

Rites of Autumn, Winter, and Spring: Decoding the Calendar of Venetian Opera

1. THE DATING PROBLEM

Throughout the Americas and Western Europe we take for granted that the year begins on January 1. What is so dependable in our own lives becomes slippery in historical studies. It was the Church of Rome under Pope Gregory XIII (1572-1585) which spearheaded the movement to bring the calendars of Christendom into some kind of conformity with each other. This meant regularization of practices that were all, at base, grounded in astronomical observation but were overlaid with the residues of centuries of independent cultural practices. These differentiated one set of rubrics from another and imbued particular dates with specific meanings that might be appreciated only locally. The task of regularizing time-keeping in predominantly Christian countries, having been completed in 1923, took a mere 350 years to achieve.

The idea of calendar reform was no more popular in the 1570s than the idea of establishing a common European currency has been in the 1990s. Many who followed the debate feared the loss of cultural identity more than they welcomed a system of standardization that would be of value (after an initial period of adjustment) only to record-keepers and accountants.

Various authors note how strenuous, and learned, was the resistance to standard-ization of the calendars of Europe. Zarlino (1579) believed that the Julian calendar was preferable. Montaigne (1585) refused to keep his diaries or accounts by it. Newton (1686) argued in favour of separating “chronological” from “historical” time, that is, he wanted the newer practice of isolating events by date to be distinguished from the “continuum” of time. Leibnitz (1703) disagreed, but argued that time should be understood as motion. Vico (1725) re-examined ancient Jewish methods of time-keeping, and Voltaire (1756) did likewise for Chinese methods.¹ In short, many leading intellectuals were uneasy with calendar reform. Small wonder, then, that scribes, editors, and printers of the time were “careless” in their treatment of dates.

Calendar reform rolled through Europe by fits and starts, making inroads here, sparking

¹ See Maiello, p. 21, and Arno Borst, *The Ordering of Time: From the Ancient Computus to the Modern Computer*, tr. Andrew Winnard (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 104-117.

opposition there. Overall it was adopted much more rapidly in catholic lands than in protestant or orthodox ones, claiming France and Bavaria in 1583, Austria and Bohemia in 1584, and the Palatinate of Neuburg in 1615. Only later was it accepted in the reformed north (Denmark in 1699, the Netherlands in 1700, England and Ireland in 1752), and much later still in lands in which Eastern Orthodoxy flourished (e.g., Greece and the former U.S.S.R. in 1923).²

There had been as much variety within the Italian peninsula as there was outside it, for the Julian calendar had not generally prevailed there. One common system of reckoning the year was from Christmas (December 25). Another common practice was to reckon the new year from the feast of the Annunciation (March 25).³ Under yet another system used sporadically in Italy before Gregorian reform, the year would begin on a moveable date—the Sunday following the feast of Sant’Andrea (November 30).⁴

In many French-speaking parts of Europe the new year began, prior to the adoption of the Gregorian calendar, on Easter. German electorates had followed the custom of starting the year on Christmas until the middle of the sixteenth century, when the new year was reconciled to the feast of Circumcision (January 1). England followed the practice of beginning the year on the feast of the Annunciation (“Lady Day”) until 1752.

Although chronology *per se* is regularly associated with historical narrative, the need to reconcile diverse notions of time arises only in comparative studies. Arno Borst credits Protestant Germany in the sixteenth century with cultivating the concept of centuries and promoting their use in historical accounts. He associates the rise of a sense of chronology with early modern humanism.

² The seminal work is A[driano] Cappelli, *Cronologia, cronografia, e calendario perpetuo dal principio dell'era christiana ai nostri giorni* (3rd edn., Milan: Hoepli, 1969). Conversion to the Gregorian calendar was not always a permanent one. Sweden adopted it, then reverted in the early seventeenth century. An idiosyncratic calendar adopted by France under Napoleon in 1793 was dropped in 1805.

³ There were two classes of this usage. In the Pisan style, the year would have been nine months ahead of the modern year. In the Florentine style, it would have been three months behind. See Hoepli, p. 11.

⁴ Maiello, p. 27.

2. DATING OPERAS

Until 1797, the Venetian civic year began on March 1. Historical reconciliation of dates would be a simple matter if all Venetian documents consistently employed the Venetian year, but they did not. The year component of a date could be old-style without acknowledgment, old-style with acknowledgement (designated by the term *more veneto*), or new-style (from January 1) without acknowledgment.

