Martyris" in the *Orationale*: Giulio Cattin, *Musica E Liturgia a San Marco*, v2. p. 278.

the *Breviarium Romanum*.<sup>138</sup> These include the feasts of several apostles, well known early martyrs, and those relating to the life of the Virgin Mary, excluding the annunciation, which had special importance as the traditional founding date of the city, as well as All Souls Day, the Feast of the Holy cross, and the dedication of St. Peter's Basilica. These are feasts with little specific connection to Venice – with the conspicuous exception of the martyr Saint Lucy, whose remains are housed in the city – that would all be widely celebrated throughout the greater Church. Several of them are also feasts with a particular connection to Rome, as the list includes two feasts related to St. Peter<sup>139</sup> as well as the feast of St. Paul<sup>140</sup>, Rome's other patron, and those of the Roman martyrs Agnes and Laurence. An additional two feasts, the beheading of John the Baptist and the Exaltation of the Cross, feature all the same materials but in a different order.

Of the remaining thirty, there are eighteen that were not considered important enough to merit their own vespers service in the Roman Breviary, nine of which do not appear in the Roman liturgy at all. As one might expect, several of the most elaborate and distinctive of these are feasts relating specifically to the presence of St. Mark's remains in the city. The actual feast of St. Mark (25 April) was, as one might expect, an important feast throughout the Church, despite being celebrated with particular elaboration and pomp in San Marco – Sansovino refers to it as the principal occasion of the Venetian year.<sup>141</sup> In Venice, however,

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<sup>138</sup> The following comparison of the *Breviarium Romanum* and the Venetian *Orationale* is based on my own perusal of the documents cross-referenced with the work of James H. Moore, featured in James H. Moore, *Vespers at St. Mark's*, v.1, 140-145.

<sup>139</sup> the Dedication of St. Peter's Basilica and St. Peter in Chains. For the main feast of Peter and Paul (the Patron Saints of Rome) Venetians had a liturgy completely different from the Roman.

<sup>140</sup> For the Conversion of Paul, the Church of Venice had its own program.

<sup>141</sup> F. Sansovino, *Venetia ... Descritta in 14 Libri (Et Cronico Particolare Delle Cose Fatte Da I Veneti, Dal Principio Della Citta Fino All'anno 1581.)* (Venice: Giacomo Sansovino, 1581), 201-202.

this was only the cap of a year-long cycle of Marcian feasts, including remembrances of the translation of his remains to Venice (31 January), the dedication of his chapel (8 October), and a feast celebrating an incident when Mark appeared to a local fisherman (25 June). These commemorations, relatively evenly spaced throughout the year, go beyond simply honoring the patron by constructing a skeletal narrative of the relationship between the city and the saint, which could then be flushed out and elaborated through the visual, musical, and especially theatrical elements of Venetian ritual practice.

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This tendency to erect narrative structures around sacred commemorations that actually write the history, ideology, and people of the republic into the story was the fundamental distinction of ceremonial practice in the Church of Venice. Thus, although there are significant differences in liturgical contents between the *Patriarchino* and mainstream Gregorian practice, the most profound deviations in the Venetian ritual tradition tend to be found in areas of ceremonial activity that would traditionally be regarded as extraliturgical. For Venetian festivities, particularly those that included elaborate processions of the doge along with representatives of both Church and State, this extraliturgical Matter often amounted to immense and multilayered lattices of religious, historical, and ideological signifiers that were cultivated and manipulated with a genius for spectacle and theatricality that had no precedent in European Christian practice. This unique approach to religious observance, which combined a strong emphasis on the local with an unusually outward-looking, spectator oriented sensibility, developed as a direct response to the historical

conditions of the republic from about the eleventh century. In particular, it was spurred by the intrinsically linked factors of the rise of Venice as an imperial power in the Mediterranean and of the republic's subsequent role in the Crusades.

The framework around which nearly all of Venice's most characteristic ceremonial practices were built was the ducal procession, or *andata*, in which the sectors of Venetian society, Church and State as well as *nobili* and *popolani*, were symbolically unified to move through the city as a single body. The tradition of periodic visits by the Doge and his retinue to the various parishes of the city dates back to the time when Venice was still a loose conglomeration of fishing villages.<sup>142</sup> Originally, these mini-pilgrimages were primarily diplomatic missions, meant to encourage the people of these far-flung communities feel connected to their nascent metropolis and to each other by adding some official pomp to one of the most important festivals on the parish calendar, often the feast of the parish church's namesake saint. This original purpose remained a part of the *Andata* tradition at least into the late sixteenth century, as may be seen in Salustio Gnechi's *Ceremonial delle uscite delli Principi di Venetia*, a miniature reference guide to Venetian ritual written for the doge's own use, in which the author stresses the importance of sending invitations for the *Andata alli due Castelli* (Venice's most famous ritual, also known as the *Senza* or Marriage to the sea) to magistrates representing the far flung sectors of Murano, Torcello, and Malamocco, and of symbolically staged handshakes between the doge and representatives of the island of Poveia and of the *Nicolotti* (fishermen who lived on the city's west side).<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 146.

<sup>143</sup> Ruth Schilling, "Asserting the Boundaries: defining the City and its territory by Political Ritual," in C. Emden, C. Keen, and D.R. Midgley, *Imagining the City: The Politics of Urban Space* v. 2. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), 95-6.

Over time, however, the events picked up an extraordinary amount of additional content. Each *andata* corresponds to a feast of either the *Temporale* or *Sanctorale*, and each is conducted with reference to the wider Christian traditions associated with that feast. In addition, though, every feast bears a specifically Venetian meaning, either a remembrance of an important triumph or tragedy in the republic's history, a reassertion of the special relationship between the city and a patron saint -- most especially St. Mark --, or a solemn reenactment of one of the republic's foundational myths.<sup>144</sup> These local traditions gradually came to overshadow the universal, so that, by the sixteenth century, important events such as the republic's salvation from the league of Cambrai or, later on, the military victory over the Turks at Lepanto and the end of the Plague of San Carlo in 1577, were taken as opportunities to add new *Andate* to the city's liturgical calendar. In his descriptions of the *Andate* in his famous guide to the city, *Venetia, Città Nobilissima, Et Singolare*, Francesco Sansovino, the son of the architect, in each case mentions the local traditions surrounding a feast first, if he even bothers to mention wider traditions at all.<sup>145</sup>

The fact that Sansovino dedicated a substantial portion of his book to the discussion of these rituals indicates that they were regarded as a major attraction for outsiders visiting the city. The elaborate choreography, theatricality, and spectacle that generated this appeal developed as a direct result of Venice's unique historical circumstances. Above all, these traditions were mediated by the republic's involvement in the Crusades. In 1095, when Pope Urban II initiated the First Crusade with a sermon at the Council of Clermont, he created an enormous new demand for knowledge of and passage to the Levant. Venice, with a unique

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<sup>144</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 77-8.

<sup>145</sup> Francesco Sansovino and G. Martinioni, *Venetia, Città Nobilissima, Et Singolare* (Venice: S. Curti, 1663), 492-526.

combination of experience and contacts in the region, safe passage rights, and nautical prowess, was in a particularly good position to satisfy this demand.<sup>146</sup> Certainly, many crusaders and pilgrims attempted the treacherous overland route, but for those who could afford it, Venice became the preeminent point of embarkation to the Holy Land.<sup>147</sup> This religious transportation industry rapidly became an extremely lucrative new source of funds for the city, but more significantly, it gave thousands of people from all corners of the continent the opportunity to see the city's uniqueness for their own eyes. Due to the seasonal weather patterns of the Mediterranean, the vast majority of people who passed through Venice on their way to the Crusades were forced to wait, often for months, for temperate weather and favorable winds.<sup>148</sup> This meant that, particularly during the winter months, Venice was now the perpetual host to a sizable population of foreigners. No one would have been likely to describe it in these terms at the time, but in a real way, this was the beginning of the tourist industry that has been a defining feature of the city ever since.

Even when there were no great marble palazzi along the Grand Canal and Venice was a city of marshy woods and low-slung warehouses, it is difficult to understate just how different from any other city it would have looked. For most medieval Europeans, security meant thick stone walls and musky hilltop fortresses. What wealth there was was hidden away behind those walls in the hands of a tiny number of people who, either through violence

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<sup>146</sup> In 1081, Venetian forces had gone against the will of the pope to assist the Byzantines, against Norman assailants. They were rewarded with tributes, free passage and tax-free trade throughout the empire, and they were granted own permanent trading enclave within the city of Constantinople. This event was perfectly timed to place Venetians in an ideal position to benefit from this connection in the Crusades. D.M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice: A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 60.

<sup>147</sup> Iain Fenlon, "St. Mark's before Willaert," *Early Music* 21, no. 4 (1993): 554

<sup>148</sup> H. Maguire and R.S. Nelson, *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice* (Cambridge, MA: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010), 187.



or in exchange for sharing a piece of their security, essentially controlled the fates of everyone else in the vicinity. In contrast, the sheer openness of Venice, spread across its sprawling islands with few overtly defensive features to be seen, must have come across as unimaginably bold, even foolhardy, but undoubtedly impressive. Perhaps even more striking was the amount of wealth to be seen and the degree to which it was distributed throughout the city, without one family clearly overshadowing the rest. To many of these visitors, Venice must have seemed like something from a different world, and the Venetians cannot have helped but to notice the power that their city held over outsiders.

There were, however, also serious issues associated with this new transient population. A large number of the people passing through were soldiers who believed, due to the indulgence pronounced by Urban II, that they were guaranteed absolution for their sins as a reward for fighting in the Crusade.<sup>149</sup> While many of these men were motivated by a piety that may have kept their behavior in check, many others were simply professional killers going with the flow of action, and there are plentiful incidents that indicate that crusader knights were not necessarily extremely particular about whom they killed.<sup>150</sup> Clearly, it was in the interests of the people of Venice to provide their visitors with ample distraction in order to prevent this opportunity from turning into a serious threat to public safety. In later centuries, Venetians would accomplish this, as they continue to do today, with opera houses,

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<sup>149</sup> Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (London: Continuum, 2009), 27-28. There has been some controversy about whether or not this was actually what Urban meant, but it is clear that this is how many crusaders interpreted the indulgence.

<sup>150</sup> Two prime examples are the slaughter of Jews in the Rheinland and south-eastern Europe by members of the so-called People's Crusade in 1096 and the Sack of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade in 1204, in which Venice played a major role, to be discussed momentarily. see Edward Peters, *The First Crusade: "The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres" and Other Source Materials* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 109-112. and Donald E. Queller and Thomas F. Madden, *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 119-204.

museums, theaters, casinos, and masquerades, but they didn't have any of those things yet at the turn of the twelfth century. What they did have were the materials of their religion: their churches, their relics, their narratives, and, perhaps most significantly, their ritual calendar.

From this point on, the Church of Venice existed not only to serve the spiritual needs of the Republic and its people, but also to cultivate a kind of outward-looking theatricality designed both to amaze and disarm outsiders and to instill pride and civic unity in the Venetians themselves. It would ultimately be this genius for spectacle developed in religion that placed Venice on the vanguard of secular entertainments, particularly opera, in the early-modern period—but its development was gradual. Early pilgrims' accounts, which tend to focus primarily on the holy land, may mention passing through Venice, but say nothing about the experience of the city itself. By the fifteenth century, descriptions of the churches, relics, and rituals of Venice had become central preoccupations of these writings, often competing with the cities that were the actual destinations of the pilgrimages.<sup>151</sup>

The most obvious aspect of this new theatrical attitude, and still one of the first images that the name Venice calls to most people's minds, is Carnival. The Venetian Carnival season was traditionally quite long, stretching from St. Stephen's Day (December 26) to the beginning of Lent.<sup>152</sup> During those weeks, which would later form the heart of the opera season, the city was alive with entertainments, some popularly organized and others sponsored by the government or wealthy patrician families, ranging from open-air comedies and parades, which often mocked the pious tone of official processions, to drunken parties and

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<sup>151</sup> Not long after that, Venice would be a destination in its own right, and travel writers from, at latest, the early seventeenth century on would require no pretense of a wider pilgrimage or even a spiritual motive to justify a visit to the floating city.

H. Maguire and R.S. Nelson, *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice*, 187.

<sup>152</sup> J.H. Johnson, *Venice Incognito: Masks in the Serene Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 252.

violent blood sports. There were occasional attempts on the part of straight-laced officials to tone down or eliminate some of the more indecorous events, but the consensus that a more indulgent attitude towards normally prohibited behaviors was appropriate in order to fight the cabin fever of Winter and prepare for the penitent self-denial of Lent does not seem to have been seriously challenged.<sup>153</sup> The use of masks, which was instituted around the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, provided extra assurance against anyone using things seen during the season against anyone else and also limited the degree to which behavior during Carnival could be regulated at all.<sup>154</sup>

Venetians thus instituted a system in which the time of year when crusaders and pilgrims were most likely to be in the city waiting for passage, the period from Christmas to late spring, was neatly divided up from the perspective of public order. That crusaders and other travelers would want to let loose after their long and difficult overland journey was probably inevitable, even in a so-called holy war, but the Carnival season gave them the opportunity to do so within the norms of the larger society. This was followed by the six weeks of Lent, during which time crusaders, having already loosed their demons, would have been encouraged to pray, fast, and generally prepare themselves psychologically and spiritually for the mission ahead. Another four weeks followed between Easter and the opening of the sailing season on Ascension Day, which provided time for more practical preparations for the journey eastward. This program, which reveals the Venetian genius for making the universal Church calendar serve locally specific purposes, not only reduced the possibility of trouble from outsiders, but also gave visitors to the city the opportunity to

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<sup>153</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 156-7.

<sup>154</sup> J.H. Johnson, *Venice Incognito: Masks in the Serene Republic*, 39.

witness the full spectrum of Venetian ritual performance, from the solemn reenactments of Holy Week to the pomp and majesty of the *Sènsa* to the bacchic revelry of Carnival.

The first mention of Carnival being celebrated in Venice comes from 1094, just before the beginning of the First Crusade, but little is known about its early development there.<sup>155</sup> The celebration began to exhibit a uniquely Venetian stamp after 1162, when Ulrich, the patriarch of Aquileia, attacked Grado, believing that the Venetians would be too distracted by their own war with Padua and Ferrara to defend their sister city. Much to Ulrich's dismay, Doge Vitale II Michiel counterattacked on the Thursday before Ash Wednesday (*Giovedì Grasso*; Fat/Shrove Thursday), not only defeating the Aquileian forces but capturing the Patriarch and forcing him to pay a yearly tribute of grain and livestock to Venice for his release.<sup>156</sup> To celebrate this victory, which was a decisive turning point in the rivalry between the two dueling patriarchates, Michiel followed the lead of what Venetians had already been doing with the feast of the Annunciation (25 March) and transformed a universal Christian observance into an explicitly Venetian commemoration.

From this point forward, the festivities of *Giovedì Grasso*, which amounted to a brutal reenactment of the events of 1162, would be the centerpiece of the Venetian Carnival. In the day's main event the doge, his *signoria*, visiting dignitaries, and other high officials would watch as a bull and several pigs, which stood in for Patriarch Ulrich and the twelve Friulian lords that had supported his cause, were symbolically tried, convicted, and sentenced to death

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<sup>155</sup> J.H. Johnson, *Venice Incognito: Masks in the Serene Republic*, 39.

Some form of Carnival, though perhaps unnamed as such, was almost certainly celebrated in Venice, as in any place where people observe Lent, long before this date. It is, after all, somewhat of a feast of necessity, as one has to do something to get rid of all the rich food and drink before Ash Wednesday or it will go bad by Easter.

<sup>156</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 160. The tribute consisted of one Bull, twelve pigs, and three-hundred loaves of bread.

by one of the high judges of the Republic, the Magistrato del Proprio.<sup>157</sup> A group of *popolani* then chased the animals through the Piazzetta San Marco before a large crowd of onlookers from all social strata. The unfortunate beasts were then publicly slaughtered and their meat distributed to the crowd.<sup>158</sup> This was followed by another symbolic reenactment, in which a group of scarlet-clad, club-wielding patricians smashed miniature wooden castles, built to represent Ulrich's fortresses that were destroyed by pursuing Venetians.<sup>159</sup>

This ritual was shocking in its blood-drenched violence, so much so that it was toned down by order of the Council of Ten in 1521 and again in 1525, but it also served as an effective strategy to add a tinge of patriotism and historical reverence to an event that might otherwise be characterized by a disregard for or even skepticism about the legitimacy of governmental authority.<sup>160</sup> This is not to say that the social inversions and mockery of official decorum that are associated with Carnival were absent in Venice, but no record exists of the sort of genuinely violent uprisings that occasionally coalesced out of the festivities in other cities – such as the Roman Carnival of 1580, where a group of artisans were brutally put down for threatening to eat the rich<sup>161</sup> – occurring in Venice.<sup>162</sup> There were, of course,

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<sup>157</sup> Iain Fenlon: "Piazza San Marco: Theater of the Senses, Market Place of the World." in W. in de Boer and C. Göttler, *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 345.

<sup>158</sup> Iain Fenlon, *Piazza San Marco*, 110.

The Piazzetta San Marco is a smaller square which stands perpendicular to the Piazza, directly between the doge's palace and the Library of San Marco; it was the traditional site of public executions in the city.

<sup>159</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 161.

<sup>160</sup> *ibid.* pp. 162-3. Architect Jacopo Sansovino later reported that Doge Andrea Gritti (1523-38) had been a major force behind at least the second of these reforms, which occurred during his tenure. Oddly, from our modern perspective, the public decapitation of the bull was one of the elements that was retained, while the smashing of wooden castles, presumably because it was deemed unbecoming of Patrician decorum, was eliminated.

<sup>161</sup> See Emmanuel le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival in Romans* (New York: George Braziller, 1980).

<sup>162</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 159.

reasons for this beyond *Giovedì Grasso*. One important factor is that the tradition of seditious revolts in Venice was associated with the attempts by ambitious doges to take power away from the people rather than popular uprisings intended to give it to them. Another was that, as Frederick Chapin Lane has observed, the city Venice lacked the sort of permanent military presence that was a mainstay of public order in most Early-Modern European cities. Even in extraordinary situations that demanded extra security, the doge was guarded by a temporary outfit of workers recruited from the Arsenal.<sup>163</sup> This meant that Venetians, even those with no real stake in the government, were not subject to, and thus had no need to rebel against, the kind of rule by intimidation that was a fact of life for people elsewhere.

This arrangement also depended on a particularly reciprocal relationship between the people and their rulers. The continuation of life in the lagoon required a great deal of maintenance in order to prevent canals from filling with silt, dikes from rotting away, and houses from sinking into the water, and these pressures forced Venetian authorities from an early date to develop something akin to modern systems of infrastructural support.<sup>164</sup>

Without these government systems in place, life in Venice would have become immediately more difficult, and eventually all but impossible for a large population. Thus, while it may have been relatively easy for people living under a more traditional feudal arrangement to feel that their relationship with their overlord was one of simple, one-sided domination, it was, for Venetians, an undeniable reality that that they were getting something in exchange for their obedience to the State.

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<sup>163</sup> Frederick C. Lane, *Venice, a Maritime Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 271. The Arsenal was a ship yard in the north-eastern section of Venice which was, in the medieval era, one of the largest and most elaborate industrial facilities in Europe.

<sup>164</sup> William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty*, 58.

### The rise of the *Andata* tradition

The strategic politicization of *Giovedì Grasso* set a pattern for the Venetian approach to religious holidays. Less than twenty years later, in 1176, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa invaded Italy in support of antipope Calixtus III and was, according to Venetian tradition, defeated in an apparently decisive sea battle against Pietro Ziani, son of doge Sebastiano Ziani.<sup>165</sup> This legend is a fanciful and fervently pro-Venetian retelling of the events that led to Barbarossa's official recognition of Pope Alexander III in the Treaty of Venice (1177), which coincidentally took place, more or less, on the feast of the Ascension, as had a key victory over Dalmatian pirates nearly two-hundred years before.<sup>166</sup> Thereafter, Venetians commemorated both events each year on the Ascension with what became the most famous, and among the most elaborate, of all Venetian ritual spectacles, the marriage to the sea, which was known as the *Andata alli due Castelli*, or, colloquially, as the *Sènsa* (short for *Asensión*).

The *Sènsa* was essentially a liturgical procession with a distinctly Venetian nautical bent. Like all religious processions, the *Sènsa* was a voyage of pilgrimage modeled in miniature, but carried out on a grand scale. On the morning of the Ascension, the doge and his entire retinue, clad in vestments of solid white, would board a massive galley known as the

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<sup>165</sup> Garry Wills, *Venice: Lion City*, 42.

<sup>166</sup> This version of the story was codified in several fourteenth century accounts by members of the Venetian government establishment including, most famously, the history of Venice composed by doge Andrea Dandolo, who held the position at the time of the Black Death. Contemporary accounts indicate that Venice did not actually participate in the war between Barbarossa and Alexander III on either side and that Venice was chosen as a locale for peace negotiations because of its neutrality. The role of doge Ziani as a mediator in the negotiations, on the other hand, seems more likely to be based in fact. The importance that was placed on the event after the fact may be rooted in the increased prestige of the dogeship that resulted from Ziani's involvement or from the more concrete political and economic results of the event. The treaty of Venice marks a key moment in the decline of the Holy Roman Empire's influence in northern Italy, which ultimately opened the way for the Venetian terra firma empire. Also, in the wake of the treaty, Venice received a special exemption from tolls in Imperial territory, which dramatically increased the republic's advantage in trans-alpine trade. See Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 106-8.



Giovanni Antonio Canal (Canaletto) - The Doge of Venice Departing for the Lido - drawing- 1763-1767 - British Museum  
A depiction of a late-era Sensà featuring the Bucintoro built in 1727

the *Bucintoro*, used only for this purpose and to meet the most important visiting dignitaries. Tailed by a swarm of craft ranging from warships to fishing boats crowded with spectators to the barges of local

confraternities (known as *Scuole*) and religious orders, which participated in the spectacle, they would then sail to the spot where the calm waters of the lagoon met the open Adriatic.<sup>167</sup> There, between the fortress churches of Saints Andrea and Nicolò (the two castles from which the name of the *andata* derives) the doge would throw a golden ring into the waters as a symbol both of Venetian dominion over and dependence on the sea. Officially, this was done in commemoration of both legendary victories, events that carried major mythological resonance as foundational moments of Venetian maritime preeminence, but in a wider sense, it was a reaffirmation of the absolutely integral nature of the relationship between Venice and the water in all aspects of life, not only in the obvious areas of defense, trade, and food production, but also public sanitation, local transportation, neighborhood identity, and many

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<sup>167</sup> see Francesco Sansovino and G. Martinioni, *Venetia, Città Nobilissima, Et Singolare* (Venice: S. Curti, 1663), 498-502.



other more subtle dependences. The *Sènza* was, in effect, a public acknowledgement that, if life in Venice was better than in other places, it was entirely due to the sea.

In many ways, this ritual appears bizarrely pagan, even animistic, and removed from Christian traditions for a religious practice in Catholic Italy. Indeed, the ceremony seems to invite comparison with ancient appeasement rituals to Poseidon. The *Senza* ritual does contain numerous parallels to the biblical narrative of the Ascension, which may have helped to justify some of its theatrical excess, but it is clear from the ceremonial program that the universal Christian aspects of the occasion play a role secondary to that of the local commemoration. The prominent role of the Republic in the international crisis of 1177, at least as remembered in the local tradition, is an indication of the evolution in Venetian self-perception that had been brought about by the acquisition of empire and the city's role in the Crusades. Occurring less than one-hundred years after the Holy Roman Emperor's official recognition of Venice as an independent state,<sup>168</sup> the narrative of the treaty of Venice is a coming-out story of sorts, in which the republic inserts itself into the top echelon of international politics.<sup>169</sup>

Such was the psychological significance of this narrative that its echoes resounded through not only the *Sènza* but nearly all of the important occasions of the year in the form of a collection of objects known as ducal *Trionfi* and the specifically Venetian ritual tradition of

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<sup>168</sup> 1094. It is probable that the feast known as the Apparition of St. Mark is, in actuality, an unspoken commemoration of this event, given the unlikelihood of the miraculous reappearance that the occasion officially remembers. Of course, from the point of view of state propaganda, it would be unthinkable to acknowledge the actual importance of this event. According to the official history, after all, Venice had always been independent. The existence of an alternative narrative to explain the celebration provides some interesting insights into the Venetian approach to the politicization of religious occasions. H. Maguire and R.S. Nelson, *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice*, 62.

<sup>169</sup> A key point in the story is that Pope Alexander insists that the doge be allowed to sit at the same level with his illustrious guests. Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 103-119.

*Andata*, with which they were associated.<sup>170</sup> According to the legend, Alexander expressed his gratitude for the assistance of doge Ziani by giving him several gifts: an umbrella (like those Alexander and Frederick were sitting under), lead seals (rather than wax, for sealing letters; a special privilege of the pope, the emperor, and other monarchs), a white candle, a gold ring (to be thrown into the sea at the *Sènza*), eight banners (including the banner of St. Mark, mentioned above)<sup>171</sup>, a sword, and a set of silver trumpets.<sup>172</sup> Whatever their true origin,<sup>173</sup> these items certainly brought a regality to Venetian ceremonial that was appropriate to the republic's, and particularly the doges', new status as imperial overlords. However, as one may expect given the level of concern about ducal overreach, this regality was meted out under

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<sup>170</sup> *ibid.*

In the Renaissance, all of the *triumfi* were frequently connected to the visit of pope Alexander II in 1177. However, several of them, including the banner of St. Mark, were in use well before this time. An alternative legend that was popular in the sixteenth century holds that the banner was a gift directly from St. Mark to the republic, discovered on the altar directly above the evangelist's tomb. Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 260.

<sup>171</sup> Unlike the other *trionfi*, which were specifically tied to the presence of the doge, the banner was carried whether he was their or not, symbolizing that, although the doge was the Vicar of St. Mark, the relationship between evangelist and city required no individual conduit.

<sup>172</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 106 The various *triumfi* are given separately at different points in the story, beginning with the white candle, given to show gratitude for providing shelter and assistance to the then-destitute pope, and ending with the banners and trumpets as Alexander makes his triumphant return to Rome. Another, intangible gift, according to the story, was a plenary indulgence for anyone who visits San Marco on the Ascension.

<sup>173</sup> There is no mention of gifts to the doge in an eye-witness account of the treaty written by the Englishman Nicholas of Dunstable. Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 106. I have already mentioned the earlier purported ceremonial use of at least one banner, that of St. Mark. The sword was most likely originally a symbol of the authority of early doges when they were still officers of the Byzantine empire, although later it came to be associated with criminal justice and carried by members of the high court rather than the doge himself. Muir, 114. The earliest extant lead-sealed Venetian documents come from nearly fifty years before the time of the legend, but it is not known what may have specifically prompted their use at that time. Muir, p. 113. The use of a white candle at the head of a procession is most likely originally connected to the supplicatory Procession to San Geminiano (discussed below), which was conducted in penance for the destruction of the Saint's original church to make room for the Piazza San Marco, which also occurred around the time of Sebastiano Ziani's dogeship. Muir, p. 109. Less can be said about the origins of the Trumpets (first mentioned in a document from 1229), Umbrella, and other banners, except that they were all symbols of royalty that were coming into prominence in Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth century and were almost certainly adopted to increase the regal patina of ducal ceremony, whether with the explicit approval of the pope or not.

highly limited and carefully controlled circumstances. The *trionfi* were employed as the emblems and signifiers to accompany the doge when and only when he was in this occasional imperial mode, primarily when greeting important foreign dignitaries and during *Andate*. This association gave the *trionfi*, along with the magnificent golden Byzantine altar piece known as the *pala d'oro*, which was only exposed for *andate*, a function as material mediators of ducal majesty and authority, as they were present only on those relatively few occasions when doges were allowed to fully embody their role as Princes of Venice. Francesco Sansovino lists fourteen annual occasions for this ducal metamorphosis, including Christmas, Easter, the Annunciation, the Ascension, Low Sunday, Corpus Christi, two feasts honoring St. Mark, and the feasts of several other Saints. In all cases he traces the celebrations to particular events in Venetian history, which include some of the greatest tragedies in the communal memory as well as the greatest triumphs.<sup>174</sup>

### Seasons of the *Andate*

The schedule of *Andate* followed an annual rhythm that conformed closely to the older, pagan tradition of harvest, solstice, and equinox festivals. During the months from All Saints' Day in November through the Pentecost and Corpus Christi in late spring, the part of the year when farmers have to spend less time in the fields, the Church calendar is congested with biblical holidays that commemorate events from the lives of Jesus and other New Testament characters.<sup>175</sup> This meant, by necessity, that the Venetian schedule of winter events looked, on the surface, very similar to that in essentially any other Christian state, whereas the

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<sup>174</sup> Granted, Sansovino would have expected his readers to already know about the feasts in their non-Venetian context.

<sup>175</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 212.

summer months were open for more idiosyncratically Venetian festivities, such as the feasts of local or occupational patrons. Venice had the luxury of filling the summer with more and more festivals in part because the city's food producers were fisherman rather than farmers and thus operated on a less rigorous, generally year-round schedule. Conveniently, the months left open on the calendar also corresponded to the part of the year in which the vast majority of military activity, and consequently the vast majority of Venetian military victories took place.

New *andate* celebrating notable recent events, such as, in the sixteenth century, the July 17 *Andata a Santa Marina* commemorating Andrea Gritti's recovery of Padua in 1513 and the October 7 *Andata a Santa Giustina* celebrating a victory over the Turks in the 1571 battle of Lepanto, thus tended to fall organically during the open part of the year. Occasionally, as in the case of Santa Marina, these correspondences were arranged intentionally, but the sheer number of saints' feasts and other observances meant that virtually any significant event could inevitably be tied to at least one.<sup>176</sup> Frequently, the invested saint would have no direct connection to the victory or to Venice, but this was of little concern, as a victory that occurred on the feast day of a saint could be assumed to have benefited from his or her guidance and protection. If a church dedicated to the right person already existed, as was the case with Santa Guistina, the patron of nearby Padua, a procession to that location could simply be established. Often, though, a new *Andata* meant a new construction project.

The character of *andate* could also vary considerably depending on what kind of message it was meant to deliver. More supplicatory occasions, such as those commemorating plague outbreaks, often took the form of loosely organized mass processions, often involving

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<sup>176</sup> Robert Finlay, "Fabius Maximus in Venice: Doge Andrea Gritti, the War of Cambrai, and the Rise of Habsburg Hegemony, 1509-1530." *Renaissance Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (2000): 994.

large portions of the population. On the other hand, *andate* commemorating military triumphs or foundational myths featured tightly organized and choreographed columns of secular, religious, aristocratic, and common officials, with the doge at the center, in which the structures of authority and the ideologies of communal order and cooperation on which Venetian government was posited were symbolically inscribed.<sup>177</sup> In all cases, however, by the sixteenth century, it was the presence of the *trionfi* and the official presence of the doge (he would likely be there in a less official capacity anyway) that defined a truly important ritual occasion, on in which the *Pala d'oro* altarpiece stood open and, from the mid sixteenth century, Vespers' psalms were song in the antiphonal, *Cori spezzati* style, in Venetian society.<sup>178</sup>

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### Depictions of the *Andate*

The elaborate choreography and pompous spectacle of the mature *andata* tradition comes across strikingly in artistic depictions of Venetian processions from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The most detailed extant visual depiction of an *Andata* of the more rigidly ordered types is the large woodcut made by Matteo Pagan in the years of 1556-59 depicting a Palm Sunday procession making its way through the Piazza.<sup>179</sup> This engraving is so detailed that even the patterns on the participants clothing are visible, ranging from the ornate

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<sup>177</sup> As Edward Muir put it, "in effect, **the ducal procession was the constitution**". Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 189-90.

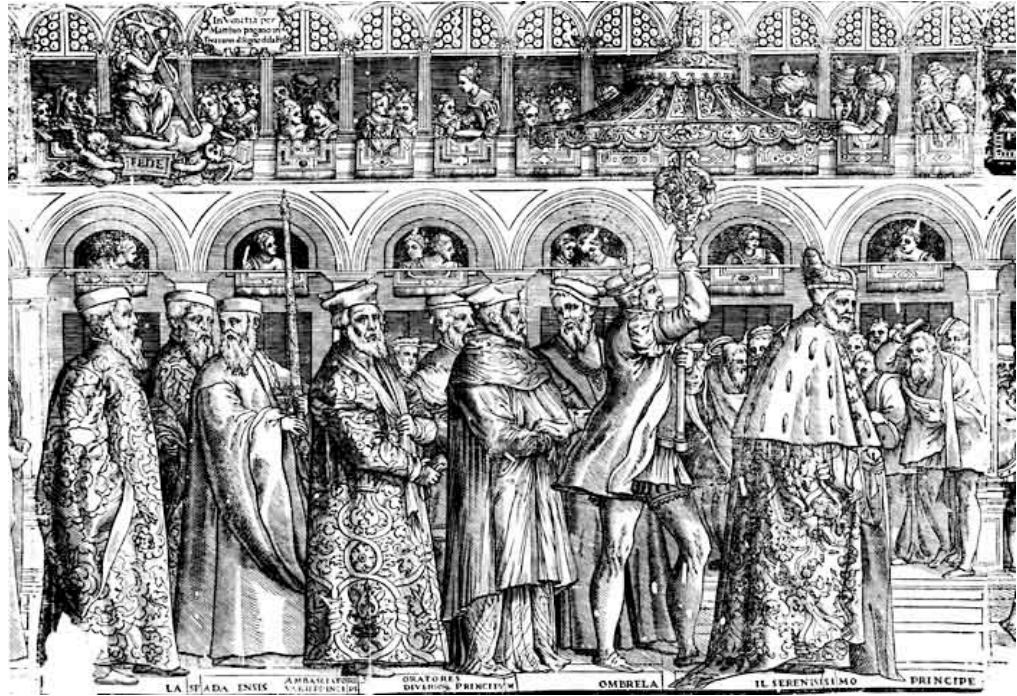
<sup>178</sup> By *Cori Spezzati* I mean that vespers Psalms and antiphons are set for two separate choirs that overlap and interact in a through-composed manner. I will go into considerable detail about this practice and the historical background behind it in Chapter 4.

Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 109.

Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice: Architecture, Music, Acoustics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). 28.

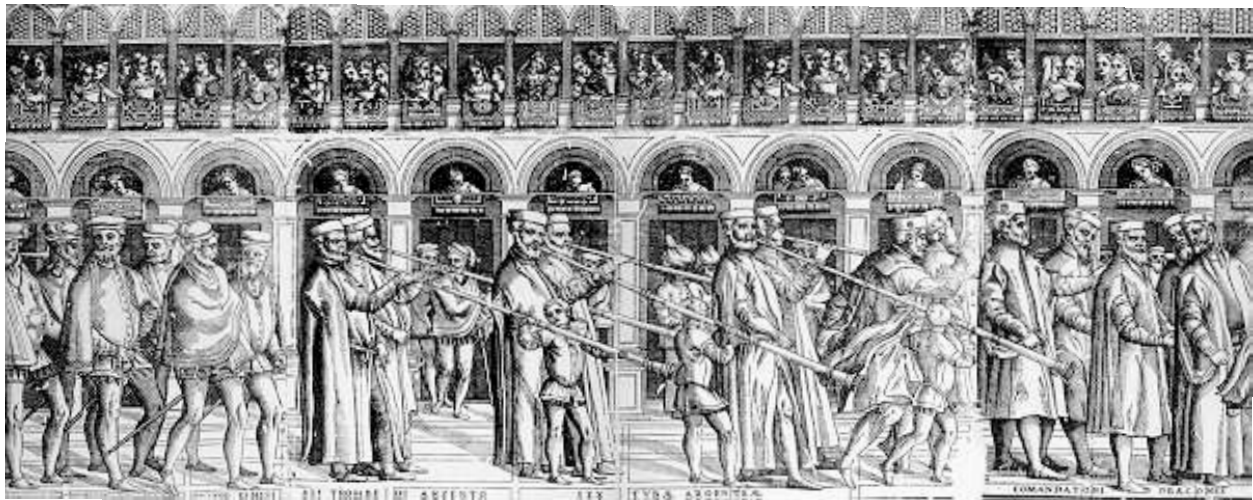
<sup>179</sup> Housed at the Museo Civico Correr in Venice. Jeffery Kurtzmann and Linda Maria Koldau. "Trumpets in Venetian Processions and Ceremonies of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries." *Journal of Seventeenth Century Music* 8, No. 1 (2003).

vestments of the doge and high ranking Church officials through the less decorous, lavish garments of attending aristocrats, down to the modest open



Matteo Pagan, "Procession in St. Mark's Square on Palm Sunday," 1556-59, detail featuring Doge, Umbrella, and Sword, Museo Correr, Venice.

robes of musicians or the thigh-length outfits that mark porters and servants. Pagan was even



Matteo Pagan, "Procession in St. Mark's Square on Palm Sunday," 1556-59, detail featuring ducal silver trumpets, Museo Correr, Venice.

kind enough to provide labels so that all participants can be easily identified with their role in the event. The order of procession in Pagan's work does not always agree with that required



Gentile Bellini - "Procession of the True Cross in San Marco Square" 1496  
Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice

by official ceremonial legislation, which may have been the result of compositional considerations or even a reflection of the rite's ongoing development.<sup>180</sup> However, the rhetorical thrust of this image, which presents Venice as a city of spectacular but unforced order and easy cooperation between a great diversity of people, is very much in line with the propagandistic purposes of these rituals.

A considerably earlier depiction of a similar event can be seen in Gentile Bellini's 1496 painting "Processione della Croce in Piazza San Marco." This painting actually portrays a legendary event of about fifty years before, at which a spectator was miraculously cured through exposure to a piece of the true cross, one of the republic's most treasured relics, during the *Andata in San Marco* on 25 April 1444. The costumes depicted by Bellini are considerable less lavish and ornately decorated than those in Pagan's engraving, and the sparse groups of chatting aristocrats in the background provide a contrast to the ogling

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<sup>180</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 193.

spectators in the later depiction (there would have been considerably less room before the expansion of the Piazza discussed in Chapter 3). However, the painting makes it clear that Venetian religious processions were already a highly cultivated spectacle.<sup>181</sup>

By the first few decades of the fifteenth century, the structures of both the Church and the State of Venice had developed into the basic form that they would maintain until the end of the Republic in the Napoleonic wars. By this point, the distinctively Venetian habit of interweaving locally specific content with the wider traditions of Christianity had taken the Republic's religious practices in a direction strikingly different from that of its neighbors. Around the same time, through a series of conquests that gave Venetian traders unfettered access to the Alpine trade routes, Venice reached the pinnacle of its political and economic power. To many Venetians, it may have seemed like the Republic was on a charmed path, which could, due perhaps to the special favor of heaven, only continue to augment its greatness. However, a series of missteps and unfortunate coincidences beginning around the middle of the century would permanently alter the status of the Republic and cast doubt on the image that Venetians had cultivated of themselves. In following chapter, I will address this crisis of confidence and how it affected the the relationship between the city and the Renaissance, which was exploding across Italy at exactly the same time. In particular, I will examine the ways in which Venetians' engagement with a new form of music that had come to Italy from north of the Alps was both delayed and fundamentally shaped by these events.

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<sup>181</sup> It is difficult to know whether this painting should be taken more as a depiction of the tradition at the time of the event depicted or at the time of painting. Normally, the latter would seem more likely. However, the silver trumpets in the right side of Bellini's painting are of the short variety that had been replaced by the long trumpets featured in Pagan's woodcut during the 1470s, indicating that the artist may have been striving for historical verisimilitude.

see Jeffery Kurtzmann and Linda Maria Koldau. "Trumpets in Venetian Processions and Ceremonies of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries."



## Chapter 2: The Crisis of Venetian Confidence

Far into the fifteenth century, Venice continued on its charmed path. As the republic intensified its network of colonies and consulates in the Eastern Mediterranean, it also expanded its naval capacities. By 1400 the Venetian shipyard, called the Arsenal, had developed to a scale almost certainly beyond any other industrial endeavor in Europe, and the enumerable ships produced there had become an increasingly familiar, and feared, sight in all corners of the Mediterranean. In this way, Venetians eventually attained such a stranglehold on trade routes that mapmakers in Alexandria started labeling the Adriatic sea “The Gulf of Venice.” During the early decades of the century the republic had also managed to conquer a large empire in northern Italy, stretching from Bergamo in the west to Trieste in the east and including the cities of Verona, Vicenza, Brescia, and Padua.<sup>182</sup> This allowed Venetians comparatively unfettered access to alpine passes necessary for trade with the north, so that when economic changes in Europe caused demand for the kinds of luxury goods that were a Venetian speciality to skyrocket, they were able to take full advantage of the expanded market.<sup>183</sup> The resulting explosion of enterprise spurred a construction boom which produced many of the city’s most familiar churches and *palazzi*.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Iain Fenlon, "St. Mark's before Willaert," 548.

<sup>183</sup> C.F. Black, *Early Modern Italy: A Social History* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 16-17.

<sup>184</sup> Iain Fenlon, "St. Mark's before Willaert," 548.

For much of the rest of Italy, this was an extremely turbulent and disheartening era. Two rival Roman aristocratic families, the Orsini and the Colonna, spent much of the century using the papacy as a foil to wear one another down, and in doing so they prepared the way for the Borgia, the Medici, and the foreign powers of Spain, France, and the Holy Roman Empire to move in on the vulnerable peninsula. The human cost of this situation was immense, but somehow it also served as a catalyst for the explosion of innovation in art, literature, engineering, and ideas that is collectively known as the Renaissance. Venice, however, was largely insulated from the early stages of this turmoil by its location and its reputation. As such, although Venetians did have their own brand of innovation during this era, they remained largely aloof from what was occurring on the mainland. In this chapter, I begin by examining this separation, particularly as it concerns the musical developments of the Renaissance and their relationship, or lack thereof, to the culture of music-making in fifteenth century Venice. Then I proceed to discuss the beginnings of Venice's decline in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries in order to show how the events of this period not only fundamentally altered the stories that Venetians told themselves about themselves, but also forced them to take a more active interest in the cultural processes that had been happening around them.

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### **Was The Venice of the Fifteenth Century a Renaissance City?**

It has been noted that tension resulting from the turbulence of this period was at least in part responsible for leading Italian to the developments in art and politico-historical thought associated with the Renaissance, and it has been suggested that Venice was somehow

held back by its insulation.<sup>185</sup> It is true that much of the cultural style current in Venice in the mid-sixteenth century seems to resonate with Florentine developments a half-century or so before. The early developments associated with the Renaissance were driven in large part by the self-promotional interests of and competition between the handful of princely families who ruled much of northern and central Italy on behalf of the Holy Roman Empire. Such lavish displays of personal wealth and monarchical pretension were tolerated, albeit hesitantly, among the Medici and a few other powerful families in the republic of Florence, but in the Venetian state, perhaps due to the ever-present tension between the doge and the *nobili*, ostentations of this sort tended to be regarded as breaches of decorum.

For this reason, major architectural and artistic undertakings tended—much more so in Venice than elsewhere in Italy—to occur in the contexts of churches, governmental institutions, or other public spaces and to avoid the overt glorification of families or individuals.<sup>186</sup> Within these confines, both painters and architects of fifteenth-century Venice tended to cultivate styles that betrayed the influence of novel developments on the terra firma but stopped short of completely abandoning Gothic conventions, as can be seen in the work of Jacopo Bellini and Piero Lombardo's Church of S. Maria Dei Miracoli. Venetians of this era were also busy with developments of their own in the areas of public health, hydraulics, sanitation, and banking, which, while not the first things that come to mind when one thinks of the Renaissance, certainly benefited from the same openness to innovation and improved

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<sup>185</sup> See especially Jacob Burckhardt, S.G.C. Middlemore, and L. Geiger. *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Company, Limited, 1904), 62-72; William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty*. 162-232; and Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance* trans. Jessica Levine (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995). 15-50, 103-138.

<sup>186</sup> There are exceptions, such of the Ca Foscari palace, which was built for the family of doge Francesco Foscari in 1453. As the most powerful and magisterial doge of the fifteenth century, Foscari is associated with several exceptions to this rule, but the scandal that ended his reign just four years after the completion of his house served to solidify Venetian resolve against the threat of personal aggrandizement.



Luca Carlevaris - etching from "Le Fabriche e Vedute di Venezia" - 1703 - Yale University Art Gallery

lines of communication. In addition during this era, the University of Padua, which had recently been absorbed into the Venetian domain, began to eclipse Paris as Europe's leading center of science, Platonist philosophy, and humanistic thought.<sup>187</sup>

### **The Rise of Franco-Flemish Polyphony and the Concept of Renaissance**

One area in which Venice seems to have lagged especially far behind its Italian neighbors was in music. Beginning primarily in the early fifteenth century, certain Italian religious and secular princes began to take an interest in a new style of polyphonic music, cultivated in the cathedral schools of north-western Europe, which had been showcased at the Council of Constance (1414-1418). In the wake of this event, a small group of aristocrats began to compete with one-another to hire singers trained in these schools to perform in their chapels and dining rooms, and by the early sixteenth century what had begun as a few isolated scenes had gradually escalated to a full-scale trend with influence that reached well beyond the insular confines of its original home. In Venice, however, despite the presence of the wealthiest and grandest private chapel in Europe, participation in these developments remained both peripheral and minimal until 1527, when the Belgian composer Adriano Willaert was elected to the position of *Maestro di Cappella* of San Marco.

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<sup>187</sup> Just to give an indication of the centrality of the University of Padua in this era, Pietro Bembo, Nicolaus Copernicus, Daniele Barbaro, Torquato Tasso, Galileo Galilei, Sperone Speroni all studied there.

From the generation of Guillaume Dufay (c. 1397-1474), who is speculated to have attended the council as a teenaged singer, to that of Orlande de Lassus (c. 1530-1594), it became common for established northern musicians to spend large portions of their careers in the employ of Italian princes, who could often afford to pay lavishly for their services.<sup>188</sup> During this period a predominance of elite musical professionals working in Italy came from a highly confined area, then controlled by the dukes of Burgundy, around the border of modern-day France and Belgium which was home to a number of prominent singing schools, most notably that of the cathedral of Cambrai.<sup>189</sup> As a result of this regional homogeneity, the most prestigious music of the era tended to be heavily dominated by the compositional techniques that were taught in these schools, which emphasized the intricate interweaving of melodies in imitative counterpoint.<sup>190</sup>

The rise of these Franco-Flemish musical chapels in the courts of Italy and elsewhere in the fifteenth century was not, however, simply a question of coincidence, or even of inspiration. The Council of Constance was, first of all, necessary to plant the seed of the idea, as lines of communication were not yet strong enough to make it practical for people in Italy to know what musicians were doing hundreds of miles away on the other side of the Alps.<sup>191</sup> An even more significant factor, however, was a shift in Church policy that would have tremendous repercussions for all areas of European creative endeavor. In 1410, just four

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<sup>188</sup> Elizabeth R. Upton, *Music and Performance in the Later Middle Ages* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 139. See also Alejandro Planchart, "The Early Career of Guillaume Du Fay," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 46 (1993), 341-368.

<sup>189</sup> Richard Wetzell, *Music and Globalization in History* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 92.

<sup>190</sup> See Sandriné Dumont, "Choirboys and Vicaires in the Maitrise of Cambrai: a socio-anthropological study" in *Young Choristers, 650-1700*. ed. Boynton, S., and E.N. Rice (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008), 146-162.

<sup>191</sup> The distance from Cambrai to Ferrara, chosen because it was an important early center of polyphonic activity in Italy, is about 544 miles as the crow flies. Even with today's highway system, the most direct route brings this to 712 miles.

years before the start of the Council, an bull issued by Antipope John XXIII granted the Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp the right to hire singers based solely on musical merit.<sup>192</sup> This move, which opened the door to the employment of musicians who were not priests in the Church, not only created a new market for specialized professional musicians but also encouraged a new competitive connoisseurship among the people who hired and patronized these performers.<sup>193</sup>

This shift was a part of a much larger trend in the early fifteenth-century Church of turning to lay contractors for jobs, from clerical work to church decoration, that had previously been assigned to specialized religious orders.<sup>194</sup> Gradually, this process resulted in the creation of an entirely new class of secular creative professionals, the members of which vied with one-another for the most lucrative and prestigious contracts with both religious and secular patrons. As art critic Dave Hickey has noted, this competition gave artists a new motivation to distinguish themselves, which led to a proliferation of idiosyncratic styles and, generally, to a far more rapid pace of change and innovation in artistic practice.<sup>195</sup> In other words, this concrete change in Church hiring policy, in addition to opening the door to the widespread adoption of polyphony in Italy, was also a crucial spur to an explosion of innovation in a far wider sphere of cultural activity. In this project, when I use the word “Renaissance,” a term that has typically been employed in musicology as a marker of historical

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<sup>192</sup> Edward E. Lowinsky, "Music in the Culture of the Renaissance," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 15, no. 4. (1954): 510. See also Kristine K. Forney, "Music, Ritual and Patronage at the Church of Our Lady, Antwerp." *Early Music History* 7 (1987): 6.

<sup>193</sup> Dave Hickey, "Buying the World." *Daedalus* 131, no. 4 (2002): 78.

<sup>194</sup> It may be worth noting that this was essentially the approach that the church had been taking to the actual construction of churches for centuries. One might speculate that the relatively rapid development of medieval architecture is connected to an earlier version of the same process that were beginning to spur music and visual art in the early fifteenth century.

<sup>195</sup> *ibid.*

periodization, I am referring specifically to this bounded cultural phenomenon and its products.

### **Musical Renaissance**

Defining Renaissance in this manner raises questions about whether or not musicians can be regarded as full participants in it. This is an issue, in particular, because the movement has traditionally been primarily understood as a revival of the artistic and intellectual culture of ancient Greece and Rome. A musician of the fifteenth or sixteenth century could approach the classical world indirectly, by studying the meter and rhetoric of ancient texts or by reading what classical writers had to say about music, but unlike poets, painters, or architects, he or she had no way to emulate actual music from the ancient world, as none was available. This is exacerbated by the fact that even what little was known about music in the ancient world was enough to make it clear that it had almost nothing in common with sixteenth-century polyphony. Further, while the Renaissance is primarily associated with Italy, the era's polyphonic tradition was a fundamentally northern phenomenon, and all this together has led many to the conclusion that the music of the fifteenth and sixteenth century should be regarded as adjacent to rather than part of the movement.

It is, however, somewhat misleading to describe the Renaissance as fundamentally a phenomenon of rediscovering ancient Greek and Roman culture. It would be more accurate to describe the Renaissance, at least as it began, as a new openness among patrons to novel self-promotional tactics that were becoming available due to the new culture of competition and innovation outlined above. The grand architecture, sculpture, literary odes, rhetorical speeches, and other liberal arts of the ancient world that experienced revivals in the fifteenth

and sixteenth centuries were all among the most effective tools available for creating the impression of individual power and greatness, and so naturally they played an important role in this process. It was, however, the functionality of these arts, not simply their classical pedigree, that drove their appeal, and once the idea that novel promotional tactics were a good way to make one prince stand out from the crowd had been introduced, the door was opened to new ideas from other sources as well.

Without doubt, the studied rhetorical strategies, architectural techniques, and many other aspects of classical society that were coming back into focus were among the most potent promotional aides available, and for that reason, humanists who specialized in uncovering, deciphering, and reenacting the ancient world were crucial agents of the Renaissance from the onset. The ancients did not, however, have a monopoly on promising promotional tactics, and Renaissance princes, in notably pragmatic fashion, were not particular about sources as long as they could see results. Thus, many non-classical elements, including the modern Italian innovation of point-perspective painting as well as spices, fabrics and gun powder from Asia, and the German printing press, all of which carried massive potential to impress, were freely brought in and made at home in the bricolage of the Renaissance. The Franco-Flemish technology of contrapuntal polyphony and the highly trained aristocratic musical chapel belong to the same category.

### **Significant Early Musical Operations**

Among the Italian princely families that began to take an interest in the new polyphonic tradition, probably the most significant to our story, both because of their proximity to Venice and the relative scale of their musical operation, were the d'Estes of



Ferrara. In the 1440s, Marquess Leonello d'Este established the *cappella di cantori*, a permanent chapel of ten singers, all from the northwest. Leonello's brother Ercole, later the famed patron of Josquin, became Duke of Ferrara in 1472, and immediately expanded the chapel to fifteen singers, and by the end of his reign in the first decade of the sixteenth century he had built it up into one of the largest musical forces in Europe.<sup>196</sup> Around the same time in Rome, Pope Sixtus IV began construction of a relatively unmemorable structure on the Vatican, which is called the *Cappella Sistina* (Sistine Chapel), after its founder. This building became the most personal space associated with the pontiff, where he was and still is elected and where he serves as parish priest. Alongside it was established a musical body, built in part from previously existing papal ensembles, that was so firmly associated with the Franco-Flemish style that the two eventually became synonymous in the term *a cappella*.<sup>197</sup>

The Basilica of Saint Peter was also home to a staff of singers, and in a bull issued on 19 February 1513, just two days before his death, Pope Julius II, a nephew of Sixtus IV, augmented the group, since known as the *Cappella Giulia*, and established a singing school connected to it.<sup>198</sup> The stated purpose of this move was to encourage the development of native talent, in contrast to the *Cappella Sistina*, which was still largely staffed with northern

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<sup>196</sup> Iain Fenlon, "St. Mark's before Willaert," 547.

