

Commerce and Opera at the *Fiera della Sensa*

On the feast of Ascension, the doge and his councilors sailed with the Venetian patriarch in the gilded galley known as the Bucintoro to the waters near the church of San Nicolò at the northern end of the Lido. The patriarch (a figure appointed by the Venetian senate) blessed the waters of the Adriatic. Then the doge cast a gold ring into the sea. This act reaffirmed the Republic's perpetual marriage to the sea.ⁱ Ascension was, of course, a feast of the Church celebrated on the Thursday 40 days after Easter. Civic ceremony did not adhere to it in most places, not did it attach itself in any such individual way to the two feasts which followed in its wake—Pentecost (50 days after Easter; a Sunday) and Corpus Christi (or Corpus Domini, 60 days after Easter; a Wednesday).ⁱⁱ

Filling in the gaps between these three feasts was destined to produce a certain amount of special activity. In particular liturgical feasts which had been declared at various points in time "feste di palazzo" caused a suspension of normal duties. The sailing of the doge and his retinue, said to date from the visit of Frederick Barbarossa in 1177, can actually be traced to its first observance—7 May 1000. The doge who then blessed the waters was Pietro Orseolo, who used the occasion to announce his view that Venice's control of the sea could be well served by extending its reach down the Adriatic. Thus began the expansion of the lagoon city into a maritime republic.

In Venice, the gaps between these three feasts came to be filled (by the fifteenth century) with a mercantile fair on the Piazza San Marco. Against the backdrop of the basilica's five domes, a horseshoe-shaped array of stalls was erected during the week before Ascension. The fair remained open over a span of more than two weeks. Activity paused for the days of Pentecost.

Prior to the eighteenth century there was no systematic performance of opera at Ascension time.ⁱⁱⁱ Why, then, was there a sudden upsurge of it in the 1720s? Several possible answers exist. All of them are related in some way to the condition in which Venice found itself at that time. The government had become progressively more impoverished with each passing decade of the seventeenth century as a consequence of lengthy wars against Turkish threats at sea and in the Balkans. Venice suffered still more from the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714), in which it officially maintained neutrality. While Austrian and French contenders for the Spanish crown vied for success on the strength of their military battles, much of the heaviest fighting took place in the war's first years in northern Italy. The duchies of Mantua and Modena collapsed. The Mantuan court-in-exile, in Casale Monferrato, came to be the new home (at least on paper) of the court's personnel, including its singers, instrumentalists, and *commedia* troupe. The dukes of Mantua and Modena had been among the most ardent and steadfast patrons of

Venetian theater, and so these changes caused the simultaneous collapse in the availability of patronage and personnel. Those cut off from Venice dabbled at forging their own theaters. Throughout the Veneto there was a growing link between annual patronal feasts, now expanded in trade fairs, and the staging of an opera.^{iv} The work itself might employ apprentice composers and musicians but once established, provincial opera thrived in the early decades of the eighteenth century. Thus when Venice was freed from the consequences of war, it found its resources for opera production diminished by declines in potential sponsors, audiences who could satisfy their tastes in the hinterlands, and singers who could earn far more abroad.

The city itself confronted a wide array of economic problems, all of them exacerbated by certain provisions of the Peace of Passarowitz (1718). Venice befriended the Austrian Empire in its defense of the Balkans against Turkish invasions, but one of the war's most important consequences was that Austria gained a toe-hold on the Adriatic at Trieste. This meant that Venice now had a competitor for trade along the sea to which it was, in its own mythology, eternally wed. By 1720 the port of Trieste (Eastern shore) was ready for business, and by 1730 free ports had been established on the sea's Western shore at Iesi and Senigalia. Goods were shipped to and from these latter two via Venice, but goods linked to Trieste came and went overland from Vienna and other cities under Austrian rule.

The Venetians introduced many initiatives in the second decade of the eighteenth century to develop new sources of revenue. In 1715 the city fathers changed the rules of public lotto, increased the rate of drawings, and publicized the winning combinations. Half the proceeds were retained by the government. The quarters under the Procuratia Nuova were newly rented to shop-keepers in 1717. Florian Francesconi opened a still-thriving caffè in one of them. Shops sprang up around the base of the Campanile. Barbershops on the Piazza came to number several dozen. Lotto and the rental of government premises generated income; the other activities generated tax receipts. The Piazza became more than ever before a forum of news, rumor, gossip, and surveillance. Vendors of books and news-sheets also flourished on the distant Campo San Polo and near the Rialto. They all soon became hubs of espionage sponsored by the Inquisitori di Stato.

Most of the population seems to have had little awareness of the implications of the Republic's declining fortunes. Where proof of substance lacked, claims of historical imperative were substituted. Thus began the aggrandizement of the feast of Ascension and its associated trade fair. On the one hand, the impoverished city sought to attract merchandise for tourists with fat purses. On the other, its leverage came from its celebrated past. The Venetians may have been prompted to promote tourism at Ascension simply to keep pace with the market fairs that followed each other in tandem through the

provincial cities of the Republic. Many of the merchants who offered their wares were in the midst of a long itinerary that took them from trade fare to trade fare (and town to town) through the spring, summer, and autumn. Its chief enticements were stage entertainments suited to mercantile tastes, the launching of a new Bucintoro, and the restoration of the Orologio tower, complete with a functional Procession of the Magi on Ascension Day. The motivations of spring opera in Venice can best be understood against this landscape of civic turmoil. The contributions to autumn and winter opera to spring opera seem to have mattered surprisingly little. Ascension opera was a phenomenon in its own right, and although over time it altered the relative contributions of the other seasons to Venetian opera overall, it was not until much later times entirely successful.

A Chronological Overview

1720-1729: Establishing Spring Opera

When in 1720 San Samuele and San Moisè both announced works for Ascension, it was considered a great novelty. On Saturday, 11 May, the papal legate reported to the Vatican that “they opened the fair [on Wednesday]. An infinite concourse of people in masks and foreigners came to enjoy not only the fair itself but also the performance of two operas—*La Griselda* at San Samuele and *Gl’inganni fortunati* at San Moisè.”^v

This first Ascension period proved to be no less prone to unexpected complications than the autumn and winter periods of theatrical opening. A mere week after these works opened, the legate reported that while the theater productions themselves were well attended, heavy rain had ruined many of the booths erected on the Piazza. His report noted the introduction of *fanali* [gas lamps] placed “a certain distance from one another” in the Piazza.^{vi}

Since in 1721 the theaters were not opened during the fair, the establishment of a regular season is best dated from 1722, the year in which Alvise Mocenigo was elected doge. The “season” was miniscule compared to the well established autumn and winter ones. It was heavily constrained by the contours of the liturgical feasts and civic ceremonies established centuries before. On the day before Ascension (a Wednesday), the doge and his councilors attended Vespers at San Marco. Once they exited the church, theaters and booths were permitted to open. Theaters (and stalls) were closed on the feast itself and also on the two days (a Sunday and a Monday) on which Pentecost was observed. The fair period spanned 14 to 17 days, depending on whether Easter (and therefore Ascension, 40 days later) fell earlier or later.^{vii} Actual dates varied over a 35-day period stretching from early May to early June.^{viii}

Again in 1722 the Ascension-day ceremony was impeded by bad weather, but the theaters were to thrive. On Ascension (14 May), the Bucintoro got as far as "la punta di Sant'Antonio" before a decision was made that it was too windy to sail further out. The ceremony was thus postponed until Sunday, the 17th. It too proved to be stormy. The much delayed *sposalizio* finally took place on Monday the 18th.^{ix} English visitors seem to have made up a conspicuous portion of the attendees in the 1720s. The growth of the English merchant population in Venice had been in progress since the 1690s but flourished particularly under the Hanoverian kings. Joseph Smith, who was destined to remain a force in Venetian life into the 1750s, was the most prosperous. He was married the English singer Mrs. [Catherine] Tofts,^x who had sung on the English stage before her marriage. Period accounts note the long-time presence of Lord Peterborough [Charles Mordaunt], Neil and Robert Brown, and the discredited London impresario Owen [Mc]Swiney.

Ascension opera remained the exclusive preserve of San Samuele from 1722 to 1726, when San Moisè resumed activity. By 1727 San Salvatore [San Luca], which had functioned only as a comedy house since 1700, joined in. In all three theaters the works given were predominantly revivals, if not from Venice then from Bologna or one of the provincial cities of the Veneto. They were often somewhat cropped, since by the modern clock spring opera started much later than autumn or winter opera. They were progressively simpler in character than works given at other times of year. Surviving musical materials are few. Spring opera seems not initially to have garnered much prestige, but the appearance may be deceptive. Sublease records for the boxes of King George I at San Samuele show the clientele there in 1725, when Gio. Francesco Brusa's *L'amor eroico* was the featured work for Ascension, to have been quite meritorious. Brusa was little-known and failed to attract an enthusiastic following in subsequent years. Nonetheless, on various nights between May 9 (the opening night) and the 27th the occupants of the king's box included Count [xx] Tassis (two performances), Camillo Pola, the Receiver of Malta (four performances), the San Marco organist Antonio Lotti (two performances), the famous castrato Carlo Broschi detto Farinelli (17 May), and the landscape painter Marco Ricci (25 May).^{xii} The libretto for *L'amor eroico* (based on Parlati's account of the pursuit of Zenobia by Odeanthus) was dedicated to Edward Cary, the commander of the British Admiralty.