Evidence for the dating of Venetian operas exists in two spheres. The first is the sphere of materials directly related to the creation and performance of operas—librettos, scores, and arias. The librettos for publicly performed operas were always published. Those scores which survive from performances through 1750 are entirely in manuscript. Most surviving arias are also in manuscript. All existing bibliographies of Venetian operas, all secondary sources based on them, and most disputes concerning the dating of individual works base their reckonings of time on evidence from this sphere.

The second sphere of evidence comes from instruments of political, religious, and personal surveillance—censors' records, commissioned newssheets, court monthlies, private reports, and the like. For those confused by the vortex of dating practices and the ambiguous dating of the musical evidence, the exactitude of censors and journalists is a welcome antidote with far-reaching consequences. From evidence of the first kind we may accumulate as many as five dates—a year, a month, a day, a season, and an ordinal position—for one work.

Year dates found in a libretto may come from three sources—the librettist, the printer, and the person writing a dedication (often the librettist but sometime an impresario). Many contradictions are to be found among these sources, but it is the dates found in libretti which form the basis of the six essential bibliographies (1730-1995) of Venetian opera. When multiple year-dates are given in the same libretto, the bibliographer must choose which one to use. For each work there are nine possibilities for interpreting the year dates found in libretti, since each of the three customary elements of information may have subscribed to any of the three styles of indication.

Show Example 1. [left side]

Evidence of the second kind—that found in intelligence reports—almost always removes any uncertainty as to the year and thus, in combination with more finite indications of month and day, enables us to decode the collective "dates" of seasons and systems of ordinal numeration. The security of this second body of evidence lies in the fact that such reports were almost invariably written on Saturdays, and in the rare instances in which the year is ambiguous, it may be inferred from the day.

Also, this second body of evidence comes not only from Venice but also from places where different systems of reckoning were in use. In the copious records of the Vatican, for example, the modern year is invariably used. Since, however, most series of such documents are preserved only for random years and since even the relatively more complete ones fail to name all stage works, it is essential to consult as many such series of possible.

In a study-in progress, precise dates for about 95% of the roughly 800 operas produced in Venice between 1675 and 1750 have been established. To accomplish this, twelve series of documents were consulted.

See Table 1.

Discuss

THE CHURCH CALENDAR, GOVERNMENT YEAR, AND OPERA SEASONS

The influences of the church calendar on the opera calendar are reasonably clear. The moveable feast of Shrove Tuesday terminated Carnival. Operas were forbidden during Advent and Lent.

The government calendar its own fixed and moveable dates and exerted considerable influence on the opera calendar. Periods reserved for business and leisure had to accommodate and complement the calendar of the church. At first, no operas were given when the government was in recess, because the nobility were ostensibly at their country villas.

To understand why records of earlier centuries can exist in chronological chaos (created

by the conflict between church and state methods of time-keeping), one must appreciate that a knowledge of calendars was expected only of certain classes of clergy, accountants, and scribes. Until at least the 1650s, time-keeping was regarded as a strictly elite activity.⁵ *Because calendars were not usually available for public consultation, dates were designated by the names of feasts even for secular purposes.*

It was the stated practice of the Major Council, for example, to recess on the Monday preceding the Feast of St. Luke, October 18. Similarly, the Council was prescribed to reconvene on the Saturday preceding the first day of Advent. This moveable date fell around the end of November. The re-opening of the Major Council could also be computed in relation to the feast of St. Martin, November 11. (The feast of St. Martin was the date on which, since the middle ages, agrarian pay was due. It was a common date for harvest festivals and is still an occasion for children's games and merriment in many Catholic parts of Europe.)

The seasons most prevalently reported in scores and libretti are "autunno," "Carnevale," and "primavera." *Each of these seasons must be decoded using dates from both the civic and religious calendars.*

3. OPERA'S SEASONS

Histories of Venetian opera abound with facile descriptions of the limits of these seasons but in most cases these limits have been inferred from a single instance. In actual fact, every defining date was a variable one. Projections and generalizations are misleading.

The general scheme was as follows:

⁵ Maiello, p. 124.

