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Italian Baroque Music in Malta: A Madrigal from the Music Archives at the Cathedral Museum in Mdina

Matteo Sansone



1. The Music Archives

For centuries, Malta's central position in the Mediterranean made the island a battlefield in the never-ending confrontation between Christians and Muslims and determined successive military initiatives to gain control of such a strategic outpost by European rulers, from the Norman kings of Sicily to the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, who settled there in 1530. Malta's links with Sicily and mainland Italy grew stronger after the Great Siege of 1565 and the final defeat of the Turks, when the Knights founded the new capital, Valletta, and built their Conventual Church of St. John. While St. Paul's Cathedral in the old capital, Mdina, kept its title and prerogatives (including the musical chapel), St. John's was granted the status of Co-Cathedral, and the

Figure 1: Portrait of Alof de Wignacourt

Knights lavished artworks and embellishments on it to make the order's church reflect their power and prestige. In 1607, Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt welcomed one of the leading Italian artists, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, who was seeking shelter and protection in Malta after killing a man in Rome. His impressive portrait of Wignacourt (see Fig. 1) earned Caravaggio new commissions, and in the following months, he produced what is perhaps his greatest masterpiece: *The Beheading of St. John the Baptist*. As a reward, in July 1608 the painter was admitted into the order as Knight of Obedience. Yet, he soon lost the favor of the Grand Master after getting mixed up in a brawl with other knights. As a result, he spent the summer of 1608 in the prisons of Fort St Angelo. Early in October, Caravaggio managed to escape to Sicily, and in 1610, his short, violent life came to an end on the Tyrrhenian coast of Italy as he made his way back to Rome to receive the pope's pardon.¹ In the second half of the century, another great Italian painter, Mattia Preti, responsible for a large part of the decorations in St. John's, became a Knight of Malta, lived there until his death in 1699, and was buried among his peers in the Co-Cathedral.

Next to the artworks of architects and painters, it is perhaps the massive presence of Italian Baroque music that can best evidence the intense relations between Italy and Malta in the seventeenth century. Surrounded by massive walls with bastions and ramparts, with an imposing church in the main square, Mdina proved the perfect location for the preservation of musical treasures and archives documenting the liturgical activity of the *cappella* in St. Paul's cathedral and the worldly entertainments of the city's affluent residents. Stored away and neglected as tastes changed and new music was adopted, the precious material survived a

¹ Caravaggio's *The Beheading of St. John the Baptist* and *Saint Jerome Writing* are housed in the Oratory of the Co-Cathedral. For the circumstances of his imprisonment and escape from the island, see Keith Sciberras, "‘Frater Michael Angelus in tumultu’: The Cause of Caravaggio's Imprisonment in Malta," *The Burlington Magazine* 144 (April 2002): 229-32.

terrible earthquake in 1693 and Napoleon's takeover in 1798 and the consequent ousting of the Knights of St. John. Scores and documents remained sheltered and unknown throughout the British colonial rule and the two World Wars until Malta became an independent state (1964) and the Cathedral authorities decided to relocate the music archives in the nearby Old Seminary, where a museum was established in 1969. This move made it possible for the material, hitherto simply inventoried in the church archives and stored in the sacristies, to be properly catalogued, evaluated, and made known to international musicology.

The Mdina Cathedral Museum now owns the most important collection of Italian baroque music that has been preserved south of Naples. A long and complex work of reorganization and classification had to be carried out before the collection could be made available to scholars and researchers. It was thanks to the commitment of the then curator of the museum, Mgr. John Azzopardi, with the support of the museum committee that hundreds of musical prints and manuscripts were sorted out and an overall assessment of the historical relevance of the collection could be made. In 1973, microfilming of the material was started with the support of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library of St. John's University, Collegeville (Minnesota), under the direction of Mgr. Azzopardi, as part of a major microfilm project of the newly established Malta Study Center, which was eventually completed in 1989.²

In the late 1970s, the Maltese collection began to attract scholarly attention.³ I researched the archives during 1978-1980 while in Malta lecturing in the Department of Italian at the university. My collaboration with Mgr. Azzopardi produced a volume of studies on the archives, which, held up by various delays, was eventually published in 2001 by the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library of St. John's University.⁴ In the 1990s, Dr. Franco Bruni finalized the cataloguing of the collection according to RISM's international standards and contributed studies on the musical chapel of St. Paul's Cathedral.⁵

² Microfilms are housed in the Mdina Cathedral Museum and in the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library at St. John's University, Collegeville (MN).