<sup>197</sup> Although there were some exceptions, the use of instruments was forbidden at the Cappella Sistina. It is from this tradition that we get the contemporary, colloquial definition of *A Cappella* as "unaccompanied voices." As the composition of unaccompanied sacred music became less common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Sistine Chapel directors responded by simply continuing to sing the old sacred polyphony, especially that by Palestrina, they had been using since the late sixteenth century, and by continuing to write new music in that now antiquated style. In this way, a great deal of music that was largely if not entirely forgotten elsewhere was allowed to survive through uninterrupted use in this one idiosyncratic locale. Tim Carter, and J. Butt. *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 553.

<sup>198</sup> Both of these groups still exist in some form today, although the *Cappella Giulia* was officially disbanded from 1980 to 2006. According to current practice, the *Cappella Sistina* performs at all Vatican rituals that are officiated by the pope, and the *Cappella Giulia* handles everything else.

and Spanish singers.<sup>199</sup> Other similar schools, including one at San Marco in Venice, were founded in the surrounding decades, and it is highly likely that they played a major role in the rise of Italian musicians to predominance in polyphonic music-making by the century's end. These developments, along with parallels in Milan, Naples, and other principalities meant that, by the time of Willaert's arrival in Italy (around 1515), it was practically awash with this music that had been such a novelty a century before. Venice, however, seems to have participated only minimally in the early stages of this process.

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### Background of Music in Venice

Certainly, composed polyphony was not completely unknown in Venice before Willaert's election. Johannes Ciconia (c. 1370-1412), the first major northern composer known to have worked extensively in Italy, was employed in the city of Padua in 1405 when the city was, along with Vicenza, Treviso, and much of the rest of the modern-day Veneto, absorbed into the Venetian empire.<sup>200</sup> Early in the next year, he apparently traveled to Venice with his patron, the diplomat and statesman Francesco Zabarella, who was one of the chief negotiators of peace between the two cities, and while there oversaw a performance of his civic motet, *Venetia Mundi Splendor* to mark the occasion.<sup>201</sup> Also, in the early fifteenth century, when Venice was at the height of its international influence, the powerful doge Francesco

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<sup>199</sup> C.A. Reynolds, *Papal Patronage and the Music of St. Peter's, 1380-1513* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 1.

<sup>200</sup> R.M. Nosow, *Ritual Meanings in the Fifteenth-Century Motet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 56-7.

M. Bent, "The Fourteenth century Italian Motet," in *L'ars Nova Italiana Del Trecento Vi: Atti Del Congresso Internazionale "L'europa E La Musica Del Trecento", Certaldo, Palazzo Pretorio, 19-21 Luglio 1984*, Ed. Giulio Cattin, (Certaldo: Libreria musicale italiana, 1990), 85-125.

<sup>201</sup> R.M. Nosow, *Ritual Meanings in the Fifteenth-Century Motet*, 69.

W.C. Hazlitt, *The Venetian Republic: Its Rise, Its Growth, and Its Fall 421-1797* (London: A. and C. Black, 1900), 768-769.

Foscari (reigned 1423-1457) commissioned large-scale civic motets to sing his praises from composers including Antonius Romanus, Hugo de Lantins, and Cristoforo da Monte.<sup>202</sup> Such works were, however, intended for singular special occasions such as the celebration of a ducal election, and they probably had little impact on the musical program for regular Venetian rituals. At any rate, this tradition seems to have faded away well before the close of the fifteenth century, possibly due in part to the scandals surrounding the end of Foscari's long reign in 1457.<sup>203</sup>

### **Polyphony and Venetian Printing: Petrucci**

Venice had also been exposed to new trends in polyphony through the city's role as a major center of the early printing industry. The first book to emerge from a Venetian press was printed in 1469, just fourteen years after Johannes Gutenberg completed the first copies of his 42-line bible in Mainz. More presses followed, and within just over a decade the city was leading the world in volume of printed material.<sup>204</sup> All told, at least one-hundred and fifty printing shops opened in Venice and produced upwards of two million copies of books in the fifteenth century alone. Very soon this new technology was modified to aid in the distribution of music; the first significant known examples are sixteen pages of liturgical chant, created using a modified version of movable type, in the *Missale Romanum* printed by Ulrich Han, one

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<sup>202</sup> Iain Fenlon, "St. Mark's before Willaert," 548.

<sup>203</sup> Jacopo Foscari, the son of the doge who had already suffered exile for accepting bribes and a questionable charge of murder, was charged with conspiring with the Ottoman empire and convicted by the Council of Ten in 1456. His father soon entered a debilitating depression and was forced to step down the following year. J. J. Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 336-8.

This story was immortalized in Lord Byron's play, *The Two Foscari* and later in the Verdi opera of the same name.

<sup>204</sup> M.K. Duggan, *Italian Music Incunabula: Printers and Type*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. p. 20.

of the German printers who originally introduced the new technology in Italy, in 1476.<sup>205</sup> Many more books of monophonic chant, but no polyphony or secular song, were printed during the century, and about half of it was produced in the rapidly expanding printing houses of Venice.<sup>206</sup>

Around the turn of the century, increasing competition in the industry led many printers to increasingly specialize their output in order to corner the market in areas such as devotional literature, legal texts, classics, and diocese-specific liturgical books.<sup>207</sup> Within this milieu, in 1498 a young immigrant from the town of Fossombrone named Ottaviano Petrucci, who may or may not have had specialized training as a printer, applied to the Venetian government for the exclusive privilege to start a print shop that would focus specifically on music.<sup>208</sup> In his application, Petrucci claimed to have invented a process that made the printing of polyphony a workable enterprise, and although this claim appears to have been somewhat disingenuous, the state granted him a twenty-year monopoly for the printing of polyphony.<sup>209</sup>

Three years later, when his shop released its first edition, a volume of secular songs by the likes of Josquin, Obrecht, Agricola, Brumel, and Ockeghem titled *Harmonice Musices*

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<sup>205</sup> *ibid.* p. 13.

<sup>206</sup> *ibid.* p. 20.

<sup>207</sup> Stanley Boorman, *Ottaviano Petrucci: Catalogue Raisonné* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 29.

<sup>208</sup> *ibid.* p. 78.

<sup>209</sup> *ibid.* pp. 79-80.

Petrucci's early editions do have an exceedingly clean and elegant look when compared to the printing that can be seen in earlier chant books, or for that matter, later editions of polyphonic music, but this was primarily the result of developments from other quarters of the printing industry, such as kerning, the precise control of horizontal space between sorts (individual pieces of type), which had been featured previously in Aldus Manutius's editions of Classical Greek texts. In addition, Petrucci benefitted from recently developed metallurgical alloys that allowed for much finer lines and details than had previously been possible in cut type.

*Odhecaton A*, it was the first known printed volume of polyphonic music.<sup>210</sup> *Harmonice Musices Odhecaton A* was followed by other editions of polyphonic music from Petrucci's shop, including volumes of masses by Josquin, Obrecht, Brumel, La Rue, Agricola, Isaac, and others, several volumes of Motets from various composers, and also books of less elaborate music like Laude, hymn settings, and secular *Frottole*. In all, forty-nine official editions were released from the shop between 1501 and 1509, when Petrucci seems to have left Venice, possibly due to the business repercussions of the War of Cambrai, and returned to Fossombrone where he resumed publishing in 1511.<sup>211</sup> These were small, specialty editions of very high quality and price, meant for purchase by wealthy religious organizations, princely chapels, and aristocratic households. This early phase of Venetian music printing was both brief and limited, but it was enough to transform the city's status in the musical world. From this point on, Venice's print culture made it an especially attractive spot for musical thinkers, enthusiasts, and young musicians looking to build contacts and curry potential patrons.

The industry would not really enter full swing until the late 1530s, when two printers, Antonio Gardano and Girolamo Scotto, set up shops that began producing books of music by the hundreds.<sup>212</sup> Both printers employed single-impression printing, a process that had been developed in England by John Rastell during the previous decade, with possible precedents in earlier Venetian and Viennese liturgical printing, and popularized by the

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<sup>210</sup> O. Petrucci, H. Hewitt, and I. Pope, *Harmonice Musices Odhecaton A*. (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1942) p. v.

<sup>211</sup> Stanley Boorman, *Ottaviano Petrucci: Catalogue Raisonné*, 411-413.

<sup>212</sup> Mary Lewis, *Antonio Gardano, Venetian Music Printer, 1538-1569* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 72; J.A. Bernstein, *Music Printing in Renaissance Venice: The Scotto Press, 1539-1572* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1998. 168.

Parisian printer Pierre Attaingnant.<sup>213</sup> Music printed with this new technique had a crude look compared to the elegant editions of Petrucci and Andrea Antico, the most significant Venetian music printer of the 1520s and 30s, but they could be produced far more quickly and cheaply than with any previous process.<sup>214</sup> This advantage allowed Scotto and Gardano to cash in on the emerging trend of the sixteenth-century madrigal by selling relatively affordable volumes of tunes by Verdelot, Archedelt, and their many followers on a truly commercial scale.<sup>215</sup> These developments would prove incredibly timely for Willaert. Not only did he publish the majority of his major prints with either Scotto or Gardano, their presence in the city also helped the composer to cultivate his swarm of notable disciples, many of whom were attracted to the Venetian scene by the possibility of a career-boosting appearance in a Gardano or Scotto anthology.

### Music at the Scuole

Probably, the vast majority of intended customers for Petrucci's editions were people and organizations outside of Venice, but there is a possibility that a market for them may have been emerging in the city's *Scuole Grandi*, benevolent organizations or confraternities that played a major role, both socially and ceremonially, in Venetian society. Musical performance had long been an important part of confraternal life. At one time this would have been largely limited to monophonic songs of praise, often evoking the *scuola's* patron saint, but in the

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<sup>213</sup> James Haar, *European Music, 1520-1640* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2014). 291; on Earlier precedents, see Stanley Boorman, "The Salzburg Liturgy and Single-Impression Music Printing," in *Music in the German Renaissance: Sources, Styles and Contexts*. ed. John Kmetz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 235-53.

<sup>214</sup> J.A. Bernstein, *Music Printing in Renaissance Venice: The Scotto Press*, 27.

<sup>215</sup> J.A. Bernstein, *Music Printing in Renaissance Venice: The Scotto Press*, 44; Mary Lewis, *Antonio Gardano, Venetian Music Printer*, 77.

second half of the fifteenth century several of them had cultivated more ambitious musical programs, even occasionally hiring professional musicians to perform things that *scuola* members could not, including at least some composed or improvised polyphony.<sup>216</sup>

Around the turn of the century, several *scuole* began to step things up even further by hiring permanent coteries of salaried musicians.<sup>217</sup> Petrucci, as a member of a Venetian craft guild, was very likely a member of a *scuola* as well, and he may thus have had sympathy with their particular requirements.<sup>218</sup> In particular, collections of *Laudæ* and Hymns prepared in the Petrucci shop, written in a relatively simple four-voice style, may have been targeted to the *Scuola* market, but almost any of the sacred editions Petrucci put out may conceivably have been appropriate for occasional use at one or more of these organizations, depending on the scale and ability of their musical forces. Petrucci's first book of *Laudæ*, published in 1508, in particular, seems to be connected to Venetian confraternal practice. It contains sixty-six settings by a priest named Innocenzio Dammonis who was associated with the church of San Salvatore, which was home to the *scuola piccola* (later *Grande*) of San Teodoro.<sup>219</sup> Like many other *scuole*, San Teodoro was responsible for providing music for certain ducal processions, and the predominant four-voice texture of the *Laudæ* in this volume would likely have been appropriate for the limited resources of the organization.

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<sup>216</sup> Jonathan Glixon, *Honoring God and the City*, 89.

<sup>217</sup> *ibid.* p. 106.

<sup>218</sup> Stanley Boorman, *Ottaviano Petrucci: Catalogue Raisonné*, 39-40.

<sup>219</sup> Iain Fenlon, "St. Mark's before Willaert," 563.

### Music in San Marco before Willaert

The paucity of surviving records makes it more difficult to trace the process of polyphony's adoption at San Marco, which served as both the city's most important church and aristocratic chapel, though musical performance as such was present. Francesco Caffi's monumental *Storia Della Musica Sacra Nella Gia' Cappella Ducale Di San Marco in Venezia Dal 1318 Al 1797*, one of the first major scholarly works on music in Venice, includes a list of San Marco organists, who seem to have been highest musical officers in the organization until the establishment of the *Maestro di Cappella* position in 1491, dating back to 1318.<sup>220</sup> Documentary evidence also exists of a school that was established there by the Senate in 1403 to teach eight boys, each of whom was paid one Ducat per year, to sing.<sup>221</sup> This indicates not only that Vocal music played a role in the ritual life of San Marco – adult singers are also mentioned, as teachers, in the same document –, but also that there was resolve among members of the government to improve it. It must be noted, however, that the music these boys were being trained to sing was very likely monophonic chant, possibly in an elaborated form. It is highly unlikely that composed polyphony would have been a regular feature of services at San Marco until much later.

Only one well-known musician of the fifteenth century has been found to have had direct ties to San Marco. Johannes de Quadris, a notable Italian composer, has been identified through a Vatican document discovered by Laurenz Lütteken as a priest with direct associations to San Marco from the 1430s through the 1450s, the peak era of Francesco

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<sup>220</sup> F. Caffi, *Storia Della Musica Sacra Nella Gia' Cappella Ducale Di San Marco in Venezia Dal 1318 Al 1797* (Venice: Antonelli, 1854), 53-55.

<sup>221</sup> Giulio M. Ongaro, *The Chapel of St. Mark's at the Time of Adrian Willaert*, 37.



Foscari's power.<sup>222</sup> De Quadris's surviving works include one of the first polyphonic settings of the Magnificat and a set of Lamentations that found their way into a Petrucci print in 1506 and which seem to have been in use at San Marco into the seventeenth century. He is identified in this document as "*musicus et cantor*," indicating that, in addition to being a practical musician, possibly part of an early choir of San Marco, he was a university educated scholar of music theory who enjoyed a considerably higher social status than did ordinary performing or composing musicians.<sup>223</sup> The degree of connection between his compositional activities and his tenure at San Marco is, however, unclear, and there is no indication that the chapel returned to the practice of hiring polyphonists until the election of Willaert nearly a century later.

It appears that another push to improve the chapel's musical program went into effect towards the end of the fifteenth century. A second organist position was established in 1490, possibly to make better use of the new organ that had been built by Fra Urbano two years earlier.<sup>224</sup> The next year saw the creation of the position of *Maestro di Cappella*, which can be taken as an indication that the San Marco singing school, or at least the standards to which it was being held, had grown substantially since its establishment nearly a century before. That the republic's government had high expectations for the position is indicated by the fact that Pietro de Fossis, the first person to hold the position, was granted the substantial

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<sup>222</sup> Iain Fenlon, "St. Mark's before Willaert," 552.

<sup>223</sup> Iain Fenlon, "St. Mark's before Willaert," 552; Giulio Cattin. "Johannes de Quadris." In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, (accessed July 19, 2012).

<sup>224</sup> E. Selfridge-Field, *Venetian Instrumental Music from Gabrieli to Vivaldi* (Mineola: Dover, 1994), 8-9. There had been two organs in San Marco, placed on opposite sides of the choir, since 1388, so it is likely that temporary second organists were periodically brought in for services that required the use of both. The second organ, due at least in part to the spatial constraints of the building, has traditionally been considerably smaller than the first.

salary of 70 Ducats per year, ten more than the first organist.<sup>225</sup> Very possibly, had the republic not soon become embroiled in a series of costly and psychologically devastating wars, many of the developments that are associated with the period after the arrival of Willaert, including the expansion of the choir and the regular performance of composed polyphony, may have occurred thirty or more years earlier than they ultimately did.

Slightly more can be said about what was happening during the period immediately leading up to Willaert's election. Iain Fenlon has constructed a picture of San Marco's musical program as it would have sounded in the mid-fifteen-twenties.<sup>226</sup> Sources for his study include the account of Arent Willemsz, a barber-surgeon from Delft who visited Venice while on a pilgrimage in 1525 and attended the Corpus Domini celebration during his stay, and the 1564 *Rituum Cerimoniale* of Bartolomeo Bonifacio, the earliest surviving liturgical reference for use by the ceremonial masters of San Marco. Fenlon has determined that, on most days of the year, all of the music heard in San Marco was provided by canons of the church, who formed a group that Bonifacio refers to as the *cappella parva* or small choir, already long defunct by the time of his writing.<sup>227</sup> This music was, according to Willemsz, extremely beautiful, and it is likely that the canons were chosen for the task based at least in part on their singing ability, and that some were highly skilled musicians.

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<sup>225</sup> O. Bätschmann, *Giovanni Bellini*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. p. 91.

<sup>226</sup> Iain Fenlon, "St. Mark's before Willaert," 547-63.

<sup>227</sup> *ibid.* p. 561.

While the earlier presence of Johannes de Quadris seems to imply the possibility of some precedent for composed polyphony in the chapel, Willemsz's 1525 description makes it clear that the music he heard the *cappella parva* perform for *Corpus Domini* ceremonies was primarily liturgical chant, in both plain and elaborated forms. As he describes, a small group of canons sat dispersed on either side of the choir and alternated psalmodizations, as he puts it, "one side *simplesanck*, the other *contrapunt* or *fabriðon*, whichever term you understand best."<sup>228</sup> Willemsz may have simply been pulling out whatever musical terminology he happened to know, but his use of the term *fabriðon* seems to imply that the more elaborate music performed by the second choir was, or at least sounded to him like, a formulaic and potentially improvised polyphonization of a psalm-tone formula.

Whether or not any of the music was pre-composed, the basic practice here outlined bears a striking similarity to the settings in the 1550 psalm collection assembled by Adriano Willaert listed under the heading, "*Salmi senza risposte*" (Psalms without responses). These eleven settings, none of which were composed by Willaert, include relatively basic four-part renderings of every other verse, leaving the other half to be performed by another choir in plainchant (i.e. *Simplesanck*). By the time of Willaert's collection, music of this sort would no longer have been featured at *Corpus Domini*, which, as one of the most important feasts on the Venetian calendar, required a more elaborate musical program. Nonetheless, the fact that the composer included half-polyphonic psalms of this sort at all suggests that the practice had survived at San Marco, potentially in both composed and formulaic forms, as one among many available gradations of musical elaboration, despite the replacement of the *cappella parva*.

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<sup>228</sup> *ibid.* p. 558.

Willemsz also refers to another group of what he calls “discanters” who stand and sing in “a beautiful, round, big, high pew, decorated and draped with red velvet cloth of gold,” which was presumably the octagonal *pulpitum magnum*, colloquially referred to as the *bigonzo* (tub). This was very likely a group of professional, auxiliary singers that are also mentioned by Bonifacio, brought in to further elaborate and beautify services on special occasions, i.e. the days of the *Anđata* calendar on which the *Pala d’oro* was opened plus a few others, mostly around Christmas. This extra choir is even more shrouded in mystery than the *cappella parva* in terms of how closely connected they were to San Marco, what sort of music they performed, and who they were. Bonifacio, writing nearly forty years after the fact, provides a few clues when, in his brief description of pre-Willaertian musical practice, he refers to “the singers who normally sing *ex practica cantant* (from memory) if they were available; in which case they were appointed to sing *more georgiano*.”<sup>229</sup> In addition to making clear that singing at San Marco was not their only, or even their primary engagement, this excerpt, both with its reference to singing from memory and the more illusive *more Georgiano*, strongly suggests that the repertoire of this group also consisted primarily of improvised polyphony built around liturgical chant, although perhaps a more elaborate version than that performed by the *cappella parva*.

Bonifacio’s use of the idiomatic term *more georgiano* was previously a source of confusion. However, two documents described by Lucia Moro and Giulio Cattin nearly twenty years ago may reveal what Bonifacio meant. The first is a manuscript from the Paduan church of San Giorgio in Alga, a congregation with Venetian origins, which contains written-out examples of chant elaborated with a two-voice, nonparallel style of (normally)

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<sup>229</sup> *ibid.* pp. 558-561

improvised polyphony known as *cantus planus binatim*.<sup>230</sup> The second is a sixteenth-century document from Bologna which speaks of music for Holy Week being sung "*falso bordone overo giorgiana*."<sup>231</sup> It thus seems likely that the improvised polyphonic music performed in this Paduan church had, by the sixteenth century, become so well-known and influential in northern Italy that *more georgiano* came to mean "sung like they do in the church of of San Giorgio in Alga". In effect, it had become a synonym for *falso bordone*, and what Willemsz heard on Corpus Domini in 1525 was some, possibly highly cultivated, form of that style.

The practice of bringing in outside contractors to augment the musical forces of San Marco for special occasions would continue long after Willaert's arrival, although in later years it was more typically extra instrumentalists rather than singers that were required. What was becoming unacceptable around the time of Willemsz's visit was the necessity of bringing in outside contractors, who, as Bonifacio mentions, may or may not be available, in order to feature elite musical performances for important ritual occasions at all. At the time, Andrea Gritti, the man primarily responsible for hiring Willaert, had been doge of Venice for around two years, but during that time the attentions and finances of the republic had been caught up in the wars that were raging through the Italian peninsula. There is, however, some indication that Gritti and his procurators were already having ideas about the future of the chapel. That same year, when Pietro de Fossis retired from the post of *Maestro di Cappella*, rather than promoting someone from within, they decided to appoint an interim *Maestro* and sit on the position until a suitable candidate became available.

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<sup>230</sup> L. Moro and G. Cattin, "Il Codice 359 del seminario di Padova (anno 1505). Canti liturgici a due voci e laude dei cononici di San Giorgio in Alga." *Contributi Per La Storia Della Musica Sacra a Padova*. Ed. Cattin, G., and A. Lovato (Padua: Istituto per la Storia Ecclesiastica Padovana, 1993), 141-89.

<sup>231</sup> *ibid.*

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### **Reasons for Late Adoption of Regular Composed Polyphony in Venice: Princely politics**

The question remains of why the Venetian Republic remained aloof to the developing tradition of Franco-Flemish polyphony for as long as it did. There are several potential reasons why it might have seemed logical for Venetians to ignore the trend of forming permanent chapels to perform composed polyphony on a regular basis. One factor was simply that there was already a great deal of music involved in Venetian ritual. Another was that Venice in the fifteenth century controlled such a wealthy and powerful empire that competing with the other statelets of Italy seemed unnecessary. A final and probably most important factor was that this trend was, to a large extent, an exercise of princely rivalries and ideologies with which the Venetian republic was simply not engaged.

### **Proliferation of music**

Although composed polyphony did not become a regular and permanent feature in San Marco until after the arrival of Willaert, there was already a huge amount of music involved in Venetian rituals and processions. In addition to the music provided *in situ* by the *cappella parva* and the professional discanters which so impressed Arent Willemsz, the paths of the processions themselves would have been alive with a variety of music. Elaborate fanfares, played on the ducal silver trumpets and perhaps accompanied by low brass, would have rung out across the city, reminding residents to come out and see the spectacle as it went by. Music of exactly this sort was later transcribed by Claudio Monteverdi, who used it in both his proto-opera *Orfeo* and the opening antiphon of his *Vespro della beata vergine*, which may have been written specifically to appeal to Venetian tastes and requirements. In between these displays onlookers would have been treated to all manner of performances by *Scuole* large and

small, religious and occupational organizations, and other groups that wanted to assert their stake in the city.

These performances were seen and heard by a much larger number of people than the music performed indoors, and they bore the primary responsibility for educating the populous about the often immense webs of symbolism behind these events. To this end organizations frequently devised elaborate costumes, painted sets, and even mechanical marvels and featured staged tableaux, theatrical performances, and stirring speeches in addition to music. Thus, it could easily be argued that these *en route* outdoor performances were the most rhetorically important musical facet of Venetian *andate*. With all the spectacle that they had to offer, it is highly doubtful that anyone was overly troubled by the fact that they very seldom featured composed polyphonic music, and even then kept it very simple.

### **Power and influence of the republic**

Another factor keeping Venice from fully engaging in these rivalries was very likely the immense size, power, and influence that the republic enjoyed during the period when these trends were developing on the terra firma. By the beginning of the fifteenth century, Venetians had, through their occupation of Corfu in 1383, completely secured their dominion over the Adriatic, and during the following three decades, seeking control over the Alpine trade routes of northern Italy, they had cultivated one of the largest domains on the peninsula.<sup>232</sup> In addition, Venice at this time still controlled large areas in the eastern Mediterranean region, much of it in Venetian hands since the Fourth Crusade (1202-1204). This was a time when European markets for luxury items from the eastern Mediterranean and grain from the Nile basin were expanding rapidly, and Venice, at the height of its power, was

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<sup>232</sup> Iain Fenlon, "St. Mark's before Willaert," 548.

in a position to control and benefit from an enormous segment of the trade that resulted from this expansion.<sup>233</sup> Given all this, competition between duchies on the peninsula may have seemed inconsequential because, from the Venetian perspective, the Republic was not only a bigger fish than its Italian neighbors, but swimming in a completely different, and much larger, pond. Under these circumstances, especially if we take commentators like Guicciardini at their word regarding Venetians' chauvinistic attitudes,<sup>234</sup> the suggestion that Venice should do something to compete with the Sforzas or the Estes may have seemed like an insult.

### **Monarchical ideology**

Finally, a great deal of the investment that supported the rise of Franco-Flemish polyphony in Italy was specifically motivated by interpersonal rivalries of a particularly monarchical persuasion. The desire of the d'Este of Ferrara to cultivate a larger musical chapel and to staff it with the most skilled singers and singer-composers coming across the Alps was no doubt inspired to a large extent by their own pious desire to beautify worship for the glorification of God as well as their personal desire to be surrounded by the most beautiful music available. However, as Iain Fenlon has noted, they were almost certainly also very interested in competing with the chapel of Galeazzo Maria Sforza in Milan as well as that of the Pope in Rome.<sup>235</sup> This was an issue for Venetians, first of all, because although Venice did have someone they referred to as "prince," excessive self-promotion and personal rivalry with foreign leaders on the part of the doge was unacceptable to the state. This was particularly

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<sup>233</sup> Iain Fenlon, "St. Mark's before Willaert," 548.

<sup>234</sup> see F. Guicciardini and S. Alexander, *The History of Italy* (New York: Collier Books, 1972), 202.

<sup>235</sup> Iain Fenlon, "St. Mark's before Willaert," 547.



true in the years following the Foscari debacle, which happened to correspond to one of the most intense periods of growth for polyphony in Italy.

This anti-republican association may be interpreted as a an aesthetic problem as well as an ideological one. The rhetorical strategies cultivated by the musicians employed in these princely chapels, as the example of Josquin's *Missa Hercules Dux Ferrariae* famously demonstrates, were oriented towards glorifying and advertising the *virtu* of one man. In much of Italy, where even the most powerful families were, perhaps painfully, aware of the allegiance they technically owed to the Holy Roman Empire, such affirmations took on a special significance. In the words of Claude Palisca, "The arts bolstered these uncrowned rulers through eloquent orations and dedications, portraits and motets, which conferred on them the magnificance and legitimacy that their thrones lacked."<sup>236</sup> In the fully independent republic of Venice, particularly after the harsh lessons of the Foscari debacle, the glorification of any individual, even a doge, was regarded as a breach of decorum.<sup>237</sup> For the new Franco-Flemish polyphony to be truly viable in a Venetian context, like the new developments of the Renaissance in architecture, painting, literature, theater, etc., which had also been largely developed under monarchical (or quasi-monarchical) contexts, its rhetorical thrust would have to be modified so that it could be suited to the glorification of the state itself (and the huge web of symbols that came along with it) rather than just its head.

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<sup>236</sup> Claude V. Palisca, *Humanism in Italian Renaissance Musical Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>237</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance* trans. Jessica Levine. 7.

## The Renaissance of Small and Large Rooms

By the nature of its origins in the tug of war for prestige among wealthy secular and religious patrons, the Renaissance may be said to have begun as fundamentally an enterprise of small rooms and only gradually opened up to larger spaces that would accommodate a larger cross-section of the community. The early innovations of the Renaissance were oriented towards the promotion of princes and princely families, and so the audience for them, consisted primarily of these people and the select group of people whom they were interested in impressing. There are notable exceptions to this rule, including Filippo Brunelleschi's *Ospedale degli Innocenti* (1419–ca.1445) and many other examples of urban architecture as well as innumerable pieces of religious art, which, although frequently placed in private familial chapels, were often visible to other people using the greater church space. However, even in these cases the primary purpose was to increase the prestige of the patron, and the potential wideness of audience is, at best, a convenient happenstance. Had Brunelleschi's *Ospedale* been intended strictly for the benefit of the Orphans who lived there, it is unlikely that his patron, Cosimo de Medici would have bothered to pay for a comprehensive essay on the state of humanistic architecture in the early fifteenth century.

It may almost go without saying that this question of room size takes on a special significance when the art-form in question is music. This is because, while the Mona Lisa may be placed in the Louvre to be seen by thousands of people every day and a work of literature that previously circulated within a small group can be printed in a large run, a piece of music designed for performance in a small, intimate chamber or chapel turns to mush when rendered in a large, resonant space, and conversely, a piece written for large room sounds thin and hollow in a small one. It should, of course, be noted that many other factors material, textural,

and geometrical contribute along with size to the overall resonant quality of a room, and many of the architectural/acoustical advances of the sixteenth century allowed greater control to be taken over these variables. Size is, however, the variable on which all of the others depend, and architectural advancements can only mediate the inevitable lengthening of echo period that comes with larger and larger spaces. Not all music falls on one extreme or the other in this dichotomy, but it is nonetheless a factor that ties musical style directly to the political circumstances under which it was created and, potentially, a lens through which the relationship between changes in musical style in the sixteenth century and the unique political and religious circumstances of the time may be brought into focus.

### **Shifting Status of Artists and Patrons**

Gradually, around the turn of the sixteenth century, the dynamics of the Renaissance began to change, due in large part to the increasing prestige of practitioners, in a process that opened up a unintended egalitarian potential of the Renaissance. Throughout the medieval period and beyond, people who got their hands dirty with the actual creation of art tended to be regarded as servants and underlings, and as such the quality of their work was taken more as a sign of their employers virtues than of their own. Gradually, however, as competition and mobility among practitioners increased and patrons vied among themselves to employ the best of them, there resulted an inevitable increase in the prestige of the most sought-after. Over time, artisans and clerks began to look more like artists and scholars until, around the beginning of the sixteenth century, a few of these lowly craftsmen were beginning to appear to some observers to be as illustrious as their employers.

To a certain extent, this was the result of concrete changes that had occurred in the culture of artistic production. As artists were encouraged to differentiate themselves from one-another more and to rely less on conventional stylistic paradigms, it was inevitable that more of the artists' personalities and personal innovations became apparent in their works. This gradually led to an increasing cultural association between works of art and the people who created them, and over time this association grew to overshadow those between works of art and their patrons, subjects, and functional purposes. To quote art critic Dave Hickey, "during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Italy, a loose confederation of artisans, church decorators, and visual educators created a body of pictures whose authority and immediacy completely eclipsed the agendas they were designed to promote."<sup>238</sup>

Hickey has also noted that this change in the way pieces of art were perceived led to a revolution in the way they were evaluated. As connoisseurs of the new art, following the lead of aesthetic discussions they knew from classical literature, commenced the process of obsessively discussing, taxonomizing, and comparing artworks and the artists who created them, the old, patron-defined standards by which they had previously been judged began to break down. In their place, there began to emerge a new and strikingly democratic notion of aesthetic taste, in which patronage, subject matter, and purpose of creation all took on secondary importance to the personal experience of the perceiver, whoever that may be, and the direct communication between him or her and the artist. In Hickey's words,

Under the auspices of this method, authorized instrumentalities of sacred devotion and political power were transformed into objects of delectation -- freely elected to serve this function by private citizens through the exercise of comparison and connoisseurship. Works once presumed to express the authority

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<sup>238</sup> Dave Hickey, "Buying the World." *Daedalus* 131, no. 4 (2002): 75.

of their origins were taken to represent the content of their admirers taste, and for the first time in history, the power to invest works of contemporary art with meaning and value began to shift from the supply side to the consumer side.<sup>239</sup> This new emphasis on the experience of the viewer, or listener, is particularly significant because it points to a profound shift in the idea of what the function of a work of art is supposed to be. In both visual art and music, this shift is characterized by a new preoccupation with effects, either for the depiction of emotional states, textures, substances,... – a prevalent example from early-sixteenth century Venetian painting and, slightly later, music is the rippling of moving water – or simply to subvert expectations for the shock, delight, and/or surprise of the audience.

One concrete result of this democratized conception of aesthetics was that, for the first time, artists had the opportunity to become true popular figures, with a status completely independent of their patronage. In the words of Leo Braudy, from his history of the concept of fame, *The Frenzy of Renown*, "After centuries of being subordinate to the framework of Church and State, they were becoming a third force, with its own traditions, its own great men, and its own canon of great works."<sup>240</sup> A key figure in this change was the Florentine sculptor and painter Michelangelo Buonarroti, whose *David*, created between 1501 and 1504, during the period of Piero Solderini's democratically tinged anti-Medician republic, was a sculpture that seemed to conform to the laudatory pattern of earlier works, but was crafted to glorify the entire city of Florence rather than a particular family or individual.<sup>241</sup>

Michelangelo presented a new model for how artists could employ skills developed for the

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<sup>239</sup> *ibid.* p. 70.

<sup>240</sup> Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (Bridgewater, NJ: Replica Books, 2001), 282.

<sup>241</sup> M.J. Unger, *Michelangelo: A Life in Six Masterpieces* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 108-9.

purpose of glorifying powerful individuals for the glorification of ideas, communities, or even. This broadening of rhetorical application had major implications for the usefulness of the Renaissance in a place like the republic of Venice. Also, the degree of actual social impact that these changes had on the lives of artists from a relatively early date can be seen from the reactions of artists such as Albrecht Dürer, who visited Italy from areas where older social structures were still in place. As Dürer wrote home to friend during a trip to Venice in 1506, "Here I am a gentleman, at home I am a parasite."<sup>242</sup>

### **Liturgical Confinement**

One final event in the fifteenth century which had profound repercussions for Venetian religious practices and attitudes and for the ultimate role of music in Venetian ritual was the confinement of the *Patriarchino* liturgy. In 1456, in the relatively early stages of the papal drive to homogenize church practice and consolidate power,<sup>243</sup> Pope Callixtus III accepted the request of the Venetian Patriarch, Maffeo Contarini, to order that all churches within the Archdiocese of Venice abandon their traditional liturgy and begin to practice the Roman

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<sup>242</sup> Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown*, 283.

<sup>243</sup> This movement to consolidate power in the hands of the pontiff (a title borrowed from the Roman emperors: a hint of the ambition that was almost inherent to the office by the sixteenth century) is frequently what people are referring to when they speak of the counterreformation. Indeed, by the early seventeenth century it had eclipsed many of the humanistic and humanitarian aims that had originally led to the calling of the Council of Trent in 1545. However, while it certainly played a major role in the Catholic reaction to the rise of Lutheranism, I will argue that it was ultimately more connected to the rise of absolute monarchy than to the reforming impulses described by Charles Taylor in his *A Secular Age*, which were primarily concerned with building a Church that would be more responsive to the spiritual and practical needs of the faithful. This is one of the major reasons why many scholars have come to prefer the term Catholic Reformation to Counterreformation, to curtail the impulse to see it as a purely reactionary movement, which it was not.

Rite.<sup>244</sup> Only San Marco, as a private chapel with a provenance of several centuries of tradition outside of the Church hierarchy, was exempted.<sup>245</sup> The effect of this action was to revolutionize the role of the chapel in the life of the city. Since its founding San Marco had been a place of great importance as a site of governmental power, a center of ceremonial and diplomatic activity, and, most importantly, the resting place of St. Mark. Suddenly, after this restriction, it was also the one place where the cherished religious traditions of the republic were allowed to continue and thrive, and the *Andate*, which were conceptually regarded as the ducal chapel in mobile form, were now the only way in which these specifically Venetian religious traditions could come out into the neighborhoods of the city.<sup>246</sup>

State policies and traditions such as the local election of bishops and parish priests, the independence of Venetian ecclesiastical courts from those in Rome, and the banning of nobles with church income from the senate make it clear that independence from Rome in both temporal and spiritual matters was a priority in the republic, and the city's liturgical traditions were an important marker of that independence.<sup>247</sup> Thus, by limiting the use of the *Rito*

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<sup>244</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 77.

Contarini, who had a reputation for reforming zeal, was only the second Patriarch after the apostolic see moved to Venice in 1421. The fact that he made this move during his first year of office may, however, indicate that he was under considerable political pressure to do so. This may have simply been because it was seen as an embarrassment for an archdiocesan city to use a non-standard liturgy, or it could be connected to the Church's response to the fall of Constantinople, which had occurred three years before.

<sup>245</sup> This situation continued until 19 October, 1807, ten years after the Venetian republic fell to the forces of Napoleon, when San Marco, no longer the private chapel of the doge, as there was no doge, became the new seat of the Venetian Patriarch (i.e. Archbishop). Since that time the *Patriarchino* rite has been practiced nowhere, although some aspects of it are still retained in Venetian practice today. Howard and Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice*. 23.

<sup>246</sup> Historical uses of the word "chapel" can be a source of confusion because it can refer to the space in which private worship takes place, as it is usually used today, or to the people who work there. There is a historical logic to this situation, because the medieval aristocrats and monarchs around whom the chapel tradition was formed spent so much time on military campaigns and Crusades, and those who could afford it would want their religious entourage to come along.

<sup>247</sup> William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty*. 64, 74.

*Marciano*, an action intended to limit its influence and ability to compete with standard Roman practice, the Church ultimately increased its visibility through contrast and transformed it from a commonplace of everyday life into an occasion for defiant celebration. As Edward Muir put it, after the imposition of the Roman rite, “all processional paths led to and from the Piazza; San Marco was no longer just a stopping-off place, but the unchallenged center of attention.”<sup>248</sup>

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By around the turn of the sixteenth century, the effects of these factors were noticeable, and many uses of the Renaissance, including Franco-Flemish polyphony, were shifting into forms more ideologically helpful to the Venetian republic. Considering the establishment of the *maestro di cappella* and second organist positions in San Marco, it is not unlikely that the State may have been poised to establish an elite musical program for the chapel in the final decade of the fifteenth century. Circumstances, however, conspired to delay any such developments, as Venetians contented with the greatest period of crisis in their history. From roughly the fourteen-nineties through the fifteen-teens the Venetian republic faced the loss of both the bulk of its overseas empire and, temporarily, the entirety of its empire in Italy, major decline as both an economic and political power, and wars against major powers on multiple fronts. When, in 1527, things had finally calmed down enough for the State to revisit this idea and elect Adriano Willaert to reform its musical program, it would be fundamentally shaped by the material and psychological repercussions of this crisis.

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<sup>248</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 154.



## The Fall of Byzantium

The issues that led to the republic's troubling circumstances had begun long before with the gradual decline of the Byzantine empire at the hands of their former border guards, the Ottoman Turks, culminating in the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Byzantium had been Venice's closest trading partner for the Republic's entire history and, with a few exceptions, a close ally.<sup>249</sup> However, the connection Venetians felt to the Eastern Empire went far beyond trade. In its earliest existence, Venice had, as part of the Exarchate of Ravenna, technically been on the frontier of the Byzantine domain. As their city grew and developed, Constantinople had been the Venetians' primary model for how to be a great city, and marks of this profound influence are everywhere to be seen in Venice today in the facades of *Palazzi* and, most unmistakably, in the architectural and artistic pastiche of San Marco.

Edward Muir has noted that only a minority of Saints depicted in the mosaics of San Marco are of Byzantine origin, concluding that "the idea of a Venice more Byzantine than Italian seems mere romance."<sup>250</sup> Perhaps so, but romance matters. And even Muir doesn't go so far as to assert that there was no connection at all. Considering the state of the relationship between Rome and Constantinople and the republic's embeddedness in the Roman Catholic world, it seems unrealistic to imagine that Venetian practice could manage to slip through the cracks as some kind of Eastern Orthodox holdout. The fact that Venetians were motivated to straddle the schism at all and that they had some success at doing so strikes me as something highly significant.

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<sup>249</sup> Exceptions such as during the Fourth Crusade (1204), when Venetians led a sack of the city and brought home many of the republic's most prized treasures, including the *pulpitum magnum* of San Marco, the *pala d'oro* altarpiece, and the famous bronze Horses of San Marco, as loot. This action, which resulted in Venice's acquisition of a large portion of the old empire, undoubtedly contributed to Byzantium's decline.

<sup>250</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 93.

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The loss of a primary role model and economic partner was troubling, but there was soon a much larger problem for the Venetians to contend with. The powerful and ambitious Ottoman Sultans rapidly set their sights on Venice's holdings in the eastern Mediterranean. Despite early efforts to establish peaceful relations, just ten years after the fall of Constantinople the republic became embroiled in a sixteen-year conflict with the new power, with major territorial losses. Perhaps as a result of lessons learned, Venice soon gained a reputation for shyness where conflict with the Ottomans was concerned. According to the Florentine historian Francesco Guicciardini, "inasmuch as the Venetians were wont to enlarge their empire in wars with other princes, nothing horrified them so much as the power of the Ottoman Turks by whom they had been beaten every time they had made war with them."<sup>251</sup> Nonetheless, Venetians were back at war with the Empire in 1499, and within four years they had lost nearly all of the territory they had gained from Byzantium centuries before.<sup>252</sup>

This troubling relationship proved to be a major source of ambivalence for the republic. On the one hand, the Ottomans, who represented a legitimate threat to large areas of Christendom, were automatically marked by their religion and culture as a knee-jerk enemy of any state with allegiance to the Roman Church. On the other, due to the empire's territories stretching from the Mediterranean coast to the Persian Gulf and the far side of the Black sea, the Ottomans had the ability to offer Venice access to incredible wealth. To the Venetians, particularly after their economy was imperiled by the rise of the Portuguese spice

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<sup>251</sup> F. Guicciardini and S. Alexander, *The History of Italy*, 176

<sup>252</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 27.

trade,<sup>253</sup> this was a fact that simply could not be ignored, and so in the periods between conflicts they took great pains to learn about and set up diplomatic relations with their new neighbors.<sup>254</sup> The possibility of a safe and friendly trading relationship between these two great Mediterranean powers was so intoxicating that any olive branch from the Ottomans had to be taken seriously, even if it came at a politically inopportune moment, as they often did. Naturally, this response created tensions between Venice and other Christian powers, and the Ottomans, aware that they possessed this power over the Venetians, at least occasionally used it to sour relations between the republic and its neighbors. Such was very likely the case when, in 1503, Sultan Bayezid II unexpectedly sent a bid for peace despite having momentum from several major victories against the Venetians.<sup>255</sup>

One bright spot for the republic had been its ability to stay largely aloof from the chaos that had been wrought on the peninsula since the rise of pope Alexander VI (1492-1503) and his son Cesare Borgia, whose actions had invited the attention of ambitious rulers north of the alps. The unrivaled power of the Venetian Empire in northern Italy posed a potential threat to the continued expansion of both papal and transalpine powers, and after the distraction of war with the Ottomans was removed, it became impossible for the republic to remain on the sidelines. A perceived incursion into the newly consecrated Papal state of Romagna in 1508 was all the excuse that the new pope Julius II, known as *il papa terribile*,

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<sup>253</sup> The first Portuguese ship to travel directly around Africa to India returned to Lisbon on 18 September 1499. F. Hümmerich, *Vasco Da Gama und die Entdeckung des Seewegs nach Ostindien* (Olms: C. H. Beck, 1898), 117.

<sup>254</sup> F. Guicciardini and S. Alexander, *The History of Italy*, 176. F. Sansovino's and G. Contarini's Histories of the Ottoman empire, and locate a citation for the setting up of the Turkish Consulate in Venice.

<sup>255</sup> Guicciardini credits this seemingly counterintuitive move to the fact that the sultan was, "a prince of mild ways," who preferred the study of literature and religion to warfare, but he also suggests that Beyezid may have suspected that other Catholic states were about to band with Venice in a holy league. *ibid.*

needed to unite the three great powers of Rome, France, and the Holy Roman Empire, along with numerous smaller states, in the anti-Venetian League of Cambrai.<sup>256</sup> The resulting conflict was, by all accounts, terrifying. In the account of Guicciardini, this period was, for Italy, the ugliest part of the Italian wars. Whereas, he writes, in the earlier conflicts the fortunes of princes suffered more than those of the people and most people who died were what he called “barbarians,” now,

there followed throughout Italy, and against the Italians themselves, the cruelest accidents, endless murders, sackings and destruction of many cities and towns, military licentiousness no less pernicious to their friends than to their enemies, religion violated, and holy things trampled under foot with less reverence and respect than for profane things.<sup>257</sup>

For Venetians, this terror was augmented by a new awareness of vulnerability, the full impact of which was felt in May of 1509, when Venetian troops were routed by a primarily French force outside of the town of Agnadello, forcing the republic to temporarily cede all of its Italian mainland territories to the enemy. Niccolò Machiavelli described the battle as the fundamental turning point of Venetian power, stating that, “in one day they lost that dominion which with infinite pains they had built up during many years,” and explaining that despite the fact that the Republic ultimately regained much of what it had lost, “they have never recovered their former renown or power, and they live at the discretion of others, *ad o*

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<sup>256</sup> For an Italian city, Venice is very far away from Rome. Even today, according to google maps, it would take at least five hours to make the trip by car. An overland traveler five-hundred years ago not only would have been making the trip on foot or horseback, but would have had to contend with a lack of adequate roads, treacherous mountain crossings, threats from disease and wild animals, and in all likelihood, bandits. Marks of the advantage that came from this distance can be seen in the cultural, architectural, and especially religious distinctiveness of the republic, and most significantly, it was this great buffer which allowed Venice to stand selectively aloof from the dangerous politics of central Italy. With Julius’s expansion into the territories that had previously been occupied by Cesare Borgia, however, the two powers were suddenly touching for the first time, and this new proximity led very rapidly to problems.

<sup>257</sup> F. Guicciardini and S. Alexander, *The History of Italy*, 191.

*all other Italian principalities.*"<sup>258</sup> The news of this defeat would have been even more disturbing for Venetians due to the fact that, just seventeen days earlier, pope Julius II had announced his decision to place the entire republic under a state of interdict, essentially excommunicating the entire population from the Catholic Church.<sup>259</sup> Under these circumstances, in the summer of 1509, the continuation of the republic as an independent state seemed a tenuous possibility at best, and as foreign armies advanced closer to the lagoon, the city reportedly entered a state of panic. According to contemporaneous observations reported by William Bouwsma, Venetians, ordinarily so dignified and grave, wandered erratically through their city exclaiming that all was lost."<sup>260</sup>

As Machiavelli suggested, it was only through "the discretion of others" that Venice was delivered from the tragedy of Cambrai. The description of Florentine historian Francesco Guicciardini makes it clear that there was considerable ambivalence among Venice's Italian neighbors as foreign troops advanced towards the Venetian lagoon in the wake of Agnadello. On the one hand, he relates, "some derived the greatest pleasure from [the decline of Venice]," in part because of the republic's suspected ambitions to subjugate the peninsula and in part due to a general dislike and resentment of Venetians, "a nation all the more odious because of their widespread reputation for natural haughtiness."<sup>261</sup> This resentment was, however, apparently coupled with admiration and widespread acknowledgement of Venice as

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<sup>258</sup> N. Machiavelli and W.K. Marriott, *Florentine History* (Florence: J.M. Dent & sons, 1922), 36.

<sup>259</sup> Ironically, in retrospect this action was probably helpful to the Venetian cause. Julius's action was such a clear instance of a pope using his spiritual powers to further his temporal ends that it served to solidify the Venetians' attachment to their cause and earn them much-needed sympathy from without.

<sup>260</sup> William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty*. 99. see also Luigi da Porto, *Lettere storiche*, ed. Bartolomeo Bressan (Florence, 1857) 63.

<sup>261</sup> F. Guicciardini and S. Alexander, *The History of Italy*, 202.

a truly great Italian city. If the republic were to fall, it would most likely be into non-Italian hands, and according to Guicciardini, cooler headed Italians were soon forced to put aside their schadenfreude and conclude that, "the fall of Venice meant the cutting off of their most glorious member, that Italian state which more than any other maintained the fame and reputation of them all."<sup>262</sup>

The strategic position and prestige of Venice meant that the priority of keeping it in Italian hands outweighed any vexation over, "the rash and overly insolent actions of the Venetian Senate."<sup>263</sup> Pope Julius II eventually seems to have recognized this reality, and by year's end he had offered the republic a humiliating treaty. By this point Venetian forces had managed to regain control of Padua and a few other key mainland holdings, but they were still desperately in need of an ally against the combined might of France and the Holy Roman Empire. Thus, on 24 February 1510 Julius's treaty was ratified by the senate, although much of it was soon voided in secret by the Council of Ten, who ruled that it had been extorted by force and was therefore meaningless.<sup>264</sup> Although this first year had represented the low point for Venice, the War of the League of Cambrai continued with considerable brutality until 1516, during which time the republic found itself in alliances with as well as against each of the other major combatants. The one major political repercussion of the war was the end of the dominion of the Sforza family in Milan, which remained under French control until it was taken by the Hapsburg Charles V in 1525. For the borders of the Republic of Venice, the conflict ended with a near-exact return to the status quo of 1508.

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<sup>262</sup> *ibid.* p. 203.

<sup>263</sup> *ibid.* p. 191.

<sup>264</sup> William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty*. 101.

## Psychological Fallout of Cambrai

Psychologically these events appear to have left a deep mark on many Venetians. In part, this consequence is simply due to the terror of any savage invading force on the way. It could also, however, have been heightened due to the confrontation of powerful mythologies of Venetian power, permanence, and invulnerability that had developed over the centuries with the realization that Venice was suddenly facing the the same uncertainties as “all other Italian principalities.” For most other European cities of the time, invading armies, violent crises of succession, panicked evacuations, and the other turmoils that characterized the Italian wars were an occasional fact of life, but Venetians had no predicaments of this nature in their communal memory. The traditional mythology, at least within the republic, was that Venice was shielded from the problems of normal cities by its unique relationship to God, which was reflected in its perfection of location, occupation, and constitution. Thus, when the city did find itself in peril, it wasn't only the permanence and invulnerability of Venice that was thrown into question, but also the ideology of Venetian perfection and all of the cherished institutions around which that ideology was constructed.

As one might expect after an ideological upheaval of this sort, Venetian writings from the second decade of the sixteenth century take on a tentative and penitential mood, at times bordering on the apocalyptic. A good example of this tendency can be seen in the almost Savanarolan approach in the response to an earthquake that struck Venice in 1511. Even in good times, a natural disaster is likely to provoke fire and brimstone in popular preaching. However, the republic's highest ecclesiastical officer, the patriarch Antonio Contarini, giving a sermon recorded by diarist Marin Sanudo, also placed the blame for the event firmly on the sins of the city, citing in particular sodomy, “which is recklessly practiced

everywhere,” and prescribed a strict course of fasting and processions “to appease the wrath of God.”<sup>265</sup> Not all Venetians found this approach compelling. Sanudo himself followed his description of the homily with the comment, “I applaud these things as an aid to piety and good conduct; but as a remedy for earthquakes, which are a natural phenomenon, this was no good at all...”<sup>266</sup>

### **Restructuring the Myth of Venice**

Venice’s new position in the world necessitated some adjustment to the structures of Venetian self-mythology. The image of Venice’s military prowess and the long reach of its sea power needed to be deemphasized, as Venetians now had very little to gain by taunting their neighbors. However, less money flooding into the city and fewer actual military victories to celebrate made the rhetorical force of myth more important than ever, both to morale within the city and to its reputation without.<sup>267</sup> Something equally potent had to be found to replace what had been lost. A potential solution came through the Republic’s most prestigious humanistic connection. Francesco Petrarca was a fourteenth century poet, but the his new availability in printed editions and the his fervent praise from humanists like the Venetian Pietro Bembo were just taking him to the peak of his influence and popularity, the early *cinquecento*.

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<sup>265</sup> D.S. Chambers, J. Fletcher, B. Pullan, and the Renaissance Society of America, *Venice: A Documentary History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 2004), 189.

<sup>266</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 27.