- *Autumn*, as a period for theatrical entertainments, stretched from a variable date, on or shortly after the Monday on which the Major Council adjourned for *villeggiatura*⁶ either through a moveable date, the last Saturday before the start of Advent, or until a fixed date, the start of the Novena of Christmas (December 16).
- *Winter*, as a period for theatrical entertainments, usually spanned the period from a fixed feast (St. Stephen's, *i.e.*, December 26) to a moveable feast, Shrove Tuesday.⁷ Carnival, however, occurred only during the latter part of this period and started on a variable date arbitrarily declared each year by the Major Council.
- *Spring*, as a period for theatrical entertainments, usually ran from a variable date, the Eve of Ascension⁸, for a fixed period terminated either by the Sunday that followed the feast by either 11 or 18 days or by the intermediate Wednesday. In years during which Ascension fell very late, a spring opera could open on the Sunday preceding this feast. The associated commercial fair ran in parallel but generally for a fixed period of two weeks.

Because gaiety, exuberance, and license have long been associated with Carnival in popular accounts of Venetian culture, it has been easy to accept the myth that the Carnival period became longer and longer as social norms dissolved in the eighteenth century. A more accurate account requires that we distinguish between many different possible meanings of the word Carnival:

- In Europe generally, Carnival was a period of festivity of variable length terminating on Shrove Tuesday. Its observation was associated for centuries with costumes and masks, with the consumption of excess food and drink, and with improvised entertainments of various kinds.⁹

⁶ See Appendix 2, Tables 1 and 2 (Dates related to early and late autumn civic affairs).

⁷ See Appendix 2, Table 4 (Dates of moveable religious feasts related to Easter). The corresponding dates for religious feasts from the contiguous periods (1637-1676 and 1753-1797) are given in Appendix 2, Table 5.

⁸ Also covered in Appendix 2, Table 4. Ascension always fell on a Thursday. Occasionally the associated theatrical season opened on the Sunday before the feast.

⁹ "Carnival" has become a convenient rubric under which to explain non-conforming behaviours and

to generalize them over centuries across the European continent. These generalizations tend to obscure rather than to clarify the unique aspects of Venice's Carnivals. See, for example, the treatment in a much-consulted work, Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World*, tr. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968); P. Clemente et al., *Il linguaggio, il corpo, la festa: per un ripensamento della tematica di Michail Bachtin* (Milan: Franco Angeli Editore, 1983); Randall W. Listerman's introduction to his translation of Hans Sachs, *Nine Carnival Plays* (Ottawa: Doverhouse Editions, Inc., 1990), pp. 9-29; Robin Howells, *Carnival to Classicism: The Comic Novels of Charles Sorel* (Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature, Paris-Seattle-Tübingen, 1989); and James M. Brophy, "Carnival and Citizenship: The Politics of Carnival Culture in the Prussian Rhineland, 1823-1848," *Journal of Social History* 30/4 (1997), 873-904. All of these studies discuss to some degree the idea that Carnival removed categorical strictures that normally governed social, cultural, and religious life by obscuring personal identity. Often enough in Venice, however, the identity of masked persons was quite transparent. In addition, rules that kept the nobility physically separated from ordinary citizens, and natives separated from visitors from abroad, remained in force for private as well as public events.

- To some Venetian scribes, Carnival had the generic meaning of being any period during which masks were permitted by the Council of Ten.¹⁰
- To infrequent visitors, Carnival could designate the collective period that spanned the autumn, winter, and spring seasons.¹¹
- To many historians, Carnival was a period commencing from the feast of St. Stephen (December 26) and stretching to Shrove Tuesday.

¹⁰ During such periods, and excepting any holidays within them, public theatrical entertainments such as operas, comedies, outdoor spectacles (bullfights, street shows by charlatans and buffoons, and so forth) could occur. A representative prescription is found in I-Vas Inquisitori di Stato, Busta 711 (Avvisi; where no additional specification is given, this series should be assumed), report of 9 Novembre 1737, f. 2. It concerns the suspension of activities on All Saints' Day. Masking was permitted only within prescribed hours of the day, and the authorities became nervous when entertainments lapped over the edges of the prescribed *orario*. Countless examples of their responses are preserved in the files of the Council of Ten (I-Vas Capi X, Notatorio). Masks could also be worn during the three-day periods of rejoicing that marked the installation of new doges and sometimes of ambassadors, procurators, and other dignitaries. The collection of all days on which masks would be worn could, by the 1730s, have approached six months on some years, but some of the periods included in such a calculation would have been non-contiguous.