³ See Peter Jeffery, "Music Manuscripts on Microfilm in the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library at St. John's Abbey and University," *Notes*, 35:1 (September 1978): 7-30. Jeffery referred to the microfilming and cataloguing of the Maltese collection as a work in progress, but, even at such an early stage, he could realize the importance of the material that was being made available: "HMML's greatest contribution to the study of baroque and classical music is its filming of the Musical Archives of the Cathedral of Malta. Barely mentioned in the musicological literature, this collection is now being catalogued for the first time." (pp. 18-19). See also Paolo Emilio Carapezza, "La Sicilia ritrova a Malta le sue musiche," *L'Ora* (Palermo) July 7, 1979. Prof. Carapezza from Palermo University stressed the special relevance of the Maltese collection to the history of music in Sicily. He also helped in the identification of the *unica* among the printed works, checking them in the *Répertoire International des Sources Musicales* (RISM). Further help came from Prof. Oscar Mischiati (Bologna) and Prof. Jeffrey Kurtzman (USA).

⁴ John Azzopardi and Matteo Sansone, *Italian and Maltese Music in the Archives at the Cathedral Museum of Mdina*, (Malta: Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, St. John's University, in collaboration with the Cathedral Museum, Malta, 2001). Besides the studies, the volume provides a supporting Handlist of the printed works (Mus. Pr. 1-159) and the manuscripts (Mus. Mss. 1 - 584) including some additional ms. compositions by the Maltese Francesco Azopardi discovered after the publication of Bruni's catalogue (see below). A checklist of musical compositions with their corresponding microfilm number can be found on pp. 349-51.

⁵ See Franco Bruni, *Stampe musicali italiane alla cattedrale di Malta. Storia e Catalogo della collezione* (ACM, Mus. Pr. 1-159), (Malta: PEG, 1999). This publication still uses the Maltese siglum ACM (Archivum Cathedralis Melitensis). See also Franco Bruni, "17th-Century Music Prints at Mdina Cathedral, Malta," *Early Music* XXVII:3 (1999): 467-79, and *Musica e musicisti alla cattedrale di Malta nei secoli XVII e XVIII*, (Msida: Malta University Press, 2001). The new library siglum – M-MDca – identifying the Cathedral Museum in RISM was used for the catalogue of the music manuscripts. See Franco Bruni, *Catalogue of Music Manuscripts – Cathedral Museum, Mdina – Malta (M-MDca Mus. Ms. 1-584)*, (Malta Study Center, 1999), <http://www.hmml.org/centers/malta/cathedral/music/bruni-cat-index.html>.

The collection impresses for its size: 159 printed works (amounting to about 900 partbooks) by Italian seventeenth-century composers (except two French editions)⁶, mostly of sacred music, with 20 secular compositions; 629 manuscripts – including nine anthologies by anonymous compilers – of works by Italian and Maltese composers.⁷ But what makes the collection really important for the history of Italian music is the number of unique works, editions, or partbooks in the printed section, unknown to international repertoires (RISM) and noted down as lost in Italian bibliographies.⁸ One remarkable example is the only extant copy of a late edition of madrigals by Gesualdo da Venosa.⁹

Such a wealth of printed partbooks shows the extent to which, for most of the seventeenth century, Malta was a market for the powerful music publishers of Italy, especially the Romans, whose editions cover nearly 50 percent of the 159 printed works. The authority of the papal city was obviously unquestionable, and the Mdina cathedral, when buying new music for its own chapel, tended to follow the prevailing tastes of the Roman *maestri di cappella*. It is significant that a large group of compositions (15, some in more than one edition, three of which being unique copies) are by Bonifacio Graziani, perhaps the most fashionable chapel master in Roman churches.¹⁰ There follows Francesco Foggia with eight works, while the greatest master of the seventeenth-century Roman School, Giacomo Carissimi, is present with only one printed work (*Sacri concerti*, Rome, 1675) and eight manuscript motets, three of which are not recorded in any other catalogue.¹¹