The presence of British aristocrats peaked in the later 1720s, when promoters of the Opera of the Nobility came to Venice to scout for singers for their enterprise. Following the ascension of George II (1727) there was a marked upsurge. By the end of the decade, sponsors of the newly organized Opera of the Nobility came to Venice in search of new vocal talent and left with unique copies of the scores for

several important winter operas. Concomitant with these new beginnings, it became the norm to stage two or three operas at Ascension.

The *avvisi* of 1727 notes the presence of “*diversi milordi inglese*” among the many foreigners who came to the Ascension fair. In anticipation of their enthusiasm, two theaters presented two works for Ascension.^{xiii} The works themselves began to change character, from predictable (if abbreviated) revivals of winter fare on classical themes to lighter works better suited to interests which were more fleeting. In fact, all the works given for Ascension 1727 were comic works—*L’Innocenza schernita* (Cassani, Albinoni) at San Samuele and Buini’s comic *L’Albumazar* at San Salvatore.^{xiv} We know from other sources that *L’Innocenza* was preceded by *La fama dell’onore*, a parody which may have been originated by a comedy troupe. *L’Albumazar* gave way to *Le frenesie d’amore*, a work which was widely traveled in the smaller theaters of the Veneto. The coincidental interest of the *milordi* in comic works could have played some role in the little noted London trip of San Samuele’s winter comedy troupe (under Giacomo Casanova’s father) to London in 1727. Presumably they left after the start of Lent, since their standing obligations would have kept them in Venice through the end of Carnival.^{xv}

There were several other changes of direction within the Ascension period of that year. One was that the growth of trade together with the steady impoverishment of many shoppers led to the arrival of contraband goods in such numbers that a delegation of Venetian merchants would set off for the fair in Brescia (from 10 August, the feast of San Lorenzo) to find out whether similar problems were occurring there.^{xvi} Another was that ambassadors were figuring out that the burgeoning activity on the Piazza and the short-term presence of so many visitors augured well for the scheduling of events intended to attract a lot of respectful attention, such as investitures (their own), banquets, and private concerts. The French ambassador [xx de Gergy] took advantage of the theatrical closure on the feast of Pentecost (1 June in 1727) to hold a noble “*veglia...for the all the foreigners who have come to our fair*” in the summer house of his extensive gardens on the north shore of Canarregio. “Abundant refreshments,” *sinfonie*, and a *ballo* were on offer. In 1727 the fair terminated on Thursday the 5th, but the theaters were permitted to remain open until Sunday the 8th. Corresponding permission to mask (after Vespers) endured through Sunday. Only by June 14th was the reporter Francesco Alvisi able to say that “the foreigners who have come to enjoy the pastimes of this Most Serene Republic” were now starting to depart.^{xvii}

This effort to enhance the Ascension period with tokens of political prestige reaches new heights in 1729, when the public entry of a new imperial ambassador, Count xx Bolagnos, on Sunday 15 May (ten days before the opening of the fair) disrupted the normal routine. He presented his credentials to the

government on Saturday the 21st. The following day he received the papal legate, Monsignor xx Stampa. Since Ascension fell relatively late in 1729, the opera *Sulpizia fedele* opened at San Samuele the following evening (that is, on Sunday). Before the official opening of the fair on the following Wednesday (the 25th), the legate and the new ambassador participated in the celebration of Vespers at San Marco and thus in the ceremony of opening the fair. The fair and the theaters were closed on June 3rd and 4th (a Saturday and Sunday) for Pentecost. Upon reopening on Monday, San Samuele presented the pastoral *Dorinda*. The final day for both activities was 9 June, a Thursday.^{xviii} The *Diario ordinario* noted, in a string of clichés typical of its reprocessed news reports, that the fair, which had been “attended by many foreigners,” had ended “quietly” and “with happiness.”^{xix}

The highpoint in the celebration of the Ascension in 1729 was the launch of a new Bucintoro. A statue of Justice graced its bow as it sailed across the lagoon. A large statue of Mars and two gold lions of St. Mark, rescued from the old Bucintoro before its destruction in 1719, were positioned on either side of the stem. The vessel (still preserved in the Museo Navale in Venice) had two decks and 42 oars, each one pulled by four men. A commemorative account of the ship—*La nuova regia sull'acque*—by Antonio Maria Lucchini (sometime librettist) was published that year and reprinted numerous times through 1765. The new Bucintoro was to be a popular subject of scene paintings from the 1730s through the 1760s. Several by Canaletto (1732-34) show the vessel moored in front of the Ducal Palace, with the Orologio visible in the background. Various kinds of lesser mortals go about their tasks in nearby gondolas and *peotte*. One by Francesco Guardi (1767) gives a stormier view of the Bucintoro as it is jostled in the waters near the Arsenale.

1730-1735: Developing Spring Opera

If there was a best-of-breed work of Ascension opera, it was provided by Hasse in his *Dalisa* of 1730. Several factors contributed to its apparent success. It opened at San Samuele on May 17th. It ran unopposed, because for the first time since 1725 no other theaters opened that spring. The libretto was dedicated to Edward Coke, the earl of Leicester and a director of the Royal Academy of Music in London. The cast featured Faustina Bordoni, whom the composer was engaged to marry on 30 July.^{xx} It was both Hasse's first work for Venice and his only premiere there. (The enthusiastic reception accorded *Dalisa* was never to be matched in any of the subsequent reruns of his works, even though he did set a new standard of expectation in the first years of the new decade.^{xxi})

Dalisa also represents the convergence of some notable trends. Most important among them were the strengthening of winter opera through the inclusion of home-grown stars now held in international esteem (Bordoni, Nicola Grimaldi, et al.), for the autumn and Carnival seasons at San Samuele's sister

theater, San Giovanni Grisostomo, was possible the most acclaimed of its entire history; and this in combination with San Samuele's effort to distinguish spring opera as pastoral in nature. In contrast to the comic fare offered in 1727-29 at San Moisè and San Salvatore, San Samuele had presented over the same years a series of works on Arcadian themes: *Nerina* (1728), *Dorinda* (1729), and now *Dalisa*.^{xxii}

Because *Dalisa* does represent a best case for Ascension opera and because we know that the theater was full every night during its run, we can readily see that it was not a financial success. Because this is so clear, we can be quite sure that no other spring opera was a financial success. The basic problem was that the costs per production were fixed and there were not enough nights available to cover them through ticket sales. In the case of *Dalisa*, lavish rates of pay exacerbated the problem. Bordoni (described in the libretto as "the new Siren, a Venetian mezzo-soprano of noble birth, [and] a true *virtuosa* of song") was paid £5,625 for her two-week engagement in the title role. Antonio Pasi (*Enrico*) received £3,000, Anna Girò (*Edita*) £1,320, and Angelo Amorevoli (*Ottone*) £538. A deficit of £2,000 remained after all other expenses for this lavish production were paid.^{xxiii} Despite the work's popularity, no complete score survives.^{xxiv}

In 1732 the Ascension fair turned cast a backward glance at its liturgical roots. New energy was invested in the ceremonial celebration of First Vespers at San Marco on the afternoon and the involvement of the basilica's dignitaries of the official opening of the fair. The reporter Girolamo Alvisi observed that when the fair opened there were "foreign visitors of both sexes [and] of rank" on hand. Various public officials accompanied by the papal legate gathered in San Marco, where a great part of the [ducal] treasure (the *pala d'oro*) was put on display. Monsignor Diedo officiated at the service, and multiple choirs sang. After the service was completed, the dignitaries retired to the ducal palace. San Samuele and Sant'Angelo opened that night, with *Evaristo* and *Chi no fa no falla* respectively.^{xxv} Despite its august opening, the fair of 1732 was somewhat marred by the death a few days later of Doge Alvise Mocenigo (requiring three days of mourning) and the need to elect a new doge. His successor was Carlo Ruzzini, who an important negotiator in resolving the War of the Spanish Succession.

We hear nothing more of the Ascension fair until 1735, when the construction of booths on the Piazza and opera rehearsals at San Samuele had both already begun by 11 May. The fair opened on the following Wednesday (the 18th). The doge, foreign ministers, and Signoria processed through the "gran Piazza" to enter the church for "solemn" Vespers. San Samuele's offering that evening was *Griselda*, the subject of a later memoir by the librettist (Carlo Goldoni) containing indifferent comments on the work's composer, Antonio Vivaldi.^{xxvi} *Griselda* was greeted with "universal appreciation" by the "throngs of ladies and gentlemen from foreign cities" who were currently enjoying the fair,^{xxvii} but when the Goldoni

text was revived in the autumn, the work was performed without music by the house troupe of San Samuele (as was usual there in the autumn).

Although some accounts portray the mood as having been more somber than in earlier years, the number of supernumerary events accruing to the Ascension period continued to increase. Among them there were now annual contests of cannon-ball shooters (*bombardieri*) from throughout the Veneto. Although they honored their patron saint (Santa Barbara) on her feast day (4 December), they also regularly held a competition at the Lido on the day after Pentecost (a Monday). Prizes were given to the teams who could shoot the furthest. On the appointed day in 1735 (June 2) the *bombardieri* gathered as usual at the Lido, but additionally, on Sunday the 5th they sailed in richly decorated *peotte* to the island of Torcello to venerate the body of Santa Barbara and to attend a “great mass and Vespers, both sung to music, in the church of the nuns at San Giovanni,” where they were hosted lavishly.