¹¹ The claim that Carnival lasted for five or six months of the year is a pervasive one in modern studies (especially those based on Molmenti's history) but first-person accounts seem to be confined to French writers active around 1730. See, for example, the Count of Bonneval to Montesquieu (*Correspondance*, p. 250, letter of 2 Octobre 1728); and, concerning 1739, Charles de Brosses, *Lettres*, p. 157. Both writers happen to have commented on seasons in which theatrical activity began on 5 October, but, as we shall see, this was not a fixed date for all years.

- To the Venetian Council of Ten, Carnival was a more finite mid-winter period, with arbitrary bounds which were newly declared each year, during which masking and theatrical entertainments were permitted. It usually began in January but never started as early as St. Stephen's.¹²
- To modern Venetian hoteliers and tourists, Carnival is a two-week period preceding the start of Lent during which masks, costumes, parties, and various special entertainments are promoted.

“Winter” is the term of choice used here for the period extending from St. Stephen's to Shrove Tuesday.

4. MICRO-SEASONS

As more and more operas are precisely dated, the important role of the government calendar becomes clear, for not only did it shape the seasons but it also indirectly shaped their repertoires.

A. SUBDIVISIONS OF AUTUMN

The internal structure of the autumn season was governed by the calendar of the State. The season can be subdivided into four segments:

- ST. LUKE'S: from the variable date of adjournment of the Major Council through November 10.
- ST. MARTIN'S: from November 11 through the Friday preceding the first Sunday of Advent.
- ST. ANDREW'S: from the variable date on which the Major Council reconvened (coincidentally the Saturday before the start of Advent) through December 15.
- THE NOVENA: the nine days before Christmas (December 16 through the 24th).

B. SUBDIVISION OF WINTER

¹² These dates, culled principally from the records of *I-Vas Consiglio de X, Capi* (the Council of Ten) and *I-Vas Provveditori alle Pompe* (the Overseers of Feasts), are given in Appendix 2, Table 3 (The civic calendar for Carnival).

At first, the staging of operas was apparently coincident with permission to wear masks, but this system did not remain in place for long. By the 1670s Carnival had become a more limited period of time which was non-coincident with the winter opera season. *Le Mercure galant* of March 1683 relates that

In earlier times Carnival began on the day after Christmas, and it is still marked that way in the majority of new calendars; but having reached the point where too often masked persons have taken advantage of the privileges of the season to avenge their enemies without being recognized, the [three] chiefs of the Council of Ten . . . have deemed it to be in the public interest to begin later . . . At present they only give permission to mask a long time afterwards . . . They tolerate comedies and operas, where such disorder is not to be feared, some months sooner. This year the comedies opened in the middle of November and the operas towards the middle of December . . .¹³

Indeed, the Council of Ten designated a different date in every year for the official opening of Carnival. Licenses were granted with little forewarning. On average, in the late seventeenth century, the official opening date of Carnival was about a month before Shrove Tuesday, so the period of permitted masking was fairly constant. In the eighteenth century the length of the period became more erratic, and the first day of Carnival usually fell within the week following January 3, often on the next Monday (the day on which the Council met).¹⁴

The winter season can be segmented into three parts:

- ST. STEPHEN'S: from the fixed feast of the same name (December 26) through the last day before the opening of Carnival.
- CARNIVAL: from the officially designated opening date of the season (as declared by the Council of Ten) through the Wednesday before Shrove Tuesday;
- The "LAST DAYS OF CARNIVAL": running from Giovedì Grasso ("Fat Thursday") through Shrove

¹³ *Le Mercure galant*, Mars 1683, pp. 230-232.

¹⁴ Retrieved opening dates of Carnival are given in Table 3 of Appendix 2 (*The civic calendar for Carnival*).

Tuesday.

BX. SUMPTUARY LAWS

Between the autumn and St. Stephen's periods, on the one hand, and Carnival proper, on the other, there lay an important cultural difference. According to sumptuary laws that had evolved since the middle ages, masks could be worn all day during Carnival, while in the other seasons they were permitted only after dinner. It was the liberalization of hours for masking during Carnival that made casual street entertainments possible. Such daytime entertainments did not exist during the other seasons.

Two other elements of behaviour accrued to the sumptuary laws in Venice. First, extravagant dress and the wearing of jewels were prohibited. These provisions, which mainly concerned women, reflected the view of the church that some semblance of a pious attitude should be maintained even in times of merriment. Second, arms could be carried either openly or disguised as part of a costume. This provision, adapted in the interest of public safety, mainly concerned men.