Whereas the Roman School is almost exclusively present with sacred music, the second strongest group of printed works, consisting of Venetian editions, includes a larger quantity of secular compositions, besides the bulk of polyphonic church music: two of the four Monteverdi items are the famous *Madrigali Guerrieri et Amorosi. Libro Ottavo* (1638) and *Madrigali e Canzonette. Libro Nono* (1651). The same is true for Monteverdi's disciple Giovanni Rovetta, three of his seven works being Madrigali concertati (*Libro Primo*, 1629; *Libro Secondo*, 1640; *Libro Terzo*, 1645).

The close links between Malta and Sicily involved the exchange of chapel masters, organists, and singers, along with the export of music scores printed in Sicily.¹² Compositions of Vincenzo Amato, Mariano Di Lorenzo, Antonio La Greca, Giulio Oristagno, and Andrea Rinaldi make up the largest group of unique copies or editions in the collection: 12 out of 33. To mention only the best known case, Andrea Rinaldi was chapel master in Mdina from 1627

⁶ Pr 20: Eustache Du Caurroy, *Fantasies a III. IIII. V. et VI. Parties*. Paris, Pierre Ballard, 1610; Pr. 112: Henri Du Mont, *Cantica sacra II.III.IV. cum vocibus, tum et instrumentis modulata. Adjectae itidem Litaniae 2. vocib. Ad libitum 3. & 4. voc. Cum Basso-Continuo. Liber Primus*. Paris, Robert Ballard, 1652.

⁷ The Mdina manuscripts are of fundamental importance for the history of music in Malta because they document the activity of the earliest Maltese composers, the brothers Giuseppe (1616-1700) and Domenico (1632-1707) Balzano.

⁸ An updated list of 33 *unica*, divided into three sections — unique works, editions, and partbooks — is included as Appendix 3 in Azzopardi and Sansone, *Italian and Maltese Music*, cit., 46-48.

⁹ Pr. 123: Carlo Gesualdo Principe di Venosa, *Madrigali a cinque voci. Novamente ristampati. Libro Quinto*. Napoli, Gio. Battista Gargano, & Matteo Nucci, 1617. Earlier editions listed in *RISM* are: Naples 1611 (*RISM* ref. no. G 1739) and Venice 1614 (*RISM* ref. no. G 1740).

¹⁰ Three editions of Graziani's works are unique: Pr. 79: *Il secondo libro de' Motetti a voce sola. Opera Sesta*. Roma, Giacomo Fei, 1662; Pr. 87: *Motetti a due, tre, quattro, e cinque voci, per ogni tempo. Opera XII*. Roma, Giacomo Fei, 1665 (incomplete); Pr. 86: *Idem*, Roma, Amadeo Belmonte, 1667.

¹¹ Ms. 14: *Ecce Deus noster* (S, vl, vla, liuto or tiorba, org), Ms. 15: *O bone Jesu* (SSS, org), Ms. 116: *Dominus illuminatio mea* (SS, org), included in a manuscript anthology by an anonymous compiler.

¹² The presence of Sicilian musicians is documented from 1619 onwards, that is, from the establishment of a formal *cappella di musica* in St. Paul's Cathedral. But the activity of Italian *maestri* of plainchant and polyphonic singing goes back to the sixteenth century, and the earliest documented musician of some distinction is the Siennese Giulio Scala, active in Malta for nine months between 1573 and 1574. See Azzopardi and Sansone, *Italian and Maltese Music*, cit., 95.

to 1631, when he returned to Sicily to take on the same position in the cathedral of Syracuse. The collection has the only extant copy of Rinaldi's *Il primo libro de motetti a due, tre, e quattro voci* (Palermo: Giovanni Battista Maringo, 1634).

No less interesting are the findings in the manuscript section of the collection. Apart from the three unique copies of motets by Carissimi mentioned above, it is, again, the conspicuous presence of Sicilian *unica* that adds historical documentary value to the Maltese collection.