Although Tuscan by birth and Florentine by affiliation, Petrarch came to Venice in 1362 to escape the final throes of the Black Death, burnt out in the city by that time.<sup>268</sup> Two years later, he expressed his appreciation in a letter celebrating a Venetian victory in Crete, writing:

The august city of Venice rejoices, the one home today of liberty, peace and justice, the one refuge of honorable men, the one port to which can repair the storm-tossed, tyrant hounded craft of men who seek the good life. Venice—rich in gold but richer in fame (*nominanza*), mighty in recourses but mightier in virtue, solidly built on marble but standing more solid on a foundation of civil concord, ringed with salt waters but more secure with the salt of good counsel.<sup>269</sup>

Venice's wealth, power, and beauty have a role to play in Petrarch's construction, but they are each demoted to a secondary position behind a more abstract principle. These typically Petrarchan pairings of concrete and figurative meanings, in this case of the words "rich" (*ricca*), "mighty" (*potente*), and "solid" (*solidi*), was perfectly suited to a state that was perforce becoming more abstract and philosophical in its thinking about itself.<sup>270</sup> Through this kind of device, traditional Venetian points of pride such as wealth, military power, and nautical prowess can be framed as mere mundane reflections of a true Platonic ideal of Venetian greatness (more closely approached, though never really accessed, through

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<sup>268</sup> P. Brand and L. Pertile. *The Cambridge History of Italian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 90.

<sup>269</sup> Esulta l'augusta città di Venezia, unico albergo a' di nostri libertà, di giustizia, di pace, unico rifugio de' buoni, e solo porto a cui sbattute per ogni dove dalla tirannia, dalla guerra possano riparare a salvezza le navi degli uomini che cercano condurre tranquilla la vita: città ricca d'oro, ma più di nominanza, potente di forze, ma più di virtù, sopra solidi marmi fondata, ma sopra più solide basi di civile concordia ferma ed immobile, e meglio che dal mare ond'è cinta, dalle prudente sapienza de' figli suoi munita e fatta sicura. Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 22. F. Petrarca, *Lettere Senili ... Volgarezzate E Dichiarate Con Note Da Giuseppe Fracassetti* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1869), 227.

<sup>270</sup> I have to take issue with this English translation, which has Petrarch playing with the meaning of the word salt, when the key word of the final pairing is actually "ringed" (*cinta*) and Petrarch doesn't even mention salt.

metaphor). If some of these attributes were on the wane, it didn't really matter because the truth always behind them—the fame, virtue, civil concord, and good council on which the republic is built—remains unchanged.

Petrarch's conceit of Venice as a safe port in a storm was, in addition to being another elegant Petrarchan merging of the literal and the figurative, also specifically appropriate to the situation in the early sixteenth century. It was in the Republic's interests to shed its reputation for arrogant militance that had earned it the scorn and resentment cited by Guicciardini.<sup>271</sup> Cultivating an image of the Venetian state as an island of peace and sanity amid the turmoil of the region and era was a promising way to accomplish this transition without much loss of mystique. It is certainly true, as Iain Fenlon has pointed out, that the idea of a calm and safe Venice shielded from the violence of the 1520s must be taken with a grain of salt. The large French, Spanish, and Austrian dominions that the early Italian Wars had created on the peninsula were still a major threat that could have reduced Venetian power and invited further threats to the state's existence down the road.<sup>272</sup> Many Venetian soldiers and sailors died in the two wars that shook Italy during the decade, and those who stayed had to contend with repeated food shortages. Venice also received a visitation of plague during this period, and while less devastating than the plagues of later centuries, even a relatively small epidemic had the power to spread terror and stop the normal life of a city in its tracks.<sup>273</sup> Only when the peace of Cambrai in 1529 created a temporary peace did Venice begin defining its new role in international politics and constructing its refurbished self-image in earnest.

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<sup>271</sup> F. Guicciardini and S. Alexander, *The History of Italy*, 202.

<sup>272</sup> Iain Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City*, 235.

<sup>273</sup> *ibid.*

Unlike Florence and Rome, however, Venice was not sacked, nor were large portions of its lands mutilated under the feet of marching and fighting armies. Even under less than ideal circumstances, when viewed from a distance Venice looked appealing. The city had already earned a reputation as a courteous host to refugees due to their determined tolerance of the religious and cultural differences of the many Greeks coming to the city in the time leading up to and following the fall of Constantinople. Thus the attractive image of the good life within the confines of a benevolent “*Pax Veneziana*” became a factor before it may have been entirely appropriate, and many refugees were arriving from elsewhere in Italy, bringing new ideas and often wealth into the lagoon, throughout the period. This flush of new blood had already begun to accelerate the pace of Venetian cultural work before 1529, when the long-awaited peace finally allowed the republic to begin taking full advantage of it.<sup>274</sup>

Edward Muir has discerned the existence of three separate civic mythologies that emerged in Venice during this period. All of them are connected to but distinct from the earlier, more assertive mythological characterization of the republic, and all of them resonant with Petrarch’s forward looking assessment of the city. The first, which Muir calls the “republic of mixed government myth” concerned the ability of the state to maintain order and common purpose through the balance of power. Echoing the logic of Plato in the *Republic*, this myth holds that the three basic forms of government, rule by a single person, rule by a select group, and rule by the people in general, that is to say, monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, are all prone to exploitation because they give one group too many advantages over the rest. Venetian government, by contrast, is purported to feature the best aspects of each, with the

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<sup>274</sup> On the influence of wealthy, particularly Florentine refugees on Venetian musical and aesthetic culture, see Martha Feldman, *City culture and the madrigal at Venice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

doge standing in for a monarch, the senate and/or council of ten for aristocracy, and the Grand Council for democracy.<sup>275</sup>

Like any myth, this one does not stand up. Political power in Venice, as in any state called a “republic” until very recent times, was almost entirely in the hands of a very small and exclusively male group, and the city’s government could be said to have been much closer to aristocracy than either of the other two. A charismatic doge could wield considerable influence through political means, but even in extreme cases, his dictatorial power was limited to affairs of state and of the state-sanctioned church. Further, the doge owed any power he had to the members of the aristocracy, of which he was also a member, who had elected him. It is, however, the people who are truly shorted by this construction, as the vast majority of the Venetian population had no sanctioned avenue of influence over the state at all. A reasonably large minority of non-aristocratic families who had been in the city for multiple generations were granted the title of citizen (*cittadino*) and allowed to serve the republic as bureaucrats. Because most aristocratic offices were held for relatively short periods of time and often by people without specialized backgrounds, industrious *cittadini* were probably able to wield considerable power behind the scenes, although this influence is obviously difficult to trace, but an electoral voice was denied even the most influential bureaucrat.

All the rest of the *Populani*, as well as all women and foreign residents without regard to class, had to be content with their role as passive servants to the state. It should be noted, however, that even the small percentage of Venetians who had a political voice was considerably greater than could be found in almost any other large-scale society in the world at the time; and that the Venetian constitution seems to have been effective at avoiding

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<sup>275</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 28.

factional strife and civil discord. The history of the Republic was not free of attempted *coups d'état*, but as none had ever been successful in the long term, the Venetian state could reasonably claim to have enjoyed upwards of five-hundred years of governmental continuity, if not quite the full millennium traditionally asserted.

The second new myth, called by Muir the “commonwealth of liberty,” was directly related to the first, in that it celebrated the continuity and good life that was made possible through Venice’s perfectly ordered mixed constitution.<sup>276</sup> In addition to Petrarch, both of these first two myths betray the influence of the burgeoning political theory of Machiavelli and Guicciardini as well as ancient Roman historians and political thinkers becoming widely available through the new printing industry. In particular, this myth relates to a central preoccupation of Machiavelli’s *Discourses*, that due to imbalances of power, the stability of the Roman republic depended on the manipulation and subjugation of the bulk of the population by the Patrician class. According to the “commonwealth of Liberty” myth, because of Venice’s perfected mix of governmental forms, in which (oddly enough) the populace lacked what little power they had enjoyed in Rome, no such manipulation or subjugation was necessary. The clear implication is that, while Rome’s unbalanced trajectory led inevitably towards the Tyranny of the imperial era, the Serenissima’s perfect mix could be sustained forever.

An obvious contradiction exists between the “commonwealth of liberty” myth and the historical reality of Venice as a conquering power in which conquered peoples were not generally invited to join the governing system of the state. By the sixteenth century, however, Venetian expansion, for better or worse, was no longer a major issue, and, at least from the point of view of Venetian mythmakers, liberty was not simply a question of political power.

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<sup>276</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 28.

From the point of view of the state, the liberty offered to the conquered, as well as to the city's populace consisted of the freedom from the tyranny and violence of the rest of the world that Venetian power supposedly offered, and to the quality of life that that freedom makes possible. Any participation in the Venetian project, according to this myth, brought unique and overwhelming advantages that were significant enough to outweigh the lack of self-determination.

This notion of uniqueness brings a particular spiritual bent to the myth. From the cosmological perspective of Christian Europeans of the sixteenth century and before, the best argument for and explanation of the uniqueness of a place is that it has a unique relationship to God. It is certainly the foundation of one of the oldest and most cherished Venetian myths, that of the apostolic foundation of the State Church. What was new was the civic and humanistic terms in which the relationship was posited. No longer simply dependent on coincidences of origin and cults of personality, though these still mattered, the rhetoric of Venetian singularity in the early sixteenth century was rooted in the tangible actions of Venetian people and the Venetian state.

In the older construction, all causes are shrouded in the distant past and all indicators that are visible in the present – military and economic success, protection from hardship and strife, the city's unique and spectacular appearance – were merely effects. This new way of thinking, by contrast, placed God and Venice in a cyclic reciprocal relationship of cause and effect. In the simplest terms, Venice was the best place in the world because it was favored by God, and Venice was favored by God because it was the best place in the world. The re-cycling nature of this model emphasizes the continuity and perpetuity of Venice and in doing so attests to the fact that some of these things were suddenly in question. At one time it

had been possible to simply take Venetian permanence as self-evident, but after the shock of Cambrai and the other turmoils of the turn of the century, Venetians were motivated to be more actively invested in their city's fate.

Muir's final myth, "the gallant city," refers both to the republic's inclination to tolerance and to the fantastic sights and experiences that the city had to offer.<sup>277</sup> Aspects of this myth have become clichés of Venetian historiography largely due to the city's role as a favorite playground for bored European aristocrats of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The oft-told story of Venice's decline into Las-Vegas-style decadence holds little interest to this project, but there is more to this myth than gambling and sexual tourism. Those stereotypes, or at least elements of them, were certainly in coalescence by the early sixteenth century, but the myth of the gallant city had as much to do with the promise that Venice held for outsiders. While true citizenship was barred to those who could not show generations of residence in and service to the republic, and membership in the governing nobility was even more jealously guarded, Venice also had a grand tradition as a welcoming refuge that went back to the city's initial foundation and further still to the story of St. Mark's sojourn there.

This tradition was, of course, at the heart of Petrarch's praise of the city, as well as the myth of Pope Alexander's visit and numerous other similar legends, indicating that the welcome of strangers was intimately tied to Venetian identity. More recently, the Republic had aroused the ire of the Roman Church over their insistence on welcoming Greek refugees from the growing Ottoman empire along with their religious traditions, as they would

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<sup>277</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 28.

continue to do for German protestants, Muslim traders, and other unorthodox visitors.<sup>278</sup>

Also central to the Myth was the idea that this practice had consistently worked to the Republic's benefit, beginning with the legendary safe night under the stars that had earned the lagoon the eternal patronage of St. Mark. There was some legitimate truth to this reputation, as can be seen from the city's Greek-driven humanistic tradition, from its printing industry, which had been largely founded by Immigrants from Germany, and in the post-Cambrai era, from the revitalizing efforts of Sansovino, Delle Rovere, Willaert, and other creative outsiders.

The Venetian tradition of grand religious spectacle served as a potent symbol of all three of these newly reconfigured myths. To the gallant city myth it was tied through its foundations in the Crusades, which had brought innumerable outsiders through the city, and more generally through the outward looking bent of rituals designed to thrillingly deliver the message of Venetian opulence and particularity. The structure of *Andata* processions, in which citizens, nobles, clerics, and outsiders came together to form a seamless and well-ordered column with the doge at its center, could be said to be the myth of the republic of mixed government writ in humanity. The illusion of easy cooperation and universal participation that all this choreography created, as well as the survival of the uniquely Venetian *Patriarchino* liturgy and the idea of the *Andate* as opportunities for this piece of communal heritage to come out into its city all served as powerful assertions of the commonwealth of liberty myth.

Certainly, the development of the Venetian ritual tradition had been fueled by the earlier mythology, and much of it, especially in its historical and political content, had been originally designed to communicate messages of Venetian military might and dominion.

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<sup>278</sup> See E. Dursteler, *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400-1797* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 464-466.



However, the new Petrarchan mythologies outlined by Muir resonate powerfully with Venetian religious practices on a deeper and more structural level, rather than relying heavily on tacked-on content. Thus, it should be no surprise that the expansion and cultivation of these ritual traditions were central to the renovating efforts that were begun in the fifties and sixties by doge Andrea Gritti and his government. This ritual reform was at the heart of Jacopo Sansovino's massive reconfiguration of the Piazza San Marco and of the simultaneous musical reconfiguration for which Adriano Willaert was elected to the office of *Maestro di Cappella* of San Marco.

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### Early Urban Renovation

One traditional aspect of Venetian greatness that cannot be said to have been in decline at the beginning of the sixteenth century was the city's physical beauty. Venetians had long been aware of the rhetorical impact of their city's unique, overwhelming appearance, and from at least the early fifteenth century they had been engaged in a project of emphasizing that asset through ever grander and more permanent building projects.<sup>279</sup> When Petrarch wrote in the thirteenth century that Venice was "Solidly built on marble," he was not being disingenuous. Venice of that era was already striking for its use of marble, a benefit of the Republic's colonial holdings in the eastern Adriatic, both as a decorative building material and as a water sealing agent in foundations. However, much of the city that Petrarch walked through was still characterized by wooden structures, unpaved streets, and mud-banked canals. Only in a few of the most prestigious zones would it have been at all recognizable as the stone city that exists today. By the early sixteenth century, Petrarch's statement had

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<sup>279</sup> C.F. Black, *Early Modern Italy: A Social History* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 69.

become considerably more accurate. Sustained investment on the part of both government and private citizens, often motivated by concerns for public health and safety as much as aesthetics, led to the replacement of hundreds of wooden bridges and buildings with structures of stone and brick, the paving of streets and *Campi*, formerly grassy areas for the communal grazing of livestock, and the shoring up of canal banks with marble.<sup>280</sup>

This extremely tangible re-structuring of the city was one aspect of a much larger process of civic refurbishment that also included the reimagining of Venetian visual art, exemplified by the work of the Bellini, Giorgione, and Titian; of Venetian literature, as seen in Bembo and Aretino (not a born Venetian but an enthusiastic convert), of Venetian religious practice, and of Venetian political thought. All of this material served to endlessly reemphasize and restate the mythological structures that Venetians were building around themselves in order to create what Clifford Geertz called “meta-social commentary.”<sup>281</sup> Venice’s loss of economic and military power had done more than bring hardship and humiliation, it had taken away a great part of the common purpose that tied Venetians together as a people. This loss is exemplified by the growing tendency of wealthy Venetians of this time to abandon traditional maritime pursuits and instead invest in agriculture on the *terra firma*.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> C.F. Black, *Early Modern Italy: A Social History*, 69.

<sup>281</sup> Full passage: “if myth can ever be reduced to anything so simple, is not just to reinforce status discriminations, such as keeping the lower classes in their place, nor is it just to maintain group loyalties; its function is to make a ‘meta-social commentary’ on the whole matter of organizing people around certain institutions, which then control the major part of collective existence. The student of myth in this sense tries to discover where ‘high thought’ and ‘low thought’ meet, to integrate theology and legends, and to unite symbols of the unconscious mind with manifestations of the conscious.” see C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 448.

<sup>282</sup> William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty*. 105.

This trend was probably ultimately beneficial to the republic. Food shortages were a constant threat, which led to an uncomfortable level of dependence on Egyptian grain imports, and the Fertile river basins of the Veneto had been long underutilized.<sup>283</sup> However, it was also taken by some as an indication that much of what had defined Venetians as a people was at risk of fragmenting.<sup>284</sup> Maritime trade had, after all, served as a key training ground for young nobles in addition to being the cornerstone of Venetian economics. This loss of common endeavor was another factor that increased the need for new mythological structures to unite the Republic. By cultivating these new mythologies in as multifaceted a way as possible in order to appeal to the understanding and inclination of as many different people as possible (I'm going to pass on Geertz's terminology of "high" and "low" thought and instead say that they were cultivated to be meaningful both in their direct form and filtered through layers of historical and religious symbolism) Venetians were filling some of the gaps left by those losses to regain confidence in the face of questions about what it was to be a Venetian. These projects had been going on well before the 1520s, but they come into particular focus with the 1523 election of doge Andrea Gritti, a man who truly understood the rhetorical power of myth and its importance to the future of Venice.

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<sup>283</sup> E. Sereni and R.B. Litchfield, *History of the Italian Agricultural Landscape* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 219.

<sup>284</sup> William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty*, 67-8. Niccolò Machiavelli, who had little faith in Venice's ability to bounce back after The War of the League of Cambrai, was among those who asserted that the greatness of Venice had come from the sea and that her glory had lasted only for so long as she had kept her attention fixed on it

## Florentine Influence

As Venetians struggled to reconceive of themselves and their place in the world, they became increasingly reliant on the model provided by the Republic of Florence. As the last holdouts of the once-common medieval Italian Commune style of government, the two cities had long engaged in a sort of kindred rivalry; but Florence had never attained the level of power or security to which Venetians had become accustomed. Florentines had, however, a great deal more experience than Venetians in thinking about political and cultural relationships from the point of view of an underdog. In the early sixteenth century, the developing Venetian publishing industry brought more and more books from Florentine political theorists, Platonist thinkers from the circle of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and the classic Florentine poets of the fourteenth century through Venetian printing houses. All of these influenced Venetian thought profoundly.

This is clear in shifts of grammar, syntax, and style. One of the most influential Venetian thinkers of this era, (eventual) Cardinal Pietro Bembo (1470-1547), a one-time Venetian ambassador to Florence, was a fervent promoter of the Tuscan dialect, not as it was spoken in the sixteenth century, but as it had been written by Petrarch and Boccaccio. In his works, particularly *Prose della volgar lingua*, he promoted the dialect as a kind of international Italian lingua franca, even at the expense of his own regional Venetian dialect. As he argued, "Tuscan words sound better than Venetian ones... ..they are not truncated and do not appear to lack any parts, as we can see that many of ours do,... ..Tuscan words have a more proper beginning, a more orderly middle and a more delicate end. They are not loose and languid; they have more regard for rules, tenses, numbers, articles and persons."<sup>285</sup> While much of this

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<sup>285</sup> From Bembo, *Prose e Rime*, published in D.S. Chambers, J. Fletcher, B. Pullan, and the Renaissance Society of America, *Venice: A Documentary History*.

may seem ultimately subjective, Bembo's ideas were extremely influential. Tuscan gradually shoved aside both Venetian and Latin as the primary literary language of the republic, and while political speeches and government documents continued to employ the local dialect, essentially every major Venetian writer of the later sixteenth century, including Gioseffo Zarlino, Francesco Sansovino, Paolo Sarpi, and Gasparo Contarini followed Bembo's lead and wrote at least some of their works in Tuscan-inflected Italian. Ultimately, this Venetian trend set the template for what would ultimately become the modern Italian language, and Bembo's influence over the form of modern Italian as it developed may be as great as that of the trecento writers he promoted.

### **Florentine Refugees**

Troubling circumstances in Tuscany encouraged this relationship by allowing Venetians and Florentines more personal contact. Since Lorenzo's death in 1492, Florence had violently traded hands multiple times, between Savanorola's radical democratic theocracy, multiple attempts at renewed and reformed republics, and Lorenzo's descendants, who ultimately managed to install themselves as dukes of Florence and later Tuscany. In comparison, even a troubled Venice looked appealing. From the fifteen-teens through the fifteen-thirties, many Florentines, particularly those who had strong connections to recently deposed governments, moved to Venice as refugees. This community, which is a primary focus of Musicologist Martha Feldman's virtuosic *City Culture and the Madrigal at Venice*, did not feel bound by the same rules of decorum as native Venetians, and they brought with them an array of ostentatious high-society culture, much of which was new to the city. Among the things they imported was a highly refined culture of private musical performance, which had a long tradition in the private salons, academies, and chapels of their native city. Most

significantly, this included the new style of the Madrigal, a form of through-composed secular music with close ties to the Motet tradition that had been developed in Florence by Franco-Flemish composers during the decade or so previous.<sup>286</sup> Madrigals, along with other arts promoted by these Florentine imports, almost certainly would have made their way to Venice without the help of these wealthy families, but their presence as patrons undoubtedly made Venice a more attractive destination for composers, especially if they, like Willaert, had particular interests in the interaction of music with the humanistic arts.

### **New Conduciveness of Composed Polyphony**

In addition to the influx of musical activity brought on by the arrival of wealthy Florentine refugees, a number of other factors were changing in the post-Cambrai era to make the idea of a northern-style choir performing composed polyphony in San Marco on a regular basis seem viable. The Franco-Flemish tradition had expanded greatly, and had, through the ever-increasing numbers of polyphonically trained singers and markets for music in printed form, become a fixture of elite Italian religious practice. In addition, popular genres such as the Frottola, the Lauda, and especially the Madrigal were turning polyphony into a fixture in the lives of people across Italy, including in Venice. Under these circumstances, it may have seemed inappropriate for an institution on the level of San Marco, which served the triple function of an Apostolic shrine, a major urban religious center, and an aristocratic chapel, not to have this music as a part of its regular spiritual arsenal.

Other key factors were rooted in the repercussions of the War of the League of Cambrai. In simplest terms, the war had, along with the rise of the Ottoman empire and

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<sup>286</sup> Martha Feldman, *City culture and the madrigal at Venice*, 25.

oceanic trade routes, humbled the republic and reduced its access to wealth and power, and this made it more difficult for Venetians to look down on the activities of their neighbors with a casual air of superiority. The war had also, in more concrete terms, shown Venetians that their standing in the Italian world, and the resentments of their power and standing that Guicciardini so bluntly recounts, could actually matter and carry serious repercussions. Surprisingly, considering the economically strapped position of the republic and its people, one way in which Venetians reacted to this decline was with a flood of investment in architectural, artistic, and literary projects.<sup>287</sup> Much of Venice's patriotic pride and international reputation had been based on economic and political power, so cultural production became a way in which Venetians could recast their own image and continue to impress, themselves as well as others, despite their losses.<sup>288</sup>

These issues can be framed in terms of international politics and image making, but to many Venetians, the crisis facing the republic in the early sixteenth century was fundamentally spiritual. A central aspect of traditional Venetian mythology was the idea that the city had a unique and special relationship with God, reflected in the presence of the remains of St. Mark and in the city's nature-defying geography.<sup>289</sup> For centuries, Venetians had pointed to this connection as an explanation for the republic's incredible expansion and economic success. And when things began to sour the psychological effects were exacerbated, because in addition to practical considerations, doubt was cast over that crucial link.<sup>290</sup> For

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<sup>287</sup> Martha Feldman, *City culture and the madrigal at Venice*, xxi.

<sup>288</sup> Arthur Steinberg and Jonathan Wylie, "Counterfeiting Nature: Artistic Innovation and Cultural Crisis in Renaissance Venice," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32, no. 01 (1990): 55-7.

<sup>289</sup> *ibid.* p 81.

<sup>290</sup> Arthur Steinberg and Jonathan Wylie, "Counterfeiting Nature: Artistic Innovation and Cultural Crisis in Renaissance Venice," 83.

this reason, there was a special emphasis on cultural products that dealt with the issue of mediation between God and humanity.

In painting, these trends were reflected in an increasing preoccupation with the integration of images of sacred figures, such as Mary and the baby Jesus, with images of contemporary life, such as cityscapes, battle scenes, or even actual sixteenth-century people.<sup>291</sup> By about 1520, this process had led to the development of the *natura* style, which emphasized the active, lifelike depiction of figures, biblical as well as contemporary, and the manipulation of compositional conventions in order to bring sacred and mundane spaces, and people, closer together.<sup>292</sup> The primary instrument of holy mediation in Venetian life, however, was sacred ritual, particularly the ducal *Andate*, in which the apparatus of Church and State were united and displayed to the public in intricately choreographed processions. Projects that dealt directly with the experience of these rituals, such as Sansovino's rhetorical remodel of the *Piazza*, thus took on a special importance. Sacred polyphony offered one of the only opportunities to freely manipulate the actual content of these rituals, and so it is not surprising that its use in San Marco increased dramatically.

### **Democratizing Influence of Printing**

Venetian engagement with polyphonic music was also encouraged by the city's role as a major center of the printing industry. Previously, the audience for essentially any written work was limited to the circle of the patron for whom it was created and to those with either the money to afford a copyist or the leisure time to make the copy themselves. Even in its most limited and elitist form, printing represented a tremendous expansion of this potential

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<sup>291</sup> *ibid.* pp. 70-71.

<sup>292</sup> *ibid.* p. 68.



audience. In music, this meant that, for the first time, composers who had gained notoriety either through prestigious appointments or word of mouth could reasonably anticipate having their music heard in distant places with little to no dependence on political, geographic, or even particularly strong cultural connections.

This new medium allowed previously isolated music scenes to exchange ideas and influences on an unprecedented level and musicians like Josquin to attain levels of widespread fame that would have been unthinkable for previous generations. This effect was even more marked for Willaert and his generation, who had come of age in the era of printed music. It also had the effect, limitedly but still significantly, of encouraging musicians to take something like a mass-market approach to their composition. To be certain, composing music to suit the requirements and desires of a patron was primary. Suddenly, however, it was also in a composer's interest to consider new concerns, such as how a piece of music might sound when performed in a space other than the particular one for which it was written or by a group of singers other than those for which it was composed. For Venice, this activity was most significant simply because it brought a much greater amount of music through the city. However, the more subtle shift away from purely patron-oriented thinking, or perhaps towards a more plural conception of patronage, also hinted at the possibility of uses for polyphony that were more ideologically suited to the needs of a republic.

### **Doge Andrea Gritti**

One final factor, which tied the rest together, was the presence of Andrea Gritti, who was elected doge in 1523. As a native Venetian of near fanatical devotion who had nonetheless spent the vast majority of his life serving the republic from afar, Gritti's

experiences in environments ranging from a Turkish prison to the court of the king of France had left him with a keen sense of the advantages of life in his home city, as well as those elsewhere.<sup>293</sup> In light of this background, the projects and reforms he advocated tended to serve the seemingly contradictory purposes of emphasizing Venetian distinctiveness while increasing engagement with the culture of mainland Italy and the wider world. The quintessential example of this tendency is his patronage of Tuscan architect Jacopo Sansovino's rhetorical reworking of the *Piazza San Marco*, a project that employed styles that had far more to do with the trends of central Italy than with any specifically Venetian traditions. The result was a space unlike anything on the terra firma, which accentuates and directs attention toward some of the most characteristically Venetian structures and spaces, and which served as a staging ground for the republic's defining religious ceremonies. Polyphonic music was a promising candidate for this approach, and Gritti certainly had ample opportunities to witness its use in both France and the Veneto during the years of the War of the League of Cambrai.<sup>294</sup> In the following chapter I will focus particularly on the applications of Renaissance humanism within Gritti's programs of reform. Then, through an examination of the humanistic predilections of the composer Adriano Willaert, particularly in his elusive secular motet, *Quid non Ebrietas*, I will attempt to show how the musician was particularly suited to working within the specific rubric of Gritti's program.

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<sup>293</sup> Robert Finlay, "Fabius Maximus in Venice," 1009.

He had spent only four years of his life serving on government councils before he was elected a provveditor-general in 1507.

<sup>294</sup> Giulio M. Ongaro, *The Chapel of St. Mark's at the Time of Adrian Willaert*, 54-5.

### **Chapter 3: Andrea Gritti's Venetian Renaissance and the Humanism of Adriano Willaert**

The mood of the republic in the early 1520s was one of ambivalence. The two great alliances, which had in just thirty years pitted Venetians first against their Italian neighbors and then the great powers of Europe, had left them painfully aware of their political vulnerability. Meanwhile, the rise of the Oceanic spice trade and the Republic's uncomfortably dependent relationship with the Ottoman Sultans, who could be nearly as much of a political liability in friendship as in enmity,<sup>295</sup> made the economic future more unstable than at any time in the collective memory. These anxieties had come to the fore in the terrifying early stages of The War of the League of Cambrai, when Venetians had been friendless, stripped of their empire in the Italian terra firma, and denied the communion of their faith, and when the human enemies who were visible on the edges of the lagoon seemed to be on the verge of accomplishing what only storms, floods, fires, disease, and other natural forces had previously done. For many, the massive earthquakes that struck near the present-day Italian Slovenian border in the spring and summer of 1511 seemed to confirm that the thousand-year history of the republic was at its end.<sup>296</sup> Just over five years later, however, the

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<sup>295</sup> Both the War of Ferrara and the War of the League of Cambrai were precipitated by peace treaties between Venice and the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>296</sup> For the diarist Marin Sanudo's description of the earthquake as it was felt in Venice, as well as his description and commentary on apocalyptically toned sermons given in the wake of the event by Patriarch Antonio Contarini and others, including a Franciscan named Fra Rufin Lovato, who blamed the Venetian Jews for the catastrophe, see D.S. Chambers, J. Fletcher, B. Pullan, and the Renaissance Society of America, *Venice: A Documentary History*, 188-190.

Venetians had come out the other side nominally victorious, and with nearly the full extent of their Italian empire intact.

For the republic to have survived against such overwhelming odds was a tremendous source of pride that seemed to provide some confirmation to the divinely charmed status that Venice had long enjoyed in its own mythology. The diarist Marin Sanudo recorded one Venetian boasting to the Turkish Ambassador, "in our past cruel war, when all the kings of the world were against the *Signoria*, not one man in this city was killed."<sup>297</sup> Nonetheless, the close call also made it clear that the world had changed around them in a way that the Republic could no longer afford to ignore. Venetians had spent centuries in a state of near-constant war, either to expand their territories or to maintain them against internal uprisings and foreign aggressors. The mythologies of the republic had correspondingly taken on a militaristic tone, drawing increasingly from the imperial legacy of Rome and defining the greatness of the republic in terms of its capacity to defeat and dominate others.<sup>298</sup> As early as the end of The War of Ferrara (1484), which according to de Fougasses, nearly exhausted the Venetian treasure with its cost of 3,600,000 Ducats, it was becoming clear that this was no longer a financially tenable way of doing business.<sup>299</sup> And, Venice now had at its doorstep the ambitious powers of France, Spain, the Ottoman and Holy Roman Empires, and the Roman

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<sup>297</sup> Quoted in Giulio M. Ongaro, *The Chapel of St. Mark's at the Time of Adrian Willaert*, 53.

<sup>298</sup> From the time of the Fourth Crusade this is evident in the doge's title, *Lord of a quarter and an eighth of the Roman Empire*. Its legacy is still present in the writings of Paolo Paruta (Official Venetian state historiographer from 1579 to 1597), whose *Discorsi Politici* (published posthumously in 1599, probably in large part due to their clear debt and numerous references to the banned works of Niccolò Machiavelli) is largely preoccupied with comparing Venice to Rome. Paruta credits Rome's success largely to its culture of military discipline and its fall to the decline of that culture rather than other sociopolitical factors. Due to this system, he writes, Rome's society and economy depended on constant warfare for its survival in much the same way as Venice, which depended economically on trade rather than plunder and which had no large standing armies to keep happy, depended on peace.

<sup>299</sup> Thomas de Fougasses and W. Shute. *The Generall Historie of the Magnificent State of Venice*, 516.

Church, all of which had recently shown that they tolerated the power of the Republic only to the extent that it served as a buffer against the others.

To thrive under these delicate circumstances would require the Republic to become adept with a scalpel in areas where a cleaver had sufficed. As Paolo Paruta wrote several decades later in his *Historia Venetiana*,

All things human are ruled by a certain variety and change, so that they may be seen sometimes to increase and sometimes to diminish in a perpetual cycle. The Republic had for a long time enjoyed a continuous prosperity, but now it was necessary to learn to tolerate adversity. When the condition of the times changed, she could easily revive her first reputation and recover her empire and her ancient glory. Meanwhile, it was essential to employ much prudence and moderation rather than to do violence to the time and, by too much accelerating the reborn greatness of the Republic, conduct it to its final ruin.<sup>300</sup>

Venice needed new techniques in foreign and domestic policy to stay afloat in this new world, and these needed to be bolstered by a revamped state mythology to maintain both morale at home and reputation abroad. To accomplish these things, the Republic turned increasingly to the new style of thought that was promoted by literary humanists.

### **Humanism in Venice**

By the early sixteenth century Venice already had a long history as a center of humanistic activity, primarily for practical reasons. Although humanism had some presence in Universities, notably the University of Padua, which stood within the Venetian domain, it was not, like the scholastic philosophical tradition, ever fully at home there. Humanism was able to speak with a new and different philosophical voice in large part because it had been born and cultivated away from influence of the intellectual elite, within the wider culture and

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<sup>300</sup> Quoted in William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty*, 232.

according to the concerns of clerks and bureaucrats. Thus, whereas medieval philosophers and their intellectual descendants tended to focus on large-scale universal truths, eschewing focus on the ordinary chaos of everyday, humanist scholars, even when they engaged with the classical philosophical canon that formed the heart of the scholastic tradition, kept the motivations, responses, and interactions of people at the heart of their endeavors.

Venice was never a particular center of scholastic thought, largely due to the fact that, until the opening of the Ca' Foscari University of Venice (primarily a business school) in 1868, the city was never host to any kind of university. On the other hand, the combination of a mercantile economy, an elaborate governmental structure, and the unique infrastructural demands of an island metropolis meant that Venice had tremendous demand for clerks and bureaucrats as well as a large and highly educated ruling class. In addition, from the mid-fourteenth century, a flood of Greek refugees and a growing printing industry provided ample material for humanistic inquiry and publication. A relatively large community of humanists – historian Margaret L. King has identified a core group of ninety-two who were active between 1400 and 1490 – were working in Venice throughout the fifteenth century, but it was following the crises of the early cinquecento that the government came to increasingly look to them as sources of novel ideas for the presentation of the new Venetian mythologies.<sup>301</sup>

This trend can be noted even before the end of the War of the League of Cambrai in the establishment of the position of official state historiographer on 30 January 1516. Enacted by the Council of Ten, implying that the Republic's history was considered a matter of state security, the position's immediate purpose was to bolster the reputation of the Republic by commemorating the valiant actions of Venetians in the conflict, but its holder was

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<sup>301</sup> Margaret L. King, *Venetian Humanism: In an Age of Patrician Dominance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 315-451. (profiles including available information and sources on all 92)

to be, in effect, a humanities czar, without whose approval no new scholarship could be published.<sup>302</sup> The first person chosen for the position was Andrea Navagero, a humanist poet and lecturer who wrote in Latin and who beat out the famous vernacular diarist Marin Sanudo for the job.<sup>303</sup> A statement from the decree of appointment, possibly intended as a jab at Sanudo, that the Council did not want their state's history to be preserved, "through compendious, uncertain, various, and crude chronicles," provides some indication of the priorities behind their selection. As it turned out, Sanudo may have been a better choice for, as he points out in his diary with some degree of Schadenfreude, Navagero died in 1529 without having published a word on Venetian history.<sup>304</sup>

Despite Navagero's lackluster performance, his appointment is an indication of the Venetian government's changing attitude towards the potential usefulness of the humanistic arts. This new attitude did not, however, reach full steam until some years later, after the election of doge Andrea Gritti in 1523. Gritti, a skilled diplomat and military leader, had been, from his position as a prisoner of war, largely responsible for cultivating the French alliance that had made Venice's victory possible, and due to his unrivaled status as a hero of the patria, he was able to wield considerably more influence than was typical for a Venetian doge. No Venetian doge had the power to directly dictate policy, and any agenda of Gritti's

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<sup>302</sup> William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty*. 139; M. Sanudo, P.H. Labalme, L.S. White, and L.L. Carroll. *Venice, Città Excelentissima: Selections from the Renaissance Diaries of Marin Sanudo* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 442.

<sup>303</sup> For selections from the disappointed diarist's commentary on the appointment, see *Ibid.* 442-445.

<sup>304</sup> *ibid.* p. 445.

What if anything he may have written before that time is unknown, as he left orders in his will for all his notes to be burned. Sanudo made it clear that he still harbored some resentment in his remarks on the occasion, writing, "I maintain that it was because he had written nothing, nothing good." Sanudo found himself passed over for the job once again, this time in favor of Pietro Bembo, probably the most prestigious humanist that Venice ever produced, although notably not a stellar exemplifier of the Republic's tradition of public service. To add insult to injury, Bembo requested and was granted access to Sanudo's diary to aid him in the preparation of his own *Historia Venetia*, published in 1552.

would have been dead in the water without a broad base of support within the patriciate. Nonetheless, his term of office coincided with an astonishing number of dramatic policy shifts for a system that had traditionally valued continuity over novelty.<sup>305</sup>

These novel reforms began somewhat conventionally with a program of refortification and military reorganization in the Veneto under the direction of their former adversary and nephew of pope Julius II, Francesco Maria della Rovere, duke of Urbino.<sup>306</sup> Della Rovere and his family had been among the most important patrons of Renaissance, and he brought many of the same principles to his work in designing new fortifications and other martial innovations for the Republic.<sup>307</sup> This early militaristic stage of Gritti's renovation repaired the damage of the recent conflict with an eye to the Italian wars that continued away from Venice, until the treaty of Cambrai in 1529, but this new preoccupation with humanistic innovation would from the late 1520s be extended into more peaceful areas of domestic policy, artistic patronage, and religious practice.

The most famous, and today the most visible aspects of Gritti's project are related to the 1529 appointment of architect and sculptor Jacopo Sansovino as *proto* (short for *protomaestro*, i.e. chief surveyor). Sansovino, a Tuscan who had come to the city two years earlier to escape the devastation of the the war of the League of Cognac, was not only the first

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<sup>305</sup> see Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance* trans. Jessica Levine. 108-112.

<sup>306</sup> *ibid.* p. 109.

Ironically, della Rovere had earlier been praised by both Machiavelli and Guicciardini for tearing down several key fortifications in the area of Urbino.

<sup>307</sup> On the importance of the della Rovere family as patrons of the arts, see I. Verstegen, *Patronage and Dynasty: The Rise of the Della Rovere in Renaissance Italy* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2007).



foreigner, but the first major architect to hold the position.<sup>308</sup> His famous refurbishment of the Piazza San Marco, beginning in 1536, was not simply a beautification effort to clear out dilapidated buildings and bring Venice's most important showplace up to date with new architectural trends: though he did accomplish those things, Sansovino more ambitiously shaped a rhetorically heightened space that amplified the messages Venetians wanted to deliver about themselves. In addition to the new construction to present a newly classicized vision of the republic, this involved the tuning of space to emphasize the grandeur of the buildings that were already there, to imply a harmonic relationship between the city's medieval past and renaissance present, and, most importantly, to provide an ideal stage and viewing platform for the spectacular civic rituals that were becoming increasingly central to both religious and public life in Venice.

Adriano Willaert, a Flemish-born musician who had trained in Paris with Jean Mouton and worked previously in the courts of Rome and Ferrara, was elected by Gritti and his Procurators to the position of *Maestro di Cappella* of San Marco in 1527, the year of Sansovino's arrival, to engage in a similar project of rhetorical tuning to clarify and heighten the affective potential of the Venetian state liturgy. However, while the general affinity of Willaert's appointment to the Grittian agenda has been widely acknowledged, neither the resonance of his subtle but iconoclastic musical philosophy with the humanistic fervor of the moment nor the unprecedented degree to which his sacred music came to be employed as a functional liturgical element (the subject of the following chapter) have been adequately

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<sup>308</sup> R.J. Goy, *Building Renaissance Venice*, 33.

The fifth of the so-called Italian wars, The War of the League of Cognac was a conflict between the Holy Roman Empire and an alliance of France, the Papal states, England, and several Italian states including Venice that occurred during the second half of the 1520s and led to, among other things, the sacking of both Rome and Florence.

explored.

### Doge Andrea Gritti

Perhaps no one was in a better position than Andrea Gritti to understand both the challenges facing Venice and the advantages at its disposal. In his early life, typically for a young male member of a Venetian patrician house, he was sent out into the world to represent the interests of his family and his republic and to learn the ins and outs of commerce, seamanship, and international relations in preparation for a later career in public life. In this way he ended up residing in Istanbul and working as a grain merchant, which gave him an unusual familiarity with both the developing Ottoman culture and the empire's key personalities.<sup>309</sup> Perhaps in part due to his linguistic abilities – he spoke Latin, Greek, French, and Turkish – Gritti developed an unusual rapport with Turkish trade authorities, who typically regarded Venetians with mistrust, and he first gained notoriety for using his diplomatic skills to avert a trade embargo that would otherwise have caused a famine in Venice.<sup>310</sup>

In the 1490s, when war broke out between Venice and the empire, Gritti, then in his mid-thirties, began using the connections he had developed to spy for the republic. The reports that Gritti sent back to Venice disguised as mundane commercial ledgers were, according to Marin Sanudo, the republic's best source of information about the composition

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<sup>309</sup> M. Sanudo, P.H. Labalme, L.S. White, and L.L. Carroll. *Venice, Città Excelentissima: Selections from the Renaissance Diaries of Marin Sanudo*. 232.

<sup>310</sup> Frederick C. Lane, *Venice, a Maritime Republic*, 270.  
M. Sanudo, P.H. Labalme, and L.S. White, *Venice, Città Excelentissima: Selections from the Renaissance Diaries of Marin Sanudo*, 232.

and movement of Ottoman forces.<sup>311</sup> In the summer of 1499, when Gritti's activities were discovered, he was convicted of espionage and thrown into a Turkish prison.<sup>312</sup> Even from a prison cell, however, Gritti's connections allowed him to play a key role in resolving the conflict, and when he finally returned to Venice nearly three years later, his heroic status was secure.

In 1513, when Gritti, after having served notably as a commander in the War of the League of Cambrai, was overwhelmingly elected to be one of two *Proveditori* of Padua, one of the top military offices in the terra firma, he was placed in charge of an empire in shambles.<sup>313</sup> It is, thus, easy to understand why he vehemently protested the appointment. Soon after his return to the field he was imprisoned once more, being captured by the French in Brescia, but again he demonstrated his gift for jailhouse diplomacy, befriendng King Francis I and using this connection to arrange the French alliance that made the Republic's victory a possibility.<sup>314</sup> Four years later when he reentered the lagoon draped in purple, having reestablished Venetian claims to Padua, Verona, and Brescia, he status as a legend of the republic was set in stone.<sup>315</sup> Gritti was assertive, charismatic, ambitious, and, at 68, still relatively young and vivacious for a Venetian politician, none of which made him a seem a likely choice of Doge. Venetian politics had long been characterized by a certain paranoia about the power of the office, and this tended to lead to the election of notable but tired men who had already

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<sup>311</sup> *ibid.* p. 233.

<sup>312</sup> *ibid.* p. 234.

<sup>313</sup> *ibid.* p. 92.

<sup>314</sup> P. Paruta, *The History of Venice*. Trans. Henry Carey Earl of Monmouth. Abel Roper, and Henry Herringman (London: Moseley, 1658), 8.

<sup>315</sup> M. Sanudo, P.H. Labalme, and L.S. White, *Venice, Città Excelentissima: Selections from the Renaissance Diaries of Marin Sanudo*, 93

accomplished everything they were likely to accomplish. Gritti's predecessor, the octogenarian Antonio Grimani was an altogether more typical choice.<sup>316</sup> It was only his status as a hero of the state that made Gritti an exception to this rule, but even this was accomplished over virulent opposition from many sectors.<sup>317</sup>

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### **Renovatio Urbis: Gritti's Plan of Reform**

Even many of those who enthusiastically supported Gritti's bid may have been in for a bit more than they had bargained for. Gritti was, by all accounts, a believer in the concept of *renascimento* (a term only coined in print by Visari a few years after Gritti's death, but which circulated as a concept considerably earlier) in the most literal sense. He felt that Venice had entered crisis that had led to the loss of the *Serenissima's* identity and international prestige, and that would require a physical and spiritual rebirth to get out of. Gritti advocated for a program, in the words of historian Manfredo Tafuri, "in which the resumption of commerce and culture would be founded on a process of radical renewal."<sup>318</sup> In other words, Gritti wanted big changes for Venice, changes that would require him to use his charisma and personal prestige to enlarge both the rhetorical and the authoritarian role of the office of doge. Regardless of Gritti's potential success, contemporaneous Venetians were not wrong to be concerned that he posed a risk to their governmental equilibrium. Indeed, the consolidation

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<sup>316</sup> D.S. Chambers, J. Fletcher, B. Pullan, and the Renaissance Society of America, *Venice: A Documentary History*, 94.

Brian Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 494.

<sup>317</sup> M. Sanudo, P.H. Labalme, and L.S. White, *Venice, Città Excelentissima: Selections from the Renaissance Diaries of Marin Sanudo*, 93 (Sanudo, a former admirer of Gritti's, was among those who felt that he was too arrogant and self-important to be right for the job.)

<sup>318</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance* trans. Jessica Levine. 108.

of power into fewer and fewer hands was to become a major issue in Venice in the following decades.<sup>319</sup>

Today, Gritti is most well-known for his patronage of the arts, and he has one of the most famous faces of anyone in Renaissance Venice due to a frequently-reprinted portrait by Titian. His role as a sponsor to Titian, Pietro Bembo, Pietro Aretino, Jacopo Sansovino, and Adriano Willaert among others was a significant aspect



Titian - Portrait of Doge Andrea Gritti - 1537-45  
Samuel H. Kress Collection - US National Gallery

of his vision for the Republic; but Gritti's program of renovation spread to all areas of Venetian life and organization. These reforms encompassed four basic areas, as described by Tafuri, *Renevatio securitatis*, *renevatio scientiae*, *renevatio iustitiae*, and *renevatio urbis*, i.e. renovation of security, knowledge, law, and of the city itself.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> For information on the consolidation of power in the Council of Ten and the subsequent movement to reduce that power, see William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty*. 232-292.

<sup>320</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance* trans. Jessica Levine. 109.

For the first several years of Gritti's reign Venice was still tied up in the conflicts of the Italian Wars, so the focus early on was sensibly in the area of *Renevatio securitatis*. People today tend to associate the Renaissance primarily with peaceful endeavors such as painting, sculpture, literature, and music, but at the time it was the purported military prowess of the ancient world that many were most interested in seeing reborn. It was also new military advances that many saw as the most striking and impressive novelties of the era.<sup>321</sup> War galleons, polygonal fortresses, and, above all, firearms fundamentally altered the nature of European warfare. Even were it not driven by necessity, it should come as no surprise that Gritti's renaissancing of the Venetian republic began in this way.

Interestingly, the man whom Gritti chose to head up this effort was a former enemy of the republic, the Duke of Urbino and nephew of Pope Julius II, Francesco Maria della Rovere. Della Rovere hailed from a family whose patronage of the arts and humanities had made first Rome, under the papacy of Pope Sixtus IV,<sup>322</sup> and later Urbino into focal points of the Renaissance, and the references to the words and tactics of Roman generals with which he peppered both his speeches to the Venetian Senate and his own military exploits are an indication that he had not neglected his own study of the classics.<sup>323</sup> As Governor and later Captain General of the Republic's land forces, he exemplified the practice of *guerra d'ingegno* (war through ingenuity), contributing new innovations to the construction of defensive walls and artillery pieces, personally designing fortifications for the cities of the Veneto, and

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<sup>321</sup> See, for example, Paulo Paruta and H. Carey. *Politick Discourses*, 156. (translation of a work first published in 1599 but probably written considerably earlier) In a brief discussion of the Renaissance in general, Paruta mentions militaristic developments first and devotes the majority of the passage to them before mentioning "architecture, painting, sculpture, and other noble arts" as an afterthought.

<sup>322</sup> Among other things, Sixtus IV, who was Francesco Maria's great uncle, established the Sistine Chapel during his tenure as pope.

<sup>323</sup> I. Verstegen, *Patronage and Dynasty: The Rise of the Della Rovere in Renaissance Italy*, 149.

developing a new strategy of military occupation that followed the lead of Renaissance painters by conceiving of a territory as an articulated organism.<sup>324</sup> This kind of organic thinking about resources and geography represented a revolutionary break from the traditional, fragmented way of conceiving space, and this increased the potential for the kind of situationally determined thinking advocated by humanist military thinkers.<sup>325</sup>

One of the most interesting and illuminating, if not ultimately the most successful, of Gritti's reforms occurred in the area of *renewatio scientiae*. Vettor Fausto was a humanist scholar of humble origins admired by several influential patricians including Gritti as a lecturer on Greek eloquence, a post that he won through a public contest. Fausto, who was knowledgeable in mathematics, architecture, and engineering in addition to classics, was interested in finding ways in which the insights of humanistic learning, new-found and reclaimed, could be used to benefit society in more direct and practical ways beyond adding lustres to elite social and political life. As a Venetian who had grown up surrounded by maritime culture, he chose to focus on the art of shipbuilding.<sup>326</sup>

Although not himself a master shipwright, Fausto studied the available ancient sources, consulted with craftsmen of many cities, and in 1526, revealed his plan for a reconstruction of the *quinquereme* warship, which had been a staple in the navies on both sides of the Punic wars. This somewhat fantastic proposition at first provoked skepticism from the Senators, many of whom preferred the Galleon design proposed by the more conventionally trained

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<sup>324</sup> *ibid.* p. 150.

In other words, rather than conceiving of individual individual locations, fortifications, units, etc. as essentially separate entities, della Rovere's system emphasized the connections and interdependencies between these points.

<sup>325</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance* trans. Jessica Levine. 109.

<sup>326</sup> Frederick C. Lane, *Venetian Ships and Shipbuilders of the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 64.

shipwright Matteo Bressan. However, Fausto soon proved his prowess as an engineer through a demonstration of a complicated rowing system that had seemed impossible, winning over enough senators to have his project approved. The wisdom of this decision seemed confirmed when in April of 1529 the completed *quinquereme* won a race against a much lighter galley. According to Sanudo, this contest was one of the major spectator events of that year and the victory ensured the “immortality” of its author.<sup>327</sup>

The vessel was sent into the war fleet and its commander Gerolamo de Canal praised its early performance in combat. Unfortunately, the next year on the way to Crete it was discovered that, while extremely seaworthy, the *quinquereme* was too exposed to the elements.<sup>328</sup> After a storm, many rowers died from hypothermia and disease, and all plans for the construction of further *quinqueremes* were put aside. Fausto continued his work at the Arsenal for the rest of his life, introducing many improvements to the ships being built there and earning the respect of the master builders, but he never accomplished his dream of becoming a modern-day Archimedes. His appointment represented a new level of separation between the realms of craft and design, which, had it continued, would likely have brought a new culture of innovation but also the loss of many crucial and traditional skills to the shipyards of Venice.

The refashioning of Venetian law was the area of reform in which Gritti had the least success. In December of 1531, he introduced a plan that would have dramatically altered Venetian jurisprudence by reducing the authority of judges and introducing a new level of specialization to all legal occupations, so that cases would be both argued and decided by

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<sup>327</sup> Frederick C. Lane, *Venetian Ships and Shipbuilders of the Renaissance*, 65-7; M. Sanudo, P.H. Labalme, and L.S. White, *Venice, Città Excelentissima: Selections from the Renaissance Diaries of Marin Sanudo*, 249-250.

<sup>328</sup> Frederick C. Lane, *Venetian Ships and Shipbuilders of the Renaissance*, 67.



people with some expertise in the areas in question. Despite being apparently regarded as a greater threat to the status quo than Gritti's other projects, this plan did gain some traction for a few years.<sup>329</sup> However, Gritti was never able to win overwhelming support, and the idea had ended in stalemate by 1535 or 36. Ultimately, the legal structure of Venice at the time of Gritti's death in 1538 was not much different from when he was elected.

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### ***Renevatio Urbis: Gritti's visual reform of the city***

A consistent theme of humanism runs through all the above-listed examples of Grittian reforms. Each represents an effort to seize on new ideas and practices that were emerging out of Renaissance humanism in an unprecedentedly organized and official capacity and to structurally integrate them into the traditional operations of Venetian life. This highly self-conscious effort to place Venice on the cutting edge of modernity was, however, nowhere more apparent than in the program of reform for which Gritti is most widely remembered, the renovation of the city itself. The physical appearance of a city and the occasional spectacles through which people's experience of that appearance is accentuated and directed are the most direct, consistent, and broadly-casted means that a municipality has to deliver a rhetorical message about itself, so it is sensible that this facet of Gritti's agenda received increasing attention over the course of his tenure, especially after the peace of 1529 freed Venice from the distractions of the Italian Wars. Through his years in Constantinople, then the largest and grandest city in the western world, Gritti was familiar with the psychological power of scale and of the appearance of permanence. Also, his experiences in France and the Italian mainland, as well as his engagement with the intellectual currents of his time, had

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<sup>329</sup>Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance* trans. Jessica Levine. 112.

introduced him to many new ideas about strategic civic display, including how already impressive vistas could be tweaked in order to emphasize line, stylistic and geometric continuity, and open space, thereby creating a more unified and more powerful rhetorical impact.