The subculture that underlay Goldoni’s satires on the foibles of a growing *bourgeoisie* as they were expressed at Ascension was already foreshadowed at San Samuele. In Antonio Gori’s comic intermezzi called *Gl’ovi in puntiglio*, given at the theater^{xxviii} in the winter of 1735, the haughty Vaneglia (who styles herself “Junfrà Fràol”) rants (in German) against the inadvisability of women’s bringing dowries to their marriages only to be ordered about by their husbands. In the second intermezzo, Vaneglia—an aggressive Ascension shopper—requires that porcelain come from China, crystal from England, and cloth from Bohemia.^{xxix} Her opposite number, Cinnabro, dresses, acts, and speaks in the French style. The (lost) musical setting is attributed to Giacomo Maccari.

1736-1742: Controlling Spring Opera

Under the doge Alvise Pisani (1735-41), the character of the fair began to change. The legate’s records report on the customary things: “foreigners of quality” in town for the fair; the singing of first Vespers “in the pontifical manner” by multiple choirs; and the attendance at that service of the legate and the Imperial ambassador. A change in tone can be noted in the staging of a serious work, *La generosità politica* (Goldoni; Gio. Maria Marchi), at San Samuele. The Bucintoro sailed as usual to the Lido on Ascension [10th May]. Lotti’s newly written madrigal, “Ritorna l’età d’oro,” was first sung on the return trip. The customary banquet took place afterwards in the ducal palace.^{xxx}

The reporter Sebastiano Trebbi noted in his *avviso* of 26 May 1736 that “jewels, silver, mirrors and other goods” had been sold at phenomenal prices during the recent fair and that “many well satisfied foreigners are now departing.” The fair had ended on the 24th, but the account of another reporter, Pietro Donado, on June 2nd notes that the opera at San Samuele continued until the 27th, when “closing night” events (similar to the galas given in theaters on the last night of Carnival) had taken

place. San Samuele hosted a “great banquet,” then a *fiesta di ballo* that lasted until daybreak. The theater glittered inside with candles and was abundantly full of refreshments of every kind. It was filled with nobles, both Venetian and foreign.^{xxxix} One might almost suspect that Goldoni was prompted to provide a work that was out-of-character both for himself and for the season in the hope of emulating Carnival’s bipolar combination of glitter and *gravitas*.

The price of goods may have been augmented indirectly by the imposition of new tariffs. A universal jubilee managed to interpose itself in the Ascension period. Jubilees normally required public piety and the closure of theaters, but the one of 1736 had a curiously commercial thrust. The government mandated that all merchandise brought into the fair would be taxed one ducat upon entry and that any item taken away would incur a separate half-ducat duty.^{xxxix} Although it was undoubtedly a scheme to raise revenue, it may also have been designed to discourage contraband and shoddy goods. Three months later, on 27 August, new pontifical and imperial tariffs announced for all goods arriving from Naples. This tax was to be enforced for four years.^{xxxix}

The new image of the Ascension fair—tonier clientele, pricier goods—brought a wave of distinguished visitors to Venice in 1737, when Ascension did not fall until May 30th. On the 28th a delegation of 54 Bavarians, including the elector and his wife, arrived in Venice. Contrary to the earlier practice of renting a palazzo, the electoral couple and their entourage stayed in a public hotel—the Lion Bianco. The prince of Wales (Frederick Louis, the son of George II), disguised as the “Count of Albania,” arrived on the 28th. He heard an oratorio at the Ospedale degl’Incurabili [probably on June 2nd], and on his last night in Venice (9 June) a *fiesta di ballo* in his honor was held in the Ca’ Gradenigo.^{xxxix} The Bavarians seem to have been more interested in the fair and the opera at San Samuele (Galuppi’s *Alvilda*^{xxxix}) than in the chaste entertainments of the *ospedali*.

In 1738, somewhat ahead of Ascension, on April 20th, Charles-François, Count of Froullay, made the most extravagant public entry that had ever been seen in Venice. As part of the celebration, a great machine was erected over the Grand Canal in front of the French embassy.^{xxxix} This may have contributed to the fever pitch of the Ascension fair, which was a big draw because of the pending visit of princess Anna Maria Amalie, the Saxon fiancée of Charles of Bourbon, the king the Two Sicilies. Trebbi tells us that when Lampugnani’s *Angelica* opened at San Samuele (May 11th), a large audience of Neapolitan nobles was in attendance. Their representatives, such as Abbot Castro Monte (the Neapolitan ambassador to Venice), and well-wishers, such as the princess of Modena, were also present.

The grand progresses that were made, sometimes over months, when a royal bride ceremonially made her way (with a large entourage) to her future husband's principality is well illustrated by that of the 14-year-old princess, the eldest daughter of the duke of Saxony. Her exact itinerary would have amounted, even by the standards of today, to a whirlwind glimpse of the Veneto. A great throng of nobles assembled in Venice, after seeing the "grand function" of [Venice's] wedding the sea and the fair itself, in order to depart *en masse* for Palma Nuova (the border crossing from imperial lands into the Venetian Republic) in order to accompany the prospective bride, who was en route from Dresden. She was expected at Palma Nuova on May 30th with her brother, the royal prince Friedrich Christian. She reached Treviso on May 31st, toured the Grand Canal at noon on the 1st of June, and was safely delivered to Padua that evening. There she "said her devotions at the chapel of San Antonio" and took in the opera^{xxxvii}, various *feste di ballo*, and "some royal entertainments" over the coming days. She passed through Rovigo on the 4th and arrived in Ferrara on the 5th, just in time to observe the feast of Corpus Domini. Much of the planning for this festive progress seems to have been organized by Alvise Mocenigo, who was then an extraordinary ambassador to the princess.^{xxxviii}

The mid-years 1738-1740 marked simultaneously the princess's whirlwind progress towards Naples and her brother's slow retreat from Naples to Dresden by way of a five-month sojourn Venice. To offset the growing prestige of Naples among visitors to Venice, the newly arrived French ambassador xx de Froullay gave a spectacular banquet on the Sunday of Pentecost 1739. At a horse-shoe-shaped table he seated 56 guests (a significantly higher number than the traditional 40). The occasion ostensibly celebrated the marriage of Filippo, the royal infante of Spain, to the eldest princess of the French court.^{xxxix} On the remaining days of the fair, Cardena's *Creusa* was performed at San Samuele.

Unlike his sister en route to Naples, the return trip through the Veneto by Friedrich Christian in 1739-40 was a leisurely affair that bracketed not only Carnival but Lent and the start of Ascension as well. Much of his delegation reached Venice in December 1739. A spate of works was given for the enjoyment of his entourage. Venice bustled with parties, balls, and a full run of miscellaneous entertainments. The winter of 1740 was a stellar one for opera productions but it cannot be taken as representative of the state either of Venice nor of its theaters by that time. The 1740 season marked both the "last hurrah" of the *drama per musica*. It also marked one of last uses of the Venetian stage to mark the rites of passage of European nobility, because by this time theater managers had long realized that their works need broad appeal in order to stay in production for more than a day or two. The Venetian nobility liked to attend on first nights and last nights, but they left the rest of the schedule unfettered by their presence. As the prince's stay continued well into Lent, unusually elaborate

performances of a quasi-theatrical nature were given in three of the ospedali. Anyone encountering a list of the many works given for the enjoyment of his party and the details of their performances would believe that opera in Venice had changed little over the previous thirty or forty years. This belief would be completely mistaken. Venice managed to stage, one last time, the image of its might together with some frivolities that had been cultivated in better times. Yet the formulas followed were all retrospective. They were what visitors expected, but not what they would have found in the surrounding years.

This time it proved to be the culture, rather than the revered visitor, that was exhausted. Ascension 1740 was a lackluster affair, bereft of the attention of anyone and without resources to sustain itself. As it turned out, the winter seasons of 1741, 1742, and 1743 were equally grim. Count [Otto Ferdinand] Traun wrote to Prince Pio of Savoy in Milan of Ascension in 1740 that

the usual function of the Wedding to the Sea, a less grand affair than in previous years, occurred on Thursday, though after the visit of the Royal Prince of Poland people expected something more magnificent. One can see that people are shredded to pieces from so much spending, and, that while not fully understanding how critical their situation is, they are advised not to squander their money, for they may need it for future emergencies. The cost of living keeps rising; there is little grain in storage, and an extravagant [agricultural] season threatens scarcity even in this year, for there is fear of hunger. This is already the case in parts of the Venetian dominion, for in Dalmatian areas [of the Republic] many petitions for charitable assistance have been received this week. The misery is so great that people are obliged to boil straw and eat it as a salad, from which people are dying....^{xi}

Venice was never again to muster the same sustained enthusiasm it had unleashed on the prince's visit, at least not until much later times, when the motives and cultural meaning were entirely different.