Vincenzo Amato (1629-1670) was one of the most important Sicilian composers of his time, priest, chapel master in Palermo cathedral from 1665 to his death, and uncle of Alessandro Scarlatti and perhaps his first teacher. Two of his early compositions, published in Palermo and considered lost, have reappeared as unique copies in the collection,¹³ and from among the anonymous manuscripts, Ms 201 has been identified as the earliest, complete, and authentic score of Amato's popular "Passio secundum Johannem," used until recently in the liturgy of Sicilian chapels but performed from late incomplete copies with the polyphonic sections for the "Turba" made up by a nineteenth-century composer.¹⁴

The blend of sacred and secular music emerging as a peculiar feature of both printed and manuscript compositions in the Maltese collection is further evidenced by the finding of a "Dialogo a quattro voci di Sofronia et Olindo dal Tasso" (Ms. 67) by Francesco Fiamengo, a lesser composer probably of foreign origin but active in Sicily (Caltagirone and Messina) and in Venice in the 1630s.¹⁵ The composition for four voices (SATB), small chorus and continuo is based on the well-known episode from Torquato Tasso's *La Gerusalemme Liberata* (II, 11-53) about two young Christians sentenced to death by the cruel Aladino and rescued by Clorinda. The "Dialogo" confirms the vast popularity of Tasso's poem as a source of texts for madrigalists and monodists in the early seventeenth century. Domenico Mazzocchi's contemporary setting of the same episode¹⁶ was artistically superior and more faithful to the source than Fiamengo's abridged text (94 lines against Mazzocchi's 245 over a total of 344 in the poem), still it was the "Dialogo" of the lesser composer to reach Malta from Sicily.¹⁷

As with Monteverdi's famous "Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda" from his *Madrigali Guerrieri et Amorosi* (also in the collection, as mentioned above), the subject of Fiamengo's "Dialogo di Sofronia et Olindo" was most appropriate for the entertainment of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. Though the various *Langues* of the Order fostered the sense of national identity in their own members, any musical rendering of Tasso's epic would strongly appeal to their religious beliefs and military commitment, the prime reasons of the Knights' presence on that Mediterranean outpost.

¹³ Pr. 3: Vincenzo Amato, *Sacri concerti a 2.3. 4. e 5. Voci con una Messa a 3. o 4. Dedicati a . . . Rodrigo De Mendoza. Libro Primo. Opera Prima*. Palermo, Giuseppe Bisagni, 1652; Pr. 4: Vincenzo Amato, *Messa e Salmi di Vespro e di Compieta a 4. e 5. Voci. Al Signor Christoforo Ortiz De Zarate. Libro Primo. Opera Seconda*. Palermo, Giuseppe Bisagni, 1656.

¹⁴ Ms. 201 was identified in 1978 by Prof. Roberto Pagano of Catania University.

¹⁵ See Lorenzo Bianconi, "Sussidi bibliografici per i musicisti siciliani del Cinque e Seicento," *Rivista italiana di musicologia* VII:1 (1972): 22. Fiamengo (also spelled as Fiammingo) composed *Cantate a tre voci* published in Messina and *Messe concertate*, both works now lost. The only extant printed work is *Pastorali concetti al presepe co' responsori della sacra notte del natale di N. S. a 2, 3, 4, 5, e 6 voci col basso continuo* [. . .] *Opera terza*, published in Venice in 1637.

¹⁶ *Olindo e Sofronia. Dialogo a quattro voci Tratto dal Libro Secondo della Gierusalemme Liberata di Torquato Tasso e posto in musica da Domenico Mazzocchi*, in *Dialoghi e Sonetti posti in musica da Domenico Mazzocchi* (Roma: Zannetti, 1638).

¹⁷ See Maria Antonella Balsano, "Sofronia e Olindo: Tasso, Mazzocchi e Fiamengo," in *Tasso, la musica, i musicisti*, ed. Maria Antonella Balsano and Thomas Walker (Firenze: Olschki, 1988), 91-103. Balsano's analysis is followed by the transcription of Fiamengo's *Dialogo* by Paolo Emilio Carapezza.