In 1527, to help him put these ideas into effect, Gritti hired Jacopo Sansovino, a Tuscan architect and sculptor on the forefront of the still primarily regional classical revival largely initiated by Brunelleschi a century before. Two years later he was promoted to *protomaestro*, a move which represented a major break with tradition, as the job had never been given to an architect, much less one of foreign origin, before.<sup>330</sup> Over the next ten years Gritti and Sansovino together engaged in a series of major constructions intended to completely make over the city. This centered on two carefully selected locations. The more famous and predictable of these, the Piazza San Marco, was the center of Venetian public and religious life as well as the alleged resting place of St. Mark, the city's patron. However, it was not until 1536, after the establishment of the magistracy for embellishing and adapting the city, that the remodel of the Piazza gained traction. Before that point, focus was given to a more obscure locale, San Francesco della Vigna on the northern edge of the less-populous western Venetian Sestiere of Castello.

According to legend, this Franciscan church stands on the spot where St. Mark, while visiting the lagoon on an apostolic mission, fell asleep and dreamed of the great city that would one day be dedicated to him.<sup>331</sup> These two spots chosen by Gritti, the site of the very beginning of Venice's relationship with St. Mark and the place where that relationship

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<sup>330</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance* trans. Jessica Levine. 110.

<sup>331</sup> *ibid.* p. 111.

blossomed into greatness, could hardly have been more pertinently chosen for their centrality



Gian Paolo and Gian Carlo Rainieri - Clock of San Marco - 1496-99 - after 1997-2006 renovation

to the most cherished myths of Venice, and there is a certain elegance to the notion of tying them together through the distinctive style of Sansovino. These were also the two locales that Andrea Gritti called home. San Marco, of course, is the site of the Doge's palace, rebuilt by Sansovino in a rigidly traditional Venetian Gothic style that allowed for very little of the Roman grandeur that was his forte, and San Francesco della Vigna is home to the Grittis' family estate, also built by Sansovino in a self-consciously understated and rusticated style.

#### **Sansovino's Changes to the Piazza San Marco**

Gritti and Sansovino's refashioning of San Marco square emphasized the centrality of this space to Venetian life, presenting the square as a synecdoche of the entire Republic, containing structures that powerfully represented Venetian religion, government, commerce, learning, and day to day activities like eating and drinking, all within a unified visual order that emphasizes the mythology of the Venetian constitution as a perfect balance of diverse interests. This image of the republic as a mechanism of diverse interlocking parts was made explicit by a then-recent addition to piazza, the clock of San Marco (picture), built by Gian Paolo and Gian

Carlo Ranieri around the turn of the sixteenth century. Old clock towers have since become a symbol of the quaintness of the past, but in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries they were technological wonders. This one, which, in addition to providing the time, date, and zodiacal sign, features a twice-yearly visit by automated Magi bringing gifts to an automated baby Jesus, could seem to mark Venice as a place where technological innovation bordered on magic. In large part, Sansovino's changes served to rhetorically emphasize this and other preexisting showpiece structures such as the clock, the massive Campanile (bell tower), and the church of San Marco itself.

Sansovino's new constructions in the square were cultivated to work with what was already there to present a narrative of Venice as a new and improved version of Rome, bringing together not only the best of the ancient and modern worlds but also those of occident and orient.<sup>332</sup> Directly opposite the Byzantine splendor of San Marco, he built the small but beautiful church of San Geminiano (sadly destroyed by Napoleon and replaced with the astonishingly unmemorable *Ala Napoleonica*), which clearly evoked the ideals of the Italian Renaissance through its classical orders and facade of white Istrian marble. This juxtaposition emphasized the treasured mythology of Venetian religion as a perfect synthesis of eastern and western Christianity and also, perhaps more significantly, of the great power and majesty



Jacopo Sansovino - Chiesa di San Geminiano - c. 1540 - drawing by Paolo Steffan

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<sup>332</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance* trans. Jessica Levine. 111-113.

of the Christian tradition with the more personal and intimate type of Christian practice that was emerging as a part of Renaissance thought.

In between these two churches, along the eastern edge of the Piazzetta, the slightly smaller arm of the Piazza that goes to the water {provide a map}, Sansovino built three

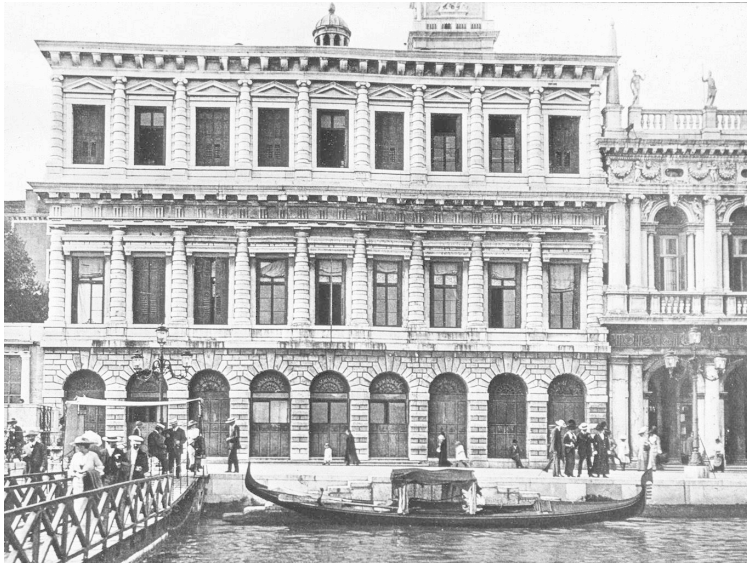


Jacopo Sansovino - Loggetta - 1537-46  
photo from William Vaughn Tupper Scrapbook  
Collection - 1891-94 - Boston Public Library

structures that each showcased his mastery of the new antiquarian architecture in different ways. The first of these, the Loggetta, a kind of social club for Venetian aristocrats, was built on the model of an ancient Roman triumphal arch. Although it is actually of a fairly good size, it is completely surrounded by buildings on a

much larger scale, and its position in the shadow of the Campanile makes it appear tiny. This juxtaposition serves both to emphasize the immensity of the tower and to provide the Loggetta with the effect of a perfect little pearl in the center of all the San Marco grandiosity, a suitably aquatic metaphor for the city.

Further down on the far end of the Piazzetta, Sansovino constructed the new Venetian mint, or *Zecca*, employing the rusticated, so-called Tuscan orders. This style, which was one of the more innovative ideas in sixteenth-century architecture, took features that would have been found in only the most utilitarian Roman buildings and lifted them up for display, in effect taking ideas from ancient engineering and presenting them as architecture. The resulting structure, which has firm ties to the classical world through ideas even though it bears little resemblance to any actual Roman building, speaks to the compromise necessary in



Jacopo Sansovino - Zecca - completed 1547  
Anonymous late-nineteenth century photographer

constructing a building that needs to be both a showcase for the wealth and splendor of Venice and an actual functioning site for industrial fabrication.

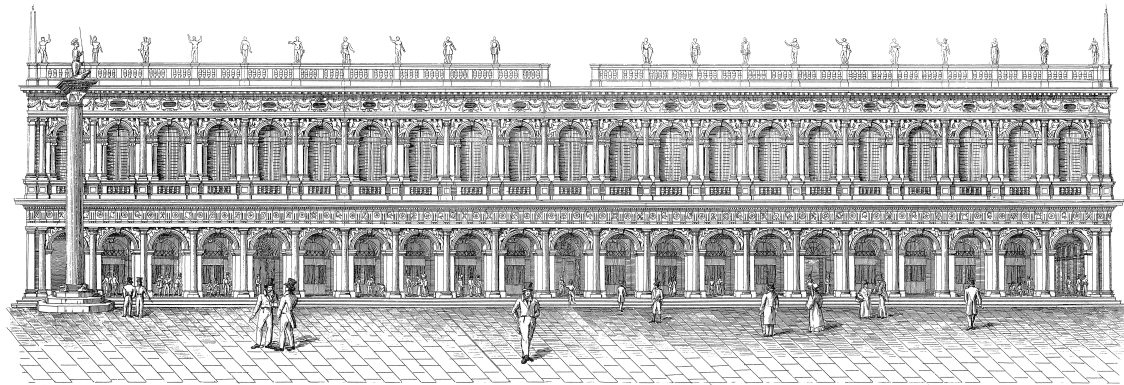
Between the *Loggetta* and the *Zecca* stands Sansovino's largest and most spectacular Venetian edifice, the *Biblioteca Marciana* (library of St. Mark), built to

emulate an ancient Roman basilica. Unlike Sansovino's other Venetian projects, the library was not built to replace a previous structure. The impetus for the construction came from the bequeath of Cardinal Bessarion, the late patriarch of Constantinople who looked to Venice as a safe place to house his massive library after his city's fall to the Turks in 1453.<sup>333</sup> An older precedent for the idea came from a deal that had been struck but ultimately fell through that would have left the poet and humanist Petrarch's library in the hands of the Republic, and although there was no true connection, Venetians did not hesitate to present Sansovino's project as the fruition of Petrarch's dream.<sup>334</sup> Whatever the specific motivation may have been, the extreme level of prestige and exposure given to what was one of the first modern public libraries in the world provides another excellent example of the new priority that was being given to the usefulness of knowledge in Gritti's Venice.

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<sup>333</sup> David Rosand, *Myths of Venice: The Figuration of a State* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 103.

<sup>334</sup> *ibid.* p. 104



Ingresso alla R. Libreria  
 Ingresso alla Biblioteca  
 Ingresso di fianco alle Procuratie Nuove  
*Biblioteca Antica ora annessa al Palazzo Reale*

XIII.

Jacopo Sansovino - Biblioteca Marciana - Begun in 1537  
 Drawing by Dionisio Moretti from *La Piazza di San Marco in Venezia, descritta da Antonio Quadri* - Pub. 1831

The buildings lining the Piazzetta, because they were the first Venetian structures that a visiting dignitary would see up close, were among the most rhetorically important in the city. Under the guidance of Gritti and Sansovino, this first impression was completely refashioned during the middle decades of the sixteenth century, and curiously, the bulk of the message that they seem to have been intent on delivering pertained to something Venice ultimately lacked, direct connections to the classical world. Unlike most important Italian towns, Venice did not exist in Roman times as a city, a military encampment, or anything else besides a muddy lagoon.<sup>335</sup> Roman heritage was an important aspect of Italian civic pride, in large part because its remains were so visibly apparent in the landscape.<sup>336</sup>

Sansovino's three structures, which evoke the semi-distinct traditions of Roman militarism (The Loggetta), Roman Religion (The Biblioteca Marciana), and Roman scientific

<sup>335</sup> There is archeological evidence of some settlement in the Lagoon during Roman times, but even this was on a very small scale, and Renaissance Venetians knew nothing about it. See P. Crabtree, *Medieval Archaeology* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 359.

<sup>336</sup> Ruins of the Roman empire were considerably more apparent in Renaissance Italy than they are today. This is, in part, simply because cities were less built up, and thus ruins were more dominant features in the landscape, but five-hundred years of erosion, numerous wars, and rampant looting for new construction have all also played a major role.

and technological innovation (The Zecca), seem to argue that this lack was actually an advantage for the republic. Whereas Rome's connection to the ancient past was mostly visible in the form of decaying ruins to serve as reminders of lost splendor and to frequently be destroyed for the stones they contain, the presence of the ancient world in Venice, the new, better Rome, was strictly in and of the present. As Thomas de Fougasses wrote in the introduction to his massive 1608 history of the republic, "In [Venice] the wisdom, fortitude, justice, and magnanimity of old Rome do yet move and stir, That which now usurps that name is not Rome, but her Carcasse, or rather Sepelcher. All but her ruins, and the cause of them, (her Vice) is removed to Venice...."<sup>337</sup> Venetians had the freedom to define their own connection to the past, and to have the presence of the ancient world be something new, useful, vibrant, and absolutely central to the life of the city rather than simply an antiquarian curiosity.

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### **The Piazza Itself: Rhetorically Heightened Space**

Just as important as Sansovino's reforms to the buildings around the Piazza were those he made to the Piazza San Marco itself. For centuries it had been one of the largest and most visually spectacular public spaces in Europe. However, in its early sixteenth-century form, the Piazza's rhetorical potential was limited by several factors. First of all, as the heart of so many aspects of Venetian life, the Piazza was extremely attractive to commerce, so it was, by accounts, cluttered with vendors' carts, tents, and even small buildings, giving it more the appearance of a bustling urban market than an open public square and leaving cramped space for public functions. This issue was exacerbated by the fact that, although the Piazza

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<sup>337</sup> Thomas de Fougasses and W. Shute. *The Generall Historie of the Magnificent State of Venice*, 1.



was as long in 1500 as it is today, the structures on the south side were built flush with the northern edge of the Campanile, making it only about as wide as the Piazzetta.

With his authority as Superintendent of public works, Sansovino cleared out the vendors, evicting some and moving others to permanent stalls along the Piazza's southern Colonnade, which he moved back by about fifty meters. These relatively slight changes had a massive effect. Moving the southern boundary, in addition to making a much larger space that could accommodate many more people, brought a new visual continuity to the space, making the Piazza appear, as it does today, as one immense square rather than a spectacular

thoroughfare

leading to the

central locale of San

Marco. The move

also gave new

dramatic impact to

the Campanile by

getting it away from

the clutter of

buildings and

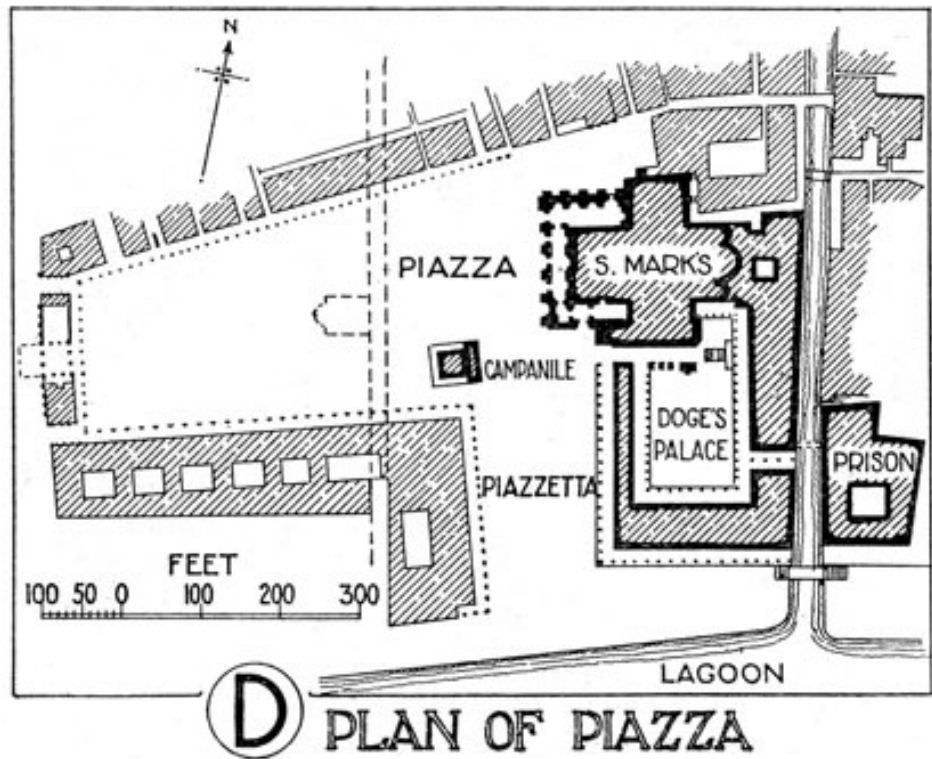
allowing its full

immense height, still

impressive to twenty-

first-century eyes

jaded by skyscrapers, to be apparent from all angles, and, in general, provided an ideal



Approximate map of the Piazza and Piazzetta after Sansovino's alterations from Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*. 6th ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 105. Provided courtesy of Allan Kohl.

viewing platform from which Venetians and foreigners alike could admire the Chapel of San Marco and its architectural entourage.

Sansovino's refurbished Piazza San Marco is a spectacle in its own right, even on an uneventful day, but its primary purpose is to serve as a perfect stage to heighten the rhetorical impact of public spectacles that were an extremely frequent aspect of Venetian life in the sixteenth century. The Piazza added layers of gravity and moment to all sorts of public events, from the most ribald Carnival celebrations to the driest government decree. Even public executions were granted a certain grim drama and perhaps a patina of ancient provenance when performed between the two massive columns of the Piazzetta. Above all, however, the refurbished Piazza was designed to serve as an ideal staging ground for the processions of the Venetian *Andata* tradition.

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### Willaert's Humanistic Appeal

Certainly, the unprecedented election of a composer with such a prestigious résumé as Willaert's to the republic's preeminent musical office would be an easy fit within the pattern of Grittian renovation, even without Willaert specific qualifications. At the time of his election, Willaert was still relatively young, and the bulk of his career had been occupied with establishing his mastery of the musical idiom of the previous generation through parody masses (not published until 1536 but almost certainly written well before) as well as Motets and Chansons parroting the similar styles of Josquin and Mouton. His skill in this arena is indicated by a story recounted by Willaert's own student, the theorist Gioseffo Zarlino, in which the young composer demanded credit for his motet, *Verbum Bonum et Suave*, to the

disappointment and embarrassment of the Sistine Chapel singers, none of whom had apparently doubted its attribution to Josquin.<sup>338</sup>

These skills definitely played a major role in Willaert's appeal, but what likely made him stand out from the crowd was his predilection for novelty and experimentation, particularly in areas of intersection between music and humanism. This aspect of Willaert's persona can be difficult for modern observers to recognize. Due in large part to a letter by Giulio Cesare Monteverdi, published with his brother Claudio's *Scherzi Musicali* of 1607, in which he is listed as the ultimate paragon of the *prima prattica* (first practice: i.e. the traditional Franco-Flemish style), Willaert has typically been treated as a "conservative" composer.<sup>339</sup> This label is, however, misleading. First of all, the issues that determine such an assignment come from the Monteverdi brothers' debate with music theorist Giovanni Maria Artusi, decades in the future at the time of Willaert's death. Secondly, the restrictions of the *prima prattica*, as Monteverdi understood them, were largely derived from the writings of Gioseffo Zarlino, who was basing his ideas primarily on Willaert's personal style. Clearly, to label a composer conservative for following rules that were codified after his or her death on the model of his or her own music is problematic to say the least.

This issue is exacerbated by the fact that the aesthetic conventions of the past two centuries or so have bred an expectation that experimental or avante-garde music also be dissonant and angular, two words that rarely describe the music of Willaert. The cultivation of smooth, consonant textures that is one of the prime markers of Willaert's style has contributed to his reputation as a conservative composer, particularly in its contrast with the

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<sup>338</sup> G. Zarlino, *Istitutioni Harmoniche: ...* (Venice: Francesco de i Franceschi, 1558) Pt. 4. ch. 36. p. 346. This anecdote is enlightening about Willaert's reputation in the 16th century even if apocryphal.

<sup>339</sup> see W. Oliver Strunk and Leo Treitler, *Source Readings in Music History*, 540.

more overtly expressive and transgressive music of later generations of Venetian composers. Actually, Willaert's more impressionistic aesthetics, which suggest a complex internal psychology hidden behind a mask of decorum, an approach which resonates with the pseudo-Ovidian notion of "*Ars Celare Artem*" (Art to Conceal Art), was among the aspects that marked his style as new at the time, when forward-thinking composers were looking for ways to avoid the dissonances and highly-wrought rhythms that are prevalent in much fifteenth-century polyphony.

There were several factors that conspired to make Willaert stand out among the musicians of his generation as an ideal candidate to participate in Gritti's project of rebuilding Venetian glory through the systematic application of Renaissance insights. Perhaps the most obvious of these was his rapidly increasing prestige. Willaert, a singer of Flemish origin (born in either Bruges or Roeselare around 1490) had already become a major figure in the Italian music scene in the thirteen years between his arrival from the north and his election in Venice. A major factor in his rise to fame had been his employment in the d'Este court in Ferrara, working first for cardinal Ippolito I and later for his brother, duke Alfonso I.<sup>340</sup> Ferrara was a major site of musical prestige and innovation throughout the sixteenth century, owing in part to the d'Estes' early adoption of the Burgundian-style musical chapel in the mid-fifteenth century and to its association with the recently deceased Josquin des Prez (c. 1450/1455 – 1521), who was still the most lauded and recognized composer in the world.

Like Josquin, but to a greater extent, Willaert's notoriety, particularly in Venice, was also largely dependent on his early engagement with the nascent music printing industry.

Willaert's first appearance in print came with the inclusion of his *Verbum Bonum* in Petrucci's

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<sup>340</sup> Lewis Lockwood, "Adrian Willaert and Cardinal Ippolito I d'Este: New Light on Willaert's Early Career in Italy, 1515–21." *Early Music History* 5 (1985): 89-90.

last collection of motets, *Motetti de la corona IV*, in 1519, a product of the printer's period working in the town of Fossombrone, which highlights the work of several notable Ferraresi musicians. By the time of his move to the lagoon his music had appeared in seven additional prints, at least four of which were the product of a burgeoning relationship between Willaert and the up-and-coming Venetian printer Andrea Antico, something that almost certainly increased his fame and visibility on the Venetian scene. In time, this would lead to still-more productive partnerships with the more famous Scotto and Gardano printing houses, where he would publish the majority of his principal editions. Within a few years of his election, he was already well on his way to being the most printed musician in the world. All told, his music would appear in at least 130 editions during his lifetime, including 33 principal prints, far outpacing Josquin even if one ignores the fact that many of these were printed on a far larger scale than earlier Petrucci editions had been, making Willaert the most accessible if not the most famous composer in the world.<sup>341</sup> All this indicates that Gritti and the Venetian Procurators were interested in finding a promising up-and-comer to run the musical facet of their program of reform. However, fame and notoriety were not the only things that made Willaert a good match for the position.

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### Willaert and Humanism

Following in the footsteps of Josquin (whose influence can be clearly seen in the large number of parodic pieces<sup>342</sup> Willaert composed based on his music) but going

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<sup>341</sup> For a complete list of Willaert's known appearances in print during his lifetime, see D. Kidger, *Adrian Willaert: A Guide to Research* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>342</sup> That is, pieces that borrow complete polyphonic textures, not just single melodies, from previously existing pieces. Frequently this technique, which was novel in the early sixteenth century, was used to build large works (e.g. masses) based on smaller ones (e.g. motets).

considerably further, Willaert was actively engaged with the currents of literary humanism, probably to a greater extent than any other practical musician of his or any previous generation. Retrospectively, there are many ways to recognize this profound interest in the composer. He was, first of all, along with Philippe Verdelot (c.1480-1485 – c.1530-1532) and Jacques Arcadelt (c. 1507 – 1568), one of the innovators of the sixteenth-century madrigalian tradition, a movement, ironically instigated primarily by northern musicians but driven by renewed interest in the poetry of fourteenth-century Tuscany, the original fountainhead of humanism, and by the increasing desire among musicians to engage directly with the currents of literature and rhetoric.

Musicologist Martha Feldman, in her groundbreaking book, *City Culture and the Madrigal at Venice*, has convincingly argued that the madrigals in Willaert's 1559 *Musica Nova* collection represent an attempt to translate into music the literary theory of Pietro Bembo.<sup>343</sup> Bembo, who was one of the most prominent humanistic thinkers of the early sixteenth century, was a major booster of the work and ideas of Francesco Petrarca (1304 – 1374). The principles of Petrarchan decorum, proportion, and rhetorical declamation are on display in the *Musica Nova* madrigals, which features the first madrigalian settings of full sonnets, the most prestigious genre of trecento (i.e. fourteenth-century) poetry, and the same can be detected in much of the rest of his oeuvre, both secular and sacred.

### Willaert's Humanistic Oeuvre

The clearest way of identifying Willaert's humanistic tendencies, especially at the time of his election in Venice, is through his engagement with the main object of the humanist

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<sup>343</sup> Martha Feldman, *City culture and the madrigal at Venice*, 250.

enterprise, the actual texts of classical literature. Well before his arrival in Venice, Willaert began composing so-called secular motets setting both passages by classical Roman authors and newly composed Latin texts, echoing the tradition of Cicconia. Like the madrigal, these pieces demonstrate a new reverence for secular literature by setting it with a degree of subtlety that previous generations had generally reserved for sacred texts, but the use of Latin, especially the Latin of Virgil and Horace, lent a sheen of scholarly sophistication and seriousness of tone. These factors, which increased their humanistic appeal, also limited their marketability. It is, thus, likely that those which survive may represent a sample of a larger repertory that has been lost, and even those few, which were published in motet collections surrounded by sacred works, raise questions about why publishers may have decided to include them at all.<sup>344</sup>

The most readily accessible and widely performed of these secular motets, *Dulces Exuviae*, is a setting of Dido's final words from Virgil's *Aeneid*. This text, which had already received melodically connected settings by Josquin and Mouton, was one of, if not the most well-known passage of classical literary writing at the time. Willaert set this text twice, producing a three-voice version that was published in a Chanson collection in 1520 in addition to the more famous four-voice version, and his settings probably served a purpose similar to that of his parody masses, as a testament of the composer's engagement with the conversations of the previous generation and his mastery of their techniques.

Several of Willaert's additional secular motets are occasional laudatory pieces that operate firmly within the aristocratic, self-promotional tradition of the early Renaissance. The

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<sup>344</sup> Both Antonio Gardano and Girolamo Scotto, Willaert's main Venetian publishers, were notable composers in addition to their printing activities, and it is possible that they may have been inclined to publish certain works with limited practical utility, simply to showcase compositional techniques contained within them.

earliest of these, *Inclite Sfortiadum princeps* and *Victor io Salvese* were written to praise duke Francesco II Sforza of Milan, a close associate of Willaert's one-time employer Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, after a victory over the French in 1525.<sup>345</sup> In these settings the composer also paid homage to the legacy of the previous generation through his use of a musical cypher that is most familiar from Josquin's *Missa Hercules Dux Ferrariae*.<sup>346</sup> In these pieces Willaert follows Josquin's exact procedure of creating a *soggeto cavato*—a *cantus firmus* melody made out of a text by translating vowel sounds into solmization syllables (i.e. U=Ut, E=Re,...)—but takes it a step further. Whereas Josquin had simply used his patron's name to create an simple ostinato, Willaert applied the same system to the more complex laudatory phrases "*Vivat dux Franciscus Sfortia felix*" and "*Salve Sfortiarum maxime dux et imperator.*"

Two additional pieces in a similar vein, *Haud aliter pugnans fulgebat Caesar* and *Adriacos numero*, respectively written to celebrate the repulsion of a Turkish invasion of Austria in 1529 and a state visit by Cardinal Ippolito de Medici in 1532, both indicate that Willaert continued to compose laudatory motets of this type for at least some time after his arrival in Venice in 1527. The Grittian project was largely one of adapting the individual-oriented innovations of the early Renaissance for the glorification of the entire Republic, but older models of self-promotional art were still useful and necessary in some contexts. The fact that Willaert had already shown such ingenuity in the former arena likely added to his value to the republic in addition to making him a promising candidate for the more unfamiliar territory of the latter.

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<sup>345</sup> J.A. Bernstein, *Music Printing in Renaissance Venice: The Scotto Press*, 242; Lewis Lockwood, "Adrian Willaert and Cardinal Ippolito I d'eEste," 93.

<sup>346</sup> R. Sherr, *The Josquin Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).



Willaert's settings of Classical and pseudo-Classical Latin poetry establish his engagement with the materials of humanist inquiry, but the movement of humanism, particularly in the context of early sixteenth-century Italy, was characterized by more than an interest in ancient literature. Humanist scholars may be distinguished from the older scholastic tradition by their methodologies, subject matter, and very often social position, but their most significant break with the established scholarly tradition was in philosophical attitude. Whereas schoolmen tended to favor pursuits such as theology, natural philosophy, and mathematics, which allowed them to focus on the big picture and avoid thinking about the unpredictability, brutality, and carnality of normal human existence, humanist thinkers more often reveled in humanity's imperfections and dedicated their attention more to understanding the relationships of people to each other than to God or the universe. This subtle quality of humanism may not be something that one would normally expect to find evinced in music, but Willaert's oeuvre contains one anomalous piece that resonates profoundly with these issues.

### *Quid non Ebrietas*

Among Willaert's antiquarian secular motets, *Quid non Ebrietas* is a singular entity. This CATB setting of a brief passage from a Horatian epistle was composed around 1519 and published, likely with no direct involvement from Willaert, in the collection *Libro Primo De la Fortuna* (publisher unknown: probably Roman, in 1529 or 1530). However, until the surviving alto part was discovered by Alfred Einstein, who mentioned it in his 1946 review of Edward Lowinsky's *Secret Chromatic Art in the Netherland's Motet*, it was only known through a transcription of the Canto and Tenor parts that was included by Giovanni Artusi in his treatise *Delle Imperfettione Della Moderna Musica* in 1600 with the distorted title *Quidnam*

*Ebrietas*.<sup>347</sup> In part because of this intellectual context, scholars who have discussed the work have tended to treat it, in some cases explicitly, more as a theoretical example than as an actual functioning piece of practical music. There are, as we will see, some valid reasons for this approach, but it has led both to a lack of adequate attention to the text, which was not included by Artusi,<sup>348</sup> and, perhaps more detrimentally, to a tendency to consider the piece more according to the issues that preoccupied sixteenth-century music theorists than those faced by Willaert and other practical, working musicians.

*Quid non Ebrietas* is marked as an anomaly among Willaert's secular motets, first and foremost, by the composer's choice of text. Unlike *Inclite Sfortiadum princeps* and *Victor io Salvese*, both of which draw from the classical ode tradition, this snippet of an Horatian epistle is not well suited for lavishing praise on a patron. Nor does it, like *Dulces Exuviae*, provide opportunities for the musical depiction of strong emotional states in what is essentially a Latinized version of the madrigal. On the contrary, Willaert's chosen verses have a more philosophical bent, praising the state of drunkenness for its ability to increase a person's honesty and perceptive abilities, potentially in order to see through exactly the sort of manipulative laudatory rhetoric that one would typically see in pieces of this sort.<sup>349</sup> This philosophical orientation extends into the piece's musical content as well, and for this reason,

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<sup>347</sup> Alfred Einstein, "Review of *Secret Chromatic Art in the Netherlands Motet*, by Edward Lowinsky," *Notes* III, no. 3 (June 1946): 284; Giovanni Artusi, *Artusi Overo Delle imperfettioni della moderna musica* (Venice: Giacomo Vincenti, 1600), 22-25. No bass part for *Quid non Ebrietas* has yet been discovered, but several informed speculative recompositions, including one by Edward Lowinsky, are currently available.

<sup>348</sup> Historians of music may recall that Artusi also suffered criticism for his failure to attend to the text in his now legendary clash with Claudio Monteverdi and his brother Giulio Cesare. In this case he may not be at fault. Although he claims that his transcription comes directly from an autograph copy, which would potentially imply that he had access to the words, it is probably more likely that he copied it from a textless version that was included in a 1524 letter from Giovanni Spataro to Pietro Aron, which he also reprinted in his treatise.

<sup>349</sup> The context of the epistle, an invitation to a drunken convivium on the eve of emperor Augustus's birthday, lends some credence to the idea of subtextual implications about seeing through the rhetorical glamour surrounding "great" personalities.

it has been an object of fascination for theorists and historians of music for nearly the entirety of its existence.

*Quid non Ebrietas Dissignat* as it appears in Artusi:

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Quid non Ebrietas Dissignat" as it appears in Artusi's edition. The score is written on ten staves, organized into two main sections: CANTO and TENOR. The CANTO section consists of the first six staves, and the TENOR section consists of the last four staves. The music is written in a single system with a common time signature (C) and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The CANTO part is labeled "CANTO." and the TENOR part is labeled "TENOR." The score concludes with a double bar line and a fermata. The name of the composer, "Duo di M. Adria no.", is written to the right of the CANTO section. The letter "F" is printed at the bottom right of the page.

My Transcription:

# Quid non Ebrietas

Adriano Willaert

Soprano

Tenor

8

Detailed description: This system contains the first 11 measures of the piece. The Soprano part is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The Tenor part is written on a bass clef staff with the same key signature and time signature. The music begins with a whole rest for both parts in the first measure, followed by a series of quarter and eighth notes. A rehearsal mark '8' is placed below the Tenor staff at the start of the second measure.

S.

T.

8

Detailed description: This system contains measures 12 through 20. The Soprano part (labeled 'S.') continues with a melodic line of quarter and eighth notes. The Tenor part (labeled 'T.') provides a harmonic accompaniment with a mix of quarter and eighth notes. A rehearsal mark '8' is placed below the Tenor staff at the start of the first measure of this system.

S.

T.

8

Detailed description: This system contains measures 21 through 29. The Soprano part (labeled 'S.') features a more active melodic line with many eighth notes. The Tenor part (labeled 'T.') continues with a steady accompaniment. A rehearsal mark '8' is placed below the Tenor staff at the start of the first measure of this system.

S.

T.

8

Detailed description: This system contains measures 30 through 38. The Soprano part (labeled 'S.') has a melodic line that becomes more rhythmic with many eighth notes. The Tenor part (labeled 'T.') provides a consistent accompaniment. A rehearsal mark '8' is placed below the Tenor staff at the start of the first measure of this system.

## Hexachordal thinking

At first glance, *Quid non Ebrietas* may seem relatively unassuming. Unlike the overtly chromatic compositions of the later sixteenth century, it contains relatively few written accidentals (seven, all of which are flats), exclusively in the tenor, and no acrobatic figures, jarring rhythmic constructions, or sudden changes in texture. A slightly closer look, however, reveals a few red flags that begin to explain the extreme interest that this brief and fragmentary piece of music has inspired. The accidentals, first of all, although relatively sparse, are in increasingly improbable positions as they move through the piece, moving in a sequence of ascending fourths (E, A, D, G), ultimately arriving, in measure 21 (“measure” is a wholly anachronistic term that I use purely for convenience of perusal), at C-flat, a note which is almost never seen in music of this period and which, according to some historiographic conceptions, should not even exist within the notational system of the sixteenth century. Even more peculiar is the final sonority of the piece, which is written as an apparent minor seventh between the tenor and cantus (d over E), something that is wholly incompatible with the musical conventions of the sixteenth century.

Clearly, something odd is going on, and for this reason musicologists from the early nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries tended to regard *Quid non Ebrietas* as a kind of musical puzzle. Earlier commentators, however, while they may have thought it clever, don't seem to have perceived of any ambiguity as far as what was going on in the notation of the piece.<sup>350</sup> This is because, whatever cognitive discord they may provoke in people trained in modern notational conventions, Willaert's notational strategies are actually quite straight-

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<sup>350</sup> Joseph S. Levitan, "Adrian Willaert's Famous Duo *Quidnam Ebrietas*. A Composition Which Closes Apparently with the Interval of a Seventh." *Tijdschrift der Vereniging voor Noord-Nederlands Muziekgeschiedenis* 15, no. 3 and 4 (1938-9): 182.

forward, even occasionally redundant, when approached from the point of view of a sixteenth-century singer. There would, in fact, have been no other way to write a piece of music that functions the way *Quid non Ebrietas* does within the conventions of sixteenth-century written music, and it is perhaps revealing of weaknesses in our own notational technologies that it would not be possible to write a piece like this one today without overwhelming swarms of accidentals that would make one pine for the clean and concise communication of the original. The key difference is that, while modern musicians expect a musical score to be a blueprint in which each individual note may be taken as a one-to-one representation of a fixed and determined sound-entity, musicians of five centuries ago were taught a more flexible approach of interpreting the notes in front of them from moment to moment according to the demands of context by thinking in terms of hexachords.

From the eleventh to the eighteenth centuries, singers were routinely trained to read music using Guidonian hexachords, an ingenious system derived from earlier Greek tetrachord theory that was developed and promoted by the music theorist Guido d'Arezzo (991/992 – after 1033).<sup>351</sup> A hexachord is, from the modern point of view, the notes of a major scale from Do (here referred to as Ut) to La, meaning that any hexachord will contain one and only one semitone (half step), between Mi and Fa. A hexachord can be built on any note, but singers were taught to default to three of them, which were called the natural hexachord (Ut=C), the hard hexachord (Ut=G), and the soft hexachord (Ut=F, requiring B-flat) unless there was a compelling reason to do otherwise. These three hexachords made up the universe of *Musica Recta* (correct music) and any others were regarded as *Musica Falsa* (False Music)

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<sup>351</sup> Why they stopped teaching people to read music this way I don't know. Honestly, I wish I had been taught to sing using a modified version of this system from the beginning, as it is, for me anyway, far more intuitive than what young singers have to contend with today.

or, more commonly by the sixteenth century, *Musica Ficta* (fictitious music).<sup>352</sup> It is important to understand that hexachords were a part of the tradition of performance pedagogy that did not play any significant role in speculative music theory or necessarily wield any concrete influence over composition. The closest modern equivalents to hexachords are the hand positions on a violin or other string instrument. Just as a violinistically inclined composer might write violin parts with hand positions in mind without ever actually letting them dictate his or her decisions, so too is the awareness of hexachordal conventions frequently visible in the part writing of Renaissance composers, essentially all of whom had been trained in this system.

The key point about hexachords for the consideration of *Quid non Ebrietas* is that they contain only one semitone, between Mi and Fa. This is significant because, in a diatonic context, the sharpening or flattening of a note will transform the distance between it and its upper or lower neighbor, respectively, from a tone to a semitone. Thus, from a hexachordal perspective, a sharp sign before a note can be taken as an indication that the note is Mi and a flat sign that the note is Fa.<sup>353</sup> The key to turning *Quid non Ebrietas* from a vexing puzzle into an notationally clear and concise piece of music is to think of a flat sign (the piece does not contain any sharps) not as an cue to lower the note by a semitone (although it will have this effect) but as a cue to let you know what hexachord you are supposed to be in. Any time you

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<sup>352</sup> Compelling reasons could include a written accidental or an unacceptable sonority that demands correction. There is typically some flexibility regarding the points at which a singer would enter and exit a hexachord, and there are occasions, although this does not occur in *Quid non Ebrietas*, when some singers might feel compelled to employ a fictive hexachord and others not.

<sup>353</sup> A flat or sharp before a note that is already Fa or Mi respectively would not make sense within this system. This is correctly noted by Karol Berger in his discussion of *Quid non Ebrietas*, but unfortunately he goes on to draw from this insight incorrect conclusions which seem to ignore the actual context of the piece. Karol Berger, *Musica Ficta: Theories of Accidental Inflections in Vocal Polyphony from Marchetto Da Padova to Gioseffo Zarlino* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 39.

encounter a written flat, then that note is automatically Fa. This reasoning may imply that other pitches are also, from our modern perspective, altered, but there is no reason to indicate this, as a singer must simply stay in the new hexachord until a reason to move to another presents itself. This insight is the crux of Edward Lowinsky's "secret chromatic art," but, as Margaret Bent has rightly noted, "the main thing that is wrong with the Secret Chromatic Art is that it is not chromatic; there was therefore no reason why it should have been secret."<sup>354</sup>

A brief walk through the tenor of *Quid non Ebrietas* with this in mind will make it clear that no other information is necessary in order to make sense of it.<sup>355</sup> The line begins exactly as one would expect of a piece from this era with a B-flat signature, moving from the F hexachord to C and then back to F.<sup>356</sup> A rest in measure 10 signals the beginning of a new phrase, which proceeds immediately in stepwise motion from c' to a notated e'-flat, signaling a that we have entered the b-flat hexachord. This is still nothing out of the ordinary; in fact, depending on whether one chooses to interpret the B-flat signature as a transposition or as a cue to generally favor the soft over the hard hexachord, it could conceivably still be regarded as *musica recta*. The appearance of a notated a-flat two measures later places the tenor in the *musica ficta* hexachord on e-flat, but this transition need not be notated at all, as it is already implied by the leap from e'-flat, which any sixteenth-century musician would know to correct in order to avoid singing a diminished fifth. Such a redundancy indicates that, far from

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<sup>354</sup> Margaret Bent, "Diatonic *Ficta*," *Early Music History* 4 (1984): 34.

<sup>355</sup> Other considerations, such as the avoidance of augmented or diminished intervals between voices, are frequently necessary for the realization of other pieces, but Willaert seems to have been inclined, possibly for rhetorical reasons, to make the realization of *Quid non Ebrietas* especially clear and unambiguous.

<sup>356</sup> Possibly taking a cue from the fact that the first note of the piece is a g, some interpreters have chosen to begin the tenor in the Hard (G) hexachord, which implies that the B in measure 3 would be natural. There is technically no reason why this would not have been a viable choice for a sixteenth-century singer, other than the awkward necessity of solmizing the f in measure 4 in a hexachord all by itself. However, I am attempting to take an Ockham's Razor approach, and beginning in the Soft (F) hexachord strikes me as the simplest solution.



constructing a puzzle, Willaert was willing to overnotate in order to hold a singer's hand through this conceptually difficult piece of music.

From the initial a-flat, the tenor proceeds in slow stepwise motion upward to d'-flat, signaling a move to the a-flat *ficta* hexachord. This notation is not quite redundant, as the prevention of diminished and augmented intervals in melodic contours with intervening notes was not as high a priority as direct leaps, but it would certainly be much easier to sing the line with a d'-flat, and singers would have been likely make the change even were it not explicitly notated, provided that there was no reason not to do so. The following transpositions to the d-flat (measures 18-19) and g'flat (measures 20-21) *ficta* hexachords proceed similarly, both occurring within step-wise outlines that would otherwise make a diminished fifth and augmented fourth respectively. Technically, although it has moved to a full semitone below where the hard (G) hexachord would be in its natural state, the tenor has actually now moved back into what one might call a phantom version of *musica recta*. This is a technicality because it is an issue that came up so rarely in music of the period, but it is nonetheless important to note, as a note like g-flat was regarded as a different shade of g rather than as a completely distinct note – hence “chromatic.”

This technical return to the normative state of *musica recta* may be reflected in the fact that Willaert temporarily ceases to provide redundant notation, rather signaling the rapid transpositions to the “phantom” natural (C) and soft (F) hexachords through dissonant leaps, first downward from c'-flat to f, necessitating a correction to f-flat, and then almost immediately back up from f-flat to b-flat, which must be re-flattened again in order to create a perfect fourth. At this point, due to the necessity of what modern musicians would call double flats within a notational system in which the double flat sign did not exist, the piece begins to

generate some cognitive dissonance. For this reason, several commentators have chosen to discuss the tenor from this point on in terms of transposition, in the modern sense, or otherwise to stray from the processes that have gotten us this far.<sup>357</sup> This becomes unnecessary if one remembers, first, that a flat sign is an indicator of a new Fa rather than of a note one semitone below some objectively fixed point, and second, that everything progresses from the point of view of the context where you are, not in reference to the point of origin. Thus, if a note within a hexachord is already flattened, provided that it is not the Fa of said hexachord, then a new flat sign will create a semitone between it and the note below it, in other words, creating a new Fa from the context of the preceding hexachord. The fact that the resulting note is actually a full tone below where things started out is simply not information pertinent to the actualization of the piece in the moment. Sixteenth century musicians lacked a double-flat sign because they they employed a notational system in which it was unnecessary.

From this point there are only two remaining transpositions, to the *ficta* hexachords of B-double flat and E-double flat respectively, before the piece proceeds through its final section, similarly to the first, in relative stasis. Probably due to the novelty of this hexachordal progression, which travels much further from the normative realm of *musica recta* than any previous known piece, Willaert makes these final transpositions as unambiguous as possible, proceeding through the exact sequence of intervals from the movement across the phantom *recta* hexachords. This time, however, he made everything that was previously left implied explicit through redundant notation.

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<sup>357</sup> See for instance Levitan, who, for a reason that is not, to my mind, adequately explained, ceases to transpose hexachords by downward-moving fifths, instead opting to shift to the D-flat hexachord rather than E-flat for the section of the piece.

Another interesting aspect to the final section of *Quid non Ebrietas*, which no previous commentator has, to my knowledge, mentioned explicitly, is that essentially every harmonic sonority between measure 21 and the end is an augmented interval that must be spelled enharmonically in order to conform to the voice-leading conventions of the time. This is noteworthy, first of all, because of the rigidity with which augmented and diminished intervals, particularly augmented and diminished versions of perfect consonances, are condemned in both practical and theoretical writings about music from this era. In practice, assuming (as will be discussed below) that tuning issues would be eliminated through the realities of vocal performance, all of this material remains as relentlessly consonant as one would expect from Willaert, but there is a certain irony to the fact that this piece, which technically contains what may be the most blatant counterpoint violations of anything written in the sixteenth century, would be written by a composer with such a reputation for following the rules. More significantly, while Margaret Bent is absolutely correct in her assertion that this piece, which Edward Lowinsky referred to as a “chromatic duo” is fully diatonic throughout, this series of augmented intervals allows for a few instances of voice leading that would normally only be encountered in a chromatic context. For instance, the tenor’s lower-neighbor tone a-flat under a sustained f’ in the cantus in measure 22 creates what sounds like a contrapuntal sequence of minor 6th, major 6th, minor 6th in oblique motion, a collection of sounds that would require a chromatic progression under conventional circumstances.

My Transcription with Analysis:

# Quid non Ebrietas

Adriano Willaert

Soprano

Tenor

8 F: C: - F:

S.

T.

8 Bb Eb Ab

S.

T.

8 Db Gb Cb Fb Bbb Ebb

S.

T.

8

S.

T.

8

Most of the musicological attention that has been given to *Quid non Ebrietas* has been focussed on deciphering and explaining this procedure, which takes the logic of hexachordal pedagogy to an extreme that no known previous piece of music had approached. However, while near-contemporaneous commentators were undoubtedly charmed and fascinated by Willaert's manipulation of notational conventions, it was not the primary reason for their interest in the piece. On the contrary, the pertinent theoretical issues of *Quid non Ebrietas*, and, I can confidently assert, the reasons why Willaert chose to develop the procedure in the first place, come down to the final sonority, a d' in the Canto above a note that is written as an e but sung as e-double flat in the tenor. It was this feature and not the general notational outline which provoked cognitive dissonance in music theorists of the sixteenth century, and it was with this feature that Willaert posed a challenge to over a millennium of accepted theoretical tradition. This is because, as we will see, it was in no way taken as a given that a sonority of this sort (i.e. a minor seventh plus two chromatic semitones) could be equal to an octave, or for that matter, to any singable interval. On the choice of whether or not this final interval may be called an octave hangs the very musicality of this piece, and, as I will attempt to demonstrate, by creating a work which raises the question in such an uncompromising manner, Willaert has in effect drawn a line in the sand with tremendous consequences for the very concept of music.

### Literary Review

As I mentioned above, *Quid non Ebrietas* has been an object of fascination to scholars since it was new. Oddly, considering its brevity, incompleteness, and general atypicality, it is

very likely the most discussed piece of music in Willaert's entire oeuvre. With this in mind, it will be prudent to briefly review the piece's historiographic background before delving any further into my own interpretation. The earliest known discussion of *Quid non Ebrietas* occurs in a series of letters written by Bolognese music theorist Giovanni Spataro to his colleagues Pietro Aron and Marc Antonio Cavazzoni between May of 1524 and October of 1533.<sup>358</sup> Although it is unfortunate that Spataro was apparently not quite as conscientious about holding on to his correspondents' letters as they were his, this one-sided conversation is fascinating both for the fact that it took place when the piece was still quite new and for what it can reveal about the transitional state of music theory in the early sixteenth century. It is, however, bogged down by Spataro's absolute refusal to acknowledge the viability of anything that falls outside of rigid Pythagorean intonation, which makes it impossible for him the piece as anything but a mistake resulting from a clear misunderstanding of musical principles on the part of Willaert.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> Much of Spataro's correspondence with Aron and Marc Antonio Cavazzoni directly pertaining to *Quid non Ebrietas* is recorded in Joseph S. Levitan, "Adrian Willaert's Famous Duo Quidnam Ebrietas," 166-92. and Edward E. Lowinsky, "Adrian Willaert's Chromatic 'Duo' Re-Examined," *Tijdschrift der Vereeniging voor Noord-Nederlands Muziekgeschiedenis* 18, no. 1 (1956): 1-36. All of Spataro's surviving correspondences have been published in Bonnie J. Blackburn, Edward E. Lowinsky, and C.A. Miller, *A Correspondence of Renaissance Musicians*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991). Fortunately, due to Spataro's personal writing style, it is frequently possible to deduce much of the content of his correspondents' letters from his own.

<sup>359</sup> According to the preconditions that Spataro brings to the discussion, the entire Gamut of pitches should be tuned as a string of perfect fifths (F, C, G, D, A, E, B, F#,...) each tuned to an exact (of as close to exact as is possible using a monochord, although this is not really an issue for Spataro as he is writing abstractly) ratio of 2:3 (in terms of string length; i.e. the interval of a fifth is defined as the difference between the pitch of two strings of equal tautness, one of which is shorter than the other by 1/3). Unlike the modern conception of "the circle of fifths," pitches tuned according to such a system will never circle back on themselves, but rather spiral out forever, the practical result of which being that, when you finally arrive at E#, it will not be the same note as F, where you originally started. In other words, according to Spataro's assumptions, it would be ludicrous to conceive of e-double flat and d as two names for the same note.

Interestingly, however, he traces the composer's misconceptions to the influence of one of the first known writers on music, Aristoxenus.<sup>360</sup> At the time, Aristoxenus's surviving writings had not yet been translated from Greek or published in a printed edition, and Spataro, who was not particularly humanistic by training or inclination, makes it clear that his knowledge of the ancient musician came primarily through an unfavorable mention in Boethius. This lack of context leads him to grossly reduce the philosopher's ideas to a prescriptive division of the octave into six equal tones, a misconception that has been repeated by essentially every writer who has written on the subject since. Despite this shallow reading, however, it is interesting to note that the possibility of an Aristoxenean connection, about which I have much more to say below, was raised at such an early point in the historiography of the piece. Due to Spataro's fixation on the incompatibility with Pythagoreanism, the discussion is almost entirely consumed with tuning issues, as he often condescendingly explains to his colleagues why both their experiments and conclusions and *Quid non Ebrietas* itself (which he never mentions by name) are invalid. It is very possible that Aron and/or Cavazzoni may have brought other issues to the table, which Spataro either ignored or misconstrued, willfully or otherwise, but any points they may have raised are not knowable until someone locates the missing letters.

Curiously, although Aron, Cavazzoni, and even Spataro were clearly intensely fascinated by *Quid non Ebrietas* and the questions that it raised, neither they nor any other writer for half a century, including Zarlino and other students of Willaert, ever mentioned it in their published writings on music. This puzzling lacuna was noted by Theodor Kroyer and

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<sup>360</sup> From Spataro's September 9, 1524 letter to Aron "e vero spatium di sei Tuoni, come era la opinione di Aristosseno, da Boetio recitata; scilicet composta di cinque Tuoni, e dui Semituoni; delli quali dui Semituoni, vno sarà maggiore, et l' altro minore,"

Hugo Riemann in their early-twentieth-century discussions of the piece as reasons to doubt the authenticity of its attribution to Willaert.<sup>361</sup> It is difficult to speculate on the reasons for this extended silence. It is, of course, possible, as Ercole Bottrigari, the first writer known to have mentioned the piece in print, in his 1594 dialogue, *Il Desiderio...*, seems to imply, that other discussions existed at one time and have since been lost, but the discussions of around the turn of the seventeenth century make it clear that *Quid non Ebrietas* seemed at that time to have become more rather than less relevant in the eighty years since its composition.<sup>362</sup> For instance, Bottrigari, a friend of both Zarlino and Torquato Tasso and a defender of Vicentino, has his character Gratoso refer to the piece in a discussion of the ancient musical genera and their relevance to modern music, a topic that was lively in the late sixteenth century but had little or no relevance to either practical or theoretical discussions of music from the time of *Quid non Ebrietas*'s composition.

The next commentator to mention *Quid non Ebrietas* was Giovanni Maria Artusi in his 1600 dialogue, *L'Artusi Overo delle Imperfettione della moderna musica*, which was, until recently, the only known source of relatively contemporaneous information on the piece. Artusi also uses the piece as a foil for writing about issues that were more of his own time than Willaert's, but unlike Bottrigari, who does little more than mention that it exists, he adds substantively to the discussion. He places his assessment of the piece after a section about the differing tuning potential of various instruments, carried out with a pragmatic relativism that makes a stark

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<sup>361</sup> Theodor Kroyer, *Die Anfänge Der Chromatik Im Italienischen Madrigal Des Xvi. Jahrhunderts: Ein Beitrag Zur Geschichte Des Madrigals* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1902), 33; Hugo Riemann, *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte v. i* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1919), 188.