1743-51

Over the 1720s and 30s spring opera had had a subtle effect on the distribution of operas from season to season. The success of spring opera depended partly on the presence of those who sailed up the Adriatic and had some interest in the fair. By the same token, this audience was more generously endowed with merchants than winter ones. However, winter audiences were falling off. The winter repertory was degenerating into endless trails of texts (often by Metastasio) reset by local and little established composers, since the best reputed of the singers and composers were finding more attractive opportunities elsewhere. Theater impresarii were hard-pressed to provide the deposits that the city fathers now required to mount new productions.(xx) Overall, the increased activity in the spring came at the expense of the winter. Autumn (which, like spring, appealed to more modest tastes than the traditionally lavish productions of Carnival) held its own.

It might seem that these factors would have paved the road to success for spring opera, but that was hardly the case. By the 1740s the Council of Ten had become nervous about the Ascension theatrical period. It ruled at the end of the 1741 Ascension period that masking and public celebrations of feasts should cease whenever the selection of a patriarch was in progress.^{xii} This was just the first of a series of edicts that interfered in some way with the already slim chances of impresari to cover their expenses.

The fair of 1743 got off to a bad start because of exceptionally cold, stormy weather the day after the feast of Ascension. Between the weather and fear of a contagion spreading in the south of Italy, attendance was sparse.^{xiii} Yet the spring of 1743 brought fundamental change not only to the complexion of opera in that season but, eventually, to the whole of the opera calendar. To begin, it coincided with a modest respite from financial ruin and spreading contagions, although famine and pestilence could still be found along other shores of the Adriatic. What brought about this striking change in attitude among Venetians themselves was their first exposure to Neapolitan *opera buffa*. It came to them via Gaetano Latilla's *La finta cameriera*, which was staged not at San Samuele (where comic works with music were anathema) but at Sant'Angelo, which had not previously participated in spring opera. *La finta cameriera* featured a Neapolitan cast and therein could be found much of its novelty. In contrast to the satirical works of Bolognese and Venetian origin that had dotted the spring calendar for almost two decades, the Neapolitan work was so funny that it had audiences "splitting their sides," according to one account. The acting of Francesco Baglione, the mainstay of the cast who portrayed the ostensible heroine, was stellar. The cast had had ample opportunity to fine-tune their interactions, too, because *La finta cameriera* had first been produced six years earlier in Naples.

It is ironic that it took a Neapolitan work performed by a Neapolitan cast to arouse the interest of Venetians in their own theater. Sant'Angelo's hosting of it also had its ironies. The theater was suffering from loss of interest in its winter fare. It would turn to a steady diet of prose comedy in 1748, when it hired Goldoni. So while rescuing Venetian opera in general from a fate of extinction, *La finta cameriera* failed to revive Sant'Angelo's reputation as an opera house. San Samuele, in contrast, offered a serious work, *Ezio*, during the Ascension fair of 1743.^{xiiii} It was well received but it was no match for the instant legends generated by *La finta cameriera*.

What proved to be so energizing for the theaters was not well received by church authorities. Reporters of the time, several of whom are known to have been in minor orders, damned comic opera with faint praise. At the same time, however, they become indifferent to serious opera. The compilation

of collective chronologies stopped in its tracks.^{xliv} There was some dismay that in the vacuum left by declining fortunes and loss of Venetian prestige in political areas, Ascension had quickly become a time for a different kind of clientele and one which was more or less indifferent to Venetian tastes and norms of behavior. An anonymous "Pallade Veneta" correspondent reported in 1747 as follows:

This week has been the most joyous one of the year in this locale....It included the opening of the renowned Fiera della Sensa....The patricians, [middle-class] citizens, and foreigners came in not insignificant numbers to turn the passageways of the Piazza into a theater of marvels and to mask, which [they are] permitted [to do] for the 15 days of the fair. Such honest and noble entertainments keep [their] boredom at bay.

The most specious among all the entertainments was that of Thursday in which the ducal entourage sailed in the royal [*sic*] Bucintoro to the Lido. [They were] served by happy acclamations by innumerable masked observers and by very loud voices full of furor, since the act of perpetual dominion over the Adriatic of Neptune provides them with the solemn wedding to the Sea, [which] turns the waves [into] subjects of the Venetian throne.^{xlv}

This bitterness may have represented some segment of the clerical community which was not particularly hospitable to the papacy, for less-than-flattering comments on the hospitality of the papal legate were voiced in the report of the following week.

A clear expression of the perceived artificiality of the Wedding of Venice to the Sea had occurred in a *drama giocoso*, *Lo scialaquatore alla fiera*,^{xlvi} given at San Cassiano in October 1745. The opening scene featured "a piazza in Venice [with] a view of shops displaying merchandise." *Lo scialaquatore* had first been given in Florence the preceding autumn. Neither Venetian ceremony nor the *drama per musica* was sacrosanct in comic opera. Operas on themes from the Crusades were satirized in the pastiche version of *Armida al campo* given at Sant'Angelo during Ascension 1746. In it a carriage was "pulled by dragons" and "horses, camels, and elephants" appeared in Geoffrey's camp at the end of the work. These were clear allusions to staging practices of the later seventeenth century, when exotic animals were occasionally hauled onto the stage to give proof of victory in far-away battles. At San Moisè *La semplice spiritosa*^{xlvii} opened in the autumn of 1748 with a depiction of the "mysterious pomp" with which Venice was wedded to the Adriatic on the feast of Ascension.

By 1749 reports in "Pallade Veneta" had reverted to perfunctory comments on the "honest entertainments" for the fair, with citations for works at San Cassiano (*Tra due litiganti il terzo gode*), San Samuele (*Leucippo*), and Sant'Angelo (*L'Arcadia sul Brenta*). All three theaters were said to be full of spectators every night.^{xlviii} This report is at odds with the vote of the Council in that year (xx) to forbid the opening of the theaters during Ascension (the period). While reporters were sometimes known to prepare reports without benefit of attending a performance, that cannot be assumed. Thus we are left to wonder whom to believe.

In 1750, the billing of Terradellas's *Imeneo in Atene* (text derived from Silvio Stampiglia) as a *componimento drammatico* suggests lack of authorization to stage the work at San Samuele. The locution *componimento drammatico* usually suggests (in the context of Venetian opera) a concert performance. At San Moisè the production of *Il paese della Cuccagna* (by Goldoni and Galuppi) was deferred until December.^{xlix} It could have been given privately in the spring, since it was already prepared.

The Ascension season went ahead in 1751, but the inclusion at San Moisè of a "Czech dance" in *La pastorella al soglio* (Latilla and Pagani-Cesa) was censored promptly by the Council of Ten, who ruled forthwith that the theaters would not be permitted to open for Ascension 1752.^l For that season the reporters Parabò and Conti noted in a joint *avviso* that preparations for the sale of "expensive goods" by the merchants were being counterbalanced by "honest entertainments for the nobles," which were in preparation at Sant'Angelo, San Moisè, and San Samuele.^{ll} Here the construction of the tense is definitely cautious. In sum, the execution of plans to stage operas at Ascension could not be assumed after 1748.

1752-1760

Venice experiences several crises almost simultaneously in the mid-to-late 1740s. It was plagued by a surfeit of rules and regulations which had progressively less force. Many had to do with attempts to control public behavior, to control the circulation of non-Venetian currency, to protect the Republic from epidemics spread throughout the Balkans and the Austrian empire, and to ward off the appearance of goods recycled from trade fares outside the Republic. Under doge Francesco Loredan (1752-62) there was some minor restoration of balance and a reluctant acceptance of a changing society in which nobility mattered less than before. However, a few stalwart families of the nobility launched the Teatro di San Benedetto at the end of 1755. It operated only during winter and staged only *drammi per musica*. It had far less impact than Goldoni's growing reputation as a comic dramatist. This reputation was built on genial satires on Venetian manners and mores. He passed from Sant'Angelo (1748-52) to San Salvatore (1752-1762). It was during this second stint that the colorful pamphlet wars, in which the chief opponents were Goldoni and Pietro Chiari, erupted (1756).

The rise of a prosperous middle class, to whom Goldoni's works so much appealed, brought with it less desirable changes to the theatrical experience. The entryways and near environs of theaters became common venues for crime. Theft was rife throughout the city, particularly during Carnival, when nights were long. In one instance, the senator Maurizio Cavalli was relieved of a gold watch as he left the Teatro San Samuele in 1752.^{lll} Some crimes were planned in advance. A thief would drop his loot from a

pontile into a passing gondola, then join his crew at a designated rendezvous point. Country life was not necessarily safer. Gangs of armed robbers occasionally made surprise appearances at country villas and demanded that all valuables be loaded into their coaches.