Throughout the seventeenth century, the hegemony of Italian music remained undisputed both in the liturgy of the church and in the worldly life of the court to the extent that any new form, such as the *dialogo*, the *canzone*, the aria, the madrigalian duet, would be promptly imported from Sicily or mainland Italy as fanciful, socially adaptable products to be enjoyed by the cosmopolitan residents of Malta. Apart from the works of major Italian composers such as Monteverdi or Mazzocchi, the wide variety of genres represented in the Mdina collection can better be exemplified by the compositions of obscure Sicilian musicians – like Francesco Fiamengo or Filippo Muscari – whose works would not have survived if anonymous Maltese vocalists or instrumentalists had not stored them away after performing them in some domestic recital or in church services.

2. Muscari's madrigal *Le rose ch'hai nel seno*

Filippo Muscari's compositions include: a *Dialogo pastorale* (Ms. 52: "Fida sampogna mia," ATB, org), two motets (Ms. 51: "Quae est ista," SSATB, vla,¹⁸ org; Ms 50: "Quis mihi det," ATB, org), and three pieces with harpsichord continuo, defined respectively as *madrigale* (Ms. 54: "Le rose ch'hai nel seno," TB), *canzona* (Ms. 55: "Occhi stativi attenti," ATB), *aria* (Ms 53: "Sdegnar nol posso no," ATB).¹⁹ The presence of a *canzona* in Sicilian dialect should confirm the local origin of the composer. In fact, Muscari's name is unknown to major reference works such as Mongitore's *Bibliotheca sicula* and does not appear in the archival documents of St. Paul's cappella either. He was probably born in Messina where his presence is documented as *Vice Maestro di Cappella* in the cathedral in the second half of the seventeenth century.²⁰

Muscari's madrigal has been selected for transcription out of his six pieces because it testifies to the late development of this major Italian genre in Sicily.²¹ A circumstance adds interest to this madrigal: its text (lyricist unidentified) was set by one other composer, Giovanni Battista Crivelli (?-1652), and published in his *Primo libro delli Madrigali concertati a due, tre, e quattro voci* (Venezia: Alessandro Vincenti, 1626), an extremely rare score. In fact, there is only one copy of it at the Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea in Ferrara (where Crivelli was for some time chapel master at the Accademia dello Spirito Santo) and one in the Maltese collection, which Muscari may have known.²² Crivelli's setting is for two

¹⁸ The viola part reads: "Di Filippo Muscari e Carrozza." Pasquale Carrozza is present with a manuscript motet (Ms. 18: *Amantissime Jesu*, SATB, vla, org, dated 12 November 1654) and two more motets in the anthology by Antonio Poggioli, *Scelta di motetti de diversi eccellentissimi autori a due, tre, quattro, e cinque voci*. Roma, Ludovico Grignani, 1647 (Pr. 120). Carrozza was active in Messina in the seventeenth century, which confirms Muscari's presence in that city.

¹⁹ A 1710 Repertory of music scores in the cathedral lists two more pieces by Muscari that have since disappeared: *Gloriosum diem a 2*; *Ecce eamus a 5 con sinf*. See Azzopardi and Sansone, *Italian and Maltese Music*, cit., 58.

²⁰ The richest source of biographical information on Sicilian composers is Antonino Mongitore, *Bibliotheca sicula, sive de scriptoribus siculis, qui tum vetera, tum recentiora saecula iillustrarunt, notitiae locupletissimae*, 2 vols., (Palermo: D. Bua and A. Felicella, 1708-1714). For the Sicilian printed works rediscovered in the Mdina collection as unique extant copies see also Bianconi's essay quoted above (note 14) and Ottavio Tiby, "The Polyphonic School in Sicily of the Sixteenth-Seventeenth Century," *Musica Disciplina* 5 (1951), 203-11. Filippo Muscari is only briefly mentioned in Gaetano La Corte Cailler, *Musica e musicisti in Messina*, a cura di Alba Crea e Giovanni Molonia, (Messina: Quaderni dell'Accademia, 1982), 129. An alphabetical entry specifies his position as "Vice Maestro di Cappella al Duomo" and documents a payment in the years 1670-1671.

²¹ I transcribed Fiamengo's *Dialogo di Sofronia et Olindo* and Muscari's madrigal *Le rose ch'hai nel seno* in 1980 and organized their performance at the University of St. Andrews (Scotland) on December 5, 1980 and then at Edinburgh University, St. Cecilia's Hall, on March 16, 1982, in a concert promoted by the Italian Cultural Institute. My transcription of Muscari's madrigal is being published for the first time.