<sup>362</sup> Alemanno Benelli (Annibale Melone) and Ercole Bottrigari, *Il Desiderio, Ouero, De Concerti Di Uarij Strumenti Musicali* (Venice: Ricciardo Amadino, 1594), 21.



contrast with the prescriptive Pythagoreanism of Spataro,<sup>363</sup> and before his own discussion of the classical genera. Artusi begins by providing a transcription of the cantus and tenor as well as one of Spataro's letters in its entirety. Then he goes on to a comparative analysis according to the strict Pythagorean tuning system as well as the Ptolemaic Intense diatonic, a system that was promoted by several theorists of the later sixteenth century, including Fogliani, Zarlino, and Salinas.<sup>364</sup> Neither of these systems is found by Artusi, or rather his character, Vario, to be an acceptable solution to the problem, as neither allows for the piece to end on a perfect octave.<sup>365</sup> There is virtually no end to the level of complexity that a discussion of these issues can attain, but the fundamental factor at work in this case is actually rather simple. In both the Pythagorean and Ptolemaic systems the diatonic semitone (i.e. the distance from f# to G) and the chromatic semitone (i.e. the distance from G to G#) are distinct quantities.<sup>366</sup> However, in the Pythagorean system, the chromatic semitone is slightly larger than the diatonic, meaning that the tenor's final pitch (two chromatic semitones below E) would be

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<sup>363</sup> Artusi divides all musical instruments into three groups: 1. instruments on which each distinct pitch is fixed but tuned independently, allowing for some degree of consideration for the idiosyncrasies of Pythagorean ratios, such as harps and keyboard instruments. 2. Instruments on which tuning is actually a part of performance and pitches are not necessarily fixed to any system, including the human voice, violin, and many wind instruments, and 3. Instruments for which the mechanics of tuning necessitate the compromise of rationally justified intervals, primarily fretted string instruments. He then states that instruments of the second group can be paired with either the first or third, but that instruments of the first and third groups will not sound good together.

<sup>364</sup> Giovanni Artusi, *Delle imperfettioni della moderna musica*, 23-24. The intense diatonic system struck sixteenth-century theorists as a more plausible possibility for the system actually employed by singers, a subject of some mystery at the time, because, unlike the Pythagorean system, it allowed for relatively consonant thirds as well as justified fourths and fifths.

<sup>365</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>366</sup> Technically, as with all other intervals, there is actually more than one possible quantity for both of these intervals in both these systems, but this is not directly at issue in this situation.

slightly lower than D, whereas in the Ptolemaic system the chromatic semitone is the smaller of the two, causing the final pitch to be slightly higher than D.<sup>367</sup>

It is notable that, unlike Spataro, Artusi is unwilling to acknowledge the possibility that the piece may simply be the result of the composer's failure to understand key music-theoretical concepts. Spataro could view Willaert as just another upstart with delusions of grandeur, but by Artusi's time he had been elevated to the status of an "old master" and deified by a generation of music theorists.<sup>368</sup> However, Artusi's comparative approach also reflects the increasingly pluralistic and performance-oriented tone that characterizes speculative writing on music across the sixteenth century. These changes can be clearly seen in the tuning debate, which stands at the center of Artusi's discussion. For Spataro, at least in these letters, the seeming incompatibility of the jagged thirds that result from pure Pythagorean tuning with the prevalence since the early fifteenth century of music that uses thirds as a consonance does not seem to pose much of a threat to the idea that Pythagorean tuning was simply the right way to do things. For the theorists of the later sixteenth century, this discrepancy had become a serious problem, and systems such as the Ptolemaic, designed to allow for sweetened thirds while retaining just fourths and fifths, were compromises intended to help reconcile speculative music theory with actual musical practice. By the time of Artusi's writing there was already a plethora of these "temperament" options, all offering different sets of strengths in exchange for sacrifices of Pythagorean rigidity, and the idea of a theoretically inscribed tuning imperative was little more than a fading memory.

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<sup>367</sup> The fact that this distinction existed between the two systems and that the question of which system singers actually employed was a matter of debate is probably an indication that the actual difference in the sound of the intervals was not a strong factor in the consideration.

<sup>368</sup> Literally, at least in the case of Zarlino, who regularly referred to Willaert in his writings as "Il divino Adriano."

Ultimately, Artusi follows Spataro's lead in concluding that Willaert has followed the opinion of Aristoxenus, the only difference being that Artusi does not regard this as a problem. He stops short, however, of addressing the question of whether this music can or will be actualized by singers in a performance, instead arriving at the same conclusion that Pietro Aron and the court of pope Leo X seem to have come eight decades before, that *Quid non Ebrietas* would be best performed on a lute or another instrument which, by necessity of construction, employs more or less equal semitones, thus eliminating the issue. Through this shortcut he exhibits the same oversight that Claudio and Giulio Cesare Monteverdi would accuse him of in a famous discourse seven years later, that of ignoring the words.<sup>369</sup> While it is true that Artusi's and Aron's solution offers a practical way around the problem of the final interval, it doesn't address the fact that Willaert clearly wrote *Quid non Ebrietas* as a piece of vocal music. For a composer who was as conscientious about the relationship of musical to linguistic features as was Willaert, the setting of text was a fairly painstaking process, which could have been completely foregone had he intended the piece for instrumental performance. Added to this, according to Spataro, in an effort to generate notoriety Willaert sent the piece to Rome to be performed by the Papal singers, who only resorted to a performance with Lutes after having failed to make it work vocally.<sup>370</sup>

Relatively little is known to have been written about *Quid non Ebrietas* over the next two-hundred years or so. The Italian music theorist and composer Angelo Berardi mentioned

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<sup>369</sup> In this case, however, there might be some extenuating evidence on Artusi's behalf. He identifies the piece by the distorted title "Quidnam Ebrietas," which may indicate that he was working from an untexted transcription like the one he includes and may not have known that the piece had originally been set to a text at all.

<sup>370</sup> From Spataro's September 9, 1524 Letter to Aron: "I was told by Messer Laurentio Burgomozo da Mutine, who was a private singer of Pope Leo, that **a duo which ended with the interval of a seventh, was sent by Messer Adriano**, a very famous musician attached to the court of the Duke of Ferrara, to his Holiness Pope Leo. He told me, furthermore, that the singers of his Holiness found it too difficult to sing; it was then performed on viols but not particularly well."

the piece in both his *Documenti Armonini* (1687) and *Miscellanea Musicale* (1689), but other than providing a much easier to read score transcription, he does little more than recount the debate as it stood in Artusi.<sup>371</sup> Nearly one-hundred years after that, the first person to write about the piece in a language other than Italian was Sir John Hawkins, who mentioned it while synthesizing Artusi in his *General History of the Science and Practice of Music* (1776).<sup>372</sup> Like Berardi, Hawkins does not add any new commentary of his own, other than referring to it as a “madrigal,” although it is not clear whether, as Levitan believed, he meant to imply that the piece had originally been set to a vernacular text, or if he was simply working with a looser definition of the term.

Hawkins’s *General History* stands near the beginning of the explosion of interest in the historical development of music, largely driven by curiosity about the background of music that was current at the time (especially Beethoven), which produced modern musicology. A great deal of extraordinary work has been and continues to be done according to this brief, but its central questions bring with them an obsessive teleological bent that often makes the field seem to value its objects of inquiry more for where they are perceived to be going than for where they are. Naturally, a piece like *Quid non Ebrietas* with so few apparent precedents in its own time and so many superficial similarities to much later musical experiments became irresistible within this new scholarly formation.

The first discussion of *Quid non Ebrietas* within this newly historicized musicology occurs in one of the early classics of the genre, Carl von Winterfeld’s *Johannes Gabrieli und sein*

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<sup>371</sup> Angelo Berardi, *Documenti Armonici* (Bologna: Giacomo Monti, 1687), 78.; Angelo Berardi, *Miscellanea Musicale* (Bologna: Giacomo Monti, 1689), 59. Berardi refers to the piece by its proper title rather than Artusi’s skewed *Quidnam Ebrietas*, but it is impossible to determine from his commentary whether this is because he knew something Artusi didn’t know or if he was simply familiar with the passage from Horace and deduced that that was probably the intended title.

<sup>372</sup> John Hawkins, *A general history of the science and practice of music*, vol. 3 (London: T. Payne and son, 1776), 228.

*Zeitalter*. Winterfeld brings up the piece in addressing the question of whether Willaert, like his students Vicentino and Zarlino, may be said to have been intellectually as well as artistically curious about music, despite having never produced any theoretical writings. Unlike many later writers, Winterfeld, who may have been old enough to have learned to sing before hexachordal techniques were entirely dead, does not seem to be thrown off by the notation, and although he does not attempt a solution, or provide a transcription at all, his statement that “if a singer follows the rule exactly, only consonant intervals will result,” makes it clear that he had at least a general sense of what was going on.<sup>373</sup> This investigation is noteworthy, first of all, for being the first to bring the text, or at least the concept of drunkenness from Artusi’s altered title, which may have been all the text that was available, into consideration when he describes the gradual slippage of the tenor voice as a musical depiction of the loss of equilibrium.

Outside of that, however, Winterfeld tends to treat the piece more as a piece of music theory than as a piece of music, and his fundamental conclusion is that the piece functions as a “proof though experience that the tone consists of two equal semitones and the octave of twelve.”<sup>374</sup> Clearly, this statement is related to similar ones about the possibility of equal semitones in Spataro and Artusi, although Winterfeld never mentions Aristoxenus, but it is important to note that these ideas had acquired a tremendous amount of teleological baggage in the intervening centuries. The temperament wars that were just beginning in Artusi’s time had intensified in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and the “equal temperament” that had ultimately emerged as victor was a very different thing from that

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<sup>373</sup> Carl von Winterfeld, *Johannes Gabrieli und sein Zeitalter*, 70.

<sup>374</sup> *ibid.*

which had been discussed in the sixteenth century. What those earlier writers had talked about as essentially a peculiarity of instrument design had developed into a fully-fledged tuning system, mediated by powerful and newly-developed mathematics, supported by technical treatises, and enforced by mass-produced tuning forks.

This powerful technology, which probably bears only vague similarity to the fretboards of Renaissance lutes and viols, had sealed its dominance through its ability to respond to an increasing need, created by the parallel musical technology of tonality, for the ability to traverse the entire vocabulary of pitches without ever hitting a sour note. When Winterfeld looked with his teleological lens at *Quid non Ebrietas*, with its own unprecedented traversal, either of the circle of fourths or of the tone, depending on how you look at it, it may have seemed like Willaert had arrived at the solution two-hundred years early, despite the fact that most of the problems it was meant to solve did not yet exist during his lifetime. While these aspects of Winterfeld's investigation demonstrate how the piece continued to be used as a foil for new preoccupations and concerns, his undeveloped notion of a "proof by experience," points to an entirely new and fascinating way of framing the piece, to which I will return, and it is certainly to his credit that he was the first writer to discuss *Quid non Ebrietas* unequivocally as a piece of music to be sung.

Over the following century, *Quid non Ebrietas* was mentioned several more times in the works of August Riessmann, Gaspari Gaetano, August Wilhelm Ambros, Theodor Kroyer, and Hugo Riemann, all of whom brought their own priorities and preoccupations to their

investigations, although I will only highlight a few here.<sup>375</sup> Perhaps the most explicit demonstration of this tendency is provided by the Bolognese musicologist Gaspari Gaetano, who prominently mentioned the piece in the opening pages of his *Ricerche, Documenti E Memorie Riguardanti La Storia Dell'arte Musicale in Bologna* (1867), not for its own inherent interest but for its connections, through Spataro, to the musical history of Bologna.<sup>376</sup> In particular, Spataro's 23 May 1524 letter to Aron contains an anecdote implying that, while the singers of the papal court seem to have been unable to make heads or tails of the piece, the unnamed musicians of Bologna, both singers and instrumentalists, were able to navigate it without a problem.<sup>377</sup> Although Spataro mentions this as a casual aside, there can be little doubt that it was meant pointedly, and the suggestion that the elite musicians of Rome had been shown up by denizens of the relative backwater provided an irresistible opener for Gaetano's local history, although he did not otherwise add substantively to the discussion of the piece.

Other mentions from the later-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are primarily concerned with the question of what *Quid non Ebrietas* is and why it may have been written.

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<sup>375</sup> These are the discussions that I am aware of. There could easily be more that I haven't discovered: August Reissmann, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik* v. 1 (München: Friedrich Bruckmann's Verlag, 1863), 197.; Gaetano Gaspari, *Ricerche, Documenti E Memorie Riguardanti La Storia Dell'arte Musicale in Bologna* (Bologna: Tip. Regia, 1867), 2.; August Wilhelm Ambros, *Geschichte der Musik* vol. 3, 3rd Ed. (München: F. E. C. Leuckart, 1893) 56, 153, 524; Theodor Kroyer, *Die Anfänge Der Chromatik Im Italienischen Madrigal Des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, 28-35.; Hugo Riemann, *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte* v. i, 377-382.

<sup>376</sup> Spataro was a Bolognese native with close ties with the city's ruling Bentivoglio family and a high degree of apparent civic pride. Even within the limited context of his *Quid non Ebrietas* correspondences there are several interesting tidbits of this local flavor, including a reference to a wager of a large Salami. see Edward E. Lowinsky, "Adrian Willaert's Chromatic 'Duo' Re-Examined," p. 26.

<sup>377</sup> Spataro to Aron: 23 May 1524: "I was told by Messer Laurentio Burgomoza da Mutine, who was a private singer of Pope Leo, that a duo which ended with the interval of a seventh, was sent by Messer Adriano, a very famous musician attached to the court of the Duke of Ferrara, to his Holiness Pope Leo. He told me, furthermore, that the singers of his Holiness found it too difficult to sing; it was then performed on viols but not particularly well..., ...I kindly requested one of my Bolognese friends who at present lives in Ferrara to intercede, and as the result received a copy of the duo, specially written for me, from Messer Adriano himself, which was sung, played, and carefully examined by our Bolognese musicians. It was praised as a very fine and learned work." see Joseph S. Levitan, "Adrian Willaert's Famous Duo Quidnam Ebrietas," 174.

August Wilhelm Ambros, discussing the piece in a passage on musical humanism in the third volume of his *Geschichte der Musik*, concludes that it is not actually a work of art so much as a highly erudite joke, targeted at music theorists.<sup>378</sup> In other words, according to Ambros's interpretation, Willaert did not write the piece to stand up as a beautiful piece of music in its own right or to assert a position of his own but because he knew that it would have people like Spataro pulling their hair out, and he enjoyed watching them squirm. This is certainly, in my opinion, one of the most fascinating readings of the piece that anyone has yet produced, although it does raise the question of why then Willaert would have then sent it to the papal singers and later allowed it to be printed in a collection.

Theodor Kroyer in his *Die Anfänge Der Chromatik Im Italienischen Madrigal Des XVI. Jahrhunderts* (1902) and Hugo Riemann in the first volume of his *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte* (1919) both provided considerably more extensive accounts of the piece. Kroyer, who expressed and then half-heartedly dismissed suspicions that the piece might be an invention of Artusi with no real connection to Willaert, nonetheless provided an admirably measured and thorough accounting of the work, which was crucial to his positioning of Willaert as a founding figure of chromaticist composition. He was the first modern scholar to reintroduce the idea of Aristoxenian influence, and he seems to have been the first to recognize *Quid non Ebrietas* as a major music-historical milestone, not only for its superficial resemblance to later practices but as a potential early, concrete example of engagement between musical

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<sup>378</sup> He makes this point with one of the most beautifully Germanic sentence constructions in the literature: "Das oft genannte Duo *Quid non ebrietas* darf nicht als Kunstwerk, sondern muss als grundgelehrter Spass taxirt werden, womit Willaert seine tonspaltenden, tonmessenden vom Phantome des "grossen" und "kleinen" Semitoniums gequälten Freunde neckte und verwirrte." (August Wilhelm Ambros, *Geschichte der Musik* vol. 3, 3rd Ed., 524) Levitan translated it thusly: "the duo must not be considered as a work of art, but as a very clever jest with which he teased and confused his tone-splitting and tone-measuring friends, tormented by the phantom of the 'major' and 'minor' semitone." Joseph S. Levitan, "Adrian Willaert's Famous Duo *Quidnam Ebrietas*," 170



composition and the discourses of Renaissance humanism.<sup>379</sup> Hugo Riemann, who was also unconvinced of *Quid non Ebrietas*'s authenticity, was less effusive, calling the piece "at most a school example with ostentatious tendencies."<sup>380</sup> Despite this invective, he also placed a tremendous amount of historical weight onto the piece, although unlike Kroyer, whose investigation was largely confined to the context of the sixteenth century, Riemann positioned the piece teleologically as a milestone on the road to tonality.

To his credit, Riemann was the first person to go further than simply asserting that he knew what was going on in the notation of *Quid non Ebrietas* and actually produce a fully-realized transcription of the piece as he believed it should sound in performance.<sup>381</sup> This transcription paints an interesting picture of the piece as it appeared to Riemann, and potentially, to other observers around the same time. Riemann's interpretation clearly connects to the same concept of hexachordal transposition that I have outlined above, but the transpositions themselves are tied to a different logic, the source of which is unclear. Rather than taking a flat sign as the signal of a new Fa, leading to a string of transpositions by ascending fourths, Riemann tends to transpose directly to the hexachord of the flattened pitch (for example, at the arrival of A flat in measure 13, he transposes directly to the A flat hexachord), in effect skipping a step and transposing upwards by minor sevenths. The results of this method are largely similar, but it necessitates the preemptive flattening of several

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<sup>379</sup> Theodor Kroyer, *Die Anfänge Der Chromatik Im Italienischen Madrigal Des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, 28.

<sup>380</sup> Hugo Riemann, *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte* v. i, 377.

<sup>381</sup> Hugo Riemann, *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte* v. i, 379-80.

For some reason Riemann seems to have wanted his transcription to look like a piece of Nineteenth-century piano music. To this end he has transposed the tenor line to bass clef, incorporated phasing lines, added an E flat to the key signature, and reduced note values by 3/4 (half note (minim)=eighth note (quaver)). It could be that this would make it easier for a pianist to read, but it strikes me as an incredibly counterintuitive way of writing out this sort of music.

pitches just before they are flattened by accidentals in the score, such as the tenor's E in measure eight. This addition of needless complexity also results in a few moments of awkward counterpoint, which may help to explain why Riemann, and perhaps earlier investigators, if they were employing a similar interpretation, were reluctant to accept *Quid non Ebrietas* as a piece of music.

By far the most extensive extant treatment of *Quid non Ebrietas* is Joseph Levitan's "Adrian Willaert's Famous Duo *Quidnam Ebrietas*. A Composition Which Closes Apparently with the Interval of a Seventh," which he published in two parts in the Dutch journal *Tijdschrift der Vereeniging voor Noord-Nederlands Muziekgeschiedenis* in 1938 and 1939. In addition to making selections from Spataro's correspondences widely available for the first time and laying out the entire scholarly tradition behind the piece from Spataro to Riemann, Levitan deserves enormous credit for having been the first to write about Willaert's notational strategies as an expanded version of common practice rather than as a special-case musical puzzle. Indeed, a great deal of the space in the article is taken up with an elaborate overview of the historical development of *Musica ficta*, through which Levitan admirably demonstrated that, far from Riemann's accusation of ostentation, *Quid non Ebrietas* is notated exactly as it should have been according to the operative logic of sixteenth-century music.

Levitan's own realization, which he positions directly against Riemann's, serves as a valuable simplification and correction to the earlier version. It is clear that he understood the simple rule of flat=fa, because he says as much multiple times in his discussion of *musica ficta*. Indeed, his own version proceeds exactly in that manner, in perfect agreement with my own and other later realizations, through the arrival on the E double flat hexachord in measure twenty-three. According to my interpretation, no reason exists for the tenor not to remain

here for the duration of the piece. Levitan's realization, however, has the tenor not only make two additional transpositions but also abandon the trajectory of movement upward by perfect fourth, proceeding instead directly from E double flat to D double flat, *alla Riemann*, and then onward to G double flat for the final stretch. Addressing this decision, Levitan wrote, "An explanation [through measure twenty-three] presents no difficulty whatsoever. However, it is quite different in the next three measures, which are of the utmost importance to the solution of the composition. The difficulty disappears when one knows that the lower voice is transposed from measure twenty-one on until the end in order to preserve this simple art of notation."<sup>382</sup> Apparently, some difficulty arises in measure twenty-three, which prevented Levitan from continuing to employ the simple methodology he advocated, but unfortunately he failed to mention just what that difficulty was, apparently believing it to be self-evident.

I have not been able to determine why Levitan made this turn, but my hunch is that it relates to the teleological idea of *Quid non Ebrietas* as a milestone on the road to tonality. So much has been made of the idea of Willaert being the first composer to make a full circumnavigation of the circle of fifths (or circle of fourths) that it can be somewhat anticlimactic to realize that the piece actually begins in the F hexachord and ends in E double flat. No more than this is required to achieve the desired ending scenario, but it stops a few steps short of the complete circle, and this fact can be deeply unsettling from the point of view of tonal music, which tends to have a particular fixation with ending back where one started. Nothing that I have found in the notation, melodic outline, or counterpoint of *Quid non Ebrietas* necessitates the final transpositions that are prescribed in Levitan's realization, but they do

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<sup>382</sup> Joseph S. Levitan, "Adrian Willaert's Famous Duo *Quidnam Ebrietas*," 200.

allow for the tenor line to end in the hexachord of G double flat, the enharmonic equivalent of F, where it began.

While Levitan's massive article is unquestionably the most valuable source of information about *Quid non Ebrietas* that exists, his ultimate conclusions may be less useful. He was, first of all, convinced that the piece was originally composed as a madrigal, making it the earliest known example of the genre, and that the Latin title *Quidnam Ebrietas* was simply something that Artusi had tacked on as a kind of joke.<sup>383</sup> He came to that conclusion based on his assessment of the style, and he could not have known that, within the next few years, Alfred Einstein would discover the texted alto part in a library, thereby cementing the connection between the piece and Horace's epistle.<sup>384</sup>

More fascinating, if as flawed, are Levitan's conclusions about the piece's elusive final sonority. Immediately following his interpretation of Willaert's notation, Levitan entered into an extended discussion of how the piece would operate within various tuning systems. Based on his results, which correspond exactly to Artusi's, he concluded that the ultimate purpose for which Willaert composed *Quid non Ebrietas* was diagnostic. In other words, if you have a group of singers and you want to know how they are tuned, just have them sing *Quid non Ebrietas*; they will end up either singing something slightly bigger than an octave, slightly smaller than an octave, or a perfect octave, thereby letting you know that they are tuned, respectively, in Pythagorean, Ptolemaic, or equal tempered fashion. This is, it must be said, a rather ingenious notion, especially considering that, as I have mentioned above, the question of how singers tuned themselves was an issue in the sixteenth century. Unfortunately, in

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<sup>383</sup> Joseph S. Levitan, "Adrian Willaert's Famous Duo *Quidnam Ebrietas*," 178-9.

<sup>384</sup> See Alfred Einstein, "Review of *Secret Chromatic Art in the Netherlands Motet*, by Edward Lowinsky," 283-84.

order for it to work in context one must presuppose not only that singers will be tied to a tuning system in the first place (more on this issue below) but also that they will remain firmly tied to it despite being out of tune with the other voices for the entire final third of the piece.<sup>385</sup>

The most well-known contribution to the discussion of *Quid non Ebrietas* is almost certainly that of Edward Lowinsky, first in his landmark paper “The Concept of Physical and Musical Space in the Renaissance,” given at the 1941 meeting of the American Musicological Society, then briefly in his 1946 book, *Secret Chromatic Art in the Netherlands Motet*, and later in the article, “Adrian Willaert's Chromatic "Duo" Re-Examined,” which he published in 1956 in the same journal that had hosted Levitan’s article nearly twenty years before.<sup>386</sup> Despite being significant for its literary value in addition to its scholarly content, this treatment could in some respects be said to be a step backwards, for while Levitan had argued for the piece’s comprehensibility within the mainstream practice of sixteenth-century musicking, Lowinsky framed it as an artifact of the esoteric “secret chromatic art,” presumed to be accessible only to an elite initiate. That being said, his discussion, particularly in the article, deserves credit for ironing out many of the kinks which remained in the discourse surrounding *Quid non Ebrietas*. Most importantly, Lowinsky produced the first full realization of the tenor, which consistently complies with the simple rule of flat=fa, and he even went so far as to compile a workable edition of the piece, matching the tenor and cantus from Spataro’s letter to the published alto part and a newly composed bass line. In addition, he included multiple sections of Spataro’s correspondence, including sections of his 1533 letter to Aron that had been somewhat

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<sup>385</sup> One might add to this that, even if it did work, *Quid non Ebrietas* would only be good for diagnosing the tuning of the tenors, leaving the other parts shrouded in mystery.

<sup>386</sup> Edward E Lowinsky, “The Concept of Physical and Musical Space in the Renaissance:(a Preliminary Sketch)”, in *Papers of the American Musicological Society-1941* (Richmond: American Musicological Society, 1946); Edward E. Lowinsky, and C. Buchman. *Secret Chromatic Art in the Netherlands Motet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), 52-55; Edward E. Lowinsky, "Adrian Willaert's Chromatic 'Duo' Re-Examined," 1-36.

misleadingly omitted by Levitan, which had previously been available only in the archives of the Vatican and the Bibliotheque Nationale.<sup>387</sup>

Lowinsky's extreme interest in *Quid non Ebrietas* derived from its position as one of the earliest examples of music that he interpreted as part of the "secret chromatic art."<sup>388</sup> The prospect of establishing the piece as an original document of the movement was appealing not only because it established Willaert as a founding figure but also because it implied a fundamental relationship between the "secret chromatic art" and the rise of humanistic inquiry in the Renaissance.<sup>389</sup> *Quid Non Ebrietas* was crucial to Edward Lowinsky's model of a "Secret Chromatic Art" in sixteenth century polyphony because, as he wrote, "the choice of the verses from Horace for the first great experiment in chromaticism would establish the humanistic influence on the development of chromaticism--well known from its later phases--for its very beginning."<sup>390</sup> In fact, Willaert chose a procedure rooted in the practice of musical performance rather than the more historically and theoretically sanctioned chromaticism to accomplish this compositional feat. This, however, does not diminish but rather heightens the humanistic connection detected by Lowinsky, although it may reveal a slightly different sort

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<sup>387</sup> See Edward E. Lowinsky, "Adrian Willaert's Chromatic 'Duo' Re-Examined," 22. The selections that were included by Levitan give the impression that Spataro was highly critical of Willaert's effort in 1524 but had changed his opinion and was lavishing praise on him by 1533. Lowinsky highlighted this contradiction and demonstrated that it is simply the result of Levitan having omitted all of the parts of the later letter in which Spataro was critical of Willaert.

<sup>388</sup> Actually, *Quid non Ebrietas* is a less than ideal exemplar for Lowinsky's concept, precisely because it is so unambiguous about how a singer is supposed to approach it. Most of the works he dealt with in his book, according to his analyses, offer at least two potential solutions: one purely straightforward, the other requiring extensive forays into the realm of *musica ficta*. Chromaticism, in the strict sense of the word, does not usually play a large role in the "secret chromatic art."

<sup>389</sup> Edward E. Lowinsky, "Adrian Willaert's Chromatic 'Duo' Re-Examined," 2. Oddly, considering the importance that he placed on this connection, Lowinsky did not devote very much attention to the text.

<sup>390</sup> Edward E. Lowinsky and Bonnie J. Blackburn. *Music in the Culture of the Renaissance and Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 681.

of connection from the one he was looking for. The notion of chromaticism, an entire framework of melodic contour that was apparently so important in the ancient world but had no role whatsoever in modern music, was certainly an object of tremendous curiosity for the humanistically inclined musicians and musically inclined humanists of the sixteenth century. Further, the creation of a new chromaticism, partly based on modern interpretations of classical theory but, unlike similar experiments with enharmonicism, compatible enough with modern musical practice to become an important effect in late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth century polyphony, was one of the signature achievements of musical humanism in the era. Willaert and his many students would play a key early role in these developments, but the experiment of *Quid non Ebrietas* is something different.

Unsurprisingly, thus, Lowinsky's ultimate interpretation of the piece is firmly tied to this classical connection, and specifically to the idea of a relationship to the ideas of Aristoxenus. As he put it, "Did Willaert intend the duo as a proof or as a refutation of Aristoxenus's view that the tone can be divided into two equal semitones and the octave into six whole tones? Did he, in other words, wish to take a stand for or against equal temperament?"<sup>391</sup> Despite this rather reductive and anachronistic conception of Aristoxenus's ideas about pitch and what they might have meant to Willaert, Lowinsky goes on to an extremely valuable investigation of the accessibility of Aristoxenus's writings, which would not receive a printed edition until 1562, in Willaert's time, and an interesting discussion of how this piece and an interest in Aristoxenus may help to explain otherwise confusing comments from Zarlino and others calling the composer, who produced no works of music

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<sup>391</sup>Edward E. Lowinsky, "Adrian Willaert's Chromatic 'Duo' Re-Examined," 4.

theory, “the new Pythagoras.”<sup>392</sup> Ultimately, given that his other option would imply that Willaert sent a piece of music to singers of the papal court believing it to be unsingable, Lowinsky concludes that Willaert must have intended his musical experiment as an affirmation of Aristoxenus’s ideas.

Relatively little has been added to the discussion of *Quid non Ebrietas* in the nearly sixty years since Lowinsky’s article, but there have been a few investigations in recent decades, which merit notice. The first and most significant of these more recent examinations is found in Margaret Bent’s 1984 article “Diatonic *Ficta*.”<sup>393</sup> To a large extent, Bent’s discussion serves as a synthesis of many of the best ideas from the debate up to this point, melding, for instance, Levitan’s insistence that the piece does not fall outside the norms of sixteenth-century notation with Lowinsky’s more straightforward and effective interpretation of the notes themselves. As the name implies, however, Bent’s article is primarily concerned with the greater system of *musica ficta* rather than the specific case, and her discussion of *Quid non Ebrietas* is primarily oriented towards demonstrating the power of said system and clearing up the confusion generated by the many references to the piece as “chromatic.” She thus pointedly avoided any discussion of factors relating specifically to *Quid non Ebrietas*, its textual sources, or its social context, preferring to defend her solutions, “independently of any possible textual or extra-musical significance.”<sup>394</sup>

Despite these self-imposed limitations, Bent was the first commentator to make an extremely important observation that had been stewing below the surface of the debates surrounding the piece from the beginning. In her own words, “Tuning or temperament only

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<sup>392</sup> *ibid.* p. 12.

<sup>393</sup> Margaret Bent, “Diatonic *Ficta*,” *Early Music History* 4 (1984): 1-48.

<sup>394</sup> *ibid.* p. 32.



becomes an issue when pre-tuned instruments are involved or have become the focal point for theoretical reference; for unaccompanied singers there is no reason why this, and indeed all late-medieval and Renaissance polyphony, should not have been performed with pure intonation, Pythagorean in principle, but probably with justly tempered thirds in practice."<sup>395</sup> This is an extremely significant point that is difficult to believe no one had made before. So much of the discussion surrounding *Quid non Ebrietas* has centered on questions of tuning systems and temperaments, but such questions are only truly relevant when dealing with tuned, and primarily fixed-pitch instruments. Purely vocal ensembles, on the other hand, tend to deal with tuning not unlike the way a sixteenth-century singer would hexachordally interpret a vocal line, based on a combination of moment-to-moment context and learned preferential habits based on music previously heard and sung. This helps to explain the many suggestions, dating back to Spataro and Aron, that the piece might be better played on instruments rather than sung, but such tactics are only a way of skirting the issue at hand. Had Willaert been primarily interested in addressing issues that are exclusively relevant to the tuning of instruments, it would not have been difficult for him to compose a piece of music that was unambiguously intended to be played on an instrument. Once it is established that *Quid non Ebrietas* was written primarily for vocal performance, it thus becomes necessary to reframe questions about what Willaert may have written it to communicate in order to acknowledge this fundamental reality.

Several more discussions have come in the wake of Bent's, and, inexplicably, they have frequently been framed as attacks against her clear, concise, and well-argued article. The most interesting of these is probably Dorothy Keyser's "The Character of Exploration:

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<sup>395</sup> *ibid.* p. 18.

Adrian Willaert's 'Quid non ebrietas,'" which was published in the 1992 book, *The Musical Repercussions of 1492*.<sup>396</sup> Primarily motivated by the coincidence of Willaert's "circumnavigation" of the circle of fifths occurring, probably, in the same year as the beginning of Magellan's voyage around the world, Keyser's investigation also explores the intriguing possibility that Willaert may have composed the piece and sent it to Rome specifically to humiliate the papal singers, possibly as an ingenious retribution for the slight of *Verbum Bonum et Suave*.<sup>397</sup>

Other recent treatments are less noteworthy. Karol Berger addressed the piece briefly in his 2004 book, *Musica Ficta: Theories of Accidental Inflections in Vocal Polyphony from Marchetto Da Padova to Gioseffo Zarlino*. Berger primarily focuses on the idea that Willaert's use of the flat sign before the notes C and F indicates that the sign must have, by that point, been read primarily as an indication of a lowered pitch rather than of a new hexachordal fa. "A note which is already fa," he writes, "...cannot be made 'more' or 'double' fa in any sense"<sup>398</sup> This point disappears, however, when one considers Bent's concept of contextual hexachordal transposition. Alterations such as written or implied accidentals are applied in relation to the conditions of the moment when they occur, not to some over-arching neutral state as in modern notation. With this in mind it is not difficult to see that none of the altered pitches in

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<sup>396</sup> Dorothy Keyser, "The Character of Exploration: Adrian Willaert's 'Quid non ebrietas,' in *Musical Repercussions of 1492*, Ed. C.E. Robertson (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian, 1992), 185-208.

<sup>397</sup> *ibid.* pp. 198-202.

<sup>398</sup> Karol Berger, *Musica Ficta: Theories of Accidental Inflections in Vocal Polyphony from Marchetto Da Padova to Gioseffo Zarlino* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 39.

*Quid non Ebrietas*, even the ones that are already in a state of flatness from previous transpositions, play the role of fa in the hexachord into which the new transposition occurs.<sup>399</sup>

This is an extraordinary amount of attention to be paid to a brief and incomplete piece of music that has very likely never been an active part of any operating repertoire.

Nonetheless, there are several key questions about *Quid non Ebrietas* that still remain unanswered, or in some cases, unasked. Did Willaert envision it as a functioning piece of music, an experiment, a joke, potentially at the expense of the pope's personal singing group, a statement about some specific music theoretical issue, a more general statement of musical philosophy, or something else altogether? Is there any significance to the Horatian text beyond the basic idea of text-painting drunkenness, itself somewhat extraordinary for the early sixteenth century, and the general prestige attached to the use of classical literature? And finally, is there a potential role for the ideas of the philosopher Aristoxenus in the genesis of the piece outside of the idea that Willaert was advocating for the equal temperament tuning system?

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<sup>399</sup> One other recent take, which I will only mention in a note, is that of music theorist Roger Wibberley, put forward in his online article, "Quid Non Ebrietas Dissignat? Willaert's Didactic Demonstration of Syntonic Tuning; Syntonic Tuning," *Music Theory Online* 10 (2004). Wibberley, who, like Berger, positions himself directly against Bent, asserts with unflinching confidence that *Quid non Ebrietas* can only have been intended to function as a kind of tuning machine. Briefly, according to his theory, if the piece were given to a group of singers trained to sing in rigid Pythagorean tuning, the arrival on double flats would result in intervals that were one pythagorean comma larger than they would otherwise have been. A Pythagorean comma is roughly the difference between the rough, dissonant thirds of Pythagorean tuning and the more consonant thirds of the Ptolemaic tuning system; ergo, the piece is a tool for forcing singers to shift from one system to the other. While this is a fascinating observation, it relies on the assumptions that singers had been blithely singing Pythagorean thirds for the hundred or more years that composers had been implying consonant thirds in their music and, perhaps more outlandishly, that singers could have been so slavishly tied to a tuning system for such a reprogramming technique to have any audible effect. In general, Wibberley seems to believe both that sixteenth century music was written to be performed by robots and that sixteenth-century musical practice followed the lead of music theory rather than the reverse. Neither belief, in my assessment, conforms to the realities of history.

## *Quid non Ebrietas* and the Intellectual Currents of the Sixteenth Century

Before addressing these questions directly, it's worth returning for a moment to the correspondence between Giovanni Spataro and Pietro Aron. This one-sided discussion is particularly fascinating for what it can reveal about currents in the history of music theory, as well as music in general, at the time when they were written. For centuries, music theorists had been writing about issues such as rational mathematically derived intervals and their implications for tuning systems, but the question of to what degree these issues actually applied to practical music making rarely came up. One reason for this was because the endeavor of music theory was understood to be a part of natural philosophy, concerned with understanding the universal laws governing the universe rather than their imperfect reflection in human musical performance. Another, more practical reason was because the questions theorists were interested in simply didn't often come up in the music and instruments of the time.<sup>400</sup> Thus, in the tradition of writing about music, there was an enormous gulf between the kinds of issues discussed in treatises on practical music-making and those in treatises concerned with abstract music theory, but this was beginning to change in the early sixteenth century.<sup>401</sup>

Part of the reason for this change is cultural. Although it was far from the most innovative or fruitful arena of medieval philosophy, the standards and preoccupations of medieval music theory were fully in line with the then-dominant philosophical paradigm of Scholasticism. By the sixteenth century, the competing current of Humanism, less concerned

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<sup>400</sup> Ann E. Moyer, *Musica Scientia: Musical Scholarship in the Italian Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 13. It is important to remember that, while theorists could approximate perfect intervallic ratios using a monochord, no instrumentation existed to precisely measure intervals in the context of performance. Thus, even if theorists had wanted to know whether their ideas were truly being enacted in performance, there was really no way to know for sure.

<sup>401</sup> *ibid.* p. 37.

with ancient authority and monolithic imperatives and more with understanding the seeming chaos of human behavior, was gaining steam. It was natural for music theorists influenced by this new style of thought to be more interested in musical practice than their forebears. Spataro, perhaps more than anyone else, exemplified this transitional moment. He was, as his extensive correspondences with other musical thinkers attests, keenly interested in the discourses of his time, and thus his work was far more practically grounded than that of his predecessors.<sup>402</sup> At the same time, however, like his teacher Bartolomé Ramos de Pareja, Spataro refused to lose his grip on many assumptions that seem to be more typical of the older, Scholastic worldview. Thus, in his discussion of *Quid non Ebrietas*, he not only refuses to consider the possibility of performance outside of strict Pythagorean tuning but dismisses anyone who does so for failing to understand the principles of music.<sup>403</sup> The question of what singers actually do when confronted with the piece is, for Spataro, not an issue because he takes it as a first principle that the definition of a fifth is the ratio of 2/3, not a particular sound, and certainly not the activities of “mere practitioners.”<sup>404</sup>

Musical practice itself was also changing in ways that made music-theoretical concerns more relevant to it. As keyboard ranges grew larger, for example, it became less and less practical to simply tune them by ear, and the idea of a tuning system was thereby gradually shifted by necessity from a purely theoretical abstraction to a practical requirement. In composition, also, as the number of conceivable combinations, progressions, and harmonizations increased, so too did the likelihood of brushing up against principles that were

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<sup>402</sup> *ibid.* p. 119.

<sup>403</sup> Edward E. Lowinsky, "Adrian Willaert's Chromatic 'Duo' Re-Examined," 16-19.

<sup>404</sup> As opposed to “the real musician and speculative theoretician” in Spataro’s 30 October 1533 letter to Aron. *ibid.* p. 6.

traditionally the purview of theorists. In part, this collision was the result of a simple desire for a larger and more varied expressive vocabulary, but it was intensified by an increasing fascination with music theory, particularly the theory of ancient Greece and Rome, among humanistically inclined practical musicians. These processes, in turn, made the music that was actually being written and performed more relevant and interesting to music theorists so that, by the end of the century, practical and theoretical music had ceased to be two separate enterprises and become interlocking parts of a single network, each guiding and informing the other.

No known previous musical composition wore these issues on its sleeve to the degree of *Quid non Ebrietas*. Traces of this transition can be detected in nearly every aspect of the piece, but nowhere more so than in its controversial final sonorities. Previously, the idea of perfect rational intervals had been taken as fact by theorists at least since the time of Boethius, but no piece of music had actually made an issue of it. In other words, before 1519 it was entirely possible to simply assume that singers who didn't sound like they were out of tune were singing the intervals exactly as prescribed by the Pythagorean tradition, or any tradition, because it really wouldn't make any perceivable difference if they were or not. *Quid non Ebrietas*, on the other hand, becomes a fundamentally different object depending on the degree to which Pythagorean principles can actually be applied to practical music making. If two consecutive half-steps can add up to one whole step, then the final sonority of *Quid non Ebrietas* can be an octave, as one would expect of a piece of real, functional music from this time and place. If, on the other hand, Spataro's world-view is correct, and correct performance can only occur within an internally consistent Pythagorean musical world, then the piece's final

measures transpire in a mire of dissonance, and thus it cannot be anything but a theoretical curiosity to prove its own inviability.

It is not difficult to see how a piece of music with so much at stake could be irresistible to Spataro, or to anyone with a heavy investment in this debate, which was becoming newly heated with the arrival of competing Ptolemaic and Aristoxenian perspectives in the sixteenth century. There is no concrete inviolable proof for either of these perspectives. However, as Spataro himself relates, after composing *Quid non Ebrietas*, Willaert sent it to the Papal singers in Rome, a group of working practical musicians, not to a theorist like Spataro, who apparently had to write to a friend in Ferrara to request a copy.<sup>405</sup> It does not seem reasonable to me to imagine that Willaert or any up-and-coming composer would send a piece of music to one of the most prestigious performing musical institutions of the time in order to demonstrate that it didn't work. Even if, as Keyser has speculated, he sent it to Leo's singers in order to set them up for failure, such a joke would only be funny if there were a correct way to sing the piece for them to fail to discover. For this and other reasons that I will make clear, I will proceed with the assumption that Willaert wrote *Quid non Ebrietas* to be singable and to end with a true octave.

It is, nonetheless, also important to attempt to understand the logic behind Spataro's position. Spataro's apparent lack of interest in the question of whether or not the piece actually worked in practice can come across to modern readers as maddeningly closed-minded, but his attitudes were firmly rooted in a powerful and illustrious intellectual tradition. The Boethian/Pythagorean tradition into which Spataro was trained was bolstered by a philosophical conception of music that regarded pitch ratios as something far more profound

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<sup>405</sup> From Spataro's letter to Aron on 23 May 1524, Quoted in Joseph S. Levitan, "Adrian Willaert's Famous Duo Quidnam Ebrietas," 174.

than a way to measure intervals and tune instruments. The idea of perfect rationality in music was something that connected humanity to the movements of the heavens and the proportions of God's creation. Along with prayer and the potential of pure thought, music was among the only things in the medieval worldview that offered the possibility to transcend the debasement of humanity and the chaos of earthly life and approach the perfectly ordered realms of God. With this much at stake, it becomes easier to understand how, for generations of writers on music, the day-to-day realities of changeable, imperfect, practical music-making did not seem like the highest priority.

From this point of view, if *Quid non Ebrietas* were to establish that Pythagoras's ratios are really nothing more than coincidences of proximity with no real relevance to music as performed and perceived by humans, it would be a tragedy. Much, if not most of the value that was ascribed to music derived from the profundity that those ratios implied, and all this would simply be eliminated. For Spataro, thus, there was a tremendous amount to be lost and apparently very little to be gained from humoring this strange little motet from an upstart composer.<sup>406</sup> It is, however, clear from the fact that Willaert wrote the piece at all and from the interest that it apparently generated that this way of conceptualizing and evaluating music was no longer the consensus among commentators by the early sixteenth century, and this reflects of one of the major philosophical differences between humanism and the modes of thought, including scholasticism, that had been dominant in the previous era.

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<sup>406</sup> This may help to explain the condescending, "let me school you..." tone that Spataro took with Aron and other correspondents who were apparently more positively disposed to the piece. From his point of view these younger thinkers were treading on thin ice and unwittingly risking what ultimately amounted to the ruination of music. What he either failed or declined to understand, however, was that Aron and most of his generation of musical thinkers were coming from a completely different point of view in the way they evaluated music.



When faced with evidence of the chaotic and irrational nature of earthly existence, medieval thinkers tended to see something fundamentally tragic and a reason why the glorious potential of human thought is better directed elsewhere. Humanistic thinkers, on the other hand, tended to see the imperfections of the world around them as something that had the potential to be used and manipulated if they could be understood. From this new perspective, there was no reason to either expect music to behave as though it were not of this world or to devalue it for not doing so. Over time this difference of approach would lead to the development of the scientific method, secular moral philosophy, and many other defining features of modernity, but in the early sixteenth century this new framework of ideas was still a relative newcomer and a clear underdog on the European intellectual scene. For support in this uphill battle, humanists, like their medieval forebears, frequently looked to the authority of ancient Greece and Rome, but it was often a different set of sources that had been either unavailable or undervalued by previous generations, to which humanist scholars turned. It is here that the possibility of a connection between *Quid non Ebrietas* and Aristoxenus becomes an especially fascinating proposition.

### **Aristoxenus**

There are a number of factors that may have recommended Aristoxenus of Tarentum to humanists looking for classical support for their new ideas. He was, first of all, a student of Aristotle, a figure who was granted such authority by the scholastic tradition that he was often referred to (following Aquinas) as “the philosopher.” In addition, he is the author of *Elements of Harmony*, the earliest surviving book dedicated to the subject of music. The ideas and definitions laid out in this work formed the basis of a major part of the Boethian theoretical tradition, but these went largely uncredited in *De institutione musica*, in which the author only

mentioned him as an outlier who had rejected the Pythagorean ideas Boethius favored.<sup>407</sup> Due in large part to Boethius's influence, Aristoxenus was almost entirely ignored throughout the medieval period. Even in the early Renaissance, as the works of Ptolemy, Aristides Quintilianus, Bacchius, and other Greek writers were rediscovered and translated, Aristoxenus remained obscure.<sup>408</sup> *Elements of Harmony* would not be published at all until 1562, when a reportedly poor Latin translation by Antonio Gogava, allegedly prepared at the prompting of Zarlino, was printed in Venice.<sup>409</sup> This meant that his works were relatively hard to come by in the early sixteenth century, but it also gave humanists the rare opportunity to examine them without a lot of interpretive baggage to contend with.

Above all, it was Aristoxenus's ideas that made him a good match for the the humanist program. He followed Aristotle in rejecting the Pythagorean-influenced ideas of Plato, presented in *Timaeus*, *Republic*, and *Laws*, which granted music tremendous moral and cosmological significance, preferring to discuss it strictly as an enjoyable human activity, bound to changing human aesthetics rather than constant physical laws or universal principles. It may come as a shock, given what has been written about Aristoxenus up until now in the scholarly discussion of *Quid non Ebrietas*, to know that he never advocated for a tuning system based on equal temperament in any of his surviving writings. This common

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<sup>407</sup> Ann E. Moyer, *Musica Scientia: Musical Scholarship in the Italian Renaissance*, 21.; Claude V. Palisca, "Aristoxenus Redeemed in the Renaissance," *Revista de Musicología* 16, no. 3 (1993): 6.

<sup>408</sup> Throughout this period, one of the only sources of Aristoxenus's writings in the west was The Codex Venetus, which was copied by one Zosimus in Constantinople in the 12th Century and housed in the Library of St. Mark in Venice. Henry S. Macran, *The Harmonics of Aristoxenus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), 90. Other copies were produced by Greek scribes including Bartholomaeus de Zanettis and Ioannes Honorios, who fled to Italy in the 15th Century after the fall of Constantinople. Claude V. Palisca, "Aristoxenus Redeemed in the Renaissance," 5.

<sup>409</sup> Claude V. Palisca, "Aristoxenus Redeemed in the Renaissance," 9. A Greek edition was finally printed in 1616 (in Leyden) with a commentary by Johannes Meursius, and a much improved Latin version was released in 1652.

impression is not baseless; in truth, if one wished to design a tuning system based on Aristoxenus's statements that, "A tone is the excess of the Fifth over the Fourth," and "the Fourth consists of two tones and a half," he or she might end up with something similar to modern equal temperament.<sup>410</sup> However, the circumstances that would create the need for equal temperament in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as the technology that allowed for its development, did not exist in Aristoxenus's time. Even if he had wanted to construct such a system, it would have been impossible for him to do so, as modern equal temperament tuning was derived using logarithmic functions first developed in the work of mathematicians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Before that, there really was no way to place the mid-point between two pitches with any more accuracy than could be provided by the human ear, and this fact is very likely what attracted Aristoxenus to the idea in the first place. As intoxicating as this coincidence may be, what is most significant about Aristoxenus's interval constructions is not actually the specific magnitudes he accords to them but the way he defends them.

As he wrote, "since [a perfect fourth] seems to be two and a half tones, let us assume that this is its magnitude."<sup>411</sup> This seemingly innocuous statement carries revolutionary implications for the study of music, not because of the specific measurements Aristoxenus posited, but because he placed musical practice, rather than the mathematically derived theory that was still dominant in Willaert's era, at the center of his postulation.<sup>412</sup> By flipping this hierarchy on its head, Aristoxenus opened up the possibility of a completely different concept

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<sup>410</sup> Henry S. Macran, *The Harmonics of Aristoxenus*, 198.

<sup>411</sup> Carl A. Huffman, *Aristoxenus of Tarentum: Discussion* (Piscataway: Transaction Publishers, 2012), 35.

<sup>412</sup> *ibid.* p. 40.

of musical scholarship, in which musical practice, unmediated by outside mathematical or natural philosophical considerations, would be the sole object of music theoretical inquiry.

It is difficult to know specifically who other than Plato Aristoxenus was responding to, as so little writing about music from the era has survived, but he was very clear about his issues with the perspectives of contemporaneous scholars. This was a question of first principles. Scholars in Aristoxenus's time, as in Willaert's, defined musical intervals in terms of Pythagorean ratios, which were often granted more importance than the actual sounds of the intervals they represented. This, to Aristoxenus, seemed to be putting the cart before the horse. In his own words,

For we hold that the voice follows a natural law in its motion, and does not place the intervals at random. And of our answers we endeavour to supply proofs that will be in agreement with the phenomena — in this unlike our predecessors. For some of these introduced extraneous reasoning, and rejecting the senses as inaccurate fabricated rational principles, asserting that height and depth of pitch consist in certain numerical ratios and relative rates of vibration — a theory utterly extraneous to the subject and quite at variance with the phenomena.<sup>413</sup>

That is to say, if music is made up of sounds that are made and heard by people, then why would you root the study of music in first principles based on mathematics rather than simply beginning and ending with what can actually be heard and controlled by skilled musicians? Like humanist musicians of the sixteenth century, Aristoxenus was less concerned about the profound potential of music to act as a key to the inner-workings of the universe than he was about the gulf that existed between its theoretical and practical dimensions, preventing from fully understanding or informing one-another. “[T]he principles which we assume,” he wrote,

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<sup>413</sup> Henry S. Macran, *The Harmonics of Aristoxenus*, 188-189.

“shall without exception be evident to those who understand music.”<sup>414</sup> In the context of the sixteenth century this was a profound statement simply because when he wrote “those who understand music,” he was referring to not to speculative theorists but to performers. From the point of view of nascent musical humanism, the liberating potential of such a statement is difficult to overestimate.

Oddly enough, the philosophical roots of this approach may be found in Aristoxenus’s own forays into Pythagoreanism. At least since Boethius, Aristoxenus has been remembered as the quintessential antagonist of Pythagoreanism, but this is somewhat misleading. Aristoxenus lived at a time when the once-powerful Pythagorean movement, which was a cultish secret society as much as a philosophical paradigm, was dying out.<sup>415</sup> The young musician and philosopher must have taken a great interest in this fading tradition, because he is known to have studied with Xenophilus, one of the last surviving Pythagoreans, before joining Aristotle’s Peripatetic school.<sup>416</sup> This connection is potentially significant because, while the Pythagoreans emphasized the importance of numeric ratios, they were also among the first people to recognize the existence of irrational numbers,<sup>417</sup> which they called

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<sup>414</sup> *ibid.* p. 189.

<sup>415</sup> Aristoxenus lived during the 4th century BC. Pythagoras, who is not known to have produced any writings of his own, lived during the 6th.

<sup>416</sup> His works that have not survived but are known through references include the *Life of Pythagoras*, *On Pythagoras and his Pupils*, *On the Pythagorean Life*, and a book of *Pythagorean Maxims*, all of which attest to a tremendous interest in and knowledge of the man and the movement he initiated. Even if all these works turned out to have been purely satirical, there can be little question that he must have had a much deeper understanding of the history, ideas, and objectives of the Pythagorean movement than would be possible in our time or in Willaert’s.

<sup>417</sup> Irrational or incommensurable numbers are quantities that cannot be expressed as a ratio of two integers. The most well-known irrational number is Pi (3.141592653589...), which provides a good example of how they behave in general. Any irrational number could, like Pi, be hypothetically represented by a decimal sequence that goes on forever but never repeats, meaning that its true magnitude can be estimated to greater and greater exactitude, but never precisely pinned down.