Perhaps to counteract this rising tide of negative associations, San Samuele fitted out its stages in 1753 with sets made entirely of Murano crystal. The theater began charging admission to daytime spectators who wished to inspect and admire the glitter. At San Cassiano two boxes were officially set aside to serve as in-house casinos in 1752.^{liii} Because of the decline of manuscript news networks and the indifference of reporters (or at least their readers) to the *opera buffa*, the only informative source up to the establishment of the printed *Gazzetta veneta* (1760) is the chronologist Pietro Gradenigo, whose daybook began in 1748 and continued to 1777. Gradenigo's dates are not above question, since some were entered long after an event occurred.^{liv} The general sense of Venetian life and its concerns after 1748 is nonetheless of considerable value. The portrait Gradenigo paints for the years leading up to 1760 is one in which the genres of greatest interest to the nobility were the oratorio and other miscellaneous works presented to noble audiences. Among the events Gradenigo mentions for Ascension 1754, for example, is a performance at the Incurabili on 27 May of the intermezzo *Accide*, set to music by Marc'Antonio Tiepolo as an entertainment for the noblewomen (*dame*) of the city. In contrast to the earlier practice of performing oratorios on Sunday afternoons of Advent and Lent, this work lasted until three hours after sunset. On one of the first nights in June *figliole* of the Pietà gave a private concert of vocal and instrumental music for the Rev. Abbot de Scopetini at an undisclosed location. Churches were great promoters of music but they were not immune to crime. Gradenigo notes in the same week (2 June) the approval of a redesign of the *cantoria* of the church of Sant'Apollinare, where a new organ was to be installed. Another item reported the theft of 1000 ducats and a gold chain from the strong box of the church of the Carmelitani Scalzi.^{lv}

The performance of works with a moral perspective divorced from Biblical literature was a frequent occurrence in religious institutions in the 1740s and 50s. Following on the example of *Accide* (a work so popular it was repeated several times over the coming years), the doge permitted the "cameriste e signore" in the Ca' di Dio to perform [xx's Montesqueue's] *La sposa persiana* in May 1755 (exact date not given). At the Mendicanti, the *figlie* gave a repeat performance of the oratorio they had given during Holy Week 1755.^{lvi}

An event recurrently linked with Ascension in the 1750s was the holding of an opening *academia de' suoni*, or an *academia filarmonica*. The practice of convening such academies reached back to the 1680s, if not earlier, but the opening concert for a summer season had not previously been

conspicuous. According to Gradenigo, such academies were to take place every Wednesday during the *staggione estiva*. In 1755, he reports, Bortolo [Bartolomeo] Nazzari, the “painter and portraitist of rank,” introduced such an event in his house on the Fondamenta SS. Giovanni e Paolo [i.e., behind the Mendicanti] “with good intentions and a noble concourse” on 26 May. The performance, which included the “incomparable” playing of his son [xx], was financed by “interested parties and dilettantes”.^{lvii} The character of an *accademia filarmonica* can therefore be differentiated from the *accademie letterarie* held by noblemen on Mondays during Lent. Since the 1720s there had also been public academies (such as the Albrizziana) to which (as in the case of Nazzari’s enterprise) *cittadini* were admitted.

From such gatherings as these a great interest in owning and learning to play musical instruments was cultivated. Herein lay an important stimulus to the manufacture of and trade in musical instruments. By 1760 instruments were advertised at the Ascension fair by the bookseller Paolo Colombani, who gave display space to “two very beautiful wind instruments—an oboe made of ebony, decorated with gold and silver filigree, and a choir-flute of mock tortoise with wind holes and keys of ivory made in England by an Excellent Maker.”^{lviii} In the caffè of Girolamo Nazion (“at the sign of the Guardian Angel under the offices of the Procuratie”) a “*clavicemablo* by _____ Celestini” was on offer. The instrument was said (no doubt apocryphally) to have been decorated by two famous painters—Paolo Veronese and Giacomo Palma the Elder.^{lix}

The sale of musical goods rapidly became a year-round phenomenon. In the autumn of 1760 Pietro Guarneri established a shop for the sale of bowed string instruments in the parish of Sant’Angelo Raffaele. The Friulano violinist Santo Serafin had a similar shop in the Campo dei SS. Apostoli.^{lx} A well-known shop for wind instruments—oboes, flutes [recorders], bassoons, and cross-flutes—was operated by Domenico Perosa at San Basso.^{lxi} In December Florian (the caffè owner) acted as an agent for the sale of a violoncello by an anonymous owner.^{lxii}

Gradenigo’s *notatorio* mentions numerous advertisements for music copyists and composers. The priest Giuseppe Baldan at San Giovanni Grisostomo was recommended as “one of the most exalted copyists of notes to sing and play in musical parts” in August 1760.^{lxiii} Ten days later Vivaldi’s nephew, Pietro Mauro, was cited as “the best copyist of notes of music.” His shop was near the Ponte del Lipore at Sant’Agostino.^{lxiv} The most distinguished composer after Baldassare Galuppi was said to be the aging but beloved Hasse, who though nominally *maestro di cappella* to the king of Poland, resided on the Calle de Morti near SS. Giovanni e Paolo in a house belonging to the Mocenigo family. Should anyone be seeking the services of Angelo Amoreoli, who was described as a “tenor sought by various foreign princes because of his unusual abilities,” he could be found near San Trovaso.^{lxv}

A rapid growth of periodical literature and serial publications, offered by subscription, affected music in tangential ways. Among the entrepreneurs an unlikely one was the aging printer Antonio Groppo, noted for his catalogue of *Tutti li drammi musicali a Venezia* (1745). In collaboration with Giovanni Battista Adami, he brought out in June 1760 a “magnificent” edition of Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata* in which each canto was prefaced with a figure depicting “remarkable facts noted in that canto.” Hoping for a “grand reception” and “eager to acquaint the public with their idea,” Groppo and Adami were willing to show the individual folios to “virtuosi” [i.e., collectors] for a subscription of 25 *soldi* a week.^{lxvi} A conspicuous example of the subscription model for publication was provided by the *Gazzetta veneta*, first published (from January 1760) twice a week was available on a semi-annual subscription.^{lxvii} Among its resellers were Florian, the *caffetiere*, and Paolo Colombani, whose names also figure among those reselling musical instruments. We view them in particular bins, but when the whole range of their functions is taken into account, they were general agents of the emerging mercantile age.

What is most unexpected about these initiatives is the anonymity of the intended audiences. Gone were the days when instruments were made, music transcribed, or lessons designed for a specific patron. Makers, copyists, and teachers had heretofore waited to be sought out; now they needed to seek their trade. Merchandise had to be more generic in nature. Florian would cheerfully conceal the identity of both seller and buyer, for in some curious way the new market seemed to reject clarity, identity, and uniqueness. On the stage, *opera buffa* suited these new values. It was fashioned from a pool of roles that represented characters in familiar situations—rich widowers and coquettish serving maids. As in the stance of Vaneglia, women were more interested in displaying symbols of wealth and commercial “taste” than in attachment to place, personality, or historical allusion.

The Restoration of the Magi

By the 1750s the accretion of activities adhering to the Ascension period may have played some role in persuading the doge’s councilors finally to authorize, after decades of resistance, initiatives to modernize time-keeping in Venice and to restore to full operability its famous *orologio*. The culmination of this long-overdue renovation was celebrated on Ascension Day in 1760. When fully operative, the Magi housed on the third tier of the Orologio tower were supposed the “process” before the Virgin Ascension^{lxviii} and other Marian feast days. While the lore of Ascension had grown and grown, the Magi had been stationery (and unseen) for the better part of a century. When in 1752 the Consiglio Minore had authorized a modernization of the bell-ringing schedule of the Campanile (to accommodate a clearer understanding of Earth’s orbit and the ecliptic^{lxix}), it was almost inevitable that the clock and its

tower would need attention, too. When the new clock tower was unveiled in 1757, it displayed a modernized "French" mapping of the 24 hours of the day, with the first hour in the position we know today (in contrast to the old "3:30" position in place since the 1490s). Depictions of the sun and the moon as well as the field of stars were removed from the tower's "celestial" sphere. In lieu of its former geocentric symbols, the *orologio* and its revived mechanical Magi now served to attract Ascension visitors to the Piazza on Ascension and, it was hoped, throughout the fair. A commemorative coin bearing the image of Doge Loredan, struck in 1760, was first available at that fair.

Apostheoses

By 1760 the Ascension fair enjoyed a certain symbiosis with the Padua fair, which began with the feast of San Antonio on 13 June. Merchants from the mainland were happy to offer their wares in tandem at each venue, although if Ascension fell late the Venetian fair could be curtailed prematurely. In Padua, spring opera was inclined to be serious but often less carefully prepared than in Venice. Scandals were not uncommon. In 1760 the featured work in Padua was *Solimano*, set on a text by Francesco Migliavacca, court poet of the king of Poland. Although the work, which opened ahead of the feast, was not well received, this did not stop it from causing a stir of a different kind. A customs agent, upon opening a chest destined for export from Gambarare (near Mira), discovered it to be full of "music paper indispensable for the opera at the theater." Inspecting it in detail, he declared it to have entered the Republic illegally, not because of the "notes of music written on it" but because of the "quality of the paper, which is foreign" and must therefore have evaded taxation upon entry. In view of this, he imposed a fine of 70 *zecchini*.^{lxx}

Gradenigo's take on the Ascension fair of 1760 is represented by this summary:

In Venice the fair continues. It lasts for fifteen days, masking is permitted, and so are theatrical performances. There the domestic and foreign populations alike enjoy themselves in an extraordinary manner, while also joining in the great solemnity recognizing a certain ancient victory of the Republic benefiting the papacy such that the debt can never be forgotten or cancelled. Thus it is remembered every year among the Venetian feasts.^{lxxi}

Gradenigo seems in general to have been sympathetic to imperial influence and probably therefore to papal interests. Yet his linking of pomp and frivolity with historical obligation is somehow wearying. This weariness reflects the weakening links of the celebration to its purported historical significance as well as other dimensions of growing cultural instability. It is as though too much pomp, in the face of so much frivolity, contradicted all that had been noble and virtuous in the traditional allusion to Venice's vows to her spouse, the Sea. The associated growth of commercial hype laid out, for better or for worse, the path that mercantile Venice has pursued with gathering momentum over subsequent centuries.