²² A later edition of Crivelli's *Primo libro* (Venice: 1633) is just as rare and the only three extant copies – in London, Bologna, and Trieste – are incomplete (see *RISM*, C 4425).

equal voices (sopranos) and continuo, like many other pieces in his *Primo libro* (12 out of 18, of which one for soprano and tenor and one for tenor and bass).

As the title clearly shows, Crivelli's *Madrigali concertati* was in line with the early Baroque fashion for the "continuo madrigal," in particular with the madrigalian duet which had an authoritative precedent in Monteverdi's Book VII significantly entitled *Concerto* (Venice: 1619). No less influential was Alessandro Grandi's earlier *Madrigali concertati a due, tre, e quattro voci* (Venice, 1615), which had various reprints up to the 1620s.²³ The large-scale unaccompanied polyphonic madrigal of the sixteenth century had given way to ensembles for fewer voices, shorter and more imitative in texture, in the new concertato style with the accompaniment of one or more instruments, though the earlier, purely vocal form survived well into the seventeenth century.²⁴

Muscari's musical setting for tenor, bass, and cembalo continuo follows the fashion of the madrigalian duet, whose heyday was the 1620s and 1630s. It is imitative in texture and short. Typical images from contemporary madrigal poetry (roses, Clori's charms, breast and face) are assembled in eight smooth, musical lines alternating settenari and endecasillabi in a tercet (7-7-11) and a quintain (7-11-11-7-11):


Le rose ch'hai nel seno,
o mia leggiadra Clori,
spariscono qual lampo in un baleno.
Ma quelle del bel viso,
di cui son api i lascivetti amori,
demonstrano pietà ma non furore;
sono 'sì vaghe e belle
che sembrano del ciel lucide stelle.


Following the form of the text, Muscari's setting consists of a short first section (mm. 1-17), separated by double bars and repeat marks from a longer second one (mm. 18-43). The continuo has few indications of harmony; it often doubles the lower voice in its imitative interplay with the tenor, or reproduces its essential harmony notes moving steadily as a walking-bass. Throughout the piece, imitation is made up of tiny phrases, like the four-note dotted figure on "spariscono" (m. 4), and longer ones like "di cui son api i lascivetti" (bars 20-21) and "sono 'sì vaghe e belle" (mm. 30-31). The first melismatic passage is allocated to the bass voice on «lampo» (mm. 6-7) and is then picked up by the tenor in imitation and carried through to the end of the first section.


²³ Grandi was Crivelli's predecessor as chapel master at the Accademia dello Spirito Santo in Ferrara. Two of his sacred works are present in the Maltese collection: Pr. 73: *Celesti fiori de concerti a 1.2.3.4.voci...Venezia, 1625*; Pr. 74: *Salmi a Otto Brevi con il primo choro concertato . . . Venezia, 1629*.

²⁴ See Gloria Rose, "Polyphonic Italian Madrigals of the Seventeenth Century", *Music & Letters*, XLVII, 2 (April 1966), 153-159. For the madrigalian duet see John Whenham, *Duet and Dialogue in the Age of Monteverdi* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), I, *passim*.


14

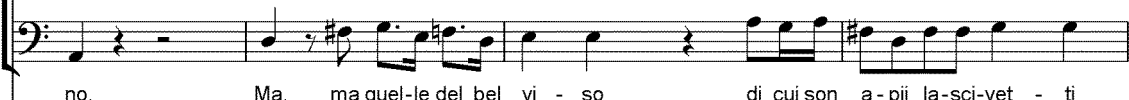
T.  qual lam - - - - - poin un ba-le - no.