A revealing statement of 1682 recapitulates well rehearsed arguments for the usual stringent rules governing dress:

[It is] important for the maintenance of a well regulated Republic to realize that when everyone reaches the limits of modesty . . . and the excesses of luxury become intolerable, disorders result. Therefore, all jewels, both true and false, pearls, . . . laces of gold, silver, and other fabrics, . . . velvet robes and brocades of gold and silver, . . . braids of gold and silver, . . . furs [and] buttons . . . are [normally] prohibited.¹⁵

¹⁵ I-Rvat Archivio, Avvisi, N. 46, entry of 17 Gennaio 1682: "Con la licenza chi comanda di farsi le maschere, s'apri mercordi il Carnevale, e tanto i maschi, che le femine, senza la pena d'abigliarsi, secondo il consueto de ricchi, e pretiosi adobbi, escono per la città con gl'habiti di camera, e qualcuno della cucina per obbedire à Divieti emanatisi il giorno avanti da Sopraproveditori, e Proveditori alle pompe, come materia (importante per il mantenimento d'una ben regolata Repubblica, acciò) che trattenendosi ogn'uno ne limit della modestia lontani dalle gare, e dalle concorrenze, tralascino di profondo vanamente le proprie sostanze, e diano tutti la dovuta obbedienza in tal materia sendo creciuto à segno intolerabile gl'eccessi del lusso condannata relassatezza, che dava il corso ad'infiniti disordini; Però restano prohibite tutte le gioie, perle così buone, come false, gli Arghironi, tutti i

ricami d'oro, e d'argento, e d'ogn'altra sorte, niuno eccettato, com'anco le robbe tessute, e broccate con oro, ò con argento, cosi ne gl'habiti, come nelle fedre, tutti li strascini, et ogn'eccesso di guarnigione, le sottane intiere di punto in aria tutte le Cordelli d'oro, e d'argento, piazzi, penne, pelli, bottoni, e camussi."

C. SPRING

The Spring opera season, which evolved rapidly in the 1720's and 1730's, usually began on the Eve of Ascension, a Wednesday. While the autumn season had close ties to government life and the winter season to the visits of foreign luminaries, the Ascension season had much more of a mercantile cast to it.

Since masking was permitted during the Ascension season, it might seem that the works given then would have attained a certain respect that autumn works might have lacked. However, the character of spring works was really quite different. They were shorter, less serious, and appear to have enjoyed less respect. The masking of Ascension was for a mercantile class who could not have made comparisons with the theatrical works of winter or even autumn.

[Exceptions: bad weather, quarantine, crime, dignitaries]

Example 1x [handout]. Composite portrait of the seasons

The correct interpretation of ordinal position information turns out to depend on the correct interpretation of seasonal information.

[Explain this statement]

5. THE MUSIC

In general librettists could anticipate the season in which a new work would be premiered. They almost certainly had some sense of the probable audience for the work. There were some very important correlations between micro-season and dramatic type.

Example 2. Main season distribution

Example 3. Micro-season distribution

Here are some operas available in recent facsimiles and their respective seasons:

Autumn (St. Martin's)	<i>Gl'inganni felici</i> (Pollarolo)	1696	GB-Lbl
Autumn (St. Martin's)	<i>Ariodante</i> (Pollarolo)	1716	D-B
Winter (St. Stephen's)	<i>Il Faramondo</i> (Pollarolo)	1698	A-W
Winter (Carnival)	<i>L'amazzone corsara</i> (Pallavicino)	1686	D-M
Winter (Carnival)	<i>Alessandro severo</i> (Lotti)	1717	D-Dlb

In general, however, the extent of source survival for this repertory is lamentable. Only about 10 per cent of the works are survive by a complete score, and better than half of these surviving scores seem to represent performances given elsewhere and usually later.

6. RECIPROCAL SEASONS

It was in the 1680s that Venetian opera first started to have serious competition from a host of other northern Italian cities. Although new productions outside Venice were inclined to be less lavish and shorter lived than those in the city, and although novices were likely to be their composers, opera and other entertainments often brought sufficient satisfaction to their audiences that in time they became perceived as something of a threat to the enterprises of the city. The stages of Dolo, Rovigo, and Vicenza in particular seem to have served as proving grounds for the city itself.