In 1763 the government decreed that an impresario wishing to produce operas at Ascension would be required to place a deposit of 2,000 ducats against potential obligations. This was in contrast to the 4,000 ducats required for the whole span of autumn and winter.^{bxii} Adjustment to these requirements did not come easily. When an impresario named Cristoforo Bernardi contracted for the use of San Giovanni Grisostomo in that year, he borrowed the money for the deposit from Baldassare Galuppi, but three months later Galuppi registered a complaint with the Council of Ten.^{bxiii}

Not until 1792 did Ascension fair draw welcome new attention. By the 1780s, when the fabric of Venetian society began to tear apart, San Moisè was transformed into a theater for the middle class. This left a wide birth for the new Teatro La Fenice, which opened its doors to the tattered remnants of the Venetian nobility with a performance (but not a premiere) of Giovanni Paisiello's *I giouchi d'Agrigento*. The doors of the new theater opened on 16 May 1792, the eve of Ascension.

ⁱ Though usually said to date back to the visit of Federico Barbarosa in 1177, the ceremony was first marked on 7 May 1000, by Pietro Orseolo, the first doge to extend Venice's reach down the eastern shore of the Adriatic.

ⁱⁱ Pentecost was observed in Friuli (in the rite of Aquileia) as a three-day feast; it was considered la terza Pasqua (the first two were Epiphany and Easter). In Venice Pentecost was a two-day feast celebrated on Sunday and Monday. Corpus Domini had been since the middle ages a feast widely associated with processions. Public elements of its observance have declined sharply in recent decades in response to the Italian state's mandate that public correlates of such occasions be collectively scheduled on Sundays.

ⁱⁱⁱ Two isolated cases of the revival of winter works in the seventeenth century have been identified, but they cannot be called harbingers of spring opera.

^{iv} Mercantile fairs were typically initiated by the feast of a patron saint and lasted for roughly two weeks. They were heavily concentrated in the warmer months. For details and dates of provincial fares, see E. Selfridge-Field, *Song and Season: Science, Culture, and Theatrical Time in Early Modern Venice* (Stanford University Press, 2007), Ch. 7.

^v I-Rvat, AS, NV, N.170, Venezia 11 Maggio 1720, ff. 296v-297.

^{vi} Op. cit., Venezia 18 Maggio 1720, ff. 312f.

^{vii} If Ascension fell late in May, the fair and the theaters opened on the Sunday before Ascension. This was to prevent the last days of the fair from overlapping the fixed feast of San Antonio (13 June), which initiated another fair in Padua. It was increasingly common for Venetian nobles and diplomatic representatives to stay at their villas on the mainland from 13 June until 4 July.

^{viii} For detailed principles, see Ch. 5 of *Song and Season*. For year-by-year dates of Ascension and other parameters of the theatrical calendar defined by moveable feasts, see Appendix 2 of E. Selfridge-Field, *The New Chronology of Venetian Opera and Related Genres, 1660-1760* (Stanford University Press, 2007).

^{ix} Op. cit., Venezia, reports of 16 and 23 Maggio 1722, ff. 209, 225v. Such repositions of public ceremonies were common.

^x She was widely reputed after c. 1715 to be mentally unstable.

^{xi} Opening times were dependent on the setting of the sun as marked by the bells of the Campanile. In June they would have rung after 21:00 (21:15 was the official opening time of some operas given in the mid-nineteenth century in Venice). May was divided into two parts on the bell-ringers' schedule; performances would have start after 20:00 at the start of the month and a half-hour later towards the end. On the longest winter nights, performance started at about 17:00 on the modern clock.

^{xii} Colin Timms, "George I's Venetian palace and theatre boxes in the 1720s," *Music and Theater: Essays in honour of Winton Dean*, ed. Nigel Fortune (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 127f.

^{xiii} This means, however, that none of these four works is likely to run for more than one week.

^{xiv} I-Vas, Inquisitori di Stato, Busta 710 (1727-34), (1) Fasc. 1727, reports of Francesco Alvisi for 17 and 24 Maggio 1727.

^{xv} It was incidentally in year 1727 that we first find definite evidence for the hiring of instrumentalists to provide *sinfonie* and perhaps other musical numbers in conjunction with the performance of *commedie* in Venetian theaters. This change would have had effect in the autumn and might possibly have been inspired by the "light opera" in gestation in London. The instrumentalists involved appear to have been headed by Giovanni Battista Pescetti (San Samuele) and Salvatore Apolloni (San Salvatore). Cf. *Song and Season*, Ch. 8, and *The New Chronology*, Supplements 3b and 4b.

^{xvi} Nunziatura di Venezia, N. 180, Venezia 2 Agosto 1727, f. 294.

^{xvii} I-Vas, Inquisitori di Stato, Avvisi, loc. cit., issues of 24 Maggio, 7 and 14 Giugno 1727.

^{xviii} Nunziatura di Venezia, N. 180, Venezia 21 Maggio, 28 Maggio, 11 Giugno 1729 (ff. 161f, 172-172v, 184). The repositioning of the fair occurred particularly in years when a later opening date would cause performance to occur on or after 13 June, the feast of San Antonio. He was the patron saint of Padua, where special observances attracted the participation of many Venetian noblemen who had villas nearby.

^{xix} *Diario ordinario*, N. 1853, report from Venice for 11 Giugno [1729].

^{xx} The cast also featured Vivaldi's protégé, Anna Girò.

^{xxi} By 1732 the composer had agreed to serve as Kapellmeister at the Saxon court, and although his *drammi per musica* on texts by Metastasio were favorites for decades, it was only in old age that the two returned to Venice.

^{xxii} *L'incostanza schernita* (1727) was arguably pastoral but more neutrally developed.

^{xxiii} Other expenses were £2,380 for the instrumentalists, £2,888 for the ballet dancers, £1,553 for the engineer, £1,674 for costumes, and £3,720 for the intermezzi (see *The New Chronology*, pp. 422f). Amorevoli was a singer in the ducal chapel.

^{xxiv} Nor is there any complete score for any Ascension opera given previously.

^{xxv} I-Vas, Inquisitori di Stato, Avvisi [Girolamo Alvisi], Venetia 24 Maggio 1732.

^{xxvi} *Griselda* was the only collaboration between Goldoni and Vivaldi and the only work set by Vivaldi to be stage in the Grimani theater.

^{xxvii} Avvisi [Francesco Donado], 14 and 21 Maggio 1735.

^{xxviii} Intermezzi such as these would have been given between the acts of a prose comedy. The roles would have been taken by members of Gori's troupe. Vaneglia's desires can scarcely be imagined in the welter of contemporary legislation governing trade. In 1697 the government had ordered that within the Republic wool, cloth, and cotton be purchased only in Venice, though by 1710 the Senate newly allowed that cloth could be made within the Veneto in the "Dutch and English" manner, not simply in the customary Venetian way. However, the spate of regulations drove many artisans away from the city; silk-weavers and coppersmiths went to Friuli, cotton-spinners to Cividale and Tolmezzo, and wrought-iron workers to the Bresciano. That the Ascension fair eventually became an emporium of foreign-made goods is something of an irony. See Pompeo Molmenti, *Venice: Its Individual Growth from the Earliest Beginnings to the Fall of the Republic* (London: John Murray, 1908), 3/1, pp. 48f.

^{xxix} Eleanor Selfridge-Field, *A New Chronology of Venetian Opera and Related Genres, 1660-1760* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 603.

^{xxx} Nunziatura di Venezia, N. 189, Venezia 12 maggio 1736, ff. 266-266v. Lotti's madrigal, preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, became a staple of the Ascension Day ceremony.

^{xxxi} I-Vas, Inquisitori di Stato, Busta 711 (1735-1772), Avvisi, Pacco 1735, entries by date. In this same era the investitures of procurators were also becoming very lavish.

^{xxxii} Op. cit., f. 267.

^{xxxiii} Op. cit., ff. 280ff.

^{xxxiv} I-Rvat, AS, Nunziatura, N. 190, Venezia 8 Giugno 1737, f. 273. Venetian overtures to the prince of Wales were not appreciated at Whitehall. Pietro Businello, the Venetian ambassador to London in 1737, was held responsible for being "too friendly to the prince" and was dismissed by the British. For this reason, there was no further Venetian representation at the court of St. James until 1744. The *Incurabili* oratorio cannot be identified (no new works are recorded for the institution between 1733 and 1745), so it was probably a revival. Hasse was then the nominal *maestro di coro*.

^{xxxv} Alvilda was the only opera given for that fair.

^{xxxvi} See the avvisi of Trebbi for 26 Aprile and 3 Maggio 1738.

^{xxxvii} The work would have been G. F. Brivio's *Artaserse*, which had opened at the Teatro Obizzi on May 20th.

^{xxxviii} Trebbi's lengthy account is the avviso da Venetia for 17. Maggio 1738. He tells us in his installment for the following week that the duke of duchess of Modena were greatly entertained in *nobile conversazioni*.

^{xxxix} I-Rvat, Archivio secreto, Nunziatura di Venezia, N. 192, Venezia 23 Maggio 1739, f. 209.