B.  - - - - - po qual lam - - - - - poin un ba-le - no.

Hpsd.  43


18

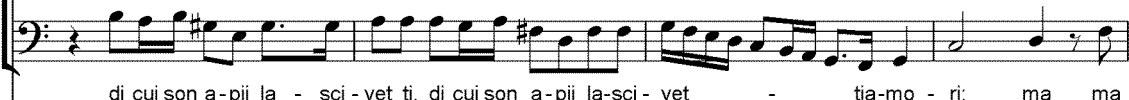
T.  no. Ma ma quel-le del bel vi-so di cui son a-pii la - sci-vet - ti, i la-sci-ve-tia

B.  no. Ma, ma quel-le del bel vi - so di cui son a-pii la-sci-vet - ti

Hpsd.  6 56 68

22

T.  mo - ri, di cui son a-pii la - sci-vet - ti ma ma

B.  di cui son a-pii la - sci-vet ti, di cui son a-pii la-sci- vet - tia-mo - ri; ma ma

Hpsd.  57 43 43

26


T.  quel-le del bel vi - so di cui son a - pii la-sci - vet - ti, i la-sci-vet-tia - mo - ri


B.  quel-le del bel vi - so di cui son a - pii la-sci-vet - tia - mo - ri de-

Hpsd.  6 56 65 43

(c) 2009 Transcription of Muscari's madrigal by Matteo Sansone

30

T. 

B. 

Hpsd. 

6 56 6

33

T. 

B. 

Hpsd. 

43 6

37


T. 


B. 


Hpsd. 

43 6 43

40

T. 

B. 

Hpsd. 

343

(c) 2009 Transcription of Muscari's madrigal by Matteo Sansone

Pleasant, with no harmonic or contrapuntal complications, therefore easy to perform, this madrigal was suitable for singers both professional and amateur and would have a wide appeal just as a fashionable piece of music for entertainment and delight. Similar features characterize the other secular compositions by Muscari (the Sicilian *canzona* and the *aria*). Together with his three religious pieces, such modest, up-to-date compositions evidence the routine activity of a professional seventeenth-century chapel master who, like many other Sicilian colleagues, kept up relations with Maltese patrons.

In the course of the century, the massive import of Italian music would gradually give way to the works of local composers, the earliest being the brothers Giuseppe and Domenico Balzano.²⁵ But a full shift from imported Italian music to an alternative Maltese production cannot be dated earlier than the eighteenth century, when young musicians – usually clerics from the Mdina cathedral – began to move to Naples to study in one of its four conservatories and returned home to take up the position of chapel master for the rest of their lives.²⁶ The links with Naples became much closer than those with Sicily as nearly all Maltese composers were students of the Neapolitan conservatories, including Francesco Azopardi who was trained at the Conservatorio di Sant’Onofrio. He became known in Europe as the author of a theoretical treatise, *Il Musico Pratico*, an easy handbook for the study of harmony and counterpoint. In 1786, without the author’s knowledge and consent, Azopardi’s treatise was translated into French as *Le Musicien Pratique* by Nicolas Étienne Framery and published in Paris as an *Ouvrage composé dans les principes des Conservatoires d’Italie*. Framery was an active partisan of Italian composers in the querelle that opposed French to Italian opera, and the publication of Azopardi’s treatise was a clever move in the promotion of Italian didactic practice in music teaching. On the authoritative recommendation of the Italophile composer André-Ernest Grétry, the book was later adopted for the study of composition in the newly-founded Paris Conservatoire (1795).²⁷

The highly competitive artistic milieu of late eighteenth-century Paris saw the Neapolitan School championed by a work that testified to the fruitfulness of the musical hegemony of Italy in the Mediterranean.

²⁵ See above, note 7.

²⁶ The first cleric to be trained in Naples was Pietro Gristi who studied composition at the Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo from 1713 to 1718 and returned to Mdina to direct the musical chapel until his death in 1738. See Azzopardi and Sansone, *Italian and Maltese Music*, cit., 100.

²⁷ A new edition of the treatise, arranged by Alexandre-Étienne Choron, was published in 1824. See Azopardi and Sansone, *Italian and Maltese Music*, cit., 123-137. For the two French editions see Oliver Brantley Adams, *Francesco Azopardi’s «Il Musico Pratico»: An Annotated Translation and Critical Study of its French Editions by Framery (1786) and Choron (1824)*, 2 vols., University of Texas, 1991. The Italian version of the treatise has also been studied by the Maltese scholar Spiridion Vincent Buhagiar as part of his unpublished doctoral dissertation, *Francesco Azopardi (1748-1809): A Maltese Classical Composer, Theorist and Teacher*, University of Malta, 1999.

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