“unspeakables”.<sup>418</sup> Many features of today’s mathematics, including calculus, limits, and even the decimal-based arabic numeral system, help to make the idea of dealing with very near estimates of incommensurable quantities more manageable, but at the time when the idea was new and none of these tools existed, the concept brought with it some very disturbing epistemological implications about the possibility of precise knowledge. Irrationality was a concrete emblem of the limitations of human knowledge, and this made it an extremely dangerous idea.

By the time of Aristoxenus, this crisis had led to the distinction, no longer common to modern conceptions in mathematics, between numbers, distinct and definable quantities, and magnitudes, *qualities* existing on an infinitely reducible continuum.<sup>419</sup> This framework is particularly fascinating because it seems to point in the direction of an insight that would not actually be proven until the work of mathematician Georg Cantor in the late nineteenth century, that although there is an infinite number of rational numbers, for each one of them there is an infinite number of irrational numbers.<sup>420</sup> This implies that the number line consists almost entirely of irrational numbers, with expressible ratios appearing only as infinitesimally

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<sup>418</sup> The earliest known proof of their existence, derived from the application of the Pythagorean theorem to the sides of an isosceles right triangle, is historically credited to the fifth century BCE Pythagorean mathematician Hippasus of Metapontum. According to legend, this revelation was so unsettling and contrary to the worldview of his compatriots that they rewarded his achievement by drowning him at sea. Hippasus is also frequently credited with conducting experiments with bronze discs to determine the fundamental ratios of Pythagorean harmonics. Jonathan Barnes, ed., *Early Greek Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 2001), 174.

<sup>419</sup> The idea of magnitude is probably closer to our modern conception of numbers. By “infinitely reducible,” I mean that, if you take any segment of a number line, it will contain an infinite number of potential magnitudes. Any subsection of that segment will also contain an infinite number of potential magnitudes, and so on, no matter how long you keep subdividing. The distinction is credited by both Aristotle and Euclid to a one-time student of Plato named Eudoxus of Cnidus. S. Drake, N.M. Swerdlow, and T.H. Levere, *Essays on Galileo and the History and Philosophy of Science* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 61.

<sup>420</sup> In mathematical terms, rational numbers are countably infinite while irrational numbers are uncountably infinite.

small needles within the immense haystack. In effect, this renders the idea of precise rational musical intervals useful only for abstract discussion, as their occurrence in physical reality is almost infinitely unlikely. How much of this was explicitly known to Aristoxenus is not clear, but he was careful throughout *Elements of Harmony* to write about musical pitches and intervals strictly in terms of magnitude and to avoid any recourse to notions of specific numerical quantity.

For Aristoxenus, specific quantities could only be regarded as significant to the extent that they affected sensory perception.<sup>421</sup> As he wrote,

"It is usual in geometrical constructions to use such a phrase as ' Let this be a straight line ' ; but one must not be content with such language of assumption in the case of intervals. The geometrician makes no use of his faculty of sense-perception. He does not in any degree train his sight to discriminate the straight line, the circle, or any other figure, such training belonging rather to the practice of the carpenter, the turner, or some other such handicraftsman. But for the student of musical science accuracy of sense-perception is a fundamental requirement."<sup>422</sup>

Of course, no carpenter has ever planed a piece of wood into a truly straight line, which simply cannot exist in the physical world. Rather, the skill of a handicraftsman is in creating the impression of straightness, sometimes, as in the case of the Parthenon and other examples of ancient Greek architecture, by forming lines that are intentionally curved. Geometricians, on the other hand, have the luxury of speaking in terms of absolutely straight lines and perfect circles because they deal in abstract concepts that are unbound by the limitations of the

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<sup>421</sup> That is to say, if the presence or absence of the 2:3 ratio makes an audible difference between an interval sounding like a perfect fifth or not, then it can be said to be a viable factor in the definition of the interval. If, on the other hand, proportions that are in the neighborhood of 2:3 cannot be audibly differentiated from the true ratio, then it becomes almost infinitely unlikely for an interval that sounds like a fifth to actually be one in the Pythagorean sense, and thus the ratio cannot be regarded as truly significant to the definition of the interval.

<sup>422</sup> *ibid*, 189.

physical world. No one is likely to confuse the carpenter's physical board with the conceptual straight line of the geometrician, but with music, perhaps due to its lack of concrete tangibility, there has been a greater tendency to conflate the physical reality with the underlying principles.<sup>423</sup> Aristoxenus's point, thus, is not only that the scholar of music needs to act more like the carpenter, but also that to do otherwise actually does a disservice to music, both by obfuscating the knowledge of how actual, earth-bound, practical music works in the real world and by implying that it has no real value of its own outside of specious connections to mathematics, cosmology, anatomy, and other fundamentally extramusical fields of inquiry.

Aristoxenus demonstrated the level of his commitment to these principles in what is often referred to as a proof but is really more of a test of the claim that the interval of a perfect fourth is two and one half times the difference between a perfect fourth and a perfect fifth (a tone). Rather than turning to measurements, calculations, or geometrical demonstrations to test this proposition, all of which would require pre-established definitions for the intervals involved, Aristoxenus chose to place his trust in the ear, voice, and instincts of an educated performer and devise a test that depends solely on the acts of singing and listening.

Aristoxenus based his test on the premise, rooted in his functional tetrachord theory laid out earlier in the book, that whereas discords (for Aristoxenus, anything other than perfect consonances) can be slippery and difficult to place, (perfect) consonances are immediately recognizable and "either have no locus of variation and are definitely determined to one

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<sup>423</sup> It should also be noted that it is not always clear quite what the underlying principles of music are. There is a clear relationship between the concept of "straightness" and the quality of being a straight line, but there is no such concrete connection between the concept of 2:3 and the quality of being a perfect fifth. The proximity of the sound combination to the acoustical ratio could easily be a coincidence that has been overblown. While it is tempting to assume that so-called "just" fifths are inherently more pleasing to the ear than their "compromised" cousins, there is no hard evidence to this effect. Vincenzo Galilei, writing in the late sixteenth century, claimed that tempered fifths actually sound better, and it is not at all uncommon for modern listeners, who have been raised on the paradigm of equal temperament, to find pythagorean consonances jarring and metallic when confronted with them. Claude V. Palisca, "Aristoxenus Redeemed in the Renaissance," 10.



magnitude or have an inappreciable locus.”<sup>424</sup> Simply put, consonances are easier to confidently sing than are dissonances, so the best way to locate a dissonance is by approaching it with consonances.

Aristoxenus’s test proceeds in precisely this manner.<sup>425</sup> Beginning with two pitches which together form a perfect fourth, Aristoxenus instructed the reader to ascend by a perfect fifth above the lower member, mirroring the action from the upper, and then descend a perfect fourth, resulting in pitches one tone above and below where she or he began. Repeating this procedure once more results in pitches that are a ditone (major third) above and below the original lower and upper members respectively. An additional leap of a fourth in the direction of the starting place will result in two pitches that are each one semitone (or one fourth minus two tones) outside of the bounding pitches of the original fourth. These distances must be equal because they were arrived at through identical procedures, meaning that, according to Pythagorean acoustics, they cannot add up to a tone and the final interval between them cannot be a perfect fifth. Aristoxenus, however, stopped short of making a prediction, instead simply writing that the reader should sing the resulting pitches and determine whether or not they form a consonance.<sup>426</sup> Once this has been determined, he wrote, “[i]f they prove discordant, plainly the Fourth will not be composed of two and a half tones; and just as plainly it will be so composed, if they form a Fifth.”<sup>427</sup> Aristoxenus left this matter open because the

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<sup>424</sup> Henry S. Macran, *The Harmonics of Aristoxenus*, 206. This principle is still present in the structures of modern music, in which dissonances and imperfect consonances all come in major and minor forms but perfect consonances have only one. Aristoxenus took this considerably further, however, granting the Lichanus (the member of a tetrachord that is functionally similar to a third) limitless variation within a determined range.

<sup>425</sup> Entire description of the test can be found in *ibid.* 206-208.

<sup>426</sup> Remember that only perfect consonances qualify in this context. Thus, if the final interval is consonant, it can’t possibly be a fourth, because it contains a fourth within it, and it is demonstrably too small to be an octave, so the only remaining possibility is that it is a fifth.

<sup>427</sup> *ibid.* 207.

question of whether or not the test will be successful may only be answered through practice. Presumably, he had conducted the test for himself, based on the musical conventions he knew from experience and observation, and presumably it was, for him, successful, as many of the other ideas put forward in *Elements of Harmony* would otherwise be invalidated. Nonetheless, he was willing to accept the possibility of a musical practice in which it would fail, because its success or failure is mediated only by what people do, which can vary across time and distance, and not by any abstract governing principle.

## Aristoxenus's Test

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Voice' and the bottom staff is also labeled 'Voice'. Both staves are in a 1/1 time signature. The top staff contains six notes: a half note G4 with a flat, a half note F4 with a flat, a half note E4 with a flat, a half note D4 with a flat, a half note C4 with a flat, and a half note B3 with a flat. The bottom staff contains six notes: a half note G4, a half note F4, a half note E4, a half note D4, a half note C4, and a half note B3. Below the bottom staff, there are six labels: P4, M6, m2, A8(m9), A2(m3), and D6(P5?).

All this helps to explain why Aristoxenus was so unpopular among music theorists of the Boethian tradition despite his prestigious historical position. To them, the ideas put forward in *Elements of Harmony* represented a real threat.<sup>428</sup> From their perspective, Aristoxenus had stripped music of its profundity, reducing it, one might say, from a potential key to unlock the secrets of God and the Universe to a mundane entertainment along the lines of juggling, requiring some skill but hardly worthy of serious scholarly attention.<sup>429</sup> Perhaps even worse,

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<sup>428</sup> Of course, most of the credit for recognizing this threat and removing Aristoxenus from the core music theoretical pantheon must go to earlier figures such as Boethius himself. Most later medieval scholars could not read Greek and would not have had access to his writings even if they could, so they had little choice but to take the word of earlier writers on whether or not he was worth looking into.

<sup>429</sup> I certainly don't mean to imply that I think juggling is unworthy of scholarly attention, but Spataro almost certainly would have.

by insisting on a leading role for performers and rejecting string-length measurement and mathematical proportion as viable techniques of analysis, he had robbed them of both their authority and their most powerful set of tools. Worst of all, Aristoxenus's acknowledgement of the potential changeability of even the most fundamental aspects of music and his requirement that factors be discernible to the educated ear in order to be considered relevant to discussions of music seems almost to negate the function of music theory in the medieval sense, which was largely the discernment of essential, permanent aspects of music from transitory fashions and of musical elements that were too subtle to be apparent to "mere performers," to use Spataro's terminology.

For music theorists and practical musicians of a more humanistic inclination, for many of whom the Boethian orthodoxies had become burdensome, it was a completely different story. Aristoxenus's performance-centered approach, insistence on real-world observation, acknowledgement of the potential for change, and refusal to treat the study of music as subordinate to mathematics or natural philosophy all resonated with ideas and trends that were developing independently among humanists, musical and otherwise, by the turn of the sixteenth century. Polyphonic music-making, which had once been a tiny niche operation in a few isolated pockets of Europe, had by this time expanded tremendously and would continue to do so throughout the sixteenth century, particularly in Italy. This expansion, on the most basic level, gave scholars a much greater quantity of new music to parse, analyze, and explain, reducing both the need and the space available for the celestial preoccupations of their medieval precursors. It also spurred more and more composers to seek ways of differentiating themselves from the herd by devising new harmonies and techniques and new forms, most famously the sixteenth-century madrigal and the related techniques of chromatic

voice-leading, to encourage such novelty, all of which gave theorists more to write about and made the idea of music's immutability seem less viable.

Both musically and culturally, the ideas of Aristoxenus were aligned to the currents of the early sixteenth century, but their accessibility was still limited by the scarcity of manuscripts of his writings and the limitations of language. References to Aristoxenus appeared with increasing frequency from the late fifteenth century, but primarily in editions of classical works such as Vitruvius's *De Architectura* (first printed in 1486), which contains a chapter on music derived from *Elements of Harmony*, Censorinus's *De Die Natali*, and Pseudo-Plutarch's *De Musica* (published by Carlo Valgulio in 1507), prepared by humanists who were not musical specialists.<sup>430</sup> It was still the case that most specifically musical scholars did not read Greek, so their direct access to Aristoxenus's ideas were largely limited to conversation and correspondence with more literate friends and colleagues, which is very difficult to trace.

It is, however, clear that some level of interest was beginning to develop in the musical community around the time of *Quid non Ebrietas's* composition. I have already mentioned that Spataro, although decidedly anti-Aristoxenian in his own point of view, immediately jumped to the conclusion that Willaert must have been under the philosopher's influence when he wrote the piece. Similarly, the first book of Gafurius's *De Harmonia Musicorum Instrumentorum* (written in 1500 but not published until 1518) contains a highly critical discussion of "five errors of Aristoxenus," which does not evince intimate familiarity with the philosopher but does strongly imply some enthusiasm that the author wished to discourage among his peers.<sup>431</sup> In addition, in the same cache in the Vatican archives that

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<sup>430</sup> Claude V. Palisca, "Aristoxenus Redeemed in the Renaissance," 7, 9.

<sup>431</sup> Edward E. Lowinsky, "Adrian Willaert's Chromatic 'Duo' Re-Examined," 9.

houses Spataro's correspondences (Vat. Lat. 5318) there exists a brief dictionary of musical terms prepared by the Venetian priest, musician, and humanist Giovanni del Lago.<sup>432</sup> Within this document del Lago provides a table of intervals featuring the complicated mathematical proportions of Pythagorean acoustics alongside a set of much simpler "qualitative" values, which he attributes to "Aristoxenus et Practici" (Aristoxenus and practitioners).<sup>433</sup>

Significantly, in this labeling as well as in his commentary, del Lago implies that his Pythagorean figures are of solely theoretical interest and that only the qualitative numbers are relevant to the experience of practical musicians.

As one might expect, the arrival of an Italian translation of *Elements of Harmony*, the first of which was published in 1562, the year of Willaert's death, spurred a flood of new interest in Aristoxenus, in large part from people with direct pedagogical connections to Willaert. His most classically inclined student, Nicola Vicentino, who was famously obsessed with the microtonal implications of Pythagorean harmonics and published his most famous work, *L'antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica* seven years before the edition's release, nonetheless refers multiple times to Aristoxenus, whom he probably knew primarily through Vitruvius.<sup>434</sup> Gioseffo Zarlino, who allegedly provided the impetus for the edition, discusses Aristoxenus's ideas in his *Dimostrazioni Harmoniche* (1571), but he, like many writers before him, seems to have found it impossible to separate the concepts of interval size from that of Pythagorean string-length ratios in his own mind and so misses the point of the philosopher's

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<sup>432</sup> *ibid.* 10.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.* 10-11. Del Lago's chart of Aristoxenus's intervals: Diesis enharmonia . 6, Diesis chromatis mollis 8, Diesis chromatis hemiolis 9, Semitonium 12, Tonus . 24, Trihemitonium 36, Diatonum 48, Diatessaron 60, Tritonum. 72, Diapente 84, Diapente et semitonium 96, Diapente et tonus 108, Diapason 144

<sup>434</sup> Nicola Vicentino, M.R. Maniates, and C.V. Palisca. *Ancient Music Adapted to Modern Practice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 6, 19, 20.

qualitative perspective entirely.<sup>435</sup> Oddly, however, it was two one-time students of Zarlino, Vincenzo Galilei and, perhaps surprisingly, Giovanni Artusi, who became major champions and popularizers of Aristoxenus's ideas around the end of the century.<sup>436</sup> The two are typically thought of, for valid reasons, as opposing figures in the musical culture of the turn of the seventeenth century, but notably, neither seems to have suffered from their predecessor's cognitive discord when faced with the idea of musical intervals divorced from mathematical ratios.

Thus, it can be said that Willaert stood at the cusp of a rising interest in Aristoxenus, and he may, through his teaching, have helped to fuel this rise. However, if he personally had an intimate familiarity with the philosopher's ideas at the time when he wrote *Quid non Ebrietas*, he must have been among the first musical thinkers of the era to do so. There is neither evidence nor any significant likelihood that Willaert could read Greek, so whatever he did know about Aristoxenus must have been second-hand. Nonetheless, there are reasons to suspect that he may have been more than casually acquainted with the philosopher. He was, first of all, in Ferrara, a university town that would, later in the century, be at the heart of Vicentino's movement to classicize modern music and had already for some time been developing as a center of humanistic activity.<sup>437</sup> Unlike most professional musicians of the time, Willaert had at least some university education, which may have been helpful for navigating this sort of social environment.<sup>438</sup> At any rate, the number of settings of

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<sup>435</sup> Claude V. Palisca, "Aristoxenus Redeemed in the Renaissance," 10-11.

<sup>436</sup> *ibid.* p. 12.

<sup>437</sup> Lewis Lockwood, *Music in Renaissance Ferrara 1400-1505: The Creation of a Musical Center in the Fifteenth Century: The Creation of a Musical Center in the Fifteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2009), 11.

<sup>438</sup> D. Kidger, *Adrian Willaert: A Guide to Research*, 5.

erudite Latin texts he composed during this period strongly implies that he had cultivated connections within the city's humanistic community, which certainly contained any number of Greek speakers who, given an available manuscript, could easily have read *Elements of Harmony* and glossed it for Willaert.

Looking specifically at *Quid non Ebrietas*, the degree of resonance with ideas presented in *Elements of Harmony* is such that for Willaert to have composed it without having had access to at least some specific information about the book would be an astounding coincidence. Indeed, it is very possible to conceive of the piece as an updated version of Aristoxenus's singing test rendered in actual, functional music. I might even go so far as to say that, after examining the two side-by-side, the comparison becomes almost unavoidable. In both cases singers are asked to move through a series of perfect melodic consonances – the tenor *Quid non Ebrietas* does not move exclusively in perfect consonances like the voices in Aristoxenus's test, but each of its structurally pertinent movements, those that lead to a new hexachord, occurs as a perfect fifth, either outlined in stepwise motion or in a leap – to ultimately arrive at a final interval whose consonance is fundamentally incompatible with rigidly rational Pythagorean acoustic principles.

In the case of Aristoxenus's test this final interval is a fifth, whereas in Willaert's motet it is an octave, but in both cases it is dependent on the possibility of two identical semitones adding up to tone, which cannot occur within an internally consistent justly tuned system. This change makes sense in the context of changing perceptions of consonance between Aristoxenus's time and Willaert's. For Aristoxenus, the fifth was surrounded by dissonances on all sides, so that a consonant sounding final interval could only be one thing, but by the sixteenth century things were complicated by the fact that the minor sixth, only a

semitone away, had been reevaluated. The octave, on the other hand, is insulated by a full tone of dissonant intervals on either side, and of all musical intervals, other than perhaps the unison, it is the most precisely calibrated, in the sense of providing the least wiggle room before it begins to sound out of tune. Both of these factors make the octave an ideal alternative for a Renaissance reimagining of a Aristoxenus's test.

The most obvious, and possibly also the most significant difference between the two is that *Quid non Ebrietas* functions as a fully fleshed out, performable piece of music. In addition to producing an object that functions as a work of art as well as a tool for inquiry, this change actually helps to make the test much easier and more practical to conduct. This is because, even though its format seems to imply simultaneity, Aristoxenus's test was not conceived polyphonically.<sup>439</sup> Attempting to sing through both the upper and lower parts of Aristoxenus's test at the same time would necessitate leaping into and out of intense discords coupled with voice crossings, something that would be difficult to do at all and which would very likely taint the reliability of the results. In order to conduct the test without this issue the singers would either have to sing the two parts in succession, forcing the first singer to precisely remember her or his final pitch, or to go into separate rooms and come back to test the final interval, which is also less than ideal. Willaert's version, on the other hand, functions as much like a normal piece of music as is possible under the circumstances. In addition to avoiding logistical issues, this adjustment allows singers to conduct the test under the familiar and comfortable atmosphere of a regular performance. Whether or not this difference would actually increase the accuracy of the results is debatable, but it would certainly produce

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<sup>439</sup> In all of *Elements of Harmony* there is no mention of the idea of two notes sounding simultaneously, which is a concept that is not known to have existed in ancient Greece.



results that were more concretely rooted in the conditions and habits of real-world music making.

Willaert thus takes Aristoxenus's professed dedication to a performance- and performer-centered approach a step further by actually casting his test in the world of performance rather than the world of theory, and this raises an interesting question. *Quid non Ebreitas* was rapidly claimed by music theorists and made their own, and it was in this form that it came down to us, but what if it was not theorists but performers who were Willaert's target audience for the piece? What if the fundamental point of the motet is not about the debates of speculative acoustics but the possibilities that open up for practical musicians when they break free from abstractions and address the world as it really is? If this were the case, it would help to explain why Willaert bothered to compose the motet in four parts when two would have served theorists' purposes just as well, why he included a text, and why he initially sent the finished product to performing ensembles rather than to theorists.

*Quid non Ebreitas* is only a little piece of music, and one that does not fully live up to its composer's usual standards, but it represents the potential for a whole world of harmonic possibility, a world which Spataro, who was actually a somewhat forward-thinking theorist for his generation, would have had performers reject because it violated his notion of musical purity. Unlike theorists, performing musicians do not have the luxury of ignoring reality and imagining that music exists in a perfectly crystalline world of the mind.<sup>440</sup> *Quid non Ebreitas*, however, provides a concrete example of the advantages of imperfection, of something that

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<sup>440</sup> Musical conservatories seem to have been trying very hard to resist this truth for the past hundred years or so, and in the process they have sucked much of the life out of the music they teach people to perform. Nonetheless, it is still true.

would be impossible in the perfect world of the theorist but has no problem existing in the real world.

This not a question of equal temperament, which was fundamentally a reassertion of authority by theorists armed with the new mathematical tools of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, after the fight for Pythagorean purity had been lost.<sup>441</sup> Rather, it is an assertion of the right to evaluate the realities of tuning and other musical issues based on the knowledge of what actually happens in the context of a performance, by the people who actually have that knowledge. This embrace of imperfection as something that defines rather than taints the real physical world, and something that can have advantages for those who are ready to accept and pay attention to it, is one of the essential features of humanism as it was developing in the early sixteenth century, and viewed in this way, *Quid non Ebrietas* stands among the most profoundly humanistic musical statements of the Renaissance.

### Horace

It remains to discuss Willaert's chosen text, a passage from Horace's Epistle 1.5, addressed to Torquatus, a prosperous patrician attorney and apparent friend of the poet. In the historiography of *Quid non Ebrietas*, this text has been one of the least examined aspects of the piece, which is surprising considering that it is one of its most distinctive features. By the mid to late sixteenth century, polyphonic settings of Horatian texts, including notable examples by Jacques Arcadelt, Cipriano de Rore, and Orlando di Lasso, had become fairly common, but at the time of Willaert's composition it was still a highly novel and pointed selection. Even at the peak of Horace's popularity among musicians, the vast majority of texts

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<sup>441</sup> Willaert may well have preferred the sound of justly tuned fourths and fifths, and if so, he could easily have instructed his singers to tune that way without compromising the viability of the piece.

set were odes, which had an obvious suitability for praising wealthy patrons, rather than the more conversational and contemplative epistles.<sup>442</sup>

Despite this rarity, those commentators who have discussed the text at all have typically gone no further than to suggest that the tenor's slippery descent may have been intended as a musical representation of the effects of drunkenness (*ebrietas*). Certainly, this is a part of the story, and for a piece from c. 1519 to include text painting of this sort at all should be regarded as significant in its own right. However, there is more to this text than a single key word, and there is reason to believe that Willaert's choice may have been motivated by more than just the opportunity it provided for musical slapstick.<sup>443</sup> To date, only Edward Lowinsky has hinted at this possibility by comparing Willaert's motet in praise of inebriation to Desiderius Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly* (written about ten years before in 1509), a connection which, while purely speculative, hints at the distinctly humanistic point of view which I also detect in the piece.<sup>444</sup> For convenient reference, I include the epistle in its entirety in both Latin and prosified English (translation by Michael C. J. Putnam). The section that was set by Willaert is highlighted in **bold**.

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<sup>442</sup> I'm still looking, but I have yet to find another setting of a Horatian epistle from the sixteenth century.

<sup>443</sup> A potentially interesting side note is that the hymn to John the Baptist, "Ut queant laxis" (UT queant laxis REsonare fibris MIRA gestorum FAMuli tuorum, SOLve polluti LABii reatum, Sancte Ioannes.), which forms the basis for Guido d'Arezzo's hexachordal system, and which appears in its earliest extant form in a codex with Horace's odes, shares its melody with a version of Horace's Ode 4.11 found in an eleventh century Montpellier manuscript (Ecole de Médecine 425 h). It is highly unlikely that Willaert could have known about these specific connections. However, he was almost certainly aware of "Ut queant laxis," and he could have noticed the hymn's typically Horatian Sapphic meter. It is conceivable that this may have inspired his choice of Horace for the piece in which he took Guido's system to its logical extreme.

Richard Tarrant, "Ancient Receptions of Horace," in *The Cambridge Companion to Horace*. ed. S. Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 289.

<sup>444</sup> Edward E. Lowinsky, "Adrian Willaert's Chromatic 'Duo' Re-Examined," 31-2.

Horace, Epistle 1.5, To Torquatus:

Si potes Archiacis conviva recumbere lectis  
nec modica cenare times holus omne patella,  
supremo te sole domi, Torquate, manebo.  
vina bibes iterum Tauro diffusa palustris  
5 inter Minturnas Sinuessanumque Petrinum.  
si melius quid habes, arcesse, vel imperium fer.  
iamdudum splendet focus et tibi munda supellex.  
mitte levis spes et certamina divitiarum  
et Moschi causam. cras nato Caesare festus  
10 dat veniam somnumque dies; impune licebit  
aestivam sermone benigno tendere noctem.  
quo mihi fortunam, si non conceditur uti?  
parcus ob heredis curam nimiumque severus  
assidet insano. potare et spargere flores  
15 incipiam patiarque vel inconsultus haberi.  
**quid non ebrietas dissignat? operta recludit,**  
**spes iubet esse ratas, ad proelia trudit inertem,**  
**sollicitis animis onus eximit, addocet artis.**  
**fecundi calices quem non fecere disertum,**  
20 contracta quem non in paupertate solutum?  
haec ego procurare et idoneus imperor et non  
invitus, ne turpe toral, ne sordida mappa  
corruget naris, ne non et cantharus et lanx  
ostendat tibi te, ne fidos inter amicos  
25 sit qui dicta foras eliminat, ut coeat par  
iungaturque pari. Butram tibi Septiciumque  
et nisi cena prior potiorque puella Sabinum  
detinet assumam. locus est et pluribus umbris;  
sed nimis arta premunt olidae convivia caprae.  
30 tu quotus esse velis rescribe et rebus omissis  
atria servantem postico falle clientem.

Translation by Michael Putnam.

If you can recline on the couches of an Archias and are not concerned about dining completely on vegetables from an unpretentious plate, I will await you chez moi, Torquatus, at set of sun. You will drink wine bottled between swampy Minturnae and Sinuessan Petrinum during Taurus's second consulship. If you have anything better, summon it, or accept my directive. For a while now the hearth gleams for you, and the furniture is tidy. Forgo flighty hopes and competition for wealth and the case of Moschus. Tomorrow a festal day at the birth of Caesar allows us indulgence and sleep. No harm will come to us from stretching out the summer's night in liberal conversation.

What means my fortune, if I'm not allowed to make use of it? The person who is sparing out of concern for his heir and given overly to self-control borders on the madman. I'll start imbibing and scattering flowers, and I'll suffer myself being considered a fool. **What does drunkenness not devise? It uncloses the hidden, it orders that hopes come true, it pushes even the sluggish into battle, it removes the burden from troubled spirits, it teaches arts. Whom have bounteous goblets not made eloquent, whom have they not released from the prison of poverty?**

These I am under orders, and gladly and willingly, to effect: that an ugly coverlet or dirty napkin not wrinkle your nose, that both tankard and charger show you to yourself, that there be no one among trusting friends who might carry our words beyond the threshold, that equal meet and join with equal. I will invite Butra for you and Septicius and Sabinus, unless an earlier dinner-engagement or girl of some charm hold him back. There is space also for plenty of "shades." But the smell of she-goats oppresses banquets too closed-in. Please write back how many you want us to be and, dropping everything, by the back door give the slip to your client who is watching at the front.

Essentially, the poem amounts to a highly elaborate dinner party invitation, although whether or not it was actually used for this purpose before publication is not clear. Horace's invitee, Torquatus, a descendent of a war hero who famously executed his own son for disobedience on the battlefield, is a lawyer currently working on the high-profile case of Moschus, a rhetorician accused of murder by poison.<sup>445</sup> The impetus for the party is the opportunity to drink, stay up late, and sleep in provided by the upcoming holiday to celebrate the birthday of Caesar Augustus, who had been declared *Princeps Civitatis* (first citizen) about five years before the poem was written. Horace begins the epistle in a self-deprecating mode, apologizing for the spartan furnishings, food, and dinnerware of his estate, but then immediately provides some indication that his modesty may be somewhat false by mentioning a vintage of wine which is considerably finer than he lets on and indicating that his estate has

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<sup>445</sup> N. Rudd, *The Satires of Horace and Persius* (London: Penguin Books Limited, 2005) glossary.

been immaculately cleaned in anticipation of the event.<sup>446</sup> Torquatus, Horace suggests, should take the opportunity to escape from the Roman rat race and join him for a relaxing night of debauchery and conversation.

The epistle's final section proceeds similarly straightforwardly, although it is perhaps somewhat more loaded in its content. After once again attesting to the cleanliness of his domicile, Horace suggests that a night of uncensored alcohol-driven conversation will help Torquatus get into better touch with his own mind, emphasizing the confidentiality of the event and the freedom that comes with being in a group of equals. He then briefly mentions the guest list, including several prominent citizens and their "shades" (ancient Roman equivalent of an entourage), indicating his willingness to make adjustments according to Torquatus's preference. Horace then ends the poem with a humorous image of Torquatus sneaking out through the back door to avoid his needy clients.

Horace takes care of all of the necessary logistical content of an invitation in these relatively concrete opening and closing sections. Between them, he places a far more fanciful and abstract passage in which he never addresses Torquatus directly. Thus, a structural parallel exists between the epistle itself and Willaert's motet, which similarly consists of a highly adventurous middle part bookended by two sections of far more ordinary and straightforward music. Horace begins by stating his desire to take advantage of the fruits of his success while he can, returning to the idea of "*Carpe diem*," which he had already explored in Ode 1.11, and expresses his dismay with people who look for excuses not to enjoy

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<sup>446</sup> The area south of Rome between Minturno and Mondragone, which contains the ruins of the ancient city of Sinuessa, is still one of the most acclaimed grape-growing regions in Italy. Horace states that his hearth, the one part of a house that can be excused for being dirty, is gleaming for Torquatus. Michael C. J. Putnam, "Horace to Torquatus: 'Epistle 1.5' and 'Ode 4.7,'" *The American Journal of Philology* 127, no. 3 (2006): 391.

themselves. Then, after indicating his willingness to make a fool of himself in the interests of a good time, Horace enters the conceit on the benefits of drunkenness from which Willaert would later draw the text of *Quid non Ebrietas*.<sup>447</sup> Here, most of the qualities of drunkenness Horace mentions, revealing the hidden, unburdening troubled spirits, encouraging eloquence, and teaching arts, connect to the emphasis on confidentiality, equality, and self-knowledge in the final section, in that they all have to do with the idea of inebriation as a remover of filters and inhibitions.

Clearly a theme runs through this epistle, present in the section excerpted by Willaert but emphasized in several other places, that has to do with the idea of open secrets and the liberation of saying what you know to be true but, under normal circumstances would be unable to say. For Horace, it is likely that this implied unspoken truth has something to do with Augustus, whose birthday provided the poem's *raison d'être*. Horace's career coincided with the period of Augustus's rise to the status of emperor, which was publicly heralded as the restoration of the Roman Republic, but in reality amounted to its dissolution as a viable political entity. Horace, who had once been an officer in Brutus's republican faction but was, by the time he wrote this epistle, dependent on the emperor as a patron and sponsor, was famously ambivalent in his relationship to these processes.<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>447</sup> "What does drunkenness not devise? It uncloses the hidden, it orders that hopes come true, it pushes even the sluggish into battle, it removes the burden from troubled spirits, it teaches arts. Whom have bounteous goblets not made eloquent, whom have they not released from the prison of poverty?" Willaert used all but the final line about poverty in *Quid non Ebrietas*.

<sup>448</sup> Robin Nisbet, "Horace: life and chronology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Horace*. ed. S. Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 8, 10.

The figure of Augustus looms over Horace's oeuvre as an ever-present preoccupation with few parallels in the history of literature,<sup>449</sup> but even in his odes he nearly always stopped short of lavishing his *princeps* with the sort of unbridled praise that one might expect.<sup>450</sup> Neither, of course, is he overtly critical of the emperor, and this cultivation and manipulation of ambiguity is both a trademark of his personal style and a symptom of his historical moment. In the words of classicist Michèle Lowrie, "Perhaps Horace best encapsulates his age by making it impossible for us to choose between his acceptance of the ideology and his understanding it for what it is."<sup>451</sup>

Thus, if Horace makes it impossible to be sure whether or not the unspoken demise of the republic is a subtextual theme of epistle 1.5, this is almost certainly intentional. Nonetheless, Horace did leave us with a clue in the identity of his addressee. For literate Romans of this period the name Torquatus would, due to his illustrious if brutal ancestor, have been immediately evocative of the astounding military discipline that was regarded as one of Rome's greatest strengths during the republican era, and this connection would have been reinforced by Horace's reference to being "under orders" in the beginning of the poem's final section. The allusions to a spartan lifestyle in the opening lines would similarly have called to mind the austere values the loss of which many Romans blamed for the republic's decline. Whether or not Horace actually lamented Augustus's rise, he was certainly aware of these associations, and for him to have juxtaposed them with a theme of unspoken truths must

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<sup>449</sup> Michèle Lowrie, "Horace and Augustus," in *The Cambridge Companion to Horace*. ed. S. Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 77. One potential example may be the figure of Abraham Lincoln in the work of Walt Whitman.

<sup>450</sup> *ibid.* 83.

<sup>451</sup> *ibid.* 85.



imply that he intended for it to be an available interpretation, though with plausible deniability.

This epistle was well-known in sixteenth-century Italy. A paraphrase of its most famous line, “*Quid non designat (ebrietas)*,” was even employed as a motto by the Florentine *Accademia degli Alterati* (founded 1568), a group whose experiments and speculations into the revival of ancient music played a major role in the developments leading to the first operas.<sup>452</sup> Thus, even those parts of the poem that Willaert did not set could potentially have influenced audiences’ interpretation of his motet, and this may be significant for the composer’s appointment at San Marco just under a decade later. We know, through Aron, that *Quid non Ebrietas* was known and perhaps performed in Venice. Even had it not been, the motet was written in the immediate wake of the War of the League of Cambrai, when there was still a major Venetian presence, notably including future doge Andrea Gritti, on the terra firma. From the point of view of Venetian republican ideology, the potential for an anti-imperial interpretation of the epistle is immensely significant.

Early classical secular motets were, as I have mentioned, predominantly fodder for princely self-promotion. The fact that *Quid non Ebrietas* does not directly promote the idea of princely authority alone makes it unusual for its time. The possibility that it may actually be directly connected to a pro-republican viewpoint makes it unique and points to the potential for a new world of applications for musical humanism. While no direct evidence that *Quid non Ebrietas* played a direct role in Willaert’s election has been discovered, Gritti, his procurators, and all of the senators who assented to his appointment had grown up memorizing and

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<sup>452</sup> A. Van Dixhoorn and S.S. Sutch. *The Reach of the Republic of Letters: Literary and Learned Societies in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 2008), 288. It is possible but unlikely that the *Alterati*’s use of the line may have been influenced by Willaert’s earlier use of the poem. However, no evidence to this effect has been discovered.

interpreting Horace as part of their education, and if they were aware of this idiosyncratic little motet, as at least some of them likely were, it may have gone a long way towards convincing them of Willaert's potential as a servant of the republic.

At the time when he wrote *Quid non Ebrietas*, Willaert, like Horace, was working under the direct patronage of a *princeps*, Duke Alfonso d'Este of Ferrara, and it is unlikely that the idea of future employment with the Republic of Venice, or any republic, had yet occurred to him. Thus, if the possible republican implications of the epistle played any role its selection, it could only have been for the composer's personal reasons, which, barring the appearance of a diary or extremely intimate correspondence, are lost to time. However, the theme of open secrets and the power of alcohol, equality, and confidentiality to bring truths that normally go unspoken into the light also relates directly to the musical content of the motet, and this very likely had at least as much to do with Willaert's attraction to the epistle as did the opportunity it provided for the musical depiction of a drunken stagger.

Most of scholars who have written about this piece, if they agreed with or at least were willing to humor my interpretation of the epistle, would probably say that the open secret of *Quid non Ebrietas* is obviously that the tone divides into two equal semitones, or, taken further, that the octave consists of twelve equal semitones. This may be the case, but it strikes me as another example of squeezing the practical musician, Willaert, into the narrow, pointy shoes of a music theorist. A more likely possibility, in my opinion, is that the unspoken truth Willaert may have had in mind has far more to do with the realities of performance than the abstractions of theory. In the context of a performance by a vocal ensemble, or any performing unit with the ability to tune from moment to moment, issues such as that of

Pythagorean versus tempered perfect intervals and the relative size of semitones are fundamentally aesthetic choices rather than structural determining factors.

The performability of a piece like *Quid non Ebrietas* does not depend, as a monochordal analysis of it does, on the size of the perfect fifths that are sounded within it, because a vocal ensemble simply does not behave like a monochord. Rather, a successful performance of the motet depends on the willingness and ability of the singers to listen to one-another and make tiny tuning adjustments throughout the piece as they are required. With this in place, it is no more or less difficult depending on whether or not the intervals sung approximate the ratios of Pythagorean acoustics. Taken in this way, *Quid non Ebrietas* becomes not so much a contribution to the debates of music theorists as an admonishment that music theory either needs to serve the interests of music (i.e. not *musica mundana* or *musica humana* but actual performed music), which means respecting the realities of how music actually happens in the real world, or get out of music's way.

### Conclusion

As in the case of Aristoxenus's test, perhaps even more so, the proof of *Quid non Ebrietas* is in the pudding. Willaert did not append an essay to the motet, and he is never known to have made any statement about whether or not it should work, or how, or what conclusions should be drawn from it. The only way he left for anyone to truly know is to try it, and even then the possibility exists that it may work for some groups and not for others depending on their abilities and priorities. It may be that whatever messages we see in this enigmatic piece are fundamentally our own, and the plethora of interpretations that the piece has elicited from very smart people attests to this possibility. Nonetheless, there are

pronounced resonances between Willaert's motet and the intellectual currents of his historical moment, as well as with products of the ancient world that was being reinterpreted and reimagined around him, that should not be ignored. Any interpretation is still only one of a near-infinite array of possibilities, but how meaningful it actually would have been in its own time and place depends on the extent to which it is guided by these resonances. My aim in my own exploration of the piece has been to illuminate what it might have meant, not to the community of speculative theorists who so rapidly appropriated it, but to a completely different audience of humanists and performing musicians, who came equipped with a completely different set of interpretive tools. This was an audience to which Willaert actually belonged, and it was an audience whose members were in a position to see the liberating and empowering potential of this extraordinary musical experiment.

The sixteenth century is frequently framed as period of increasingly reactionary backlash against the freedom of thought associated with humanism and the Renaissance. Certainly, there is truth to this conception, but less frequently recognized is the degree to which the sixteenth century also brought tremendous vindication to the humanistic prioritization of real-world, comparative observation over accepted authority. Again and again, as observational skills and technologies improved, authoritative positions that had gone unquestioned for a millennium were found wanting. For example, the Julian Calendar, long acclaimed as one of the icons of ancient perfection, was suddenly found to be sliding imperceptibly backwards, so that, after centuries of use, the solstices and equinoxes were

suddenly found to be out of place.<sup>453</sup> The classic Aristotelian truism that nature abhors a vacuum, long held to be one of the fundamental organizing principles of the universe, was also found to be false in the sixteenth century when frustrated miners discovered that suction pumps no longer function at depths greater than about thirty feet.<sup>454</sup> At around the same time, increasingly accurate observations of the positions of objects in the sky were casting doubt on the reliability of aristotelian/ptolemaic cosmology and astronomy, which required increasingly complex mathematical adjustments to maintain its predictive ability.<sup>455</sup> The list goes on. The supposed perfection of God's cosmos that dominated the thought-world of scholastic scholarship, still institutionally dominant if outdated in the early sixteenth century, held little interest to humanists, who were aware that there is no such thing, at least on Earth, as a perfect circle or a straight line. If *Quid Non Ebrietas* has a central message or argument, it is simply that music should be assessed according to those same terms.

Willaert's humanistic statement in *Quid non Ebrietas* seems to be that a perfect fifth belongs on the same list of abstract entities of the mind which can only be approximated in the real world, and still-more profoundly, that this imperfection is actually a good thing, as this motet, and the world of possible music it represents, would not be singable were it not the case. This should not, however, be taken as an advocacy of any tuning system or of any other system. Rather, if he can be said to be advocating anything, it is the prioritization of

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<sup>453</sup> This was one of the major issues raised by Nicolaus Copernicus in the preface of *De revolutionibus*, although he was not able to provide a solution. N. Copernicus and S.W. Hawking, *On the Revolutions of Heavenly Spheres* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2004), 5-6.

<sup>454</sup> Muslim scholars had been aware of this effect at least since the eleventh century, but it is not precisely known when it first came to the attention of Europeans. Certainly, it was a well-known phenomenon by the early seventeenth century, when it was experimentally confirmed and quantified by, among others, Galileo Galilei, Evangelista Torricelli, and Blaise Pascal. S. Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 38.

<sup>455</sup> T.S. Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy in the Development of Western Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957) 72.

observable reality over intellectual authority or abstract reason. I have already mentioned Lowinsky's connection of *Quid non Ebrietas* with Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly*. I would add to this another landmark of humanism, Machiavelli's *Il Principe*, which was recently written and circulating widely in manuscript at the time of Willaert's composition. In chapter XV, in a discussion of the relationship between the appearance of morality and actual moral behavior, Machiavelli writes, "because I want to write what will be useful to anyone who understands, it seems to me better to concentrate on what really happens rather than on theories or speculations."<sup>456</sup> He refers here to moral issues rather than to the realities of musical performance, but the central thesis is nonetheless strikingly close to that of *Quid non Ebrietas*. The imperfections of humanity and of the mundane world, brushed aside by generations of schoolmen as an embarrassing but ultimately unimportant consequence of the mutable world, are actually worth paying attention to and can, with effort, ultimately be understood and used to advantage. Machiavelli even goes so far as to refer to this flawed reality, not the smoother, more predictable scholastic one, as "what really happens."<sup>457</sup>

Today, after nearly three hundred years of a scientific method which regards repeatable laboratory results as the ultimate definer of truth, this idea may seem self-evident.<sup>458</sup> It is easy to miss the degree to which in the early sixteenth century that method was revolutionary. The mundane reality which Machiavelli and seemingly Willaert place in

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<sup>456</sup> N. Machiavelli, Q. Skinner, and R. Price, *Machiavelli: The Prince* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 54.

He goes on, "For many have imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or known to exist. However, how men live is so different from how they should live that a ruler who does not do what is generally done, but persists in doing what ought to be done, will undermine his power rather than maintain it."

<sup>457</sup> "*verita effettuale della cosa*," literally, the real or effective truth of the situation.

<sup>458</sup> Although given recent trends such as young-Earth creationism, climate change "skepticism," and vaccination conspiracy theory, this point of view certainly cannot be said to be universal.

the highest position was traditionally the domain of clerks, artisans, performers and other low-ranking hired help, whereas the subjects traditionally held as worthy of the “real thinkers” who populated universities and had the ears of popes and emperors were precisely those that Machiavelli casually dismisses as “theories or speculations”.<sup>459</sup> This represents a truly radical democratization of thought, placing the knowledge and skills of practical professionals over those of the intellectual elites, and it begins to hint at a counterintuitively egalitarian potential in the Renaissance, a movement which was, in its origins, largely fueled by the will to elevate and glorify powerful individuals and families in order to justify and increase their power. It would be Willaert’s job, along with others, to seize on precisely this potential when, around a decade later, he was elected to reform the musical program of the Venetian Republic.

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<sup>459</sup> *“immaginazione”* Price is being delicate with his translation. “Fantasies” would be more accurate.

## Chapter 4: Willaert, *Coro Spezzato*, and the Refashioning of Venetian Ritual:

### Composed Polyphony and Venetian Particularity

Willaert's humanistic inclinations took on a particular significance after his election to the position of *Maestro di Cappella* at San Marco. In part, this was simply a question of Venetian authorities wanting to ensure that their musical program was on the level of what had already been achieved in the literature, architecture, and the visual arts of the Republic. Willaert, as a relatively young north-western composer who had trained and proven himself in the style of Josquin, but who still had the majority of his career ahead of him, would certainly have been a suitable choice for this purpose, but there was considerably more to the task that stood before him when he arrived in the lagoon. The musical chapels that were the major centers for cultivation of the new Franco-Flemish polyphony in Italy, such as that of Alfonso d'Este in Ferrara, of which Willaert was a previous member, had, for the most part, developed gradually over the past century along with the repertoires they performed.<sup>460</sup> A musical tradition existed at San Marco as well, but it was one that relied primarily on local and largely monophonic or improvisational practices.<sup>461</sup> The determination of the ultimate shape of the choir at San Marco, and of the music that would be sung there, was to be Willaert's

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<sup>460</sup> See Lewis Lockwood, "Strategies of Music Patronage in the Fifteenth Century: The *Cappella* of Ercole I d'Este" in Fenlon, I. *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Patronage, Sources, and Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>461</sup> see Iain Fenlon, "St. Mark's before Willaert," 547-63.



responsibility. In effect, his task was the creation from scratch one of Europe's preeminent musical institutions.

This already Herculean undertaking was made even more daunting by the particular requirements of working for the republic of Venice. Franco-Flemish polyphony had, to the extent that lines of communication allowed, functioned as an international style into the sixteenth century. There were, of course, local practices and traditions, which had an increasing influence on all levels of music-making, but this effect was limited by several factors. First of all, musicians tended to jump relatively rapidly from job to job, and they had to consider the marketability of their skills on the international scene, a factor that was especially significant after the rise of music printing in the early sixteenth century. More significantly, the centralized church had an interest in emphasizing its own internal continuity over local particularity. In the area of monophonic liturgical chant, this centralization was taken to a new extreme in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, during which time the long-dominant "Gregorian" chant tradition was officially codified and very nearly universalized through a series of edicts.<sup>462</sup> Polyphonic music-making, due to its relative rarity, was never micromanaged to the same degree and tended to be regulated more or less along the same lines as the decorations on church walls. Nonetheless, as polyphony increased in prevalences, so too did the Church's interest in controlling it, and even relatively light pressure from Rome could have an homogenizing effect on the style of sacred music. Venetian musicians also had to contend with these issues, but they had the added pressure of balancing them against an equally powerful local tradition of valuing and cultivating the singularity of the republic.

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<sup>462</sup> Venetian liturgical traditions were among the few to survive this onslaught due to long use, but only in San Marco and the few other churches that were overseen directly by the doge. See below.

The myth of Venice, as it was evolving in the early sixteenth century, depended on the idea that the republic was singular in every aspect. Venice didn't look like other cities, and Venetians didn't dress, or make their money, or govern themselves, or build their houses, or move through their city in the way that other Italians did. It followed that Venetian religious practice should also have a distinctive look, feel and sound, and this desire for ecclesiastical distinction was a catalyst for much of the tension that had arisen between the republic and the Roman Church from the mid-fifteenth century. Music, visual art, and architecture, while still issues of considerable debate, were among the more innocuous ways in which this singularity was expressed, and thus they allowed the Venetian Church to maintain a measure of independence after more contentious policies, such as the direct election and state prosecution of priests, had been eliminated. In the area of architecture, Venetians' vast web of cultural influences combined with the unique challenges of building in the lagoon had led to the cultivation of a highly distinctive style, the Venetian Gothic, that had made the city's important structures immediately recognizable for centuries. Sansovino's constructions, which were still in the future at the time of Willaert's election, were to be far more overt in their engagement with wider Italian trends and more subtle in their local accent, but they would still maintain a distinctive Venetianness in their free interplay of ancient and modern ideas as well as their juxtapositions with more traditional structures like San Marco and the Ducal Palace.

The republic could also claim a relatively longstanding tradition of painting, which was elevated and modified by the artists of the "Venetian School" from around the turn of the sixteenth century.<sup>463</sup> Through their adoption of oil-based paints and emphasis on color, light,

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<sup>463</sup> The most notable early figures in the Venetian School include the brothers Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, Giorgione, and Titian.

and life-like depiction of movement, painters such as Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, Giorgione, and Titian took Venetian painting in a direction different from that of Florence and the wider Italian mainland and ultimately developed a style that was uniquely suited to the needs and values of the republic. Music, however, still offered relatively few precedents. At the time of Willaert's election there was still no real sense of a distinctively Venetian style of music other than the liturgical chants of the *Patriarchino*, due to the fact that the State had never invested in it as it had in the other two arts. local styles provided an important reinforcement, not only of Venetian values and traditions, but also of the idea that Venice was unique in the eyes of God as well as those of humanity.<sup>464</sup> The confidence-shaking mishaps of recent decades had made such reinforcements seem more important than ever, and so state patronage of cultural products increased steadily across the century, even as the once legendary wealth of the republic dwindled.<sup>465</sup>

Today, due in part to the generally understated quality of his writing and to the influence his music exerted on composers of the later sixteenth century, it can be difficult to detect the degree to which Willaert succeeded at his task of creating a Venetian musical idiom. It is true that the grandiose, extraverted styles of later Venetian composers, most notably Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli, are far more immediately apparent in their contrast to other contemporaneous music. However, the kaleidoscopic tone color effects, attention to resonant space, prevalence of homophonic textures and forceful, speech-based rhythms, and many other characteristic features of the "High Venetian Style" all have as their origin the techniques developed by Willaert during his years at San Marco. Employing features drawn

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<sup>464</sup> Arthur Steinberg and Jonathan Wylie, "Counterfeiting Nature: Artistic Innovation and Cultural Crisis in Renaissance Venice," 54-88.

<sup>465</sup> Martha Feldman, *City culture and the madrigal at Venice*, xxi.

from French and Flemish as well as native Italian musical traditions on a foundation of what he had mastered through his imitation of Josquin and Mouton, the style Willaert cultivated through his work at San Marco is notable for the degree to which he built it around the requirements of Venetian ritual practice as well as the values and aesthetic priorities of the republic. In this chapter I focus on the *Coro Spezzato* settings from Willaert's psalm collection published by Gardano in 1550 in order to explore the role of musical practice in the reimagining of Venetian cultural, political, and religious life that occurred in the wake of the War of the League of Cambrai. In particular, I examine the relationship between the innovations of Willaert's musical style and trends in contemporary religious thought, as well as the cross-media resonances that exist between the communicative strategies of Willaert's sacred music and the ecclesiastical paintings of Venetian school artists.

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Despite the near-universal renown that he had earned for his services to the republic in times of war, Gritti's authoritarian personality, bristly personality, and dissatisfaction with the status quo made him one of the most unpopular doges in the history of the republic.<sup>466</sup> Nonetheless, many the reforms that he put in place continued to define the republic up to its demise at the end of the eighteenth century, and some of them may even have helped to ensure its long survival. The projects of della Rovere, Sansovino, Fausto, and other reforms of varying levels of success all shared a grounding in humanism, both in their antiquarian interests and their valuation of practical knowledge and innovation, and they were all, at least potentially, revolutionary in their vision and scope. As government initiatives, they are bound together by an acknowledgement that there was a tremendous stock of new knowledge, ideas,

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<sup>466</sup> Celebration broke out in the streets when he died on Christmas Eve in 1538. Robert Finlay, "Fabius Maximus in Venice," 1026.

approaches, and technologies available in early-sixteenth-Century Italy and a public will to seize on these innovations in a methodical and targeted way for the benefit of the republic that has no parallel in Europe at that time.

One of the only areas in which a Venetian doge could wield direct authority was the administration of the ducal chapel of San Marco. Gritti was particularly jealous in his approach to the exercise of that power, frequently acting unilaterally in situations that would normally have been the responsibility of the Procurators or bureaucratic officials.<sup>467</sup> Such was his interest in the institution that, just over a year after his election, he issued a new set of rules (*constitutiones*) for the employees of the chapel, including specific regulations on when singers were expected to be present on various feast days and penalties to be levied against employees who arrived late or otherwise misbehaved.<sup>468</sup> The next few years saw a considerable reshuffling of the nascent San Marco musical operation, including the retirement of *Maestro di Cappella* Pietro de Fossis, the hiring of several new singers, and the dismissal of several others, and it is likely that much of this activity also occurred under the direct influence of the doge.<sup>469</sup>

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### The Election of Adriano Willaert

One decision that was definitely made under the direct influence of Gritti was the election of Adriano Willaert as *Maestro di Cappella* of San Marco in December of 1527.<sup>470</sup> This

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<sup>467</sup> *ibid.* p. 989.