^{xl} I-Mas, Potenze Esteri, Busta 226, Fasc. 1740; letter from Venezia of 28 Maggio 1740 [Pio to Traun]: "...la consueta funzione seguita giovedì passato dello Sposalizio del Mare, la quale però riuscì men grandiosa degli'altri anni, quando tutt'al contrario per la presenza del Real P.pe di Polonia si aspettava più magnifica; ma si vede che la gente è straccia [stracciata] dallo spendere, e che quasi da non inteso presaggio siano avvertiti a non gettar mal a proposito il denaro, di cui si può aver maggior bisogno nelle future Calamità; poi che i viveri van fuor di modo crescendo di prezzo; del formento v'è poca provigione, e la stagione stravagante minaccia scarsa raccolta anche in quest'anno, il che fa temere li crudeli dissaggi della fame, la quale attualmente in qualche luogo del Dominio Veneto si prova, essendo dalla Dalmazia Veneta in questa settimana giunte moltissime suppliche, implorando caritatevole assistenza, per che più luoghi trovansi a tal miseria ridotti, che sono obbligati fin a far bollire il fieno, e magiarlo per insalata, da che poi la gente si muore, e qui con ogni ossequio mi rassegnò."

^{xli} *The New Chronology of Venetian Opera*, p. 477. Francesco Antonio Correr, patriarch since 1734, died on 17 May 1741. His successor, Lodovico Foscari, was not actually elected until 27 November of that year.

^{xlii} *New Chronology*, p. 487. Contagions made the Provveditori alla Sanità nervous, because crowds of strangers were generally considered to be less respectful of health regulations than Venetians.

^{xliii} Reports of the 1743 fair can be found in I-Vas, Miscellanea di Atti diversi, Busta 58/I, in the avvisi of 25 Maggio 1743 by Donado, Desideri, and Aviani. This collection includes news-sheets from various publication series including fragments of *Pallade veneta* not reported in my 1985 book (*Pallade Veneta: Writings in Music in Venetian Society, 1650-1750*. Venice: Fondazione Ugo e Olga Levi). I am indebted to Mario Infelise for calling my attention to this series of news-sheets.

^{xliv} This can be attributed to several factors: (1) the "collectors" for whom such collators as Bonlini and Groppo seem to have written were becoming too poor to collect; (2) the nobility in general was in a state of rapid impoverishment that limited the past grandeur of the theatrical experience; and (3) almost none of the serious music-drama performed in Venice rested on new texts. The demise of the great northern Italian courts deprived Italy of young poets and dramatists, and in any event Metastasio had such a secure hold on most theaters by the 1740s that few were confident to expose their work to the public.

^{xlv} Misc. Atti, "Pallade Veneta" for 6-13 Maggio 1747. "Questa settimana è stata delle più gioconde, che corrono fra l'anno in questa dom.te, dacche ... si è dato principio alla rinomata Fiera della Sensa, e così li Patrizj, Cittadini, ed esteri, che non in poco numero sono giunti per doverla, vieranzi xx, e nel passeggio della Piazza sud.ta riddotta in un teatro di meraviglie e nel trattenim.to della maschera permessa p tutti li 15 g.ni della Fiera, cosiche trattenimenti si onesti, e nobili tengono lontano da ciascuno tutte le noie. Il più specioso però trà tutti li trattenimenti fù quella di giovedì in cui la Publica Ducà [?] sopra il Reggio Bucintoro passò al Lido servita da liete acclamazioni di maschere innumerabili, e da lautissime voci di Bronzò infuorati, poiche si servitò l'atto del suo perpetuo dominio sopra l'Adriaco Nettuno, venendo col solenne sponsalizio del Mare suddite al Veneto Trono l'onde.

^{xlvi} A pastiche incorporating music by Giuseppe Orlandini and others on a text generally attributed to Ambrosio Borghese.

^{xlvii} Adapted by the Mingotti troupe from Goldoni's text, with music attributed to Giovanni Fiorini.

^{xlviii} Misc., *Pallade Veneta* for 10-17 Maggio 1749, f. 2v.

^{xlix} *New Chronology*, pp. 534f.

ⁱ *New Chronology*, p. 538. It appears that the basis for their objection was gestural rather than textual.

ⁱⁱ Misc., Avviso of Venetia 15. Maggio 1751 [Parabo' e Conti].

ⁱⁱⁱ Gradenigo, Notatorio II (Ottobre 1751-Genaro 1754 M.V.), f. 9 (entry for 30 Gen.o [1751 M.V.]).

ⁱⁱⁱⁱ The government had closed 144 casinos in 1744.

^{lv} Gradenigo's dates are not above question, since some were entered long after an event occurred.

- ^{lv} Gradenigo, May-June 1754, ff. 99v-100v. The Scalzi was largely supported by those with imperial ties.
- ^{lvi} Gradenigo, May 1755, ff. 18v-20. The oratorio was probably Bertoni's *Cum amore divino*, although he also set a *Modulamina sacra* for the Mendicanti that year. See Denis and Elsie Arnold, *The Oratorio in Venice* (London: Royal Musical Association, 1986), p. 89.
- ^{lvii} Gradenigo, f. 21. One of Nazzari's most famous portraits was of Carlo Broschi detto Farinelli.
- ^{lviii} At least six flute-markers were active in London at the time. Colombani was a purveyor of *avvisi* and the new *Gazzetta veneta*. His shop on the Merceria was near the church of San Salvatore (I-Vmc Mss Gradenigo-Dolfin, Notatorio, VI, f. 5v. Entry for 15 Maggio 1760).
- ^{lix} *Op. cit.*, f. 6 (continuing account for 15 Maggio). The Venetian maker Giovanni Celestini (fl. 1587-1610) is survived by five harpsichords and six polygonal virginals (two mis-identified in instrument catalogues, according to Denzel Wraight, "Two Harpsichords by Giovanni Celestini," *Galpin Society Journal* 46 (1993), 120-136). None of the surviving instruments contains decorative features of note.
- ^{lx} By this time, though, the shop may have been maintained by a descendant, as Serafin is thought to have died in c. 1758.
- ^{lxi} *Op. cit.*, f. 87v, entry for 28 Ottobre 1760.
- ^{lxii} *Op. cit.*, f. 118, entry for 15 Dicembre 1760.
- ^{lxiii} *Op. cit.*, f. 57, entry for 24 Agosto.
- ^{lxiv} *Op. cit.*, f. 91v, entry for 3 Settembre 1760.
- ^{lxv} Continuation of same entry, ff. 92-92v.
- ^{lxvi} Only random folios survive to document the publication. See *op. cit.*, f. 14, week following 2 Giugno 1760. Colombani was quick to counter their offer with a new edition in two volumes of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. It contained a "true portrait of the author from a copper engraving." A subscription to it was 24 *lire* (*op. cit.*, f. 96, entry for 25 Luglio 1761. The term was not stated.) One unnamed bookseller rented books for 5 *soldi* a day. Sebastiano Coletti was commissioned to sell the *Giornale nuovo di commercio*.^{lxvi}
- ^{lxvii} Manuscript *avvisi*, which had been the primary source of news in and out of Venice over the past century, had been compiled weekly and sold on a half-yearly subscriptions.
- ^{lxviii} The liturgical dissonance between the Wise Men of Epiphany and the Risen Christ of the Ascension did not seem to trouble the promoters.
- ^{lix} Strictly, the geometric plane containing the orbit of the earth as it travels around the sun. In common parlance it is the apparent path of the sun through the constellations. The "circle" of constellations forms an important iconographical element of the Orologio decoration.
- ^{lxx} Gradenigo VI, ff. 14-15v, entry for 5 Giugno 1760.
- ^{lxxi} Gradenigo VI, f. 5v, entry for 15 Maggio 1760.
- ^{lxxii} In 1762-63 an Englishman, William Stuart (ninth Lord Blantyre) was engaged as impresario at San Samuele for autumn and winter (I-Vas, Capi, Consiglio de Dieci, Notatorio, Busta 53, Fasc. 1763, entries of 2. 8bre. 1763 and 13 marzo 1764). Lord Blantyre was required to deposit 4000 ducats in advance but could only provide 2250 at the outset of his tenure. The remaining 1750 had not yet been produced by the start of Lent, when the season was terminated. Lord Blantyre's brother John, third earl of Bute, acquired a collection of 1286 Venetian opera libretti in Venice at about the same time as this ill-fated venture. Continued until 1767, it traveled by sea to London where it remained in private hands until the 1960s, when was acquired in the 1960s by the University of California at Los Angeles. The collection is itemized in the *Catalog of Venetian Opera Libretti* by Irene Alm (University of California Press, 1992).
- ^{lxxiii} By 8 August the composer had still not been paid for composing the music. The *capi* of the Consiglio dei Dieci ruled on the 13th on Galuppi's behalf, ordering that Bernardi repay the balance and the other monies due to him (Capi, Consiglio de Dieci, Notatorio, Busta 53, Fasc. 1764, documents of 14 Maggio, 8 Agosto, and 13 Agosto 1764). In the last case, the amount at issue seemed to be 30 *zecchini*. Galuppi claimed that he was normally paid 90 *zecchini* by the Grimani theaters, 80 by San Benedetto, and 60 by the Teatro di Padova.