The periods during which provincial operas were given were defined by dates that are already familiar. In Rovigo, which was accessible by boat (if the inland water level was high enough) as well as by land, the annual fair started on October 18, the feast of St. Luke and lasted for 19 days,¹⁶ that is until November 5.

¹⁶ In the "Mercurio" of 26 ottobre 1709, f. 1^v, we read that "Stante le bellissime giornate che corrono da molti giorni in quà continuano a goder della Villeggiatura la Nobiltà molta della quale è passata à vedere la solita fiera di Rovigo che cominciar per S. Luca, e continua per 19 giorni durante i quali vi si fà la recita d'un Opera in Musica, ch'è stata prima fatta a Dolo, e s'è sentito chi era arrivato à detto Rovigo, il Prencipe di Rosana [Marc'Antonio Borghese] colla Principessa soggiornarsi." In 1708, the fair had apparently begun on the 19th, for there is a reference to "l'opera in musica che principiò ieri" in the "Mercurio" of 20 ottobre, f. 2.

A notable detail about operas staged at the Contarini villa of Piazzola around 1680 is that they regularly fell on the Feast of St. Martin and thus provided one more excuse (on the heels of the Rovigo Fair) for Venetian nobles to avoid returning to Venice.¹⁷

Spring operas, given in association with spring fairs, seem to have originated in Vicenza somewhat earlier than they did in Venice. From 1707, the Teatro delle Grazie offered a May work in random years. An important example was Vivaldi's first opera, *Ottone in villa*, given in 1713.

CONCLUSION

The composite calendar of Venetian opera enshrines more than a miscellany of feast days that happen to have coincided with convenient dates for spectacle. Several of the particular feasts it highlights were in medieval times occasions for religious dramas, often in the vernacular. The German *Weihnachtspiel* would have been given on the equivalent of the Venetian night of December 26. The Play of Daniel was a Christmas play. Shepherd plays were a staple of Epiphany. Reenactments of the Slaughter of the Innocents were commonly given on the Feast of Purification. The *Fastnachtspiel* was given on Shrove Tuesday. Corpus Christi was the occasion for miracle plays. Drama had a long-standing association with major feasts. Opera, in its own way, respected these traditions.

¹⁷ See, for example, the quotations from the *Mercure galant* concerning the productions of Pallavicino's *Le Amazzoni nell'isole fortunate* and Freschi's *Berenice vendicativa* (presented on 11 November 1679 and 8 November 1680 respectively) in *Pallade Veneta*, Document #A27, pp. 344-52. Productions in Piazzola are subsumed in the Calendar of References.

The “traditions” of Venetian opera were copied almost as quickly as they were established. The theatres of Naples and Florence and of myriad other cities all over Italy copied the Venetian repertory (although often with new casts and modifications to librettos) as fast as they could acquire exemplars.¹⁸ At some level the associations of subject-type and season were conveyed by this dispersion.

The calendar of Venetian opera, or more particularly the special flavours of each of its theatrical seasons, left their imprint on European opera for generations to come. One need only consider the some stellar works of the current repertory to detect this influence.

- Some works for the St. Luke’s season:
 - Mozart: *Die Zauberflöte* (Vienna, 1791)
 - Gershwin: *Porgy and Bess* (New York, 1935)
- Some works for the St. Martin’s season:
 - Gershwin: *Funny Face* (New York, 1927)
- Some works opening on St. Stephen’s Day:
 - Bononcini: *Il trionfo di Camilla* (Naples, 1696¹⁹)
 - Piccinni: *Ciro riconosciuto* (Naples, 1759)
 - Mozart: *Mitridate, re di Ponto* (Milan, 1770)
 - Mozart: *Lucio Silla* (Milan, 1772)
 - Donizetti: *Anna Bolena* (Milan, 1830)
 - Bellini: *Norma* (Milan, 1831)
 - Donizetti: *Lucrezia Borgia* (Milan, 1833)
- Some works for Carnival:

¹⁸ It would seem to be for this reason that so few scores from after 1685 survive in Venice. Note in the *Calendar of References* that a great many works “lost” from Venice had progeny among the works of such composers as Scarlatti and Handel. The loss of the musical models is all the more to be regretted.

¹⁹ First performance on the 27th.