<sup>468</sup> This document even includes a disturbingly modern-seeming system of points, which were given out for violations and could add up to a dock in an employee's pay.

<sup>469</sup> Giulio M. Ongaro, *The Chapel of St. Mark's at the Time of Adrian Willaert*, 61.

<sup>470</sup> *ibid.* p. 79.

is clear, as musicologist Giulio Ongaro observed in his 1986 dissertation, from the way in which the appointment was announced to public. Under normal circumstances, a transaction such as this would have been under the purview of the office of the *procuratori*, and would thus be announced through a decree in their names. In the case of Willaert, however, the decree came directly from the office of the doge. The degree of his personal involvement in the selection and recruitment is not known, but given Gritti's Francophilic tendencies, it is not unlikely that a musician with Willaert's Parisian background might have held a particular appeal for him. Gritti's connections with the French court may even have played a key role in attracting Willaert to San Marco, despite its lack of an extensive polyphonic tradition.<sup>471</sup>

Under the circumstances outlined above, it is not surprising that Gritti and his government would have sought to hire a composer of some prestige and fluency in up-to-date Franco-Flemish styles to head up the musical arm of San Marco. However, it is important to note that the election of Willaert as *Maestro di Cappella* of San Marco was a departure for the republic just as striking as the election of Jacopo Sansovino as Superintendent of Properties would be two years later. Just as Sansovino was the first architect to be trusted with his position, so to was Willaert the first composer to be trusted with his. The difference was that while the superintendency was a powerful and important position in the Republic before, the centrality and influence of Willaert's position seems to have come primarily alongside his appointment.

Pietro de Fossis, who held the position for over thirty years before Willaert's election, who has not yet been found to have been active as a composer, seems to have had

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<sup>471</sup> *ibid.* p. 74.

essentially the job that the name *Maestro di Cappella* implies.<sup>472</sup> That is to say, he was primarily responsible for the education and discipline of the boys under the care of the chapel. No clear evidence exists of how rapidly Willaert began composing heavily for the chapel, as the first of his major collection of music connected with San Marco was not released until 1539, but it was very likely to make more time for composition that he began to delegate his teaching responsibilities to senior members of his staff not long after taking office.<sup>473</sup> The non-compositional responsibilities of the office continued to be reduced over time so that, when Claudio Monteverdi took on the job nearly one-hundred years later (by which time the San Marco personnel had been augmented to include an assistant *Maestro*) the position appears to have been both undemanding and nearly immune to disciplinary oversight.<sup>474</sup> Already by virtue of Willaert's appointment, however, the nature of the position had fundamentally changed. While we cannot be sure how quickly its impact began to be felt in the rituals of San Marco, his unprecedentedly comprehensive collections of liturgical polyphony make it clear that a major purpose of Willaert's election was the organization, and a great deal of the composition, of an entirely new and rhetorically empowered musical program for Venetian civic/religious ritual.

### **Greater reorganization of San Marco around the time of Willaert's election**

All this occurred in the context of a larger reorganization of the San Marco organization. I have already mentioned the steps in this process that were taken in the years

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<sup>472</sup> Lewis Lockwood, et al. "Willaert, Adrian." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed 8 July 2014.

<sup>473</sup> Giulio M. Ongaro, *The Chapel of St. Mark's at the Time of Adrian Willaert*, 100. Willaert, working for the first time with the Scotto press, published three books of motets (W1106: , W1108, W1110) in 1539, indicating that, by that time, he had written a great deal of music for the chapel. He had also released a book of masses (W1103) in 1536, but these appear to have been written before his arrival in Venice.

<sup>474</sup> D. Stevens, *Monteverdi in Venice* (Hackensack: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001), 67.

leading up to Willaert's arrival and Andrea Gritti's unusual involvement in them. In the years following, the doge seems to have taken an even more active interest, beginning with his personal intervention to have Willaert's salary raised from 70 to 100 ducats per year in March of 1529.<sup>475</sup> This was coupled with a new set of regulations that dramatically increased the *maestro's* authority in the chapel by forbidding singers from contradicting him or usurping his responsibilities in any way, including even giving a beat or pitch or correcting the mistakes of their peers.<sup>476</sup> A number of other new rules followed, that same year and into the 1530s, focussing primarily on the issues of absenteeism and corrupt hiring and payment practices. The degree of Willaert's involvement in this process is not known, but signatures and even emendations in the hand of Gritti attest to the doge's personal investment in the smooth day-to-day running of the chapel.<sup>477</sup>

This increasing oversight of San Marco employees gives an indication of how troubled the Venetian financial situation still was during this era. Although the republic had made an astounding recovery since the panic of 1509 when government bonds were fetching three percent of their face value, the conditions that had led to the panic were still largely in effect.<sup>478</sup> These circumstances are significant because of the difficulty they created for Willaert in his efforts to transform the relatively skeletal choir that he had inherited from de Fossis into a world class musical operation. Although there was a failed attempt to recruit a French soprano within a year of his arrival, Willaert was not actually able to successfully hire

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<sup>475</sup> F. Caffi, *Storia Della Musica Sacra*, 85; Giulio M. Ongaro, *The Chapel of St. Mark's at the Time of Adrian Willaert*, 80.

<sup>476</sup> Giulio M. Ongaro, *The Chapel of St. Mark's at the Time of Adrian Willaert*, 61-2.

<sup>477</sup> *ibid.* p. 82.

<sup>478</sup> Arthur Steinberg and Jonathan Wylie, "Counterfeiting Nature: Artistic Innovation and Cultural Crisis in Renaissance Venice," 55.



any new singers until 1530. Five more were added the next year, but new difficulties arose in 1533, at which point the choir numbered fifteen, not counting boys or musically inclined clerics who could be brought in for support, when the procurators voted to suspend raises and slash the budget by ten percent.<sup>479</sup> Early on, it appears that many of these decisions, even those concerning the hiring and firing of singers, were made over Willaert's head, but gradually, beginning in the early 1530s, this began to change. By the end of 1535 he had even gained the right to examine the musical abilities of potential deacons, subdeacons, and canons in order to ensure that the staff of San Marco included as many people who could sing as possible.<sup>480</sup>

### **Polyphonizing the Liturgy**

In the previous chapter I discussed evidence for Willaert's interest and involvement in literary humanism in his secular music, but a more subtle indication of his inclinations in this direction can be found in his approach to the polyphonization of the liturgy. Willaert's printed output from his time at San Marco, where he remained until his death in 1562, includes massive collections of motets, psalms, and hymns, often with titles that advertise their ability to cover all of the key solemnities of the Church year. This comprehensive approach suggests that he was engaged in what amounted to a polyphonization of the liturgical program of San Marco on a scale that had as its only precedent the *Choralis Constantinus*, Heinrich Isaac's massive 1508 collection of mass proper motets. Willaert and his chapel were charged with more than the simple beautification of Venetian occasional music, a task for which the improvised polyphonists described by the barber-surgeon Willemsz (see Chapter 2) would

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<sup>479</sup> Giulio M. Ongaro, *The Chapel of St. Mark's at the Time of Adrian Willaert*, 85-92.

<sup>480</sup> *ibid.* p. 96-101.

honestly be quite sufficient. Rather, Willaert seems to have been engaged in a program of infusing the ritual life of the republic with an entirely new and controllable rhetorical layer and thereby fundamentally altering the devotional experience of Venetians and outsiders alike.

### **Changing religious attitudes**

The increasing focus on the devotional experience of the laity in Willaert's sacred music may be explained in specifically Venetian terms, but it resonates with much larger-scale trends in both musical and religious thought. In the Christianity of early-medieval Europe, religion was largely seen more as a specific vocation than a communal enterprise. To be sure, Christian theological principles were more or less important to the construction of ordinary people's spiritual worldview, depending in part on how recently their communities had been Christianized, but they weren't expected to give it very much thought, because the people closed off in secluded monasteries bore the primary responsibility for the spiritual well-being of the majority. The basic attitude behind this system is encapsulated in Charles Taylor's paraphrase of a classic formula, "the clergy pray for all, the lords defend all, the peasants labour for all."<sup>481</sup> As Taylor outlines in *A Secular Age*, his philosophical history of secularization, this gap in religious experience gradually became a source of anxiety for members of the Christian intellectual elite, and by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries this concern had spawned a reform movement aimed at promoting religious education, rooting out vestiges of older pagan beliefs, and generally increasing engagement between the Church and the laity. Most notably, this shift is reflected in the rise of mendicant religious orders, the Carmelites, the Franciscans, the Dominicans, and the Augustinians, all of which were founded

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<sup>481</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 63.

between 1150 and 1250, who abandoned the traditional monastic lifestyle in favor of urban preaching and public service.<sup>482</sup>

Initially, this movement was inflected with a characteristically medieval confidence in the capacity of the human intellect.<sup>483</sup> By the early sixteenth century, however, the idea of a straight-forward, intellectual road to the divine was breaking down, and Catholic devotional thought began to gravitate increasingly towards emotions, sensations, and other purely experiential phenomena as potential media for communion with God.<sup>484</sup> This notion of religion as something to be felt rather than thought had a profound impact on the tone of European spiritual practices. The intensely emotional devotional style that it encouraged can be felt in the classics of sixteenth century devotional literature, most notably St. Teresa of Avila's *Interior Castle*, St. John of the Cross's *Dark Night of the Soul*, and St. Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, each of which provides advice for the often torturous process of making oneself receptive to spiritual elevation and accepting it when and if it comes. All three of these works were intimately connected to a second explosion of new religious orders, including the Discalced Carmelites, The Jesuits, and the Third-Order Franciscans, which followed the model of the earlier mendicant movement but with a greater emphasis on corporality and asceticism.

A less extreme response to the same crisis can be seen in the early sixteenth-century movement of Italian evangelism, or spiritualism, proponents of which rejected doctrine as a basis for faith and advocated a spirituality based almost entirely on the personal relationship

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<sup>482</sup> *ibid.* p. 63.

<sup>483</sup> William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty*, 4-5.

<sup>484</sup> *ibid.* pp. 29-30.

of the individual believer with God.<sup>485</sup> At the time, before the Council of Trent, there was a general agreement among religious thinkers that the Church required reform but little over what that reform would entail. Evangelists, a group which included many Venetians, including diplomat and, later, cardinal Gasparo Contarini, who was the era's chief enunciator of the values, myths, and ideologies of the republic,<sup>486</sup> sought to cultivate a less authoritarian Church that would prioritize engagement with the laity on the local level rather than rigid hierarchy.<sup>487</sup> Of course, this vision could hardly be more distant from the route that the counter-reformation Church ultimately chose, but evangelism continued to wield a quiet influence well into the seventeenth century.<sup>488</sup> This influence was particularly notable among members of the Venetian patrician class, who increasingly resented the growing papal authority and ritual homogenization that characterized the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Church.<sup>489</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> Elisabeth G. Gleason, "On the Nature of Sixteenth-Century Italian Evangelism: Scholarship, 1953-1978," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 9, no. 3 (1978): 24.

<sup>486</sup> see G. Contarini, and L. Lewkenor, *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice* (London: Elsevier Science Limited, 1969).

<sup>487</sup> Elisabeth G. Gleason, "On the Nature of Sixteenth-Century Italian Evangelism: Scholarship, 1953-1978," 24-25.

Italian Evangelism developed during the period in which Protestant Christianity was being born to the north, and there are some significant commonalities between the two movements, including emphases on lay bible study and justification through faith. Many proponents of Evangelism were also among those who hoped and worked for a reconciliation of the two communions. Nonetheless, it is wrong to think of the Italian phenomenon as a southern extension of Protestantism, as the former movement was pointedly non-schismatic and lacked the latter's militancy and preoccupation with reasoned order.

<sup>488</sup> *ibid.* p. 25. Among other places, this influence can be seen in the writings of Fra Paolo Sarpi, a leading Venetian religious thinker and political advocate of the early seventeenth century.

<sup>489</sup> William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty*. 41.

## Artistic Reflections of Religious Trends and the Development of a Venetian Style

These trends had a powerful impact on the approaches of artists who worked for the Church. This influence is most immediately apparent in the work of sculptors and painters, who began to gravitate away from static subjects, such as the Virgin Mother and baby Jesus, which encouraged serene and thoughtful postures and expressions, and towards more narrative topics like the *Pietà*, which allowed for more intense depictions of bodies and faces in states of emotional, and often physical duress. Painters in particular also began to increasingly cultivate dense, frenzied compositions and effects designed to overwhelm the viewer.<sup>490</sup> Once again, this phenomenon was particularly notable in Venice, where the early adoption of oil paints and *da vivo* (from life) technique encouraged experimentation with color, texture, and especially the dramatic depiction of bodies in motion.<sup>491</sup>

The particular responses of Venetian painters to these currents also contributed to their development of strategies that allowed the innovations of the Renaissance to be more readily adapted to the needs and values of a republic. Venice had been a major center for painting at least since the career of Paolo Veneziano (before 1333 - after 1358), the official painter of doge Andrea Dandolo, but it was not until the work of the brothers Gentile (1429-1507) and Giovanni (1430-1516) Bellini and especially the slightly later generation of Giorgione (c. 1477- 1510) and Titian (1489-1576) that the idea of the big-room Renaissance began to make its presence felt in Venetian art. In the early sixteenth century, the Venetian painting industry was experiencing a boom, with the studios of the Bellini brothers,

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<sup>490</sup> Both can be seen in the crowds of human and angelic figures that reach for God and the unnervingly spectral cherubic mass that forms the upper border in Titian's *Assunta*, which is high altarpiece of the the Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice.

<sup>491</sup> Arthur Steinberg and Jonathan Wylie, "Counterfeiting Nature: Artistic Innovation and Cultural Crisis in Renaissance Venice," 78.

Giorgione, and Titian, among others, not only receiving increasing numbers of commissions, but also for increasingly large-scale works.<sup>492</sup>

In part to help meet this demand, Venetian painters began to experiment with working entirely in oil paints, a technique which, like Renaissance polyphony, had recently come to Italy from Flanders, and replacing wooden panels with more easily transportable canvas.<sup>493</sup> These changes allowed works to be completed more quickly, but the shift also encouraged significant changes in technique. Oil paints have several major advantages over previous media. First of all, they dry slowly, allowing adjustments to be made mid-process. Also, they have a variable transparency and can be layered to achieve all manner of textural effects such as glass, human skin, water, and clouds. Finally, they are susceptible to tonal modification through the use of different oils and ingredient ratios, so that the same pigments can be employed to achieve incredibly bright or muted colors.

In order to capitalize on these advantages, Venetian artists beginning with Giorgione began to take a very different approach. Most significantly, they began to paint *la prima*. That is, they abandoned the traditional painstaking preliminary process of drawing and underpainting in favor of sketching things out roughly in paint and building from there.<sup>494</sup> This technique does not encourage the kind of astounding realism and intricate composition that characterizes Florentine painting of the era, but in exchange it allows for spontaneity in

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<sup>492</sup> *ibid.* p. 86.

<sup>493</sup> *ibid.* p. 65-6.

<sup>494</sup> *ibid.* 66.

the depiction of motion and expression and verisimilitude of substance and setting.<sup>495</sup> These differences in technique were significant, first of all, because they allowed Venetian painters to participate in the artistic Renaissance while remaining distinct from what was happening on the mainland. Even more importantly, they pushed artists to cultivate a style that was specifically tailored to public consumption. The ideals of *disegno* (literally, drawing), which were championed by Giorgio Vasari, emphasized finely rendered detail, subtlety of expression, minute anatomical precision, and other elements that reward close and extended examination.<sup>496</sup> The implication of such private and leisurely modes of appreciation for works in the style make it particularly well suited to serve the purposes of the Renaissance of small rooms.

To be sure, Venetian painters, like the composer Adriano Willaert, also participated extensively in the small-room Renaissance. Titian in particular was, in addition to his more publicly oriented works, an extremely popular portraitist for the ruling class whose clients included Emperor Charles V, Pope Paul III, and Federico II Gonzaga, as well as doge Andrea Gritti himself. Such works form an important part of the Venetian Renaissance oeuvre, but where the style truly came into its own was in large-scale altarpieces such as Titian's *Assunta*, the work that jump-started his career. Exploding with light and color, crowded with larger than life figures contorted in emotional extremity, and incorporating elements of both the salacious and the macabre, these works were tailor-made to overwhelm large numbers of

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<sup>495</sup> Giorgio Vasari, who systematically ignored Venetian artists in the first edition of his *Lives...*, was still highly critical of this style when he added an extended section of Titian to the second. Preliminary drawing, he asserted, was the only way for an artists full creativity to make it into a painting, and necessary for the accurate depiction of complicated forms such as nude bodies or draped fabric. It was, he suggested, to make up for these deficiencies, that Venetian artists resorted to excesses of color and histrionic emotion. Giorgio Vasari, J. Foster, E.H. Blashfield, E.W. Blashfield, and A.A. Hopkins. *Lives of Seventy of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1902), 259.

<sup>496</sup> P.D. Cast, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Giorgio Vasari* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 179.

people at once, and to intensify the experience of any religious rituals that occurred in their presence. In effect, these were the Renaissance painting equivalent of today's Summer

blockbuster action movies.<sup>497</sup>



Titian - *Assunta* (The Assumption) - 1516-18  
Altarpiece of the Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari

In addition to this decidedly public orientation, many of these massive ecclesiastical works are connected to Venetian ritual traditions by their strategies of juxtaposition. The most characteristically Venetian rituals, the ducal *Andate*, emphasized the city's connection to the divine by commemorating events in the republic's history and more conventional religious remembrances simultaneously. I mentioned earlier that the cautious juxtaposition of the biblical world with the modern, most typically in the form of town or cityscapes, had been a preoccupation for Venetian painters since the mid-fifteenth century.

Giorgione employed innovative warped

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<sup>497</sup> I don't mean to imply any derision with this statement, but it does help to explain why works such as this one had a limited appeal for someone of Vasari's particular tastes. If Michelangelo, Vasari's favorite artist, was Hal Ashby, Titian would be Steven Spielberg.



compositions in order to bring the two worlds closer together, but Titian took temporal collage even further, creating compositional devices such as the three-tiered structure of the *Assunta* to maintain separation while eliminating the middle ground altogether. The *Assunta* avoids direct reference to the contemporary world, but the concept is still present in the way Titian connects the Earthly and Heavenly domains with an apostle's hand and a cherub's foot.<sup>498</sup>

Titian's next major ecclesiastical project, the Pesaro Madonna, which was commissioned by the Patrician Jacopo Pesaro to adorn a secondary altar in the same church, provides a far more explicit example. Mary, the main focal point of the image, sits on a marble pedestal, attempting to maintain control over a squirming naked baby Jesus, with two roughhousing cherubs as the only figures above her. This elevation sets the mother and child apart from the rest of the picture, but she is



Titian - Pesaro Madonna - 1519-26  
Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari

<sup>498</sup> It is also possible that the faces of some of the apostles would have been familiar to contemporary Venetians.

surrounded by a group of people who, due to the placement of architectural features both within and around the painting, seem to be crowded into a very small space. Despite this compression, however, the figures are differentiated by the fact that three of them, Saints Peter, Francis of Assisi, and Anthony of Padua, stand on the steps leading to Mary's pedestal, slightly above the rest. The remaining figures are all explicitly drawn from the world of contemporary Venice. The eyes of both Mary and Peter are locked onto those of the kneeling patron, who is somewhat obscured by the darkness of his clerical robes. Behind him a knight holds a banner featuring the papal and Pesaro family seals and escorts a turbaned prisoner, symbolizing the second Ottoman-Venetian war (1499-1503), which the altar was intended to commemorate. Another group of five figures, all male members of the Pesaro family who were alive at the time, kneel in the bottom right corner of the image. These figures lack the kinetic intensity of everyone else in the painting, which could make them seem like an afterthought, except for the presence of a small boy, the lowest figure in the painting, who fixes his gaze outward, directly toward the viewer. The effect of this uncanny detail, which can easily be missed at first glance but then becomes more and more transfixing after you notice it, is to create an implied fourth tier connecting the audience for the image, which is the city itself, directly to God through the Pesaros, saints, holy family, and angels.

### **Musical Analogue**

The musical response to changing religious perspectives in the sixteenth century was strikingly similar to that in the visual arts. Given that musicians, painters, and sculptors were not only operating in the same towns and social circles, but actually frequently working within the same spaces, often as secular outsiders within communities of clerics, resonances are

common. The earliest and most immediately apparent way in which musicians reflected these changing demands was in the texts that they set. As Edward Lowinsky observed in his 1954 article, "Music in the Culture of the Renaissance," "Starting in the last decades of the fifteenth and throughout the sixteenth century there is a significant and increasingly sharp shift from the objective world of hieratic symbolism to the subjective realm of man's relation to God in the face of sin, suffering, and death."<sup>499</sup> Like religious paintings, earlier sacred motets tended to treat biblical and hagiographic figures as paragons of untroubled serenity, as far removed as possible from the sensations and tribulations of the ordinary world. Even when dealing with narrative topics, such as the crucifixion, motet texts tended to emphasize the abstract significance of the event rather than the experience of it, because it was this spiritual content, not the embarrassingly corporeal human side, that was considered important. This religious perspective was very likely a factor in the popularization of sacred polyphony, which, particularly early on, sounded so different from anything else in most people's lives that it could contribute immensely to this otherworldly ambiance.<sup>500</sup>

Those older modes of devotion still had a place in the sacred music of the sixteenth century, but from around the turn of the sixteenth century another very different style of motet text, which embraced the human experiences, particularly painful or sorrowful experiences, of religious figures, began to proliferate. Texts concerned with the pain of Christ on the cross formed the heart of this developing tradition, but it also embraced, among many others, the misfortunes of Job, David's lamentations over the deaths of Jonathan and

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<sup>499</sup> Lowinsky and Blackburn. *Music in the Culture of the Renaissance*, 24-5.

<sup>500</sup> Of course, using of music to add a veneer of otherworldliness to a ritual is something that was done long before the fifteenth century, across countless religious traditions, and which is still done today, but it is difficult to imagine how effective polyphonic music would have been at this purpose at a time when it was still new and unfamiliar.

Absalom, and various narratives of martyrdom as well as more erotically charged passages from the Song of Songs and other sources.<sup>501</sup>

Such new texts presented a very different aesthetic agenda to composers. First of all, the turn away from a austere spiritual, disembodied depiction of religious subjects also diminished the appeal of cultivated otherworldliness. Stylistic shifts of the era including the reduction of melodic filigree, the employment of speech-based rhythms, the use of popular songs as source material, and the increasing prevalence of the homophonic “familiar” style all served to ground sacred polyphony, often following the lead of native Italian traditions, and make it more intelligible to general audiences. The highly charged content of these texts also presented composers with the related problems of how to depict strong emotional states musically and how to elicit complementary emotional reactions from listeners. These questions of affect gradually became a major preoccupation for musicians over the course of the sixteenth century, and many of the era’s most significant musical innovations, including the employment of adapted classical rhetorical devices, the use of chromatic voice-leading, the development of monody, and the expanded rhythmic vocabulary and coloristic orchestration of late sixteenth century Venetian *concerti*, came about, at least in part, as strategies for dealing with these issues.

### Willaert’s Brief

By the time Willaert arrived in Venice in 1527 Titian had been at work for over two decades on adapting the idiom of Italian Renaissance painting to the needs, values, and tastes of the republic. The resulting style, which slightly later critics came to call “natura,” would

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<sup>501</sup> Lowinsky and Blackburn. *Music in the Culture of the Renaissance*, 25.

wield a tremendous influence on the following generation of Veronese, Tintoretto, and Bassano, each of whom took Titian's aesthetic of color, light, texture, action, and scale to even greater extremes.<sup>502</sup> Within the next decade, a similar if slightly less directly applicable model would be provided by Sansovino's integrated reworking of the *Piazza* and *Piazzetta* of San Marco. As favored beneficiaries of Gritti's state patronage and colleagues who would at least occasionally have been working within the same spaces, the three artists had the opportunity not only to influence one-another's work, but actually to strategize together about the cultivation of distinctively Venetian aesthetics.

However, as the first major composer to be tasked with creating ritual music for routine use in the Venetian State Church, Willaert's task was particularly difficult. Both Titian and Sansovino took the Venetian traditions of their arts in new directions, but both had extensive traditions to work with or against. No comparable body of Venetian polyphony existed to serve as a starting place for Willaert. Due to this lack of precedent, figurative examples from other arts, including literature and rhetoric as well as painting and architecture, take on a particular significance for the examination of Willaert's Venetian style. It is somewhat unlikely that anyone ever set the newly hired Willaert down and explicitly tasked him with the creation of a new Venetian style of music, the composition of a comprehensive body of sacred music in that style, and the cultivation of a world-class ensemble to perform it. Nonetheless, based on the quantity, stylistic distinctiveness, and liturgically targeted nature of his output, as well as the degree to which the precedents he set

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<sup>502</sup> See for instance Veronese's immense (18' x 42') *Feast in the House of Levi* (1573 - Painted for the refectory of the Basilica di Santi Giovanni e Paolo, but currently housed in the Venetian Gallerie dell'Accademia), an extravagant take on the last supper that was controversial enough to earn the artist a trial before the Inquisition.

were followed by later generations of Venetian composers through, at least, the early eighteenth century, one may reasonably state that this was precisely his brief.<sup>503</sup>

It can, however, be difficult to define precisely what the Venetian aspects of Willaert's style are. In part, this difficulty is due to the influence of his protege, the composer and music theorist Gioseffo Zarlino, whose writings have served as a major source for Willaert's historical reputation. Although he inherited his mentor's position at San Marco after the brief tenure of Cipriano de Rore, Zarlino was at least in his theoretical writings primarily interested in polyphonic music as an international phenomenon. Thus, in his assessment of Willaert he emphasized his teacher's substantial contributions to the international enterprise of music-making rather than those qualities that were of specifically Venetian interest. Willaert's reputation as the paragon of the *prima prattica* style comes largely from Zarlino's writings. It is not inaccurate to think of his music this way, but it is worth noting that with respect to the Venetian composers of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, particularly Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli, the elements of Willaert's idiom that are retained and emphasized are not necessarily those that were promoted by Zarlino. If it can be difficult to pick up on the Venetianness of Willaert's music, the fact that the Venice of a half century later had a musical style of its own, completely apart from anything else that was happening in Italy, is inescapable. The supreme exemplifiers of this style, equivalent to the massive ecclesiastical works of the Venetian School painters, are the polychoral *concerti* and *Sacrae Symphoniae* of the Gabrielis, which interestingly tend to be described according to

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<sup>503</sup> My use of the term "brief" derives from the analytical methods of the late art historian Michael Baxandall, who advocated a concept of "intention" for art objects based on their function within a specific context, without reference to what may have been going on the mind of their creators. See Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

similar terms of direct communication, color, texture, effect, saturation, contortion, and power.

As with Titian's *Assunta*, the experiential and sensational qualities of Venetian sacred music are not there for the purpose of evoking emotional responses in isolation but rather of heightening and intensifying the experience of rituals that carried a tremendous amount of additional spectacle and symbolic content. Sadly, however, perhaps due to fires that destroyed part of the San Marco archives during the 1570s, no music of Willaert's has survived in its original context at San Marco.<sup>504</sup> Although a great deal of his work has survived, it comes to us primarily through commercial prints that were published for the international polyphony market. This creates a problem because San Marco, along with a few small auxiliary churches in the neighborhood, was the only institution in the world that still employed the traditional Venetian *Patriarchino* rite in the sixteenth century. This means that liturgical pieces would have, in some cases, had to be reworked to bring their texts in line with the Roman standard (though this is a relatively small issue, as divergences of this sort tended to be relatively infrequent and slight). A much more serious problem is that pieces relating to the idiosyncratically Venetian extra-liturgical content, particularly those for the historically loaded *Andate*, would have made no sense at all in a generic ritual context. Thus, Willaert's surviving oeuvre provides an inherently skewed picture of endeavors at San Marco, as his music with the most connection to Venetian ritual practices is the least likely to have been published.

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<sup>504</sup> C. Boito and W. Scott, *The Basilica of S. Mark in Venice: Illustrated*, 213.

## Willaert's Psalm Collection of 1550

For this reason, one of Willaert's major publications, the collection of psalm settings that he released with the Gardano press in 1550, stands out for its concrete connections to the ceremonial life of San Marco. The collection, titled *Di Adriano Et Di Jachet. I Salmi Appertinenti Alli Vesperi Per tutte le Feste Dell'anno, Parte a versi, et parte Spezzadi Accomodati da Cantare a uno et a duoi Chori, Novamente Posti in Luce, et per Antonio Gardane con ogni Diligentia Stampati et Correti*,<sup>505</sup> was a very ambitious project for the time. It represents the earliest known attempt to compile and publish a comprehensive set of polyphonic vespers psalm settings for all the major feasts of the year, although due to historical preferences for some psalms, particularly those that are assigned to Sunday on the liturgical calendar for a normal week, only fifteen out of the thirty-eight vespers psalms in the psalter are present, all but three more than once.<sup>506</sup> As the title implies, not all or even most of the settings in the collection are by Willaert: in addition to Jachet of Mantua, it features the work of Domenico Finot, Giovanni Nasco, and Henricus Scaffen, all transalpine composers who were active in northern Italy and highly influenced by Willaert.

The psalm settings within the collection are divided into three categories of ascending elaboration, *Salmi a versi senza risposte* (settings of even or odd verses only), *Salmi a versi con le sue risposte* (Settings of entire psalms for alternating choirs), and *Salmi Spezzadi* (to be discussed below).<sup>507</sup> All of these take as their starting place the tradition of monophonic

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<sup>505</sup> RISM I, 1550

<sup>506</sup> psalm 112, four times; psalms 109 and 110, 3 times; psalms 111, 115, 121, 125, 126, 129, 131, 138, and 147, twice; and once each psalms 113, 116, and 127. All parallel settings employ their own *modi*, except those of psalms 125 (nos. XV and XXXI of this volume) and 138 (nos. XVU and XXIX).

<sup>507</sup> They are not placed in ascending order. The collection begins with the *Salmi a versi con le sue risposte*, and the *Salmi a versi senza risposte* are divided into two groups, one for settings of odd verses (choir I) and one for settings of even verses (choir II), which are placed on either side of the *Spezzadi* settings.



psalmody, in which the psalms have typically been sung by two choirs who trade off verses.<sup>508</sup> Over time, the melodic formulae for singing psalms, which vary according to the mode of brief but often elaborate introductory chants called antiphons,<sup>509</sup> became codified as “psalm tones,” of which different liturgical traditions have different versions, although those of the *Patriarchino* are similar to the Gregorian standard.

This traditional form of psalmody would have been practiced in San Marco, and many other places in the city, on every normal day of the year, and the psalm settings in Willaert’s collection represent an elaborated form of the same tradition. Each setting in all three categories is intended to be sung by two choirs, although the psalms *con* and *senza* *risposte* are printed in their entirety in the part books for both choirs in order to make it possible for a single group to sing them. Each setting also follows the contours of a psalm tone, a characteristic that distinguishes Willaert and his northern associates from most of their native Italian contemporaries, although this presence may be more or less apparent depending on the style in which the particular verse is set.

The simplest settings, in all respects, are the *Salmi a versi senza risposte*, which provide four-part polyphony only for every other verse, leaving the rest to be performed by a choir in plainchant. In San Marco, these would have been employed on relatively minor feast days

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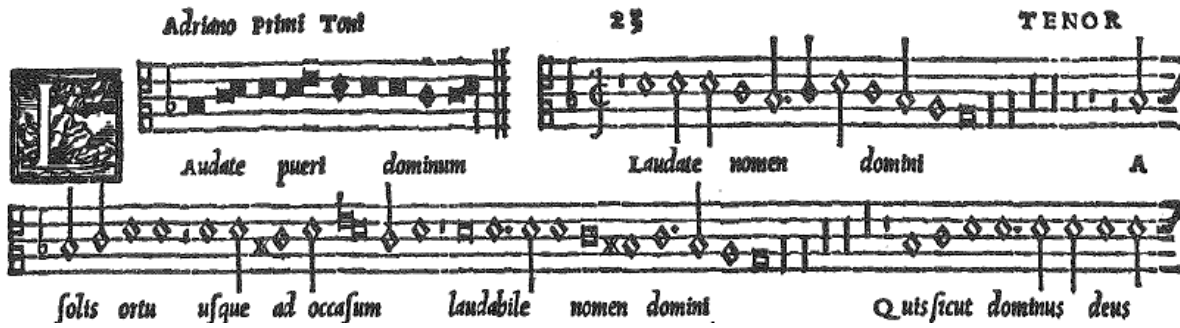
<sup>508</sup> G. Wainwright, and K.B.W. Tucker, *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2006), 265.

It is likely that this tradition emerged, or was popularized, because of the sheer quantity of psalm singing that was involved in early Christian worship. In some early monasteries, in particular, there is evidence that the entire psalter was recited on a daily basis, so alternatim singing may have begun as a practical strategy for making this physically doable. This is a controversial idea that has been contested by scholars including the Jesuit Historian Robert H. Taft. Assuming that it is true, the rule of Saint Benedict of Nursia (c.480–547) set a more reasonable requirement of one full recitation per week, which remained standard until the establishment of pope Paul VI’s further reduced “Liturgy of the Hours” in 1971.

<sup>509</sup> In San Marco and elsewhere there is evidence that antiphons were being replaced by motets on important feast days by the early seventeenth century. Although each of the psalms in the collection is tied to psalm tone and an antiphonal mode, it is possible that this practice was already in place in Willaert’s time. James H. Moore, *Vespers at St. Mark’s*, vol. 1, 152.

that were deemed important enough to merit some polyphony but not to require the entire *cappella* to be present. Although this contrast of textures can be extremely beautiful, the lack of such settings by Willaert makes it clear that they were a lesser artistic priority. The second group essentially represents a polyphonized version of traditional psalmody, in which both odd and even verses are rendered in four parts. They provided a middle ground between relatively minor feasts and the grand ducal *Andate*, which, due to peculiarities of the San Marco calendar, included some of the year's most important religious occasions. The most curious feature of these settings is that, in all but three of the twelve, the odd and even verses are not composed by the same person. As there is no purely practical reason for this approach, and it seems unlikely that they would have done it this way for fun, the most reasonable possibility seems to be that the strategy was intended to intensify the inherent contrast of two choirs by giving each a unique compositional voice.

Although the psalms in these two groups probably more or less represent the normal musical practice in San Marco in the time of Willaert, there is not much specifically Venetian about them. Based on the settings they contain and the way in which they are presented, it appears that they are primarily intended to be of practical use in as wide a range of religious institutions as possible. The final section labeled *Salmi Spezzadi*, on the other hand, is marked even by its more elegant layout and typography as something completely different. These eight settings are, first of all, entirely composed by Willaert. Unlike the other psalms in the collection, they cannot be performed without a minimum of eight skilled singers, making them useful only to institutions with relatively large musical operations. In addition, while the other settings conform entirely to the texts and melodies of mainstream Gregorian practice, the *Spezzado* psalms seem to occupy an in-between space, with elements of the psalter used in San



Opening of Willaert's Ps. 112, *Laudate Pueri Dominum* in the 1550 edition.

Marco as well as the Vulgate version.<sup>510</sup> For instance, Jachet's *senza risposta* setting of *Credidi Propter quod locutus sum* contains two verse segments, “vota mea Domino reddam coram omni populo eius,” and “et in nomine Domini invocabo,” which are present in the standard biblical and liturgical psalters but not in the Old Roman or Venetian versions, but both are skipped in Willaert's *spezzato* setting of the same psalm. None of this necessarily prevents these pieces from being useful, but it does point to a secondary purpose for the collection, to commemorate and promote the musical practices that had developed in San Marco under Willaert and the novel style that had become one of the prime liturgical markers of Venetian solemnity.

### *Coro Spezzato*

These works stand out within Willaert's oeuvre, not only for their style and originality, but for the verifiable role that they played as key signifiers of the republic's most important ritual occasions, making them particularly useful as windows to the past.

Stylistically, the *Salmi Spezzati* are set apart from the other settings in the collection not by the fact that they are set for two choirs but by the way the two bodies interact, overlap, build

<sup>510</sup> Hermann Zenck and Walter Gerstenberg eds., *Adrian Willaert: Opera Omnia* vol. viii (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1950), XIII.

For particularly notable variants, see Willaert's settings of psalms 115 and 138.

momentum, and ultimately join together in concert. Although the pieces were referred to by both Willaert and his student Gioseffo Zarlino as *salmi spezzati*, the wider style, which was developed in the cities of Venice's northern Italian empire in the 1510s and 1520s, is more generally referred to by the closely related term *Coro spezzato*.<sup>511</sup> These eight psalms, *Confitebor tibi Domine* (Ps. 110), *Credidi propter quod locutus sum* (Ps. 115), *De Profundis* (Ps. 109), *Domine Probasti Me* (Ps. 138), *In convertendo* (Ps. 125), *Laudate Pueri* (Ps. 112), *Lauda Jerusalem* (Ps. 147), and *Memento Domine David* (Ps. 131), are all among the most prominent in the liturgy for important feasts at San Marco.<sup>512</sup>

Two of them, *Laudate Pueri* and *Lauda Jerusalem* are elements of the *Vespro delli Cinque Laudate* liturgy, a construction specific to the northern Adriatic region of Venice and Aquileia, which the *Patriarchino* assigns to a large number of important dates including the Ascension (*Senza*), Pentecost, Corpus Christi and most of the Marian feasts.<sup>513</sup> No published *spezzato* settings of the other three exist from the sixteenth century, but Zarlino mentions that versions by Willaert once existed in the 1573 and 1579 editions of *Le Istituzioni Harmoniche*, and he states that Willaert had written “many more” psalm settings in the style, none of which have thus far been discovered.<sup>514</sup> Based on this, it seems likely that the eight psalms in the collection were chosen, probably due to their applicability to Roman practice, as a representative sample of what was a considerably larger segment of Willaert's body of work.

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<sup>511</sup> The term *Coro Spezzato* probably originates from the Italian phrase, *spezzare una cantilena*, meaning: to add rests to a musical composition. This refers to the fact that part books for these settings required long passages of rests while the other choir was singing. Hermann Zenck and Walter Gerstenberg eds., *Adrian Willaert: Opera Omnia* vol. viii, XI.

<sup>512</sup> For a full overview of psalm correspondences on the Patriarchino calendar, see James H. Moore, *Vespers at St. Mark's*, vol. 1, 216-227.

<sup>513</sup> For the complete list, see *ibid.* p. 129.

<sup>514</sup> In the 1573 edition: Gioseffo Zarlino, *Le Istituzioni Harmoniche* (Venice: Francesco de i Franceschi Senese, 1573), 329.

### Background of *Coro Spezzato*:

Although Willaert did not, as was once commonly believed, invent *coro spezzato*, he did begin working with it when it was still very new, and he was almost certainly the first northern composer to do so.<sup>515</sup> All of Willaert's predecessors in the style were of his generation, the oldest, Gasparo Alberti (c1480-1560), being about ten years his senior, and there is no reason to believe that much if any of its early development occurred before Willaert had arrived in Italy and was operating within the region. There was, in truth, relatively little existing tradition for polyphonic psalmody of any kind. The harmonic stasis and obsessive repetition of the psalm tones made them unappealing *cantus firmi*, and they never seem to have been particularly appealing for polyphonic elaboration. There are traces of polyphonized psalms from the earliest days of organum, but they remained very rare throughout the medieval and early Renaissance periods. The few examples that exist from the fifteenth century typically either amount to elaborated versions of the psalm tones employing an improvised or formulaic technique such as *Fauxbourdon* or *Falso Bordone* or, at the other extreme, motets employing psalm texts but with little to no reference to their liturgical function or content.<sup>516</sup>

For the *coro spezzato* style itself there are even fewer precedents from before the second decade of the sixteenth century. The earliest known polyphonic psalm settings of any kind for two divided choirs do not appear until the 1470s, in part books that likely originated

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<sup>515</sup> The confusion about Willaert's role in this process is largely due to a misunderstanding of a passage by Zarlino, wherein the author states that Willaert had discovered (*ritrovato*) a particular technique for composing in the style, not the style itself. Giovanni D'Alessi, "Precursors of Adriano Willaert in the Practice of "Coro Spezzato," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 5, no. 3 (1952): 188.

<sup>516</sup> John Arthur Smith, et al. "Psalm." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press,

in the city of Verona.<sup>517</sup> There are also several relatively brief passages in the music of Josquin and his generation wherein eight-part textures break up into temporary “choirs” that interact with one-another more or less like those in a *coro spezzato* work, and these passages may have exerted a significant influence on the style, particularly as it developed in the work of Willaert. True *coro spezzato*, in which the division and interaction of distinct choirs stands as a defining structural feature rather than a momentary textural variation, has its origins on the fringes of the prestigious international scene where Josquin and his northern peers operated. The earliest extant examples of the style, which include prominently but not exclusively settings of psalms, are all the products of a small circle of native Italian composers who were operating in the urban cathedrals of the Veneto region from the second decade of the sixteenth century.<sup>518</sup>

It must be noted that although they all share the defining attributes of *coro spezzato*, major stylistic differences exist between Willaert’s *salmi spezzati* and other contemporaneous examples. Gasparo Alberti, Giordano Passetto (c. 1484- 1557), Francesco Santacroce (1488-1556), and Ruffino d’Assisi (c. 1510-32), the four known composers who are likely to have composed *spezzato* works before Willaert, were all native Italians working outside of the elite aristocratic contexts that are associated with the spread of polyphony in Italy. As such, they were part of a musical world that was, in the first half of the sixteenth century, still quite distinct from the Franco-Flemish style favored by the international aristocracy. These

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<sup>517</sup> Anthony F. Carver, "The Psalms of Willaert and His North Italian Contemporaries," *Acta Musicologica* 47, no. 2 (1975): 270.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid.

Anthony F. Carver, *Cori Spezzati: Vol. 1, the Development of Sacred Polychoral Music to the Time of Schutz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 17; 21-22.

The earliest composers who are known to have worked in the style were Gasparo Alberti (c1480-1560) in Bergamo, Ruffino d’Assisi (fl 1510-32) in Padua and Vicenza, and Francesco Santacroce (1488-1556) in Treviso.

composers were part of what can almost be called a folk tradition in Italian polyphony, influenced by what they could glean from the northern sound but standing completely outside of its networks of pedagogy and patronage. The presence of such a scene in early-sixteenth century northern Italy is fascinating both for what it implies about the spread of interest in polyphonic sounds and for what it may reveal about the early stages of Italian musical reassertion.

Over the following century, key positions in Italian music making were increasingly taken over by native Italians until, by the early seventeenth century, the old dominance of Franco-Flemish musicians was entirely relegated to the past. This strongly implies that these early scenes represent the beginning of an important transitional moment, but although some recent scholarly attention, most notably in the work of Anthony F. Carver, has opened the door to both investigation and performance of this music, the area has remained a lacuna within the musicological metanarrative. When musicologists have examined this music, they have tended to judge it against and according to the standards of the Franco-Flemish court tradition, and given such inappropriate grounds for assessment this Italian style-complex has repeatedly come up short. It is true, as one might expect, that these early *spezzato* works are far simpler than Willaert's, relying heavily on formulaic *falso bordone* harmonizations, with only very brief and occasional nods to imitative counterpoint.<sup>519</sup> In comparison to Willaert's delicate voice-leading, this can sound somewhat crude, but this contrast serves to emphasize

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<sup>519</sup> see Anthony F. Carver, *Cori Spezzati: Volume 2: An Anthology of Sacred Polychoral Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

This uniform quality implies the possibility that these pieces may represent an elaborated form of a previous unwritten tradition. Certainly, semi-improvised psalm harmonization along the lines of Willemsz's *more georgiano* formed a major part of the ecclesiastical music tradition in the Veneto, but not enough is currently known about this tradition to establish whether or not it included extemporaneous *coro spezzato*.

the degree to which Willaert took aspects of this nascent style and transported them into a completely different musical tradition.

Willaert's take on *coro spezzato* is, in all ways, a classicized version of the original style, but what is most significant here is simply the fact of his engagement with it. Although musicians had been coming to Italy from the north for well over a century, no previous composer had shown a level of interest in his adopted culture comparable to Willaert's. This can be noted through his engagement with the Italian language in the madrigal and other vernacular genres, but his Italophilia nowhere makes itself more apparent than in his adoption of *coro spezzato*, a style of exclusively native origins that had absolutely no connection to the practices or predilections of the international aristocracy. The fact that Willaert heard more potential in Italian music than his forebears had was very likely at least partly the result of there having been more Italian music available for him to hear, but the level of his engagement is still highly noteworthy. He also deserves credit, through his pedagogical activities, for helping to close the gap between northern and southern musicians. Throughout his career in San Marco Willaert took on many Italian students who went on, through their activities as writers, composers, and performers, to make the secrets of Franco-Flemish polyphony accessible to the manipulation of innovative later Italians like Pierluigi Palestrina, Vincenzo Galilei, and Claudio Monteverdi.

### **Coro Spezzato and Venice**

The regional affiliation of *coro spezzato* was very likely an important factor in the appeal of the style to the governors of San Marco and other members of the Venetian Patrician class. The fact that it was a native Italian creation, first of all, provided a buffer



against the Franco-Flemish styles that were most associated with the pseudo-monarchical elites of the peninsula. A further element of patriotic pride may also have been involved, as many of the most important sites of the style's development happened to fall within the republic's domain on the terra firma. Most importantly, this was a style of music that had emerged during the period of The War of The League of Cambrai, in precisely the region that Venetians were fighting and dying to retain.<sup>520</sup> Depending on how aware people were of this background, this connection may have added a tremendous amount of symbolic and emotional weight to *coro spezzato*, particularly early on, when the war was still a relatively recent memory. Very possibly, doge Andrea Gritti may even have personally witnessed the new style in action during the extended period he spent in Padua during the war and later suggested it for use on important occasions in San Marco.<sup>521</sup> This would have provided a concrete connection between musical practice in the chapel and the actual symbolic content of the ritual, as a new *Andata* for the feast of Santa Marina (17 July) was added to commemorate Gritti's retaking of the city.<sup>522</sup>

There exists, in addition, a potential resonance between the structures of *coro spezzato* and the political ideologies of the Venetian republic. In a recent dissertation, Masataka Yoshioka has argued for such a connection based on an inherent hierarchy that he

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<sup>520</sup> Ruffino d'Assisi was *Maestro di Cappella* at the Cathedral of Padua when the city was retaken by Venetian forces under the command of Andrea Gritti. Anthony F. Carver, *Cori Spezzati*, Vol. 1, 22.

<sup>521</sup> Howard and Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice*, 28.

<sup>522</sup> There is evidence that this was done quite intentionally on Gritti's part. Santa Marina (Margaret of Antioch) was significant to the Venetian Paduan relationship because doge Michele Steno, during whose reign the Venetians originally conquered Padua, was buried in the church bearing her name. According to the research of historian Robert Finlay, Gritti could have retaken the city long before he did, but he chose to wait for the seventeenth of July in order to take advantage of this connection. Robert Finlay, "Fabius Maximus in Venice," 994.

perceives in the style and links to Venice's tiered system of *popolani*, *citadini*, and *nobili*.<sup>523</sup> His conclusion derives from the cleffing in Willaert's *salmi spezzati*, which, he notes, without fail place the first choir in a slightly higher tessitura than the second. This distinction, he argues, amounts to the allotment of a higher status on the first choir, allowing the entire style to serve as an analogy for a rigidly stratified system in which the classes are nonetheless able to cooperate for the sake of the common good.

While I agree that Willaert's consistent cleffing is a significant feature of these works, I have some issues with Yoshioka's conclusions. First of all, I would point out that the first choirs of Willaert's *spezzato* settings contain the lowest pitches as well as the highest. This doesn't necessarily preclude the idea of a hierarchy, but the image of a second choir embedded within the pitch space of the first is somewhat different from that of the first choir simply standing above the second. The most significant implication of Willaert's cleffing is that it created a coloristic contrast between the two choirs, which would have been particularly striking in the highly likely instance that the pitch difference necessitated the use of boys' voices for the soprano of the first choir but not the second.<sup>524</sup> This structural feature, which has so far been completely lost in commercial recordings of the pieces, is a consistent way in which the composer infused these settings with coloristic contrast between choirs, looking forward to the much more elaborately orchestrated coloration in the *concerti* of his disciples later in the century. But the voices of boys, despite being higher in pitch, do not immediately evoke the idea of a higher social status than those of men.

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<sup>523</sup> Masataka Yoshioka, "Singing the Republic: Polychoral Culture at San Marco in Venice (1550-1615)," (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 2010), 63-4.

<sup>524</sup> Anthony F. Carver, *Cori Spezzati*: Vol. 2, 9.

The biggest objection to Yoshioka's conclusion is that the hierarchical nature of Venetian society was in no way peculiar to the Republic. Rigid social structures and legally sanctioned aristocracy were among the few things that Venice had in common with most of the rest of Italy and Europe. What was unique about the Venetian social structure was the lack of a single authoritarian voice at the top. Despite the role of the doge as a conceptual prince, the Venetian government was extremely cautious about placing unilateral authority in anyone's hands. The decision-making powers of councils and committees were invariably checked by other bodies, and even the courts were administered by teams of judges.<sup>525</sup> *Coro spezzato* might be seen as a musical embodiment of this idea of diffuse authority.

The interactions of the choirs in Willaert's *spezzato* psalms present a compelling rhetorical argument for the merits of this kind of system. Unlike traditional psalmody, in which a complete statement is made and there is a pause before the response, the choirs in these pieces step on each other's sentences like politicians in heated debate, gradually building momentum through the frenzy of this continuous argument, but inevitably coming together for the grand doxology, which sounds stronger for having finally arrived at a consensus. These issues were particularly relevant during the Gritti era because many Venetians feared that the doge's ambition, authoritative bearing, and uncompromising attitude posed a risk to these republican traditions.<sup>526</sup> Thus, it would have been a smart political move at that time to promote a style of music that seemed to provide assurance that the traditional values of the state were still a priority.

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<sup>525</sup> see Frederick C. Lane, *Venice, a Maritime Republic*.

<sup>526</sup> Robert Finlay, "Fabius Maximus in Venice," 989.

### Coro Spezzato and Venetian Liturgy:

Whatever the reason, over the following century this tiny repertoire became the basis of an entire “Grand Venetian Style” of sacred music that would set many of the patterns and trends that shaped what we now think of as “classical music.” The staying power and influence of the style owes in large part to a decision by the religious authorities of San Marco to move beyond the typical, decorative role of elaborate music in christian ritual and grant the style an official, structural role within the Venetian *Patriarchino* liturgy.<sup>527</sup> As a locked-in liturgical element of Vespers services on feasts that featured grand ducal processions known as *Andate*, Willaert’s *salmi spezzadi* operated within a pre-existing network of material mediators to rhetorically heighten the entire ritual program, much as Sansovino’s new structures did with the space of the piazza.

For a musical style to have a clearly defined and fixed liturgical role is exceedingly rare in the entire history of Polyphony in the Catholic church. That it happened in Venice under the guidance of Willaert depended on a precise and serendipitous set of circumstances. The most important of these was the confinement of the *Patriarchino* liturgy to San Marco and a few other small churches under the direct jurisdiction of the doge, which occurred by papal order in 1456, shortly after San Pietro di Castello in Venice became the center of the former archdiocese of Grado.<sup>528</sup> This was done at the request of the second Patriarch, Maffeo

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<sup>527</sup> This official adoption likely took place gradually over the period of Willaert’s tenure at San Marco. That it was definitely in place by 1564 is attested to by Bonifacio’s *Rituum Cerimoniale*, a liturgical reference designed to assist the San Marco Master of Ceremonies. See S. Sinding-Larsen, *The Burden of the Ceremony Master: Image and Action in San Marco, Venice, and in an Islamic Mosque: The Rituum Cerimoniale of 1564* (Rome: G. Bretschneider, 2000), 45 etc..

<sup>528</sup> The small churches of Santa Maria in Broglio, Ss. Filippo e Giacomo, San Giacomo in Rialto, and San Giovanni Nuovo di Rialto all fell under the direct jurisdiction of the doge and thus retained the *Patriarchino* after 1456. The focus of the rite, however, was San Marco, and what occurred in these other churches was a simplified version of what happened there. Masataka Yoshioka, "Singing the Republic:" 50.

Giovanni Contarini.<sup>529</sup> Many Venetians, particularly within the patrician class to which Contarini belonged, valued the traditional rite, but to a growing contingent within the church, the retention of a local liturgy was an embarrassment that could no longer be tolerated now that Venice was no longer a relative backwater. Although the act was probably intended to discourage the eccentricities of Venetian ceremonial traditions, it ultimately brought San Marco and its calendar of ducal ritual closer to the center Venetian life. Even more importantly, for practical purposes, it eliminated the distinction between the *Patriarchino* liturgy and the specific, elaborate practices of the ducal chapel.