Operas given during the Ascension season in Venice, 1720-1750

Year	Day	Theater	Title	Composer	Librettist (earlier use)	Subject; Patronage; Performance
1720	8.V.	S. Samuele	<i>La Griselda</i>	Orlandini (Mantua, 1717)	Zeno (Venice, 1701)	Arcadian subject (Sicily); British patron; Bolognese cast
1720	8.V.	S. Moisè	<i>Gl'inganni fortunati</i>	Buini	Valeriani (Modena, 1716)	Arcadian subject (Aetolia); Genovese patron
1722	13.V.	S. Samuele	<i>L'amor tirannico</i>	Chelleri, Porta	Lalli (Venice, 1710)	Pastiche, Bavarian patron; Florentine dance master (Fr. Aquilanti)
1723	5.V.	S. Samuele	<i>Bajazet</i>	Gasparini (Venice, 1711)	Piovene (Venice, 1711)	Turkish history; Hessian patron
1724	17.V.	S. Samuele	<i>Scipione nelle Spagne</i>	Albinoni	Zeno (Vienna, 1722)	Reduced version; No dedicatee
1725	9.V.	S. Samuele	<i>L'amor eroica</i>	Brusa	Zeno, Parlati (Barcelona)	Persian, Assyrian history; British patron;
1726	26.V.	S. Samuele	<i>I rivali generosi</i>	Vignati	Zeno	Visigoths on the Adriatic; No dedicatee (British audience likely);
1726	26.V.	S. Moisè	<i>Le frenesie d'amore</i>	Buini (Bologna, 1725)	Buini (Bologna, 1725)	Comic work; No dedicatee
1727	21.V.	S. Samuele	<i>L'incostanza scherziata</i>	Albinoni	Cassani	Pseudo-Arcadian; Bavarian patron
1727	21.V.	S. Moisè	<i>Albunazar</i>	Buini	Buini	<i>Scherzo musicale</i> (satire on Turkish history); No dedicatee
1727	1.VI.	S. Salvatore	<i>Le frenesie d'amore</i>	Buini	Buini	Revival (see 1726)
1728	5.V.	S. Moisè	<i>Nel perdono la vendetta</i>	Porta	Pagani-Cesa	Satire on royal marriages; No dedicatee; very popular
1728	5.V.	S. Samuele	<i>Nerina</i>	Pollarolo, A (S. Moisè, 1720).	d'Averara, rev. Lalli	Arcadian subject; Bavarian patron
1729	22.V.	S. Samuele	<i>Subpizia fedele</i>	Pollarolo, A.	Boldini	Roman/Sicilian betrothal; Roman patron (Noblewoman)
1729	6.VI.	S. Samuele	<i>Dorinda</i>	Pescetti, Galuppi	Pasqualigo (Vicenza, 1707)	Arcadian subject; Roman patron (noblewoman)
1730	17.V.	S. Samuele	<i>Dalisa</i>	Hasse	Minato,	Arcadian subject;

Year	Day	Theater	Title	Composer	Librettist (earlier use)	Subject; Patronage; Performance
1731	2.V.	S. Angelo	<i>Li sponsali g'Enea</i>	Cordans	rev. Lalli	British patron; very costly production
1731	2.V.	S. Moisé	<i>Artaganamenone</i>	Buini	Passarini	Classical subject; German patron
1731	2.V.	S. Samuele	<i>Venere placata</i>	Courcelle	Buini	Satire on ancient history; No dedicatee
1731	9.V.	S. Moisé	<i>Fidarsi è bene, ma non fidarsi è meglio</i>	Buini	Buini (int. 1722)	Maritime mythology; German patron
1732	21.V.	S. Angelo	<i>Chi non fa non falla</i>	Buini	Buini	Comic work; no dedicatee
1732	2.VI.	S. Angelo	<i>L'ortolana contessa</i>	Buini et al.	Buini	Satire on theatrical finances; No dedicatee
1733	13.V.	S. Angelo	<i>L'ambizione depressa</i>	Galuppi	Papis	<i>A divertimento comico</i> ; very popular; no dedicatee
1733	13.V.	S. Samuele	<i>Ginevra</i>	Sellitti	Salvi (1716), rev. Boldini	Pastoral subject; British patron
1734	30.V.	S. Samuele	<i>La ninfa Apollo</i>	Galuppi	Lemene (1709), rev. Boldini	Pseudo-history from Ariosto; Pseudonymous (Neapolitan?) patron
1735	18.V.	S. Samuele	<i>Griselda</i>	Vivaldi	Zeno (1701 et al.), rev. Goldoni	Satire on pastorate; Neapolitan audience
1736	9.V.	S. Samuele	<i>La generosità politica</i>	Marchi	Goldoni	Roman patron, Florentine audience
1737	29.V.	S. Samuele	<i>L'Abilda</i>	Galuppi	Zeno (1707), rev. Lalli	Athenian history; small cast; Imperial patron
1738	11.V.	S. Samuele	<i>Angelica</i>	Lampugnani	Vedova	British patron; work designed "to keep foreigners entertained"
1739	6.V.	S. Samuele	<i>Creusa</i>	Cardena	Rizzi	Story from Ariosto; Modenese patron
1740	25.V.	S. Samuele	<i>Gustavo primo</i>	Galuppi	Goldoni	Greek mythology; Florentine patron
1741	10.V.	S. Samuele	<i>Statira</i>	Chiarini	Goldoni	Swedish subject (<i>opera seria</i>); Genovese patron; Praised for the dancing of Teresa LeConte
						Persian history; Genovese patrons;

Year	Day	Theater	Title	Composer	Librettist (earlier use)	Subject; Patronage; Performance
1742	2.V.	S. Moisè	La Zanina maga per amore	Pastiche	Buini (Bologna, 1737)	Satire given by intermezzo performers.
1742	2.V.	S. Samuele	<i>Demetrio</i>	Gluck	Metastasio (1732)	Milanese (?) patron; Gluck's second opera
1742	2.V.	S. Salvatore	<i>Ariarrese</i>	Paganelli	Metastasio (1730)	Persian history; Milanese (?) patron
1743	22.V.	S. Samuele	<i>Ezio</i>	Lampugnani	Metastasio (1728)	Roman history; No dedicatee
1743	22.V.	S. Angelo	<i>La finia carriera</i>	Latilla	Barlocchi (1737)	First "Neapolitan" comic opera given in Venice; "pleased to excess"
1744	13.V.	S. Angelo	<i>La finia schiava</i>	Maccari	Silvani (1701)	Gothic/Spanish/Moroccan subject; No dedicatee
1744	13.V.	S. Samuele	<i>Cesare in Egitto</i>	Colombo	Bussani (1676), rev. Goldoni	Roman history; dedicated to [noble]women
1745	22.V.	S. Angelo	<i>Nicoraste, re di Tracia</i>	Pattoni	Vituri	Byzantine context (land division)
1745	22.V.	S. Samuele	<i>L'Olimpiade</i>	Fiorillo	Metastasio (1734)	Classical history; No dedicatee; oboe and bassoon obbligati well received
1746	18.V.	S. Angelo	<i>Arnida in campo</i>	Pastiche	Silvani (1706)	Crusades; no dedicatee; Menagerie (horses, camels, elephants) seen
1746	18.V.	S. Moisè	<i>La facendiera</i>	Anonymous	Anonymous	<i>Dramma giocoso</i> ; No dedicatee, no reports
1746	18.V.	S. Samuele	<i>Orazio e Curiazio</i>	Bertoni	Sografi	Roman history; Dedicated to [noble] ladies
1747	10.V.	S. Angelo	<i>Tigrane</i>	Lampugnani	Silvani (1741)	Classical history; Venetian dedicatee
1747	10.V.	S. Moisè	<i>La finia pazza</i>	Anonymous	Anonymous	Satire on madness and astrology; first production of A. Mingotti; intermezzo (<i>Il Marchese del Bosco</i>) more popular than opera separately.; Venetian patron
1747	10.V.	S. Samuele	<i>Achille in Sciro</i>	Runcher	Metastasio (1736)	Very short work; scenario for balli published separately.; Venetian patron
1748	22.V.	S. Samuele	<i>Ipernestra</i>	Bertoni	Metastasio (see 1744)	For reopening of theater; very short; No dedicatee
1748	22.V.	S. Angelo	<i>Li tre cicisbei ridicoli</i>	Resta	Vasini	Satire on <i>cicisbeismo</i> ; No dedicatee
1748	29.V.	S. Angelo	<i>Orazio</i>	Auletta	Palomba (1744)	Three performances, then revival of <i>Li tre</i>

Year	Day	Theater	Title	Composer	Librettist (earlier use)	Subject; Patronage; Performance
1749	14. V.	S. Angelo	<i>L'Arcadia in Brenta</i>	Galuppi	Goldoni	<i>cicisbei</i> Satire on <i>villeggiatura</i> (and much else); well regarded for text and music
1749	14. V.	S. Cassiano	<i>Tra due litiganti il terzo gode</i>	Pescetti (Vicenza, 1746)	Lorenzi (Vicenza, 1746)	Comic work; no dedicatee
1749	14. V.	S. Samuele	<i>Leucippo</i>	Hasse (1747)	Pasquin (1747)	Arcadian; no dedicatee
1750	[6. V.]	S. Samuele	<i>Ineneo in Atene</i>	Terradellas	Stampiglia (1726)	Not performed. Season cancelled by Council of Ten.