- Mozart: *Idomeneo* (Munich, 1781)
- Verdi: *Otello* (Milan, 1887)
- Verdi: *Falstaff* (Mila, 1893)

· Some works for the Ascension period:

- Mozart: *Le nozze di Figaro* (Vienna, 1786)
- Donizetti: *L'elisir d'amore* (Milan, 1832)

Of course this influence diminished over time and distance.²⁰ It was never predominant north of the Alps, where climate alone would have discouraged winter productions and encouraged spring and summer ones. It was certainly attenuated beyond the bounds of Catholic Europe, where the lingering shadows of church feasts that so firmly structured the Venetian calendar were invisible. But then the pagan traditions of antiquity cast their own shadows on the liturgical year.

For the history of Venetian opera a huge irony lurked here: nothing was so castigated on the Venetian stage as heathen practices. Yet ultimately planting and harvest festivals and the cycle of full moons that dictated their timing shaped the highly structured apparatus of the theatrical calendar and rendered the musical stage extremely responsive to seasonal change. To those sensitized anew to the shapes of that calendar, its outlines, although dim, are still perceptible today.

4900 words

Example of a problematical title-page:

Ariberto e Flavio Regi de Longobardi. Drama per musica da rappresentarsi nel Ristaurato Famoso Teatro Vendramino di San Salvatore l'anno M. DC. LXXXV.
In Venetia, M.DC.LXXXIV. Per Francesco Nicolini.

²⁰ It is substantially different today, when a prime time for premières at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice was (prior to its recent fire) during what had been the prohibited Novena of Christmas period.

Some examples of problems solved by documents (no seasonal designation):

Title	Librettist's year	Printer's year	Dedication year	Reported opening date
<i>Irene e Costantino</i> (Giannettini)	1681	M.DC.LXXXI.		12 December 1680 (NV) 13 December 1680 (MOas)
<i>Temistocle in Bando</i> (Giannettini)	M.DC.LXXXIII.	M.DC.LXXXIII.		4 December 1682 (M)
<i>Falaride</i> (Bassani)	M.DC.LXXXIV.	M.DC.LXXXIV.		29 November 1683 (MOas)
<i>Ariberto e Flavio</i> (Lonati)	M.DC.LXXXV.	M.DC.LXXXIV.	9 December 1685	26 December 1684 (M)
<i>Le generose gare tra Cesare e Pompeo</i> (Gabrielli)	1686	M.DC.LXXXVI.	9 Febbraro 1685	9 February 1686 (MANas: agent)

Title	Librettist's Year and season	Printer's year and season	Reported opening date
<i>Berenice</i> (Orlandini)		Carnovale MDCXXV ²¹	20 January 1725 (NV)
<i>Orazio</i> (Latilla)		Nell'Autunno dell'anno 1743	6 February 1744 (DO)
<i>La fata meravigliosa</i> (Scolari)	Carnevale 1745	MDCCXLVI.	8 February 1746 (DO)

²¹ Misreported by Wiel as "inverno 1726".

Example of a well-behaved *fede*:

Adi 17 ottobre 1696

Faccio fede io _____ ho letto l'opera intitolato _____ che si recita nel teatro di _____ per
il Carnevale dell'anno 1697 e che non si trova niente contraria alla fede cristiana

nell'autunno 1696

Some determining dates, 1683-86:

	1683-84	1684-85	1685-86
Autumn recess	October 11	October 16	October 15
Council reconvened	November 27	December 2	December 1
Carnival opened	January 22?	February 3	January 21
Giovedì Grasso	February 10	March 1	February 21
Shrove Tuesday	February 15	March 6	February 26

Series of documents consulted:

- censors' reports for libretti (I-Vas)
- weekly *avvisi* from Venice (I-Vas)
- weekly *avvisi* from Venice (I-MAa)
- weekly *avvisi* from Venice (I-MOa)
- weekly *avvisi* from Venice (I-Rvat)
- weekly *avvisi* from Venice quoted in the *Diario ordinario* (I-Rvat)
- weekly *mercuri* from Venice (I-Vnm)
- weekly *Pallade Veneta* MSS from Venice (I-Vas, I-Vmc)
- weekly letters and reports of the British residents in Venice (GB-Lpro)
- weekly reports of the Papal nuncio (I-Rvat)
- printed court monthlies (*Le Mercure galant*, *Pallade Veneta*, et al. in I-Vnm, I-Moe, F-Pn et al.)
- theatre contracts (I-Vas, I-Vcg, I-MAa)
- miscellaneous letters of the Mantuan residents and performers in Venice (I-MAa)