The role of San Marco in the life of the city was fundamentally changed by this event. The chapel and its environs had long had an important social role as a neutral space within the parochially divided city, as the diplomatic elements in some of the older *Andate* attest.<sup>530</sup> The structure itself had also long been a source of pride for many Venetians, both for its architectural and decorative wonders and for its legendary status as the final resting place of Saint Mark, but it was fundamentally a space that belonged to the doge, a private chapel like that of any powerful figure in Europe, despite its grander dimensions and more public style. After the confinement, it had a new social role as the sole purveyor of a key piece of ancient Venetian heritage. This led to a greater emphasis on the public functions of the chapel, which is reflected in the flood of new artistic embellishments and architectural improvements that were commissioned for San Marco during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and especially in the increasing state investment in the chapel's musical arm during the same period.<sup>531</sup>

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<sup>529</sup> Jonathan Glixon, *Honoring God and the City*, 80.

<sup>530</sup> see Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. 146.

<sup>531</sup> Giulio Cattin, *Musica E Liturgia a San Marco*: vol. 1, 36.

Also, the *Andate*, the cycle of intensely choreographed ducal processions that marked the most important days on the Venetian calendar, were changed in character. Formerly, they had served an important purposes of symbolically resolidifying relations between the doge and various parishes or key religious institutions, of commemorating ideologically significant historical or mythological events, and of displaying an idealized vision of the republic itself as a perfectly ordered society of diverse parts working in effortless cooperation.<sup>532</sup> After 1456, they had a new role as the only artery through which the republic's religious traditions could escape their confinement and come out into the city. The chapel of San Marco, unlike the present-day basilica of San Marco, was as much a community of people as a building, and when it was on the move, the texts, melodies, and choreography of the *Patriarchino* came along. The majority of liturgical activity still took place within the chapel building, but the long processional columns, like that depicted in Gentile Bellini's *Procession of the True Cross in the Piazza San Marco*, now had a more profound connection to the city itself and a new sense of mystical transformative power, which the State encouraged by augmenting the pomp and spectacle of the occasions.

This sense of the *Andate* as a touchstone of Venetian heritage encouraged a continual increase in festive spectacle over the following century and bolstered the already significant element of civic pride in the rituals. At least since the twelfth century, crucial events in the history of the republic had been allowed to share the spotlight with more universal Christian commemorations.<sup>533</sup> After the confinement, however, with only San Marco to worry about, there was less of a need to balance the local aspects of the rituals with the universal and a

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<sup>532</sup> Iain Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City*, 13.

<sup>533</sup> Iain Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City*, 14.

much greater opportunity to accentuate those aspects that were distinctively Venetian.<sup>534</sup> The liturgy of the Patriarchino and the ceremonial traditions of San Marco were now, for practical purposes, one and the same, and this allowed the liturgical requirements for key feasts to be far more specific than would be possible in any more generalized rite. The direct result of this new potential was the *Rituum Ceremoniale*, a liturgical book compiled by the San Marco master of ceremonies that provides specific instructions on all manner of practices that were specific to the chapel, such as the presentation of relics, the precise locations of celebrants, and the opening of the *Pala d'Oro* altarpiece.<sup>535</sup> Fortunately, the original version of this document was completed in 1564, just two years after Willaert's death, and thus it may be taken, more or less, as an outline of practices in the chapel towards the end of the composer's tenure there.<sup>536</sup> This is particularly significant because, in what is perhaps its most unusual specification, the *Rituum...* not only indicates occasions when polyphony should be featured but even goes so far as to specify certain days, the same as those when the *Pala d'Oro* is opened, when the vespers psalms should be sung in the *coro spezzato* style.

### Signification and Mediation in the *Andate*

The unique construction of the Venetian *Andata* meant that every major feast brought with it an enormous set of associations, with legends, historical events, people, and locations in

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<sup>534</sup> By the fifteen-eighties, when he wrote the famous Venetian travel guide, *Venetia Città Nobilissima Et Singolare*, Francesco Sansovino, the son of Jacopo, was able to describe the *Andate* as explicitly local remembrances that just happen to occur on more or less important catholic feast days. Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia, Città Nobilissima Et Singolare Descritta in XIII Libri Da M. Francesco Sansovino* (Venice: Jacomo Sansovino, 1581), Book XII.

<sup>535</sup> The entire text of the 1564 version is available in S. Sinding-Larsen, *The Burden of the Ceremony Master*.

<sup>536</sup> An indication of the impact that Willaert personally had on the practices of the chapel is provided by the fact that he is the only person mentioned by name in the *rituum...* who was not either a cleric or a politician. S. Sinding-Larsen, *The Burden of the Ceremony Master*, 51.

the lagoon, that were not reflected in the actual texts that made up the day's liturgical content. This additional layer of concordance brought significant challenges and opportunities for the employment of polyphonic music. First of all, polyphony offered the possibility of tailoring identical texts, such as the psalms, which are repeatedly reused for occasions throughout the year, to be adjusted stylistically and affectively to match the mood of a given feast, whether boldly triumphant or meekly penitential. It also encouraged composers to more actively consider the spaces in which their music was to be performed. Writing music for multiple spaces with differing acoustical properties makes it much more difficult to ignore the effects of such factors on the sounding result. Willaert and his successors had to write music for some of the smallest ceremonial spaces in the city as well as some of the largest, and this requirement cannot help but have had an impact on their approaches. Thus, it should come as no surprise that one of the most distinctive elements of the "high Venetian style" of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries is its active use of resonance in building musical textures.<sup>537</sup>

On the most basic level, the *Andate* provided a challenge to musicians due to their clear hierarchical distinction from the other feasts of the year. Particularly after the confinement of the Patriarchino, the *Andate* represented separate sphere of ritual experience, and this separation was emphasized in numerous ways through the elaborate staging of the events. The idea that a passing procession could alter one's state of being from one liturgical reality to another emphasized the transformative power of ritual acts, and things that were only seen in the event of an *Andata* gradually came to be regarded as profound material mediators of this transformation. These included physical accoutrements such as the ducal

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<sup>537</sup> Anyone who has attempted to rehearse a Gabrieli concerto in a dry space can confirm that they frequently border on incoherence without thick layers of echo to tie the parts together.



*Triumfi*, a set of processional objects traditionally believed to be gifts from pope Alexander III, the magnificently gilded *Pala d'oro* altarpiece, which was kept hidden under Paolo Veneziano's beautiful but unadorned *Pala Feriale* and dramatically revealed at second vespers for a kind of grand finale, as well as the government officials themselves, assembled in their rigid processional order. Bringing polyphony into this web of signification posed an interesting challenge because it demanded a musical style that would intensify the emotional and sensational experience of the ritual and that was distinctive in a way that would be immediately apparent, even to people with no musical background.

By the early sixteenth century the Venetian ritual establishment had elevated the *Andate* to a high dramatic art over centuries of adjustment, but there were a few rhetorical imbalances that may have grown increasingly apparent with the rise in humanistic sophistication within Gritti's circle. One issue was rooted in the fact that there was much greater variance in the *Patriarchino* liturgy for the office than for the mass. Thus, Willaert, like most of the composers working in San Marco after him, wrote few if any masses after his arrival in Venice, as there was no major reason not simply to use masses published for the international market. Musicologist Giulio Cattin has shown in his study of one of the earliest Venetian sources for sacred polyphony that this pattern had been in place, although with far simpler repertoires, for much of the fifteenth century at least.<sup>538</sup> Thus, while there was no shortage of music, both indoor and out, as the work of Cattin, Iain Fenlon, Jonathan Glixon,

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<sup>538</sup> See Cattin's discussion of *Ven I* in G. Cattin, *Il Manoscritto Veneto Marciano, Ital. Iv 145* (Rome: Istituto di Studi Musicali, 1962), 12-18.

*Ven I* is a small book of polyphonic tunes for two and three voices that was apparently put together within a Venetian Franciscan community in the mid-fifteenth century. It contains music by international Franco-Flemish composers like Dufay and Binchoys, primarily hymns and mass fragments, as well as music more specifically tailored to Venetian practices in a much more stripped down, Italianate style.

and others has shown, there was an inverse relationship between the elaboration of liturgy and that of music.

For the liturgically generic mass ordinary, musicians of San Marco had access to the work of the most sophisticated composers of the Franco-Flemish tradition, but for the much more characteristically Venetian and event-specific liturgy of the office they were relegated to the more rusticated and formulaic styles of local composers or to formulaic polyphonizations of liturgical melodies. This was an issue especially for Vespers, with which every *Andata* began and ended. Even important feasts were not necessarily days off from work, so Vespers, which happened in the early evening, tended to be the focal point of major feasts as they were experienced by the major public.

It was, in addition, during the vespers service that the golden *Pala d'Oro* altarpiece was exposed to the public, very likely timed to catch the glint of the setting sun through the windows of the western facade, providing a visual climax to the entire event. This level of elaboration implies a need for a similarly dramatic program of music for which the psalms and hymns of a traditional vespers service are excessively understated and meditative. There is some indication that this imbalance had been on Venetians' minds for some time. As mentioned in a previous chapter, one of the earliest known polyphonic settings of the Magnificat, the text with which nearly all of the vespers services in the *Patriarchino* end, is credited to Johannes de Quadris and is dated "1436, in the month of May in Venice" in an Oxford manuscript.<sup>539</sup>

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<sup>539</sup> Iain Fenlon, "St. Mark's before Willaert," 552.  
The Oxford manuscript containing the Magnificat is Bodleian Library, Canonici misc. 213

There is another, more basic imbalance related to the the timeframe of *Andata* festivities. The calendar of the *Patriarchino* counted days, more or less, from sunset to sunset. This was a problem because, in most cases, all the traditional signifiers of the *Andata*, the procession, the *triumfi*, and the *Pala d'Oro*, only began to appear in the morning, when the feast had been going on for quite some time. The addition of elaborate music or other decorative components could have helped to provide the sense of a special occasion earlier on, but an *andata*, as it had developed by the sixteenth century, was not simply an augmented version of a normal church day. *Andata* was a profound and materially mediated transformation with implications in all areas of religious experience, but, as things stood at the time of Willaert's election, this material mediation had no real presence in the first half of the ritual occasion.

### **Liturgical adoption in Venice**

Given these factors, it is no surprise that the cultivation of a suitably dramatic and immediately recognizable style of music for the vespers services of *Andate* was a major priority for Willaert after his arrival in Venice. What is more unusual is the fact that the religious authorities of San Marco chose to officially codify the style he developed as an element of the *Patriarchino* liturgy. Exactly how rapidly or premeditatedly the codification took place is not entirely clear, but at least by the time of Bartolomeo Bonifacio's *Rituum Cerimoniale*, dated 1564, two years after Willaert's death and fourteen after the publication of his book of psalms, the *salmi spezzadi* were being employed as mediators that were present when and only when *Andata* transformations were in effect, in exactly the same manner as the *triumfi* and *pala*

*oro*.<sup>540</sup> This unique liturgical role brought rhetorical demands that were different from those of previous sacred polyphony. In order to function like the other, primarily visual, material mediators of the *Andate*, a piece of music had to be able to communicate powerfully and instantaneously and to evoke an emotional response, not only in musically sophisticated audiences but in anyone who happened to be listening. *Coro Spezzato* was uniquely well suited to these requirements.

### Coro Spezzato and Musical Style

Like the earlier examples of the style from the Veneto, Willaert's *salmi spezzati* have a strikingly homophonic feel, particularly as compared to the styles of earlier Franco-Flemish composers. This predominance stands as one of the factors that sets these pieces apart from the rest of Willaert's oeuvre, but it is a decidedly different sort of homophony from that of his Italian predecessors. Whereas the static harmony and unvaried rhythm of *falso bordone* gives earlier *spezzato* works a monotone quality and a sound that bears a striking similarity to that of traditional monophonic psalmody, Willaert's far more minutely worked out version of the style achieves a quality unlike anything earlier. In large part, this is a question of Willaert's approach to rhythm, which borrows heavily from rhetorical techniques experiencing a major revival among preachers, politicians, and academics after the publication of Cicero and Quintilian around the turn of the century. This speech-based approach, which Willaert employed in much of his music (but nowhere more prominently than in these psalm settings), points forward to techniques that would be explored by Claudio Monteverdi nearly one-

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<sup>540</sup> Bonifacio, in the original *Rituum Ceremoniale*, states that this is done, whereas previously psalms were sung in plainchant. Giovanni Pace, in a later version titled *Ceremoniale Magnum* (1678), goes so far as to specifically refer to it as a requirement. James H. Moore, *Vespers at St. Mark's*, vol. 1, 174.

hundred years later. Monteverdi took as his model the more emotive and erratic speaking style of a dramatic actor, a concept that was still in the early stages of development in Willaert's time, but the resonance that exists between the rhythmic approaches of the two *maestri* of San Marco across so many decades is nonetheless striking.

Willaert's heavy use of homophony, which very likely betrays the influence of native Italian musicians, may be understood in the context of the big-room Renaissance.

Homophonic textures aid in the directness and accessibility of music, not only by making the words easier to understand but also by eliminating ambiguities of rhythm and harmony to cultivate a united rhetorical front suitable for forceful communication of affective content to a large number of people. Also, in literal terms of room size, these factors help to prevent the muddiness that can afflict contrapuntal polyphony in large resonant spaces like San Marco or, even more so, some of the larger churches that were visited in annual *Andate*.<sup>541</sup> Thus, only very rarely does an entire psalm verse go by in these settings without some instance of a homophonic texture between at least two voices. To a far greater extent than his Italian forbears, however, Willaert also employed a number of strategies to create textural variety and prevent the plodding monotony that excessive homophony can provoke, particularly when corralled by the limitations of a psalm tone.

Full, four-part homophony, while frequent in these pieces, is almost never sustained for more than two or three words of text. These moments are largely confined to the beginnings of verses, key expository phrases, and/or moments where significant grammatical divisions require emphasis, such as the phrase, "Ego dixi" (I said) in verse two of *Credidi...*, which is followed by the thing said in a more florid style. The frequency of these lock-step

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<sup>541</sup> For precise acoustical information on San Marco and a number of other important Venetian churches, see Howard and Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice*.

moments varies widely between the psalms and tends to be far greater in confident and exuberant psalms like *Lauda Jerusalem*, in which five out of nine verses include significant homophonic passages, than in more introspective or insecure ones, such as *Credidi...*, which contains only two in the actual psalm text.<sup>542</sup> The vast majority of homophonic material in all

Choir 2

E - go di - xi in - ex - ces

8 E - go di - xi in ex - ces - su

8 E - go di - xi in— ex - ces

E - go di - xi in— ex - ces

Adriano Willaert - "Credidi, propter quod locutus sum: Quarti Toni" - Choir II: Beginning of second verse - Typical instance of full homophonic texture

of these settings occurs in the context of what Anthony Carver has referred to as polyhomophony, meaning homophonic textures between two or three voices, typically phasing freely in and out of rhythmic alignment, alongside elements of more traditional Franco-Flemish counterpoint.<sup>543</sup>

Willaert employed two basic strategies for constructing these quasi-homophonic textures, both of which are use repeatedly, often in nearly identical constructions, across all of

<sup>542</sup> i.e. before the Doxology, which alters the mood.

<sup>543</sup> Anthony F. Carver, *Cori Spezzati*, vol. 1, 280.

the *salmi spezzadi*. The first is to divide the choir into two paired duets, which are frequently tied together through imitation. Most often, one of these will be, at least initially, homophonic and the other staggered, although occasionally one member of the pair that begins together, typically the bass or tenor, is allowed to immediately abandon its partner and engage in a more rapid contrasting motive. This device was already a mainstay among the previous generation of Franco-Flemish composers, but Willaert's music played a significant role in building and maintaining its popularity, particularly through the influence of his protégé, Gioseffo Zarlino.

Adriano Willaert - "Lauda Jerusalem: Secundi Toni" - Opening of Doxology  
 Typical example of paired duets

The second method, which is more specific to the style of Willaert, is to create a standard homophonic texture, but with one voice offset from the rest. This technique allows most of the communicative advantages of homophony to be retained, but with a slightly out-of-kilter feel that creates a striking contrast with the monolithic forcefulness of full rhythmic alignment. It is a particularly versatile compositional tool, because the resulting effect can

Do - mi-ne ex - au - di vo - cem me - am

Do - mi-ne ex - au - di vo - cem me - am

8 Do - mi-ne ex - au - di vo - cem me - am

Do - mi-ne ex - au - di vo - cem me - am

Adriano Willaert - "De Profundis: Quinti Toni" - Opening

vary a great deal depending on which voice is staggered, whether said voice is divergent by a quaver or a minim, and whether it enters early or late. Willaert nearly always dislocates either Alto or Tenor in his *salmi*, but he was able to achieve considerable variety by cycling through the permutations offered by these voices. This poly-homophonic texture features even more prominently in the styles of Andrea Gabrieli, the first organist of San Marco for much of the second half of the sixteenth century, a student of both Willaert and Orlando di Lasso, and of his nephew and successor Giovanni Gabrieli. Through them, it became a signature trademark gesture of the Venetian style.

Interspersed throughout all of Willaert's *salmi spezzadi* are also the fully staggered, contrapuntal constructions that were the stock in trade of the Franco-Flemish tradition. Their presence, more clearly than anything else, sets Willaert's work apart from that of his Italian forebears in the style, but even in these cases the psalms depart somewhat from his educational background and betray some Italianate influence. Willaert's staggered entrances



Adriano Willaert - "Credidi, propter quod locutus sum: Quarti Toni"

typically feature at least some imitation, but very rarely across all four voices,<sup>544</sup> and even then it is imitation of a rather loose, non-canonic nature. As one might expect, these quasi points of imitation are more frequent in the doxology sections, in which text comprehension is less of a concern.

In the psalms themselves, Willaert tended to employ contrapuntal sections as a driver of momentum, and thus they are more prevalent in texts of a festive, laudatory nature, such as *Laudate Pueri* and *Lauda Jerusalem*, and less so in more somber or introspective texts like *Credidi propter quod locutus sum*. Willaert's use of counterpoint in the doxology sections also comes across as more traditionally Franco-Flemish, whereas their relative sparseness in the primary texts allowed the composer to deploy them more as an effect, or a multiplicity of effects, than as a core structural element of the piece. In some cases, such as *Quoniam confortavit seras portarum tuarum* in the second verse of *Lauda Jerusalem*, Willaert uses these passages as an

<sup>544</sup> Never across all eight.

opportunity to momentarily abandon the strictures of the psalm tone entirely, whereas in others, such as *et filius, ancillae tuae* in the seventh verse of *Credidi...*, the obsessive repetition of the chant becomes a motive in its own right. Willaert also occasionally employs staggered part-writing in decidedly untraditional ways. For instance, in what is, counterintuitively, perhaps the most Italianate moment in the entire set, Willaert uses staggered entrances on *Qui dat nivem sicut lanam* in verse five of *Lauda Jerusalem* to accompany a simple, delicate soprano melody, creating an effect closer to the monody of Monteverdi than to anything in previous northern polyphony.

Qui dat ni - vem sic - ut la - nam

8 Qui dat ni - vem sic - ut la - nam

8 Qui dat ni - vem sic-ut la - nam

Qui dat ni - vem sic - ut la - nam

Adriano Willaert - "Lauda Jerusalem: Secundi Toni" - Choir I: Verse 5  
 "Qui dat nivem sicut lanem."

## Textural Analyses

### Key:

[Brackets] = homophony

*Italics* = Staggered, Franco-Flemish style entrances

**Bold** = Paired Duets

Underlined = One voice offset

○ Outline = Repeated text

~~Strikethrough~~ = Text that is in the standard Gregorian psalter but not here.

### PS 147 **Lauda Jerusalem Dominum**<sup>545</sup> - **Secundi toni (hypodorian) A. Willaert**

1 **Cantus:** {Lauda Jerusalem Dominum:} I. Lauda Deum tuum Sion. (T 1/2 late)

2 II. *Quoniam confortavit seras portarum tuarum*(imitation in SAT): **benedixit filiis tuis in [te.]**  
([AB] ST)

3 I. **Qui posuit [fines tu]os pa[cem]** (AT [SB]): et [adipe frumenti] satiat te.

4 II. **Qui emittit eloquium suum terrae** ([AT] SB): **velociter\*** **currit sermo e[jus.]** ([SA] TB  
imitates SA)

5 I. *Qui dat nivem sicut lanam* (Soprano “solo”; loose imitation in TB): **nebulam sicut cinerem**  
**spargit.** (TS AT)

6 II. [Mittit crystallum su]am *sicut buccel[las:]* ante faciem fri[goris] (A 1/4 late) ejus] quis  
sustine[bit?]

7 I. [Emittet verbum] suum, et liquefaciet ea: flabit spiritus ejus (T 1/2 late) et fluent aquae.

8 II. [Qui adnuntiat] verbum suum Ja[cob]: **justitias** ([AT] SB) [et judi]cia sua Isra[el.]\*

9 I. [Non fecit taliter] *omni nationi* (Imitation in ST): *et Judicia sua non manifestavit e[is.]* (loose  
imitation)

Doxology:

II. **Gloria Patri, et Fili[o,]** (ST BS)

I. *Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui San[cto.]* ([TB] SA imitating TB)

II. **et Spiritui San[cto.]** ([AT] BS S imitates T)

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<sup>545</sup> Translation (Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition): 1 Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem: praise thy God, O Sion. 2 Because he hath strengthened the bolts of thy gates, he hath blessed thy children within thee. 3 Who hath placed peace in thy borders: and filleth thee with the fat of corn. 4 Who sendeth forth his speech to the earth: his word runneth swiftly. 5 Who giveth snow like wool: scattereth mists like ashes. 6 He sendeth his crystal like morsels: who shall stand before the face of his cold? 7 He shall send out his word, and shall melt them: his wind shall blow, and the waters shall run. 8 Who declareth his word to Jacob: his justices and his judgments to Israel. 9 He hath not done in like manner to every nation: and his judgments he hath not made manifest to them. Alleluia.

I. \**Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et sem[per,]*

II *Sicut erat* (A 1/2 early) **in principio**, ([SB] TA signature “in principio” figure in all voices)  
et nunc, et sem[per,]

I. **et in sæcu[la]** (AT [SB])

II. [et in sæcula]

I & II. *sæculorum. Amen. sæculorum. Amen.*

**Ps. 115 - Credidi propter quod locutus sum<sup>546</sup> - Quarti toni (hypophrygian) A. Willaert**

**1 Cantus** {Credidi propter quod locutus sum:} **I.** [Ego au]tem **humiliatus sum nimis.** (SB [AT])

**2 II.** [Ego dixi] in excessu mentis meae: (A 1/4 late) Omnis homo mendax. (S 1/4 late)

**3 I.** **Quid retribuam Do[mino,]** (SB [AT]) **pro omnibus quae retribuit mihi?** (AT SB)

**4 II.** [Calicem salutaris accipiam:] *et nomen Domini invocabo.*

~~5 vota mea Domino reddam coram omni populo eius~~

**6 I.** Pretiosa in conspectu Domini (A 1/2 early) **mors sanctorum ejus,** ([SB] AT) mors sanctorum ejus:

**7 I and II - O Domine quia ego servus tuus** (T1 1/4 early)- **II. ego servus tu[us,]** (SA [TB]) **et filius,** (TS [SB]) **et filius,** ancillae tuae, (2-part counterpoint, first TS then BA) **et filius ancillae tuae.** **I.** Disrupisti vin[cula me]a:

**8 tibi sacrificabo hostiam laudis,** ([SB] AT) ~~hostiam laudis. et in nomine Domini invocabo~~

**9 II.** **Vota mea Domino reddam** (AT [SB]) - **in atriis domus Domini** ([AT] [SB]) - (text order different from standard psalter) **in conspectu omnis populi ejus,** (BS [AT])

~~10 in atriis domus Domini~~ **in medio tui Jerusalem.** ([TB] AS)

**Doxology:**

**I. (time switch 3)**Glo[ria Patri et] Filio, (T 1/4 late) **et Spiritui San[cto.]** ([TB] AS)

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<sup>546</sup> Translation (Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition): 1 I have believed, therefore have I spoken; but I have been humbled exceedingly. 2 I said in my excess: Every man is a liar. 3 What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things he hath rendered unto me? 4 I will take the chalice of salvation; and I will call upon the name of the Lord. 5 I will pay my vows to the Lord before all his people: 6 Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. 7 O Lord, for I am thy servant: I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid. Thou hast broken my bonds: 8 I will sacrifice to thee the sacrifice of praise, ~~and I will call upon the name of the Lord.~~ 9 I will pay my vows to the Lord In the courts of the house of the Lord, (text order as in Venetian psalter) in the sight of all his people: 10 ~~In the courts of the house of the Lord,~~ in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.

II. [et Spiritui] San[cto.] (2) *Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper,*

I. *Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, [et in saecula,]*

I and II. *et in saecula, saeculorum. Amen.*

I and II. *et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.*

These four distinct textures, all of which are susceptible to considerable variation, allowed Willaert to explore the full space between the extremes of fully homophonic and fully polyphonic soundscapes. The most distinctive aspect of Willaert's approach, however, is the way that these textures are constantly changing, breaking down, and phasing into one-another. Single textures are very rarely sustained across entire verses, and in those rare cases they are usually deployed in contrasting ways. As may be expected, shifts in texture nearly always occur at the moment of the flex,<sup>547</sup> but Willaert frequently subdivided even further, employing as many as four distinct textures within a single verse. Such prioritization of variety gives these works a motet-like quality with respect to their auditory interest.

At the same time, however, whereas earlier Italian examples tend to take a free and easy approach to psalmodic structure, switching choirs at unpredictable moments, abandoning psalm-tone melodies for cadences, and employing full eight-part textures at will, a certain liturgical orthodoxy asserts itself in Willaert's classicized take on the style.<sup>548</sup> In Willaert's *spezzato* works, psalm tone contours are only very rarely and briefly abandoned, and even in those cases they are reflected in cadences. He was equally rigid in his dedication to antiphonal structure, nearly always reserving choir switches for the intersections of verses. although the borders between verses in the Venetian psalter are sometimes different from

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<sup>547</sup> Flex, i.e. the slight pause that occurs in the middle of a psalm verse.

<sup>548</sup> Anthony F. Carver, *Cori Spezzati*, vol. 1, 22.

those of common practice.<sup>549</sup> Only once, for the line *O Domine quia ego servus tuus* (Oh Lord, I am your servant) in verse seven of *Credidi*, does Willaert bring the entire body of eight parts together to sing the same text before the final section of doxology, and he does this for a

1

(e) - jus: O Do - mi - ne e - go ser - vus  
 mors san - cto - rum e - jus: O Do - mi - ne e - go ser - vus tu - us  
 jus ——— O Do - mi - ne ——— e - go ser - vus tu  
 cto - rum e - jus: O Do - mi - ne e - go ser - vus tu

2

O Do - mi - ne e - go ser - vus tu  
 O Do - mi - ne e - go ser - vus tu  
 O Do - mi - ne e - go ser - vus tu  
 O Do - mi - ne — e - go ser - vus tu

Adriano Willaert - "Credidi, propter quod locutus sum: Quarti Toni"  
 Choirs I and II: Verse seven - "O Domine, ego servus tuus."

<sup>549</sup> See *Credidi...*, verses 8-10, in which Willaert's, and the Venetian psalter's, verse structure is quite different from that of standard Gregorian practice.

specific rhetorical purpose. The main idea of *Credidi...* is the importance of stating one's dedication to God aloud, even if there are negative consequences to doing so.<sup>550</sup> This is the moment when the psalm's author actually makes such a public declaration of faith, and thus it is logical for the entire musical body to make said declaration together.

Previously, polyphonic music for the psalms tended to fall on either the extreme of slavishly monotonous elaborations on the chant or that of the psalm motets of Josquin's generation, which tend to ignore liturgical strictures altogether. Earlier examples of native Italian *coro spezzato* began to hint at the possibility of a bridge between these extremes, but Willaert's combination of orthodoxy and variety was ultimately something new in the art of psalm setting. In building this compromise, and in finding ways of embracing the limitations of psalm tones while still creating exciting and varied music, he set the basic pattern for the coloristic Venetian style, which the following generation would take still further with the addition of periodic refrain structures and instrumental orchestration.

### **Musical Rhetoric in Willaert's *Coro Spezzato* Psalms**

Willaert's use of homophony and polyhomophony in the service of forceful, direct declamation and text comprehension and his constant variation of texture to avoid monotony and encourage engaged listening are both crucial indicators of the rhetorical strategies at work in these pieces. Discussions of the role of rhetoric in the music of Willaert have typically revolved around his methods of text-setting and the still somewhat controversial idea that he may have endeavored to make his music sound like a skilled orator giving a speech. While I have some sympathy for these ideas, when I refer to the rhetoric of his *coro spezzato* psalms, I

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<sup>550</sup> This is very likely a reference to the inherent danger of openly practicing the Hebrew faith during the Babylonian captivity.

am primarily speaking of the way that he, in true Ciceronian fashion, manipulates and subverts listener expectations in order to provoke an emotional response. Like Titian's altarpieces and the oratorical Franciscan sermons that were the other major attraction of the Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, but unlike most earlier northern-style polyphony, these pieces were designed to communicate clearly and simultaneously to large numbers of people of varying class statuses and education.

The communication in question was not, however, something necessarily meant to educate or inform the audience in the manner of the evangelical preaching styles that were developing in the nascent Protestantism of the north; rather, it was a communication meant to move the emotions of the laity, to cultivate mental states conducive to religious experiences, or, in the words of Andrew Dell'Antonio, to grant the listener "a glimpse of the transcendent Truth that words could only imperfectly adumbrate."<sup>551</sup> It is Willaert's intense focus on these new priorities in his *salmi spezzati* that allowed this tiny body of music to form the seed of the entire grand Venetian style, and that makes this music, despite its composer's education and background, resonate with the music later generations of Italian-born composers more than it does with that of his own northern peers and teachers.<sup>552</sup>

The most fundamental rhetorical aspect and the ultimate defining feature of the *coro spezzato* style is the overlap of the two choirs that occurs at every juncture of two verses.

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<sup>551</sup> Andrew Dell'Antonio, *Listening as Spiritual Practice in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 18.

<sup>552</sup> The smallness of this body of work may have seemed like an advantage in the context of sixteenth century humanism. The canon of classical literature, particularly Classical Greek literature, is, first of all, very small, and this sense of exclusivity certainly contributed to its prestige. In addition, Pietro Bembo, the preeminent Venetian humanist of the era, was an advocate of the extremely selective choice of literary models, which, for him, primarily meant the works of Petrarch, in his own efforts to "classicize" the Italian vernacular tradition. For information on Bembo's influence in Venetian musical culture, see Martha Feldman, *City culture and the madrigal at Venice*,.



Whereas in traditional psalmody, polyphonic or otherwise, one choir arrives at a cadence after which a brief pause precedes the other choir's entrance for the following verse, in a *spezzato* setting, the second choir jumps the gun and has already begun before the first has dropped out. Although this may seem to be a relatively subtle distinction, the difference that it makes in terms of rhetorical and aesthetic possibilities for musical composition can hardly be understated. Most significantly, this is a question of dynamism. Like the paintings of Florentine *disegno*, traditional psalmody, no matter how intricately or delicately composed, is an inherently static medium, with no opportunity to build momentum or musical trajectories other than on the smallest scale. In effect, each verse in a polyphonic setting of this sort acts like a miniature composition in itself, and this is why it was not a problem for the alternating verses of the *con risposte* psalms to be written by two different composers. A *spezzato* psalm, on the other hand, functions as a singular through-composed entity in which musical ideas and trajectories may be built up, torn down, and otherwise manipulated on as large or as small a scale as the composer wishes. The technique of *coro spezzato* thus opens up many of the same possibilities for composers of psalm settings, or any antiphonal music, as that of *a la prima* did for Venetian painters, and Willaert clearly understood the dynamic potential of this device. The moments of overlap in his *salmi* function like a lever for the precise control of momentum, at times ratcheting it up and at others releasing it, although never to quite the extent of the traditional full stop.

The choral interruptions of *coro spezzato* are, thus, both a very powerful tool for manipulating the tone of a setting and a binding agent for turning a series of disjoint musical statements into a singular musical composition, but they are also, in their own right, an extremely eloquent rhetorical device for eliciting the surprise and delight of the perceiver. As

I mentioned above, in order for the *salmi spezzati* to function, like the *triumfi* and the *pala d'oro*, as material mediators for the *andata* liturgy, it was crucial for them to communicate clearly and immediately that things were fundamentally different from the usual. Thus it is extremely significant that *coro spezzato*, perhaps uniquely among musical styles, is fundamentally defined by a single, unmistakable moment, that of the first choral interruption. Even today, these interjections can still be breathtaking when effectively milked by the performers, but it is impossible to imagine what the effect of this moment would have been on people who had trained their expectations listening to traditional psalmody for their entire lives.

Particularly when the style was relatively newly introduced at San Marco, this must have been an extreme jolt to the listener's sense memory, which was ideally suited to both the generally forceful aesthetic of the pieces and the high drama of these ritual occasions. Zarlino and Vicentino, both of whom had numerous opportunities to both witness and participate in the deployment of *coro spezzato* in its original context, both attest to the fact that these moments were highly successful at eliciting an intense emotional response in contemporary audiences.<sup>553</sup> One might reasonably imagine that Willaert, who was the leader of San Marco's performing ensemble in addition to being the composer of much of its music, may have instructed his choirs to approach these moments in such a way as to accentuate this subversion of expectations, but little can be established about this possibility, as the notational technologies of the time offered very little opportunity for the inclusion of performance notes. In part for this reason, although several ensembles have released notable recordings of some of Willaert's *Spezzati* in recent years, none as of yet have realized the potential drama of the overlap.

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<sup>553</sup> Hermann Zenck and Walter Gerstenberg eds., *Adrian Willaert: Opera Omnia* vol. viii, XI.

These choral overlaps occur consistently at every juncture of verses throughout all eight of the *salmi spezzadi*, and Willaert managed to manipulate them to create as much or more variety as he did with the choral textures within the verses. The points of overlap vary in terms of when the new choir enters, the number of voices that participate in the interruption, and the harmonic, rhythmic, and textural relationship between the exiting and entering choirs. The timing of the new entry depends largely on the tone of the psalm being set. For instance, in the exuberant *Lauda Jerusalem*, the majority of entries occur one quaver

The musical score consists of two systems, labeled 1 and 2. Each system has four staves: two for Choir I (Soprano and Alto) and two for Choir II (Tenor and Bass). The lyrics are in Latin. In system 1, the lyrics are "Sic - ut e - rat" for Choir I and "Sic - ut e" for Choir II. In system 2, the lyrics are "i San - cto." for Choir I and "(san) - cto." for Choir II. The score shows overlapping entries between the two choirs, with some notes in the second system starting before the first system has fully concluded.

Adriano Willaert - "Lauda Jerusalem: Secundi Toni"  
Choirs I and II: Doxology excerpt

after the exiting choir arrives at its cadence, cultivating a chipper rhythmic drive and a sense of abrupt interruption, whereas in the more introspective *Credidi propter quod locutus sum*, nearly all of the entrances are delayed by a minim, which allows for a sense of pause and a more conversational relationship between the choirs. Entrances also sometimes occur at the moment of cadence,

frequently for confident homophonic statements such as *mittit cristallum suum sicut buccellas* in verse six of *Lauda Jerusalem*. Willaert also occasionally allowed one or two voices of the entering choir to enter before the exiting choir has arrived at its cadence. Most often, this occurs during the final build of momentum during the doxology, such as the particularly impatient entrance of Choir I's soprano, one minim before choir II's cadence, on the first *Sicut erat* of *Lauda Jerusalem*. There are exceptions to this rule, such as the early entrance of Alto II on *Vota mea* in verse nine of *Credidi...*, but in this case it is debatable whether the entrance comes early or the cadence comes late.

Harmonic relationships between the choirs are much more consistent. The vast majority of the time, entrances occur on the same sonority at which the exiting choir has cadenced, frequently adding a third or, more rarely, a fifth that was missing from the cadential harmony. These consonant juxtapositions are

Adriano Willaert - "Credidi, propter quod locutus sum: Quarti Toni" - Choirs I and II - Transition between verses 8 and 9

1

tri - bu - it - mi - hi?

8

tri - bu - it mi - hi?

8

it mi - hi?

2

quae re - tri - bu - it mi - hi?

Ca - li - cem sa - lu - ta

8

Ca - li - cem sa - lu - ta

8

Ca - li - cem sa - lu - ta

Ca - li - cem sa - lu - ta

Adriano Willaert - "Credidi, propter quod locutus sum: Quarti Toni" -  
Choirs I and II: Transition between verses 3 and 4

constructed in various ways, but in general those in which only one or two voices make the initial interruption tend to create a more abrupt feeling of interruption, and those in which the full choir enters together more conversational. There are also some cases the new choir enters on a new sonority, such as *Calicem salutaris accipiam* in verse four of *Credidi...*, in which an open fifth cadence on A

is answered with a full-choir entrance on E major. In such situations, it would have been impossible for Willaert to create the sort of clash that he did with harmonically unified juxtapositions, as this would lead to unacceptable dissonance. In this case, every voice in Choir I other than the Tenor, singing an E, drops out suddenly just as Choir II begins to sing, creating a feeling more of transformation than of interruption. Perhaps the most interesting harmonic juxtaposition occurs on the longest internal overlap in the set, the statement of *O Domine quia ego servus tuus* in verse seven of *Credidi...* (See above). Here, Willaert, or possibly

Gardano, has written in a C# in Alto I for the eight-voice entrance but not for the previous cadential pitch. Whether or not this notation was actually intended to imply a chromatic relationship is open to debate, but such a device would resonate with the predilections of the composer, the tone of the piece, and the importance of the moment.<sup>554</sup>

The most vivid juxtapositions are those that coincide with a shift in time signature, which occur in four out of the eight *spezzato* psalms. In two of these cases, *Credidi...* and *Confitebor Domine...*, there a shift to triple time corresponding to the beginning of the Doxology, although this occurs one verse early in *Confitebor...* This turn is, of course, in line with the age-old association between triple time and the holy trinity, but it also serves as an interesting rhetorical device for the control of momentum. For instance, the general pacing of the main text in *Credidi...* does not lend itself to the boisterously exultant praise of the Doxology opening. At the same time, however, a total change of mood for the entire final section would also be problematic, as it would compromise the holistic quality of the piece. Thus, Willaert used the brief turn to the energetic triple for only the section pertaining to the trinity to briefly insert some energy and then returns to duple to retain the overall tone and cultivate a strikingly physical feeling, not unlike stepping off the end of a moving sidewalk, in the listener. The most rhetorically interesting shift in meter occurs in the middle of the second verse of *In Convertendo*, in one of the few instances where Willaert chose to break with liturgical structure and switch choirs at the flex. *In Convertendo* is the only *salmo spezzato* that Willaert begins in triple time, and the text that follows the switch, “*tunc dicent inter gentes magnificavit Dominus facere cum eis*” (Then shall they say among the Gentiles: The Lord hath done great things for them), stands as a unique moment within the eight psalms due to its

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<sup>554</sup> The editors of the Willaert *Opera Omnia* have chosen to side with neither position and inserted a parenthetical sharp above the note in question.

1

Tunc - di - cent in - ter gen

Tunc di - cent in - ter gen

8 Tunc - di - cent in - ter

Tunc di cent in ter gen

2

ti - o - ne.

ta - ti - o - ne.

8 ex - sul - ta - to - o - ne .

(ex) - sul - ta - ti - o - ne.

Adriano Willaert - "In Convertendo: Sexti Toni" - Choirs I and II  
Middle of verse 2

concern with the impressions, and the speech, of people looking in from the outside. It is, thus, noteworthy that the entrance of Alto I a full semibreve before the cadence is one of Willaert's earliest and most abrupt interruptions. This somewhat uncouth insertion, together with the abrupt shift in rhythm, made more extreme by a simultaneous

slowing from quavers to minims, amounts to a strikingly clever musical depiction of both the indecorous behavior and incomprehensible speech of outsiders.

Perhaps the most significant choral interruption in all of the *salmi spezzadi* is the tenor entrance on *quoniam confortavit seras portarum* (Because he hath strengthened the bolts of thy gates), in the opening bars of *Lauda Jerusalem*. This entrance deserves particular attention in large part because of the importance of this particular psalm, the last in the vespers sequence, in the Venetian Church, As a part of the *cinque laudate* service and an element of the liturgy for

1

(si) - on.

8 on.

8 (si) - on.

(si) - on.

2

Quo - ni - am con - for

8 Quo - ni - am con - for

8 Quo - ni - am - con - for - ta - vit

Quo - ni - am - con

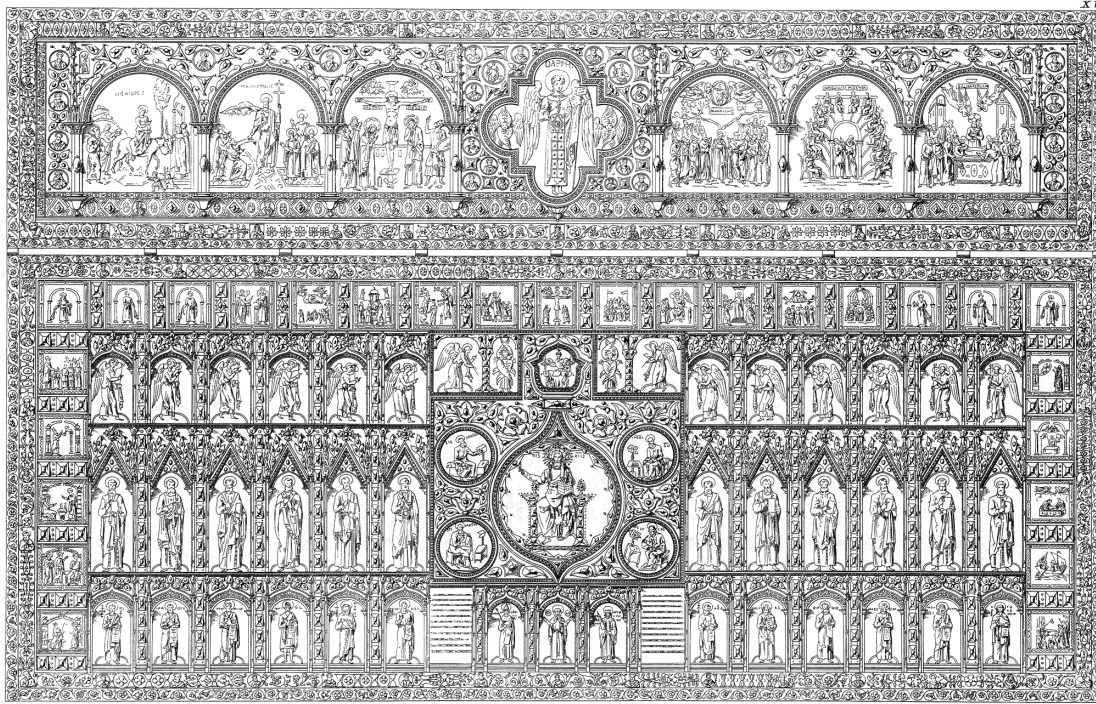
Adriano Willaert - "Lauda Jerusalem: Secundi Toni" - Choirs I and II:  
Transition between verses 1 and 2

several other key feasts, it was, first of all, the most frequently employed text in the *Patriarchino* rite. This prominence is appropriate and somewhat predictable, as its text, which discusses first the advantages of urban life and then the special relationship between the city of Jerusalem, which may easily be understood as the "new Jerusalem" of Venice, and God, reads

like a theme song for the Republic. Probably for this combination of reasons, long before Willaert's arrival, *Lauda Jerusalem* had born a particular association with the dramatic moment when the *pala d'oro* was revealed, the ultimate climax of chief visual spectacle of every *Andata*.<sup>555</sup> Clearly, creating a suitably dramatic musical accompaniment to this moment must have been a priority, and a popular Venetian term of affection for Willaert's music, *Aurum*

<sup>555</sup> Paul Stephenson, *The Byzantine World* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 414.





*Scala di 1 metro*

*La Pala d'Oro, collocata sul Maggiore Altare della Basilica di S. Marco*

Pala d'Oro altarpiece - Completed by unknown artisans from previous Byzantine artwork between 1102 and 1105 - drawing by Dionisio Moretti - Pub. 1831

*potabile* (drinkable gold), very likely testifies to the composers success in this arena.<sup>556</sup>

Willaert's treatment of the initial moment of overlap effectively provides a musical corollary to the first glimmer of candlelight on the golden altarpiece as Paolo Veneziano's *Pala feriale* slowly rose, as if by magic, employing a pulley system similar to those that would be used in the city's opera houses a century later. Willaert takes advantage of the contrast between the weak final syllable of *Sion* and the strong first syllable of *Quoniam* and of the shimmery quality of an open fifth sonority by giving tenor II a syncopated entrance on D, a quaver after Choir I's Bass, tenor, and Soprano have landed in open octaves on G. This moment is rendered more surprising because of alto I, who arrived at a cadential pitch on the same D a semibreve

<sup>556</sup> August Wilhelm Ambros, *Geschichte der Musik* vol. 3, 3rd Ed., 519.

The term itself, which some sources imply applied specifically to the *salmi spezzati*, originally refers to a universal remedy from the lore of Alchemy.



Paolo Veneziano and sons Luca and Giovanni - *Pala Feriale* - 1345  
Basilica di San Marco - Venice

before. This strong entrance on a note that was already present, but tapering off, in the texture, provides an oddly seasick physicality to the moment.

### Question of Space

One issue that has arisen repeatedly concerning Willaert's *salmi spezzati* and the use of *coro spezzato* at San Marco in general is the question of the placement of the choirs. In part, this result from a misunderstanding concerning the name of the style. As I mentioned above, the word *spezzato* actually refers to the layout of the musical notation and not to the spacing of the ensemble, but it is nonetheless a question worth briefly addressing. Until the past few decades it was assumed that, when this music was originally performed in San Marco, the choirs were stationed in the *Pergoli*, two balconies on either side of the chancels that were erected by Jacopo Sansovino in 1536-7, replacing an older wooden version, and 1541-4.<sup>557</sup> More recently, however, based largely on comments made by Giovanni Stringa in 1604, the idea that all of the singers would have stood together on the *Bigonzo*, an enormous red

<sup>557</sup> Howard and Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice*, 37.

porphyry pedestal built from stone looted from the emperor's private space in the Hagia Sophia, has become more popular.<sup>558</sup> I have no wish to dwell on this issue, except to state that I know of no reason to assume that things were always done one way or the other. During the years between Willaert's tenure as *maestro di cappella* and Stringa's comments, San Marco experienced multiple floods and fires, as well as structural alterations. This period of time could certainly have provided ample opportunities for Sansovino's *pergoli* to become decrepit, dangerous, inaccessible, or otherwise less convenient for use. It is also worth considering that the each location may have a different suitability depending on the music performed.

In acoustic experiments conducted in the chapel in 2007, architectural historians Deborah Howard and Laura Morreti found considerably dryer and clearer sound conditions in the *pergoli*, snugly positioned against the walls, than on the *bigonzo* in the middle of the chancel. These less resonant conditions were particularly well suited to music by Willaert (although sadly they did not perform any of his *salmi spezzati*), whereas the richer sound and slower harmonic rhythms of Giovanni Gabrieli, who was writing music for San Marco during Stringa's era, sounded better from the *bigonzo*.<sup>559</sup> Zarlino, who as a decades-long *maestro di cappella* of San Marco, must be regarded as at least as much of an authority as Stringa, made it clear in his discussions of *coro spezzato* that he regarded distance between the choirs as an important factor.<sup>560</sup> No firm conclusion can be drawn from this. It is entirely possible that the *pergoli* may have been used in Willaert's time and fully replaced by the *bigonzo* by the early seventeenth century, that both options were consistently available as options depending on the

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<sup>558</sup> *ibid.* p. 42.

specific information regarding the origins of the Bigonzo: Paul Stephenson, *The Byzantine World* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 264.

<sup>559</sup> *ibid.* p. 42.

<sup>560</sup> *ibid.* p. 3.

music being performed, or that the choirs of San Marco positioned themselves in some way that has not yet been imagined.

### Outro

As with the madrigal and the secular motet, Willaert did not invent the *coro spezzato* style, as was once widely believed, but he brought it to a level of mannered cultivation far beyond that of any previous model. That its origins are not found in the halls of San Marco does not, however, lessen the profound connection between the style and Venetian ritual practice, as well as Venetian aesthetics in general, as they were developing in the wider spectrum of literature, architecture, and visual art in the first half of the sixteenth century. On the contrary, the fact that the earliest examples of composed *cori spezzati* were written in Padua or one of the other smaller cities of Veneto during the same years when Venetian armies were fighting and dying to hold them within their domain would have, if anything, increased the style's symbolic value for anyone who knew about it. Quite possibly, Gritti himself may have encountered the style and recognized its potential during his years there as a military leader, or Willaert could have known about it from his time on the mainland, but however *coro spezzato* came to Venice, its adoption there was one of very few landmark moments in the use of polyphonic music not just as a decoration but an actual functioning and contributing cog in the machine of ritual liturgy.

## Conclusion

The goal of this project has been to situate the origins of the Venetian style of ecclesiastical polyphony, and the central foundational repertoire of Willaert's *coro spezzato* psalm settings, within the context of Andrea Gritti's *renewatio urbis* and the wider tradition of ritual spectacle in the Church of Venice. This, however, is only a beginning to the process of fully contextualizing the work of the the small but extraordinary school of composers working in San Marco during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Even looking strictly at the output of Willaert, this effort could support several more large-scale projects. First of all, Willaert published an incredible quantity of ecclesiastical music, much of which is considerably more difficult to place in its original ritual context, in part due to liturgical modifications for the international market. This oeuvre is considerably more stylistically varied than the *salmi spezzati* and frequently less clear in its relationship to the later Venetian style. Thus, when musicologists have paid attention to this material, they have tended to treat it as abstract music. This is particularly true of the motets of Willaert's *Musica Nova* collection, which are among his most fascinating and characteristic pieces, but which are still very poorly understood in terms of the purpose of their composition. In addition, Willaert was among his generation's most prolific and innovative composers of secular music. Typically for a composer of this era, musicologists have paid more attention to this repertoire than to his sacred output, but very little attempt has been made to look at the two sides as parts of the same musical world and conceptualize the stylistic and cultural relationship between them. I have attempted to close this gap slightly with my culturally informed discussion of *Quid non*

*Ebrietat*, but this is one relatively atypical piece from early in his career. Much work remains to similarly frame the composer's chansons, canzoni villanesche, and especially madrigals.

More significant more me personally is the task of tracing the style forward in time into and beyond the period that has been referred to as the "Venetian high Renaissance."<sup>561</sup> The Venetian ecclesiastical music of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, particularly that of Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli, has, far more than that of Willaert, defied the traditional taxonomies that musicologists have applied to music of this era. Thus, the task of defining the musical influences and material mediators that led Venetian musicians in this direction offers a profound potential for deepening understanding of this slippery, transitional moment in the history of music culture. Additionally, an investigation of this sort would offer valuable opportunities for expanding understanding of musical and spiritual responses to plague. Over the course of the period in question, Venice was hit by two major plague outbreaks, one in 1575-7 and one in 1630-1, both of which resulted in the deaths of over a quarter of the city's population, and Andrea Gabrieli and Claudio Monteverdi, who were, respectively, at the peaks of their careers in San Marco when the epidemics hit, both have compositions that can be confirmed to have been written in commemoration of the events. These works are particularly interesting as potential objects of investigation because together they frame an era in which there was a tremendous level of interest in the musical depiction of extreme states of emotion. The emotional responses that one would expect after a devastating event of this sort are, first of all, quite different from the affective states that are usually

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<sup>561</sup> This phrase was used in art history for some time before it was applied to music. The earliest instance of the phrase "Alto rinascimento veneziano" that I have been able to locate is found in a discussion of the influence of Giovanni Bellini on Titian in the book *Nuovo Archivio Veneto*, which was published in 1905. It first appeared in English two decades later, in a 1927 article on Tintoretto in *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*. The phrase has been common in musicology since the publication Denis Arnold's *Giovanni Gabrieli and the Music of the Venetian High Renaissance* in 1979. Typically, it is used to refer to the decades surrounding the turn of the seventeenth century.

associated with depiction in madrigals and early monody, which makes these pieces fascinating and potentially unique examples of composers' adaptive strategies. Also, the timing of the two outbreaks is ideally situated for the comparative study of changing ideas about musical affect during an extremely dynamic fifty-year period in their development.

Too often, the explosion of cultural production that occurred in Venice for nearly two centuries following The War of the League of Cambrai has been characterized as a kind of civic mid-life crisis on the part of a city whose greatness was behind it. This narrative, which is in part the legacy of the prudishness and anti-Catholic prejudices of generations of anglophone commentators, is laden with dangerous half-truths that demand reexamination. It is true that the Venetian State never again regained the wealth and power that it had enjoyed in the early fifteenth century, but the city's rise as a center of artistic and cultural innovation is a story equally significant but far less well understood than that of its dominion over the Mediterranean. It is my hope that this project has been a step in the direction of this much-needed reassessment.

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